

Project Roomkey: Strategies for Rural Communities



CDSS

CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

- California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Housing and Homelessness Branch
- Butte County Dept. of Employment and Social Services
- HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) and Technical Assistance Team
- California's Project Roomkey State Technical Assistance Team

PROJECT ROOMKEY

- Locally driven, State supported initiative, created to provide emergency housing in hotels/motels/and trailers for sick and medically vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness in response to COVID 19
- Goals are to mitigate transmission, reduce hospital surge, and protect lives



*Photo by Michael Owen
Baker/Los Angeles County*

FEMA REIMBURSEMENT

- 75% FEMA reimbursement to state or local government
- Non-congregate shelter and wrap around services directly necessary for the safe and secure operation of facilities are reimbursable
- Case management and behavioral health services not FEMA reimbursable
- Approval currently through June 30, 2020, with opportunity to request extension
- Must maintain tracking mechanism to provide sufficient data and documentation to establish eligibility - plan to use HMIS



RESOURCES FROM CDSS

- CDSS Website
 - <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/cdss-programs/housing-programs/project-roomkey>
- Newly released Project Roomkey ACWDL (6/1)
 - https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACWDL/2020/ACWDL_Project_Roomkey_Initiative.pdf
- For more questions: housing@dss.ca.gov

BUTTE COUNTY INITIATIVE

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1

Gather Change Agents

- **ESG (City, County, State) and CoC Leaders** Include individuals with decision making power
- **Individuals with lived experience of homelessness**
- **Non-traditional partners** Smaller organizations and groups that reach your targeted sub-population or neighborhoods
- **Public Health, Healthcare & Workforce Development Providers**



2

Articulate Vision

- **Data- & Equity-driven**
- **Current context responsive**
- **Leverages funding for large impact**



3

Plan with Accountability

- **Determine funding allocations**
- **Goals with milestones** Utilizing baseline data, project the expected outcomes and interim milestones that will indicate to stakeholders the community is on track.
- **Describe strategies to be implemented**
- **Use planning tools** The HUD SNAPS R & CIPT tool (highlighted in this presentation) or other tool



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Implement

- **Solicitation Process** Adapt local policies to include non-traditional partners; provide tools to explain application process
- **Scaling Up** Focus on effective and efficient solutions (Landlord & PHA engagement, Housing surges, etc.)
- **Program Delivery** Provide capacity building to smaller / newer providers; articulate continuous improvement

Update Consolidated Plan and IDIS, as needed

5

Evaluate (process and impact)
Revisit Plan & Repeat Cycle

Implementation Tips

Targeting Rehousing Assistance

- Give yourself the flexibility in creating permanent housing to meet a range of needs. For example, for RRH, keep length of assistance limits flexible in solicitations, contract negotiations and program design.
Scale service intensity according to the needs of the households you are serving, e.g. RRH as a bridge to Housing Choice Voucher or PSH vs. RRH to help stabilize a household
- Be flexible: budget for and allow a longer length of rental assistance and services for everyone in your system.
- Update ESG and CoC written standards on RRH for flexibility and alignment

Implementation: Strategies for Funding Solicitations

Solicitation Procedure Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Design local procedures inclusive of persons with lived experience and providers who are part of and effectively provide services to communities who have experienced greatest impact of COVID-19 and homelessness.
Consolidated Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Connect solicitations to the goals of the Con Plan including any recent amendments AND to the broader Rehousing Investment and Implementation Plan
Engage New Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop written materials explaining the ESG application process that clearly explains information without jargon. Host webinars with Q&A for applicant organizations that may not be familiar with acronyms commonly used in the ESG Program.

