

# 2021 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE



**MARIPOSA COUNTY**  
CALIFORNIA

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# 2021 Homelessness Strategic Plan Update

This 2021 Homelessness Strategic Plan Update serves as the five-year progress update date to, and as envisioned by, the 2015 Strategic Plan to End Homelessness in Mariposa County.

## Background

In 2015, community members and stakeholders in Mariposa County came together to address homelessness within the community by developing a unified and strategic plan. Gaps in housing and services were identified and priorities and action steps were developed with the goal of creating a community safety net to prevent homelessness and to support those already experiencing homelessness.

The 2015 strategic plan envisioned a three- to five-year process for establishing an effective, coordinated response to homelessness in Mariposa County. This 2021 Homelessness Strategic Plan Update summarizes the steps taken and those that the community has identified as continuing priorities. This update was informed by interviews and focus groups conducted with various community members and stakeholders. The quantitative data was collected and analyzed through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). (See Appendix A, below.)

Note that, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was an entirely anomalous year. The pandemic presented many challenges to efforts to serve those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, but it has also spurred opportunity and innovation. New funding has been made available, some of which is discussed below, and new response options—including the sheltering of homeless individuals in hotels and motels—continue to be developed. Understanding the pandemic’s full impact on the planning, development, and evaluation of Mariposa County’s homelessness system of care, however, will require further study and analysis.

## Who is Homeless in Mariposa?

Two principal data sources were used to analyze Mariposa’s population of people experiencing homelessness.

1. The **Point-in-Time Count**, which provides a snapshot estimate of the population of people experiencing homelessness during a single 24-hour period in January 2019;
2. **HMIS data** entered by homeless service providers operating Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Rapid Re-Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing programs that provides estimates of people who received shelter or housing over the course of a two-year period (October 1, 2018, to October 1, 2020).

## Point-in-Time Data

The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count provides a snapshot representation of the size and basic characteristics of the population experiencing homelessness within a single continuum of care (CoC).<sup>1</sup> The PIT count is completed over a 24-hour period during the last 10 days of January and is required to qualify for housing and homelessness funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). A complete count of sheltered and unsheltered people is required at least once every other year, and a sheltered count is required every year. As part of the Central Sierra CoC, Mariposa County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) conducts a full PIT count of the sheltered and unsheltered people in Mariposa County every other year.

When discussing homelessness, it is important to understand the context of the PIT count. As explained by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, “[the PIT] count is designed to enumerate those living in a homelessness facility and those living on the streets. It does not generally capture people who are staying a few nights with a relative but must leave, youth who are couch-surfing temporarily, or those being put up in a garage or a barn.”<sup>2</sup> The PIT count, in other words, is typically considered an undercount of the actual number of individuals or families who are experiencing homeless. While the PIT count does not function as a comprehensive analysis of people experiencing homelessness in a community, it can still help illuminate important trends.

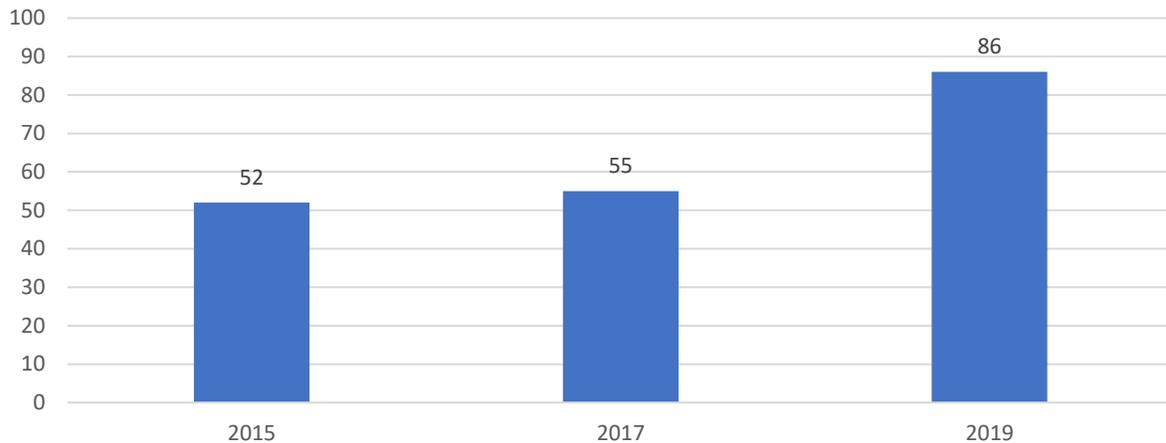
In Mariposa’s January 2019 PIT count, a total of 86 people were counted, up from a total of 55 people in January of 2017 and 52 in 2015. For the county, this represents an increase of 156% from the 2017 count. In comparison, the Central Sierra CoC saw an increase of 130%. PIT count results from 2015, 2017, and 2019 can be seen below.

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<sup>1</sup> A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a HUD mandated regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. Mariposa County is a member of the Central Sierra CoC, described below.

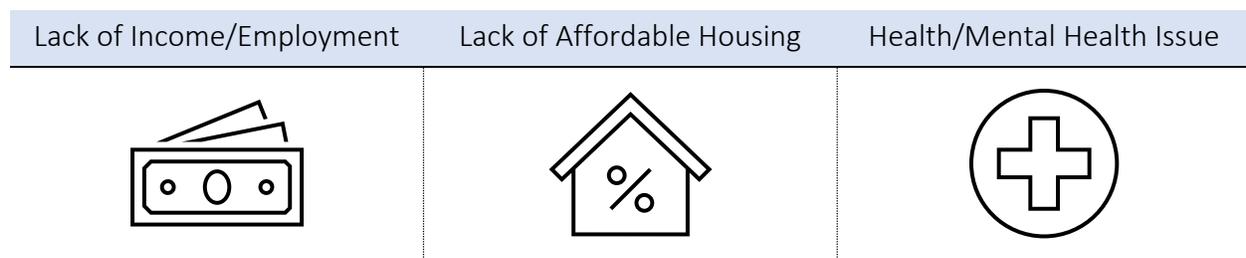
<sup>2</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/pit-count-counts/>

### Point in Time Homelessness in Mariposa



In conjunction to the HUD-required demographic and subpopulation information, Mariposa County included additional survey questions while conducting the PIT count that provide insight to the needs and barriers for the community. The 2019 PIT count found that 20 percent of people worked either full- or part-time in 2019, which was similar to the results from the 2015 PIT count. The 2019 PIT count also found that the number of people reporting serious health problems or concerns sharply increased from 40 percent to 80 percent between 2015 and 2019.

