



County of San Mateo FY 2025-26 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Funding Priorities

Low Income Benefit. Successful applications will meet one of the funding priorities listed below. All programs/ projects must benefit Extremely Low to Moderate-Income persons. Please note, PLHA requires all beneficiaries to earn equal to or less than thirty percent (30%) of San Mateo County’s Area Median Income (AMI).

Minimum Request/Two-Year Funding Agreement. \$25,000 is the minimum application request. Current County policy is to give two-year contract terms to CDBG Public Services (including Fair Housing) and CDBG Economic Development Activities as well as Federal ESG and State PLHA-funded projects for services for individuals experiencing homelessness. FY2025-26 is year two of the two-year contract period for Public Services, Micro-Enterprise Assistance, and Fair Housing Activities. For Minor Home Repair Programs, County policy is to give a one-year contract term for FY2025-2026 and Capital Development and Public Facilities projects are one-time awards.

A. Housing Development/Housing Repair and Modification Programs

1. Development of new housing, acquisition/rehabilitation of existing housing, conversion of non-housing structures to provide affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, or transitional housing, for Extremely Low- to Moderate Low-Income individuals, families, and persons with special needs.* Priority will be given to projects that meet the following criteria:
 - incorporate supportive housing services**;
 - transit-oriented development;
 - support the County’s Continuum of Care’s Strategic Plan on Homelessness;
 - and contain units for larger families (2-and 3-bedroom) and those with the greatest need (see Note below).
2. Housing repair and modification programs operated by nonprofit agencies that provide cost-effective improvements focusing on health & safety, housing quality standards, and/or access modifications.
3. Rehabilitation of rent-restricted, existing multi-family affordable housing.

B. Community Development (including Public Facilities*)**

1. Development (acquisition and/or new construction) or rehabilitation of emergency shelters or facilities providing service-enriched supportive housing for persons with special needs to meet the goals of the San Mateo County’s Continuum of Care’s Strategic Plan on Homelessness.
2. Development (acquisition and/or new construction) or rehabilitation of community facilities serving lower income individuals and households, including community and youth centers, childcare facilities.

C. Public Services & Economic Development Programs (including Shelter Operations, Fair Housing Enforcement, and Micro-Enterprise Assistance)

1. Operational support for emergency shelters and transitional facilities serving individuals and families.
2. Support for rapid re-housing activities, including rental assistance and supportive services, to assist individuals or families who are homeless to move as quickly as possible into permanent housing.
3. Operational support for agencies that provide safety net services.
4. Supportive services aimed at keeping people in their homes, including financial literacy programs, tenant-landlord mediation, and fair housing services.
5. Activities which result in the creation or retention of permanent employment opportunities for lower income persons.

Note: through the Consolidated Planning Community engagement process, residents and stakeholders identified persons or families experiencing or at-risk of homelessness, persons living with a disability or

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mental illness, farmworkers, and the elderly as having the greatest needs in our County. A preference for housing for veterans was subsequently added as a significant need in the County.

- * **Persons with Special Needs.** Under CDBG, this category includes: abused children; veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness; survivors of domestic violence; seniors (62+); adult persons with serious disabilities; homeless persons; illiterate persons; and migrant farm workers. For County purposes, this category shall also include, but not be limited to, mentally ill persons; emancipated youth; seniors aging in place (for service-related programs); frail seniors (for housing); persons recovering from substance abuse; and persons recently released from jail or prison.
- ** **Supportive Housing Services.** Under this NOFA, these are services that assist special needs persons to stabilize, maintain their housing, and live as independently as possible, and without which the special needs person might have difficulty maintaining their housing.
- *** **Definition of Public Facilities:** “In general, public facilities and public improvements are interpreted to include all facilities and improvements that are publicly owned, or that are owned by a nonprofit and open to the general public.” (source: Basically CDBG, Chapter 6: Public Facilities, Special Assessments and Privately-owned Utilities, <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Basically-CDBG-Chapter-6-Public-Facilities.pdf>)



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State Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Funding Priorities and Guiding Principles

The State of California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD or Department) administers the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program with funding received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The federal ESG program provides funding to (1) engage homeless individuals and families living on the street; (2) improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families; (3) help operate these shelters; (4) provide essential services to shelter residents; and (5) prevent families/individuals from becoming homeless.

In February 2016, the State of California released the Continuum of Care (CoC) Allocation SOLICITATION OF INTEREST for Administrative Entities to identify local government entities that can act as Administrative Entities (AE) of State ESG funds through two allocations:

- Continuum of Care Allocation for Service Areas that contain a city or county that receives ESG directly from HUD; and the
- Balance of State Allocation for Service Areas that do not contain a city or county that receives ESG directly from HUD.

In response to the SOLICITATION OF INTEREST, the San Mateo County Department of Housing submitted an Administrative Entity Response Form and was selected to serve as the Administrative Entity for State ESG funding allocated to San Mateo County. The State ESG program will generally be administered by the State of California HCD in a manner consistent with the Federal ESG program as listed above, and in addition, the State ESG program may facilitate technical assistance activities to improve the capacity of grantees and the Continuum of Care to end homelessness.

