United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

Fiscal Year 2015 Congressional Budget Justification

"No one should experience homelessness—no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home."

FISCAL YEAR 2015 SUMMARY STATEMENT

	Enacted/Request	Obligations	Outlays
FY 2013 Enacted	$3,127,190[1]	$3,125,308	$3,117,733
FY 2014 Enacted	$3,500,000	$997,013[2]	$929,455[3]
FY 2015 Request	$3,530,000		

BUDGET PLAN COMPARISONS: FY 2013 – FY 2015

Category	FY 2013 Enacted[4]	FY 2014 Enacted	FY 2015 Request
11.0: Full-Time Permanent Personnel	$1,607,413	$1,893,168	$2,105,647
	19.5 FTE[5]	21.5 FTE[6]	21.5 FTE
12.0: Civilian Personnel Benefits	$434,978	$513,355	$562,226
21.0: Travel and Transportation of Persons	$85,548	$167,809	$168,000
22.0: Transportation of Things	$500	$487	$487
23.0: Communications, Utilities, and Miscellaneous Charges	$505,000	$280,000	$301,200
24.0: Printing and Reproduction	$4,400	$5,000	$5,000
25.0: Services	$455,861	$610,181	$357,440
26.0: Supplies and Materials	$33,490	$30,000	$30,000
Grand Total	**$3,127,190**	**$3,500,000**	**$3,530,000**

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[1] FY 2013 reflects the post-sequestration operating level. USICH receives annual budget authority; therefore, there is no carryover.
[2] As of 1/31/14
[3] As of 1/31/14
[4] Includes sequestration & rescission
[5] All positions not occupied entire FY
[6] All positions not occupied entire FY

Our Request: a Summary

USICH presents its Congressional Budget Justification request in the amount of **$3,530,000** for planned FY 2015 activities and Agency operations. This requested investment supports *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* (the Plan). Approval of this request will provide sustained and significant return on investment in the progress that is necessary to realize the Plan's vision that no one will be without a safe a stable place to call home.

To achieve the goals of ending and preventing homelessness among Veterans, families, youth, and those experiencing chronic homelessness, USICH will need the modest appropriation requested to drive smart, sustainable solutions across the Federal government and through to local communities. The impact of USICH as the lead agency responsible for implementation of *Opening Doors* has been significant: homelessness among Veterans is down by 24 percent since 2010; chronic homelessness is the lowest since HUD began requiring counts of this subpopulation; and family homelessness is also down significantly.

Our FY 2015 Request includes a total of 21.5 FTE and necessary operations costs to support the effectiveness of these staff members. USICH requests two legislative changes via this Budget Request: 1) a change in the Executive Director's compensation level to be on par with other Federal executives who manage Federal agencies with like staff size and budget levels as USICH, and 2) deletion of USICH's current sunset date in order for the work of preventing and ending homelessness to continue to be a priority in this country, as well as to position the Agency with ability to hire experienced staff without administrative prohibitions caused by our sunset date which disallows benefits for new employees under certain conditions.

Details about our Budget Request

OC 11.0 Personnel   **$2,105,647**

USICH is able to drive Federal policy through a very modest number of high performing staff. USICH is successful, even without having direct authority over Federal programs, because talented staff with expertise work nimbly and efficiently across the Federal government and in partnership with State and local governments as well as the non-profit and private sectors.

By leveraging national private-sector partners and key Federal partners at HHS, HUD, and VA, USICH brings collaboration and innovation to scale across this country. USICH's staffing structure effectively integrates field and policy work to support Plan implementation.

For FY 2015, USICH proposes no additional staff; therefore support for 21.5 full-time equivalents (FTE) is requested:

Executive Director	Management/Program Analysts (3)
Deputy Director	Communications Specialist
Director of Finance and Administration	Special Assistant to Executive Director
Director of Communications & External Affairs	Special Assistant to Deputy Director
Director of National Initiatives	Program Assistant
Policy Directors (2)	Staff Assistant
Regional Coordinators (4)	Interns (5 part-time)

In FY 2013, USICH received OPM approval and concurrence on its first-ever performance management system and a merit-based compensation system to include the availability of within-band increases and performance-based awards for eligible staff. These tools greatly increase the ability to competitively recruit and maintain a high functioning, high performing staff to expertly carry out the agency's mission and the Plan. These tools are cornerstones in efforts to make USICH's compensation system comparable and competitive with other Federal entities by supporting a culture of high performance and incentives for sustaining high performance. Included in the topline personnel amount of $2,105,647 is the ability to support within band increases, $53,910, and any possible merit-based awards, $19,540, for eligible employees.

OC 12.0 Civilian Personnel Benefits   **$562,226**
These costs reflect agency-provided and OPM-approved benefits for all applicable employees.

OC 21.0 Travel and Transportation of Persons   **$168,000**
The costs included in this category support the ability of headquarters and regional staff to engage directly with State and local stakeholders to provide guidance and develop cross-sector partnerships. Travel costs are absolutely necessary to support work in priority communities and key States.

USICH has been heralded as a model for interagency collaboration, and that success is predicated on the support provided to Council member agencies and partners in the field. USICH's ability to inform Federal policy and implement those policies locally is dramatically influenced by the ability to engage, in person, with local stakeholders. Adequate resources for travel are necessary to drive the momentum gained from the success of *Opening Doors* deeper into the local systems, which will determine much of the nation's success in preventing and ending homelessness. Homelessness cannot be solved nationally if it is not solved locally. Inadequate travel support would greatly impair USICH's ability to translate policy work from the field to the Federal government and vice versa. While USICH continues to use new technologies to virtually preserve and maintain a local presence, the most successful relationships are those we are able to foster face to face. Additionally, 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 and achieve the most impact.

