

# Briefing on Homeless Initiatives

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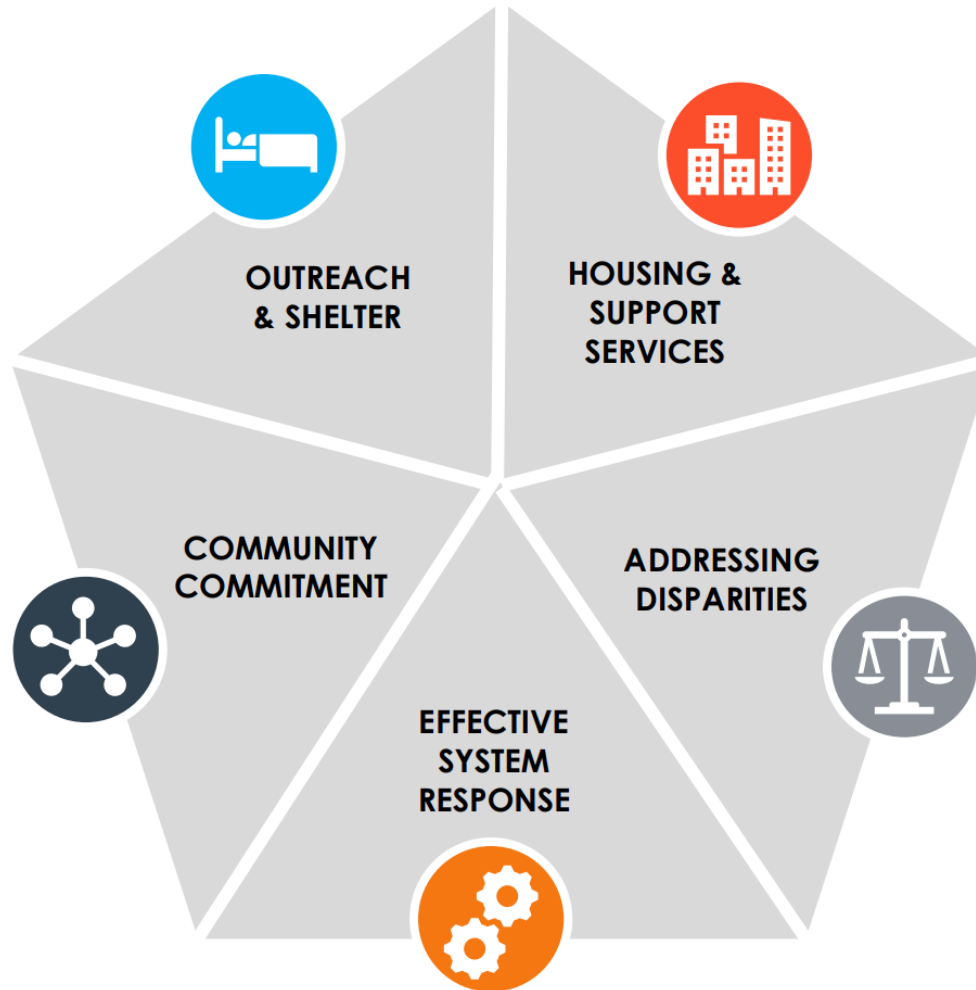
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# Presentation Topics

