

South Bay Cities Council of Governments

April 11, 2022

TO: SBCCOG Steering Committee

FROM: Jacki Bacharach, SBCCOG Executive Director
Ronson Chu, SBCCOG Senior Project Manager for Homeless Services

SUBJECT: Letters to Board of Supervisors in support of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness recommendations

Adherence to Strategic Plan

Goal A: Environment, Transportation and Economic Development. Facilitate, implement and/or educate members and others about environmental, transportation and economic development programs that benefit the South Bay.

BACKGROUND

Over the past 6 months, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness (BRCH), with Redondo Beach Councilman Christian Horvath as one of the co-chairs, has been studying testimony from 280 individuals representing non-profits, subject matter experts, county department heads, local cities and cities from across the country. In addition, several public servants in the South Bay participated, including:

Mayor Robert Pullen-Miles, Lawndale
Councilmember Rodney Tanaka, Gardena
City Manager Suja Lowenthal, Hermosa Beach
HUD Programs Manager, Roberto Chavez, Inglewood
Grants Coordinator, Lori Jones, Inglewood
Assistant City Manager Raylette Felton, Lawndale
Director of Municipal Services, Michael Reyes, Lawndale
Deputy City Manager, Viet Hoang, Torrance
Center Director, Mary Agnes Erlandson, St Margaret's Center
Director SPA 8 Coordinated Entry System, Shari Weaver, Harbor Interfaith Services

On April 1, 2022, BRCH released the final 7 recommendations to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to streamline and improve the County's response to homelessness. The recommendations were not designed to be prescriptive in detail but were rather high-level. This approach allows the Supervisors flexibility in addressing deficiencies but is absent of detailed recommendations. The SBCCOG has written a letter in support of the BRCH recommendations and has added additional detailed suggestions to help further improve the program. Please see the letter on the following page.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Directors approve sending the SBCCOG Support letter to the LA County Board of Supervisors.

Proposed Letter to Supervisors to be on SBCCOG letterhead:

Dear Supervisor Mitchell, Chair and Members of the Board,

The South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG) supports the 7 recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness. We urge the Supervisors to act with urgency to implement the recommendations with the caveat that we recognize that there are still a great number of details to be considered. As such, the SBCCOG would like to provide additional recommendations in 3 main areas:

Theme #1: Consolidation and Coordination

The SBCCOG believes the following recommendations should be grouped together and implemented under one entity:

- Recommendation #1: Creation of County Entity, Working Groups, and identify a Leader
- Recommendation #4: Consolidate various bodies into a single decision-making Board
- Recommendation #6: Define goals and improve data sharing and integrity

The creation of the new County Entity and the consolidation of the new single decision-making Board go hand in hand. The new Board and County Entity would work closely and collaboratively to create data-informed goals, metrics, policies and procedures for the entire County and across departments to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The importance of data-informed goals and decision making cannot be understated, which is why we are recommending a **Chief Data Officer (CDO)** to be housed at the new County Entity. The role of the Chief Data Officer is to consolidate data from disparate systems (CHIP, HMIS, etc.), and report actionable data to the new Leader and to the decision-making Board. It is envisioned that the CDO will have staff to analyze the data and ensure that pertinent data is shared with cities and COGs across the County. This recommendation will provide the opportunity to take advantage of all data resources to inform decision making instead of relying primarily on one data source – HMIS – as is currently the case.

Other considerations for Recommendations #1, 4, and 6:

- a) One important topic mentioned frequently during BRCH, and reported recently by Cal Matters, is the issue of employee turnover and burnout - <https://calmatters.org/economy/labor/2022/01/california-homeless-worker-shortage/>. High turnover is costly to the program; using valuable resources to continually train new staff. The Corporation of Supportive Housing estimates that a single turnover event can cost the system \$20,000 in lost productivity, training costs, and rehiring costs; in addition to the emotional toll on people experiencing homelessness (PEH) when they have to start-over with a new case manager. The return on investment (ROI) of reducing turnover and employee burnout can be 3x or more.

To address this item, we recommend a Working Group dedicated to identifying the cause of turnover and implementing solutions across the Coordinated Entry System (CES). Furthermore, we recommend that this Working Group works closely with a new **Chief People Officer (CPO)** and staff at the County Entity. The goals of the Working Group and the CPO are twofold: to decrease systemwide turnover from 20% to under 10%, and to increase average employee tenure from less than 18 months to 3 years.

- b) Contract delays are common in homeless services – delaying important services while funding sits idle. The new County Entity will need to act across a number of County Departments, each with its own rules and regulations. We recommend that the County Entity house a **Chief Legal Officer** and staff to cut through the bureaucracy and streamline the contracting process.
- c) Strong leadership at the executive level is key to the success of the homeless delivery system. Choosing a Leader for the new County Entity must be executed wisely. Homelessness is a tactical, street problem (“FEMA-Like”) requiring a leader that can roll-up their sleeves to assess the situation on the ground. The SBCCOG recommends that the job posting for this position and qualifications include:
 - i. Demonstrated ability to pro-actively identify and solve large, complex problems
 - ii. Experience in tactically deploying large teams, with responsibilities for thousands of employees
 - iii. Ability to bring diverse groups together and facilitate their collaboration

This skill set does not need to come from homeless services or the public sector. **It is more important that they have the experience solving large, complex, tactical problems in either the private or public sector.** As an example, an ex-executive at a Fortune 500 company would have the tools gained from managing cross functional teams across multiple countries with thousands of employees. A Fortune 500 executive would be a great communicator, be a taskmaster, and have an eye for detail – all qualities we need in a Leader.