OC 22.0 Transportation of Things   **$487**

Estimated costs are for mailings and deliveries. We request no increase over FY 2014.

OC 23.0 Communications, Utilities, and Miscellaneous   **$301,200**

USICH realized substantial cost savings when it relocated to the current office space in November, 2013. These costs cover agency-leased office space as well as office phone, cellular phone, internet connectivity, and IT-security costs.

OC 24.0 Printing and Reproduction   **$5,000**

Estimated costs represent production support for online documents, versus printing of materials, as USICH produces very few printed publications.

OC 25.0 Services   **$357,440**

This category includes operations assistance and infrastructure support from GSA in finance, payroll, human resources (HR) processing, auditors for compliance with the Accountability of Tax Dollars Act (ATDA), IT support, and other operational support items. The budget estimate also includes costs to ensure agency compliance with the Administration's commitment to ensure and promote equal opportunity as USICH uses GSA's Office of Equal Employment Opportunity to support this work. Costs to ensure compliance with OMB security policies and guidance from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) are also included in this category. The category decreased dramatically from FY 2014, as costs to support the office move and office reconfiguration of new space were included in FY 2014 versus FY 2015.

OC 26.0 Supplies and Materials   **$30,000**

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

Legislative Requests

Change in Salary Level for Executive Director from EX V to EX IV

The requested change will provide USICH's Executive Director with a compensation level that is consistent with the position's high level responsibilities and that makes the position comparable with other independent Federal agencies of like staff size and budget. This correction is required to sustain the quality of leadership USICH needs in order to ensure effective and accountable collaboration across Federal agencies and with national, State, and local leaders. The Executive Director is a highly visible leader who must possess a specialized range of skills, expertise, and experience in order to successfully advance the complex change-agenda that is required by *Opening Doors.*
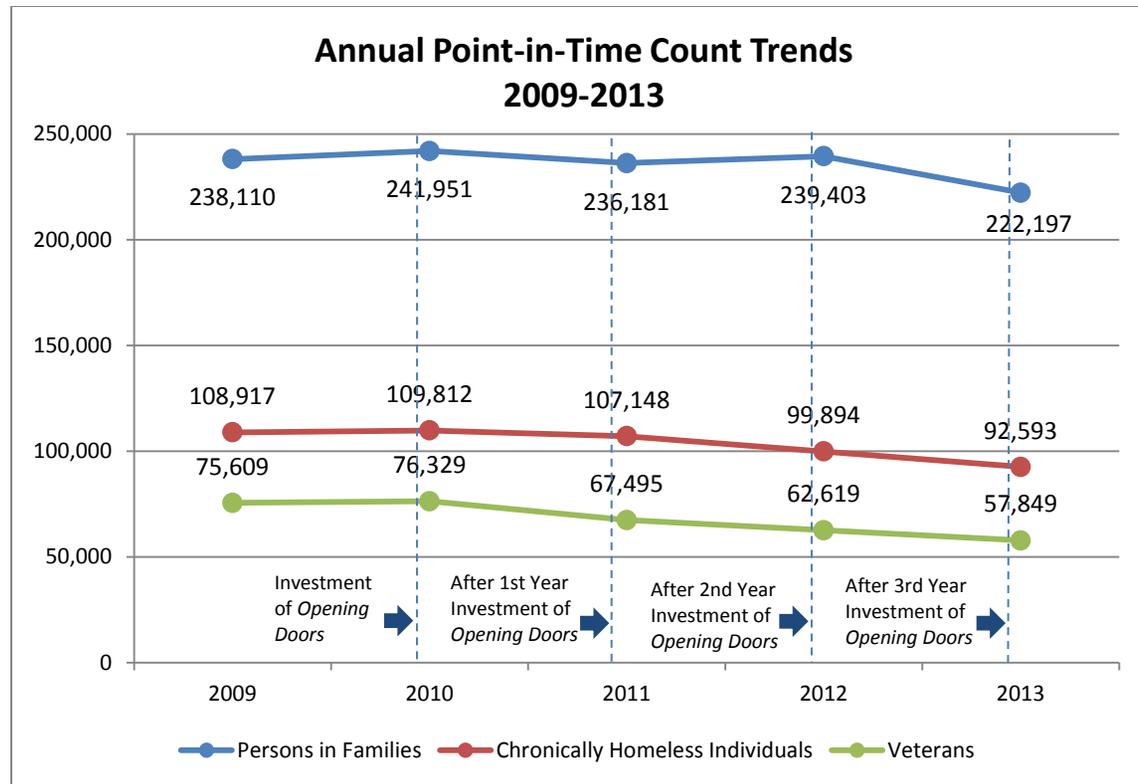
The agency's termination clause has caused tremendous operational problems for USICH. Federal regulation requires at least a one-year appointment for one to be considered as a regular Federal employee who can receive health benefits. Consequently, if USICH is less than a year from its termination date and has a staff vacancy, a regular appointment that grants health benefits is unallowable (i.e. it would exceed the sunset date of the agency.) As a result, the position could only be filled on a term basis *and* the new employee would be unable to receive benefits. This has previously presented the agency with challenges as highly qualified, potential job candidates declined positions based on our inability to grant health benefits. Currently, the USICH termination date is October 1, 2016. Therefore, the problems described here will begin impacting USICH's effectiveness at the end of FY 2015. Additionally, *Opening Doors,* calls for Council action beyond the current sunset date, at least through 2020 (end family, youth, and child homelessness), and then beyond to focus efforts on ending homelessness for other than the current, focused populations (chronic and Veterans homelessness).