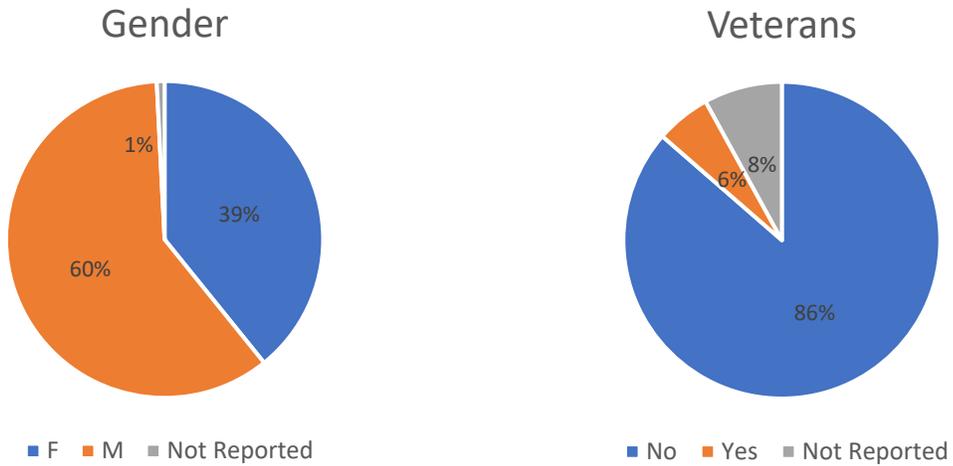
In 2019, the top three barriers to obtaining/maintaining housing were the same as in 2015:



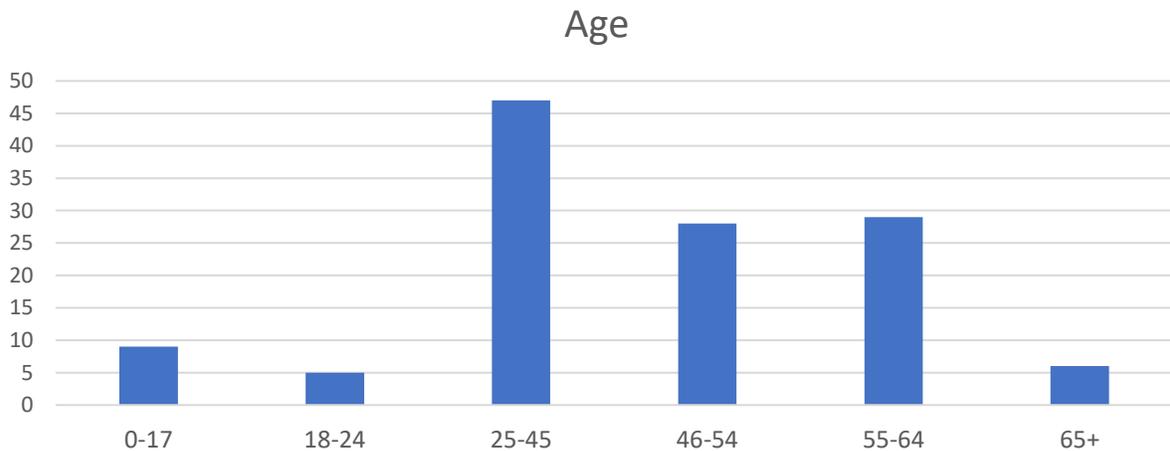
### HMIS Data

In comparison to the PIT count, the actual number of individuals experiencing homelessness over the course of a year is typically much higher. Data from a community’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) can provide insight into the population of people experiencing homelessness over a period of time. According to the Mariposa County HMIS database, at least 125 people experienced homelessness in Mariposa County at some point between October 1, 2018, and October 1, 2020.

The HMIS data revealed the following demographics and characteristics of the population:

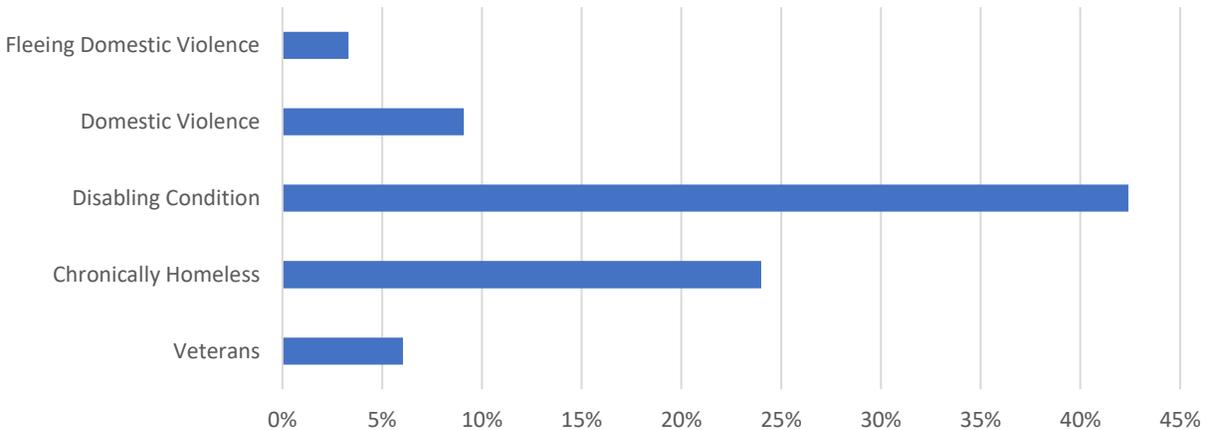


In Mariposa County, men are overrepresented in shelter and housing programs in comparison to their proportion of the general population (51 percent), accounting for 60 percent of the entries in HMIS during the 10/1/18 – 10/1/20 timeframe. Comparatively, veterans represent roughly 9 percent of the general population of the county but only 6 percent of the population accessing housing and shelter programs in HMIS.