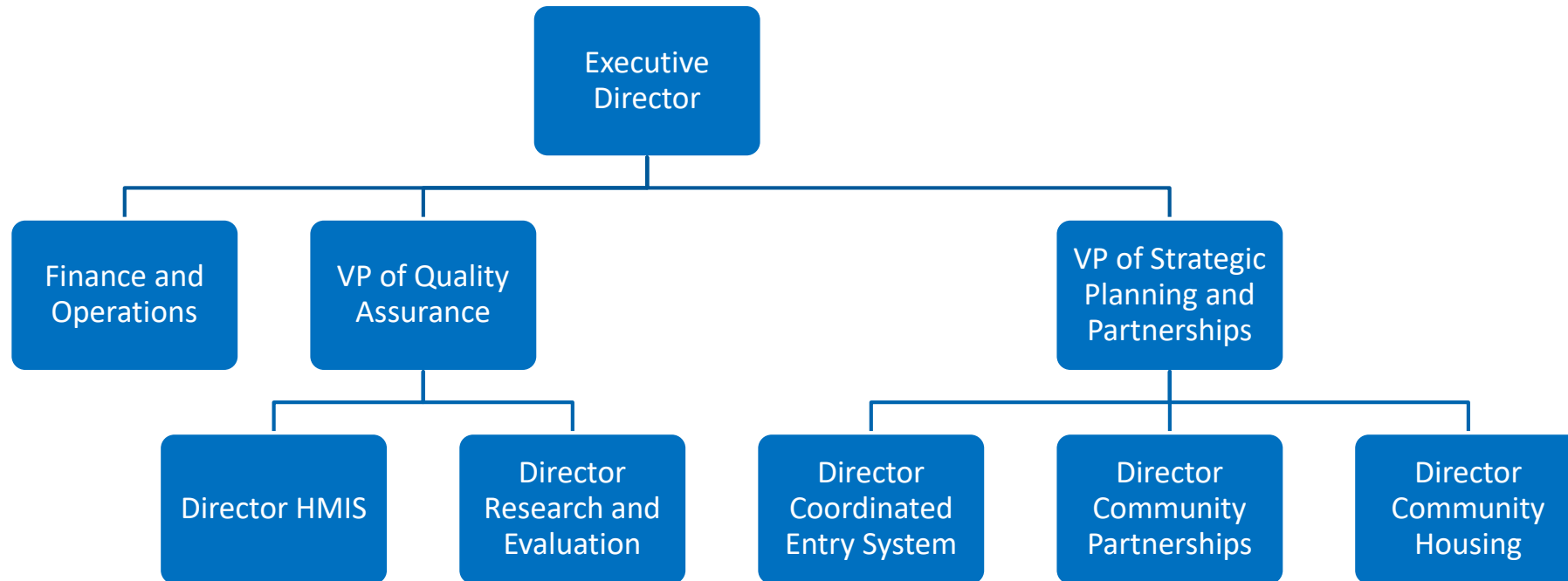
- ❑ Ending Community Homelessness Organization (ECHO)
  - Action Plan
  - Homeless Response System
  - ECHO's Role and Responsibility as Continuum of Care (CoC) Organization
- ❑ Homeless Strategy Office
  - Guided Path Pilot Project
  - Encampment Strategy
- ❑ Recommendations Moving Forward

# Five Elements of ECHO Action Plan

**System Components to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County**



# ECHO Leadership Organization Chart



# ECHO Overview of Homeless Response System

- ❑ Continuum of Care and Community Partnerships
  - Action Plan Areas of Coordination
    - System Effectiveness
    - Addressing Disparities
- ❑ Coordinated Entry System (CES)
  - Action Plan Areas of Coordination
    - Housing and Support Services
    - Outreach and Shelter
- ❑ Community Housing
  - Action Plan Areas of Coordination
    - Housing and Support Services
- ❑ Homeless Management Information System
  - Action Plan Areas of Coordination
    - System Effectiveness
- ❑ Research and Evaluation
  - Action Plan Areas of Coordination
    - System Effectiveness
    - Addressing Disparities
    - Outreach and Shelter
    - Housing and Support Services
    - Community Commitment
- ❑ Pay for Success (\$14.7 Million)

# ECHO's Role as CoC Lead Agency/ Collaborative Applicant

- ❑ U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates that a CoC is responsible for
  - Promoting community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness;
  - Providing funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness;
  - Promoting access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
- ❑ As the Collaborative Applicant ECHO is designated by the CoC Board (Membership Council) to be the entity responsible for coordinating and submitting the collaborative application to HUD.
- ❑ ECHO is also responsible for evaluating outcomes of awarded programs.
- ❑ FY2018 Austin/Travis County CoC Awards: \$6.8 Million.
- ❑ FY2019 Austin/Travis County CoC Request: \$10.5 Million.

# ECHO's Responsibility as CoC Lead Agency

- ❑ Designated to carry out the planning and system operation activities of the CoC, including fiscal and compliance activities
- ❑ Coordinate a local competition for CoC funds that are granted to providers in our community
- ❑ Management of the annual HUD application; coordination of other funding opportunities; project and system monitoring; meeting management; planning
- ❑ Coordination of the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count
- ❑ Consulting with Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) recipients
- ❑ Establishing a Coordinated Entry system
- ❑ Developing written standards for housing program types (Rapid Rehousing (RRH), Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), etc..)

