FOCUS STRATEGIES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

PURPOSE AND GOALS

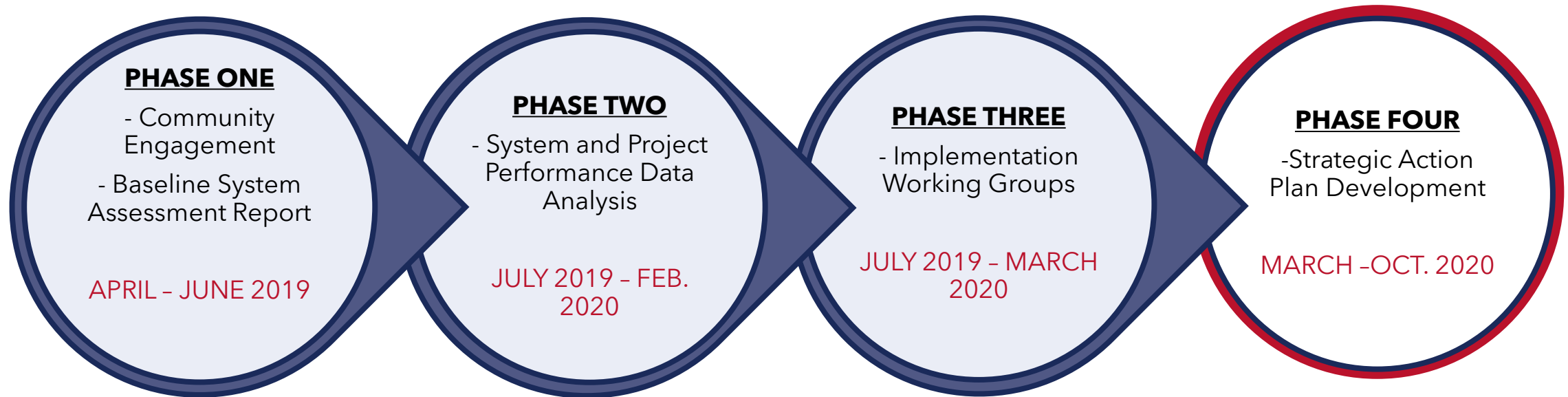# TA PURPOSE AND GOALS

In March 2019, Santa Cruz County engaged Focus Strategies to:

- Assist community leaders and stakeholders to evaluate, align and improve the countywide response to homelessness

- Guide the community towards developing a Strategic Action Plan to implement a more coordinated and systematic countywide approach to reducing homelessness

PLANNING PROCESS PHASES

PHASE ONE

- Community Engagement

- Baseline System Assessment Report

APRIL – JUNE 2019

PHASE TWO

- System and Project Performance Data Analysis

JULY 2019 – FEB. 2020

PHASE THREE

- Implementation Working Groups

JULY 2019 – MARCH 2020

PHASE FOUR

-Strategic Action Plan Development

MARCH –OCT. 2020

COUNTY CONTEXT:

EXISTING PLANS AND DATA

ALL IN PLAN

- **Strategic plan to guide homelessness system planning in Santa Cruz County, completed in 2015**

- **Developed collaboratively through a design team lead by the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP), Smart Solutions to Homelessness, the United Way of Santa Cruz County and the Santa Cruz County Human Services and Planning Departments**

- **Includes eight strategic priorities to address homelessness and implementation strategies for each priority**

ALL IN PLAN - PRIORITIES

1. Transforming the crisis response system

2. Increasing access to permanent housing

3. Integrating systems and community support

4. Ending chronic and other adult homelessness

5. Ending family homelessness

6. Addressing needs in South County

7. Initiating a response to youth and young adult homelessness

8. Ending veteran homelessness

2019 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT DATA

- **The Point-In-Time (PIT) Count is a bi-annual census of households experiencing homelessness at any point in time within a community.**

- **Data is available to understand subpopulations, specific demographics, and geographical trends**

2019 PIT COUNT: PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS COUNTYWIDE

	# of People	Percentage
Unsheltered	1,700	78.4%
Sheltered	467	21.6%
Total Number of People	**2,167**	

	# of People	Percentage
Age		
Adults (24 and up)	1,273	58.7%
TAY (18-24)	594	27.4%
Children under 18	300	13.8%
Chronically Homeless	403	18.6%

