CoC Plan for Serving Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness with Severe Service Needs

P-1c Landlord Recruitment

1. Current strategy to recruit landlords and their units in which to use tenant-based rental assistance: New Orleans' rental market has severely tightened in recent years due to loss of units from Hurricane Ida, the long-lasting impact of the pandemic on New Orleans's tourism-focused economy and its disproportionate economic impact on people living below the poverty line, who make up more than a quarter of the city's population and held many tourism-based jobs, increasing gentrification since Hurricane Katrina, and the explosion of the short-term rental market. In a community where more than a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line, New Orleans renters are currently paying 61 percent of their income as rent – one of the highest rates in the nation. Our current strategy is the following:

* The CoC lead agency employs a Senior Housing Manager (whom we call our "Landlord Whisperer") with more than 20 years experience recruiting landlords in our community to rent to people experiencing homelessness. Her full-time job is to recruit and keep in daily touch with landlords to immediately find out about availability and talk them into renting to CoC clients and to lower rents, to ask landlords and developers to acquire more rental property, particularly one-bedroom and efficiency apartments, to distribute information on apartments to PSH and Rapid Re-Housing providers, to assist with inspections as needed, including pre-inspecting apartments to speed the housing process. Her close relationships with the landlord community have proven indispensable to the CoC's success. The lead agency and our CoC's Permanent Housing service providers have expanded, and are continuing to expand, the hiring of more housing search specialists to build our capacity to recruit more landlords.
* Conduct marketing outreach through a public relations campaign to encourage landlords to work with the CoC to rent to people experiencing homelessness, including the development of materials to address any concerns and stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness. These materials will cite research showing that the primary driver of homelessness is the shortage of affordable rental housing and that the vast majority of our clients stay in housing for more than five years and are not evicted. The materials will emphasize the fact that our clients have case managers available to work with landlords and tenants to resolve any issues.
* Expand the use of master leasing to appeal to more landlords with the stability of leasing with an agency, control more of the housing that does exist and speed the housing process. Master leasing also improves housing stability for participants who have behavioral health challenges paying their portion of the rent in a rental assistance program.
* Create a Landlord Incentive and Damage Fund to incentivize landlords to rent to homeless persons and to minimize any risk due to damage. The incentives available through ESG-CV and EHV were successful in recruiting landlords while helping to lower monthly rent.
* Reward CoC PSH and RRH staff for each housing completed, as a way of showing appreciation for the increasing difficulty of the task and helping to ensure that dedication to the task of recruiting landlords and units stays high, even in a highly challenging market.

a. Demonstrate how well this strategy works in identifying units across our CoC's entire geographic area: Even during the challenges of the past two years, when pandemic fears in 2020 made it difficult to meet with landlords and view apartments and when Hurricane Ida in

2022 damaged many apartments and took them off-line, the CoC managed to permanently house over 1,148 unsheltered people who were assisted to move off the streets in both Orleans and Jefferson parishes. Most of these individuals were assisted off the streets by our CoC's Street Outreach teams into hotels providing NCS before being permanently housed by our CoC's housing specialists and case managers.

b. Demonstrate how well this strategy works in identifying units in areas where the CoC has historically not been able to identify units. An analysis of 2726 PSH and ESG-CV clients shows that we are renting units in 31 of the 34 zip codes in our jurisdiction, including in highly desirable zip codes close to the city center such as 70112, 70113, 70115 and 70119; in very affluent zip codes such as 70124 and 70005, and in many far-flung and suburban areas that some of our clients have ties to or want to rent in. Plotting the addresses on a map shows that we are renting units for our clients across a 36-mile wide area and covering our entire jurisdiction.

2. Identify any new practices our CoC has implemented to recruit landlords in the past 3 years and describe the lessons learned from implementing those practices. Our new practices include 1) Working closely with housing authorities to recruit landlords and inform them about landlord incentives. We have worked with HANO and HUD TA providers to develop marketing materials and a virtual briefing to educate and recruit landlords for participation in homeless programs. 2) Calling and meeting with landlords and developers to ask them to buy rental properties to dedicate to homeless program participants and to focus on one-bedroom and efficiency apartments that are most needed. This has resulted in several landlords and developers doing this, increasing the supply of affordable housing available to our clients. We have also leveraged landlord relationships to purchase and renovate substandard properties to increase the availability of rental housing available for our program by increasing the number of units that would pass habitability and HQS standards. This includes 323 units at Oakmont Apartments, where the units were deemed unlivable by the City of New Orleans. 3) Rewarding performance of CoC housing provider agency staff through awards at CoC monthly meetings and the provision of gift cards, provided by the lead agency board of directors, for those who complete housings. This expression of appreciation for the increasing difficulty of the work in a tight rental market helps ensure that the level of effort and dedication to the task of recruiting landlords and units remains high. All of these practices have been very effective and are being continued and expanded.