# ECHO - *Homeless Response System*

*What is it? How is it working? What's on the horizon?*

- ❑ Continuum of Care (CoC) Partnerships
- ❑ Coordinated Entry System
- ❑ Community Housing Partnerships
- ❑ Homeless Management Information Systems
- ❑ Research and Evaluation



# Guided Path Pilot Project

## *Overview*

- ❑ Homeless encampments are highly visible and troubling reminders of the housing crisis in our community. Encampments occur because there is a pervasive lack of affordable, permanent housing in communities.
- ❑ The City of Austin is purposed in our efforts, to manage public spaces that are not in conflict with the community's goals to prevent homelessness, provide temporary crisis help, and provide a path out of homelessness to housing.
- ❑ With that thinking, the Homeless Strategy Office in partnership with ECHO, Austin Public Health (APH), Downtown Austin Community Court (DACC), Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD), and Austin Police Department (APD) co-convened the homeless provider community to design a strategy to address the encampments outside of the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH).

# Guided Path Pilot Project

## *Goals*

- ❑ Both reduce the health and safety risks for those living in encampments and prevent and end homelessness through long term solutions.
- ❑ To utilize all the resources from current City contracts to be applied to a strategy to address the long-standing encampments found outside of the ARCH and Salvation Army Downtown Center.

# Guided Path Pilot Project

## *Understanding*

- ❑ The Guided Path Pilot Project, in addressing the encampment outside of the ARCH, should be seen as a pilot initiative with limited resources which has to confront an extreme situation brought on by the larger complexities of homelessness.
- ❑ With this being a pilot we will find out what works and what doesn't work, understanding available resources and where there needs additional investment, while providing critical assistance to those individuals outside of the ARCH.

# Guided Path Pilot Project *Strategy*

- ❑ Outreach and Assessment
- ❑ Service Engagement and Referral
- ❑ Sustainment and Accountability

**System Components to End Homelessness in Austin/Travis County**



# Guided Path Pilot Project

## *Outreach and Assessment*

- ❑ Enumeration and mapping of individuals of people found outside of the ARCH over a 2 ½ day period.
- ❑ A short survey/assessment of every individual which then populated a By Name List (BNL) for individuals who would be included in the Guided Path pilot.
- ❑ Validation of the BNL for referrals to current resources.
- ❑ Individuals immediately offered opened slots for emergency shelter.
- ❑ Current shelter providers waived policies that would hinder entrances.
- ❑ Navigation center services popped up inside of the ARCH for immediate case management and navigation to mainstream resources.
- ❑ Results for this first phase:
  - 99 individuals identified and surveyed
  - 13 people were already staying in shelter
  - 22 additional people stayed at least one night in shelter after being engaged through the pilot.

# Guided Path Pilot Project

## *Service Engagement*

- ❑ Immediate referrals (once client is willing to accept) to **available** housing resources, case management, and shelter beds.
- ❑ Diversion through mainstream resources or one-time financial assistance (bus passes, utilities in arrears, housing deposit, etc.).
- ❑ Immediate referrals to substance abuse treatment slots and mental health treatment slots.
- ❑ Results as of 10/28:
  - 4 people are housed
  - 1 person reunited with family
  - 3 people accepted respite at 15<sup>th</sup> St.
  - 75 of the 99 people surveyed are enrolled or pending enrollment into appropriate programs that lead to permanent housing
  - 24 people are not matched with programs for enrollment

# Guided Path Pilot Project

## *Sustainability and Accountability*

- ❑ Sustainment and Accountability – *Will be fully built out in the next few weeks*
- ❑ Increased outreach activity.
- ❑ Increased police monitoring.
- ❑ Increased cleaning of the areas.
- ❑ Perceived impact assessment.

# Guided Path Pilot Project

## *Initial Assessment of the Pilot*

- ❑ Every individual that was engaged shared that they want housing (and services), but not everyone wanted shelter; evidence based upon current unused and available shelter spots
- ❑ Over enrollment into RRH due to the lack of PSH slots
- ❑ Need at least 20 new PSH case management slots to meet the need of the pilot
- ❑ The inflow to outside of the ARCH, from other systems are contributing factors.
- ❑ The will of the providers to make this a priority outside of their usual services is being made but continuous pressure to serve without resources may negate that good will.
- ❑ Dedicated housing resources for people just outside of the ARCH conflicts with efforts by the community's Coordinated Entry System (CES) to provide more equitable, city-wide access to housing resources through that centralized intake system.