Implementation: Strategies to Scale Up Housing Quickly

Coordinated Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CE systems should actively evaluate and update policies and procedures affecting access and interventions for different subpopulations based on vulnerability to public health outbreaks.
Housing Surges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan a housing surge - an organized, concentrated, time-limited effort to accelerate rehousing efforts in response to COVID-19.
Landlord Engagement & Risk Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centralize and re-energize landlord engagement strategies in current environment• Set up a risk mitigation fund that can be drawn on in cases of excessive damage to the unit, lost rent, or legal fees that exceed the amount of the security deposit
PHA and Multi Family Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Per PIH 2020-05, Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) have increased flexibility to streamline and expedite processes around the HCV Program, including Administrative Plan changes (which can be used to adopt or expand or Moving On from PSH or RRH, per PIH 2015-15), briefings, and inspections, among others.

Key HUD Rehousing Resources

[Planning a Housing Surge to Accelerate Rehousing Efforts in Response to COVID-19](#)

- Implementation steps and best practices for quickly rehouse a large number of people in a short time frame.
- Some parts, like creating a housing pool or one-stop shop may not make sense in rural communities, but a housing surge that involves coordinating partners and resources, identifying a group to be served, and engaging in an intensive, time-limited effort to house those individuals quickly is possible.
- In addition, although landlord outreach might not be around specific units, because of a spread-out geography, a high-level landlord outreach and engagement strategy might still be possible and appropriate in a rural community.

[Rehousing Activation: Planning and Implementation Tips](#)

- Key frameworks to help communities strategically plan, dedicate, and implement use of resources to rebuild and transform their housing systems and quickly re-house people in the pandemic/post-pandemic environment.
- The steps outlined to help communities make strategic decisions and develop a rehousing plan can be useful in both rural and urban settings. Rural communities typically have fewer resources to coordinate and fewer types of housing options available in their continuum than urban areas, but they still need to make strategic decisions about how to target and deploy resources in order to meet local needs.

[Changes to Coordinated Entry Prioritization to Support and Respond to COVID-19](#)

- Outlines changes CoCs can make to coordinated entry prioritization policies in order to limit the spread and impact of COVID-19.
- Coordinated entry systems and processes often look fairly different in rural areas than they do in urban areas, but the goal is still the same - ensuring that people who need homeless assistance the most can access it easily and in a timely manner.
- Factors that put people at great risk in this pandemic environment, and can be used to modify CE prioritization are the same in rural and urban areas – people 65+ years and people of all ages with underlying medical conditions)

Equity Resources

[Rehousing Activation and Racial Equity Part 1: Equity as the Foundation](#)

- Lays the foundation to help communities understand how and why to think about equity as they reshape their systems in the COVID-19 environment and beyond, including how to conduct a Racial Equity Impact Assessment.
- Critical resource for rural communities – disparities may look different than in cities, but they still exist. Assessing how different racial and ethnic groups may be affected differently by proposed funding and policy decisions is a critical step that will reduce the risk of negatively impacting specific groups, and increase the ability of the community to address disparities.

[Untapped Expertise: Strategies for Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement When Developing your Coordinated Investment Plan](#)

- Describes a range of stakeholders that communities should engage with in order to create a Coordinated Investment Plan (a document developed through a collaborative process that outlines plans to strategically align and commit resources to fund a rehousing strategy) that is rooted in equity considerations.
- Marginalized populations may be less visible in rural communities, but they still exist and should be included in decision-making, since decisions about homeless programs disproportionately impact them. In addition, amplifying the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness to tailor interventions and make strategic decisions is just as critical in rural areas as in urban ones.

[Equity-Driven Changes to Coordinated Entry Prioritization](#)

- 1-page graphic showing ideas of why, how, and when to incorporate thoughts about equity as communities consider changes to CE assessment and prioritization processes.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OR QUESTIONS

Submit through HUD's Ask A Question (AAQ). Participants can access the AAQ here: <https://www.hudexchange.info/program-support/my-question/>.

Join HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) Office Hours, held each Friday from 2:30 – 4:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time (11:30 – 1:00 PM Pacific Daylight Time). Participants do not need to register in advance. Here is the link to join the session on Friday, June 12: [Join Office Hours](#)

All the latest resources from HUD here: <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/diseases/#covid-19-community-planning-and-preparedness>

QUESTIONS & OPEN DISCUSSION

