



City Council Agenda Report

DATE: January 23, 2024
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
FROM: Deyanira Brito, Management Analyst
SUBJECT: Homeless Programs and Services Update

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council receives the homeless programs and services report and, if desired, provides feedback, recommendations, and direction on homeless-related programming and funding.

BACKGROUND:

This agenda item provides a report on the homeless programs and services using City, federal and state funding sources. This report provides a summary of programs and services, program outcomes, new and expanded services, a program assessment, recommendations, and a conclusion.

Summary of Programs and Services

Since January 2020, the City has funded or operated 19 different homeless-related programs (including new programs) or projects, and allocated over \$6.4 million in general (local), federal, and state funds to support those programs. The programs have one of three aims:

1. Housing homeless individuals (both temporary and permanent housing),
2. Preventing homelessness, or
3. Addressing community impacts as a result of homelessness.

The summary of active programs and services includes:

1. Program updates;
2. Use of various funding sources such as Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus Relief (CDBG-CV) funds, Low and Moderate Income Housing Asset Fund (LMIHAF) and Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA) grant; and
3. Program expenditures and outcomes as shown in Table I below in alphabetical order for the past six (6) months.

A Way Back Home Program

The Salvation Army's (TSA) "A Way Back Home" program reunites homeless individuals with their families by providing assistance with transportation, food and sometimes an overnight stay while en route. The program was funded by LMIHAF with \$10,000 during FY 2023-2024.

Crisis House

Crisis House provides services to El Cajon's homeless and victims of domestic violence. In FY 2023-2024, Crisis House received PLHA funding to expand homeless outreach services and case management services to the El Cajon homeless community (see Crisis House Homeless Outreach and Case Management Services Program below).

East County Homeless Task Force

Since 2019, the City has annually contributed \$5,000 from the General Fund to assist in sustaining the East County Homeless Task Force (ECHTF). The ECHTF plays a role in coordinating efforts in the East County region and helping to understand homeless service needs. In addition to financial support, the city manager participates on the organization's steering committee.

Emergency (Scatter-Site) Motel Program

In May 2021, the City Council awarded \$400,000 in CDBG-CV funding to Home Start, Inc. for the provision of a refined emergency motel program to assist homeless families and individuals with immediate shelter, to reduce their risk of exposure to COVID-19. In March 2023, the City Council approved an additional \$165,500. This program is active through the end of FY 2023-2024, as CDBG-CV will be fully expended by approximately June 30, 2024.

Homeless Outreach Events

Police Department staff accompany homeless service providers every Friday in an effort to make contact and offer assistance to the City's homeless community. The City's contribution to this program continues to be two police officers for three hours per event, as allowed by staff availability. These costs are funded by the General Fund and vary depending on the amount of outreach events attended.

Neighborhood Quality of Life Team

The Neighborhood Quality of Life Team ensures that the City's parks, right-of-ways, and drainage channels are clear of debris and trash. In the past six months, the City has removed 162 tons of debris from parks, streets and drainage channels. To date, the City's contractor has removed at least 134 tons of debris. Clean-up costs are funded solely by the General Fund.

Outreach Support Services Program

This program was created to bolster existing outreach efforts during the coronavirus pandemic. This program provides street-based outreach and hosts weekly outreach events for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These outreach events provide connections to vital resources such as housing, food and employment for homeless families and individuals. This program is active through the end of FY 2023-2024, as CDBG-CV will be fully expended by approximately June 30, 2024. Additional funding was allocated in FY 2023-2024 to Home Start for this same purpose using PLHA funds for the next three years (see Home Start Homeless Outreach and Case Management Services Program below).

Rotational Shelter Program

Historically, the City has awarded funding to the Interfaith Shelter Network's (ISN) Rotational Shelter Program using CDBG funds typically totaling \$10,000. This program provides seasonal, nighttime shelter for homeless individuals and families at East County area places of worship that volunteer to provide shelter, meals and support.

New and Expanded Programs

In June 2023, Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA) funds were awarded to the City for a total of \$2,752,411 by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). A total of \$2,120,302 was allocated towards homeless services (including administrative costs of \$137,620) to cover a three-year period with options to extend in accordance with HCD's imposed expenditure deadlines. Staff released a Request for Proposals in July 2023 and returned to City Council on September 26, 2023, where the Council adopted eligible homeless services programs. These programs were in effect on October 2, 2023 and are detailed below.

Crisis House Homeless Outreach and Case Management Services Program

Through this program, Crisis House provides essential services necessary to reach out to unsheltered homeless persons, connect them with emergency shelter, housing and critical services. This includes street-based homeless outreach and a case management model that is person-centered and focused on engaging with disconnected people to build trust and engage them with services and resources that can increase their health and end their homelessness. The Housing Navigator and Outreach workers refers clients to other active programs in El Cajon administered by ECTLC and Home Start, such as, but not limited to, the Emergency Shelter Program and the Emergency (Scatter-Site) Motel Program. This program has funding of \$40,000 in PLHA funds which will be expended by the end of FY 2023-2024.