2019 PIT COUNT: PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY JURISDICTION
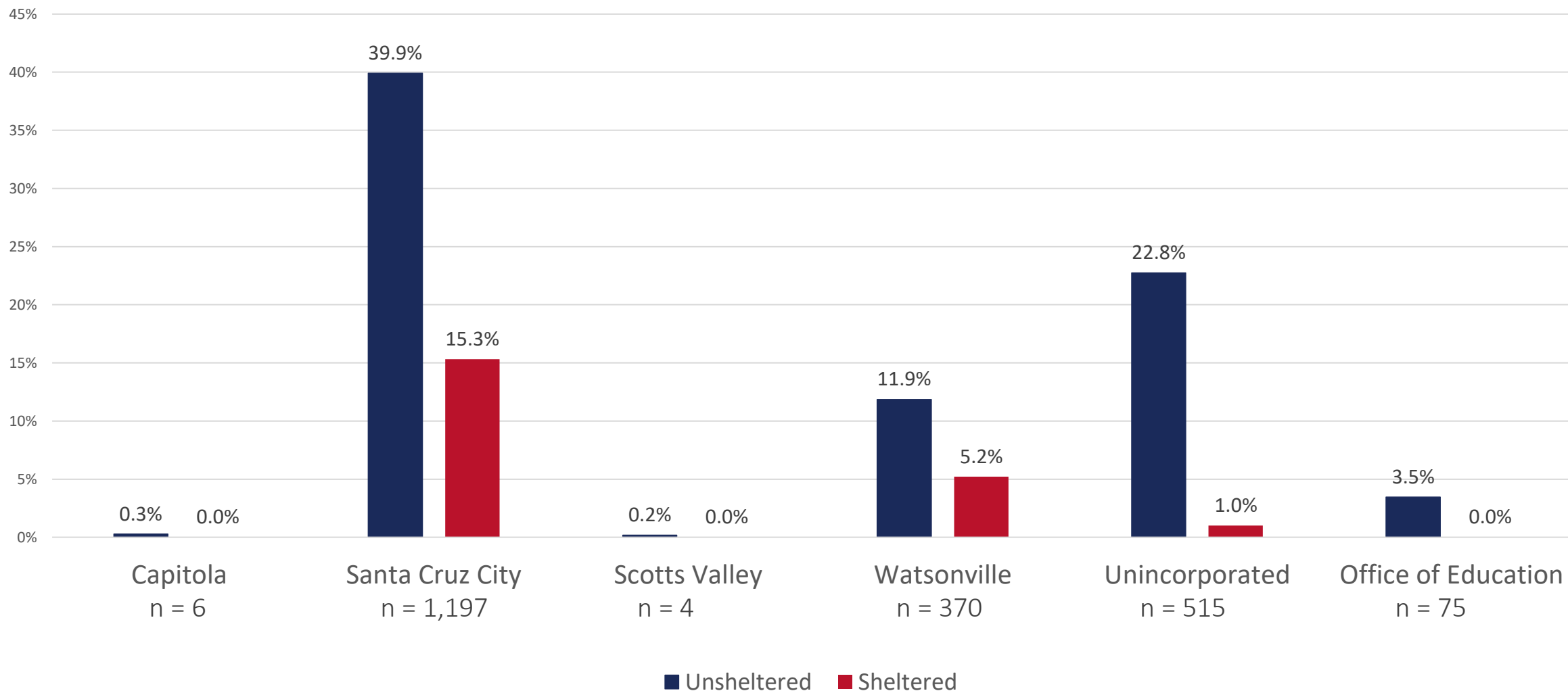
2019 PIT COUNT: HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Household Type	# of People	Percentage
Adult Only	1,280	88.9%
Family (Adults and Children)	122	8.5%
Unaccompanied Minors	38	2.6%
Total	**1,440**	

FOCUS STRATEGIES FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING

SYSTEMS APPROACH

WHY YOU NEED A COORDINATED SYSTEM APPROACH

- **Programs alone cannot solve the problem**

- **Limited resources requires joint decision-making shaped by shared goals**

- **Need to know how you are investing your funds, who is being served, and what the results are**

- **Creates accountability for all stakeholders**

PRINCIPLES OF A HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

- **Housing-focused**

- **Person-centered**

- **Data-informed**

- **Effective use of resources**

A SYSTEM TO END HOMELESSNESS

Ending homelessness means building systems that:

- **Divert people from entering homelessness**

- **Quickly engages and provides a suitable intervention for every households' homelessness**

