



United States Interagency Council on Homelessness Fiscal Year 2013 Congressional Budget Justification

**UNITED STATES INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS
SUMMARY STATEMENT**

	<u>Enacted/ Request</u>	<u>Carryover</u>	<u>Supplemental/ Rescission</u>	<u>Total Resources</u>	<u>Obligations</u>	<u>Outlays</u>
<u>2011 Enacted</u>	<u>\$2,680,000</u>	<u>-0-</u>	<u>-0-</u>	<u>\$2,680,000</u>	<u>\$2,671,968</u>	<u>\$2,666,119</u>
<u>2012 Enacted</u>	<u>\$3,300,000</u>					
<u>2013 Request</u>	<u>\$3,600,000</u>					

I. **FISCAL YEAR 2013 BUDGET REQUEST**

For Fiscal Year 2013 (FY 13), the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) requests \$3.6 million to support its mission.

Additionally, to support its work on *Opening Doors: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* (Plan) implementation, the Budget proposes to delete the agency's sunset date to permanently authorize the agency as it builds momentum and carries out its ongoing mission to prevent and end homelessness for populations in the United States. The Budget also requests a change in the salary level for its Executive Director, from an EX V to IV, to be consistent with equivalent positions in the federal sector.

In this Budget, USICH has included major activities executed in FY 11, activities planned and underway for FY 12, and proposed activities for FY 13. These efforts do not, in any way, represent all of the collaborations, day-to-day activities and ground work necessary to complete the unprecedented work that our mission charges us to do – creating, sustaining and increasing momentum on activities that support prevention of and an end to homelessness as we know it.

With a very small complement of staff, and correspondingly small operating budget, USICH staff is constantly challenging itself to do more with limited resources. Whether it is utilization of staff in the most strategic way possible or using technology in a way that best supports our work and promotes cost savings in terms of the need to travel and other efficiencies afforded by smart use of 21st century technology. The government's, Congress', and taxpayers' return on investment is excellent, given what we have been able to accomplish, since the passage of the HEARTH Act in 2009 and the June 2010 launch of *Opening Doors*.

USICH looks forward to Congress' continued support of its Budget requests in order to make the kind of progress and impact that is necessary to accomplish what was set forth in the HEARTH Act.

Budget Request by Object Classification - \$3,600,000

OC 11, Personnel: \$2,004,626

The amount requested is based on a staff of 22 FTE. USICH, fully staffed and engaged, will ensure active and complete coverage for all USICH activities and will help achieve its mission, goals, and objectives.

Starting in FY 12, USICH was granted budgetary authority which enables it to directly hire five (5) regional staff and officially end the practice of HUD detailing Regional Coordinators (RCs) to USICH. Regional staff thus consists of one Director, National Engagement and Field Operations, who supervises and coordinates the work of four (4) RCs, as well as having a direct share of regional accountabilities. This Request adds an additional RC to support USICH's work and Plan progress, and a part-time Management and Program Analyst to provide mission support for professional staff. USICH continues to work with HUD on providing office and associated support for regional staff.

Many of the specific activities and projects that will be accomplished by USICH staff are discussed in detail in Section III of this document.

OC 12, Benefits: \$475,657

This amount represents USICH's contributions for employee benefits, which have increased slightly, as OC 11, Personnel has increased over our FY 12 Budget Plan.

OC 21, Travel: \$219,000

This category includes all travel costs for all USICH activities, particularly travel necessary for regional work in support of Plan implementation that is necessary to achieve Plan objectives.

Since the release of the Plan, USICH has added staff to build capacity to achieve the Plan goals. An increase in travel expenses is necessary to support the implementation activities of our larger staff. Without the ability to travel regionally to support and promote implementation of the Plan, our progress in achieving its goals and objectives, many of which require work with stakeholders across the country, will be greatly hindered.

OC 22, Transportation of Things: \$3,000

This category's estimates are for local and long distance courier and overnight delivery services as well as postage for mailings.

Object Class 23, Communications, Utilities, and Miscellaneous Charges: \$500,000

This estimate represents USICH's cost for rental of office space for Headquarters, as well as communications services such as broad band internet and phone services.

The reduction in cost for this object class between years FY 13 and FY 12 is a result of cost savings we have identified which will enable us to get the communication services we need at a lower rate.

Object Class 24, Printing and Reproduction: \$12,000

This category supports the printing and reproduction of USICH materials and other routine costs incurred in the operations of USICH. USICH expects to utilize its website in FY 13 to make more documents available electronically, which is reflected in the slight decrease in this category.

Object Class 25, Services: \$345,717

The costs for this category include outsourced services such as web site maintenance, enhanced computer network support, administrative support from GSA, audit services, training, and other routine administrative services.

USICH depends heavily on a reliable IT system to support its work, both onsite and remotely. With additional staff hired in FY12 and expected in FY13, more robust network support is necessary and therefore an increase occurs in this category over FY 12.

Object Class 26, Supplies and Materials: \$40,000

Anticipated expenses include routine office supplies, subscriptions and other materials, as well as technical and other reports and studies.

This category has increased slightly over FY 12 in order to provide necessary supplies and materials for the increased staff levels.

