Request for Information on Proposed Federal Homelessness Research Agenda:
From Evidence to Action

Key Dates

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U.S. INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS (USICH)

Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to solicit public input on a proposed federal homelessness research agenda.

Launched in December 2022, *All In: The Federal Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* is built on a commitment to advance evidence-based practices to prevent and end homelessness. One of the foundational pillars of the plan, "Use Data and Evidence to Make Decisions," includes a strategy to "*Develop a federal homelessness research agenda in collaboration with federal agencies, academic researchers, people with lived experience, and innovative programs to conduct, compile, and disseminate research on best practices, the effectiveness of various interventions, and metrics to measure outcomes.*"

With public input, USICH is developing a research agenda that will determine federal priorities in homelessness research and create a national roadmap to build a stronger evidence base for what works to prevent and end homelessness.

Below is a preliminary outline of the proposed federal homelessness research agenda. The final research agenda will incorporate feedback from this Request for Information.

Goals

Through a federal homelessness research agenda, USICH seeks to:

- Strengthen the knowledge base on what works to prevent and end homelessness through rigorous qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Reinforce existing evidence to combat disinformation about effective approaches
- Align research priorities and prevent fragmentation at both the federal and non-federal levels
- Facilitate meaningful engagement of and collaboration with a diverse group of funders, researchers, people with lived expertise, and other partners at every stage of developing and implementing federal research activities

- Promote research to address gaps in policy and practice, and facilitate the uptake of evidence by decision makers and service providers
- Spur governmental and non-governmental investment in homelessness research

Values

The research agenda and the process used to create it embody the following values:

Collaboration
- Meaningfully engage people with lived expertise of homelessness in all aspects of homelessness research
- Break down silos in research and research funding at the federal and non-federal levels

Racial Equity
- Acknowledge the historical and ongoing harm of research on people of color and other marginalized populations
- Co-create inclusive and equitable research processes, including collection and analysis of demographic information
- Address the most pressing questions to understand and disrupt systemic racial disparities

Research to Action
- Support policymakers to use evidence as they shape local, state, and national responses to homelessness
- Develop tools and strategies to support uptake of evidence by service providers

Development Process

USICH has undertaken a comprehensive process to assess the state of homelessness research. Since May 2023, the USICH team has:

- Conducted over 50 key informant interviews, focus groups, and listening sessions with researchers, people who have experienced homelessness, national organizations, and federal agencies
- Evaluated systematic reviews of homelessness interventions (see Appendix 1)
- Reviewed federal agency learning agendas and research agendas developed by academic institutions and other non-governmental organizations (see Appendix 2)
- In partnership with the National Institutes of Health, assessed the portfolio of federal funding for homelessness research from 2000-2023
- Convened a research workshop with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago that included a diverse group of researchers, people who have experienced homelessness, and national advocates

Proposed Framework

USICH plans to publish a federal research agenda that is grounded in existing evidence and sets forth priority areas for further research that will inform policies, programs, and practices to prevent and end homelessness. The proposed framework and key areas of focus are outlined below.

As highlighted in *All In*, the research agenda recognizes that the needs of people experiencing homelessness vary based on factors such as age, disability, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and it acknowledges that tailored research questions are needed to address the needs of specific populations and geographic areas. The agenda will seek to identify equitable data collection methods and understand the effectiveness of population-specific interventions.

Further, the research agenda will center racial equity and will include a focus on historically marginalized groups, including communities of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ communities, and others. Additional subpopulations of focus include families, older adults, youth and young adults, people experiencing chronic homelessness, unaccompanied women, and Veterans. USICH encourages the identification of culturally relevant strategies across each research topic to address the needs of each subpopulation.

Section 1: Preventing Homelessness

Background: To understand what it would take to end homelessness in the United States, we must develop and rigorously test approaches to help people exit homelessness, access housing and supports, and remain stably connected in the community, and we must understand how best to keep people from experiencing homelessness in the first place. We must answer the fundamental question: *What would it take to prevent homelessness?*

While communities are increasingly focused on homelessness prevention, the research base remains limited. Initial studies demonstrate the promise of approaches such as guaranteed basic income, flexible funding pools, shelter diversion, and targeted interventions for specific subpopulations, providing a foundation to build upon.