- **Have short lengths of stay in programs**

- **Have high rates of permanent housing exits**

- **Use data to achieve continuous improvement**

SYSTEMS APPROACH
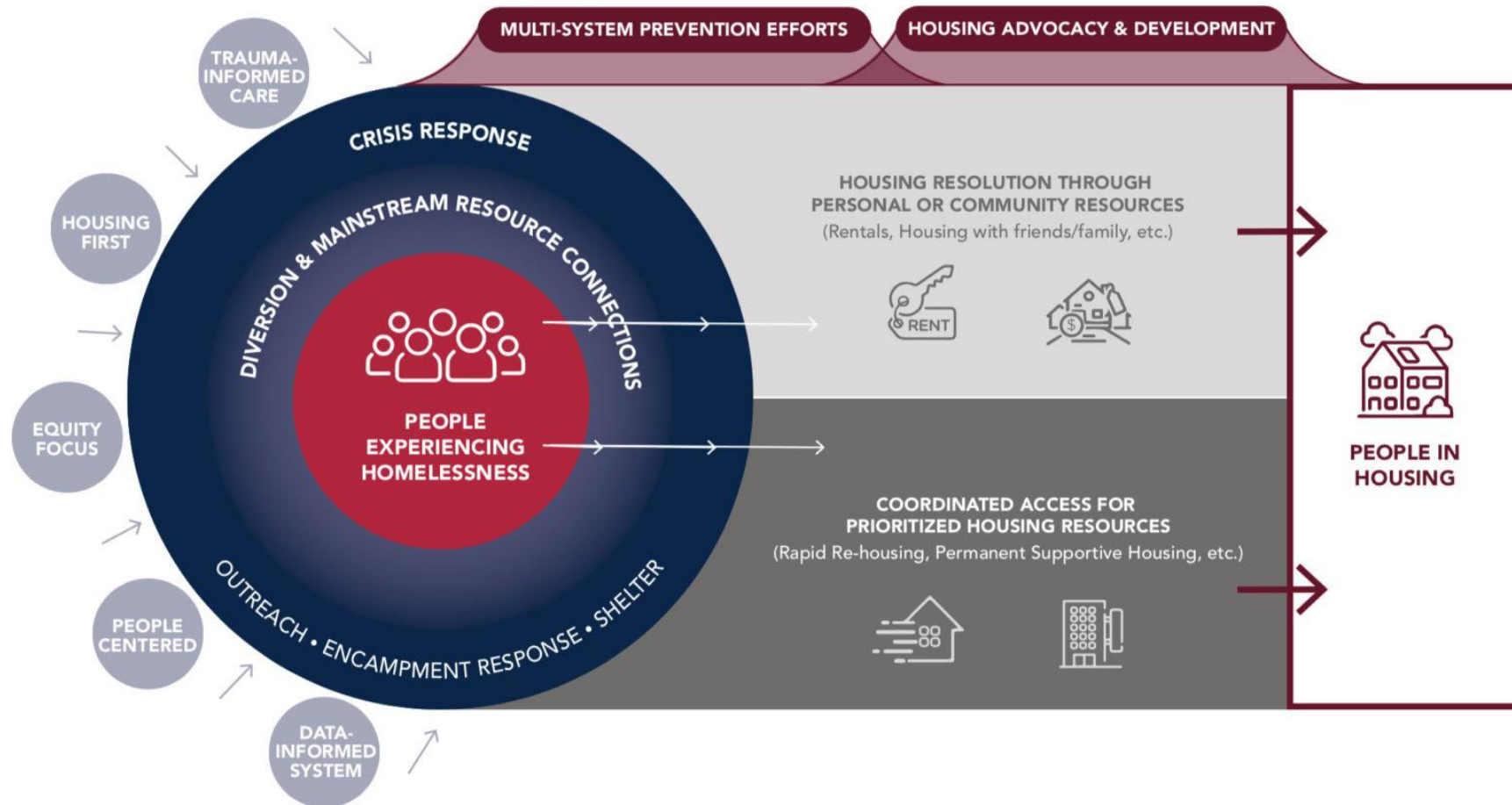
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

A crisis response system should include three structural elements:

1. **Leadership and Governance** that guides system-level planning and decision making towards a single shared set of strategies and policies

2. **Planning, Policy, Data, and Evaluation Capacity** to support ongoing assessment of performance at project and system levels, including HMIS data

3. **Staffing Capacity** to adequately support system changes and implementation of shared strategies and policies

FOCUS STRATEGIES BASELINE ASSESSMENT:

KEY FINDINGS AND INTIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING SYSTEM

- **Baseline report completed in August 2019**

- **Tells us about the state of the current system and how it works to address and reduce homelessness in the community**

- **Informed by qualitative analysis of community efforts - program site visits, interviews with stakeholders, focus groups with people with lived experience of homelessness, review of documents**

- **Identifies initial areas of strength and need for improvement**

- **Recommends short-term implementation steps for system improvement**

ASPECTS OF SYSTEM EXPLORED IN-DEPTH

- **Leadership and Governance**

- **Strategies to Reduce Inflow**

- **Emergency Response**

- **Homeless-Targeted Housing**

- **Affordable Housing**

- **Coordinated Entry and Data**

STRONG FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS

- **Outreach efforts connect individuals to basic needs, health and behavioral health, and CES**

- **Community shifting from transitional to permanent housing interventions**

- **Increased housing navigation services and targeting of landlords to build relationships**

- **Highest need individuals being prioritized; change in who has access to housing**

- **County is aligning homelessness data with CORE measures to improve system processes**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT

- **Some immediate gaps: diversion, housing-focused shelter, limited rapid rehousing and PSH exits**