II. MISSION AND OVERVIEW

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) was established in 1987 by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act). USICH's mission, established in the McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by the HEARTH Act of 2009, is to:

"Coordinate the Federal response to homelessness and to create a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness in the nation while maximizing the effectiveness of the Federal Government in contributing to the end of homelessness."

USICH is currently comprised of the heads (or the designees) of 19 Federal departments and agencies:

- Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Department of Commerce (Commerce)
- Department of Defense (DoD)
- Department of Education (Education)
- Department of Energy (DOE)
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Department of the Interior (DOI)
- Department of Justice (DOJ)
- Department of Labor (DOL)
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
- General Services Administration (GSA)
- Social Security Administration (SSA)
- U.S. Postal Service (USPS)
- White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI)
- White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

Additionally, the White House Domestic Policy Council actively participates in Council activities.

Launched in June 2010, *Opening Doors* serves as a roadmap for joint action by the 19 USICH member agencies and the USICH staff. The Plan is focused on four key goals:

- Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015;
- Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans by 2015;
- Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020; and
- Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.

Building off of the momentum generated across the country by the release of *Opening Doors*, USICH began immediately working through all 10 objectives outlined in the Plan.

Organization

- Council

In FY 11, the full Council met five times -- in November and December of 2010, and March, July and September, 2011. During these meetings, discussions included improved and additional activities to support Plan implementation, including better collaboration among Council Member Agencies and other opportunities to prevent and end homelessness specifically related to Veteran homelessness (November), chronic homelessness (December), and family homelessness (September). Additionally, the Council developed and submitted to OMB for clearance a copy of the first Annual Update on Opening Doors.

Most recently, in FY 12, the full Council met at HHS on December 13 to discuss a plan for the beginnings of a framework to tackle Youth Homelessness.

- Chair

At the December 2011 full Council meeting, elections were held that moved the chairmanship from Labor Secretary Hilda Solis to HHS Secretary Sebelius, and the vice chairmanship from Secretary Sebelius to Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki.

- Staff

The daily activities of USICH are managed by Executive Director Barbara Poppe. Executive Director Poppe reports directly to the USICH Chair, and is supported by professional and mission support. For FY 13 proposed staffing also includes two (2) Deputy Directors, one (1) Director of Finance and Administration, one (1) Director of Housing Policy/Research, one (1) Director of Communications and Congressional Relations, six (6) regional staff [a Director of National Engagement and Field Operations and five (5) Regional Coordinators], one (1) Communications Specialist, two full and one part-time (2.5) Management and Program Analysts, one (1) Executive Assistant, two (2) Program Assistants, one (1) Staff Assistant, and five (5) part-time graduate level interns for a total of 22 FTE. The addition of one RC increases the agency's ability to cover all

ten federal HUD regions, which span the entire United States. The part-time Management and Program Analyst provides additional necessary support for accomplishment of Plan objectives and implementation.

Staffing is structured so that the Executive Director and Director-level staff are directly accountable for achievement of Plan objectives and activities noted in this Request. RC staff provide essential regional coverage in support of Plan objectives and necessary implementation activities with the myriad of homelessness stakeholders. All other staff provide mission support for achievement of Plan objectives and implementation, and support for operations, communications and other mission support activities.

Activities described in this narrative are built with the expectation of the staffing described above and resources for operations and travel as outlined in this Request and in the accompanying FY 13 Budget Plan.

- Council Policy Group

The Council Policy Group (CPG) consists of at least one senior representative from each of the nineteen member agencies. The CPG provides a regular forum for coordinating policies and programs, collecting data, developing special initiatives, and preparing recommendations for consideration by Council members.

In FY 11, the CPG met five times with high participation rates from all member agencies. Meetings focused on implementation and management of *Opening Doors*, preparation for meetings of the Council, work with national organizations, and development of the USICH Annual Update to *Opening Doors*.

Thus far in FY 12, the CPG met on November 9, 2011 with the primary objective of that meeting being an introduction to USICH's process of performance measurement of Plan progress.

CPG meetings will continue to occur at least four times per year in the future.

III. FY 11, 12 AND 13 ACTIVITIES

Consistent with its mission, USICH is working to coordinate the national effort to end homelessness through activities involving all levels of government, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector through the vehicle of its strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, *Opening Doors*, as required by the HEARTH Act of 2009.

Opening Doors, Progress on Plan Objectives

- **Veterans' Homelessness**

FY 11

During FY 11, USICH began coordinating efforts in the District of Columbia to prioritize ending Veterans homelessness. We convened meetings with community stakeholders to identify areas where the District is making progress and areas where more work needs to be done. USICH, also convened a

meeting between the District of Columbia government and the District of Columbia Veterans Affairs Medical Center which led to the District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness adding a representative from the Veterans Affairs Medical Center to the DC ICH and established a committee to write a plan to end Veterans homelessness. USICH also worked with the Department of Veterans Affairs to recruit and work with an interagency team of grant reviewers for the Supportive Services for Veterans Families Grant that will provide rapid rehousing and prevention services to homeless and at risk Veterans. USICH is playing a key role in the Department of Veterans' Affairs redesign of their Grant and Per Diem Program and the sharing of their data to strengthen efforts in ending Veterans homelessness by 2015. Finally, USICH is working with the VA to improve targeting of HUD VA Supportive Housing Vouchers (VASH) to chronically homeless Veterans and helping to facilitate strategies to reduce the amount of time it takes for those Veterans to be housed.