Our Story: Preventing and Ending Homelessness

USICH has been a model of success for interagency collaboration and local engagement, helping to steer $4.785 billion in targeted homelessness funds (FY 2013 Enacted) into evidence-based solutions that are measurably reducing homelessness in America. This success is predicated on the support we provide our Federal council members and our partners in the field. Our ability to inform Federal policy and implement those policies locally has been and continues to be influenced dramatically by our ability to engage with local stakeholders. Without any programs or regulatory authority, our tools for good governing come in the form of our highly skilled, expert staff members who drive smart, efficient systems change among our partners and stakeholders through innovative collaboration and strategic engagement. Our success diffusing proven, cost-effective innovations across the homelessness landscape is leading to real, sustainable solutions for ending homelessness in America.

Our modest budget and staff have accomplished a great deal and we have proven our value in the efforts to prevent and end homelessness in this country as outlined in the request. Since launching *Opening Doors,* the Council has made progress toward preventing and ending homelessness despite the economic recession and subsequent recovery. Remarkably, during a time of extreme economic turmoil and instability (a leading cause of homelessness) this nation avoided an overall surge in homelessness due to nimble action of the Council and its Federal partners as well as Congress' investment in the Recovery Act program through HUD, the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), as well as targeted homeless programs across the Federal government during FY 2010 – FY 2013.

**Annual Point-in-Time Count Trends
2009-2013**

Year	Persons in Families	Chronically Homeless Individuals	Veterans
2009	238,110	108,917	75,609
2010	241,951	109,812	76,329
2011	236,181	107,148	67,495
2012	239,403	99,894	62,619
2013	222,197	92,593	57,849

Investment of *Opening Doors* ➡

After 1st Year Investment of *Opening Doors* ➡

After 2nd Year Investment of *Opening Doors* ➡

After 3rd Year Investment of *Opening Doors* ➡

— Persons in Families   — Chronically Homeless Individuals   — Veterans

HUD's point-in-time (PIT) count provides a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night in America and is the best available data for measuring trends and progress against the goals in *Opening Doors*.

The government's, Congress', and taxpayers' return on investment is excellent given what has been accomplished since the passage of the HEARTH Act in 2009 and the June 2010 launch of *Opening Doors.* A February 2014 report by GAO cites USICH as an example of effective collaboration for other agencies and organizations[7].

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[7] GAO-14-220: *Implementation Approaches Used to Enhance Collaboration in Interagency Groups*. Published: Feb 14, 2014. Publicly Released: Feb 14, 2014. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-220

Even with the progress made, there is still much work to do. Preventing and ending homelessness is a lofty but achievable goal. It requires equally ambitious **collaboration, focus on data and performance measurement, emphasis on evidence–informed practice and policy, coordination among Federal agencies, innovation, disciplined place-based work, and above all, an aggressive commitment to getting to the finish line.** Communities across the country are providing examples of this commitment every day. USICH and our Federal partners are weaving together resources and reforms to ease the journey. Together, USICH is making the necessary strides toward *Opening Doors'* goal of preventing and ending homelessness in America.

Collaboration across the Nation

> *"Through President Obama's Opening Doors plan, the United States' first comprehensive strategy to prevent and end homelessness, we have helped more than a million Americans get their lives on track. We've implemented an effective rapid re-housing approach that quickly rehouses families after they lose their homes so they don't fall into the cycle of homelessness. We've advanced the Housing First model in order to help those experiencing homelessness find a place to live first, so they can begin to address other issues in their lives. HUD and Veterans Affairs have worked in partnership like never before, using unprecedented evidence-based research to help Veterans who have served our country so courageously.   – HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan*

Homelessness is a complex problem with a variety of causes and manifestations. It requires comprehensive solutions that cut across systems and sectors; effective collaboration is essential to success. For this reason, collaboration is at the core of the work of USICH and its partners at all levels. Collaboration generates broad support for the strategies to prevent and end homelessness, which is evidenced by the involvement of business and civic leadership, local public officials, the faith-based community, and mainstream systems that provide housing, human services, and health care.

The value added of USICH includes the ability to collaborate in all directions. For instance, the work with state and local governments and the private and nonprofit sectors help ensure that Federal funds are used more wisely and in sustainable ways. Collaboration enables a feedback loop to the Federal government on what's working well and where there is opportunity to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Coordination among Federal Agencies

> *To represent the collective interests of its participants, USICH has a policy to reach agreement among its members to ensure that all views are heard. As noted above, USICH is composed of the heads (or their designee) of 19 Federal agencies. All 19 agencies have equal votes in any decisions brought before the group. USICH worked through its Council Policy Group to develop strategic interagency opportunities, built consensus, and laid the groundwork for the decisions brought before the leadership. We observed this process take place in June 2012 when*

USICH was considering revisions to objectives in its strategic plan.—GAO, February 2014. MANAGING FOR RESULTS: Implementation Approaches Used to Enhance Collaboration in Interagency Groups

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) was established in 1987 by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (later renamed the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act). USICH's mission, per 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. The current Chair is HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, and the current Vice Chair is Labor Secretary Thomas Perez.

Coordination among Federal agencies means avoiding duplicate efforts and smartly using all available Federal resources to prevent and end homelessness. Just as no one sector can address homelessness by itself, neither can one Federal agency. USICH makes it possible to address the multi-faceted issue of homelessness by linking across the individual budget, programs, staff and experiences of each Federal agency.

USICH continues to work strategically, coordinating the national effort to end homelessness through activities involving all levels of government, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. In these efforts, because USICH does not have programmatic or regulatory duties, USICH is seen as an honest broker among Federal agencies participating in the Council.

