

Homelessness Leadership Forum Report
Increasing Efficiencies in Leadership Addressing Homelessness in San Joaquin County



October 17, 2023

Prepared by United Way of San Joaquin County

Executive Summary

There is nothing more powerful than the wisdom developed from the collective opinions of a diverse and highly engaged group of independent individuals rather than a single expert, allowing for a broad range of thinking. It is with this theory that the *Homelessness Leadership Forum* was constructed. Equally, nothing is more critical to the health and quality of life within San Joaquin County than caring for and lifting up our homeless residents.

In fact, it is the number one issue across the state, with California carrying a disproportionate share of the nation's homeless within its cities, over 170,000. We are in a crisis with public perception, with over 84% of people viewing homelessness as a very serious problem, and that perception is increasing. And of the greatest concerns is the continuing misconceptions of why people are homeless.

This report does not intend to serve as an analysis of homelessness nor as a strategic plan about how to address homelessness but as a compilation of ideas from key stakeholders as to how we must strengthen the support systems within our county, which, on a day-to-day basis helps us address and meet the challenges associated with the homeless head-on in a cohesive and progressive manner. Central to the event's mission was the guiding question: "*How might we increase the efficiency of services for the homeless population in San Joaquin County?*"

This report was established to offer insights and exploration towards centralized structures and systems that bind the cities and county together in a common bond to solving homelessness. And that the inclusion of partners from the shelters, nonprofits, behavioral health, business, housing developers, and law enforcement, who exist to help those experiencing homelessness, are equally at the table collectively working side by side as an alliance.

Based on the ideation process utilized, discovery interviews, and other means of capturing the collective will of the engaged stakeholders, this report outlines themes, actionable recommendations, timelines, and critical success factors necessary for the execution of the outlined actions.

This is the first-ever process the San Joaquin County Health Care Services Agency utilizes to help us redirect our focus regarding internal systems of change we must make at this pivotal time. This is an important step for San Joaquin County for many reasons. The time is right based on incoming and new leadership in the role of the Program Manager for Homelessness, a new Chair assuming the lead of the SJ Continuum of Care in 2024, and the construction of over 1,000 new shelter beds and significantly more low-income housing units being realized by the end of 2024, all designed to support the over 2,300 homeless residents living in San Joaquin County.

This report is an outline of a new beginning in San Joaquin County to ending homelessness.

General Summary of Process

In response to the pressing need and public concern for enhanced collaboration and a strategic vision to improve services for the homeless population in the county, the San Joaquin County Health Care Services Agency with the support from the Board of Supervisors AD-HOC Homeless Review Committee, forged a strategic partnership in the coordination of a Homelessness Leadership Forum with key stakeholders from each city, county leaders and nonprofit and shelter providers.

Together, Health Care Services and United Way of San Joaquin County (UWSJC) constructed a day dedicated to learning, listening, and understanding the forces that challenge and limits our leadership structures at the city, county, and provider level to solve homelessness.

UWSJC, known for its community-driven initiatives and strong focus on the plight of the homeless, has played a pivotal role in designing, preparing, and facilitating the Homelessness Leadership Forum.

This forum's primary objective was to convene leaders from various sectors across San Joaquin County, providing them with a platform to collectively assess the current state of homelessness services and generate actionable recommendations for enhancing efficiency countywide. These finalized recommendations will serve as a vital roadmap for improving the effectiveness of homelessness services.

Ultimately, the goal is to have the Health Care Services Agency present these recommendations to the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors, ensuring that diverse stakeholders' insights and expertise inform future initiatives to address homelessness in the region.

In preparation for the Homelessness Leadership Forum, multiple intensive phone conferences were hosted called "discovery interviews" to understand the status better, desired changes, gaps in services, and recommendations regarding homelessness services in San Joaquin County. Interviews were conducted to derive insights into potential increased efficiencies and partnerships across county structures. And to reinstate trust, respect, and communication back towards the center of everything we do as a collective. Most importantly, the feedback was utilized to design the agenda (see Appendix A) and help guide the facilitation of the forum.