FY 12 and 13

In FY 12, USICH is focusing on the alignment of resources across our federal partners, shared performance management frameworks, and increased interagency communications to support work in this area.

Implementation of this framework will occur after adoption and through FY 13.

- **Chronic Homelessness**

FY 11

Opening Doors included the development of a new joint initiative between HUD and HHS that would connect vouchers with health and social services provided through Medicaid and wraparound services funded through SAMHSA. Proposed but ultimately not funded in FY 11, USICH instead worked with HUD and HHS to understand the opportunities and complexities of pairing existing Housing Choice Vouchers with Medicaid in a permanent supportive housing intervention. USICH's contributions helped SAMHSA shape its Cooperative Agreements to Benefit Homeless Individuals, an RFA that requires applicants to show evidence that their local Medicaid authority and public housing authority are partners in creating permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals.

FY 12 and 13

Work in FY 12 will focus on analyzing the cause of what we currently know about progress on reductions of chronically homeless populations – adjustments are necessary now in order to end chronic homelessness by 2015. USICH will obtain a better understanding of available data relevant to this population and convene appropriate stakeholders in efforts to gain a more accurate plan of action in order to make intended progress on this Plan objective.

Based on progress achieved and the availability of necessary resources to include affordable housing units, implementation of a revised plan of action will start in FY 12 and continue through FY 13, and will be supported by USICH regional staff.

- **Youth Homelessness**

FY 11

In FY 11, USICH worked with the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs to determine scalable solutions to youth homelessness, and to discuss the needs of youth and what would be necessary to fulfill the goal of ending youth homelessness by 2020.

FY 12 and 13

Thus far in FY 12, USICH has begun work with staff across key agencies (ED, HHS, HUD, DOL, DOJ, and SSA) to identify opportunities to incent improved local systemic responses to youth homelessness, to improve federal data on the number and nature of youth homelessness, and to develop a federal research agenda to elevate understanding of best practices for various subsets of unaccompanied homeless youth, and youth at risk of homelessness. Most recently, the full Council met at HHS on December 13, 2011 to discuss a plan for the beginnings of a framework to tackle youth homelessness. Additionally in FY 12, interagency staff will develop an operational framework and implementation plan to support an end to youth homelessness by 2020.

Considerable work will need to be done during FY 12 and FY 13 to understand federal resources that can be brought to bear and the ways in which we can have the greatest impact with the federal investments we make across agencies. Together, the agencies are exploring options for moving forward, which may include a pilot, changes in the way existing investments are prioritized to reach underserved youth, opportunities for collaboration across agencies, and opportunities to learn more about program impacts for different subpopulations of youth.

- **Family Homelessness**

FY 11

Opening Doors included the development of a new joint initiative between HUD, HHS, and ED that would connect vouchers with services provided through TANF and the schools. Proposed but ultimately not funded in FY 11, USICH instead worked with HUD, HHS and ED to understand the opportunities and complexities of pairing existing Housing Choice Vouchers with TANF, educational supports, and other federal programs to stabilize housing for families.

FY 12 and 13

USICH is working closely with HUD to promote opportunities under HEARTH implementation at the local level that can improve services to families at risk of and experiencing homelessness. Work in this area also includes interagency planning to determine and construct an operational framework to end homelessness for this population by 2020. Implementation of the result of that work will occur afterwards, and through FY 13. USICH will also facilitate a discussion with external stakeholders to determine activities that might be undertaken within existing authority to better meet homeless children's needs.

Improving Federal Approaches

- **Interagency Collaborations**

A key activity and core function of USICH is to work with all the member agencies that form the Council to align targeted homeless programs with the approaches outlined in *Opening Doors*. This includes understanding the regulations and policies that guide these targeted programs, understanding the data that is collected and what it says about performance, and helping grantees shift their thinking from operating programs that "help the homeless" to designing and implementing programs that will prevent and end homelessness. USICH has no direct responsibility for any of these programs, but it is incumbent on our staff to stay abreast of opportunities to communicate with federal agencies (to ensure federal agencies are communicating with one another), assist with messaging to state and local leaders and grantees, identify opportunities to improve the collection and use of data, create collaborations between programs both federally and locally, and help articulate the vision of how realigned federal resources, coupled with local and private resources, can be used to make dramatic reductions in homelessness. Some of this activity is small, some of it is transformational.

FY 11 examples include:

- USICH partnered with HHS on a number of activities in FY 11, including three expert panel listening sessions: one with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on integrated care models for chronic homelessness, and two with SAMHSA on homelessness prevention and the unique needs of Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn Veterans. All of these topics are pressing, emerging issues and areas of new understanding and practice. The panels are helping get up-to-date information out to the field quickly.
- In December 2010, USICH and the VA co-hosted a Veterans Summit. At this Summit, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki charged the VA to develop local plans that will collectively end Veterans homelessness by 2015, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan committed his agency to partnering with the VA and local communities to achieve this goal, and USICH Executive Director Barbara Poppe challenged local communities to better partner with the nonprofit and private sectors. The Summit also provided workshops on the tools and approaches the VA must adopt to accomplish this goal.

