U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
Fiscal Year 2021
Congressional Budget Justification

Trauma-Informed Care + Affordable Housing
=
Housing Stability

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
Fiscal Year 2021 Summary Statement

	2019 Enacted	**2020 Enacted**	**2021 Request**
Budget Authority	$3,600,000	$3,800,000	$3,800,000

Comparisons by Budget Object Classification: 2019 - 2021

	2019 **Actual**	**2020** **Enacted/Plan**	**2021** **Request**
11.0: Personnel	$2,150,277	$2,290,565	$2,290,565
FTE	*16*	*18*	*18*
12.0: Civilian Personnel Benefits	707,904	778,791	778,791
21.0: Travel and Transportation of Persons	108,969	191,198	191,198
22.0: Transportation of Things	1,062	960	960
23.0: Communications, Utilities, and Misc.	63,440	70,000	70,000
24.0: Printing and Reproduction	0	0	0
25.0: Services	523,254	446,486	446,486
26.0: Supplies and Materials	13,491	22,000	22,000
Total Obligations, Estimate	**3,568,397**	**3,800,000**	**3,800,000**
Total Outlays, Estimate	**3,568,397**	**3,800,000**	**3,800,000**

I.   Executive Summary

Many states and communities, with the support of the federal government and the private sector, are continuing to make progress, using best practices and building the coordinated responses that are necessary to reduce and ultimately end homelessness in America. Other states and communities, however, are experiencing increases in homelessness, and there are indicators of significant challenges ahead.

Data from HUD's *Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress* for 2019 shows an estimated 11% fewer people were experiencing homelessness in 2019 compared to 2010, and there were 10% fewer people who were unsheltered, sleeping on our sidewalks, in our parks, and in other unsafe environments. For some targeted groups, communities have made even greater progress within their point-in-time data. For example, since 2010, there are 50% fewer Veterans and 32% fewer family households experiencing homelessness. Geographically, 29 states and the District of Columbia reported overall declines in homelessness, while 21 states reported increases.

In addition, since the release of federal criteria and benchmarks in 2015 to measure progress for ending homelessness among Veterans, 78 communities and 3 entire states, across 35 different states, have effectively ended Veteran homelessness. And four communities have achieved the federal criteria and benchmarks for ending chronic homelessness. These achievements show that ending homelessness is possible when resources are scaled to necessary levels and deployed strategically.

Other data released in FY 2019 revealed some concerning trends. For example:

- HUD's point-in-time count of chronically homeless individuals with disabilities and extended patterns of homelessness in the 2019 count went up more than 8% from 2018, comprised of increases in both sheltered and unsheltered people. The increase in chronically homeless individuals was concentrated in major west coast cities that are experiencing a severe shortage of affordable housing: 8 of the 10 Continuums of Care (CoCs) with the largest increases in unsheltered homelessness were in California.

- According to ED's *Federal Data Summary School Years 2015-2016 to 2017-18: Education for Homeless Children and Youth*, released in January 2020, public schools reported that 1,508,265 enrolled students were identified as experiencing homelessness at some point during the 2017-2018 school year, an increase of approximately 15% over a three-year period. An increase in homelessness among students in Texas as a result of Hurricane Harvey during the 2017-2018 school year accounts for a significant portion of that increase. At the point of identification by school district liaisons, the majority of students experiencing homelessness (74%), shared housing with others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason.

- Racial inequities remained pronounced and stark. For example, while African Americans make up 13% of the general population, they represented 40% of people counted as experiencing

homelessness in the [2019 point-in-time count](#), and 43% of people who accessed shelter, according to HUD's [annual shelter usage data](#) for 2017, the most recent published data.

- According to the [State of the Nation's Housing 2019](#), released by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University in June 2019, the total number of low cost rental units across the country fell 17% between 2011 and 2017, a decrease of more than 4 million units.

To meet these challenges, we are especially focused in FY 2020 on working directly with jurisdictions with the highest rates of both homelessness and unsheltered homelessness. To support local efforts to increase access to affordable housing, USICH will also support efforts that reduce the cost of constructing affordable housing that is targeted to people exiting homelessness. We will also be supporting communities to use evidence-based trauma-informed care across services and supports to improve housing stability. These activities are expected to continue in FY 2021.

To support that work, USICH presents its Congressional Budget Justification request in the amount of **$3,800,000 for FY 2021**. This request includes a total of 18 FTE and necessary operations costs.

II.   Our Request

OC 11.0 Personnel - $2,290,565
USICH is able to drive federal policy through a small number of dedicated staff. Our employees work nimbly and efficiently across the federal government, in close partnership with state and local governments, and with the non-profit and private sectors to end homelessness and foster housing stability throughout the country. Staff coordinate the work of federal partners across HHS, HUD, VA, and other Council member agencies to better align their investments and achieve maximum impact and return on investment of taxpayer dollars.

USICH uses its OPM-approved performance management system to sustain and encourage continued high performance among our staff. This tool helps support the ability to recruit and maintain our staff to carry out the Agency's mission.