3. Describe how our CoC will use data, including the specific data points that will be used, to update our landlord recruitment strategy. We will use data in at least three ways: a) We will keep track of the number of new landlords who rent to CoC clients, as a way of measuring progress. b) We will thoroughly analyze zip code data for all CoC PH clients to be sure all programs are placing clients in a variety of neighborhoods according to client choice and not confining them to certain neighborhoods, to recruit landlords in desired neighborhoods with lower distribution of homeless program participants to ensure participants have a range of choices in different communities, particularly in high opportunity neighborhoods. Data points will include the number of units rented in each zip code, number of units available in each zip code, race of the clients, demographics of each zip code. We will update this information on a monthly basis to determine trends and measure progress. c) We will compile and present data on our clients' success in sustaining housing for the long-term in order to counter stereotypes and concerns by landlords.

P-3a Current Street Outreach Strategy

Describe your CoC's current strategies to:

1.Ensure that outreach teams are coordinated: Our CoC currently has 5 outreach teams that cover the entire jurisdiction, with the largest and most experienced team operated by the lead agency, UNITY of Greater New Orleans. The following strategies are being employed to ensure outreach is coordinated to cover the entire geographic area and engage people with the greatest needs who are least likely to seek services: a) the lead agency convenes weekly meetings of the teams to staff client cases involving intense needs, overcome problems, ensure focus on people with the greatest vulnerabilities and risk of victimization and plan initiatives; b) outreach team activities are mapped to ensure the entire geographic area is covered, to identify "hot spots" on an ongoing basis and to adapt outreach as needed; c) share information to prevent duplication of services.

2.Ensure that outreach is frequent. Outreach is ordinarily conducted in our CoC both morning and night, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. in order to be sure the Outreach teams can find everyone who is sleeping on the streets as well as conduct navigation activities and services that are more effectively done during the day. For special initiatives, outreach is also conducted as early as 3:00 a.m. and throughout the night as late as 2:00 a.m., as well as on weekends. Our current strategy is to continue to expand night hours for outreach, as this is the time of day that can best distinguish who is homeless from who is merely hanging out in an encampment for other reasons during the day but is not actually sleeping there. The CoC Standards of Care for Street Outreach requires that outreach must be conducted at least two nights per week for each full-time outreach staff.

3.Help people exit homelessness and unsheltered homelessness. The goals and success of outreach teams are primarily measured by the number of clients who become permanently housed and the number of clients who are moved off the street into temporary shelter for safety while permanent housing is being found for them. We also review the length of time participants are engaged with outreach prior to shelter and permanent housing in order to decrease the length of time unsheltered and the length of time homeless. We measure the success of each team in order to improve performance of each team as well as our system.

Our strategies are to a) expand the number of outreach workers with support of the Downtown Development District, French Quarter Development District, local government and HUD in order to quickly identify, assess and assist all unsheltered people to obtain housing. Participants will first be offered immediate, temporary shelter while outreach workers continue to assist them to navigate to permanent housing. All participants will be assisted with permanent housing regardless of whether they choose to stay in temporary shelter. Our Special NOFO application includes three new outreach workers.

b) Develop a By-Name Prioritization List of all persons living on the street with a triage assessment of their needs and enter into HMIS information about every unsheltered person on a regular basis. The current shortage of outreach workers has made it impossible to enter every unsheltered person in HMIS. To further assure that all persons on the street are identified and known and that everyone is in HMIS to the maximum extent possible, we are starting a quarterly PIT count and triage assessment of every person on the street. This will also help us track inflow and outflow and other trends. The Council of People with Lived Experience and Racial Equity Task Force will advise the CoC on developing a triage assessment tool that will be trauma-

informed, equitable and provide the appropriate amount of information needed to improve our process to prioritize people with the most severe service needs and adapt engagement methods to be more successful with outreach activities.

4.Ensure the specific engagement strategy will engage individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the highest vulnerabilities and will use culturally appropriate strategies. a)We will give top priority to engaging individuals and families with the highest vulnerabilities, including those with physical and mental disabilities, families with children, and women and members of the LGBTQ community who are disproportionately the victims of violence. b) We will seek to employ more outreach workers who have lived experience, will seek to ensure that each of the outreach teams is both racially diverse and has proportionate representation of Black people, who make up the majority of the street homeless population, and will strive to develop more capacity to communicate in Spanish or Vietnamese (the primary minority languages in our community). Currently members of CoC outreach teams include peer supports, LGBTQ+ people, and a Spanish language speaker. c) The Outreach Teams are regularly trained in Cultural Humility, harm reduction and trauma-informed approaches. The Council of People with Lived Experience will advise on how to ensure that outreach workers who may not share a client's cultural background can ensure culturally appropriate strategies. In addition, the Lead Agency Outreach team will consult with Latino and Vietnamese faith groups and social service organizations to improve identification of people in those communities experiencing unsheltered homelessness using culturally appropriate strategies. Because the UNITY Outreach Team is already so deeply rooted in the community, we frequently can engage family members in assisting unsheltered persons, including those with the highest vulnerabilities. d) For people who are gravely disabled and unable to care for themselves due to the most severe mental illness, we will use a multi-system consultative staffing approach and work together with mental health agencies to increase access to Assertive Community Treatment and other essential care. e) We will use data to identify high users of emergency rooms and jails for prioritization.