Key leaders (see Appendix B) throughout San Joaquin County were invited to participate in the forum. The leaders were divided into six groups and participated in five rounds of ideating recommendations.

Each group reached a consensus through rounds of voting for top recommendations/most urgent needs.

General Background & Resources

In addition to the Discovery Interviews, various supporting documents were utilized to understand the current state of homelessness in San Joaquin County.

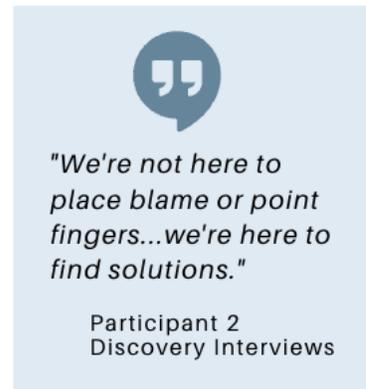
The basis of this report was built on information using multiple supporting documents, including:



"We need to focus on what is relevant now; we need to leave some things in the past and adapt to our current realities."

Participant 7
Discovery Interviews

- The SJC Continuum of Care Strategic Community Response to Homelessness Strategic Plan which was reviewed and adopted by all cities in San Joaquin County.
- Point in Time (PIT) Count Data: The 2022 CoC PIT Count Report provided a count of those experiencing homelessness within San Joaquin County. The PIT Count provided a landscape of understanding through the data reported.
- Cost of Homelessness Report: The 2022 San Joaquin County Cost of Homelessness Survey Summary Report, prepared by University of the Pacific's Center for Business and Policy Research and sponsored by Dignity Health St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center and United Way of San Joaquin County, shares the findings from data gathered from over 140 organizations that assist people experiencing homelessness.
- Encampment Outreach Survey Report: The 2023 San Joaquin County Unsheltered Outreach Survey, prepared by the San Joaquin Community Data Co-Op in partnership with the United Way of San Joaquin County, contains data from over 300 unsheltered individuals from each city in San Joaquin County.



The Forum

The Homelessness Leadership Forum, organized in partnership between the San Joaquin County Health Care Services Agency and the United Way of San Joaquin County, convened on Friday, August 25, 2023, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, marking a crucial milestone in addressing homelessness in San Joaquin County. The event brought together 44 participants representing the county's various offices and organizations addressing homelessness.

Purposes for the Process:

Overall Outcome: The primary objective of the Homelessness Leadership Forum was to unite leaders from various sectors within San Joaquin County, fostering a shared sense of purpose and igniting forward momentum as a collective to manage the strategic plans associated with the reduction of homelessness.

Rational Aims/Products:

This event sought to yield a tangible list of actionable recommendations enhancing the efficiency of homeless services in San Joaquin County. These recommendations are envisioned as a roadmap, charting the course for future initiatives and improvements in the homelessness services landscape.

Experiential Aims:

1. Shared Vision and Purpose: The Homelessness Leadership Forum aimed to cultivate a shared understanding and commitment among participating agencies. It underscored that these entities are not merely individual entities with distinct missions but are unified in their resolute mission to provide homelessness services, transcending individual agendas to embrace a collective overarching purpose.
2. Collaborative Culture: A fundamental experiential aim of the forum was to nurture a culture of collaboration among the participants. The event was designed to foster interactions that actively dismantled existing silos, paving the way for a more integrated approach to service delivery and collaborative resolution of challenges.

3. **Agenda-Free Engagement:** The Homelessness Leadership Forum championed the idea of placing the well-being of the homeless population at the forefront, above individual agendas. It aspired to foster an atmosphere where exchanging ideas and information would bolster a unified, collective voice within the realm of homelessness services in San Joaquin County.

The guiding question was central to the event's mission: "*How might we increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services for the homeless population in San Joaquin County?*" This pivotal question was the bedrock for all discussions during the forum and provided the impetus for developing a practical, action-oriented list of recommendations.

Participants formed six groups, discussing critical aspects for the future of homelessness services: support structures, staffing structures, systems, synergy, and sustainability. Groups engaged in five rounds of ideation facilitated by experienced Table Ambassadors.