- **Individual components need to be tied into a system approach**

- **Important to continue progress towards adopting a governance structure that can better oversee a systems approach; address community concerns about decision-making, transparency and goals**

- **Data underutilized; HMIS coverage and data quality concerns**

- **Current staffing capacity for homeless system functions is inadequate**

LONG-TERM GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Additional long-term goals and areas to be addressed by the strategic action planning process include addressing:

- **Regional equity in delivery of services**

- **Housing gap including homeless-targeted housing opportunities and affordable housing**

- **Approach to unsheltered homelessness and encampments**

- **Improvements in data tracking and analysis**

Diversion/Coordinated Entry, Shelter, and Outreach

- Implement systemwide Diversion practice to reduce inflow; includes retooling Smart Path Coordinated Entry

- Build capacity of emergency shelters to deliver housing-focused services through training and seeding new pool of flexible resources

- Coordinate and standardize outreach efforts through agreement on aligned approach by outreach teams and funders

Governance

- **Relaunch and complete work on a new Governance structure**

- **Reconvene the Governance study group with support from Focus Strategies to answer:**

  - How will the revised structure operate?

  - What purview it will have?

  - What resources and efforts it will jointly oversee?

  - What administrative staffing is needed to implement the system?

  - End result will be agreement on the new structure, including protocols and procedures

SYSTEM PERFORMANCE RESULTS

ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE DATA

- **Tells us how effectively the system as a whole is helping people move from homelessness to housing**

- **Shows the relative effectiveness of individual programs**

- **Informs decisions about:**

  - Where to target efforts and investments to become more effective

  - How to prioritize system and program resources

  - How to achieve continuous improvement

SYSTEMWIDE ANALYTICS AND PROJECTION (SWAP)

- **Tool developed by Focus Strategies in partnership with the National Alliance to End Homelessness**

- **Uses local data from Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Housing Inventory (HIC), program budget data**

- **Produces analysis of system and project performance measures**

- **Helps communities understand what they are accomplishing**

- **Gives communities a method for estimating the impact of changes to the system, using predicting modeling**

HOW WAS SWAP USED IN SANTA CRUZ?

- **Data Gathering - July to September 2019**

- **Generated results at project and system level – October 2019**

- **Met individually with provider organizations – Oct. 31 and Nov. 1, 2019**

- **Presented draft system results to providers – December 4, 2019**

- **Data clean-up – January 2020**

- **Revised results generated – February 2020**

WHAT TYPES OF PROGRAMS ARE INCLUDED?

Project Type	# Projects	Single Adult Beds	Family Units
Emergency Shelter (year-round)	7	106	40
Emergency Shelter (seasonal)	2	160	0
Transitional Housing	4	40	30
Rapid Rehousing	12	36	41
Permanent Supportive Housing (Single Site)	2	15	0
Permanent Supportive Housing (Scattered Site)	8	417	44
Total	**35**	**729**	**158**

WHAT ARE MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE?

1. ***HMIS Data Quality***

2. Bed/Unit Utilization

3. ***Entries from Literal Homelessness***

4. Length of Stay in Programs

5. ***Exits to Permanent Housing (PH)***

6. ***Cost per Permanent Housing Exit***

7. Returns to Homelessness

HMIS DATA QUALITY

- **HMIS data quality and completeness poses challenges**

- **Improving overall data quality will involve attention to many factors, including:**

  - Missing and unknown values for prior living situation and exit destination

  - Incorrect information (date of birth, entry date, gender, race)

  - Unrecorded exits from programs

  - Inconsistencies between the HIC and HMIS

  - Projects that do not enter data into HMIS

# LIVING SITUATION OF PEOPLE WHO ENTER HOMELESS PROGRAMS

- **Are available beds/units being filled by people who are living outside or in emergency shelter ("literally homeless")?**

- **Measures system accessibility and targeting**

- **Critical to have high performance on this measure if the community wants to reduce unsheltered homelessness**

- **Strategies to serve people who are not yet literally homeless include prevention and diversion/problem-solving**

