



March 29, 2023

**TO:** Mayor Steinberg, City Council, Board of Supervisors, Ann Edwards, Chevon Kothari, Emily Halcon and Lisa Bates

**FROM:** Bob Erlenbusch, Executive Director

**RE:** Response to your March 3, 2023, answers to our original 20 questions regarding the implementation of the City-County Homeless Services Partnership Agreement

***PLEASE RESPOND TO ALL QUESTIONS BY APRIL 12, 2023***

**Overview:** While we appreciate City and County staff taking the time to answer each of our original 20 questions from January 30, 2023, after reviewing your answers, we concluded that, in general, they were very vague and lacked the specificity we requested. Having concrete answers, instead of what sounds like boiler plate responses, is important in an effort for the community to hold the City and County accountable in the implementation of the City-County Homeless Services Partnership Agreement. To that end, SRCEH is responding to your answers with specific questions that each of your responses raises. We would appreciate concrete and specific responses to each of the questions below:

**Specific Questions:**

1. **Racial equity:** Yes, we are fully aware of SSF's Equity Taskforce. However, our original question, which you did not answer, was will the City and County amend the Partnership Agreement to include a comprehensive racial [and gender identity] equity implementation lens?
  - Specifically, will the City and County include that lens either in the programs you operate or in the contracts or RFP's you develop to implement this agreement. This would include being sensitive and intentional regarding program design, hiring for the staff to implement these programs and tracking service and placement outcomes, to ensure that it is not disproportionately white, male people experiencing homelessness that are placed into affordable housing.
  - Additionally, given that both the City and County have recently hired for outreach and engagement teams, specifically, what are the demographics of those teams, including age, gender identity, ethnicity and how many people with lived experience of homelessness and/or behavioral health issues?
  
2. **Ombudsperson program:**
  - Why wasn't the Ombudsman program part of the partnership agreement, since it is our understanding that SSF has proposed an ombudsman for the Coordinated Access System and that role could be expanded to include the partnership agreement? Additionally, CalAIM apparently envisions an ombudsman.
  - Given that all County contracts are required to have grievance processes, specifically, what are those processes and how do people experiencing homelessness find out about those processes?
  - What is the status of including voices of lived experience and advocates into program design and evaluation?

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3. **Cal-AIM:**
  - Thank you for the link to the CalAIM table. It is very helpful.
  - Does the County plan to create a dashboard that tracks each health plan by population focus. Specifically, how many people experiencing homelessness have been signed up by each health plan and what services have they received? If a dashboard is not planned specific to Sacramento County, why not?
4. **Income-Employment Strategy:** Good to hear that the County is incorporating income and employment services into the new Safe Stay communities, but that is not the question we asked. Again, our question is will Sacramento Steps Forward, the City and County add income and employment as a 7<sup>th</sup> building block in the Local Homeless Action Plan [LHAP]. If not, specifically, why not?
5. **Treatment on Demand:** Thank you for explanation of the 500 beds that Ms. Kothari was referencing, and we were aware of the \$10 M the Board of Supervisors allocated to help build out the County's residential treatment infrastructure, but again, that is not the question we asked. Will the County move to treatment on demand, especially for our unhoused neighbors, as a lifesaving best-practice. If not, why not?
6. **Full Service Partnerships:** Good to hear the County continues to add full-services partnership [FSP] capacity, but again, that is not the question we asked. Specifically, how many FSP's does the County currently have and specifically how many FSP's does the County plan to add under this Partnership Agreement?
7. **Community Engagement:** Given that you state that since Measure O only applies to the City of Sacramento let us rephrase the question: Will the City and County under this Partnership Agreement create a City-County Implementation Committee, comprised of not only elected and staff, but also an inclusive list of community stakeholders, including people with lived experience, service providers, advocates, interfaith community, chambers of commerce and neighborhood associations? If not, specifically, why not?
8. **Peer Advocates:** Good to hear that you state that "several of these teams are already out in encampments, working with clients...and are made up of ... peer support positions." Thus, our next question includes how many encampment outreach teams are there that help with navigating behavioral health services systems, and what are the demographics of these teams, including gender-identity, age, ethnicity and lived experience of homelessness, and/or mental health issues?
9. **Role of Sacramento Steps Forward [SSF]:** Thanks for clarifying the role of SSF. Would it be fair to say that as it relates to the Partnership Agreement, SSF does not have a clearly defined role in the implementation of this Partnership Agreement?
10. **Shovel Ready Sites:** Your answer to this question is generic and vague. Specifically, how many "shovel ready" sites has the City identified to date, and how many "shovel ready" sites does the City envision creating to meet the requirement of Measure O and this Partnership Agreement?

