

MEMORANDUM

Subject: Response to Public Comments on the Housing Crisis Response System Performance Framework and Measures

From: EveryOne Home Results Based Accountability Committee

Between November 3rd and December 1, 2017, the Results Based Accountability Committee (RBA Committee) made available for public comment a draft of proposed Housing Crisis Response System Performance Framework and Measures. In all, the RBA Committee received comments from six individuals. This document summarizes the public comments the RBA Committee received, and the responses developed.

To facilitate responding to the comments the RBA Committee has divided them into three groups: those suggestions that could be incorporated immediately in December 2017, those necessitating greater thought and community process, and finally those that prompted clarifying the purpose and intent of the System Performance Measures.

1. Questions and Suggestions with Unanimous Support

The first group of comments the RBA Committee unanimously agreed would both strengthen the work and could be immediately integrated. These suggestions include:

- Create a data dictionary
- Align the framework and measures to reflect a regional system that is distinct from the HRCs.
- Include measures to track housing problem solving activities and their impact.
- Align the definition of Literally Homeless with the HUD definition, which includes individuals and families who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence.
- Add a measure to track how often shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing projects decline or reject matches to resources.
- Emphasize that performance measurement is intended to improve collective work rather than to serve as a punitive tool.
- Visually illustrate the difference between total population and client populations
- Define the terms: “warm transfer,” “successful exits,” “complete assessment.”
- Combine the two client satisfaction measures into one under the 211 heading.
- Clarify that Home Stretch serves people who are literally homeless and disabled and/or chronically homeless, and revise the data quality measures to focus on document readiness.
- Include time frame to reflect quarterly and annual reporting.
- Show clearly defined numerators and denominators for the percentage metrics

2. Questions and Suggestions Requiring Greater Thought and Community Process

The RBA Committee identified a second group of comments as insightful and productive, but also requiring a broader community process or data development before they could be incorporated into the Housing Crisis Response System Performance Framework and Measures. These suggestions include:

- How will the HCR System Performance Framework and Measures impact funding and contracts, including the local competition for federal funds (NOFA)? Perhaps focus the NOFA process on regional performance and drop project type measures altogether?
 - Interesting idea that would require exploring whether such a change would make Alameda County’s Continuum of Care package more competitive.

- Continue looking for ways to track and measure housing problem solving activities and outcomes.
 - The RBA Committee strives to refine existing measures of housing problem solving activities and outcomes, and to develop new measures.
- How will the RBA Committee decide what costs are included and excluded when measuring cost effectiveness?
 - Cost effectiveness data points will be used to identify best practices, troubleshoot anomalies, and understand future needs. A working group that includes nonprofits, county agencies, and city governments will be created to define a consistent and fair way of calculating program cost.
- Define what makes a client inactive in the housing crisis response system.
 - A good and necessary development that will require input from System Coordination and the Continuum of Care committees.
- Consider measuring:
 - *Current housing crisis response system capacity, including affordable housing in development.
 - *Number of people newly experiencing homelessness
 - *Legal services, housing education and counseling services, landlord liaison services, housing development, etc.
 - *Real time measure of the number of homeless people in Alameda County
 - *Vacancy rates
 - *Rapid Re-Housing (RRH): measure the monthly duration and amount of subsidy
 - *Differentiate scattered site permanent supportive housing (PSH) from site-based PSH
 - *Differentiate exits to affordable housing from market rate housing
 - These are excellent ideas for ongoing discussion and data development.
- Will there be benchmarks or targets added to the measures? And how will they be set?
 - The RBA Committee will begin benchmarking and setting targets in March 2018 using a combination of current performance data from our Homelessness Management Information System database and comparing those against existing Continuum of Care targets. The RBA Committee is open to anyone interested in learning about and using RBA to end homelessness in Alameda County is welcome to join in the work.

3. Questions and Suggestions Prompting Clarification of Purpose and Intent

- What impact will the HCR System Performance Measures have on homelessness?
 - The HCR System Performance Measures will allow EveryOne Home—Alameda County’s collective impact initiative—to hold itself accountable for producing measurable change in the lives of people experiencing homelessness. This accountability includes ensuring that the most vulnerable households are prioritized for housing and services, verifying that people are better off because of the housing crisis response system services, identifying the replicating the best practices, recognizing and resolving problems, and continually improving impact.
- How will the HCR System Performance Framework and Measures impact the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless people? What will be different moving forward if there isn’t an additional source for affordable housing?
 - The System Performance Framework will allow the housing crisis response system not only to know how much of an impact it is having but also to allocate resources to most effectively assist sheltered and unsheltered homeless people in Alameda County. Additionally, understanding our system and continually improving our performance will make our Continuum of Care more competitive in the annual HUD Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) process. In short, measuring and improving performance will result in increased federal funding for housing and support services.

- There should be clear guidelines of values and actions required from the staff, and metrics to measure the performance and training when needed.
 - The EveryOne Home governance charter, which includes the Housing Crisis Response System Manual, details the policies, standards, and principles that guide the housing crisis response system. These are implemented in a variety of ways, from funding contracts and performance measurement to program design and training curricula. The EveryOne Home governance charter is available at: everyonehome.org/about/our-governance/
- Given Alameda County’s dependence on federal funding, how can the county ensure meaningful, locally relevant outcomes?
 - Alameda County is working to ensure locally relevant systems and outcomes. Like its federal partners, EveryOne Home—Alameda County’s collective impact effort—strives to end homelessness by decreasing the number of people experiencing homelessness and increasing the number of households that exit to permanent housing. Together, county partners, city governments, nonprofit organizations, and people experiencing homelessness informed a locally-specific housing crisis response system design, including coordinated entry design. The RBA Committee’s system performance measures are a central way in which EveryOne Home will evaluate the system design’s effectiveness in ending homelessness in Alameda County.
- Why use the same measures to evaluate very different pieces of the system? Why measure housing outcomes in projects (like emergency shelter or outreach) that aren’t directly responsible for placing clients in housing?
 - Many identical performance measures are taken from federal (HUD) guidelines, such as the number of clients served or exits to permanent housing. Other similar measures across seemingly different sectors provide proxy reporting and encourage shared accountability for countywide systems.
- Is socialization an important program component and if so, what activities and outcomes should be measured?
 - The RBA measures assess the cumulative impact of systems, rather than the effectiveness of individual program components. Programs are responsible for continuously evaluating their client outcomes and improving their programs.
- What are the factors for deciding when a person is ready for permanent housing?
 - Alameda County’s housing crisis response system firmly believes that all unhoused people deserve permanent housing. The HCR system embodies “housing first” principles, meaning that access to permanent housing should not depend on sobriety, income, or employment. The system has formalized housing first principles in its policies, procedures, and standards from local funding competitions for federal funds as well as county and local government contracts to the coordinated entry assessment, housing problem solving, and prioritization process.