

The Urban Institute
Evaluation of Santa Monica's Homeless Services

For the first time since its inception in the 1980s, the City's homeless delivery system is undergoing a comprehensive program and system evaluation. The goals of the evaluation are:

- 1) refining the strategy for homeless service provision and the effective management of resources;
- 2) results-oriented recommendations against which the effectiveness of the programs and the system can be measured;
- 3) recommendations for specific action steps to be carried out within the next five years; and,
- 4) recommendations for increasing and/or reallocating resources to carry out the action steps.

The Urban Institute was selected to conduct the evaluation following a nationwide, competitive process. The Urban Institute is a Washington, D.C.-based nonpartisan economic and social policy research organization. The Urban Institute and the project's principal evaluators, Dr. Martha Burt and Laudan Aron, have completed numerous evaluations of homeless services programs and continuums of care, surveyed best-practices and are considered experts in the field. Prior evaluations have used agency and project surveys; sampling; literature review; site visits; fieldwork; focus groups and data analysis.

Dr. Burt and Ms. Aron have extensive experience developing evaluation plans with local stakeholders which include clearly articulated goals and feasible mechanisms for measuring progress. They are currently working on a five-year project to reduce long-term homelessness, especially among people with serious mental illness, sponsored by the Corporation for Supportive Housing and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation; and are evaluating a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development/Department of Labor homeless demonstration project for the City of Los Angeles' Community Development Department. Other past clients include: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Melville Charitable Trust, The Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, Fannie Mae, numerous Federal departments and agencies, and local jurisdictions across the nation.

Dr. Burt and Ms. Aron will employ qualitative and quantitative evaluation methodologies in order to produce a description of the current homeless system, including what is working and what is not, and make recommendations for a refined vision of service delivery in Santa Monica and action steps to be taken over the next five years.

A copy of the full Scope of Work and Timeline is provided below. The Scope of Work includes a document review which will include previous reports or studies, annual reports and other documents of individual programs in the Continuum of Care, newspaper articles, and other materials indicative of public opinion, ten-year or other

plans already developed by the City, and any other documents that shed light on the evaluation issues.

Interviews will be conducted with homeless and mainstream program staff, City staff including representatives from the Human Services Division, the Open Space Management Division, the Housing and Redevelopment Department, the City Manager's Office, Fire/Paramedics and Police based on a standard protocol.

Elected officials, community development corporations, housing developers, regional stakeholders, community groups, faith-based groups and other interested parties will be interviewed using a variation on the service provider interview protocol. Two public community workshops, one in July and one in December, will be held to solicit public opinion.

Focus groups will be held with homeless and formerly homeless people and front line staff to reveal how the system "really" works from the point of view of people who try to get it to work every day.

Data from the City's homeless management information system, ClientTrack, which is used by all city-funded homeless programs, will be analyzed to determine who the system serves and how the homeless population in Santa Monica has changed over time, client outcomes and service delivery information.

Program budgets will be reviewed to address the questions of system resource. Budgets may be accessed via annual reports, program information of sufficient quality or independently through the IRS files maintained by the Urban Institute.

The final report, including recommendations for action, will be presented to the City Council in January 2007, and subsequently made available to the community. The Urban Institute has the permission of the City to disseminate the final version of the project report, mostly likely through its web site.

The timeline will be updated as necessary and new information will be posted here. Please check back for updates.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

- I. The Urban Institute will perform a program and system evaluation of Santa Monica's continuum of care for homeless persons, using a variety of data collection methods, including:
 1. Document review of previous reports or studies that include Santa Monica's Continuum of Care and related programs and activities, annual reports and other documents of individual programs in the Continuum of Care, newspaper articles, and other materials indicative of public opinion, ten-year or other plans already

developed by the City, and any other documents that shed light on the evaluation issues.