- USICH helped the VA incorporate lessons learned from HUD's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program into the design and selection process of its new Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. By transferring lessons learned in real time, and providing support and training to VA staff and the new grantees, USICH will support these new dollars being invested wisely, to achieve the greatest possible impact. USICH participated in the review and selection process for the inaugural grantees for this program. USICH staff also participated in the two national grantee meetings to launch SSVF.
- USICH is working closely with HUD, VA, and local communities to improve both the utilization and targeting of HUD-VASH vouchers. At the beginning of 2010, these vouchers were underutilized and oftentimes not targeted to those who most needed supportive housing. Now, utilization has been improved, better targeting is occurring, and USICH is supporting work in communities that have had the greatest difficulty to streamline their collaborations and processes to speed the amount of time it takes to house a homeless Veteran, and to improve information sharing for better performance management.
- In the summer and fall of 2011, USICH developed and distributed information and technical assistance resources (e.g., webinars, toolkits) to increase involvement of Public Housing Agencies in local efforts to prevent and end homelessness, as well as working with HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing to identify and modify policies that serve as barriers at the local level to serving homeless households. Given the extremely limited supply of affordable and permanent supportive housing in communities across America, engaging Public Housing Agencies and encouraging deep targeting to households with the most severe barriers will be critical to successful implementation of *Opening Doors*.
- USICH worked closely with HUD, the VA, and HHS leading up to the January 2011 and 2012 HUD Point-in-Time Counts to prepare and distribute guidance to increase the participation of Veteran and youth service providers in local Point-in-Time counts. Veterans and youth are two populations that have been historically undercounted. While more work must be done in this area, this collaborative activity is leading to more accurate data on the size and nature of both Veterans and youth homelessness, which is critical to ending homelessness for these populations.
- USICH has been working with HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs to retool the way technical assistance resources are deployed to communities. This work began in Los Angeles after USICH and its federal partners worked with local leaders to host a Summit in April 2011. HUD and other federal agencies have since begun collaborating to better coordinate technical assistance for the LA area. Similar work is continuing in other communities through the USICH Priority Communities initiative.

FY 12 and 13

USICH will continue to respond to opportunities to further federal interagency partnerships. As in FY 10 and FY 11, these opportunities emerge as USICH works closely with its federal partners based on their respective agency plans as well as in response to requests from the Council.

- **Federal Research Agenda**

FY 11

USICH hired its first Research Director in October 2010 to lead the *Opening Doors'* strategies to aggregate significant research and evaluation reports on federal, state, and local initiatives to reduce homelessness. In order to accomplish this work, a federal interagency work group was established in January 2011 to bring together agencies that are funding or conducting research on homelessness to begin the work of compiling research, identifying gaps, and developing a federal research agenda to guide future investments. The group has completed the first step of this process --compiling known research. The redesigned USICH website (launched in May 2011) includes a searchable research database including abstracts of and links to relevant research conducted over the past decade.

FY 12 and 13

In FY 12, and building on the work done in FY 11 to compile known research on homelessness, USICH will review gaps in this research and move forward with the creation of a Federal research agenda on homelessness to guide decisions about future investments. USICH will also continue to coordinate research efforts across Federal agencies to ensure we are leveraging available opportunities and learning from one another's efforts.

USICH will also add a searchable "solutions database" to the website, which will be a simple way to access information about evidence-based practices and promising program models. This is in support of the second objective in *Opening Doors* regarding strengthening capacity and increasing knowledge. Throughout, FY 12 and FY 13, USICH will continue to add new items to this database as well as update information in this system as needed.

Additionally, implementation will occur as agencies adopt the research agenda and as necessary resources are available over the next few years.

- ***Opening Doors'* Performance Management and Annual Update**

FY 11, 12, and 13

Pursuant to the HEARTH Act, USICH prepared an annual report on progress towards *Opening Doors'* goals, including a discussion of key activities and accomplishments by Council member agencies. The report examines the impact of environmental factors (such as the recession) and includes a discussion on barriers to

implementation. While the report serves as an update to both Congress and the public, it was also an opportunity for reflection by Council member agencies and staff on needed adjustments to plan implementation. The report was cleared and disseminated in October 2011. USICH plans to replicate this process in FY 12 and FY 13 with a focus on updates and progress made on Plan Objectives outlines and identified in *Opening Doors*.

- **Engaging National Partners**

FY 11, 12, 13

USICH is strategically engaging a network of cross-sector partners across the country, such as the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and a myriad of other organizations. The purpose of this work is to assist USICH in advancing policy initiatives, coordinating with states and local communities, and promoting a unified message to prevent and end homelessness. Through this strategic work with our national partners, we are supporting states' work to create, invigorate and support their State Interagency Councils on Homelessness, and supporting communities in their efforts to align local plans to end homelessness with *Opening Doors*.

Additionally, USICH holds a regular quarterly meeting with national and advocacy organizations and with our Council agencies to provide opportunities for open dialogue about the Plan and other issues related to the federal response to homelessness.

These regular and formalized collaborations with national partner organizations have created both buy-in and ownership of the Plan and have resulted in significant support on Plan implementation.

