

Homelessness Assistance Outcomes Follow-Up



Objective

The objective of this special report was to follow up on the City’s actions to implement recommendations from the 2018 Allocation of City Resources audit and the 2019 Outcomes of City Efforts audit.

Background

We conducted four audits of the City’s homelessness assistance efforts from 2017 to 2019. We issued 10 recommendations as part of these audits.

In 2021, we conducted follow-up work on the 10 recommendations. This work focuses on the six recommendations that were underway or on hold in 2021.

The City hired its first permanent Homeless Strategy Officer in 2019 to coordinate the City’s homeless response activities.

In 2020, the City created the Homeless Strategy Division within Austin Public Health to coordinate the City’s efforts with community partners.

In December 2023, the City created the Homeless Strategy Office (HSO) to be a standing office separate from other City departments and serve as a focal point for homelessness efforts in the City.

What We Learned

The City has implemented one of two recommendations from the 2018 Allocation of City Resources audit. Additionally, all four recommendations from the 2019 Outcomes of City Efforts audit are in progress.

Recommendations from the 2018 Allocation of City Resources Audit

Recommendation 1
Improve data about the homeless population



Recommendation 2
Develop strategies to meet the current housing need



Recommendations from the 2019 Outcomes of City Efforts Audit

Recommendation 1
Measure long-term success



Recommendation 2
Improve contracts



Recommendation 3
Enhance and develop new prevention programs



Recommendation 4
Improve coordination among case management providers



While the City has made significant progress in these areas, to fully implement the remaining recommendations, the City should:

- Establish a clear and updated goal to measure the current housing need
- Establish metrics to assess the long-term success of homelessness efforts that are measurable and include timeframes
- Require all contractors to track long-term outcomes, use client feedback, establish a client prioritization method, set performance goals, and dedicate appropriate resources to these efforts
- Clearly define prevention efforts, revise and enhance current prevention programs, and develop new programs
- Continue to improve coordination and collaboration among all case management entities in Austin

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Issued Findings and Recommendation Statuses from Previous Audits

Audit	Finding
2018 Allocation of City Resources	The City does not have a complete understanding of how many people are experiencing homelessness or their needs, which limits its ability to effectively allocate resources.
2018 Allocation of City Resources	The City is not meeting the long-term needs of the homeless population and it is unclear if it is effectively meeting the short-term needs.
2019 Outcomes of City Efforts	The City does not effectively ensure outcomes are met and does not determine the long-term success of homelessness assistance efforts.
2019 Outcomes of City Efforts	Efforts to prevent people in Austin from experiencing homelessness may not effectively serve people with the highest risk and are insufficient to meet the needs of the population.
2019 Outcomes of City Efforts	Case management services in Austin may not be efficient or adequate, making it harder to connect people to services and increasing the length of time people experience homelessness.
2019 Outcomes of City Efforts	The City has made significant efforts to assist people experiencing homelessness, and opportunities exist to enhance current efforts.

Audit	Recommendation	Implementation Status
2018 Allocation of City Resources	Recommendation #1: The Assistant City Manager leading the City's Homelessness Task Force should work with ECHO and other partners to improve the quality and accuracy of data collected about the homeless population. This may include, but should not be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving identification of people experiencing homelessness Improving the percentage of people experiencing homelessness who receive a coordinated assessment, and Collecting and analyzing information about the short-term needs of people experiencing homelessness. 	Implemented
2018 Allocation of City Resources	Recommendation #2: The Director of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development should develop and implement strategies to meet current need for housing for those transitioning out of homelessness.	In Progress
2019 Outcomes of City Efforts	Recommendation #1: The Assistant City Manager responsible for coordinating the City's homelessness efforts should review how the City measures the long-term success of homelessness assistance efforts, to ensure all goals are measurable, and include appropriate timeframes.	In Progress
2019 Outcomes of City Efforts	Recommendation #2: The Assistant City Manager responsible for coordinating the City's homelessness efforts should ensure each contract related to homelessness assistance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires vendors track and report long-term outcomes, Requires vendors collect, report, and incorporate client feedback, Establishes a method to prioritize clients for services, Sets realistic performance goals, and Provides appropriate resources to achieve these efforts. 	In Progress
2019 Outcomes of City Efforts	Recommendation #3: The Assistant City Manager responsible for coordinating the City's homelessness efforts should work with City departments to enhance the capacity of existing homeless prevention programs and develop new programs to prevent homelessness.	In Progress
2019 Outcomes of City Efforts	Recommendation #4: The Assistant City Manager responsible for coordinating the City's homelessness efforts should work with stakeholders to design and implement changes to improve coordination and collaboration among all entities providing case management services in Austin.	In Progress