To expand the evidence base on homelessness prevention, future research should address:

1. **Universal Prevention Strategies**: Approaches that impact large groups of people who are living in poverty and have moderate to high risk of homelessness. Priority research topics may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Child Tax Credit	Did the pandemic-era expansion of the child tax credit prevent families from experiencing homelessness, and what impact would permanent expansion have in preventing homelessness?
Large-Scale Eviction Prevention	To what extent have community-level (or larger) eviction prevention interventions disrupted the inflow into homelessness?
Guaranteed Basic Income	How does providing a guaranteed basic income for specific groups, such as mothers with young children or transition-age youth, impact their longer-term risk of experiencing homelessness? What innovative new approaches are showing promise?
Flexible Funding Pools	How effective are flexible funding pools (e.g., to help people pay for rental and utility arrears, car repairs, and other unexpected expenses) in preventing homelessness?

2. **Targeted Prevention Strategies**: Approaches that provide housing and services for people at very high risk of homelessness at critical moments in their lives. Priority research topics may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Youth	What are the most effective homelessness prevention interventions that target crucial transitions for youth (e.g., emancipation from foster care or exit from the juvenile justice system)? What innovative new approaches could be tested and scaled?
Criminal/Legal System Reentry	What are the most effective interventions for preventing homelessness upon exit from jails and prisons? What new interventions are needed?
Health-Care Systems	How can health care systems effectively screen for risk of homelessness and connect people to services What are best practices for discharge planning? How can medical respite support effective discharge planning?
Older Adults	What are effective housing and service interventions for preventing homelessness among older adults at high risk? What new strategies are needed?
Service Members	What practices can support transitioning service members pre-transition, at the point of transition, and post-transition to prevent homelessness in both the short and long term?
People Experiencing Life Transitions (health crisis, divorce, or death of a loved one)	What strategies can communities deploy to identify and support people at risk of homelessness who are not transitioning from a system or who are not connected to mainstream services?
Racial Equity	What systemic interventions decrease inflow of people of color into homelessness response systems? What innovations are needed?

3. **Diversion:** "Intervention(s) designed to immediately address the needs of someone who has just lost their housing and became homeless." These approaches attempt to connect with people at the moment of housing crisis and explore options for keeping them housed and avoiding involvement in the homelessness system. Priority research topics may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Diversion	What are barriers to greater uptake of effective diversion practices and what new strategies can be developed to increase uptake?
Flexible Funding	What are the most effective and efficient uses of flexible funding pools at the community level?
Subpopulations	What are the impacts of diversion on specific subgroups, including families, youth, single women experiencing

	homelessness, people with disabilities, and communities of color, and people with intersecting identities? What are emerging culturally relevant practices to meet people's needs? What innovative new approaches can meet the needs of these groups?

4. **Screening and Identifying Risk**: Although tens of millions of Americans each year experience poverty, housing instability, and poor housing conditions each year, only a fraction of people experience homelessness. We must learn how better to target resources and scale prevention responses to meet the needs of those most at risk of experiencing homelessness. Priority research topics may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Universal Screening	What would be the impacts of implementing a universal screening tool for homelessness risk in health care and educational settings, followed by supportive service interventions to keep people stabilized in housing?
Predictive Analytics	How can we responsibly leverage emerging tools such as predictive analytics to understand who is at highest risk of experiencing homelessness? How can we embed safeguards to prevent racial bias? What innovations are needed to understand who is at highest risk?

5. **Cost and Scale:** In addition to building an evidence base for effective prevention strategies, we must understand the size and scope of the population at risk of homelessness and sharpen the focus on who is most at risk. Answering these questions will help make the most efficient use of current resources and understand the need for future resources. Priority research topics may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Annual Cost	What is the annual cost estimate for preventing all new entries into homelessness in the U.S. and potential cost savings to other systems (e.g., homelessness response, emergency rooms, ambulances, law enforcement, courts, and jails/prisons)?
Housing Supply	What is the impact of housing supply and affordability on homelessness in specific geographic areas?
Doubled-Up Households	Among those who are doubled up with friends and family (i.e., non-leaseholders), who is most at risk of falling into literal homelessness, and what interventions are most effective in preventing homelessness? What innovative new approaches are needed to support doubled up, non-leaseholder households?

Section 2: Ending Homelessness

Background: The evidence for Housing First as an effective strategy for ending homelessness is robust. To better understand how to scale housing and supportive services to meet individual needs, more research is needed on:

1. **Cost of Ending Homelessness:** Together, with evidence-based strategies and sufficient accompanying resources, we can end homelessness. To do so, we must better understand the full cost of scaling interventions to meet current and anticipated needs. Priority research topics may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Total Cost of Ending Homelessness	What is the total estimated cost of stably housing everyone currently experiencing homelessness in the United States?
Shifting Narratives to End Homelessness	What strategies are most effective in creating the public and political will to end homelessness? What innovative new approaches are needed to shift public narratives?