Working with local communities and states

One of the primary methods USICH uses to advance the national effort to prevent and end homelessness is direct engagement with states and communities throughout the country. This work is accomplished through the work of the regional team in concert with the Deputy Directors and the Executive Director, as well as through a number of specific national initiatives. The extent of state and community engagement is and, in FY 13, will continue to be dependent on the number of regional coordinators and the level of travel funds available to support their work. The ability to bring on the additional regional coordinator proposed in this Request will be critical to success of this work.

FY 11, 12, and 13

- In FY 11, USICH launched outreach to states and communities in the Plan implementation, by providing information to key community, state and jurisdictional partners about federal investments, innovations, and partnerships and lending technical expertise in developing State Interagency Councils on Homelessness. These efforts continue throughout FY 12 and FY 13.

- USICH is supporting and encouraging creation of a State ICH in every state to serve as a bridge between federal, state, and local efforts. Focused efforts which have occurred in states with the greatest number/rates of homelessness will continue in FY 12 and FY 13.
- *Opening Doors Across America*, Priority Communities, and Technical Assistance (see below for specific descriptions).
- ***Opening Doors Across America: a USICH Call to Action***

FY 11, 12, and 13

As part of our efforts to reinforce the implementation of *Opening Doors* throughout the nation, USICH launched *Opening Doors Across America: a USICH Call to Action* in September 2011. This is an effort to catalyze communities throughout the United States to take on the challenge of preventing and ending homelessness by implementing *Opening Doors*. *Opening Doors Across America* is connecting with stakeholders throughout the nation who are engaged in homeless policy and systems work and calling on them to commit to a set of specific actions that will assist in our national efforts to coordinate action leading to the prevention and end of homelessness. The regional team is advancing this effort in collaboration with Federal and national partners and tracking participation by states and communities. Design of this initiative and the launch were part of our FY 11 activities. Implementation will occur during FY 12 and continue into FY 13.

Sufficient regional staff, including the additional RC requested, are crucial to the success of this work in addition to resource availability at the federal, state, local and philanthropic levels. Additionally, a sufficient and incrementally increasing level of affordable housing units will be necessary for successful execution of this work.

- **Priority Communities**

FY 11, 12, and 13

In order to make a noticeable difference nationally and make progress on the goals and Objectives set forth in *Opening Doors*, it is imperative that we make positive, significant movement in communities that represent a large share of homelessness in this country. These twenty-five “Priority Communities” - along with three priority states - are home to the majority of people who are homeless in this country. Considering the work of Federal Agencies, other national partners, and our understanding of these communities, USICH is developing and executing customized engagement plans to complement and support efforts underway in these areas. Engagement plans are guiding the work of the USICH regional team and enhancing the capacity of these crucial communities in preventing and ending homelessness. Development of the Priority Community strategies for the top ten was completed in FY 11 with implementation underway in FY 12. Engagement plans for the priority states and the next fifteen communities will be developed in FY 12 with implementation to begin concurrently. A continued focus on this initiative will continue through FY 13.

Sufficient regional staff, including the additional requested RC, are crucial to the success of this work in addition to resource availability at the federal, state, local and philanthropic levels. Additionally, a sufficient and incrementally increasing level of affordable housing units will be necessary for successful execution of this work.

- **Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2)**

FY 11, 12, and 13

This initiative was launched by the White House, to strengthen neighborhoods, towns, cities and regions around the country by strengthening the capacity of local governments to develop and execute their economic vision and strategies. Strong Cities, Strong Communities bolsters local governments by providing necessary technical assistance and access to federal agency expertise, and creating new public and private sector partnerships. SC2 will also help advance our goals in preventing homelessness as USICH engagement plans developed for Priority Communities are being coordinated with SC2 teams in cities that are also USICH Priority Communities. These Communities are Fresno, Detroit, and New Orleans.

- **Technical Assistance**

FY 11, 12, and 13

USICH plays an important role in connecting communities with existing federal technical assistance (TA) resources and, where multiple agencies are providing TA, enhancing the coordination and effectiveness of these resources. USICH has developed, as part of our website, a common portal for communities to access TA from various federal agencies. Communities and service providers are now able to easily access information about available federally provided technical assistance that can help them develop and implement strategies that prevent and end homelessness. Federal TA can help ensure that local strategies are based on best practices and in alignment with *Opening Doors* while still being tailored to the needs on the ground. In Priority Communities where multiple agencies are providing technical assistance, such as Los Angeles, USICH has coordinated efforts to ensure non-duplication, consistency and assist with prioritization of activities.

Special Projects

- **Alternatives to Criminalization**

FY 11

Pursuant to a Congressional mandate in HEARTH and *Opening Doors*, the planning phase of the Alternatives to Criminalization project was begun during the first quarter of FY 11 upon completion of the Plan. A summit held in collaboration with DOJ that involved relevant state, local, nonprofit, business, and homeless stakeholders from across the country occurred on December 1, 2010. A draft report resulted and USICH and DOJ revised the report on the development of “constructive alternatives to the criminalization of homelessness” and submitted it to be commented on informally by Council members in September/October

2011. The result of this work was submitted to OMB for clearance and is currently going through that process. This work supports a strategy in *Opening Doors* to reduce criminalization of homelessness.