ECTLC Homeless Outreach Services

ECTLC also provides street-based outreach and case management. Outreach is provided in the form of pop-up events throughout the City to highlight the various programs and resources available at ECTLC, as well as street-based outreach. Persons taking advantage of such services at ECTLC also receive person-centered case management that leads to a path of self-sufficiency. This program received \$90,000 in funding, and it is expected to be fully spent in the course of a three-year period.

ECTLC Operation of Emergency Shelter

This program will continue to offer emergency shelter beds, food, and case management for the homeless population. Outreach workers and case managers at ECTLC will be referring clients to Home Start's Rental Assistance/Rapid-Rehousing Program if needed. ECTLC was allocated \$307,510 in PLHA funds for a three-year period. This funding ensures continuing shelter availability for El Cajon homeless and will be used to supplement the CDBG allocation of \$100,000.

Home Start Homeless Outreach and Case Management Services Program

On September 13 and 27, 2023, City Council approved to re-allocate \$185,000 in one-time CDBG funding to Home Start for (1) the expansion of its street outreach team to address encampments in collaboration with El Cajon staff and other local homeless service providers and (2) provide case management services. Street outreach includes wraparound services for clients for self-sufficiency and provides access to mental health and substance abuse programs, childcare referrals, and employment training. Services are provided to help find permanent housing solutions or a long-term housing program and clients are often referred to other active programs in the City. As part of this program, Home Start is providing wraparound services to the clients referred to and staying in the emergency sleeping cabins located at Meridian Baptist Church. It is anticipated that the CDBG funds will be expended by June 30, 2024.

In addition, \$792,531 in PLHA funds were awarded to Home Start (over a three-year period) for additional outreach and case management services. PLHA funding began October 2023 and funding is available for the next three years. As a result of these efforts, referrals will be made to emergency shelter, transitional housing, and rental/rapid re-housing programs that lead to a path of self-sufficiency.

Home Start Rental Assistance/Rapid Re-Housing Program

Rental assistance and rapid re-housing offered through Home Start is for homeless individuals or families earning less than 30% Area Median Income (AMI). Rental assistance must provide a minimum of six months of assistance to eligible households. Rapid re-housing must provide housing relocation and stabilization services and short- and/or medium-term rental assistance, as necessary, to help a homeless individual or family move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability. This program received a total of \$752,641 in PLHA funding and will be used over the next three-year period.

Program Outcomes

July 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023

Over the last six months, the City has allocated approximately \$2.3 million and expended \$398,002 on various homeless assistance and housing programs. During this time frame, the staff estimates that 1,040 individuals received services, 72 of those were assisted with some form of housing or shelter, and from that number, 29 individuals were assisted into permanent housing, as shown in the first two columns in the Table below.

January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2023 (Aggregate)

Overall, since January 2020, the City has allocated \$5.871 million for various homeless assistance/housing programs, \$591,000 to neighborhood clean-up efforts, and \$22,500 to the East County Homeless Task Force, for a total allocation of over \$6.4 million and expended \$3,425,577. Between January 2020 and December 2023, staff estimates that more than 8,500 individuals have received services. More than 3,400 of those were assisted with some form of housing or shelter, and from that number, over 1,100 individuals were assisted into permanent housing, as shown in the last two columns in the table below.

Program	Expenditures Last 6 Months	Outcomes Last 6 Months	Expenditures January 2020 – June 2023	Outcomes January 2020 June 2023
A Way Back Home Program (The Salvation Army) (LMIHAF)	\$1,236	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 persons permanently housed (average of \$618 per person) 	\$11,659	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 persons permanently housed (average of about \$291 per person)
Crisis House (CDBG)	\$0*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 435 persons received services during Q1 and Q2 (FY 23-24) 	\$700,000**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 891 persons received services during FY 22-23 and 1,147 persons received services during FY 21-22 (total of 2,038) • 159 persons permanently housed
East County Homeless Task Force (General Fund)	\$2,500	Assists in regional coordination	\$20,000	Assists in regional coordination
El Cajon Homeless Outreach and Flexible Housing Assistance Program (Home Start) (previously LMIHAF, now PLHA)	This program is now using PLHA funds (expenses detailed under the Home Start Homeless Outreach and Case Management Services Program.	Outcomes detailed under the Home Start Homeless Outreach and Case Management Services Program.	\$437,081 (All expenses were using LMIHAF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,786 persons enrolled in the program • 253 persons permanently housed • 188 persons housed in bridge housing

