



Developing a State Interagency Council on Homelessness:

A Step-by-Step Guide



The National Context: Opening Doors

Opening Doors, the federal plan to prevent and end homelessness, is based on partnership with state government, local government, and agencies directly housing and serving homeless persons.

It is simply unacceptable for individuals, children, families and our nation's Veterans to be faced with homelessness in this country.
- President Barack Obama



The National Context: Opening Doors

Goals of Opening Doors

1. Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015
2. Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans by 2015
3. Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020
4. Set a path to ending all types of homelessness



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Preface

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness believes partnerships with local communities and states are more important than ever. Through collaboration at all levels of government, the nation can harness public resources and build on the innovations that have been demonstrated in communities nationwide to employ cost effective, comprehensive solutions to homelessness.

Every State and territory has been encouraged by the United States Interagency Council to establish by Governor's Executive Order or legislative authority a State Interagency Council on Homelessness with representation at the Cabinet level from the mainstream income support, health care, behavioral health, human services, Veterans, housing, corrections, transportation, education, and labor departments and agencies.



Purpose of a State Council

A State Interagency Council Coordinates the State-Wide Response to Homelessness

Create a state plan to prevent and end homelessness that assesses overall needs, coordinates resources, and promotes national best practices. SICHs can facilitate alignment of state-wide and local plans with the goals, vision, values, and strategies of *Opening Doors*.

Foster the development of local community plans to end homelessness throughout the state.

Recommend policy, regulatory, and resource changes needed to accomplish the objectives outlined in the state plan.



Purpose of a State Council (Cont.)

A State Interagency Council Coordinates the State-Wide Response to Homelessness

Ensure accountability and results in implementation strategies.

Create a state wide partnership with local stakeholders and local elected officials through Continuums of Care and Ten Year Planning Councils.

Promote a research-driven, performance- based, results-oriented plan and implementation strategy.

Sustain a non-partisan approach to address homelessness.



Establishing a State Council

A State Interagency Council on Homelessness can be established in one of three ways:

1. Executive Order of the Governor
2. Executive Order and Legislative Action
3. Legislative Action

The most common vehicle of creation is an Executive Order that identifies membership, meeting frequency, functions, and timeframe.



Establishing a Council: Example (Part 1)

Executive Order Number 2004-13

The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Former Governor of Arizona*

WHEREAS, multiple state agencies bear the responsibility of serving the homeless and those who are at risk of homelessness; and

WHEREAS, ending homelessness requires collaboration among state agencies, local governments, the private sector and service provider networks to coordinate program development, deliver essential services and provide housing; and

WHEREAS, ending or reducing homelessness contributes to economic development and improves the overall quality of life within our communities;



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Establishing a Council: Example (Part 2)

Executive Order Number 2004-13

The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Former Governor of Arizona*

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Janet Napolitano, Governor of the State of Arizona, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of this State, hereby order and direct as follows:

1. The Governor's Interagency and Community Council on Homelessness (the "Council") is created to develop and implement a plan to prevent and end homelessness in the State of Arizona.
2. The Council shall be chaired by the Governor of the State of Arizona, and in his/her absence, co-chaired by the Directors of the Department of Economic Security and the Department of Housing, each of whom shall have the power to convene the Council.



Establishing a Council: Example (Part 3)

Executive Order Number 2004-13

The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Former Governor of Arizona*

3. The Council shall be comprised of the following eighteen (18) members, each of whom shall be appointed by the Governor, and serve, without compensation, at the pleasure of the Governor:

Director, Department of Economic Security; Director, Department of Housing;

Director, Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families; Director, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System;

Director, Department of Health Services; Director, Arizona Department of Corrections; Director, Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections; Director, Arizona Department of Commerce;

Director, Arizona Department of Veterans' Services; Director, the Office of the Courts; Director, Government Information Technology Agency; The Arizona School Superintendent (or his/her designee); and

Six members of the public.



Council Membership State Agency Officials

Representatives from the following Elected and Appointed Statewide Offices:

- Governor's Office
- Lieutenant Governor's Office
- Judicial Offices
- Attorney General's Office
- State Fiscal or Comptroller's Office

AND...