FY 12

Once cleared, USICH anticipates the final being published and disseminated in early 2012. USICH expects to host a webinar and feature community partners that were featured in the report. USICH envisions this will be an asset for local communities that are struggling to find more cost-effective and humane approaches to homelessness.

- **Common Vocabulary, Data Standards**

FY 11

Pursuant to a Congressional mandate in the HEARTH Act, USICH convened a meeting in January 2011 to discuss a GAO report on homeless definitions. The report recommends that USICH explore the feasibility of adopting a common federal vocabulary and data standard regarding housing status for targeted homeless programs, as well as mainstream programs. A summary of that January convening was sent to Congress in June 2011. This activity aligns with *Opening Doors*.

USICH member agencies began work in August 2011 conducting a preliminary feasibility study for creating a common federal vocabulary and data standard regarding housing status across all targeted and some mainstream programs. A common data standard regarding housing status would facilitate data exchanges and comparisons between both targeted homelessness programs and mainstream systems in order to improve identification of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. It would also increase opportunities for measuring program impact and effectiveness as it relates to housing stability.

FY 12

During FY 12, USICH is facilitating discussions among and between agencies about the feasibility of creating a common data standard regarding housing stability across relevant federal programs. If adopted, such a common data standard would also allow for greater collaboration between agencies.

- **HMIS**

FY 11, 12 and 13

USICH has participated in conversations with HUD, VA, SAMHSA, and ACYF on opportunities to expand use of HMIS across federal targeted homeless programs that do not use it today. Work in FY 12 and FY 13 will include continued work in supporting agencies' adoption and use of HMIS, and analysis of mainstream program opportunities and priorities to further progress in this area. Agency resource availability will dictate the pace of progress.

- **Homeless Children and Youth Summit**

FY 12

USICH originally proposed in our FY 12 Congressional Budget Justification to work with Council member agencies to host a one-two day intensive summit focused on current knowledge regarding homeless children and barriers to mainstream and trauma services for this population. Because of the cost and complexity of hosting such a summit, USICH has shifted strategies. First, we participated in the first ever LGBT Youth Summit hosted by ED in Washington DC in 2011. We also participated in the Fostering Connections Summit co-hosted by ED and HHS in November 2011. In February 2012, we provided several workshops at the National Alliance to End Homelessness' conference on youth and families. We will continue to seek opportunities to include considerations of child and youth homelessness through other events such as these.

- **Rural and Indian Homelessness**

FY 12

In FY 12, USICH will review best practices in housing and homelessness in rural and Indian reservation communities. That work, combined with USICH's planned solutions database building, should lead to a body of information that the agency will share with stakeholders to assist them in these areas.

FY 13

In FY 13, USICH will continue to refine understanding of need and solutions, and disseminate information through our communications channels and our federal partners.

- **Medicaid Expansion**

FY 12 and 13

Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act happens in 2014. During FY 12 and FY 13, USICH will work with HHS to develop and disseminate information (webinar, website, speeches and conferences, and partnerships with national groups) to providers and policymakers working on ending homelessness about steps they can take to ensure that people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness will be enrolled as quickly as possible.

- **Rewarding Collaborating Communities**

FY 11

In FY 11, USICH created a concept draft on this work and started the groundwork in exploring the feasibility of executing this work which is in line with a strategy in *Opening Doors* to, "seek opportunities to reward communities that are collaborating to make significant progress preventing and ending homelessness." The

purpose is to invest in communities that have demonstrated progress in ending and preventing homelessness through local efforts that engage multiple local entities and funding streams to create community-wide systems for effective crisis response. A key feature would be the development of a Community of Practice to further shared learning among the initiative communities, philanthropy investors, and federal agencies. Success would be evidenced by numeric outcomes measured across the partnering federal agencies. HUD, VA, HHS, and OMB have indicated a willingness to explore this concept. Interest and investment by philanthropy and identification of an external host for the Community of Practice are prerequisites for development and implementation.

FY 12 and 13

USICH will refine the concept during FY 12 and propose the result of that work to the Council to consider supporting this work in FY 13. Additional USICH staff (either by detailee or philanthropic investment) to support this work would be needed during FY 13. Implementation could occur in FY 13/14 but will be contingent on the availability of philanthropic resources as well as FY 13 or FY 14 appropriations to agencies for flexible or targeted funding that can be available for these efforts.

Communications

Through both USICH's newly revamped website and its regular electronic newsletters (with approximately 17,000 subscribers), USICH disseminates information on open federal requests for proposals, other new funding opportunities to assist in ending homelessness, and provides linkages to key federal agency partners, programs and initiatives. USICH also highlights important information for the field through bi-monthly webinars that have had high participation rates. USICH has enhanced coverage of the issue of homelessness, including educating the public on its causes, consequences, and effective solutions, through national and regional media outlets. USICH staff spoke at over two dozen public events in FY 11 which highlighted its work on the issue of homelessness.

