

Key Themes from Policy Summits #1-7

- 1. The homeless services system is struggling to meet the needs of clients with the highest needs, who may have serious health and mental health challenges along with other special needs.** From outreach to interim housing to permanent housing, providers and system leaders are struggling to utilize existing resources to meet the needs of the sickest clients. For some of these clients, higher levels of care that are currently available only outside of the homeless services system are needed. Going forward, we need to explore options for linking clients with complex needs to other systems of care or expanding the availability of such higher-level care (such as Skilled Nursing Facilities) to the homeless system. With these needs in mind, system leaders can continue to revisit policy decisions regarding the appropriate allocation of resources between higher and lower acuity clients to allow for intentional approaches to meeting clients' needs.

What policy, programmatic, or operational changes would most significantly enhance our ability to meet the needs of the most highly vulnerable individuals currently experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County?

- 2. Lack of permanent housing slots creates bottlenecks throughout the system and can undermine the efforts of those on the “front end” of the system, such as outreach workers and interim housing providers. In the face of this limitation, and given the fact that many low and moderate acuity clients will not receive housing subsidies, there is a need for creative solutions and flexibility.** Key emerging strategies for addressing the lack of housing resources available in the region include problem solving, enhanced employment services and supports, and shared housing, both of which seek to make use of existing housing resources to address participants' housing instability or homelessness.

What creative strategies to increase the ability of people experiencing homelessness to secure permanent housing (without relying exclusively on new construction) are most promising?

- 3. Cross-system and intra-system collaboration is essential to successfully serving people experiencing homelessness, who often have complex needs that require interventions spanning multiple County and non-County systems.** While there has been considerable successful collaboration as a result of the Homeless Initiative, system leaders and providers have identified a number of areas where increased collaboration between the homeless services system and other partners is needed, including with substance use disorder treatment, public workforce system, and legal services providers. While there is already significant collaboration with mental health providers and public housing authorities, there are opportunities to grow these partnerships.

How can we strengthen collaboration within and across the systems that serve people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County?

- 4. While there are high levels of vulnerability and need among our homeless neighbors, there is also a great deal of resilience, capability, and resourcefulness, which often goes underappreciated. It is important to build a system that empowers participants and builds upon their capacities.** The problem-solving approach should be integrated throughout the system in order to work with participants to identify all available options and resources, before offering costly interventions that may not be necessary. Further, as participants move through the system, opportunities to build confidence and self-sufficiency are important to long-term success.

How can we best foster and build upon the capacities and resilience of people experiencing homelessness? Are there policy, programmatic, or operational changes that can help to ensure our system is empowering participants to utilize their strengths?

5. **As system leaders explore innovations and creative ways to make use of limited resources, respecting client choice should remain a central value in our system.** From potentially providing sober-living options in interim housing to offering shared housing as a permanent housing placement to assisting clients who are ready to move on from Permanent Supportive Housing, client choice should be a primary factor in determining the appropriateness of interventions.

What steps are needed to ensure that we maintain client choice as a central value and practice in our system?

6. **Homeless services providers are challenged by administrative burdens prescribed in their contracts with government entities.** Burdensome requirements can take away from service providers' abilities to directly serve clients. However, the fact that the system is largely funded through local dollars allows for opportunities to streamline and reduce administrative burdens that detract from our overarching goals. There is a need to systematically review contract language and policies to ensure that we remove any unnecessary burdens and maximize efficiency. Such a review should also take into account the challenges that have arisen in the process of executing contracts between the County and cities, which are directly receiving Measure H funds to implement their homelessness plans.

What changes would most significantly ease administrative burdens for contractors receiving Measure H funding, without compromising accountability or the countywide homeless service delivery system?

7. **To truly move the dial on the homelessness crisis in Los Angeles County, we need full participation from all levels of government, including the state and federal governments.** A coordinated and thoughtful advocacy strategy that brings together service providers, cities, County agencies and other key local stakeholders can help to continue forward momentum we have seen at the state level in recent years. The areas requiring advocacy are diverse, ranging from legislative changes to streamline and incentivize housing development, reforms to the mental health care system, increased support for housing subsidies, and more.

What opportunities do partners throughout the region have to enhance our collaborations around homelessness-related advocacy at the state and federal levels? What are the most urgent issues requiring advocacy efforts?