Council Membership State Agency Officials

Secretaries & Commissioners (or their Representatives)
from the following Departments, Agencies, and Resources:

- Housing & Housing Finance
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health
- Veterans Affairs
- Office of Management & Budget
- Social Security/Disability Determinations
- Managed Care Entity
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- State and County Corrections/ Public Safety/Juvenile Justice
- Education
- Labor/Employment Services
- Welfare
- Medicaid
- Transportation
- Children & Families/Youth Services
- Health & Human Services/Homeless Services



Council Membership Stakeholders

State Councils should include non-state and community stakeholders as part of the Council. These are critical members as they add grassroots perspective to the Council. Some states have non-state officials as co-chairs. Councils can include the following:

- Local Federal Officials
- Local elected leaders
- United Way and Philanthropic Groups
- Business and Corporate Representatives
- People with first hand experience of homelessness (currently or formerly)
- Local Continuum of Care Representatives
- Providers of Homeless Services, including Veteran - serving Groups
- State Advocacy Group Members
- Faith-Based Representatives



Council Membership: Federal Agency Representatives

1. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – Field Office Director, CPD Director or Regional Administrator
2. Veterans Affairs (VA) – VISN Director or VISN Network Homeless Coordinator
3. Labor (DOL) – Regional Liaison to state or WIA Directors/Administrators
4. Health and Human Services (HHS) – Regional Liaison to state
5. Social Security Administration – Field office director
6. Agriculture (USDA) – State director
7. USICH – Regional Coordinator



Council Organization

Three Alternative Models:

State Officials + Stakeholders meet as a combined group.

This is the recommended model.

State Officials and Advisory Group of Stake Holders Meet Separately

State Officials Only



Council Organizations

Chair, Terms, Meetings

- Chair or Co-chairs appointed by the Governor
or alternately
- Chair or Co-chairs elected within the Council.
- Terms of the Chair or Co-chairs are set by Executive or Legislative Order or may be determined by the Council.
- Terms for members are also set by Executive or Legislative Order or determined by the Council and are generally between 1 and 5 years, with many Councils offering up to 3 consecutive terms.
- Meeting frequency can vary from quarterly to monthly.



Characteristics of a Successful Council

- Governor or Legislature initiated
- Active participation of Governor's Office
- Chaired/Co-chaired by Lt. Governor or Governor's Appointees (Secretaries, Commissioners or Directors)
- Council representation maintained at the State Secretary or Deputy Secretary level
- Senior Staff dedicated to overseeing and implementing Council activities



Characteristics of a Successful Council

- Membership is represented by the core State Agencies:
 - Housing,
 - Welfare,
 - Human Services,
 - Corrections,
 - Labor/Economic Development,
 - Education and Finance.
- Council activities are performance-based and results-oriented with measurable outcomes that are periodically reviewed and documented in written reports
- Council is transparent and meetings are open to public.



Characteristics of a Successful Council

- All stakeholders gain a say in the process of creating a statewide plan and the accompanied action steps
- Member Legislators are champions of the plan, strategy, and resources needed for homelessness initiatives in the Legislature
- Enhanced coordination with local community planning processes
- Promotion of fiscal responsibility and enhanced efficiency with identification and elimination of duplicative programs and costs



Characteristics of a Successful Council

- Credible documentation of research-driven, measurable outcomes is available for future funding requests
- Greater buy-in for elements of the strategy through expansive stakeholder involvement, including supported housing, discharge planning, and assertive engagement initiatives
- Federal Partners are engaged in joint discussions with the Council
- Membership or an Advisory Board to the State ICH includes community stakeholders and interested parties



Major Council Tasks

- Council promotes the Plan and evaluates progress
- Create the State Plan to End Homelessness
- Monitor plan implementation
- Provide an annual progress report on the Plan to the Governor and Legislature
- Disseminate information (e.g. data and best practices) to educate state officials and the public regarding issues related to homelessness
- Create a website that provides information on Council activities, copy of plan, membership and minutes.
- Host an Annual Conference on Homelessness



Development of a State Plan

Alignment with Goals of Opening Doors

State Councils are critical in aligning State and Local Plans with the four principal national goals as set forth in Opening Doors:

1. Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015;
2. Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans by 2015;
3. Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020;
4. Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.

“I learned long ago that there are never any absolutes in life, and a goal of zero homeless veterans sure sounds like an absolute. But unless we set ambitious targets for ourselves, we would not be giving this our very best efforts. No one who has served this nation as veterans should ever have to be living on the streets.”

- VA Secretary Eric Shinsecki



Development of a State Plan

Key Elements

- Develop measurable goals to end homelessness
- Set targets and measure results.
 - Set numeric goals for permanent housing units made available for target homeless populations.
 - Measure progress using the annual point-in-time data for the four population goals.
 - Measure housing retention and how well homeless programs help their clients become employed and access mainstream programs.
- Create and coordinate statewide data collection and reporting system
- Assemble accurate fiscal and demographic information and research/data to support policy development and track outcomes



Characteristics of a Successful Council (Cont.)

- Map out a state-wide production plan for permanent, supportive housing
- Coordinate goals and tasks of Balance of State Continuum of Care with local continuums
- Promote systems integration (e.g. health services and housing supports) to increase effectiveness and efficiency

“Homelessness cannot be solved by a single agency or organization, by a single level of government, or by a single sector. Everyone should be reminded of the intricacies of homelessness as a policy area, and remember that preventing and ending homelessness will take real coordination, collaboration, and a constant exchange of ideas.”

- HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius



Development of a State Plan

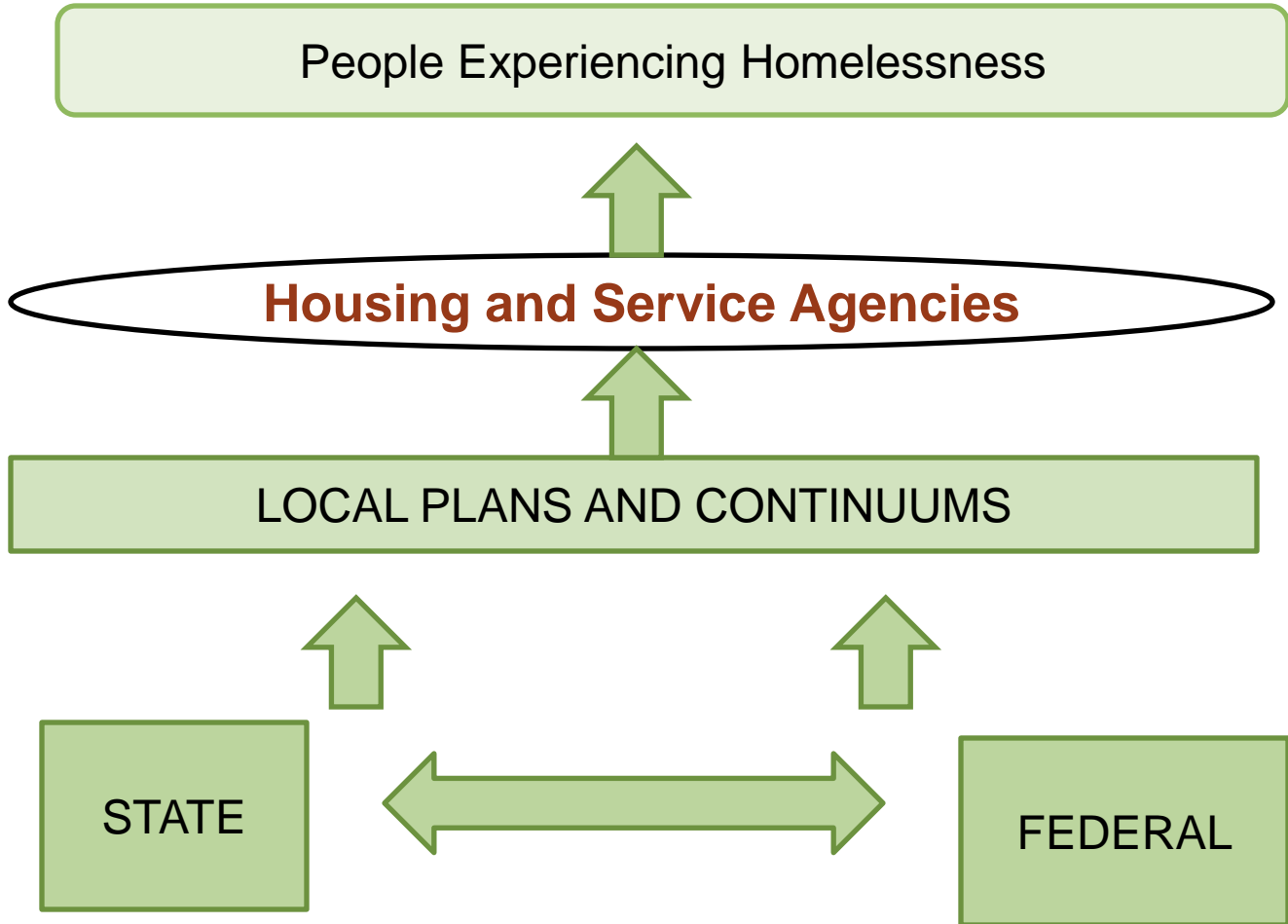
Alignment with Values of Opening Doors

State Councils promote state-wide plans based on a common set of values shared by federal, state and local plans:

- Homelessness is unacceptable.
- There are no “homeless people,” but rather people who have lost their homes who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Homelessness is expensive; it is better to invest in solutions.
- Homelessness is solvable; we have learned a lot about what works.
- Homelessness can be prevented.
- There is strength in collaboration.
 - **Values that Opening Doors, the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness was built upon.**



Relationship with Local Plans: Provide Tools and Resources





Relationship with Local Plans

State takes on issues beyond reach of local plans:

- Provide tools and resources to local community plans
- State wide data: HMIS
- Prisoner re-entry policies
- Coordination of state housing resources
- Guide overall production of permanent, supportive housing
- Guide local effort to align with national strategies such as Housing First
- Support local plan connection to mainstream resources: Medicaid, TANF, education, employment
- Policy guidance to rural and small community plans



Sustaining a Council

NAVIGATING POLITICAL TRANSITIONS

- Maintain continuity through changes of administration
- Practical solutions transcend ideological biases
- Emphasis on partnership over partisanship
- Obtain a new executive order re-authorizing the State Council
- Seek new executive appointments to lead State Council



Assistance from the USICH

Regional USICH Coordinators throughout the country are available to provide support and guidance in the development and operation of your Council.