PEOPLE ENTERING WHO WERE LITERALLY HOMELESS
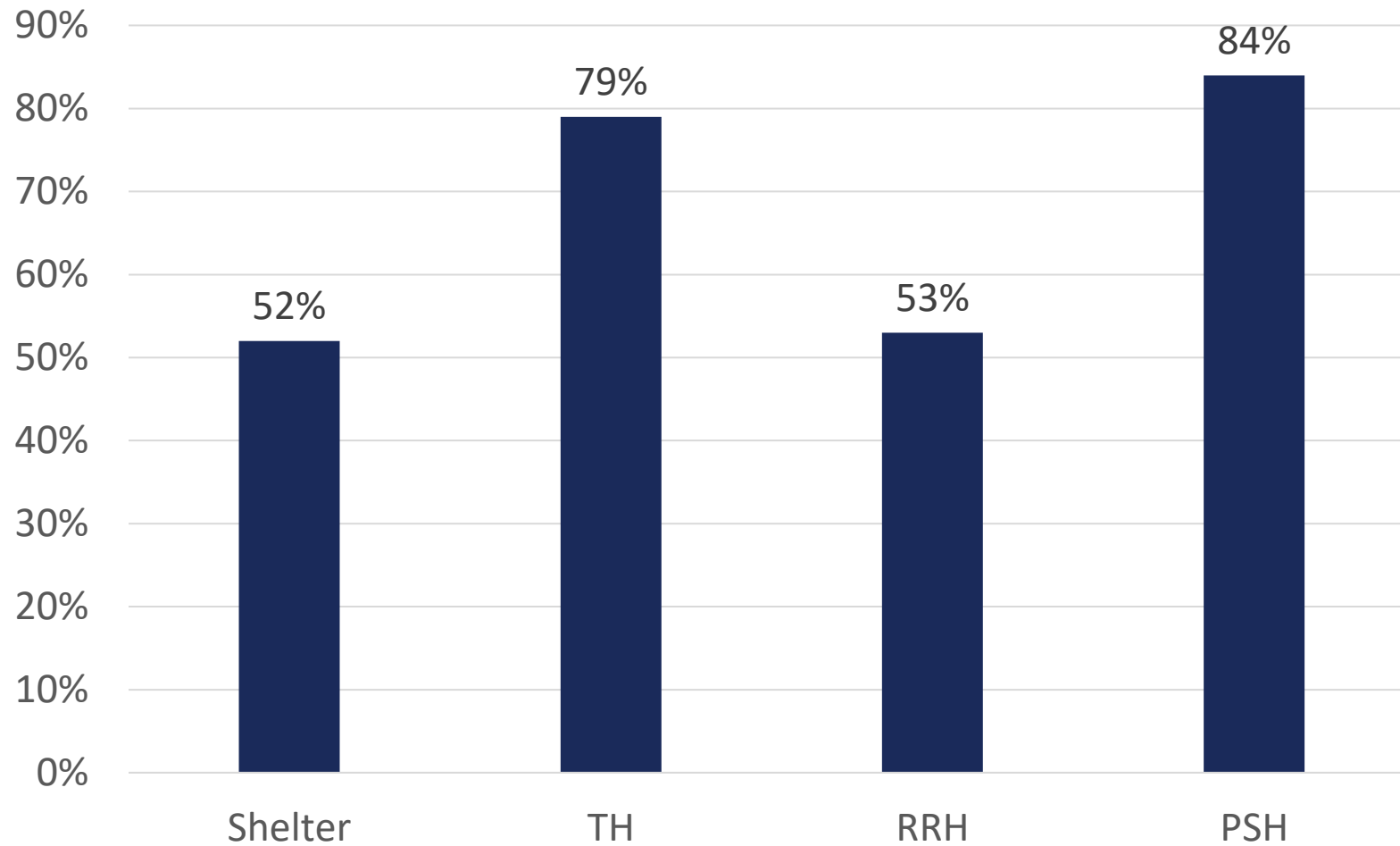
LIVING SITUATION AT ENTRY: SHELTERS ONLY
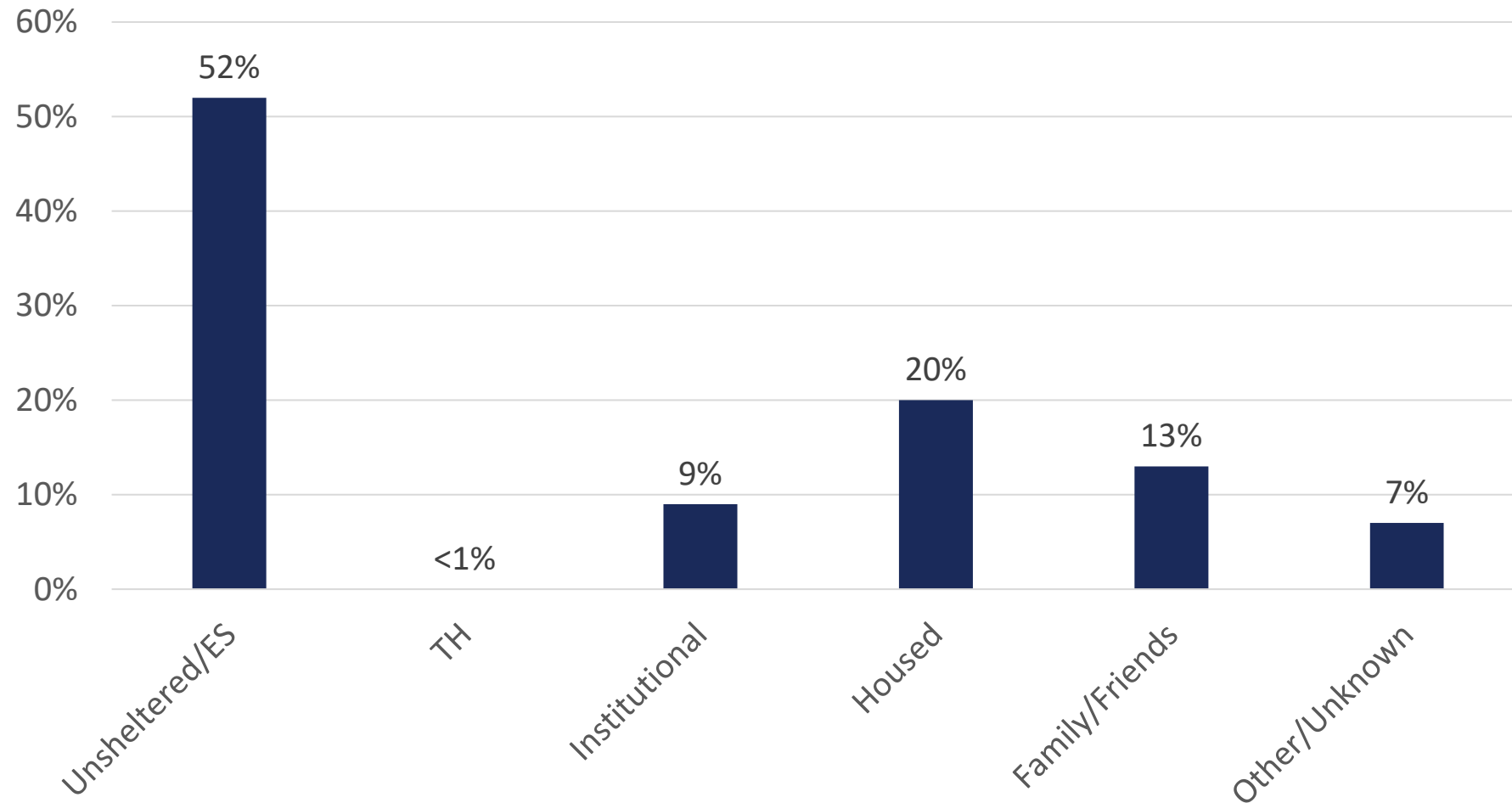
PEOPLE WHO LEAVE PROGRAMS AND ENTER HOUSING

