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HOME Program CESH Proposal

1.0 Introductory Letter

Dear CESH Evaluation Committee,

The Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Housing, Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) Program proposes to establish a flexible housing and supportive services fund that we would use for emergency aid to HOME program participants who are experiencing homelessness. HOME has been operating DHHS's U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-funded Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program for chronically homeless persons with serious mental illness since 2011 and has been operating a street and rural outreach program since 2002. The program is staffed by Mental Health Clinicians, Case Managers, Outreach Workers, Peer Coaches, and administrative support staff.

These funds will allow us to house additional high priority members of the California Emergency Solutions and Housing (CESH) program target population at rents that are affordable to persons with extremely low incomes and those with no income at all, as well as helping to ensure that DHHS can offer an appropriate level of supportive services to meet participants needs and to help them avoid returning to homelessness.

Warm regards,

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3.0 Project Description

We propose to establish a flexible housing and supportive services fund that would augment HOME’s supportive housing and outreach program. Eligible uses of this fund would include:

1. Rental assistance and housing relocation and stabilization services to ensure housing affordability to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
2. Flexible housing subsidy funds that support rental assistance, bridge subsidies to property owners waiting for approval from another permanent rental subsidy source, vacancy payments, or project-based rent or operating reserves.
3. Supportive services designed to connect homeless persons to income, public benefits, health services, permanent housing, or other shelter
4. Street outreach services to connect unsheltered persons to temporary or permanent housing
5. Shelter diversion, including, but not limited to, homelessness prevention activities and other necessary service integration activities to connect individuals and families to alternate housing arrangements, services, and financial assistance.

We estimate that approximately 50 clients would receive assistance from this project by June 30, 2024. The target population is persons that are homeless as defined in Section 578.3 of Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations, with an emphasis on serving those with the longest histories of homelessness and/or the most severe service needs.

The project would serve all of Humboldt County because all County residents are potentially eligible for CESH- it makes no difference to this program where they are experiencing homelessness or where they are from.

This project would assist in the County's effort to end homelessness in Humboldt County by augmenting DHHS' existing efforts to house those who are experiencing homelessness who require permanent supportive housing.

Housing the hardest to serve, chronically homeless super utilizers of services is the very foundation of the County's Homeless Strategy and Implementation Plan, which is attached to this proposal:

"Some key recommended next steps for MIST include: ... Prioritizing assistance to those with the highest housing barriers and highest use of emergency services, rather than those who appear to be 'housing ready;'"

"One of the most important strategies for reducing homelessness is to better target available PSH to prioritize those with the highest housing barriers."

"Some suggested steps that Eureka and Humboldt County can pursue to better prioritize access to PSH include: ...Creating a centralized waiting list for all the HUD-funded PSH units in the community (including all the CoC funded projects) and placing those with the highest housing needs and barriers at the front of the line for available units. This approach has been mandated by HUD through CPD Notice 14-012, issued in 2014. Having the MIST team and Street Outreach Services (SOS) conduct a standardized assessment with each literally homeless person (see recommendation above) and using these assessments to determine who is prioritized for available units will help improve access to PSH for chronically homeless people living in encampments."

HOME staff were instrumental in the creation of Humboldt County's prioritized list for HUD-funded permanent supportive housing (PSH) and have been overseeing this system since it launched in August 2016. .

No additional staff would necessarily be required to carry out this project, but these funds may be used to support the provision of necessary services.

The HOME Program is currently using the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to collect data related to, and evaluate the performance of, two HUD-funded PSH projects, one HUD-funded rapid rehousing (RRH) project, a Measure Z-funded RRH project and a street outreach project. Each unsheltered HOME client, as well as clients residing in emergency shelters that do not use HMIS, are entered into our street outreach project in HMIS. Staff collect all of the client-level data that would be required if the project were HUD funded. Each time staff interact with a street outreach client, staff are required to record that contact in the street outreach project. When a client enters a shelter that uses HMIS, when we have lost contact with a client or when they are no longer homeless, they are exited from the street outreach project and the exit destinations are recorded.

When we enroll a client in a PSH or RRH project, their client-level data is entered into that project from HMIS. The project start date is the date that they have a voucher from

a certain funding source assigned to them. As in the street outreach project, staff collect all HUD-required client-level data and update the record as staff become aware of changes. When the PSH or RRH client moves into permanent housing, the move-in date is recorded. When they stop receiving rental assistance from that source, they are exited from the project in HMIS and the exit destination is recorded. Our street outreach data allows us to track the length of time that people are residing on the streets and the extent to which those enrolled exit to permanent housing and institutional settings. Our supportive housing and rapid rehousing data allow us to track the time it takes between enrollment and housing move-in, the extent to which people remain housed while enrolled, and the type of living situation they exit to when they leave the program, as well as data on income and benefits received.

When CESH funds for this project have been exhausted, HOME will continue providing housing and services just as it did before it had CESH funds using a variety of federal, state and local funding sources. HOME staff will continue monitor all federal and state funding sources that may be used to support these activities and to increase supportive housing capacity in Humboldt County

HOME integrated Housing First principles into all aspects of its activities several years ago. The program never screens people out of housing assistance because they aren't "ready for housing." There are many programs that claim to fully adhere to Housing First, but what's different about the HOME Program is that we prioritize the hardest to serve for our housing assistance. No client is too difficult. Unless a program is screening in the most difficult to serve, which necessarily involves prioritizing certain people over others who are easier to serve, that program has not truly embraced Housing First.

We believe that this CESH-funded project would be the difference between continued street homelessness and housing for many of these highest-priority clients. Once we help them obtain housing, we can use other funds to help them avoid returning to homelessness for years to come, long after CESH funds have been exhausted, and we will continuously seek out other funds that may be used to augment our program's effectiveness. HOME places every client on the list for Housing Authority Section 8 certificates and has moved 41 clients onto that permanent funding, relieving DHHS from continued rental assistance for those clients.

3.1 Project Budget through June 30, 2024

A. Operational Costs	Amount
Item: Flexible fund for housing and services. Description: Flexible funding that can be used to provide rental assistance and supportive services.	\$1,390,595.75
Grand Total:	\$1,390,595.75

4.0 Supplemental Documentation

1. Housing Unit Handbook (2018)
2. Homeless Strategy and Implementation Plan
3. HHHC Plan to End Homelessness 2019 Update (Draft)

5.0 Required Attachments

1. RFP Signature Affidavit