- **Website**

FY 11

USICH redesigned its website to become one of the key portals for issues, topics, and research regarding homelessness for key stakeholder groups and government officials at the local, state, and federal levels. In addition to providing information about Opening Doors and all of the Council member agencies, the website includes a research library, an events and grant deadline calendar, and guidance on accessing technical assistance from our partner member agencies. USICH also launched its social media feeds, which allow the agency to engage stakeholders in the field and expand the agency's communications reach.

FY 12 and 13

In FY 12, pursuant to the first objective in Opening Doors, USICH coordinated with Council member agencies to create an interactive map providing key statistics and contact information across the country; this map was launched in January 2012. USICH will continue to expand upon these efforts in FY 12 and FY 13.

IV. AGENCY MANAGEMENT

Strategic Management of Human Capital

USICH has begun its initial implementation of a new employee performance management system. The first year of this performance cycle ended in December 2011. This new system supports fair and objective measurement of job performance and regularly scheduled employee reviews, thus enabling USICH to ensure it employs and maintains a high level staff. Additionally, employees' performance goals are tied directly to the mission, strategies, objectives and overall performance of USICH.

In FY 11, USICH held employee training sessions that focused on areas identified by staff and that support accomplishment of our mission and productivity.

Thus far, in FY 12, EEO training has been completed for all supervisors, and planned training includes Ethics training, with an emphasis on Hatch Act prohibitions, as this is an election year.

USICH will continue regular training sessions for employees, to include an annual staff training conference for all employees to further support and enhance our work culture and professional growth.

Contracting

USICH continues to strategically outsource several major components of its operations to other entities after cost-effectiveness determinations. USICH maintains agreements with divisions of the General Services Administration to provide operational support that would be exorbitant to perform in-house, as well as website and network support from other outside sources. Those costs continue to be included in USICH's Request.

USICH will continue to plan its procurements in a timely manner in order to reduce to the maximum extent possible, the agency's reliance on high-risk contract vehicles. USICH will continue its use of minority, woman-owned, and disadvantaged contractors, to the extent possible, in supporting its work.

Financial Management

USICH has received consecutively clean audit opinions since its initial FY 05 audit by an independent, outside CPA firm. USICH again received an unqualified audit opinion for FY 11 audit, November, 2011.

USICH utilizes GSA's accounting system to track its finances. No instances of improper payments occurred during FY 11, and previous years.

V. **PERFORMANCE GOALS**

With OMB concurrence, USICH proposed new, revised performance goals. These goals are effective in FY 12 and throughout the fiscal year, USICH will be tracking and monitoring progress as we perform the work that supports these measures.

1. Strengthen the capacity of public and private organizations by increasing knowledge about specific subpopulations, the costs, and consequences of homelessness, and effective solutions and models for preventing and ending homelessness.

Preventing and ending homelessness will only be possible through coordinated efforts of strong public and private organizations. Across the country, capacity varies from community to community, especially as it relates to the ability to use data for system and program design, evaluate program effectiveness and nimbly make changes where needed, and target interventions to people for whom they are best suited. The Federal government can lead by making best practices standard operating procedure as we adopt an increasingly evidence-driven approach.

Significant research and evaluation has been and is being conducted on homelessness and strategies to prevent and end it. There is tremendous opportunity to better understand and apply what is being learned by coordinating and sharing research across federal agencies and with states and local communities. Research must be conducted to understand more about how to end homelessness for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, unaccompanied youth, youth aging out of foster care, and other unique groups. Defining a federal research agenda focused on gaps in knowledge about preventing and ending homelessness could ensure that future investment and policies contribute to solutions.

Specific strategies and measures related to increasing knowledge and strengthening capacity are as follows:

Strategy #1: Compile and disseminate research findings; identify information gaps.

USICH will compile and catalog research in an effort to more effectively distill and disseminate findings and lessons learned to the field, as well as to identify gaps in the body of knowledge.

Measure #1a: USICH will compile, catalog, and make available online a homeless research compendium by December 30, 2011.

Measure #1b: USICH will develop a federal research agenda that prioritize areas of study and focuses efforts to fill gaps in knowledge by December 30, 2011.

Strategy #1 Update:

A federal interagency work group was established in January 2011 to bring together agencies that are funding or conducting research on homelessness to begin the work of compiling research, identifying gaps, and developing a federal research agenda to guide future investments. USICH expects a draft of the federal research agenda to be complete by early 2012. Implementation will occur as agencies adopt the recommendations and resources are available over the next few years.

Subsequent to the finalization and any necessary clearance/review of the agenda, USICH will share this work via its website. The date for this action is dependent upon finalization of the research agenda, but we anticipate this occurring within 60-90 days subsequent to finalization.

Strategy #2: Disseminate, promote, and facilitate use of best practices.

USICH will identify best practices and model programs and make this information more readily available to stakeholders - including funders, advocates, grantees, and service providers. USICH will use multiple methods to disseminate information about best practices, including its website and newsletter, social media, webinars, partnerships with advocates, and direct contact/meetings with stakeholders. The database will cover system-level, program-level, and client-level practices and will span the strategies and populations covered in the Federal Strategic Plan.

Measure #2a: USICH will disseminate information on best practices and model programs and facilitate peer-to-peer sharing through the creation of a searchable, online best practices database. This database will be populated and launched by December 30, 2011.