Recommendations were gathered through each round, exploring a guiding question per round. Each round began with individual brainstorming, with participants jotting down their ideas on a single sheet of paper.

Each participant selected their top 3-5 recommendations from this pool of ideas, transcribed them onto ½ sheets of paper, and affixed them to the Sticky Wall for group visibility. Following this, each group was tasked with comprehensively reviewing all ideas displayed on the Sticky Wall. Subsequently, they began voting to identify the recommendations they considered the most effective or urgently needed.

Each round centered around specific questions to elicit insights and recommendations:

1. **Support Structures:** "What support structures should be established to enhance collaboration between San Joaquin County, the Cities, and the Continuum of Care?"
2. **Staffing Structures:** "How can we best support positions like the Program Administrator for Homeless Services and other support roles? Where should these positions be situated within county services?"
3. **Systems:** "How can existing systems like HMIS, CoC, Encampment Response Teams, or Coordinated Entry be improved through county operations? How might we strengthen, redesign, reset, or reroute these systems?"
4. **Synergy:** "How can we enhance continuous communication between SJC, Cities, and Shelters, rebuilding trust and respect in our collaborative efforts? How can we establish alliances that expand our communication with the community?"
5. **Sustainability:** "How can we ensure mutual accountability towards our objectives without the appearance of self-promotion or shifting responsibility? How can we ensure that trust, respect, and communications remain at the forefront of our efforts toward sustainable systems and structures?"

In summary, the Forum, larger group discussions among the 44 participants evoked a sense of shared support of the ideas generated from the table conversations, signaling that strong agreement among the stakeholders was apparent.

The subsequent sections of this report detail these recommendations.

Emerging Themes from the Forum

In the evaluation of the comments shared during the Ideation process, six key themes repeatedly emerged as common threads required to secure the success of integrated planning. Those themes included:

- Leadership-we must build stronger bonds of trust between the county, cities, and nonprofit partners, create communication systems for the public, and break down historical silos to advance our work.
- Systems of Support-we must create better systems of support that strengthen the leadership structures.
- Synergy-we must promote collaboration among leaders instead of fostering competition.
- Information-we must enhance efficiency by consistently gathering and disseminating information to the public and among our stakeholders.
- Funding-we must re-evaluate funding solutions to strengthen homelessness initiatives.
- Laws and Policy-we must address legal and policy frameworks to promote transparency, accountability, and secure funding for programs and services.

Action Steps for Key Strategies for County Consideration

The Homelessness Leadership Forum identified key strategies to enhance the efficiency of homelessness services in San Joaquin County. This section presents actionable recommendations under six critical themes: Leadership, Systems of Support, Synergy, Information and Communication, Funding, and Law and Policy. Each theme addresses specific challenges and opportunities, offering a roadmap for future initiatives to address homelessness in the region.

Leadership: Enhance the efficiency of homelessness services in San Joaquin County by reexamining the current county leadership structure.

Actionable Recommendations:

- Create an Office of Housing and Homelessness Services within the San Joaquin County Health Care Services Agency.
- The new Program Manager - Homeless Initiatives being recruited by the County should be the Deputy Director overseeing this new Office, which should be supported by a County general fund contribution and have additional support staff allocated.
- Trust and Respect themes surfaced multiple times in how top management and CoC must support agencies, partners, and cities.

Systems of Support: Create support systems to enhance efficiency and strengthen leadership structure.

Actionable Recommendations:

- The Homelessness Project Manager needs more staff to effect change properly, including a data analyst, grant and funding specialist, program coordinator, and communications specialist.
- Create an organizational chart with staff positions, roles, and expertise to share publicly.



"We exist in silos. Siloed efforts will not result in collective progress."