<p>Emergency Motel Stays Program (Home Start) (CDBG)</p>	<p>\$0</p>	<p>Program has been completed and is now supplanted by the Emergency Scatter-Site Motel Program.</p>	<p>\$142,568</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 243 individuals sheltered • 1,646 night stays (average stay per person is 7 nights) • 47 persons permanently housed (average cost of \$587 per person) • This program ran continuously from June 2020 to May 2021. It is no longer available.
<p>Emergency (Scatter-Site) Motel Program (Home Start) (CDBG-CV)</p>	<p>\$68,741</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49 persons sheltered • 4 persons permanently housed • 30 persons housed in bridge housing 	<p>\$472,005</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 270 persons sheltered • 43 persons permanently housed • 16 persons housed in bridge housing

Emergency Shelter Program (ECTLC) (CDBG and CDBG-CV)	\$100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 234 individuals sheltered during Q1 and Q2 (CDBG FY 23-24 funding) • The CDBG-CV portion of this program has been completed. 	\$760,985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,110 individuals sheltered (annual FY 19-20, FY 20-21, FY 21-22 and FY 22-23 CDBG funding) • 1,035 individuals sheltered (annual FY 19-20, FY 20-21, FY 21-22 and FY 22-23 (CDBG-CV funding) • Total of 2,145 individuals sheltered over the past 48 months • Of this total, 5 households and 422 individuals (288 adults and 134 children) have moved into permanent housing.
Emergency Shelter Program (ECTLC) (PLHA)	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 194 individuals sheltered during Q1 and Q2 	This is a new program.	This is a new program.
Homeless Outreach Events (General Fund)	\$6,841	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 outreach events conducted on average, 12 individuals contacted per event 	\$64,853	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 106 outreach events conducted • 5 to 23 individuals contacted per event
Homeless Outreach and Case Management Services Program (Crisis House) (PLHA)	\$0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 individuals were assisted 	This is a new program.	This is a new program.
Homeless Outreach and Case Management Services Program (Home Start) (PLHA)	\$23,879	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 individuals were assisted 	This is a new program.	This is a new program.

Homeless Outreach and Support Services Program (includes Tiny Cabin Village) (Home Start) (CDBG)	\$74,570	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 253 contacts were made • 15 households were housed through the Tiny Cabin Village • 2 households were placed into permanent housing 	This is a new program.	This is a new program.
Neighborhood Quality of Life Team (General Fund)	\$67,723 PW: \$46,580 PD: \$21,143	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34 clean-ups conducted • 162 tons of debris removed by City team • 134 tons of debris removed by City contractor 	\$523,307	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 606 clean-ups conducted • 1,017.25 tons of debris removed by City team • 525.06 tons of debris removed by City contractor
Outreach Support Services Program (Home Start) (CDBG-CV)	\$7,205	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 77 individuals contacted 	\$130,120	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 502 individuals contacted
Rental Assistance and Rapid Re-Housing Program (Home Start) (PLHA)	\$41,974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 individuals assisted 	This is a new program.	This is a new program.

Rental Housing/Utility Assistance Program (CSA San Diego County, Interfaith Shelter Network, Home Start) (CDBG-CV)	\$0	Program has been completed.	\$434,104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 103 households assisted to remain in their homes (average of \$4,214 per household) • This program ran continuously from May 2020 to February 2021. It is no longer available.
Rotational Shelter Program (Interfaith Shelter Network) (CDBG)	\$3,333	No persons were sheltered during Q1 and Q2 (FY 23-24 CDBG funding). Shelter will be open end of January – end of March 2024.	\$30,893	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38 persons sheltered (annual FY 20-21 CDBG funding) • 69 persons sheltered (annual FY 21-22 CDBG funding) • 27 persons sheltered (FY 22-23 CDBG funding) • 11 persons permanently housed

*Expenditures based on paid invoices through January 10, 2024.

** Funding for acquisition of property and related costs for a new location.

Program Assessment

The staff believe that the homeless programs and services are functioning well to help achieve the goal of securing permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness and to address community impacts as a result of homelessness.

Recommendations

The staff makes the following recommendations:

1. Continue funding the homeless programs described above, contingent upon available funding;
2. Continue the Homeless Outreach Events and the enhanced Neighborhood Quality of Life Team efforts;
3. Continue to work with neighboring jurisdictions, including the County, on a regional approach to jointly addressing homelessness in East County;
4. Continue to monitor Crisis House during their contract performance period through 2031 to serve El Cajon residents;
5. Continue to seek new funding opportunities using local, federal, or state resources that can be used to prevent homeless individuals or families from entering into homelessness or to seek funding for additional homeless services that lead to a path of self-sufficiency, including permanent housing and housing stability;
6. Continue support for the East County Homeless Task Force; and
7. Staff to continue to provide updates on all programs every six months.

Conclusion

Staff will continue to monitor program performance for each of the active programs and provide technical assistance to service providers. As of January 2024, CDBG programs for FY 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 and CDBG-CV funded programs and subrecipients are in good standing.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT:

The action being considered by the City Council is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a “project” under Section 15378(b)(5) of CEQA Guidelines. The action involves an organizational or administrative activity of government that will not result in a direct or indirect physical change in the environment.

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