Measure #2b: Throughout its outreach to communities across the country, USICH will get 10 communities to model/adopt use of a specific best practice (which practice will be determined by the circumstances, needs, and capacity of the community) by September 1, 2012. Further, HUD is developing measures of high performing communities as required by the HEARTH Act. USICH will work with HUD to assess the correlation between high performing communities and adoption of best practices to help inform next steps.

Strategy #2 Update:

In reference to Measure #2a, USICH expects to launch its online, searchable “solutions database” available via its website by spring 2012. This mechanism will be a user-friendly way to access information about evidence-based practices and promising program models.

The work mentioned in Measure #2b is ongoing. For example, in partnership with public and private partners, USICH worked with two communities to improve their housing placement process for the HUD-VASH program, in efforts to improve the time it takes from initially engaging Veterans who are homeless to actually housing them. The two communities, New York and Los Angeles, have a great deal of the nation’s largest populations of homeless citizens.

2. Coordinate the federal government’s response to homelessness to maximize the reach and impact of federal resources.

The need for homeless assistance and services in this country far outweighs available resources. Compounding this challenge is the fact that federal funding for homeless assistance flows through programs administered separately by multiple Departments, each of which has its own set of priorities and processes. Over time, separate programs and budget streams have created some inconsistencies and overlap in administrative requirements, resulting in unnecessary complexity and cost. As such, strengthening the country’s capacity to prevent and end homelessness will require effective collaboration within the federal government to address inconsistency, reduce duplication of effort, increase economies of scale, and identify points of synergy.

True collaboration means being open and transparent about resources, data, assumptions, perceptions, and decisions, and takes concerted effort and leadership to be realized. USICH is a unique agency in a unique position, offering the Federal government the opportunity to test and model interagency collaboration. Specific strategies for the coming months are outlined below.

Strategy #3: Coordinated, Strategic Investments.

Over one-half of the overall population of people experiencing homelessness is located in just 45 (or 10 percent) of the Continuum of Care jurisdictions. In order to move the needle nationally and make progress against the Federal Strategic Plan, it is essential to focus our efforts and invest our resources more strategically. For example, Federal agencies currently invest extensively in technical assistance, but it is generally not coordinated across agencies, or even programs within agencies. Towards this end, USICH will identify a set of priority communities for monitoring, engagement, and technical assistance, as needed. These communities will also serve as laboratories for testing and modeling collaboration, systems change, and innovative strategies.

Measure #3a: USICH will identify/adopt a set of “priority communities” by January 1, 2011.

Measure #3b: Each community will undergo an assessment and develop a “next steps” plan that identifies high priority needs and key areas for action. USICH will assist in coordinating federal technical assistance resources to address the needs identified in the plans. These plans will be completed by September 1, 2011.

Measure #3c: By September 1, 2012, USICH will compile lessons learned from the work with the priority cities, assess the barriers and opportunities related to coordinated federal technical assistance, and determine if (and how) such efforts can be brought to scale.

Strategy #3 Update:

Identification of the priority communities, and assessments and strategies for the top ten were completed in FY 11 with implementation currently underway in FY 12 as described in more detail earlier in this Budget. Engagement plans for identified priority states and fifteen more communities will be developed in FY 12 with implementation beginning concurrently with selection. Data from lessons learned are generated as the work is performed and will be compiled as indicated in Measure #3b.

Strategy #4: Coordinated Data Collection.

Collection, analysis, and reporting of quality, timely data on homelessness is essential for targeting interventions, tracking results, strategic planning, and resource allocation. Currently, each Federal program uses a different vocabulary, different data standards, different reporting systems, and different reporting requirements. This creates both confusion and duplication of effort in the field, as providers that rely on multiple funders have to respond to each independently. Movement towards a common vocabulary and data standard across targeted federal programs would – for localities – simplify procedures and reduce administrative costs. Nationally, it would provide us with better data and consequently a more comprehensive understanding of the scope and dimensions of homelessness in the country.

Measure #4a: USICH will convene an interagency working group to conduct a feasibility analysis and identify and implement steps (even if incremental) towards a common vocabulary and data standard. USICH will focus on convening, relationship building, and translating, such that the group will operate independently by June 1, 2012.

Measure #4b: USICH will continue to explore, promote, and support the use of HUD's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) by grantees of other Federal agencies with the goal of two other Federal agencies transitioning to the use of HMIS by December 31, 2014.

Strategy #4 Update:

USICH, along with other federal agencies, is advancing opportunities to adopt a common vocabulary for housing status and a data standard across federal targeted homeless programs, along with an expansion in the use of HMIS which will assist in this overall Strategy of coordinated data collection.

On January 26, 2011, USICH hosted a meeting with a broad representation of stakeholders. This day-long meeting allowed us to hear both the benefits people saw in developing a common vocabulary and a common data standard, in addition to some of the challenges associated with moving in this direction. Subsequent to this meeting on June 1, 2011, USICH issued the *USICH Report to Congress: Community Forum to Discuss GAO Recommendation to Develop a Common Federal Vocabulary on Housing Status* which highlighted the outcomes of this meeting, including a plan to forward this work.

In the Fall of 2011, USICH convened a total of three implementation meetings with stakeholders and is proceeding towards accomplishment of Measure #s 4a and 4b.