Participant 5
Discovery Interviews

- Create a standing committee of the Board of Supervisors and City representatives, staffed by the new Office, to provide ongoing leadership, recommendations, and policy direction from the municipal partners to the CoC.
- Need a robust Coordinated Entry System managed by SJC and connected to health and referral systems.
- CoC needs to be revisited: membership representative of the BIPOC community, introduce term limits, an annual audit of fiscal oversight, and alignment with county and city needs. Overhaul might be required to bring up to date to the homelessness needs of the county.
- Other systems such as HMIS, Encampment Response Team, CoC, and Coordinated Entry can be improved if managed within the control of county operations. *(Multiple recommendations to bring HMIS under county control.)*



"We must operate differently, unite as one, collaborate regularly, and share insights and data."

Participant 3
Discovery Interviews

Synergy: San Joaquin County promotes collaboration among leaders instead of fostering competition.

Actionable Recommendations:

- To bolster synergy between all stakeholders and enhance effective collaboration, the CoC should return to in-person meetings, ideally every quarter, following them with Forum-type events to maintain momentum and interest.
- Clear expectations between cities and the county:
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for all public partners and have cities/county aligned as a partner to act independently using an "Alliance" model.
- Host consistent meetings where the right people are at the table, definitions of work streams, and actions can be decided and implemented.
- SJC leadership facilitates opportunities for collaboration in strategy sessions, goal setting, networking events, regional workshops, and training sessions.
- Examining the operational sustainability and alignment of service providers.
- San Joaquin County (SJC) leadership fosters a culture of open and honest dialogue, encouraging thoughtful reflection to uncover underlying issues and facilitating collaborative decision-making that benefits the collective rather than a single entity.
- Each group (CoC, County, City) clearly defines what they want to see happen in their city. How do they relay their vision to the County? Come to a unified effort where everyone is in alignment.

Information and Communication: Enhance efficiency by consistently gathering and disseminating information.

Actionable Recommendations:

- Establish a unified and comprehensive platform housing crucial data for informed decision-making, featuring HMIS view access, a veteran screening option, and real-time updates on standard and recuperative bed availability, all aimed at optimizing shelter placements and service provision.

- Communication must be a priority using public information, coordinated media efforts, shared calendars with agencies, and quarterly reporting using newsletters and PSAs.
- Inform the public using data analytics and reports.
- Develop a communication strategy encompassing website updates and coordinated social media campaigns.
- Create a quarterly report with stats and outcomes from all homelessness agencies involved for public consumption.
- Schedule regular meetings between city leaders and county officials who oversee homelessness initiatives, shelters, and programming.
- Host high-level regional meetings to support coordinated funding and directions.
- Unification of communication between cities and counties with point personnel to increase communication.
- Create a communication plan for all homelessness and housing-related ventures, updates, and reports.
- Create a listserv of all county people, meetings, etc.

Funding: Reevaluate funding solutions to strengthen homelessness initiatives.

Actionable Recommendations:

- General funds support services for agencies supporting the homeless.
- Re-evaluate funding and redirect funding from what is not working to what is working.
- Examine ways to reduce or eliminate funding competition and develop a fair resource allocation.
- Equitable distribution of funding competition and resources.

Law & Policy: Address legal and policy frameworks to promote transparency, accountability, and secure funding.

Actionable Recommendations:

- Enforce Laws and hold people accountable.
- Explore the possibility of establishing a Parcel Tax to provide a dedicated local revenue stream to support the capital and operating needs of our housing and homelessness providers.
- County-wide sales tax to increase funding for homelessness work.
- Changes to CoC rules: No funding recipients as voting members to remove the perceived conflict of interest.
- Ensure common understanding by county, BOS, cities, providers, and stakeholders of CoC functions surrounding what is mandated by HUD and what is outside the ability/realm of the CoC.

These recommendations testify to the collaborative efforts of diverse stakeholders who participated in the forum. They underscore the shared commitment to improving the lives of the homeless population and optimizing service delivery. Moving forward, these recommendations should be carefully considered when paving the way for a more efficient and impactful approach to addressing homelessness in San Joaquin County. The success of these strategies hinges on continued cooperation, trust, and communication among all stakeholders, ensuring that the region can make significant strides toward alleviating homelessness and fostering a more equitable and supportive community for all residents.