Persons under the age of 18 comprise roughly 16 percent of the Mariposa’s general population but only 7 percent of entries within HMIS accessing shelter and housing programs. Within the general population, persons over age 65 account for around 29 percent of the total population in Mariposa, significantly higher than the state average of around 11 percent. Within HMIS, persons over the age of 65 were significantly underrepresented, accounting for only 5 percent of entries for shelter and housing programs.

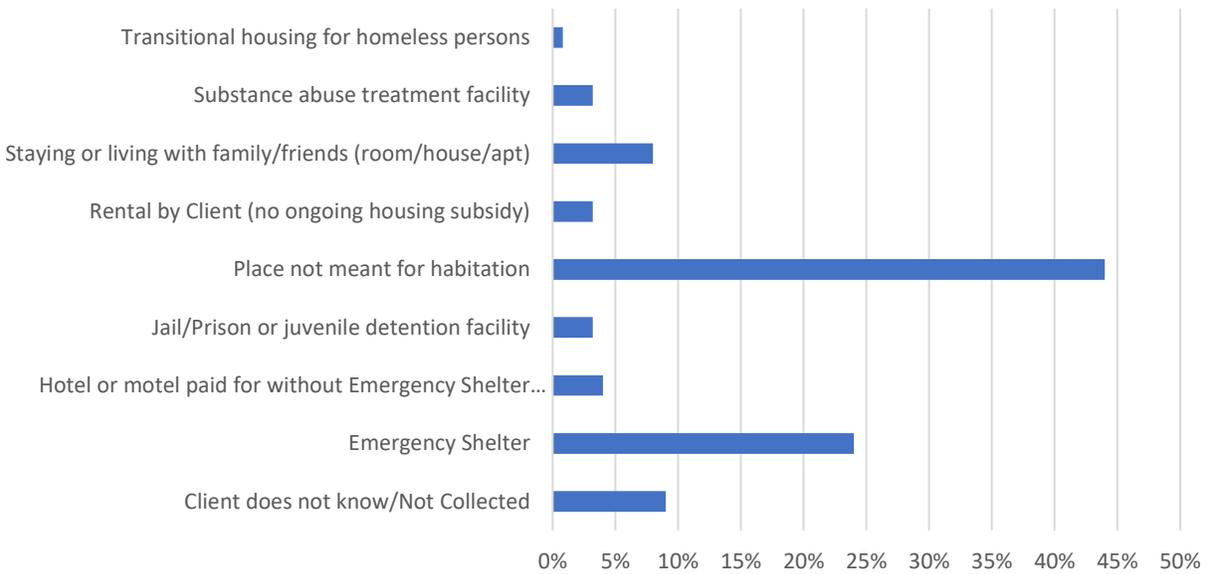
## Additional Population Characteristics



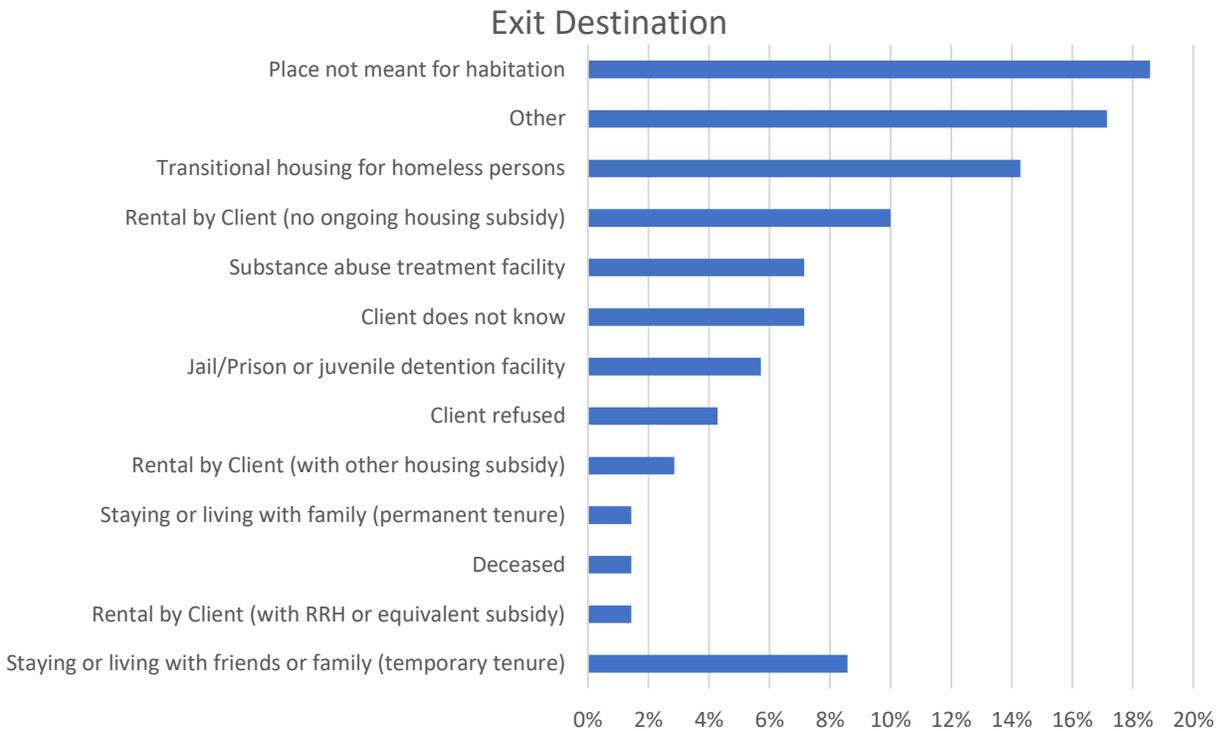
Within HMIS, program-specific data elements provide information about the characteristics of clients, the services provided, and client outcomes. Under these program-specific data elements, the following elements are defined as such in the HMIS Data Standards Manual:

- **Fleeing Domestic Violence** – The person is actively fleeing or attempting to flee the domestic violence situation or is afraid to return to their primary residence.
- **Domestic Violence Victim/Survivor** – The person has experienced any domestic violence, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening event that has either taken place within the individual’s or family’s residence.
- **Disabling Condition** – A physical, mental, or emotional impairment, including substance use, PTSD, or a brain injury that is expected to be long lasting and impede the individual’s ability to live independently and access housing.
- **Chronically Homeless** – An individual or head of household with a disability who
  - lives in a place not meant for human habitation, safe haven, or emergency shelter; and
  - has been homeless and living in one of these places continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights of not living in one of the aforementioned places.

## Prior Living Situation



Among the 125 people who entered the homeless system of care between October 1, 2018, and October 1, 2020, 74 percent (93) reported a prior living situation fitting the HUD definition of homeless. Among these, “places not meant for habitation” and “emergency shelter” represented the majority of the individuals’ prior living situations at 44 percent and 24 percent respectively. Entries where the prior living situation was not collected or left blank also accounted for a high proportion of total overall entries, accounting for roughly 9 percent of total entries. While this combined category can have a variety of implications—ranging from clients simply not knowing their prior situation, not being asked their prior living situation, or even a data entry/data quality issue—a majority of these entries fall within the “blank” category, meaning nothing was entered in the HMIS field for Prior Living Situation.



Within HMIS, the “Destination” field is used to identify where a client will stay just after exiting a project for the purposes of tracking and measuring outcomes. If a client moves into rental housing with a subsidy to help them maintain that housing, the entry should indicate the type of housing subsidy—tenant-, project-, or sponsor-based, for example. A destination like “other” should be used according to the HMIS Data Standards Manual “only as a last resort if the client’s destination truly cannot be even loosely described by any of the available options.”

In the HMIS data set available, it is notable that 30 percent of data points fit into a category where a response was not collected. Out of this combined category, entries where an exit interview was not completed represents roughly 14 percent, and data not collected represents roughly 16 percent.

## Housing in Mariposa

In 2018, Mariposa County completed the *Comprehensive Housing Program Implementation Study* in conjunction with the County’s 2014-2019 Housing Element.<sup>4</sup> As part of the study, an evaluation of the county’s housing conditions found that Mariposa County is facing an affordable housing shortage impacting all income levels. According to the evaluation, “Neither the lowest income renter households nor the mid-level professionals and managers who move to Mariposa County to work can easily find high quality housing at a price they can afford.” The evaluation attributed the area’s housing shortage to several factors including: lack of development activity, incomes growing slower than housing costs, growth in vacation rentals, lack of infrastructure, and land use regulations.

Current Housing Units <sup>3</sup>		
Property Type	Number	%
Single Unit	7,480	72%
1-unit attached	218	2%
2 units	264	2%
3-4 units	116	1%
5-19 units	223	2%
20+ units	167	1%
Mobile Home, Boat, RV, ETC	1,943	19%
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>10,411</b>	

In the county, the lack of affordable housing inventory is particularly exacerbated by the number and rate of conversions to vacation rentals, in part because conversions have not been offset by new construction.<sup>5</sup> In 2019, the county had 10,411 total housing units. Of those, roughly 27 percent are categorized as vacant, one of the higher vacancy rates found around the country. Comparatively, El Dorado County that contains South Lake Tahoe sits at 21 percent, Marin County sits at 7 percent, Orange County that contains Orlando, Florida, sits at 14 percent, and Placer County sits at 13 percent. Across the entire state, the average vacancy rate hovers at around 8 percent.<sup>6</sup>

According to the county’s 2019-2024 Housing Element, the relationship between the relatively static housing supply and the ongoing and increasing rate of conversion is expected to continue and is categorized as “significant.” In particular, very low- and low-income households feel this burden the most and, between the 2015-2019 reporting period, no permits were issued for housing at very-low or low-income levels. In accordance with state requirements, the county’s Housing Element identified a need for an additional 752 units between the 2014-2019 period at various income levels. Out of those, roughly 52 percent were identified as being needed in the low- and very low-income categories. A chart of the most recently available Annual Progress Report (APR) from California’s Housing and Community Development (HCD) can be viewed on the next page and shows that the county failed to reach its housing targets in any income category.

Note that the chart refers to the County’s “RHNA” value. This value is set by the state and looks at population projections to determine how much housing each region will need from each income category.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Occupancy Status American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2015-2019).

<sup>4</sup> The housing Element is one of nine state-mandated elements of the General Plan and identifies housing conditions and needs, goals, objectives, and policies. The most recent version of the Housing Element can be found [here](#).

<sup>5</sup> Mariposa County, *2019-2024 Housing Element*

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Occupancy Status American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2015-2019).