2. **Longitudinal Outcomes:** To fully end homelessness, we must ensure housing and services interventions meet people's needs both in the short and long term. Priority research topics may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Housing First Subpopulations	What are the long-term outcomes of the Housing First approach for different subpopulations?
Housing First Models	What are the long-term outcomes of different models which fall under the Housing First approach, such as scattered site vs. project-based permanent supportive housing?
Recovery Housing	What are the most effective models of recovery housing, and what are the long-term housing and behavioral health outcomes for their residents?
Residential Behavioral Health Programs	What is the role of inpatient/residential mental health and substance use treatment programs in helping people exit homelessness? What interventions show long-term housing stability for program graduates?

3. **Housing and Services:** Housing ends homelessness, and voluntary supportive services can help keep people stably housed. It is important to build upon this knowledge base to learn more about person-centered approaches to tailoring housing and services to meet individual needs. Priority research topics may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Housing First Fidelity	To what degree are Continuums of Care following the Housing First approach to fidelity?
Exploring the Outcomes of Data and Service Connectivity	What is the most effective mix of housing and services for specific subpopulations? What is the feasibility of an adaptive

Among Housing, Services, and Health Care, Building on the Base of Evidence Generated From the Department of Veterans Affairs	mixed methods study that evaluates long term housing stability, health, equity, involvement with criminal justice, and well-being for different types of housing (project based, scattered site, shared housing, recovery housing) and case management models (Critical Time Intervention, Assertive Community Treatment, Intensive Case Management) and mental health and substance use treatment to meet needs of individuals, especially those of high acuity (older adults and those with mental health and substance use disorders)?
Permanent Supportive Housing	What is the total estimated need for permanent supportive housing supply for specific subpopulations and what are the implications for racial equity?
Housing Vouchers	What are promising practices to increase landlord acceptance of housing vouchers? What innovative new approaches are needed to increase voucher utilization?

4. **Specific Subpopulations:** As highlighted above, the research agenda will highlight the need to better understand the unique experiences of all subpopulations experiencing homelessness, as well as the barriers and opportunities to provide more effective housing and service interventions. This priority area will include a call to focus on culturally relevant practices to meet people's needs and acknowledge intersectional identities. Sample subpopulations and associated research topics, may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Older Adults	What are promising targeted approaches to meet the needs of people over the age of 55, the fastest growing segment of people experiencing homelessness, often with a high incidence of underlying chronic health conditions?
Youth Ages 18-25	What would a large, longitudinal, direct cash transfer program for youth ages 18-25 teach us about how to support a key transitioning population?

5. **Encampments:** As unsheltered homelessness is at crisis proportions in many communities, jurisdictions have begun to implement a range of approaches to provide short-term shelter and permanent housing with services to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Simultaneously, the nation has seen an increase in harmful and dangerous local and state laws that criminalize homelessness. To understand how best to address encampments, future research may focus on:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Encampment Experiences	What are the experiences of those living in encampments, including measures of health, safety, and social connectedness?

Outreach and Engagement	What outreach and engagement strategies are viewed as most helpful and effective from the perspective of encampment residents?
Housing and Services	When permanent housing is not immediately available, what are the best short-term approaches to move encampments residents into safe settings and provide wrap-around supports?
Criminalization	What is the long-term impact of anti-camping laws on individuals and communities? What new alternatives are needed to reverse the trend towards criminalizing homelessness?

6. **Lessons Learned From COVID-19 Response:** New streams of funding and innovations helped stave off a tidal wave of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to learn more about how communities creatively used new dollars and flexibilities to re-house vulnerable populations and prevent new entries into homelessness. Specific areas of focus may include:

Topic	Areas of Inquiry
Flexibilities and Waivers	How did federal COVID-19 flexibilities impact the equity and effectiveness of the homelessness response system? What would be the impact extending or making regulatory relief permanent?
Pandemic-Related Innovations	What were the most effective innovations that emerged to address homelessness during the pandemic, including non-congregate sheltering, targeted health services, medical respite, and other approaches?
Public Health	What did we learn about community responses to homelessness when the crisis of homelessness was also framed in terms of a public health crisis and state of emergency? What could be drawn from these lessons to shape the nation's long-term approach to ending homelessness?

14-day Comment Period

Comments must be received by 11:59:59 PM (ET) on September 22, 2023.

Information Requested

USICH is requesting public comment on the *Proposed Federal Homelessness Research Agenda: From Evidence to Action*, an agenda that will set federal priorities on homelessness research and create a national roadmap to build the evidence base for what works to prevent and end homelessness. Response to this Request for Information is completely voluntary.