For Fiscal Year 2021, USICH requests funding for 18 FTE. These staff carry out our policy work, work with our federal partners and national, state, and local stakeholders, carry out our internal mission support functions, communications work, and other areas – all in support of the mission of the Agency.

OC 12.0 Civilian Personnel Benefits - $778,791

These costs reflect agency-provided and OPM-approved benefits for all applicable employees.

OC 21.0 Travel and Transportation of Persons - $191,198

The costs included in this category are for headquarters and regional staff to work directly alongside state and local stakeholders to provide guidance and develop cross-sector partnerships and solutions. Travel costs are necessary to support USICH's ability to directly engage with partners and to have the

direct impact proven necessary to further progress towards ending homelessness in states and communities that are most critical to the achievement of the Agency's mission across the nation.

While USICH continues to utilize new technologies as much as practicable to preserve and maintain our local partnerships virtually, we have been most successful in translating those relationships into local actions and policy changes through significant levels of in-person engagement.

As a matter of practice and prudence, USICH regularly combines as much stakeholder work into each trip as possible, which helps ensure that we utilize travel funds in the most cost-effective manner, while achieving optimal impact.

OC 22.0 Transportation of Things - $960

These estimated costs are for mailings and deliveries.

OC 23.0 Communications, Utilities, and Miscellaneous - $70,000

These costs cover office and cellular phones, internet connectivity, postage, and package delivery costs.

OC 25.0 Services - $446,486

This category includes agency-leased federal office space, as well as operations and infrastructure support from USDA and GSA in finance, payroll, human resources processing, outside auditors for compliance with the Accountability of Tax Dollars Act, information technology desktop and network support, and other operational support. Additionally, costs included here support our communications work, as well as our website management and webinars hosted by USICH.

OC 26.0 Supplies and Materials - $22,000

This category covers necessary supplies and materials to support the work of USICH.

III. Our Value

USICH's mission is two-fold: to drive an efficient and effective federal response to homelessness; and to build and foster a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness across the nation. Homelessness is a complex and multi-faceted problem that cannot be solved by any single agency, level of government, sector, or system on its own. We support all of our interagency and community work by publishing a robust body of guidance, tools, and resources that we disseminate through a multi-pronged communications strategy.

Driving an Efficient and Effective Federal Response to Homelessness

USICH focuses on using data and performance measures to maximize several billions of dollars in targeted federal homelessness funding, and to engage other federal, state, and local non-targeted programs, by providing a foundation for evidence-informed practices. USICH is highlighted in a 2014

[GAO report](#) for its successful strategies for enhancing interagency collaboration. USICH does not administer programs or have regulatory authority, nor do we duplicate the efforts of other agencies; rather, our tools for advancing good governance are through innovative collaborations and strategic engagements that drive smart, efficient changes and progress across our partners and stakeholders.

Building Consensus at the Highest Levels. Through our efforts, collective action to end homelessness reaches the highest level of the federal government. USICH calls and supports the quarterly meetings of our Council, which include senior leaders from our 19 member agencies. We utilize other interagency policy and planning structures to provide a regular forum for senior staff from member agencies to coordinate policies and programs, collect data, develop special initiatives, and prepare recommendations for consideration by Council members and for Council meeting discussions.

Driving Interagency Action. To drive day-to-day progress, we also convene a variety of on-going and ad hoc interagency working groups as necessary and comprised of high-level agency staff from key partners across our 19 member agencies, including:

- Solving Veteran Homelessness as One
- Interagency Working Group on Ending Chronic Homelessness among People with Disabilities
- Interagency Working Group on Ending Family Homelessness
- Interagency Working Group on Ending Youth Homelessness
- Interagency Working Group on Employment and Homelessness
- Interagency Working Group on Setting a Path to End Homelessness among American Indians and Alaska Natives

Gathering Input on Emerging Topics. We bring together groups of community leaders, experts, national partners, and staff from our Council member agencies for exploratory conversations about new strategic actions. Recent topics have included addressing homelessness and housing instability among American Indians and Alaska Natives, translating key findings from the Voices of Youth Count research into policy recommendations, and highlighting emerging research on the needs and characteristics of older adults experiencing homelessness.

Mobilizing Nationwide Actions in Support of a Shared Vision. As the only agency in the federal government whose singular mission is to end homelessness, our role includes building and sustaining a shared national vision, which is captured and communicated in our federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. We also work to create a shared vocabulary and understanding of the data regarding homelessness and make sure that federal technical assistance to the field conveys both that shared understanding and the best practices for achieving our goals.

Encouraging Understanding and Action to Address Racial Inequities. Racial inequities in experiences of homelessness are clear in the data, driven by a complex array of inequities within our systems and social dynamics—biases and prejudices, overt discrimination, systemic and institutional racism, and many other related and intersectional forces—that impact our responses to homelessness. We work to foster understanding and elevate strategies for addressing racial disparities.

Ensuring Consistent Federal Technical Assistance on Ending Homelessness: Communities across the country receive technical assistance from different, and sometimes multiple, federal agencies and programs that guide their strategic planning and implementation of best practices. We work to ensure that that technical assistance is as streamlined and coordinated as possible so that all communities are receiving the same guidance.