Income Level		RHNA Allocation by Income Level	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total Units to Date (all years)	Total Remaining RHNA by Income Level
Very Low	Deed Restricted	265								265
	Non-Deed Restricted									
Low	Deed Restricted	130								130
	Non-Deed Restricted									
Moderate	Deed Restricted	180							126	54
	Non-Deed Restricted		35	44	19	28				
Above Moderate		420	14	10	28	9	56		117	303
<b>Total RHNA</b>		<b>995</b>								
<b>Total Units</b>			<b>49</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>56</b>		<b>243</b>	<b>752</b>

Figure 1 2019 Annual Progress Report

In 2019, in collaboration with the Calaveras Mariposa Community Action Agency, First 5 Mariposa, and the Local Childcare Planning Council, and the Mariposa County Health and Human Services Agency, the first Needs Assessment and Community Survey was developed as part of a comprehensive effort to identify and assist the greatest unmet needs. In this survey, 83 percent of those responding to the county’s 2019 Community Needs Assessment and Community Survey rating affordable housing as an “important” or “very important” need. The Housing Element also notes that roughly a third of county residents have housing costs above the recommended HUD levels. For homeowners, 33.5 percent are considered housing burdened and spend more than a third of their income on housing costs. Renters are increasingly considered housing burdened under HUD’s definition with 38 percent of renters paying more than a third of their income on rent. Note that the typical recommendation is that no more than 30 percent of income should be spent on rent and anything more than that is considered cost burdened. In focus groups, one participant with lived experience of homelessness said, “I make \$1300 a month . . . but most places start at \$1000, which is expensive.”

### Responding to Homelessness in Our Community

#### Services Currently Available

The landscape of services offered to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness has changed since the adoption of the 2015 Strategic Plan to End Homelessness in Mariposa County. Below is an updated summary of agencies currently providing services to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

## **Alliance for Community Transformations Programs**

The Alliance for Community Transformations provides responsive and preventative services to individuals and families and works through partnerships and collective action to create truly safe, healthy, and socially just communities where every member thrives. Serving Mariposa and Merced Counties, Alliance comprises six programs: Mountain Crisis Services, Valley Crisis Center,<sup>7</sup> Ethos Youth Center, Mariposa Heritage House, CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocates) of Mariposa, and Connections Emergency Shelter.

- **Mountain Crisis Services:** provides emergency shelter and transitional housing to victims of domestic violence and their children.
- **Mariposa Heritage House:** assists individuals with substance-use disorders to locate housing and apply for income assistance. Operates a drop-in center for homeless individuals and community members in need.
- **CASA of Mariposa County:** advocates for abused and neglected children by linking youth in the foster-care system with court-appointed special advocates and supporting them to receive ongoing services through the County Child Welfare Department. Affiliated with the national association.
- **Ethos Youth Center:** operates a drop-in center for youth (ages 13-18) and links them with necessary services.
- **Connections Emergency Shelter:** provides emergency shelter and supportive services to those experiencing a housing crisis.

**Manna House:** provides emergency food to those in need.

**Mariposa County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA):** administers various local, state, and national social services programs (CalWorks, CalFresh, Cash Aid/General Assistance, Child Welfare Services, Adult Protective Services, Behavioral Health, and others); provides case management services and financial assistance for locating and supporting housing.

**Mariposa County Unified School District:** assists students and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness by linking them to necessary services.

**Mariposa Safe Families, Family Enrichment Center and Community Partner Program:** provides mentoring, training, and support in order to move families out of poverty.

**Mother Lode Job Training:** links individuals with job and training opportunities.

**Salvation Army:** provides emergency financial assistance to individuals and families to help meet basic needs.

**Stanislaus Regional Housing Authority:** administers the Housing Choice Voucher program for Mariposa County residents.

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<sup>7</sup> Valley Crisis Center is located in Merced, California, serving Merced County.

### *Federal, State, and Local Funding: Current Landscape*

The landscape of federal, state, and local funding that supports our work has also changed dramatically since the adoption of the 2015 Strategic Plan to End Homelessness in Mariposa County. Since 2015, Mariposa County has taken important steps in diversifying support of its housing and homelessness system of care by tapping into several new sources of funding. Among these are funding streams that have been made available specifically to address the COVID-19 pandemic crisis—most notably, perhaps, are Projects Roomkey and Homekey.

Below is an updated summary of funding available for Mariposa housing and homelessness programs. Please note that not all available funding is necessarily being leveraged to address homelessness and there is more work to be done to ensure Mariposa is taking advantage of all available opportunities. Further, each of these funding sources is subject to different eligibility criteria, reporting requirements, and other guidelines (which may restrict, among other things, which populations the funds may serve).

**Domestic Violence Assistance Program (DVAP):** Administered through the California Emergency Management Agency, DVAP funds support services for survivors of domestic violence and their children and, in Mariposa County, support transitional housing and emergency shelter services.

**CalWorks Housing Support Program (HSP):** Administered through HHS, CalWorks HSP offers financial assistance and wrap-around supportive services (i.e., rental assistance, case management, housing outreach and placement, legal services, and credit repair).

**CalWorks Housing Assistance Program (HA):** Administered through HHS, CalWorks HA can provide payments for temporary shelter for up to 16 consecutive calendar days, as well as payments to secure or maintain housing (including a security deposit and last month's rent, or up to two months of rent arrearages).

**California Emergency Solutions and Housing (CESH):** CESH funds are used for various activities in Mariposa County, including emergency shelter, strategic-plan development, and administration.

**HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) Funding:** Mariposa County is a member of the Central Sierra CoC (comprising Amador, Tuolumne, and Calaveras counties as well), which receives CoC funding used in Mariposa to provide permanent supportive housing.

**Community Development Block Grant – Coronavirus (CDBG-CV):** Administered through the state, CDBG-CV will provide support for communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including housing-related activities.

**Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG):** Federal funds administered annually through the state, ESG funds are used in Mariposa County to support a rapid re-housing program.

**Emergency Solutions Grant – Coronavirus (ESG-CV):** Special allocations of ESG funding intended to be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic among those experiencing homelessness or receiving homeless assistance.

**Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP):** Established to provide direct assistance to California's CoCs and large cities to address homelessness, HEAP funds are used in Mariposa to support emergency shelter operations.

**Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP):** State funds providing outreach, case management, and housing support to those who are disabled and experiencing homelessness.

**Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP):** State grant established to assist individuals who are disabled and are experiencing homelessness apply for disability benefit programs while also providing housing assistance.

**Home Safe Program:** Provides housing-related assistance using evidence-based practices for homeless assistance and prevention, supporting the safety and housing stability of individuals involved with Adult Protective Services (APS).

**Housing Choice Program:** The federal government's major program for providing housing assistance to very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled, housing choice vouchers are administered in Mariposa County by the Stanislaus Regional Housing Authority.

**Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Funding:** State funding intended to increase access and services for underserved and unserved populations, MSHA funding is used in Mariposa County to support transitional housing through Mariposa County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services.

**No Place Like Home (NPLH) Program:** Funds dedicated to the development of permanent supportive housing for persons in need of mental health services experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

**Project Homekey:** State and federal emergency funds intended for the purchase of hotels for conversion to permanent housing facilities for people experiencing homelessness.

**Project Roomkey:** The state- and federal-funded Project Roomkey leverages Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding to house unsheltered individuals in hotel rooms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF):** Administered through Veterans Affairs, SSVF funds provide a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability to very low-income veteran families residing in or transitioning to permanent housing.

## Progress Since 2017 Strategic Plan Update

This summary tracks the progress the community has made on its priorities as identified in the 2017 Mariposa Homeless Strategic Plan as well as Suggested Action Steps to be taken by the community.

### *Priority 1: Build a community framework to address homelessness.*

Action Step	Progress Since 2017	Status
Review available funding sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive review is finished, including a completed matrix of available funding sources.</li> <li>New housing team started in early 2020 and is becoming familiar with funding sources.</li> <li>HHSA continues actively identifying new funding sources.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Communicate about available services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mariposa housing team has been established and meets weekly.</li> <li>HHSA has created an active community Facebook page that communicates housing and homelessness information to the community.</li> <li>The HHSA also hosts a referral hotline providing referrals for housing resources.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Invest in relationships with local stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HHSA has established a network of communication regarding available rentals and is currently working to build its landlord base.</li> <li>HHSA and Alliance has deepened their working relationship.</li> <li>HHSA has been building relationships with the Sheriff's department and the Mariposa Public Works department.</li> <li>The Mariposa Homelessness Task Force continues to engage community stakeholders and facilitate partnerships.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Policy opportunities to increase housing inventory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five new PSH units have come online.</li> <li>County has secured NPLH round one funding for the Creekside Terrace apartment project, which will include 11 supportive units.</li> <li>County has secured NPLH round two funding at the St. Andrews site, which will include 9 supportive units.</li> <li>An additional project, Sierra Gardens, will include five units for seniors who are experiencing homelessness.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<p><b>Suggested Action Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider partnering with the faith community, fair grounds, leaders in the Native American community, and other community centers in disseminating information to those experiencing homelessness.</li> </ol>		

- 2. Look into workforce housing options for Yosemite employees.
- 3. Assess and identify needs in North County area.

*Priority 2. Engage street homeless population in services to address immediate needs.*

Action Step	Progress Since 2017	Status
Establish Downtown Outreach team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While there are no full-time outreach efforts, there have been some outreach efforts spearheaded by Connections/Human Services and Sheriff/Probation.</li> <li>• CoC funding obtained for street outreach.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<p><b>Suggested Action Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish quarterly or monthly outreach efforts in collaboration with the sheriff’s department.</li> </ol>		

*Priority 3: Establish temporary rental assistance projects for lower-need households.*

Action Step	Progress Since 2017	Status
Identify providers to administer rental assistance and provide case management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HHSa has obtained funding to assist with first month’s rent and deposit through the Home Safe and CESH programs.</li> <li>• As Mariposa County develops its system of care, it continues to identify additional providers and sources of support.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Educate providers about funding opportunities for expanding services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providers are generally aware of funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	✓
Build inventory of housing opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HHSa and Heritage House are establishing a network of landlords.</li> <li>• County has secured NPLH round one funding for the Creekside Terrace apartment project, which will include 11 supportive units.</li> <li>• County has secured NPLH round two funding at the St. Andrews site, which will include 9 supportive units.</li> <li>• An additional project, Sierra Gardens, will include 5 units for seniors who are experiencing homelessness.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<p><b>Suggested Action Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prioritize development of units that don’t pose transportation barriers.</li> <li>2. Expand shared housing.</li> </ol>		

- 3. Continue to identify funds that can be used to build capacity/additional housing stock.
- 4. Continue to explore options to increase housing stock at sites already under construction (i.e, St. Andrews).

*Priority 4: Develop sustainable emergency housing support system.*

Action Step	Progress Since 2017	Status
Create a matrix of existing emergency housing supports and eligibility criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under development.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Identify providers with capacity to administer proposed emergency housing model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connections, an emergency shelter/navigation center operated by Alliance, provides emergency shelter services with capacity to house 40 individuals daily (20 daily during the COVID-19 pandemic).</li> <li>• Additionally, Project Roomkey has been leveraged to provide non-congregate emergency shelter options during the COVID-19 crisis.</li> </ul>	✓
Establish sustainable funding stream to support emergency housing system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HHSa has identified ongoing funding for Connections through CoC/ESG funding, HHAP funding, as well as some social service realignment dollars.</li> </ul>	✓
<p><b>Suggested Action Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advertise and distribute the matrix of existing emergency housing supports and eligibility criteria.</li> <li>2. Identify additional scattered site opportunities, within close proximity to downtown and services, to address increased need.</li> <li>3. Continue to provide services under current emergency shelter model.</li> </ol>		

*Priority 5: Develop and coordinate sustainable homeless prevention support system.*

Action Step	Progress Since 2017	Status
Promote and expand landlord/tenant mediation program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal program-by-program case-management and client/landlord mediation is ongoing.</li> <li>• Ongoing plans to integrate landlord/tenant mediation into a formal landlord-engagement program.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Coordinate prevention support system network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings serve as an opportunity to refer and connect clients on an informal basis.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>