Submitting a Response

Please submit comments electronically using this following link.

This Request for Information is for planning purposes only and should not be construed as a policy, solicitation for applications, or as an obligation on the part of the Government to provide support for any ideas identified in response to it. Please note that the Government will not pay for the preparation of any information submitted or for its use of that information.

Please do not include any proprietary, classified, confidential, or sensitive information in your response. USICH will not capture personally identifiable information unless provided by the respondent. Responses will be compiled, and a content analysis will be generated for internal use to help shape the federal research agenda.

Please direct all questions to: research@usich.gov

Appendix 1: Inventory of Reviewed Systemic Reviews

- Adverse childhood experiences and related outcomes among adults experiencing homelessness: a systematic review and meta-analysis - ScienceDirect
- Lancet (thelancet.com)
- Determinants of Tenancy Sustainment Following Homelessness: A Systematic Review | AJPH | Vol. 108 Issue 11 (aphapublications.org)
- Permanent Supportive Housing With Housing First to Reduce Homelessness and Promote Health Among Homeless Populations With Disability: A Community Guide Systematic Review - PubMed (nih.gov)
- Comprehensive Evidence Review of Programs and Practices Addressing Youth Homelessness Can Now Inform Decision Making – Chapin Hall
- A qualitative systematic review on the experiences of homelessness among older adults | BMC Geriatrics | Full Text (biomedcentral.com)
- Effects of Housing First approaches on health and well-being of adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness: systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials - PubMed (nih.gov)
- Effects of Housing First approaches on health and well-being of adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness: systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials - PubMed (nih.gov)
- Experiences of transitioning from homelessness: a systematic review and meta-aggregation of qualitative studies conducted in middle to high income countries: Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness: Vol 0, No 0 (tandfonline.com)
- Supporting Vulnerable People During Challenging Transitions: A Systematic Review of Critical Time Intervention | Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research (springer.com)
- Social support and networks among people experiencing chronic homelessness: A systematic review. (apa.org)
- Risk and Resilience Factors for Youth Homelessness in Western Countries: A Systematic Review | Psychiatric Services (psychiatryonline.org)
- Interventions for youth homelessness: A systematic review of effectiveness studies - ScienceDirect
- Morbidity and mortality in homeless individuals, prisoners, sex workers, and individuals with substance use disorders in high-income countries: a systematic review and meta-analysis - The Lancet

- A comprehensive review of prioritised interventions to improve the health and wellbeing of persons with lived experience of homelessness - PubMed (nih.gov)
- Effectiveness of interventions to reduce homelessness: a systematic review and meta-analysis - Munthe-Kaas - 2018 - Campbell Systematic Reviews - Wiley Online Library
- Transportation and homelessness: a systematic review: Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness: Vol 28, No 2 (tandfonline.com)
- IJERPH | Free Full-Text | Characteristics and Effectiveness of Co-Designed Mental Health Interventions in Primary Care for People Experiencing Homelessness: A Systematic Review (mdpi.com)
- A Systematic Review of the Effect of Stigma on the Health of People Experiencing Homelessness | The Homeless Hub
- A Systematic Review on the Intersection of Homelessness and Healthcare (hilarispublisher.com)
- The Impact of Homelessness on Mortality of Individuals Living in the United States: A Systematic Review of the Literature - PubMed (nih.gov)
- systematic scoping review of primary health care service outreach for homeless populations | Family Practice | Oxford Academic (oup.com)
- Homelessness and Depressive Symptoms: A Systematic Review : The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease (lww.com)
- Hospital-based preventative interventions for people experiencing homelessness in high-income countries: A systematic review - eClinicalMedicine (thelancet.com)
- Common trust and personal safety issues: A systematic review on the acceptability of health and social interventions for persons with lived experience of homelessness | PLOS ONE
- A comprehensive review of prioritised interventions to improve the health and wellbeing of persons with lived experience of homelessness - PubMed (nih.gov)

Appendix 2: Inventory of Reviewed Learning Agendas

- Learning Agenda: Fiscal Years 2022-2026 (huduser.gov)
- FY 2022-28 Learning Agenda Supplement on Homelessness (va.gov)
- Reducing and Preventing Homelessness: A Review of the Evidence and Charting a Research Agenda | NBER
- 2020-Research-Agenda-Final-4.21.2020.pdf (endhomelessness.org)
- HPRI-Research-Agenda_FINAL_3.17-1.pdf (usc.edu)
- LGBTQ-Youth-Homelessness-Research-Agenda-_-Final.pdf (truecolorsunited.org)