Focus on Data and Performance Measurement

Over the last several years, local, State and Federal elected officials, along with many in the nonprofit and business communities, have taken critical first steps to ensure that taxpayer dollars are invested in solutions that use evidence and data to demonstrate better results – but more must be done. – Moneyball for Government

Progress on reducing homelessness requires data to understand the needs and gaps of Federal, State, and local service systems. Obtaining accurate data on how individuals fare in programs is essential to see a clear picture of an individual's journey through a system. USICH focuses on data and performance measurement because it allows us to monitor progress, share lessons across Federal agencies, and identify which efforts contribute to reducing and ending homelessness.

Emphasis on Innovation and Evidence-Informed Practice and Policy

> *"Central to achieving these goals is a growing shift toward intervention that is data driven, is research informed, and prioritizes more immediate access to permanent housing."*
> *– HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan & VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki*

USICH focuses on innovation, placing value on the adoption of new practices, policies, and technology that more effectively advances work to prevent and end homelessness. It is imperative for USICH to stay nimble and at the forefront of what is necessary to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness. USICH uses its communication and convening tools to encourage and disseminate emerging practices.

USICH operates from the perspective that the Federal government can lead the way by making evidence-based best practices standard operating procedure. The emphasis on evidence-informed practice and policy builds directly off USICH's focus on data and performance measurement. By promoting proven practices and policies where success can be measured, USICH influences investment at local, state and Federal level in what works.

> ### FOCUS ON INNOVATION
>
> USICH partnered with the **Office of the Comptroller of the Currency** to convene a Houston roundtable between lenders and homelessness-system staff to promote opportunities for increased leadership and funding by banking institutions in order to advance community efforts. Additional roundtables are being scheduled to occur in FY 2014, with planned expansion in FY 2015.

Mayor Ralph Becker of Salt Lake City and Mayor Greg Stanton of Phoenix, Arizona and their communities are proof that progress can be made despite challenges. They recently announced that their communities have ended chronic homelessness among Veterans by applying innovation, outcome-focused planning, and aggressive commitment combined with strategic investment at the Federal and levels. Setting an example for the rest of the country, Mayor Becker and Mayor Stanton engaged in a "friendly competition" to see which community would be the first to connect Veterans who were experiencing chronic homelessness to permanent housing. Both mayors have noted that USICH was an important partner in these efforts.

Disciplined Place-Based Work

> *"We cannot solve the problem of homelessness nationally if we don't solve it locally. The Federal government stands shoulder to shoulder with local communities—supporting their efforts, learning from their practices, and sharing their successes as models for other communities. "*
> *– Barbara Poppe, USICH Executive Director*

USICH works with local communities to support their efforts to implement the strategies of *Opening Doors*. This work also enables USICH to discover when and if Federal practice and policies are working on the ground. Through direct interaction in local communities, the Federal government can better understand the opportunities that need to be supported and elevated.

For example, in 2013, USICH's Regional Coordinator for Los Angeles led a team of Federal and local partners through a collaborative analytical process that developed the first-ever comprehensive assessment of the scale and characteristics of the population of Veterans projected to experience homelessness in Los Angeles County through the end of 2015. This was compared against the quantity and types of permanent housing opportunities needed by such Veterans, to determine the gap between those needs and currently available housing and services resources. In addition to identifying strategies for closing those gaps in Los Angeles, this analysis resulted in VA working with USICH to create a national methodology for such gaps analyses that has since been applied to every community in the United States. The results of those analyses are now being used to drive the improved targeting of Federal funding to end Veterans homelessness, such as Supportive Services for Veteran Families and HUD-VASH funding allocations. This is one example of the critical nature and value of strategic travel by USICH national and regional staff. USICH optimizes the use of virtual tools on a daily basis, but nothing is a substitute for face-to-face engagement with community leaders to improve understanding and increase accountability for tackling the hard issues and complexities required to make progress.

Aggressive Commitment to Getting to the Finish Line, Ending Homelessness

> *"I regularly bring [USICH] work out as an example of the government setting high marks and meeting them because we know how to end homelessness. We can do what many people think is impossible. But it's not impossible and we have the metrics to show for it."*
> *– Cecilia Munoz, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council*

In line with the *Opening Doors*, USICH's implementation work is structured around four goals:

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

Since the launch of Opening Doors in the summer of 2010, aggressive goals and implementation work have framed the Council's success. As a result, the Council has witnessed unprecedented collaboration at the Federal level and across the nation. Council member agencies, in particular, have individually and collectively advanced the Plan through their mainstream and targeted programs.

Our Work: FY 2013 Activities and Plans for FY 2014 and FY 2015

As required by the HEARTH Act of 2009 and consistent with the mission, USICH is working to coordinate the national effort to end homelessness through activities involving all levels of government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. This section gives an update on FY 2013 activities, and outlines work that is planned for FY 2014 and FY 2015, all of which is executed via staffing, travel, and operations complements described. Activities described in this section are based on the request level. Under less than the request level, work described here could be diminished due to inadequate funding levels. Activities described in this narrative do not, in any way, represent all of the collaborations and day-to-day activities that are performed by USICH or necessary to prevent and end homelessness in the United States. FY 2015 activities flow from activities already started in previous fiscal years, as the target dates for the goals outlined in the Plan will be the culmination of work planned and executed over a number of years.