- **When people leave programs, do they secure housing?**

- **Assesses the degree to which programs are helping people end their homelessness**

- **Helps identify program and system design challenges**

- **Helps identify opportunities to reduce homelessness without adding new temporary beds**

RATE OF EXIT TO PERMANENT HOUSING
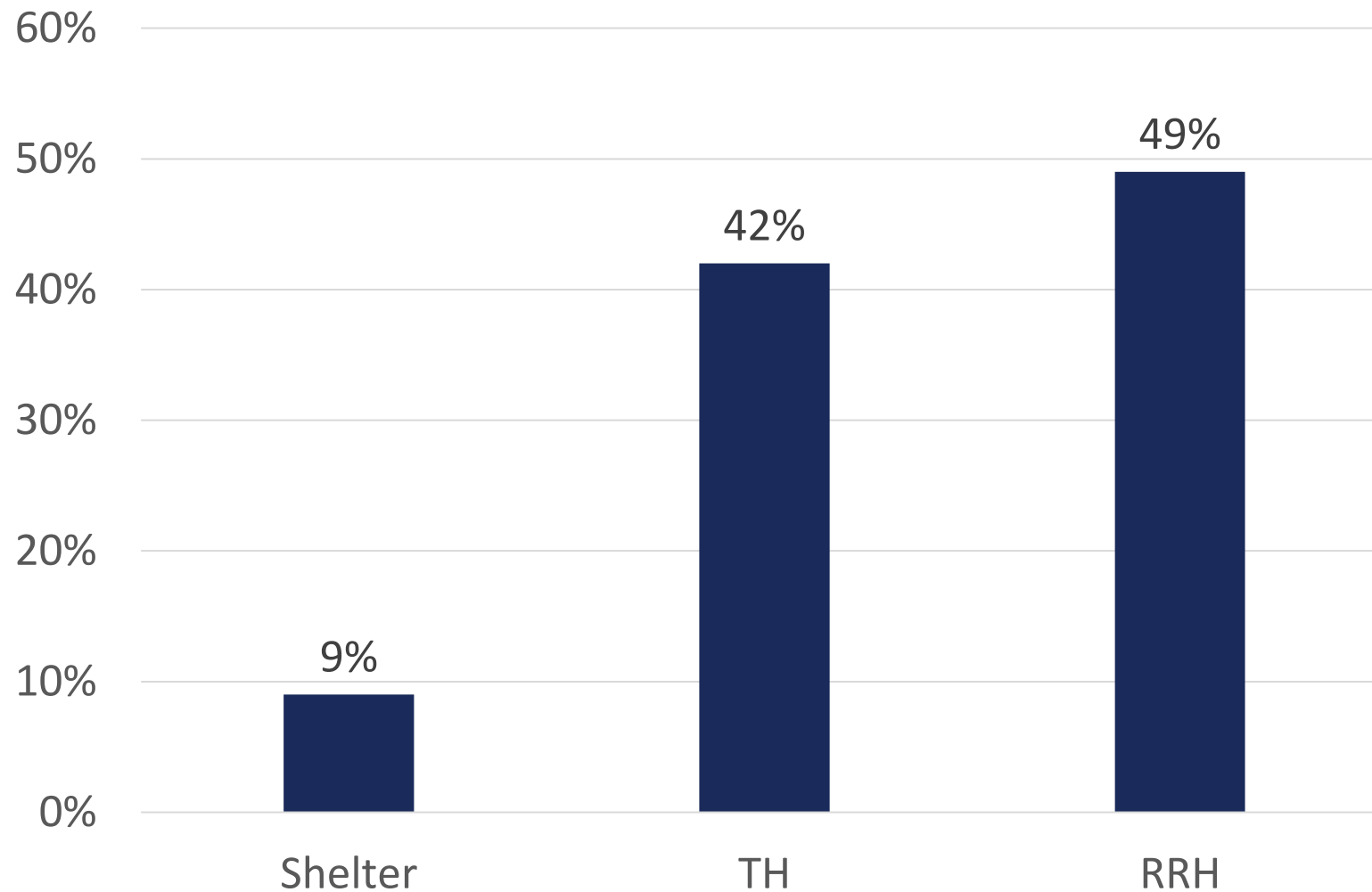
HOW COST EFFECTIVE ARE HOMELESS PROGRAMS?