5.Use the outreach teams to connect individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness to permanent housing. Since Hurricane Katrina, our CoC's Outreach Teams are laser-focused on assisting unsheltered people, especially those triaged as the most vulnerable, to become permanently housed as quickly as possible. Because of this focus, we achieved a 94 percent reduction in unsheltered homelessness between 2009 and 2019, and a 32 percent reduction in unsheltered homelessness between 2020 and 2022. As we expand the number of teams and the number of outreach workers, we will use our weekly CoC Outreach meetings, our Unsheltered By-Name Prioritization List, and a weekly dashboard monitoring progress to keep everyone focused on quickly achieving Permanent Housing outcomes. We are updating the CoC Standards of Care for Street Outreach and expanding training of all outreach teams and new team members. The evidence-based and emerging best practices that our CoC uses to conduct street outreach, and which will be the focus of expanded training for all existing and new street outreach workers, include Housing First, motivational interviewing, a trauma-informed approach, consumer choice, harm reduction, and Housing Problem-Solving.

6.Hire people with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness to conduct street outreach. The JPHSA street outreach team includes people with lived homeless experience. The CoC will

ensure that persons with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness are hired to conduct street outreach for at least one of the positions to be funded through this Unsheltered NOFO.

P-3b Current Strategy to provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Shelter and Temporary Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness.

1.Describe CoC's current strategy:

Our CoC regards improving access by people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to Low-Barrier Shelter as one of the most important things we must accomplish in order to reduce unsheltered homelessness for the long term. Here is the strategy endorsed by the Council of People with Lived Experience, the Community Task Force to Reduce Street Homelessness and the CoC Governing Council:

a.The City Health Department is currently conducting a large survey of unsheltered people to gain insight into barriers to accessing shelter and will present its report to the Mayor and City Council and CoC to gain support for taking steps to improve access and lower barriers.

b.Increase the availability of non-congregate temporary housing such as hotel rooms, as this type of shelter is accepted by the vast majority of people living on the street because it provides privacy, dignity, and personal freedom. This application includes funding for non-congregate temporary housing as part of a TH-RRH.

c. Encourage existing shelters to prioritize people living on the street rather than simply filling beds on a first-come, first-served basis, which tends to disadvantage people with the greatest need for shelter. Recommended changes include 1) prioritizing most available beds for people known by outreach workers to be living on the street; or 2) creating a specific set-aside of beds for people known by outreach workers to be living on the street.

d. Free up shelter beds for those living on the street by reducing the number of people entering shelter who are first-time homeless. Provide Housing Problem-Solving interventions for those seeking shelter who may be able to resolve their housing crisis without having to enter shelter. Problem-Solving is an emerging best practice that assists clients to identify available resources, uses mediation and provides flexible funds to quickly end people's housing crises before or soon after they enter shelter.

e. Identify barriers that discourage people on the street from accessing shelters. The Council of Persons with Lived Experience and focus groups convened by the CoC have identified many barriers. The New Orleans Health Department is currently conducting a large survey of persons on the street to develop more information and recommendations about barriers.

e. Encourage, incentivize and provide funding to traditional shelters to enable them to lower barriers that discourage people living on the street from accessing shelter by 1) allowing persons to stay in shelter during the day rather than having to leave every day without a bed reserved for them the following night; 2) eliminating short limits on length of stay; 3) eliminating shelter fees; and 4) eliminating unnecessary rules that pose a barrier to entering or staying in the shelter. This application includes funding to help an existing shelter to lower barriers to people living on the street and prioritize them for shelter beds.

f. Provide expert technical assistance to existing shelters to assist them in serving more people living on the street and lowering barriers.

g. Track progress in increasing the use of shelters by people living on the street.

h.Obtain the funding to make available all beds at the City Low Barrier Shelter. Currently, 100 beds are not available for use because of inability to hire enough staff at the wages allowed by the current budget.
i.Develop additional Low Barrier Shelter beds where needed in our community, especially shelter with private or semi-private accommodations. Consult with Council of Persons with Lived Experience and other persons living on the street in designing accommodations to ensure they appeal to and meet the needs of people living on the street. Develop a small Safe Haven or other temporary housing alternatives for people with serious mental illness who need more intensive supportive services than other shelters can provide.

P-3c. Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low Barrier Permanent Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness

1.Current strategy

a.How we use a Housing First approach in implementing our current strategy: The CoC Standards of Care require a Housing First approach by the Coordinated Entry system, every outreach team and every TH and Permanent Housing provider. Programs are required to accept the persons referred to them by Coordinated Entry without regard to whether they have a substance use problem, whether they are clean and sober, whether they are medication-complaint, whether they have a criminal record, or any other barrier, and they are not allowed to discharge people from their programs except under extraordinary circumstances. People are prioritized for housing based on vulnerability. UNITY staff annually reviews each CoC program to ensure that all partners are using a Housing First approach. Annual training in Housing First, Motivational Interviewing, Trauma-Informed Care and Harm Reduction is provided, and the CoC's Permanent Housing Working Group meets monthly to discuss strategies for serving people with high needs and keeping them housed.

b. How the strategy is connected to the permanent housing resources identified in the Leveraging Housing Resources chart: All partners who are offering permanent housing resources as leveraging have agreed that the CoC Coordinated Entry System will select the participants in the program. The NOFO would provide four new Permanent Supportive Housing projects, including two using Housing Authority resources. Our four local housing authorities who provide tenant-based vouchers have applied to participate in the Stability Voucher Program as part of our strategy. We have worked closely with all four of these housing authorities in the past on Housing First initiatives. We plan to have weekly calls with each housing authority to track progress in housing clients and speed the housing process and work together to recruit landlords. The NOFO would help fund two new Rapid Re-Housing projects, including one that is part of a TH-RRH Joint Component using non-congregate temporary housing, using a local Housing Fund that has raised $569,500 for Rapid Re-Housing rental assistance. Other leveraging includes City of New Orleans and CoC HOPWA units and 13 units in a new PSH housing development utilizing HOME-ARP funds.

c. Other components of our strategy: 1) Develop an Unsheltered By-Name Prioritization List listing every person living on the street that is updated daily. Convene weekly meetings of navigators to review and report on progress housing the people on the list. 2) Develop a weekly dashboard and a monthly newsletter that is sent to all stakeholders to report progress and encourage continued investment in strategies to reduce unsheltered homelessness; 3) Develop a

new triage tool for prioritizing people living on the street and those with severe service needs for Permanent Housing resources; 4) Launch a program to encourage the use of shared housing; 5) Develop other resources for ongoing impact, including incentivizing Permanent Supportive Housing providers to "graduate" people who meet stability criteria for housing authority vouchers, thereby freeing up Permanent Supportive Housing for people living on the street; 6) work with all housing authorities to increase HCVs for people living on the street; 7) secure local and state allocations for Rapid Re-Housing rent assistance and case management services using ARPA funds; 8) Advocate for the creation of more one-bedroom apartments, efficiency apartments, and for decreasing the minimum size to allow more housing units to be created and for more deeply affordable units to be created; 9) Identify ways that CoC housing programs can shorten the time it takes to house clients and assist them to do that. 10) Develop best practices to ensure CoC housing programs do not lose clients before they are housed by ensuring a warm hand-off and close communication with street outreach teams.

2) Demonstrate how CoC's current strategy performs at providing low-barrier and culturally appropriate access to permanent housing to individuals and families with histories of unsheltered homelessness: The best recent data is that in the first two years of the pandemic, the CoC's outreach teams worked with state and local government to move 1013 people off the street into hotels, permanently housing 744 of them using mostly pandemic resources, while also permanently housing 404 other persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness without first putting them in hotels. The vast majority of these persons suffered from mental illness and substance use disorders. The CoC was very effective in sheltering and permanently housing them using a trauma-informed approach and honoring client choice. The majority of the persons housed were Black.

3) Provide the evidence that supports the use of the CoC's current strategy: In addition to the above evidence, our basic strategy and ability has been honed over the past 15 years. Embracing Housing First immediately following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the CoC, led by the UNITY Outreach Team, closed two squalid encampments over an eight-month period by assisting every person we could find in them – 485 people -- to move to hotels and then to apartments. Eighty percent were permanently housed. Turning its attention to the problem of thousands of people squatting in the city's 35,000 abandoned buildings, UNITY then launched a four-person Abandoned Building Outreach Team that searched buildings by day for signs of life and then returned after darkness to assist the people sleeping in them to access permanent housing. The CoC used Rapid Re-Housing, a new PSH program approved by Congress as part of Katrina relief, and other resources to decrease unsheltered homelessness by 94 percent over the 10-year period between 2009 and 2019. In 2015, we became the first CoC recognized as effectively ending veteran homelessness in an intense six-month campaign that focused intensely on identifying and permanently housing every veteran living on the street.

4) Identify new practices the CoC has implemented across its geographic area in the past three years and the lessons learned from implementing these practices: 1) The pandemic experience in which we were able to assist every person who wanted housing to go to NCS in the first three months of the pandemic and then permanently house 79 percent of them proved what is possible with sufficient resources. It also further enhanced our reputation among people living on the street that we will deliver what we promise, which will enhance the Special NOFO initiative. 2)

We worked closely with the Housing Authority of New Orleans to recruit landlords, which was effective, emphasizing incentives available to landlords and the benefits of renting to our clients.

P-4 Updating CoC Strategy to Identify, Shelter and House Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness with Data and Performance

The CoC has a history of using data with system improvements that have resulted in a marked decrease in street homelessness since 2009; very few people experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are veterans, families with children, or unaccompanied youth; and a 34 percent reduction in street homelessness since the beginning of the pandemic. Following is our plan to continually review and update strategies to identify, shelter and house individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness using data and best practices:

1)The CoC is adopting strategies that are being developed with people who have lived experience to develop a more equitable system that will also be more effective to reduce the number of people who are unsheltered, reduce the length of time people experience homelessness (particularly unsheltered homelessness), and improve the ability of the system to assist those who are the most vulnerable and have more severe service needs. The Unsheltered Homelessness Task Force will use strategies that build upon strengths, fill-in the gaps, and be nimble enough to adapt to new information.

2)Data sources include: HMIS, the ByName Prioritization List, coordinated entry system evaluation, and formative information from people who are served by the system.

3)Develop a prioritization list that is comprised of unsheltered individuals and is inclusive of those who have not yet completed an assessment. The Unsheltered By-Name Prioritization List will be reviewed weekly to prioritize engagement and navigation to resources dedicated to those who are unsheltered and ensure that resources do not have barriers for those who may have severe service needs that are not documented.

4)Improve the scope of data to ensure the List includes unsheltered individuals who may not have completed an assessment.

5)Improve data quality by identifying administrative data sources that can improve information about client needs prior to engagement and more quickly assist people.

6)Develop a shorter triage tool for street outreach to determine highly vulnerable people to be prioritized for sheltering within 24 hours.

7)Ensure all outreach contacts are entered in HMIS in 7 days.

8)Improve timeliness of emergency shelter data; ensure that it is updated “in real time” so that available shelter beds can be immediately accessed.

9)Update the coordinated entry assessment and prioritization tool to ensure that the tool is equitable and prioritizes people who are the most vulnerable, taking into consideration victimization and unsheltered homeless experience.

10)Review data to re-examine if people without any outreach or other system contact should be exited in 90 days or 120 days.

11)Improve exits from emergency shelters to reduce exits to unsheltered homelessness.

12)A public-facing dashboard of outreach and shelter data will be updated weekly.

13) There will be monthly reporting of outreach and unsheltered data to the CoC Governing Council and the Unsheltered Homelessness Task Force, including a) the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness (each parish) with demographics: race, ethnicity, gender

identity, age (approximation), vulnerabilities, length of time homeless; b) Caseload of people engaged with outreach or another navigator: vulnerabilities, connections to services (ID, assessment, health care, SOAR, SNAP), race; c) Gap of the number of people who are unsheltered and not engaged (including race, gender, age); d) People in emergency shelters who have been unsheltered compared to people in shelter who have not been unsheltered (with demographics); e) Outcomes for people who are no longer engaged (by demographics): Temporary Housing, permanent housing, institution (hospital, jail), unknown; f) Client satisfaction surveys and interviews to identify qualitative system improvements including making programs welcoming, building trust, and engagement strategies.

14) Outcome goals include: a)Reduce the total number of people who are unsheltered at any moment in time by 50 percent by the end of the first year of the grant, by an additional 20 percent the second year, and by 10 percent the third year; b)Determine baseline and then reduce the length of time people are experiencing unsheltered homelessness by similar percentages each year; c) Decrease the number of people with severe service needs who experience homelessness.

P-5 Identify and Prioritize Households Experiencing or with Histories of Unsheltered Homelessness

1)CoC's strategy for ensuring that resources provided under this Special NOFO will reduce unsheltered homelessness: Our CoC is confident that we can and will significantly reduce unsheltered homelessness if we receive the resources provided by this special NOFO, and that with these resources we can greatly contribute to the national learning community about how to go about reducing unsheltered homelessness. Our confidence is based on our new Community Plan to Reduce Street Homelessness as well as our track record that shows that, whenever we have been able to amass the resources, we have done whatever it takes to dramatically reduce unsheltered homelessness.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when thousands of people were squatting in abandoned buildings and huge street encampments sprang up (7385 unsheltered persons were counted in the 2009 PIT), we embraced Housing First and launched a Street Outreach team that emptied two large encampments by placing 485 camp residents in hotels and permanently housing 80 percent of them. For nearly 10 years, we operated a four-person Abandoned Building Outreach Team that scoured the city's 35,000+ abandoned buildings for signs of life, met the occupants at night, and permanently housed the vast majority of the people we found squatting in them. By 2019, we had reduced unsheltered homelessness by 94 percent over the prior 10 years.

After years of steady progress in reducing street homelessness, however, the soaring rents caused by gentrification and short-term rentals displacing traditional renters, combined with a lack of new homeless resources, led to a surge in the number of unsheltered people between 2019 and 2020, from 430 in 2019 to 550 in 2020. When the pandemic hit New Orleans early and hard, the CoC's street outreach teams and our local and state governmental partners assisted nearly every unsheltered person in New Orleans and Jefferson Parish to move off the streets into hotels over a 2 ½-month period. Only 30 persons were living on the streets as of June 1, 2020. 80 percent of the 619 people moved off the streets were permanently housed, despite the challenges of finding apartments during the pandemic and Covid PH resources not being available until many months after the initative began. Our second pandemic initiative, in 2021 and early 2022, resulted in an additional 394 persons being moved off the street. Hurricane Ida struck shortly after that

initiative began, greatly tightening the rental market and causing project expenses to soar and the hotel funds to run out before we were able to permanently house everyone, but we still managed to permanently house 62 percent of the participants and are still working on permanently housing the rest. Our CoC also has effectively eradicated unsheltered homelessness among veterans and children. In intense campaigns, our CoC was the first recognized by the federal government as effectively ending veteran homelessness, as well as one of the first to reach the standard of ensuring that homeless families are permanently housed in 45 days or less.

We are relying on more than our track record in reducing street homelessness, however. We have worked hard to build a Task Force with prominent government, business, philanthropic, health care, criminal justice, survivor assistance, and homeless service provider leaders together with people with lived experience, to achieve consensus around a Community Plan to Reduce Street Homelessness that will guide not only the use of the Special NOFO funds but also achieve reductions in unsheltered homelessness in other ways. The following are our key strategies to ensure that the resources provided by this grant will reduce unsheltered homelessness:

a)We are expanding street outreach, through three positions provided in this NOFO as well as four positions provided by the Downtown Development District and the French Quarter Management District, in order to identify, assess, prioritize and navigate more people off the street. We are coordinating these teams to ensure that all unsheltered persons are identified.

b) We are creating an Unsheltered People By-Name Prioritization List with a navigation group meeting once a week to work that list.

c) We are implementing a PIT street count four times a year in order to better ensure that all unsheltered persons are identified and to more closely track our progress, patterns of inflow and outflow, and other trends.

d) Our community plan, approved by a broad array of community leaders, calls for better prioritization of emergency shelter beds for unsheltered people, and for lowering barriers in traditional shelters, especially ending the practice of people having to leave each morning with no guarantee they will be able to find a bed the following night. Outreach team outcomes will include numbers of people being moved into shelter off the street. The plan also calls for full funding of the City Low Barrier Shelter so that it can make available 100 beds that are currently not in use due to inability to recruit staff at low salaries. This NOFO would fund a project to assist a traditional shelter in eliminating barriers and prioritizing people living on the street for available beds, and would fund NCS beds.

e) We will build upon our successful history working with our local and state housing authorities to house people experiencing homelessness, especially the recent successes with EHV despite the challenges of the pandemic coupled with the tightened rental market caused by Hurricane Ida in 2021. We will continue to rely heavily on our well-developed strategy of using rapid rehousing as a bridge to PSH as necessary. Although our Jefferson Parish EHVs have been slower to lease up, they are all assigned to specific clients and will be leased up soon.

f) We will expand landlord recruitment by focusing on a public relations campaign making use of well-known community leaders, emphasizing incentives, along with data showing the benefits of our programs to landlords and our history of PSH participants maintaining housing for long periods of time.

g) We will implement and/or expand new strategies of shared housing, master leasing, and requesting individual landlords and developers to acquire rental properties emphasizing one-bedroom and efficiency apartments.
h) We will advocate, and assist the Council of People with Lived Experience to advocate, for with state and local government to create Rapid Re-Housing to quickly house people who become homeless in the future and affordable rental housing to prevent homelessness.
i) We will use data to carefully monitor on a monthly basis the progress of each component of our plan and each grant funded through the Unsheltered Homelessness NOFO, and make course corrections as often as necessary.
2) How our CoC will adopt:a) program eligibility processes that reduce unsheltered homelessness: All CoC programs are required to follow Housing First eligibility processes that eliminate any barriers to participation by people living on the street. CoC policies in the Standards of Care bar programs from requiring identification cards as a condition of referral or acceptance into the program. CoC policies also require programs to meet clients where they choose to meet rather than requiring office appointments. New processes we will adopt will be to get client feedback via a survey to ensure that those policies are being followed, as well as specific monitoring of programs to ensure that these policies are followed. The CoC Coordinated Entry system refers only one person for each opening in a program, so programs do not select participants.
b) coordinated entry processes that reduce unsheltered homelessness: Unsheltered homelessness has long been a prioritization factor in our coordinated entry process through the prioritization of people who are vulnerable to victimization. The CoC Governing Council recently voted to more explicitly prioritize people who are unsheltered or have histories of unsheltered homelessness in Coordinated Entry and develop a new triage prioritization tool, in partnership with the Racial Equity Task Force, that increases racial equity. The Coordinated Entry Working Group is currently evaluating the Coordinated Entry process in concert with a national consultant and will be seeking the input of the Council of People with Lived Experience in making recommendations for changes to policies and procedures.
3. How our CoC will use street outreach to connect those living in unsheltered situations with housing resources: Our CoC's street outreach has been sharply focused on permanently housing unsheltered people since 2006, when it was completely overhauled in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to meet the need to identify, assess, and quickly house people suffering on the street and in abandoned buildings. By expanding newer street outreach teams focused on the downtown area and in Jefferson Parish, this grant will strengthen our ability to permanently house more people living in unsheltered situations. We will also ensure that all street outreach teams, no matter their housing source, have strong permanent housing goals. We will also prioritize and measure our street outreach teams' success at helping people on the street access temporary shelter on their way to permanent housing, and use Problem-Solving resources and flexible funds to assist people on the street, especially those who are newly arrived, to resolve their housing crises quickly with those resources if that is possible.
4.Additional steps our CoC is taking to ensure that people who are unsheltered or have histories of homelessness can access housing and other resources including steps to:

a. Increase access to identification: Our Outreach teams work closely with the NOPD Homeless Assistance Collaborative and a charitable group that together spend many hours each week assisting unsheltered people to get IDs. In addition, the need for an immediate ID is eased by CoC policy, which forbids housing programs from requiring ID as a condition of referral or acceptance into their programs. Once accepted into a housing program, housing case managers assist clients to get IDs if they do not have them.

b.Provide housing navigation services: The CoC already has eight housing navigators who exclusively or principally work with unsheltered people. We are expanding our Street outreach workers with three new positions in this grant and with three other new positions funded by the Downtown Development District and the French Quarter Development District. By serving primarily as housing navigators, the hiring of these additional outreach workers will expand access to housing navigation services for people who are unsheltered. Outreach staff participate in a warm handoff of clients with the housing program within 7 days of referral to facilitate the housing search and will assist with housing search as needed.