Providing Technical Assistance to Inform Federal Disaster Response and Homelessness. We work with partners from federal agencies, the Red Cross, national consultants, and continuums of care affected by natural disasters to share resources and information.

Building a National Partnership at Every Level of Government and Across the Private Sector

USICH drives national, regional, state, and local collective action through outcome-oriented partnerships with a wide variety of leaders and decisionmakers:

Regional/State Interagency Councils. We have encouraged every federal region and every state to develop interagency councils on homelessness to set goals, align public resources, build on innovations and best practices across the country, and promote cost effective strategies.

Elected Officials. Political leadership is critical to advancing progress. We meet regularly with Governors, Mayors, and other elected officials and local leaders to provide individualized guidance to address the unique needs of their jurisdictions. We also work with associations that support the efforts of a broad array of elected officials.

National Non-Profit Organizations and Associations. Through our national stakeholders' outreach, we partner with national organizations that drive and influence public agendas on homelessness, housing, and related issues, such as the National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, A Way Home America, and National Low Income Housing Coalition, and many others.

Private Sector, Faith-Based, and Philanthropic Partners. The private sector and faith-based and philanthropic organizations dedicated to serving populations at risk of or experiencing homelessness play critical leadership roles, in partnership with public agencies and programs. We work with a variety of stakeholders across those sectors.

Community Leaders. We provide a range of targeted community engagement and technical assistance to community leaders in all 50 states.

Providing Tools and Resources for Success

Through a broad communications strategy that includes electronic newsletters, speaking engagements, conference presentations, social media, and media engagement, we disseminate best practices to a wide array of stakeholders across the country.

IV. Our Work: Plans for Fiscal Year 2021

In FY 2021, we will be particularly focused on working directly with the jurisdictions with the highest rates of both homelessness and unsheltered homelessness. To support local efforts to increase access to affordable housing, USICH will also support efforts that reduce the cost of constructing affordable housing that is targeted to people exiting homelessness. We will also be supporting communities to use evidence-based trauma-informed care across services and supports to improve housing stability.

1. **End Chronic Homelessness Among People with Disabilities**

   Recent increases in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness means we must redouble our efforts to end the recurring or long-term homelessness of people with disabilities. We will work with communities on strategies to prevent people from falling into chronic homelessness in the first place, to prioritize people experiencing chronic homelessness for existing supportive housing, create opportunities to bring new units online, and pair housing with health and behavioral health services to help ensure housing stability.

2. **End Homelessness among Veterans**

   Since 2010, Veteran homelessness has fallen by 50%, according to HUD's point-in-time count data. At the same time, 78 communities and 3 entire states have achieved the federal criteria and benchmarks for achieving the goal of effectively ending Veteran homelessness. USICH will continue to provide leadership to advance coordination among federal partners, state and local entities, and philanthropy, using data-driven decision-making to drive the deployment of resources through the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, which enable communities to provide a range of housing and services interventions to Veterans.

3. **End Homelessness among Families and Children**

   Between 2010 and 2019, homelessness among family households was reduced by 32%, including a 75% drop in unsheltered homelessness among family households, as documented within communities' annual point-in-time counts. That progress has been driven by the vision of a comprehensive community response to family homelessness described within our [criteria and benchmarks for ending family homelessness,](#) which are helping government, non-profits, and other partners increase their focus on evidence-based solutions and using their time and resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. We will continue to promote systemic responses to achieving the goal of ending family homelessness, as well as increased coordination with schools and early care and education programs and with domestic violence services.

4. **End Homelessness among Youth**

   Local point-in-time counts estimate that there were 35,038 unaccompanied youth under the age of 25 experiencing homelessness on any given day in 2019. In addition, there were 7,564 parents and 9,779 children in families in which the parent was a youth. Data from the Department of

Education and Voices of Youth Count also show that there is still much work to be done to reduce and end youth homelessness in America. According to ED's Federal Data Summary, 1,508,265 public school students were identified as experiencing homelessness at some point during the 2017-2018 school year. And national prevalence research from Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count found that 1 in 30 youth ages 13 to 17 and 1 in 10 young adults ages 18 to 25 experience some form of homelessness in a year.

Efforts to improve our data on the scale and scope of youth homelessness are helping us to better understand the full range of solutions, collaborations, and investments needed to achieve and sustain an end to homelessness, by any federal definition, for all youth. We'll continue work to improve our understanding of the scale and scope of youth homelessness as well as supporting and learning from communities that are engaged in Youth Homelessness Demonstration Projects and other initiatives.

5. **End Homelessness among All Other Individuals**

Point-in-time count data estimates that 70% of people experiencing homelessness (396,045 people) were "individuals," in 2019, that is, in households without children. While homelessness among individuals trended downward between 2010 and 2016, it increased over the last three years. In order to address homelessness among single individuals, we will continue work to advance efforts to address encampments and unsheltered homelessness, help people who exit homelessness find employment success, and build strategies to address homelessness among older adults.