



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager

From: David Gray, Homeless Strategy Officer

Date: September 25, 2026

Subject: **Extreme Weather Funding – Staff Response (Resolution No. 20230816-021)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a final response to [Resolution No. 20230816-021](#), which directs the City Manager to prioritize funding that enhances extreme weather shelter operations and increases direct outreach and support for unsheltered individuals.

This memorandum outlines the work Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations (HSO) has accomplished to date and closes out this resolution.

1) The City Manager is directed to prioritize funding that enhances extreme weather shelter operations and increases direct outreach and support for unsheltered individuals.

HSO has dedicated funding within its budget to support extreme weather shelter operations and direct outreach for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. HSO has also maintained its extreme weather text alert system, which now reaches nearly 5,000 subscribers with timely notifications about shelter activation, extreme weather notifications, and available resources. Additionally, HSO received funding in Fiscal Year 2025 to create an internal Street & Community Outreach Division. This seven-person division, along with HSO's eight-person Public Space Management Division, now conducts proactive outreach year-round and coordinates with community partners during extreme weather events to connect unsheltered individuals with shelter, transportation, and other critical services.

2) Funding should be dedicated to a comprehensive model review and modification of the extreme weather planning process, encompassing preparation through successful exiting and reporting.

HSO works annually with Austin Emergency Management (AEM), Austin Public Health (APH), and other City departments to review and update, as needed, the Cold Weather Shelter Standard Operating Procedure. In addition, HSO actively participates in AEM's broader emergency preparedness efforts, including planning processes, tabletop exercises, situation report calls, and

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other coordination activities for extreme weather and other emergency events. These efforts provide continuous opportunities to evaluate and refine the City's planning processes from preparedness through response, demobilization, and after-action reporting, helping ensure departments remain coordinated and prepared for future events.

3) *Prioritization in funding allocated to emergency shelter operations should ensure an expansion in service provision and enhance the quality of holistic and accessible care.*

The City resolicited its Cold Weather Shelter services contract in Spring 2026, and the procurement is currently underway. The solicitation was designed to expand and strengthen service delivery by requiring a comprehensive, turnkey approach to Cold Weather Shelter operations. The selected contractor will be responsible for managing congregate or non-congregate overnight sleeping accommodations; adequate staffing to support basic needs of the clients; the coordination of communication, outreach, and transportation with relevant partners; the provision of meals and needed supplies to shelter clients; the provision or coordination of necessary supportive services as well as the provision or coordination of security and safety resources for as long as cold weather conditions persist.

4) *Prioritization in funding should consider culturally competent outreach and service provision for unsheltered people, including collaborations with community-based organizations.*

HSO has significantly expanded its capacity to provide culturally responsive outreach and coordinate with community-based organizations during extreme weather events. HSO's Street & Community Outreach Division conducts direct outreach year-round, providing people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with information, transportation, and essential supplies before and during cold, hot, flood, wildfire, and other adverse weather events. During Cold Weather Shelter activations, outreach teams notify individuals of impending weather conditions, assist with transportation to shelter embarkation sites, and distribute items such as cold weather clothing, heat packs, and, when available, fire extinguishers to promote safety.

Coordination with community partners remains a cornerstone of this work. HSO convenes a weekly outreach coordination meeting with street outreach providers across the community to share operational updates, prepare for anticipated weather events, identify resource needs, and coordinate response activities. During emergency events, HSO provides timely notifications to outreach partners through direct communications and collaborates with community-based organizations to ensure consistent messaging regarding shelter availability, cooling centers, evacuation guidance, and other critical resources.

HSO has also maintained and expanded its communications infrastructure to improve direct engagement with people experiencing homelessness. The department's text alert system now has nearly 5,000 subscribers and distributes multilingual alerts regarding extreme weather, shelter activations, evacuation instructions, and other time-sensitive information. In addition, HSO launched the [Open Now platform](#), which provides real-time information on the locations and availability of critical resources, including shelters, cooling centers, water access, hygiene facilities, healthcare, behavioral health services, substance use recovery resources, and food

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assistance. Together, these efforts strengthen the City's ability to deliver timely, coordinated, and accessible outreach before, during, and after extreme weather events.

In summary, HSO works year-round to fine-tune and improve the cold weather shelter response. Feedback from the community, including people with lived experience, is incorporated for an updated and improved response. The iterative process continues as HSO strives to provide clients with a safe space during cold weather and other extreme weather events.

Should you have any questions, please contact David Gray, Director of Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations, at david.gray@austintexas.gov or 512-974-7836.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Erika Brady, City Clerk
Jason Hadavi, City Auditor
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CMO Executive Team
Department Directors