

**SAN MATEO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING  
STATE EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT (ESG) NOFA  
FUNDING PRIORITIES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The County of San Mateo maintains a strong commitment to prevent and end homelessness for county residents, with the goal to end homelessness by 2020. Over the course of the next few years, the County and stakeholders will focus on system changes and implementing strategies identified in the County's strategic plan to end homelessness, presented to the Board of Supervisors on March 29, 2016.

San Mateo County's new Strategic Plan to End Homelessness by 2020 will create a unified system, invest in best practices, and reorient the current homeless system towards housing crisis response. The new plan addresses homelessness as a housing crisis and sets the path to develop a systematic approach targeted at helping people maintain their housing, returning unsheltered homeless people to housing as quickly as possible, and prioritizing existing system capacity for those who face the highest barriers and longest history of homelessness.

The San Mateo County Strategic Plan to End Homelessness by 2020 is organized around five key goals:

**Goal 1: Create a System to End Homelessness in San Mateo County by 2020**

- Transforming existing set of programs into a housing crisis resolution system.
- Shifting the county-wide system to a Housing First Approach in which all people are "housing ready" and the system is charged with identifying a housing solution for each individual or family experiencing homelessness.
- Developing and implementing a shelter diversion program to prevent households who have other housing options from entering shelter and help them move directly to alternative housing.
- Developing and implementing a Coordinated Entry System (CES), providing a clear and standardized entry way into the Housing Crisis Resolution System. There will be multiple, coordinated access points throughout the county, all using standardized screening, triage, assessment and prioritization process and tools.
- Right-Sizing Interim Housing Programs. Right size the inventory of shelter, transitional housing, and rapid re-housing beds to ensure it aligns with population needs (single adults, families, and youth) and that it is optimally sized and structured to ensure rapid exit from homelessness to permanent housing.
- Expanding Rapid Re-Housing Capacity. Expand the availability of rapid re-housing assistance for single adults and families with children. All rapid re-housing programs will be aligned with a set of consistent policies and standards based on evidence and best practices, and will be available to households who have high housing barriers.
- Maximizing Permanent Supportive Housing Programs. Expanded capacity in permanent supportive housing will be created by maximizing our ability to use existing voucher capacity.
- Using data for Continuous Quality Improvement.

**Goal 2: End Veteran Homelessness**

**Goal 3: End Family Homelessness**

**Goal 4: End Youth Homelessness**

**Goal 5: Individuals Exiting Institutions Will Not Discharge Into Homelessness**

## **Guiding Principles of the San Mateo County Homeless System**

In order 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 System Principles and Program Principles.

### System Principles

- **Systems Orientation:** Create a **system** that responds effectively and rapidly to the crisis of homelessness. In a system, all stakeholders, programs, and organizations work together in a coordinated way to accomplish a clear set of shared objectives. The objective of the housing crisis resolution system is to ensure that anyone who is homeless quickly returns to stable housing.
- **Housing First:** People experiencing homelessness need housing above all else. Strategies and interventions focus on returning households to safe and secure housing that they can use as a starting place to address other issues.
- **Data Driven:** Plans are based on an analysis of the current system that assesses what is working and what can be improved. System and program-level performance is measured and the 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.
- **Client Centered:** People experiencing homelessness are at the center of the system design. The system is designed to ensure easy and streamlined access for everyone, and particularly those who experience the greatest challenge navigating the complexities of publicly-funded services and programs.
- **Context-Specific and Aligned with Best Practices:** System strategies are aligned with evidence-based practices and lessons learned from the field, as well as federal policy direction. Best practices are applied to local conditions and tailored to reflect the specific strengths and challenges of San Mateo County.

### 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), which is currently in development.
- 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.
- 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.