Existing State Council documents soon to be available to assist in the design of the mission and making of your State Council.

Clearinghouse of proven solutions and state contacts is in development by USICH to support the implementation of State Council strategies and will be available on www.usich.gov.

Connection/Introduction to Technical Assistance by Council Member Agencies.



Additional Information on State Councils

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

USICH Regional Coordinators have specific local expertise and are based throughout the nation (see map on next page).

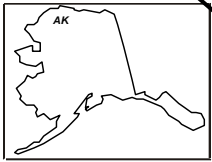
USICH's bi-weekly e-newsletter highlights new developments, updates on *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, innovations, partnerships, and resources for state and local providers. Subscribe at **www.usich.gov**



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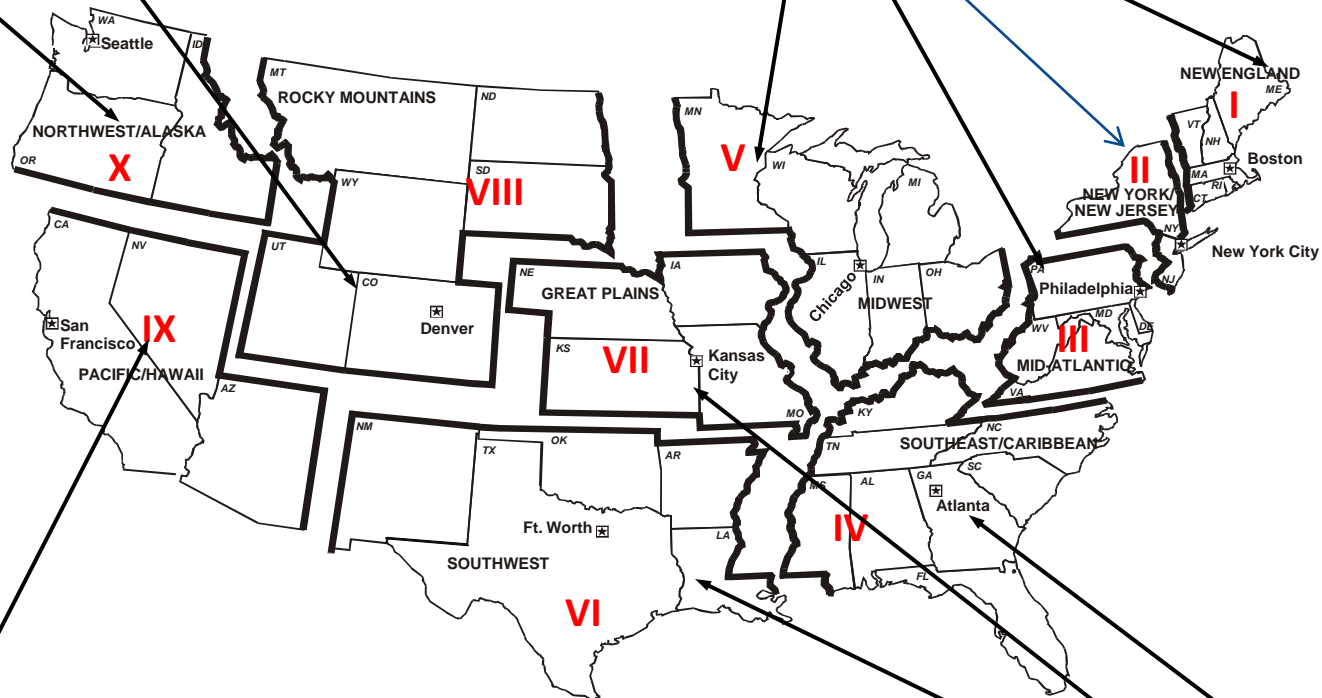
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For more information, visit our web site at: www.usich.gov



USICH Mission

The mission of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness is to "coordinate the Federal response to homelessness and to create a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness in the nation while maximizing the effectiveness of the Federal Government in contributing to the end of homelessness."

Information on current State Interagency Councils on Homelessness can be found on the USICH web site:

www.usich.gov