# Encampment Strategy

## *Overview*

- ❑ As the homeless population grows nationwide and the housing affordability gap continues to widen, especially in large metros, cities across the country are grappling with how to provide shelter for homeless and lower-income residents.
- ❑ The presence of encampments often creates heightened awareness and concerns in communities and requires a coordinated action plan.
- ❑ Any successful plan **MUST** include appropriate housing options so that the presence of encampments in the community can be resolved over time.

# Encampment Strategy

## *Immediate Housing Units are Key to Success*

- ❑ Nationally, with housing labor and land costs skyrocketing, new ground-up affordable housing projects are harder to come by and take much longer than the urgency of need.
- ❑ More cities have and are beginning to see where the conversion of motels could help with the nationwide affordable housing crisis.
- ❑ Motels can be easily converted to affordable, permanent supportive housing units because the infrastructure is already in place.
- ❑ Locally, for a robust encampment strategy, any motels that would be purchased would initially be used as bridge housing and then slowly converted to PSH to meet with urgency for the unsheltered population.
- ❑ The system would be sure to allow not just the unsheltered to gain access to these units but individuals who have been in CES waiting on PSH.

# Recommendation #1:

## *Formalize an Interagency HMIS Working Group*

- ❑ Utilizing the HMIS data that is required from City contracts, an interagency working group of staff who fund and manage homeless assistance programs be created to meet on a monthly basis to do real-time evaluations based upon data.
- ❑ This group, at minimum, would include; APH, NHCD, DACC, HSO and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) who would meet monthly until the end of the year, and then quarterly in 2020 to review program results and investments using data on program enrollment and outcomes from HMIS and City information on expenditures.
- ❑ One standard to be used during the efforts of this working group is to track and compare outcomes achieved against the HUD CoC performance standards that is set for all communities to prevent and end homelessness.

## Recommendation #2:

### *Review and Evaluate City Investments to Align with the Endorsed Austin's Action Plan*

- ❑ Through the approved City Council budget item, to establish performance criteria, contract with an experienced national expert to review and evaluate City of Austin investments in homelessness to assess that outcomes match the intentions of the contracts.
- ❑ The review will endeavor to identify ways to align City of Austin investments with not only the ECHO Action Plan but to maximize potential federal funding and to maximize the outcomes that the City of Austin is seeking.
- ❑ Final report would be presented to Council during the first quarter of 2020. The scope of the project would be limited to investment in homelessness program and not include a review of anti-poverty, safety net services (exclusive of homeless assistance programs) or affordable housing strategies.

## Recommendation #3:

### *Procure Properties in Order to Implement a Successful Encampment Strategy*

- ❑ Continued monitoring of City data on outcomes of health, safety and sanitation needs of unsheltered populations.
- ❑ Steadfast commitment for the City of Austin to continue to partner with ECHO and other interested experienced parties to identify potential properties that would result in quickly building a pipeline of low barrier, affordable units that could provide us with the throughput necessary to get a person or household housed as quickly as possible.
- ❑ Working with a partner organization, like ECHO, to (re)create a Landlord Recruitment campaign with funding for a Landlord Incentive Program (LIP) that would benefit the whole homeless response system. Incentives include leasing bonuses, holding fees, application expense reimbursement, damage claim reimbursement, security deposits and utility assistance.
- ❑ In preparation of more PSH units coming online provide system-wide training on case management that is trauma-informed, housing-first and harm reduction to support clients to stay housed. Opportunity to level up current agency staff.

# Recommendation #4:

## *Stay on the Path*

- ❑ The solution to homelessness is not an easy one. The City of Austin is commended for investing substantial local resources to address homelessness and for rethinking its approaches to homelessness over the past few years.
- ❑ Taking these recommended steps will help the City be more effective with their investments, be able to report to elected officials and other stakeholders about what their investments are buying, be able to hold programs accountable and reallocate investments to gain better results, and ultimately to reduce homelessness and the community costs associated with it.

# Questions and Answers