

Alameda County Health Housing and Homelessness Services
Housing Fair Prioritization Pilot

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Introduction

This document describes a pilot program which utilizes “Housing Fairs” to prioritize people experiencing homelessness to permanent housing. Housing Fairs are a site-based approach in which participants eligible for permanent housing through Coordinated Entry, who reside at specific emergency shelter or interim housing sites, are matched with units available through the County’s new Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool. Implementation of this pilot provides an opportunity to evaluate of this strategy for potential consideration into Alameda County’s broader prioritization and matching approaches.

Definitions

- Alameda County Coordinated Entry Policies: The current set of policies governing the implementation of Coordinated Entry in Alameda County as approved by the Outreach, Access, and Coordination Committee of the CoC.
- Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool: A program that identifies private market housing units across Alameda County to be used as scattered-site permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness and braids multiple funding sources to use as rental subsidies.
- Housing Fair: A strategy that allows a provider to match multiple households to housing on a single day in a designated location. Housing Fairs may take place in a variety of locations based on specific program goals. Once a date is set for a Housing Fair, eligible participants at the site are identified and given the opportunity to prepare necessary documents. On the day of the fair, eligible households are matched to housing during the event.
- Housing Queue: The Housing Queue is a list of households that have indicated an interest in one or more types of housing resources and been assessed and prioritized for such resources. The Housing Queue contains key information about

the household that is used to establish an order and to match clients to available and anticipated housing resources.

Policy Scope

Housing Fair Pilot

This pilot will be conducted as part of the implementation of Alameda County's Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool (Flex Pool). The Flex Pool is a program that identifies housing across Alameda County to be used as scattered-site permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness. The Flex Pool braids funding from local, state, and federal sources in order to maximize available funding and can utilize both short- and long-term funding sources to house people permanently.

In order to do this quickly and effectively, the Flex Pool will conduct "Housing Fairs" that facilitate the process of matching multiple participants to permanent housing at a single event. Initially, these Housing Fairs will take place at emergency shelters and interim housing sites. Other locations for Housing Fairs may be identified as the Flex Pool program progresses over time. During these Housing Fairs, participants living at a specific emergency shelter or interim housing site, who are eligible for an available long-term rental subsidy, would be invited to work with a service provider on a specific day or set of days to attend a Housing Fair.

Housing Fairs will utilize lessons-learned regarding successful housing strategies during Project Roomkey to:

- 1) Quickly house people, and
- 2) Increase throughput at shelters to create more shelter capacity across Alameda County.

The Housing Fairs incorporate multiple steps in the existing housing process into one event. A Housing Fair includes all eligible participants at a given site who meet eligibility requirements based on Coordinated Entry and funding requirements and offers people viable units. Participants are given notice in advance of a Housing Fair so they can work with their Housing Navigator or other case managers to prepare the documents that will be needed for program entry by the day of the event. Participants are given until two weeks before a Fair to have all the necessary documents uploaded into HMIS.¹

¹ Participants who are prioritized for permanent housing via the Housing Queue, but who are unable to prepare their documents in time for the Housing Fair, will remain eligible for matches to permanent housing in future Housing Fairs or via other County programs.

Site Prioritization

Alameda County Housing and Homelessness Services (H&H) staff will select the initial emergency shelter and interim housing sites to maximize the following factors:

- Service region: Housing Fairs will be held at sites across Alameda County in proportion to PIT Count in order to ensure there is equitable representation across regions.
- Funding eligibility: Housing Fairs will be held at sites with participants eligible for funding sources for specific populations of focus (e.g. behavioral health needs, criminal justice involvement, etc.) in order to maximize funding utilization.

Participant Eligibility

Once a site is identified, H&H staff will identify participants who are eligible to participate in the Flex Pool, based on the following eligibility criteria:

1. Participant is eligible for one of the long-term subsidies within the Flex Pool.
 - a. The Flex Pool will initially include scattered-site permanent supportive housing subsidies utilizing a variety of funding sources and may expand to other types of subsidies based on available funding.
2. Participant is prioritized for permanent housing in alignment with existing Alameda County Coordinated Entry Policies, except as follows:
 - a. Length of Time on the Housing Queue: All participants at the designated Housing Fair site will be eligible regardless of length of time on Housing Queue.
3. Participant, and all household members, are able to prepare the necessary documents by a specified date two weeks before the Housing Fair.
 - a. Documents needed for eligibility will be based on applicable funding source requirements. These may include government-issued identification, Housing Support Plan (HSP), Verification of Homelessness (VoH), Verification of Disability (VoD), and/or Reasonable Accommodation Request. In advance, participants will be informed of requested documentation.

Once at the fair, participants will be matched to permanent housing units based on funding restrictions and applicant preferences such as unit size/type, location, ADA requirements, etc.

Goals and Reporting

The Flex Pool expansion officially launches January 1, 2026. H&H has received approval from the Alameda County Board of Supervisors to implement this program over a five-year period. In Year 1 of the program (calendar year 2026), the goal is to house 250 households.

The majority of these participants will be connected to housing through Housing Fairs. Current housing goals are based on resources available at this time and may change as the funding landscape changes over the next five years.