The County of San Mateo is strongly committed to preventing and ending homelessness for county residents.

The Continuum of Care Strategic Plan on Homelessness (The CoC Strategic Plan) sets forth a vision and roadmap for the community's response to homelessness over the next three years, July 2022 through July 2025. It is aligned with the Working Together to End Homelessness (WTEH) initiative being led by the County Executive's Office that is bringing together City representatives, service provider agencies, partner agencies, business representatives, community members, and other partners to craft a high-level framework for ending homelessness as a community. The CoC Strategic Plan also satisfies the requirements of the State of California to develop a Homelessness Action Plan, a prerequisite for requesting funding under the State's Homelessness, Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program.

The section below outlines the CoC Strategic Plan's centerpiece: a set of six goals that articulate what HSA and the CoC seek to accomplish over the next three years. These goals will organize the community's response to homelessness and provide a methodology to track progress. These goals also set the priorities for the County for Emergency Solutions Grant funding.

For each goal, there is a related set of outcome measures and targets that are requirements for the HHAP Action Plan. The CoC Strategic Plan and HHAP goals both cover from July 2024 to June 2025.

Goal 1. Engage and support people who are unsheltered to transition to interim housing, permanent housing, or other places where they can access needed services and supports.

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- a. Continue existing street outreach programs and implement targeted expansions to further cover County geography, offer services after hours and on weekends, and deepen connections and collaborations with health and behavioral health services.
- b. Refine and fine-tune connections between street outreach programs and Coordinated Entry access points to streamline access into services for people who are unsheltered.
- c. Enhance data collection by outreach teams to increase understanding of numbers and characteristics of people who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- d. Expand emergency shelter bed inventory for adult-only households, including completion of the Navigation Center in Redwood City. Continuously analyze data to ensure inventory of shelter for adults is right-sized.
- e. Maintain inventory of emergency shelter and transitional housing beds for families, youth and domestic violence survivors. Continue analyzing data to ensure inventory of shelter for these populations is right-sized.
- f. Offer a range of shelter options and models, including both congregate and non-congregate settings.
- g. Continue and enhance Housing First approaches in emergency shelter programs – including low barriers to entry, 24/7 operations, voluntary service participation, and housing-focused services and supports.
- h. Scale up existing programs and create new programs providing nimble, intensive, wrap-around service for highly vulnerable unsheltered people who have multi-system involvement and/or are ineligible for some shelter programs.

Goal 2. Permanently house people experiencing homelessness, by increasing the capacity of the homeless crisis response system to provide housing solutions.

- a. Prioritize developing new housing units targeted to people who are experiencing homelessness and/or who are Extremely Low Income (incomes at or below 30% of Area Median Income).
 - i. Leverage the County's Affordable Housing Fund (which consists of a combination of local sources like Measure A/K and State sources managed locally) to continually add new units targeted to ELI households and people experiencing homelessness.
 - ii. Secure funding to acquire and rehabilitate motels for permanent supportive housing through future Project Homekey rounds.
 - iii. Use the Housing Authority's HCV project-basing authority to incentivize development of new units for people experiencing homelessness.
 - iv. Explore creation of new Local Operating Subsidy (LOSP) program to provide a local source of subsidy for deeply affordable units.
 - v. Explore innovative construction methods and models such as modular units.
 - vi. Identify sources to develop housing for specific populations impacted by homelessness – particularly older adults who need medical and behavioral health support.

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- b. Maintain and expand permanent housing voucher programs for people experiencing homelessness, e.g., CoC-funded PSH, EHV, VASH, FUP, Mainstream Vouchers. Introduce more flexibility to transition people to different levels of support or phase out support as appropriate. Create voucher programs with simplified eligibility criteria and process (e.g., EHV).
- c. Analyze the need for Rapid Rehousing (RRH) slots and continue adding to the system inventory as needed. Identify strategies to stabilize RRH households that need additional support (e.g., with longer subsidies, options to transfer to permanent supportive housing).
- d. Evaluate CE policies and tools for matching people to permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing to identify whether the matching process is functioning as intended and revise as needed.
- e. Assess need for housing search services and scale up as needed to serve more households that need support with identifying units, completing housing applications and negotiating with property owners. Explore dedicated housing search services for special populations such as DV survivors and veterans.
- f. Continue and enhance Housing First approaches in permanent housing programs – including low barriers to entry, voluntary service participation, housing-focused services and supports.
- g. Identify innovation housing solutions for populations that have the greatest barriers to housing – people with complex health needs, older adults, people with criminal histories, and people who are undocumented.
- h. Leverage Cal-AIM resources to provide housing supports.
- i. Strengthen partnerships with programs providing employment and training services for experiencing homelessness who have significant employment barriers, such as NOVA/WIOA programs. Connect eligible households to income supports such as SSI.
- j. Deepen connections between health services and homeless crisis response system to expand housing access and support housing retention.

Goal 3. Prevent people from experiencing homelessness through early intervention, stabilization services, and financial assistance for households with housing instability.