Identify and secure mainstream and homelessness-specific funding for providing homeless prevention assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Safe funding provides eviction-prevention resources for senior population.</li> <li>• HHSA has identified prevention funding available through CoC and CESH funds.</li> <li>• County has secured a public services CDBG funding allocation for homeless services at Mariposa Heritage House</li> </ul>	✓
<p><b>Suggested Action Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue efforts to establish a formal landlord-engagement program.</li> <li>2. Develop homelessness prevention program (continuing efforts to develop additional funding sources).</li> <li>3. Increase awareness of homelessness prevention services to those that need them.</li> </ol>		

*Priority 6: Leverage Medi-Cal expansion to provide supportive services to people who are homeless.*

Action Step	Progress Since 2017	Status
Build linkages between community homeless response team and local medical and behavioral health providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HHSA Triage Response and Access to Care (TRAC) team currently works with shelter (Connections and Project Roomkey) participants.</li> <li>• Alliance has secured grant funding to study healthcare and homelessness and to design a project to enhance partnerships.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Explore opportunities to use Medi-Cal to financially support supportive services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The TRAC team is currently billing Medi-Cal.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>

**Suggested Action Steps:**

1. Consider providing trainings for providers on how to bill services to Medi-Cal.
2. Identify additional opportunities for using Medi-Cal to fund services, such as using Medi-Cal transportation services to connect clients to medical appointments.
3. Work with Alliance to establish it as an official Medi-Cal provider.
4. Explore option for Housing and Homeless team to bill to Medi-Cal.

*Priority 7: Establish supportive housing for high-need households.*

Action Step	Progress Since 2017	Status
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Learn about supportive housing models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is an ongoing effort.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Identify potential funding streams to establish supportive housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County has secured NPLH grant for 9 units at St. Andrews and 11 units at Creekside Terrace.</li> <li>Identified and obtained CoC permanent supportive housing funding, currently contracted through Alliance (and currently housing 6 individuals).</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Identify providers with capacity/interest in administering housing/providing supportive services to high-need household.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is an ongoing effort.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Educate providers, particularly those identified as administering similar programs, about funding opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is an ongoing effort.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<p><b>Suggested Action Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue efforts to establish supportive housing for high-need households.</li> <li>Evaluate current system-of-care model and flow, and develop Move On policy.</li> </ol>		

*Priority 8: Improve employment opportunities for people who are homeless/recently housed.*

<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Progress Since 2017</b>	<b>Status</b>
Build partnerships with business community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mother Lode Job Training has joined the CoC board as a voting member.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Establish supportive employment program to provide intensive supports, including skills training, to homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HHSa has partnered with Mother Lode Job Training, which provides job training, experience, and employment opportunities for those experiencing homelessness.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>

persons who gain employment.		
Investigate feasibility of establishing social entrepreneurship program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is an ongoing effort.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
Improve transportation options for people who are homeless to access employment and education opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HHSA piloted a fixed transportation route that included Connections, HHSA, and commercial services (e.g., the pharmacy); the service was suspended due to the COVID-19 crisis, but stakeholders (including those with lived experience) identified it as highly beneficial.</li> </ul>	<i>Ongoing</i>
<p><b>Suggested Action Steps from Community:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize expansion of job-training programs to increase housing sustainability.</li> <li>Establish a social entrepreneurship program with support from the county economic development department.</li> <li>Integrate Motherlode into Homelessness Task Force.</li> <li>Continue efforts to improve transportation options, including reinstating (when appropriate) the HHSA fixed transportation route pilot.</li> </ol>		

*Priority 9: Evaluate community progress.*

<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Progress Since 2017</b>	<b>Status</b>
Draft three- and five-year progress updates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress update completed for 2017 and 2021.</li> </ul>	✓
<p><b>Suggested Action Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a new comprehensive strategic plan for the next five years;</li> <li>Conduct a gaps analysis as part of the new strategic plan;</li> <li>Continue to identify and pursue new and additional potential sources of funding; and</li> <li>Evaluate programs for long-term outcomes and impacts.</li> </ol>		

## Feedback from Community Members and Stakeholders

Representatives of community members and stakeholders (see Appendix A) participated in focus groups and interviews designed to identify progress made in the community since 2017 and to outline community priorities and actions steps for the 2021 update. The participants in the various focus groups and interviews identified some common priorities:

- Increase transportation options;
- Develop housing opportunities, especially those convenient to transportation;
- Improve access to communication (including phone and internet) for those experiencing homelessness;

Additional priorities were also identified by some of the focus-group or interview participants:

- Evaluate and address the barriers to affordable housing posed by zoning regulations and infrastructure limitations;
- Develop stronger partnerships and coordination among service providers;
- Identify and apply for funding designated to assist Native Americans; and
- Explore partnerships with faith-based organizations with respect to housing/homelessness issues.

## Feedback from Community Members with Lived Experience of Homelessness

Community members with lived experience of homelessness (see Appendix A) participated in focus groups and interviews designed to gather their perspectives and guidance. The participants in the various focus groups and interviews generally agreed that services for those experiencing homelessness in the community were generally well-known and popular. Clients found the co-located services especially convenient. One participant noted, “If you go to the human services building, it’s all there. It’s not a secret and people are really helpful, there are people who really like their jobs.” Unfortunately, the participants reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many of these services, to the detriment of community members experiencing homelessness.

The participants also identified some of the most common barriers they face in obtaining and maintaining housing:

- The lack of affordable housing options, including those accessible to people with disabilities;
- The lack of transportation, which makes it difficult to get to necessary medical appointments, shop for affordable food and clothing, and search for jobs and housing;

- The lack of access to internet access and phone service, which makes it difficult to look for employment, look for housing, apply for benefits, and arrange transportation to medical appointments and make other necessary errands; and
- Lower-barrier emergency and otherwise temporary housing options that include cooking facilities.