- d) Consolidating the various boards and commissions down to a single decision-making entity is going to be an important and difficult task. Just as important will be the composition of the people appointed to this new Board. In the past, we have seen Supervisors each appoint their own individuals to these posts; not knowing how much coordination occurs between the Supervisors. We recommend that the Supervisors take a very coordinated approach when making appointments to this new Board. **It is important that this Board not only have diverse demographic backgrounds, but also diverse professional backgrounds.** For example, if one Supervisor appoints someone with a strong legal background, another Supervisor might want to appoint someone with a strong financial background.

We also stress the need to have cities and COG representation on this Board.

Theme #2: Improving Local Partnerships

SBCCOG fully supports Recommendation #2: Provide multi-year local solutions fund to be accessed by cities and COGS.

One problem is that many of our cities have homeless counts of <100 and are too small to dedicate staff to address homelessness. This is where coordinating entities such as the SBCCOG play an important role. However, the SBCCOG only has 2 paid staff to address homelessness, and we understand that other regions may also lack the administrative capacity to take on more funding. If the Supervisors were to implement Recommendation #2, we suggest the County immediately provide **Seed Money to build staff at the regional level.**

At the SBCCOG, we could immediately use the Seed Money to hire additional staff members to build out programs such as a 24/7 Alternative Crisis Response, additional interim housing sites, landlord engagement programs, permanent housing development assistance, and outreach coordination for our member cities.

Theme #3: Streamline and Improve LAHSA

SBCCOG supports Recommendation #3: Streamline LAHSA, and Recommendation #5: Improve LAHSA operations with a special “Ops Team”.

The SBCCOG believes it makes sense to do #3 first before #5. The LAHSA structure needs to be streamlined and then improvements implemented. As recommended by BRCH, we support streamlining LAHSA by transitioning the authority back to its role as Continuum of Care lead and away from a direct service provider.

Once LAHSA’s role has been clearly defined, then the task of improving LAHSA’s operations can begin. The SBCCOG is concerned about how funds have been spent in the past on consultants to improve operations. Without exaggeration, millions of dollars with little benefit have been spent on recent work such as:The multi-year reorganization of LAHSA

- a) The revamp of its Grant Management System and the complimentary consulting work
- b) An analysis of LAHSA information management systems
- c) A compensation study for the entire organization

The SBCCOG asserts that LAHSA executive management and operations must be improved. Veronica Lewis, Director of HOPICS and Donyielle Holley, Homeless Programs Supervisor, City of Pomona, addressed this issue at BRCH:

“Internal struggle with communications at LAHSA make it difficult to get things done,”
“..they operate in crisis mode and tend to take action and make decisions that are reactive in nature..”

BRCH recommends an “Ops Team” to take a holistic look at LAHSA systems and processes. The SBCCOG recommends replacing the “Ops Team” with a **surgical approach using the skill of a Management Consultant**. In addition, the SBCCOG recommends that the scope of work for a Management Consultant include:

- a) Look at LAHSA’s 360 degree performance review process to make sure feedback from lower level staff are heard by Managers and Senior Executives
- b) Evaluate performance of Senior Executives, recommend individual development plans, set goals and make staffing change recommendations if needed
- c) Conduct management training and best practices

Recommendation #7 - The SBCCOG supports Recommendation #7: Convening and Executive Level Action Team. Convening senior subject matter experts, thought leaders, and people with political influence would be valuable, but we are unsure how this Executive Level Action Team fits with the New County Entity and the Working Groups that will be formed under the new Entity.

Summary:

In summary, the SBCCOG is supportive of BRCH Recommendations #1-6 under the themes of Consolidation & Coordination, Improving Local Partnerships, and Streamlining and Improving LAHSA.

In summary, the SBCCOG is supportive of the BRCH Recommendations, and would like to add the ideas underlined throughout this letter for your consideration:

- a) Create a New County Entity
- b) Include Chief Data Officer and staff to New County Entity
- c) Include Chief People Officer and staff to New County Entity

- d) Include Chief Legal Officer and staff to New County Entity
- e) Find a Leader of the New County Entity that has experience solving large, tactical problems from either the public or private sector
- f) Appoint Board members to the new decision-making entity that have diverse demographic and professional backgrounds and ensure City and COG representation on new consolidated Board
- g) Provide Seed Money for regions to increase staffing resources and support more multi-year local funding
- h) Replace the BRCH recommendation of a holistic “Ops Team” consultant at LAHSA, with a targeted management consulting service to address management performance and operations which are fundamental to the success of LAHSA and assuring the most efficient and effective use of its financial resources.

The SBCCOG is ready to support the Supervisors in implementing these recommendations. We are open to help in any way, including participating in any future discussions or working groups.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Drew Boyles, SBCCOG Chair
Mayor, City of El Segundo