- a. Refine strategies to prevent discharge from institutions to homelessness, including diversion services for people exiting jails and hospitals.
- b. Partner with school districts to identify families at risk of homelessness and ensure they are connected to available prevention services.
- c. Provide the right level of case management and clinical services, matched to what participants need, for people who are housed -- particularly people who are chronically homeless who have recently secured housing (to prevent returns to homelessness)
- d. Maintain system capacity to provide emergency financial assistance to help households maintain their housing.
- e. Explore strategies around using data to target prevention assistance to households most likely to experience an episode of homelessness.



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Goal 4. Advance equity by identifying and addressing disparities in who experiences homelessness, who accesses the homeless crisis response system, their experiences with the system, and the outcomes of the system.

- a. Convene quarterly meetings of CoC Racial Equity Committee to guide development and implementation of strategies to advance equity, including:
 - i. Qualitative data gathering (e.g., interviews, focus groups, etc.) to identify and understand causes of racial and other disparities in the system
 - ii. Developing and releasing regular data reports
 - iii. Providing training and technical assistance to homeless crisis response system providers
 - iv. Increasing representation of those with lived experience in CoC and agency leadership

Goal 5. Listen and respond to the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness to enhance person-centered approaches in the homelessness response system.

- a. Create regular, ongoing processes for gathering input from people experiencing homelessness and involving them in decision-making on homeless crisis response system implementation (e.g., focus groups, surveys, a lived experience advisory group), including staff working within the system who have had experiences of homelessness.
- b. Assess and identify how to streamline access processes for services, treatment and shelter so that people can more immediately access the services and supports they need when they are ready to reach out for help.
- c. Enhance “customer service” orientation throughout the system.
- d. Build partnerships, collaboration and communication between providers and across systems to provide more nimble, responsive and coordinated assistance for people who are experiencing homelessness.
- e. Scale up training programs for agency staff to build capacity to deliver trauma-informed, client-centered services.
- f. Review existing grievance processes.
- g. Find ways to measure quality of engagement not just number of contacts that service providers have with people experiencing homelessness.

Goal 6. Use data for continuous quality improvement and service coordination.

- a. Continue using HMIS/Clarity and other systems to gather and analyze data to understand what the homeless crisis response system is accomplishing, identify areas in need of continued improvement, and make decisions regarding funding of various program types.
- b. Expand capacity of data systems to provide real time information at the client level to support service coordination between service providers and across systems.

Also outlined in the CoC Strategic Plan are a set of Guiding Principles of the San Mateo County Homeless System. To receive funding under this NOFA, the selected service provider and program must adhere to the guiding principles for the new homeless system, comprised of six key Principles and Program Principles.

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San Mateo County Homeless System Guiding Principles

- *Systems Orientation:* The goal is to foster a system that responds effectively and rapidly to the crisis of homelessness. Within the system, all stakeholders, programs, and organizations work together in coordination to accomplish a clear set of shared objectives. The objective of the homeless crisis response system is to ensure that anyone who is homeless quickly returns to stable housing.
- *Data-Informed:* The system is data-informed. Plans are based on an analysis of the current system and the best assessment of what is and what is not working. System- and program-level performance is measured, then results are used for continuous quality improvement. Funders of the system view their role as stewards of community resource who are responsible for understanding what results their investments are achieving and ensuring resources are used in a way that maximizes impact.
- *Person-Centered:* People experiencing homelessness are at the center of the system design. Their views are sought out and their voices are welcomed. The system is designed to ensure easy and streamlined access for everyone, particularly those who experience the greatest challenge navigating the complexities of publicly funded services and programs. Programs within the system adopt fair, transparent, and understandable policies regarding how assistance is accessed and how these policies respect client choice and self-determination.
- *Housing First:* People experiencing homelessness need housing above all else. Strategies and interventions must focus on returning individuals and households to safe, secure housing that they can use as a starting point to address other issues.
- *Equity Oriented:* The homeless crisis response system acknowledges the barriers to housing and resource connection that disproportionately impact people by race, ethnicity, gender, and other identities. The system and programs utilize intentional policies and practices to reduce these disparities and advance equity in system experiences and outcomes.
- *Context-Specific and Aligned with Best Practices:* The Plan is specific to the local context and priorities. It is tailored to reflect the specific strengths and challenges of San Mateo County. At the same time, it is aligned with evidence-based practices and lessons learned from the field, as well as state and federal policy direction.

San Mateo County Homeless System Program Principles

- Must accept referrals following the process established by the County, including participation in and receiving referrals from the County's Coordinated Entry System (CES)
- Must implement a Housing First approach, ensuring low barriers to program entry and program rules designed to minimize clients being involuntarily terminated from programs. Low entry barriers means there are no sobriety requirements, service participation requirements, or other entry criteria designed to screen out households based on lack of "housing readiness."
- Adopt fair, transparent, and accessible program policies.
- Client-centered – individualized to meet the needs of each client.



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- Support client choice and self-determination.
- Understand the role of emergency shelters and transitional housing as short term.
- Prioritize assistance for households who are unsheltered and those who have the highest need for assistance to resolve their housing crisis.
- Program design is oriented to help all households return to stable housing as quickly as possible
- Funded providers must participate in homeless and safety net system planning meetings and collaborate with other community-based organizations and public agency partners.