## Conclusions/Recommendations

Mariposa County has taken substantial steps to support the priorities identified in its 2015 Strategic Plan. It has secured funding from multiple new sources; it has improved coordination among service providers; and it has enhanced the services available to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The 2021 strategic plan update process allowed community members and stakeholders to revisit the community's highest priorities and identify the ways things have improved, and the ways they still need to improve. It also gave space and time for a community impacted by a pandemic to think about the ways people experiencing homelessness have been impacted and the new potential needs that have come as a result.

Through focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and a review of recent community and stakeholder input processes the following three themes emerged:

### **Increasing transportation options and access for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness**

*Clients and stakeholders both identified inconsistent, increasingly limited, or discontinued transportation options as a barrier to being able to access basic services, including important medical surgeries and more affordable grocery options. In one focus group, one participant noted that they had to cancel a surgery due to a lack of transportation. In another instance, a client noted that a specialist they needed to see was in Fresno, but since they had no way to get there, they have not carried through with that appointment yet. Although stakeholders and clients identified co-located services as being a strong benefit, accessing appointments or other needs outside of the county or immediate location was a significant barrier in general, particularly for those with disability and mobility issues. Lack of access to transportation can also restrict clients from accessing services available in other locations more broadly and even limit viable locations for the creation of new housing.*

- Potential options to explore:
  - *Share information about current and alternative transportation options with clients through outreach, social media, flyers, partners and other methods*
  - *Support donations of resources (e.g., bicycles, automobiles) or time to improve access to transportation for clients (repairs)*

- *Engage transportation agencies to better coordinate and increase the resources necessary to address the needs of clients and other low-income or no-income households*

### **Increase affordable housing options and improve access to available units**

*Permanent housing – and the supports needed to retain and maintain it – is the primary solution to homelessness. There is a great need for the creation of very low- and low-income units, and for the buy-in and infrastructure to support their creation and development. Available data suggests the County is making significant progress on its goal of meeting moderate-income level housing, but is falling short in other income categories, especially very low-, and low-income levels. One client noted, “I make \$1,300 a month, but most places start at \$1,000, which is expensive.” Although construction of new affordable housing units can be very costly and take years before new units become available, non-traditional housing options and landlord engagement strategies can be used in many communities to fill in the gaps. New state and federal sources of funding are also frequently being released that should be monitored that may help towards the preservation, protection, and production of new housing.*

- **Potential options to explore:**
  - *Monitor new state and federal funding streams, including new COVID relief funding, and explore if current existing funding opportunities around housing and homelessness are and can be coordinated and aligned*
  - *Explore the feasibility and next steps for non-traditional housing options, such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs)<sup>8</sup>, and tiny homes*
  - *Increase participating landlords through landlord engagement strategies like hosting housing fairs or uplifting successful stories*

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<sup>8</sup> HCD’s ADU handbook can be found here and provides some useful tips, definitions, and summaries: [https://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/docs/adu\\_december\\_2020\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/docs/adu_december_2020_handbook.pdf)

- *Conduct education campaign with any housing navigators, case managers, and clients around California’s Source of Income Discrimination law that prevents landlords from discriminating tenant selection based on the source of rent payment*

### **SB 329 - Source of Income Discrimination**

On January 1, 2020, California Senate Bill 329 went into effect and now prohibits housing discrimination based on source of income. Through this bill, source of income is now defined as “lawful, verifiable income paid directly to a tenant or to a tenant’s representative, or paid to a housing owner of landlord on behalf of a tenant, including federal, state, or local public assistance, and federal, state, or local housing subsidies, including, but not limited to, federal housing assistance vouchers issued under Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937.”

A study commissioned by HUD in 2018 found that cities with an existing source of income law protecting voucher holders had higher rates of landlord acceptance of tenants compared to cities without a source of income protection. This means that California residential landlords cannot state that they do not participate in Section 8 or other rental assistance programs under California law. This includes postings on sites such as Facebook and Craigslist.

#### **Improving access to communication and services for those sheltering in place, especially the internet**

- *With many in-person service providers and facilities closed as a result of COVID, it has been increasingly difficult for clients to reach their service providers or find housing through ways they may have previously. In focus groups, several participants mentioned that their ability to access the internet has been substantially reduced after public locations like the library have closed as a result of COVID. For some clients, this means that they are no longer able to check Craigslist postings to search for housing.*

#### **Recommendations for next steps include:**

- Conducting a comprehensive strategic planning effort and creating an implementation plan with specific action steps for the next five years;
- Conducting a gaps analysis as part of the new strategic plan, including review of current grants and funding received related to homelessness; and
- Continuing to identify and pursue new and additional potential sources of funding.

## Appendix A: Stakeholder Strategic Planning Process

### *Feedback Sessions with Providers*

To capture qualitative feedback on overall goals/priorities, the following entities participated in focus groups or interviews to identify progress made since 2017 and to outline priorities and actions steps for the 2021 update:

1. **Mariposa Weekly Housing Case Conferencing Group:** Group of more than ten individuals closely tied to housing processes within Mariposa County.
2. **Mariposa Homelessness Task Force:** Group of more than 30 individuals representing stakeholders across the community including various departments within HHSA, with some overlap from the Weekly Housing Case Conferencing Group.
3. **Mariposa County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services Department:** Group of more than 40 individuals from across the department within HHSA.
4. **Additional Stakeholders:**
  - Mariposa Unified School District
  - Alliance for Community Transformations
  - Native Solutions Center
  - The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
  - Local real estate and insurance agencies

### *Community Members with Lived Experience: Focus Groups and Interviews*

Consumers with lived experience of homelessness participated in interviews and focus groups to provide additional feedback on priorities for the county. Three focus groups were conducted: one including two participants in Project Roomkey; one including two participants in transitional housing; and one including two participants in permanent supportive housing. In addition, a series of interviews of four participants in emergency shelter were also conducted.