- **Typically communities consider the cost per unit or bed**

- **To be more performance-oriented, measure the cost for person or household to secure housing when they leave the program (cost per successful exit)**

- **Helps identify whether system resources are being invested effectively**
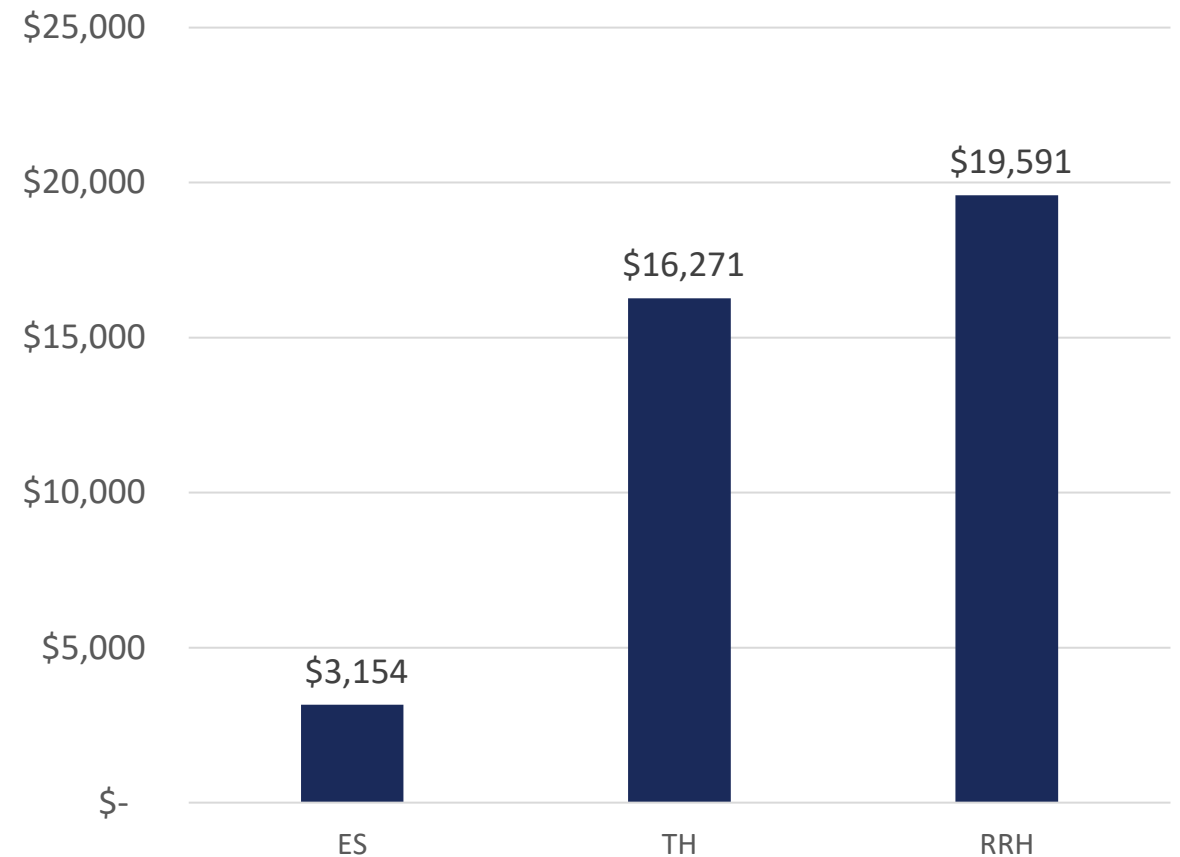
SUMMARY OF KEY AREAS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT

- **Increase program participation in HMIS and improve data quality across the board**

- **Improve rate at which literally homeless people are accessing homeless programs**

- **Improve the system's ability to help people in homeless programs secure housing when they leave**

HOW DOES SANTA CRUZ COUNTY COMPARE?

- **Similar to other communities where Focus Strategies has conducted SWAP analysis:**

    - Challenges with access to programs for people who are literally homeless

    - Significant variability in performance among programs ("superstars" and "low performers")

- **Unusual findings in Santa Cruz**

    - Programs are helping people enter housing at lower than typical rates

    - Rapid rehousing is underperforming in relation to transitional housing

IMPLEMENTATION WORK GROUPS:

PROGRESS AND RESULTS

WORK GROUP PROGRESS REPORT

Between September 2019 and February 2020, Focus Strategies facilitated four work groups that were convened to begin implementation of the short-term recommendations from the Baseline Assessment:

1. Implement systemwide Diversion practice and refine Smart Path

2. Build capacity of shelters to deliver housing-focused services

3. Coordinate and standardize outreach efforts

4. Complete work of the Governance Study Group

SYSTEMWIDE DIVERSION AND SMART PATH REFINEMENT WORK GROUP

- **Developed implementation strategy and proposal to integrate problem-solving (diversion) into Smart Path**

- **Developed recommendation for more effective prioritization strategy for housing resources**

- **Presented proposals to stakeholders for input and refinement**

- **Conducted an Introduction to Diversion training for providers and other interested stakeholders**

HOUSING FOCUSED SHELTER WORK GROUP

- **Assessed what is working and where there are gaps in the existing programs' ability to help shelter residents secure housing**

- **Conducted focus groups with shelter residents;**

- **Identified priorities for implementation:**

    1. Increase housing-focused case management/advocacy in shelters;

    2. Create flexible funding pool to support housing exits;

    3. Increase shelter provider capacity; provide more training and develop a peer learning collaborative

OUTREACH SERVICES WORK GROUP

- **Created inventory of existing outreach programs (mobile outreach, drop-in services, etc.)**

- **Identified:**

  - Goals and purpose of effective outreach

  - Measures for assessing outreach effectiveness

  - Strategies to increase impact of outreach

PLANNING, GOVERNANCE, AND COMMUNICATIONS WORK GROUP

- **Building upon work of Governance Study Committee (2017)**

- **Developed proposal for new governance body that will design, direct and evaluate a coordinated, countywide response to homelessness**

- **Proposal includes recommended scope of decision-making, structure, and input processes**

COVID-19 HEALTH PANDEMIC:

COMMUNITY RESPONSE AND IMPACT ON STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

COVID-19 RESPONSE AND IMPACT

- **Multi-jurisdictional, coordinated decision-making through Shelter + Care DOC**

- **New one-time funds for preventing spread of COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness**

- **Expanded congregate shelter capacity, including TAY shelter**

- **Addition of new non-congregate shelter (for isolation, quarantine, vulnerable population)**

- **Coordinated access system for shelter**

- **Investment in Homeless Outreach Services Sites (HOSS) and enhanced mobile outreach**

- **Enhanced data collection for shelters**

COVID-19 IMPACT ON ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

- **Delay in launching Phase 4 of planning process due to COVID-19**

  - Moving input gathering process to virtual engagements

- **Community developed experience with more coordinated and rapid response approach**

- **Recognition that community continues to be in rapidly changing environment**

  - Significant and fluid changes in needs and priorities

  - Significant changes in resources

  - New ways of working and collaborating

- **Action Planning process to include**

  - Three-Year Strategic Action Plan to guide overall strategy

  - Six-month work plans to detail activities, resources and responsible parties, respond to changes in need and resources

NEXT STEPS:

STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

NEXT STEPS FOR STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PROCESS

STEP ONE

August 2020

Stakeholder and community input sessions to inform mission, vision, principles, goals and strategies

STEP TWO

September 2020

Plan drafted; public comment period

STEP THREE

October 2020

Plan finalized and adopted

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QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION