

Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative  
Proposal for Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAP) Funding  
New Union Avenue Site: Job Development and Housing Department Case Management  
Relocation  
Submitted by Bakersfield Homeless Center  
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BHC respectfully submits this proposal to the Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative (BKRHC) for \$276,690 in funding that will enable completion of a new site on Union Avenue in Bakersfield that will house its Job Development Program and its Housing Programs Case Management Department. This move, from the current shelter site at 1600 East Truxtun Avenue in Bakersfield, is necessary to accommodate two bed expansion projects at the current shelter site; one project is a 30-bed expansion that was requested by the City of Bakersfield to accommodate growth in the local homeless population over the last several years, and the second project is a 40-bed expansion for single homeless women with the addition of modular restroom facilities. These bed expansion projects will move into the space that the Job Development Program currently occupies at 1600 East Truxtun Avenue, meaning that the program must be relocated to Union Avenue as the property cannot accommodate further growth. The new site on Union Avenue is also needed to accommodate growth in BHC's Housing Programs Case Management Department, which has outgrown its existing space at 1600 East Truxtun. Currently, at least 16 Housing Department staff need office space to continue service provision.

Bakersfield Homeless Center served 2,642 people in fiscal year 2019-2020. The agency provided 57,192 bed nights and 168,962 meals to single individuals and families in need. Across all programs combined, 77% exited the program to permanent housing, and 93% of those individuals maintained their housing for six months or more. Seventy-one percent of adult clients had noncash benefits and 34% increased income from any source at exit. Besides emergency services like shelter, clothing and food, all adult clients receive case management services, and a full array of comprehensive wraparound services to address barriers to homelessness and housing stability.

BHC provides high impact services to all people who have been traumatized by homelessness, without regard to their gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. The agency endorses a Housing First, low barrier approach, one that ensures access to housing for the most vulnerable individuals without pre-conditions or contingencies. Staff understand the salience of this approach, given complex issues like mental illness, substance use and abuse, trauma and poverty that are so often associated with homelessness. In keeping with the Housing First model, BHC participates in the Coordinated Entry System, which prioritizes homeless individuals for housing based on need. Providing long-term stabilization services beyond basic needs, staff work with shelter clients to develop and execute individualized case management plans that help clients find stable housing and employment. Client-focused care ensures that each person is individually assessed for need and fragility and directly linked to care and services dependent on their needs. BHC's long track record of success helping Kern County's homeless families achieve housing stability offers evidence of the organization's strengths and professional capacities to further expand services to those in need. Case management and job development services, which will be housed at the new Union Street site, are fundamental services that help clients achieve their highest level of self-sufficiency.

Job Development Program

BHC's Job Development program is one of its most significant achievements of impact to-date. The program was established to help homeless individuals, many of whom are considered "hard to hire" individuals because they have criminal records and histories of incarceration, homelessness and addiction, find gainful employment. These individuals often have little to no job experience, trauma-induced behaviors that minimize opportunities for employment and negative track records. Employers are usually reluctant to hire them. To directly address these issues, BHC began bidding on labor contracts in 2009 to help these "hard to hire" individuals find work. The first City of Bakersfield contract employed 12 clients. Since then, the program has expanded, and BHC now has 15 city, county and private contracts that employ more than 80 people.

Since its inception in 2009, the program has employed almost 350 people. Due to these job opportunities, 516 people have gained housing, including 295 children. One-hundred nineteen employees have gone on to gain full time employment. In fiscal year 2019-2020, the program had 87 employees with almost 60,000 combined hours of work over the course of the year; while the number of employees is accurate, these hours are likely underestimated, as some hours were lost when BHC replaced paper timesheets with electronic tracking. These job development and training efforts are especially important amid the current COVID-19 crisis, which has precipitated an unprecedented number of temporary and permanent layoffs in Kern County, resulting in an unemployment rate that currently exceeds that of the Great Recession in 2010, as well as current state and national rates.

Alongside other supportive services, the Job Development Program aims to improve economic security, health and stability of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This aim was established in the BKRHC, and it is well-aligned with BHC's mission to provide support and resources to families and individuals in crisis while helping them achieve their highest level of self-sufficiency. Besides housing placement, BHC helps homeless clients increase income through employment or acquisition of mainstream benefits. The Job Development Program provides job training and assistance with living-wage job searches, resume preparation, job interview coaching, acquisition of interview and employment suitable clothing, financial literacy and basic skills development, including life skills and other "soft" skills necessary for employment. Most importantly, the program provides opportunities for actual employment; the majority of the budget is devoted to paying wages to people who are hired under the City, County and private contracts managed by BHC.

By providing job training, mentoring and employment, the Job Development Program offers an important pathway to stable, permanent housing through increased employment income for homelessness youth ages 18 to 24. Without intervention that connects these youth to education, training and job skills, it is often difficult for them to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness at an early age. The Job Development Program can provide a strong foundation connecting these youth to social capital, including positive role models that foster skills and provide opportunities that help them envision and create an alternate future.

The September 2020 Race to Zero Report showed a substantial increase in the number of local unsheltered homeless youth from July 2020 to September 2020, while the number of sheltered youth remained flat. The report also suggested that the goal to include all unaccompanied homeless youth on the Built for Zero By Name List (BNL) was not met, although the number of youth on the list is increasing. Overall, the report indicates that additional outreach and services directed at this particular population are needed. Prior to the advent of COVID-19, the Job Development Supervisor conducted outreach to homeless youth or youth at risk of homelessness at the Dream Center in Bakersfield. The center serves current and former foster youth up to 25 years of age. The supervisor will continue outreach efforts at the center to reach this vulnerable population once the threat of COVID-19 subsides.

### Housing Department Case Management

In FY2019-20, BHC served 1,811 Rapid Re-Housing clients in all Rapid Re-Housing programs combined, and 85.43% of people (979 of 1,156 clients) exited these programs to permanent housing. In two HUD-funded RRH projects, BHC served 98 clients, and 90.79% (69 of 79 clients) exited to permanent housing. In FY2019-20, BHC served 33 Homelessness Prevention clients in its County ESG program, and 79% of them (15 of 19 clients) who exited this program were able to maintain housing and avoid returning to BHC for shelter.

The Housing Department is actively involved in service provision based on the Built for Zero BNL. The Housing Department Supervisor attends monthly case conferences with other community service providers, during which time the service needs and progress of homeless youth and chronically homeless individuals on BNL are reviewed and evaluated. BHC offers all available rental assistance to those who qualify. In the last fiscal year, BHC's Rapid Re-Housing programs served 71 homeless youth; 63 of them were parenting youth and 8 were youth without children. BHC also served 54 youth who received emergency shelter services; 24 were parenting youth and 30 were youth without children. Nearly half of these sheltered youth were unsheltered prior to entering the Emergency Shelter Program.

A recent review of the 10-year plan to end homelessness conducted in January of this year by the BKRHC and the City of Bakersfield identified a dearth in case management services as a gap in Kern County. Compared to an industry standard of 1:25, the report showed increased case management to client ratios ranging from 1:40 to 1:65. The report concluded that 114 more case managers are needed locally to serve new and existing clients in permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing programs. To address this gap, BHC has contracted with the Department of Human Services to fill case management roles by providing housing navigators and locators that connect people to housing. BHC recently received both City of Bakersfield and HHAP funding provided through the County of Kern, the City of Bakersfield and the BKRHC to support case management staff in its homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing programs; however, the additional space that the new Union Street location would provide is urgently needed to address the gap in local case management to client ratios by providing space for these new staff.

The Department is currently managing a \$1.1 million dollar City Homelessness Prevention contract as a result of COVID-19 Cares Act funding, as well as \$550,000 Rapid Re-Housing and \$578,000 Homelessness Prevention HHAP contracts. The HHAP contracts include a Case Management component with a budget of just over \$400,000. There are other new contracts as well, not to mention BHC's existing contracts. The Department is well poised to effectively manage this growth, but it needs space to accommodate that growth, reiterating the need for the additional space available at the Union Street site.

As the local expert in rapid re-housing service provision in Kern County, BHC has implemented innovative practices that have further improved service provision and enhanced cost effectiveness. With one-time HEAP funding, BHC began to hire Housing Navigators that work closely with clients to help them secure and maintain housing. The agency also hired Housing Locators that conduct landlord outreach and engagement to find affordable housing that is accessible to RRH clients. Over a one-year period, this dual-pronged strategy has increased the local supply of affordable housing units listed in Padmission, an online housing search platform available to all homeless service providers in Kern County, by 560 affordable units, helping to ameliorate the local shortage in supply. BHC's Housing Locators and Navigators added 100% of units available in Padmission, which are now available Collaborative-wide. The Housing Department will continue to expand, providing local leadership and innovation in support of Built for Zero in its new space on Union Street.

## Union Street

The expansion on Union Street and the two bed expansion projects at the current shelter site have been generously funded by a variety of funding sources including Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), the Redevelopment Agency (RDA) and the Homeless Emergency Aid (HEAP) Program. This support is much needed as the cost of the three projects combined is \$1,820,300. The 30-bed expansion is \$90,363; the total cost of the 40-bed expansion is \$247,239, which includes \$131,085 for renovation of the job development classroom and \$116,154 for modular restroom and site preparation; and the modular restroom itself is \$406,870. The cost of the Union Avenue site is estimated at \$1,075,828.

BHC received \$891,632 in funding from CDBG, \$250,000 from the RDA and another \$390,000 from HEAP for total contributions of \$1,531,632. These funds have allowed for completion of the architectural plans and design, as well as the demolition needed to make way for construction at the new Union Street site. After the bids, even when the lowest bid is considered, there is a \$276,690 shortfall that is needed for site improvements. The improvements are not cosmetic; they include improvements that are mandated by local and governmental ordinances before BHC can safely operate the Union Street site. To provide a few examples, these improvements include ADA-compliant handicapped access provisions as well as a security and fire alarm systems.

The basic budget for these site improvements based on estimates from Rymac General Contractors is as follows: Assumed Site Work, \$157,690; Shell Preparation, \$77,000; Exterior

Lighting and Utility, \$12,000; and Security and Fire Alarm Systems, \$30,000, for a total of \$276,690.

BHC respectfully requests \$276,690 in funding from BKRHC, which will allow it to proceed with the site improvement work needed to open the new Union Street site. This work is necessary to accommodate the Job Development Program and the Housing Department's Case Management staff, as well as to enable completion of the 30- and 40-bed expansion projects at the current site. The relocation to Union Street is even more pressing given the economic fallout associated with the COVID-19 crisis and the new Cares Act funding recently awarded to BHC. Increases in service numbers given temporary and permanent layoffs and high rates of unemployment are expected, especially when the COVID-19-related moratorium on evictions expires. To help mitigate the local shortage in case management staff and to help families and individuals who are rendered homeless or at risk of homelessness by the pandemic, BHC seeks funding that will permit it to transition as swiftly as possible to the new Union Street site.