2. Interviews with homeless and mainstream program staff based on a standard protocol which will cover the major research questions about each program and how the program fits into the structure of the overall service system for homeless people in Santa Monica. Parts of the protocol will be used to determine if and how Santa Monica programs and practices fit into and use state and county resources.
3. Interviews with elected officials in Santa Monica, community development corporations, housing developers, regional stakeholders, and other interested parties, conducted using a variation on the service provider interview protocol. Information from regional stakeholders will be used to gain an understanding of how Santa Monica is affected by the region and potential strategies for regional issues. Other interviews of this type will address potential avenues of approach, including affordable housing development. Two public community workshops will be held to solicit public opinion.
4. Focus groups with homeless and formerly homeless people and front line staff to reveal how the system “really” works from the point of view of people who try to get it to work every day. Focus groups with front-line workers may reveal the challenges of their jobs and things they perceive would make them more effective in their efforts to serve homeless clients.
5. Administrative data analysis of ClientTrack data to determine the completeness and validity of the data, who the system serves and how the homeless population in Santa Monica has changed over time, client outcomes and service delivery information, as well as analysis of individual program’s databases if available.
6. Continuum of Care program budget reviews to address the questions of system resource. Budgets may be accessed via annual reports, program information of sufficient quality or IRS files maintained by the Urban Institute.

II. The data will be compiled and analyzed to produce a description of the current homeless service delivery system in Santa Monica that addresses the following questions. The Urban Institute will present its findings in a final written and oral report to the Santa Monica City Council.

A. Description of the current homeless service delivery system in Santa Monica:

- 1) Who does the continuum of care, as a system, predominately serve?
 - a) What are the homeless sub-groups in Santa Monica?
 - b) Has the composition of the homeless population changed over time?
 - c) Which sub-groups is the continuum currently serving?
 - d) Are those who are homeless in Santa Monica from Santa Monica? Where are they from? Is there any variation in this between sub-groups (for example, the senior population)?
- 2) For the people currently being served, how effective is the system at achieving the homeless service delivery goals?
 - a) Is the system, as a whole, tailored to meet the needs of the homeless sub-groups in Santa Monica?
 - b) Has the service delivery system evolved to meet any observed changes in the homeless population over time?
 - c) Do agencies effectively identify the needs of clients early on and refer them to the agency best suited to serve them?
 - d) Are services being effectively coordinated between agencies?
 - e) Is the system using the current "best practice" models to best effect?
 - f) Are the new initiatives (e.g., the Chronic Homeless Program, the Serial Inebriate Outreach Program) having a significant impact?
 - g) What gaps in service exist within the existing system?
 - h) What is the current capacity of the system and has it been met or exceeded?
 - i) How does the system, as a whole, coordinate access to permanent housing resources?
 - j) Are there services being offered that neither prevent homelessness nor contribute to persons exiting homelessness?
 - k) Are there services being offered that enable life on the streets without significantly contributing to the service delivery goals?
- 3) For each program evaluated:
 - a) How well does the current program design address the need of the various homeless sub-groups it targets?
 - b) What barriers/incentives exist in the design of each program that affect the intended targeted populations' ability to access services and achieve successful outcomes?

- c) Do the goals/outcomes match the populations that require service?
 - i. How reasonable are the goals/outcomes given the target population?
 - ii. If they are not reasonable, what would be reasonable goals/outcomes?
 - d) What function does the program fulfill within the service delivery system?
 - i. Is this function a priority for achieving the City's homeless service delivery goals?
 - ii. Is this function filled adequately?
 - e) How does this program collaborate and coordinate with other providers?
 - f) Is there unnecessary duplication with other providers?
 - g) Does the program contribute to the overall effectiveness of the system of service delivery?
 - h) Is the program functioning as described in the grant agreement with the City with respect to the target population, numbers served, scope of services and outcomes?
 - i. Explain any significant departures from the grant agreement
 - i) Does the program use ClientTrack as effectively as possible?
- 4) How are the resources (financial, personnel, capital, data) in the continuum of care being used?
- a) What is the total universe of resources?
 - b) What functions are being supported by these resources?
 - c) Does ClientTrack, the City's current HMIS, provide data that is useful for assessing the performance of a system as a whole?
 - d) Do staff have the appropriate level of training and experience necessary to achieve desired outcomes?
 - e) What is the impact of staff turnover and salaries?
 - f) Are the capital assets in the continuum being used to best effect?
 - g) Are non-service related resources (e.g., law enforcement, criminal justice, recycling centers, business, community education) being used to the greatest effect or are they contributing to the problem?
 - h) Is the continuum of care making the most use of regional resources to address homelessness?