c. Provide access to health care and other supportive services: The City's Health Care for the Homeless Clinic has committed to expand its health care services specifically to people who are unsheltered. In addition, we have secured commitments from both Tulane Medical School student clinic and LSU Medical School to provide urgent care and medical assessments to unsheltered people; these services will be provided to them both on the street and at a medical clinic operating at a downtown shelter; we are working on a strategy to embed a resident physician with the outreach teams on a frequent basis. Odyssey House Louisiana, which operates an FQHC as well as substance use treatment programs, has committed to provide substance use treatment services to all persons on the street who choose them, and will accompany outreach staff to facilitate referrals for care; it commits to provide treatment services to all the clients served by this NOFO grant regardless of whether they choose the services while unsheltered or after they are permanently housed. Through a foundation grant, the CoC is now offering Housing Problem-Solving services to people on the street. Travelers Aid Society is expanding case management services to unsheltered people. The UNITY Outreach Team is providing SOAR services to unsheltered people. Other supportive services to unsheltered people are provided by Harry Tompson Center and Grace at the Greenlight.

P-6. Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision-Making--Meaningful Outreach

1.Describe the meaningful outreach efforts (e.g., street outreach, social media announcements) to engage those with lived homelessness experience to develop a working group: This summer, the CoC conducted four focus groups with 41 people with lived experience -- at a day shelter, a program that feeds people living on the street, the office of the UNITY Street Outreach team, and the office of the Jefferson Parish Street Outreach team. The Street Outreach teams brought many people to these meetings. The focus groups gathered input from people with lived experience about the services needed by people on the street, the characteristics of shelter and permanent housing that they ideally wanted and/or would accept, their difficulties accessing overnight shelter, and their experiences at various shelters, with outreach, and with coordinated entry. At the focus groups, people were asked if they would be willing to serve on a Council of People with Lived Experience and on a Community Task Force to Reduce Street Homelessness, and the

Street Outreach teams continued to recruit people living on the streets to join the Council. The Council has now held four meetings, each of which was attended by 6-15 people. It is the policy of the CoC to provide gift cards as compensation for participating in every meeting attended by people with lived experience.

2.How individuals and families experiencing homelessness, particularly those who have experienced unsheltered homelessness, are meaningfully and intentionally integrated into the CoC decisionmaking structure.

The CoC has always included people with lived experience on its governing board for the past 30 years, and developed a Youth Action Board five years ago that has two representatives on the CoC Board. Building on this experience, the development this summer of the Council of People with Lived Experience already has proven to be transformative: for the CoC, for the community leaders who have had the privilege of working with the Council members on the Community Plan to Reduce Street Homelessness, and for the people with lived experience who participated on the Council and all the unhoused people who will benefit from their work.

What seems to make this structure particularly impactful is that so many people participate, that they have their own group with which to express themselves and develop their collective voice and recommendations, and that all the other CoC and community stakeholders were informed repeatedly that the recommendations of the Council must be centered in our Plan and in all of our work to reduce homelessness. It has been extremely helpful and empowering to have HUD require that people experiencing unsheltered homelessness be centered in this work in this way. The prominence of their voices in this process has opened the eyes of community leaders to see that homelessness is not just a problem for the community but is a humanitarian crisis causing suffering experienced by their fellow humans and that the solutions must be led and informed by those suffering. Three Members of the Council of People with Lived Experience served as members of the Community Task Force to Reduce Street Homelessness, alongside leaders of the CoC & government, business, health care, philanthropic, criminal justice and other sectors.

For the people participating in the Council of People with Lived Experience, many have expressed that it has been empowering to be listened to and heeded by powerful people in the community. Their reports on their recommendations were a prominent part of the meetings of the Community Task Force to Reduce Homelessness. Their recommendations are set forth in the policies laid out in the Community Plan to End Homelessness, which was adopted by the Council of People with Lived Experience on October 13 and by the Community Task Force to Reduce Street Homelessness on October 14. Perhaps the single most powerful input relayed by the Council of People with Lived Experience to the Community Task Force was that virtually all of them had experienced repeatedly being treated disrespectfully and inhumanely because of their homelessness. At the Council's request, a fundamental ground rule that "We are committed to ensuring that unhoused people are treated with compassion, dignity and respect" was included in the Introduction to the Plan to Reduce Street Homelessness. And the very first strategy in the plan is to "Ensure that people with lived experience of homelessness are consulted in the development of all strategies, policies and programs to address and reduce street homelessness, and that they have a meaningful role in creating, overseeing and evaluating the implementation of this plan and in the governance of the homeless Continuum of Care."

Other recommendations of the Council that are reflected in the Community Plan include: a) making sure there is racial equity in the work to reduce homelessness and expanding access to underserved communities; b) expanding street outreach (nearly every council member relayed that they had lived outside many months before meeting an outreach worker); c) getting shelters to prioritize their beds for people living on the street; d) getting traditional shelters to eliminate barriers to people living on the street, including getting rid of requirements that people leave during the day or that they pay for shelter, allowing people to stay at a shelter as long as they need to; and eliminating unnecessary rules that infringe on personal freedom; e) increasing access to hotels as shelters; f) increasing less-expensive options for permanent housing such as efficiency apartments, container homes and shared housing; g) increasing employment programs; and h) reporting on Plan implementation to the Council.