- 11. Shelter Spaces:** We are encouraged that the City is pursuing “non-congregate type shelter spaces, including but not limited to sleeping cabins and trailers.” We were concerned that this wording [“shelter spaces”] was so broad that it could include the City erecting tents on a parking lot. Will the City commit that this is not the case and that all “shelter spaces” are inside “spaces”, with amenities that include heat, cooling, shower and a bathroom? If not, why not?
- 12. Trauma-Informed Care:** We feel that the City & County used a convenient definition by the National Coalition for the Homeless to avoid answering our question. We prefer the six principles identified by the Center for Disease Control and the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care. These principles, as you may know, are: safety; trustworthiness & transparency; peer support; collaboration & mutuality; empowerment and choice and cultural, historical and gender issues. Our concern is by the City and County using law enforcement, park rangers and code enforcement to engage with our unhoused neighbors, this is re-traumatizing for our unhoused neighbors. Given this definition above, does the City and County offer training to law enforcement, park rangers and code enforcement, as well as encampment outreach teams etc. on this meaning of trauma-informed care with the goal of these interactions not re-traumatizing our unhoused neighbors? If not to each of these professions, why not? Is the City and County moving away from law enforcement being the first responders to mental health and homelessness issues and moving towards interdisciplinary teams, including peer advocates? If not, why not?
- 13. Harm Reduction:** We appreciate that the City and County embrace the Housing First approach, which you state “harm reduction can be a component.” This raises the question, under what specific circumstances can harm reductions be a component of Housing First for the City and County, and under what specific circumstances can it not be?
- 14. Weather Respite Sites:** We appreciate your answer which differentiates from your perspective a temporary respite from severe weather from a 24/7 shelter. However, you missed our point, which the Mayor seems to embrace, that the need for respite is not weather driven – especially since over the past year 11 of our unhoused neighbors have died from hypothermia. In other words, during the rainy and high temperature seasons, the City and County abandon weather criteria, and open temporary respite and service centers on a 24/ basis? If not, why not?
- 15. Vehicle Repair Pilot Project:** We appreciate your answer that through the CoC Problem Solving Access Points, partners are provided with flexible funding that “could include vehicle repair.” Given that, how many partners have used this flexible funding for this purpose [vehicle repair]? Even so, given how seemingly hundreds of our unhoused neighbors vehicles are tagged and maybe towed, why doesn't the City and County invest in a Vehicle Repair Pilot Project so that the people can remain in their homes and remain mobile?
- 16. NIMBY issues:** We feel that this is a pretty vague answer from the County and non-existent from the City.
- To address the NIMBY issues, why hasn't the City and County, for example, invested in a broad public education-public relations campaign about the homeless crisis in an effort to lessen community fears and be more accepting of siting homeless and housing programs?

- Secondly, given your answer states that the “County has exhausted all of its owned property,” our specific question is how many County-owned sites were considered, how many were used for homeless programs, and why were the other sites rejected?
  - Finally, why hasn't the City and County taken an “adaptive-reuse approach,” in other words, turning existing city and county empty buildings and turning them into shelters in the short-term, and low-income housing in the longer terms?
17. **SSI:** We appreciate your briefly describing the SSI process. Given your answer, specifically, in Sacramento County, what is the percentage of people experiencing homelessness that apply for SSI actually receiving it on an annual basis beginning for the period 2017 - 2022?
18. **Affordable housing plan:** Given your answer, and the fact that we only have about 2 months before the 6 month timeline of developing an affordable housing plan, what and when specifically are the opportunities for the community to give input into a yet to be announced plan?
19. **Legally binding agreement:** Thank you to the County for your commitment to your deliverables of the Partnership Agreement. Does the City make the same commitment? And again, our original question was, given that the Partnership Agreement has been framed as a “legally binding agreement,” what happens is it turns out despite this commitment, that one [or both] of the parties fails to deliver on their deliverables in the agreement?
20. **Budget:** Your answer doesn't make sense. The Partnership Agreement has specific deliverables, based in part on Measure O, each of which has an accompanying budget, either for shelters, CORE Centers or Encampment Engagement Teams. Given this, it seems hard to believe that the City and County have not developed at least a draft budget on what it will take to meet the deliverables identified in the Partnership Agreement. Your answer states that as “individual components come forward, they will have associated budget asks,” but their currently exists no comprehensive budget for the implementation of this Partnership Agreement despite knowing the deliverables and their associated costs?

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***Thank you***