



## United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

*Preventing and Ending Homelessness in the United States*

### **Developing and Implementing Strategic Plans to End Homelessness**

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness believes partnerships with local communities are more important than ever. There has been unprecedented collaboration among federal agencies to implement *Opening Doors*. We want to extend and support that strong collaboration to states and local communities.

This document is part of the USICH commitment to provide communities the support to develop and implement plans to prevent and end homelessness or realign their existing plans. It also helps define the roles key stakeholders, including Continuum of Care planning bodies, can play in such plans.

State and local officials, service providers, and local advocates are critical partners in achieving the goals in *Opening Doors*. Effective communities are implementing strategic plans to prevent and end homelessness tailored to their local needs. USICH strongly encourages the development and implementation of these plans; and they are a requirement of the HEARTH Act of 2009. Community-wide strategic planning is a pivotal step in ending homelessness and has been shown to demonstrably result in decreases in homelessness when the plans are well-crafted and implemented.

Many communities are familiar with Ten Year Plans, which have been advocated by local, state, and national organizations and the previous and current Administrations. For those who have established Ten Year Plans, Community Strategic Plans, or Continuum of Care Plans, USICH is encouraging them to both reassess their community's progress to the goals/objectives outlined in their plan and consider revisiting their plans to align with the subpopulations, goals, and timelines given in *Opening Doors* and with new opportunities outlined in the HEARTH Act. For those do not already have a Ten Year Plan, USICH calls on communities to develop a Community Strategic Plan to prevent and end homelessness guided by best practices and aligned with Federal goals.

USICH recognizes that each community has different strengths and resources, and that the planning process will vary by community. In some communities, Continuums are in the lead. In others, the community planning process will be led by jurisdictional leaders, in others the private sector. Whichever approach is used, all key community stakeholder leadership should be involved, including Continuum of Care and provider representatives. All should be important players in the process. Additionally, sharing data between the Continuum of Care, the Consolidated Plan jurisdictions (other jurisdictions) and other planning entities is strongly encouraged to have a more effective plan. There is no one right path to a comprehensive community plan.

Below, USICH provides some guidelines as a reference for your Community Strategic Plan leaders in development of the plan or in the review of your current Ten Year Plan. These guidelines emphasize the need in Community Strategic Plans for emphasis on all homeless populations, leveraging the use of mainstream resources, and including specific, measureable, and actionable goals in particular. The success of a Community Strategic Plan is found in collaboration between all stakeholders in the planning process to inform a plan for your specific community, no matter what the path is. With the participation of communities in Strategic Planning and in implementation, USICH envisions marked progress to preventing and ending homelessness in America.

For those who have Ten Year Plans already in place and are beginning realignment, and for communities looking to begin development of a Community Strategic Plan, USICH encourages community plans to:

- Align with the Federal timelines for ending chronic homelessness and homelessness among Veterans by 2015 and homelessness among families, children and youth by 2020;
- Emphasize all homeless subpopulations – people experiencing chronic homelessness, Veterans, families with children and unaccompanied youth;
- Inform the plan by reviewing local Point In Time, HMIS, and other market/demographic data;
- Include strategies for leveraging the use of mainstream housing, services and funding to meet the needs of those who are homeless and on the brink of homelessness;
- Embrace strategies from *Opening Doors*, which are best practices/evidence-based practices
- Be informed by Continuum of Care leadership and providers and involve local government, political leadership, foundations, and the private sector;
- Invite action – with action plans that include specific steps, timelines, and responsible parties;
- Contain HEARTH Act required measures-- length of time homeless; recidivism (subsequent return to homelessness); access/coverage (thoroughness in reaching persons who are homeless); and overall reduction in number of persons who experience homelessness
- Include cost estimates and financing strategies;
- Contain measurable goals, performance indicators and targets that are reported on in accordance with HEARTH Act requirements; and
- Include a public relations/communications strategy to disseminate information on plan progress for education and advocacy purposes.