Reach our Goal of Ending Chronic Homelessness

According to HUD's Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), 92,593 single individuals were experiencing chronic homelessness on a single night in 2013—a **16 percent reduction since 2010.** People who experience chronic homelessness are frequently highly vulnerable. The longer they remain without housing, the more their health deteriorates. The human and fiscal toll of chronic homelessness is high. The President's FY 2015 Budget Request will enable communities across the country to end chronic homelessness in 2016. By ending chronic homelessness, the Federal government would demonstrate its ability to solve one of the most visible, costly, and seemingly intractable manifestations of homelessness.

Research indicates that people experiencing chronic homelessness consume a disproportionate amount of public resources through repeated use of publically funded services such as shelters, jails, emergency rooms, and psychiatric centers. Studies estimate that the total average annual public costs incurred by each individual experiencing chronic homelessness ranges from $40,000 to over $70,000. Extrapolating the lower estimate to the total current chronic homeless population (92,593 individuals) suggests that allowing chronic homelessness to persist costs the American public over $3 billion annually.

Ending chronic homelessness means enabling people who are currently experiencing chronic homelessness to move into permanent housing with access to necessary services. It also means having a systematic response in place that prevents more people from becoming chronically homeless. USICH, working with its Federal, State and local partners, will prevent chronic homelessness by supporting local response that ensure that no person with a disability or chronic health condition will experience homelessness longer than a year or in repeat episodes over many years.

In FY 2015, USICH will continue to drive progress through interagency work and capacity building efforts at the State and community levels. USICH launched and co-led the Interagency Working Group on Chronic Homelessness in FY 2013, to identify resources and key strategies needed to achieve the goal of ending chronic homelessness. The 10-agency working group identified opportunities and resource gaps; the Council approved and charged the working group to undertake in FY 2014 and FY 2015:

- Developing messaging, technical assistance tools, and resources on how to fully employ a Housing First approach to end chronic homelessness;
- Improving communities' capacity to link Medicaid-eligible services to permanent supportive housing;
- Identifying and disseminating findings on best practices in collaborative identification, outreach, and engagement of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness to more efficiently and effectively prioritize individuals for necessary services and supports;
- Exploring and leveraging opportunities within *Olmstead* for communities to create permanent supportive housing for those experiencing chronic homelessness; and
- Supporting private partners on the design, implementation, and monitoring of pay-for-success initiatives.

End Homelessness among Veterans and their Families in 2015

In his speech on housing policy in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 6, 2013, President Obama stated, "Nobody in America, and certainly no Veteran, should be left to live on the street." Ending homelessness among Veterans by 2015 is a national priority, one that has widespread bipartisan support. HUD's 2013 AHAR reported that 57,849 Veterans were experiencing homelessness, a **24 percent reduction since 2010**. Continued focus and strategic action will be required to remain on a trajectory towards ending homelessness among Veterans and their families over the next two years. In FY 2015, USICH will drive progress through interagency work structures previously put in place by USICH and its member agencies. In the final push to the 2015 goal, there is a crucial need to ensure seamless coordination and capacity at the national and local level.

USICH, HUD, and VA collaborate to plan and execute a myriad of strategic actions in order to end homelessness among Veterans. Work expected to continue and expand in FY 2015 includes:

- Strategic implementation of the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) and Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) programs;
- Improvements to HUD's annual point-in-time (PIT) Count to use the count as an opportunity to engage Veterans in services;
- Identify and promote ways for communities to improve data sharing, analysis, and where feasible, data integration among VA and HUD funded providers;
- Foster the development of local targets to meet the 2015 goal;

- Promote the integration of targeted Veterans programs into coordinated entry systems in communities to improve their ability to match interventions to the needs of Veterans who experience or are at-risk of homelessness in their communities; and
- Determine the prevalence of Veterans who are not eligible for VHA services and determine ways that they can receive housing and support needed to end their homelessness.

End Homelessness among Families and Children in 2020

Data from HUD indicates that 70,960 families were homeless at a point-in-time in 2013. Longitudinal data from HUD's AHAR indicates that a larger number—167,854 families—were homeless and sheltered at some point in 2012. Department of Education data, which includes doubled-up households, indicates that more than one million school-age children and their families were homeless at some point during the 2011 – 2012 school year. Without the doubled-up households, the Department of Education data would show 295,000 school-aged children and their families experiencing homelessness. Trends over the last four years indicate that the number of families on the street or in homeless programs at a point in time has remained steady, and the number of families experiencing homelessness over the course of a year has increased. Clearly, data on family homelessness points to the need for additional Federal efforts.

When families become homeless, the experience itself is traumatizing, especially for children. Children in families experiencing homelessness also have high rates of acute and chronic health problems, and most have been exposed to violence. Homeless school-age children are more likely than similar age children in the general population to have emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and manifestation of aggressive behavior. Moreover, repeated school mobility leads to decreased academic achievement, negatively impacting both the child's and the school's overall performance.

The costs of family homelessness are high and impact a number of systems. But most importantly, they have a lasting detrimental social impact. Ending family homelessness requires leveraging national priorities around closing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates, and improving economic stability for future generations.

During FY 2013, USICH launched and co-led a 13-agency Interagency Working Group on Family Homelessness to identify resources and key strategies needed to achieve the goal of ending homelessness among families and children by 2020. The working group developed a set of short-term and long-term strategies, prompting the Council to approve a complement of activities that will continue in FY 2014 and into FY 2015:

- Help communities develop a centralized or coordinated assessment system that has the capacity to connect families to targeted prevention assistance where possible and temporary shelter as needed;

- Target Federal resources to provide rapid re-housing assistance to the majority of families experiencing homelessness, increase access to affordable housing, and help communities target resources so that longer and more service-intensive housing interventions are directed to the highest need households;
- Use Federal programs and guidance to help communities connect families to benefits, employment, and services they need to achieve and sustain housing;
- Use Federal interagency messaging, policies, and technical assistance to communicate this coordinated Federal approach to stakeholders; and
- Develop and strengthen evidence-based strategies for serving families experiencing and at-risk of experiencing homelessness.