B. Recommendations for a refined vision of service delivery in Santa Monica and action steps over the next 5 years:

- 1) What are the factors influencing a refined vision of service delivery in Santa Monica?
 - a) What is the national context for the trends we are seeing in Santa Monica?
 - b) Do other communities provide examples of “best practice models” that the City of Santa Monica can emulate and adapt?
 - c) What can we learn from other resort cities or cities with high levels of tourism?
 - d) How will anticipated future trends in the population, politics or the resources available affect who we will serve and how we will serve them?
 - e) What has been the impact of homelessness on the community as a whole?
 - f) How do we assess community tolerance for homelessness?
 - g) What is our definition of success?
 - h) How do we communicate success to the public?

- 2) Based on the findings for Questions A1 through A4 above, over the next five years:
 - a) What homeless sub-groups should the continuum target?
 - b) What mix of services should it provide for maximum effectiveness?
 - c) Are there new methods of service delivery that should be tried?
 - d) What would be the optimum scale (i.e., capacity) for the service delivery system?
 - e) Where there are gaps in the continuum due to a lack of resources, how can these best be filled?
 - f) How can referral agencies better identify clients early on and refer them to the agency best suited to serve them?
 - g) How can we improve service planning coordination to effectively stop recidivism and prevent clients from “falling through the cracks”?
 - h) How can mechanisms for enhanced coordination be implemented while still respecting confidentiality and consent?
 - i) How can we work more effectively with Community Corporation of Santa Monica, other affordable housing developers, and rental property owners?

- j) How can we gain access to more resources that can be used for:
 - i. Prevention activities?
 - ii. Program operations?
 - iii. Housing development and rental subsidies?
 - iv. Administration, overhead and infrastructure?
 - k) Is there a better way for the City to work with other major funders to universalize reporting and auditing?
 - l) How can City grants administration and technical assistance be more effective?
 - m) How can we use HMIS to more effectively coordinate service delivery, data management and sharing and outcome tracking?
 - n) How can the “funnel system” created by lack of housing and a highly selective housing system be addressed?
- 3) How can Santa Monica work at both the local and regional level to ensure that:
- a) Services in Santa Monica do not become an attractor for homeless persons across the region?
 - b) Other communities do their part to address homelessness in their area?
 - c) Regional resources are allocated in a manner proportional to the local efforts in place to address homelessness and are used to maximum effectiveness?
- 4) Given the findings of the evaluation and the recommendations for the next five years, how might the City of Santa Monica prioritize the allocation of funding and other resources in the future? Given the strategies recommended, what potential new resources (funding and otherwise) should be pursued by the City and stakeholders?
- 5) What ongoing mechanisms for evaluation at the system and program levels should the City and its non-profit partners consider implementing?

III. The Urban Institute has the permission of the City to disseminate the final version of the project report, and any other materials (e.g. handouts, presentation materials) related to the project, after they have been released to the public by the City. The Urban Institute may disseminate only the final versions, in whole or in part, of such reports or materials. Any use of the data, notes, findings, or related materials in a form other than the final, publicly released version, will require the prior written approval of the City.

IV. Timeline

Date	Event
5/22-5/24/2006	First UI site visit - 1 on 1 Interviews with Executive and Program Directors and City Staff
6/19-6/21/2006	Second UI site visit - 1 on 1 Interviews with Executive and Program Directors, Community Groups, City Staff
7/24-7/26/2006	Third UI site visit - 1 on 1 Interviews with City Staff, City Council members, Community Groups, focus groups with line staff, homeless clients and residents
5/10-10/31/2006	Work with local UI consultant on access to ClientTrack and other program data; UI phone follow-up to interviews/focus groups; other data collection analysis
11/27/2006 – 12/4/2006	Receive draft report from UI, circulate to stakeholders for comment.
12/11/2006	Fourth UI site visit - Present summary of overall recommendations to City staff, social service providers and the Social Services Commission, solicit feedback. This would include any recommendations potentially affecting the RFP for the 2007-2010 Community Development Program.
1/09/2007	Fifth UI site visit - UI and City staff to present background and findings to City Council, recommend homeless funding priorities for 2007-2010 Community Development Program.
1/29/2007 (Tentative)	Sixth UI site visit – Community meeting to launch next phase of the project.