The Health Care Services Agency will bring various recommendations in this report and seek policy direction from the Board of Supervisors during their November 28th meeting. Prior to this action, there will be direct engagement with the Continuum of Care and the City of Stockton on aligning the recommendations in this report. In partnership with the United Way of San Joaquin County, a follow-up homelessness stakeholder event will be scheduled before the January point-in-time count.

Critical Success Factors

The success of the Homelessness Leadership Forum hinges on several critical factors that address the complex challenges of fostering collaboration between the county, cities, and service providers.

Foremost among these factors is building and maintaining trust, and San Joaquin County must establish a stronger foundation of trust among stakeholders to have actual progress. Effective and efficient cooperation is tantamount. Communication must be open and transparent among all parties, with everyone well-informed and engaged in decision-making.

Additionally, since centralization of services has emerged as a key attribute, streamlining efforts and resources to create a more efficient and cohesive approach to homelessness services will be required. Beyond these, attributes such as shared commitment, data-driven decision-making, and a shared understanding of the overarching purpose of addressing homelessness will all contribute to overcoming the historical challenges associated with stakeholder collaboration. By cultivating trust, promoting communication, and centralizing services, the Homelessness Leadership Forum aims to pave the way for more effective and unified action in addressing homelessness in the region.

Next Steps

The next steps for the Homelessness Leadership Forum involve returning to the homelessness stakeholders for their invaluable final feedback. This critical phase ensures that the recommendations and strategies crafted during the forum align with the insights and expertise of the diverse group of stakeholders who participated.

By incorporating their feedback, Homelessness Leadership Forum leadership can refine and strengthen the proposed actions, making them more effective and responsive to the unique needs and challenges of San Joaquin County.

This collaborative and iterative approach underscores the commitment to creating lasting solutions for homelessness in the region, and the ongoing engagement of stakeholders is integral to the success of this initiative.

Appendix A: Agenda



AGENDA

Homelessness Leadership Forum
Friday, August 25th
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Cabral Agricultural Center-2101 Earhart Ave
Assembly Room 3

Welcome & Registration

Room Opens at 8:30 AM

Opening Remarks

Greg Diederich, Director, SJC Health Care Services
Kristen Birtwhistle, President & CEO, United Way of SJC

Welcome

Introductions, Purpose of the Day

Group Facilitation

Nikki Lowery, Lowery Consulting & Facilitation

Objective: Produce actionable recommendations for the SJC Board of Supervisors to increase the efficiency of services for the homeless population in San Joaquin County.

Group Work: Five rounds of collaborative ideation, each centered on a guiding question.

Group Presentations: Table Ambassadors will present recommendations.

Closing Remarks

Greg Diederich, Director, SJC Health Care Services

Additional Information:

Wifi: "AG Center Guest"

Follow prompts, no password required

Appendix B: Agenda

Table Facilitators and Attendees 8/25	
Table 1: Edward Figueroa	Table 4: Robin Baglietto
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patricia Barrett 2. Tiffany Phovixay 3. Paul Canepa 4. Britton Kimball 5. Matt Garber 6. John Narvaez 7. Steven Shih 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joelle Gomez 2. Midori Lichtwardt 3. Harry Black 4. Sam Kasich 5. Dennis Buettner 6. Thomas Pogue
Table 2: Keiland Henderson	Table 5: Najja Haynes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phyllis Grupe 2. Melanie Estarziau 3. Gina Calder 4. David Midura 5. Steve Jackson 6. Joan Singson 7. Fred Sheil 8. Kate Hutchinson 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jennifer Rhyne 2. Virginia Carney 3. Captain Art Harty 4. Jennifer Goodman 5. Genevieve Valentine 6. Jose Ortega 7. Petra Linden 8. Jayson Burk
Table 3: Ted Leland	Table 6: Paula Hermann
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jon Mendelson 2. Carrie wright 3. Tom Patti 4. Kayce Rane 5. Lizeth Granados 6. Jasjit Kang 7. David Tolliver 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John Della Monica 2. Krista Fiser 3. Lt. Michael Eastin 4. Jennifer Jolley 5. Richard Price 6. Natasha Garcia 7. Peter Ragsdale 8. Jennifer Spruill