In FY 2015, USICH will support local capacity to implement evidence-informed strategies and innovative approaches to ending homelessness among families and children, by:

- Supporting communities in the development of trauma-informed centralized or coordinated assessment systems that improve access to and targeting of resources for at-risk or homeless families through coordinated interagency messaging and technical assistance;
- Developing strategies to help communities expand temporary shelter capacity and access to end unsheltered homelessness among families;
- Improving Federal policy and local coordination to maximize outcomes for families served by homeless service and domestic violence programs; and
- Developing and strengthening evidence-based strategies for serving families experiencing and at-risk of experiencing homelessness, incorporating findings from the HUD Office of Policy Development and Research's *The Impact of Housing and Services Interventions on Homeless Families*. Identifying other areas of needed research.

End Homelessness for Youth in 2020

The number of unaccompanied youth (age 12 – 24 years) experiencing homelessness is difficult to pinpoint. Due to barriers that exist for young people in accessing adult-only shelters and their lack of connection to most social services, many, if not most, youth experiencing homelessness go uncounted. Research shows a high prevalence of depression, suicide initiations, and other mental health disorders among youth who are homeless. Chronic physical health conditions are common, as are high rates of substance abuse disorders. Many youth who become homeless have histories of academic difficulties including suspension and expulsion. Homeless youth engage in risky behaviors and have high rates of

arrests and convictions. Youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning (LGBTQ) disproportionately experience homelessness as a consequence of coming out.

More needs to be known about the costs associated with youth homelessness, even as the high rates of medical and behavioral health care and incarceration are costly. These costs compound over a lifetime as today's homeless youth become tomorrow's homeless adults.

It is widely acknowledged among experts involved in this work that there is a severe lack of capacity in nearly all communities to address the needs of youth experiencing homelessness. Youth are often disconnected from community systems or may come in contact with multiple systems. While family members can be a resource in resolving youth homelessness, there is lack of knowledge about the practices that support a safe return to family. Among youth-serving programs, there is often a lack of cultural competency to address needs of LGBTQ youth and youth of color.

Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness

In FY 2013, USICH released the *Framework to End Youth Homelessness: A Resource Text for Dialogue and Action.* This document was developed for Federal, State, and local stakeholders to use as a resource in their work to get better youth outcomes in stable housing, permanent connections, education, employment, and well-being. The framework details the intervention model contents, including risk and protective factors, practice frameworks, intervention strategies, and core outcomes (stable housing, permanent connections, education and employment, and well-being). Ongoing dialogue is intended to drive action across communities to incorporate components of the intervention model into their programs and align their outcomes with the core outcomes in the model.

Youth Count!

USICH and its Federal partners, including ED, HUD, and HHS/ACYF launched *Youth Count!*, a community-driven initiative to develop effective strategies for counting unaccompanied homeless youth in conjunction with the local HUD PIT counts. The goal of this initiative was to identify promising strategies for conducting:

1) collaborative PIT counts of unaccompanied homeless youth that engage CoCs, Runaway and Homeless Youth providers, local education agencies' homeless liaisons, and other local stakeholders; and
2) credible PIT counts that gather reliable data on unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. Nine sites participated in *Youth Count!*.

In partnership with the Council, Urban Institute, an independent national social policy organization, released the results of a process evaluation to understand the nine study sites' strategies for counting youth experiencing homelessness, identify promising practices, and highlight lessons that can be drawn to develop better methods to count this population in future PIT counts across the country. In FY 2014 and FY 2015, USICH will support information dissemination and capacity building in communities to improve their methodology and strategic partnerships to get a more accurate count of youth experiencing homelessness. These efforts will help communities during the 2014 PIT count and will improve their data collection.

In FY 2015, USICH will work to reach the outcomes reflected in the youth framework by supporting efforts to improve data quality and collection on youth experiencing homelessness and build capacity for service delivery.

Similar in structure to the chronic homelessness and family working groups, the working group on youth homelessness is charged with executing and tracking progress on strategies to end youth homelessness. USICH action that will continue or accelerate in FY 2015 includes:

- Supporting a national dialogue on the intervention model by communicating more broadly to communities and homeless service providers with opportunities to receive feedback;
- Implementing a LGBTQ prevention pilot in collaboration with the True Colors Fund, HUD, HHS, ED, and USICH to allow communities to test the youth framework's preliminary intervention model;
- Supporting the development of replicable models for improving stable housing, permanent connections, well-being, education, and employment outcomes for youth who have experienced homelessness;

Figure 1: Unaccompanied Youth Intervention Model

- Supporting HUD's efforts to improve the capture of data in HUD's PIT count (and subsequent PIT counts), which for the first time in 2013 required all Continuum of Care organizations (CoCs) to report on the number of persons in each household type by age category (under age 18, 18 to 24, and over age 24); and
- Subject to FY 2015 appropriations, supporting HHS in the administration of a national study which will improve data quality on the needs and characteristics of youth experiencing homelessness and informing the development of interventions to address youth homelessness.