The Council of People with Lived Experience is interested in participating in public policy decisions impacting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and actively participated in two hearings by the City of New Orleans seeking input on the use of ARPA funds.

Currently, the CoC Governing Council includes three persons with lived experience, two of whom serve on the Youth Action Board. Because of the tremendous impact of the Council of People with Lived Experience, the CoC Governing Council voted on Oct. 17 to present a by-laws change to the CoC Oct. 21 monthly meeting to increase the number of persons with lived experience on the CoC Governing Council to four, including two members of the Council of People with Lived Experience.

3.How our CoC encourages projects to involve individuals and families with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness in the delivery of services (e.g., by hiring people with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness): Hiring people with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness was a factor in the scoring of projects for the grant. For its pandemic initiatives that assisted over 1000 people to leave the streets for NCOs with most being permanently re-housed, UNITY as the lead agency hired several people with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness to serve as resident advisors at the NCOs and housing specialists. For all CoC-funded grants, the hiring of people with lived experience of homelessness is a longstanding scoring factor in the selection of new projects and is a scoring factor in the ranking and tiering of renewal projects. The CoC Racial Equity Task Force is making recommendations on how to further increase the hiring of people with lived experience of homelessness, and specifically unsheltered homelessness, across the CoC and will be tracking the CoC's progress in increasing the hiring of people with lived experience, including specifically those with histories of unsheltered homelessness.

P-7 Supporting Underserved Communities and Equitable Community Development

1.Our CoC's current strategy to identify populations in our CoC's geography that have not been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness:

The CoC Racial Equity Task Force regularly analyzes the rate at which underserved communities of color are experiencing homelessness compared to their proportion in the general population and compared to the rate at which they are accessing CoC housing programs and makes recommendations. The primary disparities identified are: 1) While Black people are being served by homeless programs at a somewhat higher rate than they experience homelessness, Black people are being discharged from PSH at a higher rate than white people; and 2) our awareness of homelessness among Latino and Vietnamese populations may be incomplete

because it is possible that they may be less likely to seek shelter outside of their communities. Primary disparities identified among other underserved communities are: 1) it is likely that many LGBTQ+ people experiencing homelessness do not feel safe identifying themselves on the street or in shelter and if they are identified, are at risk of violence; they may be much less likely to use shelter than non-LGBTQ+ people as a result; 2) Because of our insufficient number of Outreach Workers, and the fact that LGBTQ+ people may not feel comfortable identifying themselves in shelter and to Outreach Workers, we are probably not fully aware of the extent of homelessness in the LGBTQ+ community; 3) the percentage of people with disabilities among our sheltered and unsheltered populations, as self-reported in the PIT count, is substantially lower than what we find to be true after performing detailed assessments. Part of the problem is people's reluctance to disclose disabilities and lack of access to health care that would have made them aware of disabilities. These disparities may disproportionately affect communities of color and impact their access to PSH.

2.<u>How underserved communities in our geographic area interact with the homeless system:</u> Black people are 66 percent of the sheltered population and 51 percent of the unsheltered population. Latinos are 4 percent of the sheltered population and 2 percent of the unsheltered population. Native American, Indigenous people and Asians are 2 percent of the sheltered population and 3 percent of the unsheltered population. LGBTQ+ people are 6 percent of the sheltered population and 7 percent of the unsheltered. People with disabilities, by self-report, are 60 percent of the sheltered population and 78 percent of the unsheltered.

3.<u>Our CoC's current strategy to provide outreach, engagement and housing interventions to serve populations experiencing homelessness that have not previously been served by the homeless system at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness:</u> Our CoC has long focused on equity in providing outreach, engagement and housing interventions to serve underserved populations, given our community's history of enslavement, discrimination, inequality, persistent high rates of poverty, and the impact of systemic racism in the suffering caused by the Hurricane Katrina levee failures and inequitable rebuilding policies. Our Outreach strategies include: 1) We will continue to focus on scouring the entire geographic area where people are likely to reside, not just large encampments, which tend to have disproportionately fewer Black people. While encampments will receive a great deal of focus because of their size and dangerous conditions, Outreach will also focus on unsheltered individuals and families who shy away from encampments, who are more likely to be Black and other People of Color; 2) We will encourage neighborhood groups to communicate with our Outreach team to report unsheltered people; 3) We will develop stronger relationships with Latino and Vietnamese organizations to ensure we are regularly visiting all areas where unsheltered people in Latino and Vietnamese communities may be and that we are regularly communicating with and receiving reports from those communities about unsheltered people; 4) We will seek to hire persons from Latino and Vietnamese communities to join our Outreach teams; 5) We will seek to hire more persons from the LGBTQ+ community to join our New Orleans outreach teams; 6) We will build our LGBTQ+ Task Force to assist with outreach, engagement and creating more welcoming environments; and 7) we will ensure that all Outreach Teams, including new members, participate in annual Cultural Humility training and Racial Equity training.