Increase Access to Mainstream Housing, Income, Health Care and Employment Resources

Targeted homeless resources alone will not end homelessness. Accessing mainstream resources, including health care, education, employment, housing, legal services, and financial supports is critical for all populations and the overall success of the Plan. People who are experiencing or at-
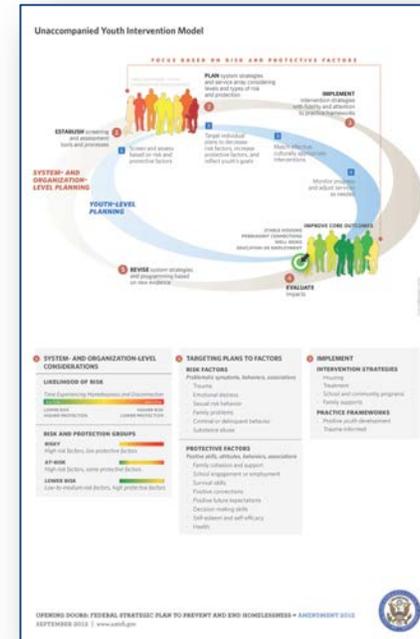

Figure 2: PHA Portal

risk of homelessness may have difficulty navigating the application or re-certification process for these programs. The Council and USICH are increasing access to needed benefits and services by:

- Supporting HUD on guidance to PHAs and providers of multifamily housing to encourage prioritization of mainstream affordable housing resources for people experiencing homelessness and broad dissemination of this information to stakeholders through FY 2014;
- USICH launched a PHA Portal, an interactive web-based resource to inform public housing authorities about how they can contribute to local plans to end homelessness, using strategies that are tailored to the needs, goals, and opportunities of local communities (updates and promotion will continue through FY 2015);
- Leading an interagency working group to develop and implement a Federal Interagency Best Practices Model for Connecting People Experiencing Homelessness to SSI/SSDI that builds on the success of SAMSHA's SOAR initiative;
- Creating, with input from HHS and HUD, a web-based tool to help communities better leverage mainstream service resources in order to end homelessness; and
- Webinars, local meetings, conference calls, and other targeted engagements to support local understanding and capacity to leverage Medicaid towards efforts on homelessness (FY 2013, FY 2014, FY 2015).

Supporting National Implementation of Opening Doors

USICH continues to support local implementation of the strategies outlined in *Opening Doors* through engagement with regional and State coordinating bodies, elected officials, public housing authorities and community leaders. With a complement of four (4) regional coordinators led by the Director of National Initiatives, USICH provides a range of targeted community engagement and technical expertise in communities through the implementation of place-based work, partnerships and strategic communications.

Budget cuts in April 2014 required by sequestration meant that USICH instituted a necessary travel freeze on any USICH-funded non-local travel. This significantly impacted the level of direct, on-the-ground support and guidance that USICH Regional Coordinators were able to offer communities. Notwithstanding the impact of lessened travel, USICH staff were resourceful in leveraging virtual technology to support these communities. Our focus in States and local communities continues to be:

- Partnership. USICH is a bridge between community level work and Federal policy. By providing information to the field, and sharing real world challenges in implementing Federal programs back to agencies, USICH helps resolve and support community level efforts. This improves crucial partnerships between communities and the Federal government necessary to accomplishing goals on ending homelessness;

- <u>Proactive engagement and building collaboration</u> at the local level, both by directly convening people as in LA, and by supporting local leadership as was done in Houston and Salt Lake City for example) to convene people and implement a coordinated approach to homelessness; and
- <u>Technical assistance and capacity building</u> by sharing solutions and resources to support their implementation.

Priority Communities

Through the work of our Regional Coordinators, in FY 2015, USICH will continue its strategic and proactive engagement in priority communities, which are communities that have been identified as having the greatest incidences of homelessness. USICH is strengthening local collaboration, targeting of resources, technical assistance, and our strategic messaging to communities that are home to the majority of people experiencing homelessness in this country:

- In FY 2013, USICH undertook a **new partnership with HUD** to engage their mainstream housing resources in 10 communities. This work included convening and managing local leadership teams and equipping them with a tool to use their data to determine needed housing interventions and analyze resources to identify opportunities where mainstream housing could meaningfully contribute to local efforts to reach the goals in *Opening Doors*. The Council will build on this work through FY 2015 by supporting the implementation of opportunities identified and taking lessons learned to scale nationally;
- Regional Coordinators participated on leadership teams for the four State-level **SAMHSA Policy Academies** to reduce the rate of chronic homelessness through a SAMHA-sponsored, cross-agency Federal technical assistance effort. USICH brought necessary partners to the table, added content expertise, and in some areas is currently supporting follow-on activities. Similarly, the Council will build on lessons from this work in our support of State efforts in FY 2015;
- Beginning in FY 2014 and continuing through FY 2015, USICH staff are partnering with national and local staff from **VA and HUD** to tailor the implementation in 25 communities of a collaborative approach to strengthen the development of coordinated assessment and intake systems for people experiencing homelessness, to enhance the coordination between VA Medical Centers and local Continuum of Care organizations, and to strengthen each community's capacity to efficiently target housing and services interventions and achieve the goals of *Opening Doors*;
- USICH supports the coordination of **federally funded technical assistance** in priority communities, by convening HUD, HHS, VA, and privately funded agencies to ensure communication and strategic implementation of activities; and
- USICH, in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015, will continue engaging in specific, purposeful activities related to implementing the **youth framework**, such as developing a screening and assessment tool that assesses youth based upon risk and protective factors, encouraging

data sharing between local homeless service providers and schools, and incorporating the four outcomes into youth provider service evaluation.

Partnerships

USICH supports and progresses national implementation of *Opening Doors* through fostering strategic partnerships on initiatives, amplifying key messages, and identifying opportunities for collaboration to further efforts to end homelessness. In FY 2013 the Council saw considerable success from partnership activities that will continue into FY 2014 and FY 2015.

Philanthropic Partners

The importance of public-private partnerships has never been greater. As States and communities continue to face constrained resources, many philanthropic organizations dedicated to serving populations at-risk of or experiencing homelessness can play a larger leadership role. Coordination amongst all of these stakeholders is essential to achieving the goals of the Plan. Examples of ongoing activities include:

- Promote leadership in local planning efforts and awareness of evidence-based approaches among philanthropy and private funders;
- Partner with Funders Together to End Homelessness to convene funder networks around opportunities for collaboration;
- Engage local leaders on better ways to involve philanthropy and coordinate efforts with funders at the community planning table; and
- Partner with Funders Together to End Homelessness to plan a Community of Practice focused on ending youth homelessness.

Mayoral Partnerships

Mayors are critical partners in local community efforts to prevent and end homelessness. USICH continued its collaboration with their official non-partisan organizing body, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, throughout FY 2013 with work expected to continue into FY 2014 and FY 2015:

- Engage with mayors to provide guidance and resource ideas based on specific community needs;
- Organize peer learning conversations between mayors with shared interests and concerns;
- Leverage expertise from mayors whose communities are already making significant progress towards the goals of Opening Doors to share promising practices and create momentum with other communities across the country; and
- Collaborate with the U.S. Conference of Mayors and VA on the successful adoption of a resolution at the June 2013 Conference that reinforced the need for collaborative action by Mayors and VAMC directors to achieve the goal of ending homelessness among Veterans in 2015.

Advocates

USICH hosts quarterly meetings with national advocacy organizations and Council agencies, creating a rare opportunity for open dialogue among stakeholders and policy makers from multiple agencies. Participants planned a series of topics to facilitate ongoing opportunities for public-private collaboration. In response to questions and issues raised in this open forum, USICH undertook research on criminalization of youth experiencing homelessness in local communities which will further inform the Council's work on youth. In addition, USICH engaged national partners on efforts to accelerate progress on chronic homelessness by engaging this group in ways to improve identification, outreach, and prioritization of resources for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. In FY 2015, USICH will continue these meetings as a way of maintaining transparency, momentum, and public-private partnerships.

Communications, Research, and Common Data

Communications

Communications activities are an essential way USICH supports the broad implementation of Opening Doors. USICH shares information on Federal policies and resources and evidence based practices with local communities. USICH also provides tools, information, and resources to enhance the capacity of these communities to implement solutions to homelessness.

Through the website, regular electronic newsletters (with over 16,000 subscribers), social media, and webinars, USICH disseminates information to build capacity, awareness, and political will to implement Opening Doors.

- USICH's website is a go-to resource for open Federal requests for proposals, other new funding opportunities to assist in ending homelessness, and linkages to key Federal agency partners, programs and initiatives;
- USICH newsletters reinforce policy priorities and promote stakeholder understanding of the Administration's efforts and commitments to prevent and end homelessness;
- USICH leverages partnerships to provide webinars and interactive learning opportunities in order to support field implementation of key systems-level work;
- In FY 2013, USICH staff spoke at over two dozen public events, which highlighted our work on the issue of homelessness;
- USICH's increased social media engagement in FY 2013 has improved the accessibility of information on promising practices, successful community solutions, and relevant research; and
- USICH's website features blogs from nonprofit and community leaders, researchers, and Federal partners working in a variety of issue areas related to ending homelessness.

Research

USICH has compiled and developed abstracts for approximately 200 studies conducted over the past decade and hosts the information on our research database. Users can browse through the listings, which promote best practices and evidence-based strategies for ending homelessness. In compiling and sharing this information, USICH hopes to support policy professionals and national, State, and local leaders in their efforts to improve how the nation responds to the crisis of homelessness. USICH will continue to update the research database in FY 2014 and FY 2015.

Common Vocabulary and Data Standards

USICH works to develop and promote a common Federal vocabulary and data standard regarding housing status across all targeted homeless and key mainstream programs for low-income households. This work began in 2011 as part of a Congressional mandate in the HEARTH Act and is critical to our ability to identify people served by government programs that are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and to measure the impact of homelessness programs. In FY 2014 and 2015, USICH will continue to:

- Promote adoption of common vocabulary and data standards across homeless targeted and mainstream programs, through adoption of HUD's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data standards, especially in reporting on housing status;
- Support HUD and HHS efforts to integrate HHS's Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS) with HMIS;
- Promote the adoption of HMIS for HHS's Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program, and support data sharing efforts between VA's homeless programs and HMIS, including direct use of HMIS for select VA programs; and
- Assist ED and HUD is determining options for aligning reporting categories for residence and housing status with HMIS data standards.

Performance Management and Annual Update to Opening Doors

USICH's performance management activities monitor the Council's progress on implementing *Opening Doors*, is used to identify what's working well and where changes are needed, and is used to ensure Council members are focused on the highest priority activities. USICH is accountable across agencies for the full implementation of the Plan. USICH performance management activities include:

- Build consensus on Federal policy and interagency activities necessary to prevent and end homelessness;
- Bring strategic opportunities and critical data to Federal leadership for decision making; and
- Implement systems of accountability to promote follow-through, track implementation, and provide feedback on what is working, what is not, and how to adjust.

Annual Update to Congress

Pursuant to the HEARTH Act, USICH prepares annual reports on progress toward goals of the Plan, including a discussion of key activities and accomplishments by Council member agencies. The report examines the impact of 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 also serves as an opportunity for reflection by Council member agencies and staff on needed adjustments to plan implementation. The 2012 report was published in March 2013. The 2013 report is currently underway and will be published in FY 2014. In FY 2014, USICH will publish the 2013 Annual Update and begin the process of developing the 2014 Annual Update for publication in 2015.