

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PROCESS SUMMARY AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Task Force met as a full body 8 times and in smaller subcommittees 14 times between June 2022 and March 2023. Oregon’s Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities prepared the following interim report in fulfillment of its charge, as laid out in House Bill [4051](#) (2022) and in an effort to build on its [foundational recommendations](#), as mandated in House Bill [2100](#) (2021). In its January 2022 Findings and Recommendations Legislative [Report](#), the Task Force adopted an overarching problem statement, which has since focused its work:

*Oregon has a unique and complex opportunity to reimagine its current homeless services funding system and structure in pursuit of racial equity and justice, demanding both immediate action and a long-term commitment to achieve 1) alignment, 2) structural change across philosophical differences and historical positionality within existing structures, and 3) adequate resources to effectuate the transformational change required to reduce racial disparities by people experiencing homelessness.*

With its reauthorization in 2022, the Oregon Legislative Assembly charged the Task Force to identify “implementation pathways for [1] changes to the state’s funding structure, [2] modifications for contracting processes and [3] solutions regarding the eligibility and funding of services.”

The opportunities that are waiting to be unlocked, down each of these three pathways, are blocked by one common truth: “You can’t solve a ten-dollar problem with 50 cents,” in the words of a Task Force Member and longstanding advocate for low-income Oregonians.

The Task Force offers these recommendations in alignment with our commitment to pursuing racial equity across Oregon and working intentionally to reduce the disparate impact of homelessness on communities of color in Oregon.

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## AREA 1: SOLUTIONS REGARDING ELIGIBILITY AND FUNDING OF SERVICES

The Task Force recommends ongoing funding of \$1.1 billion to include enhanced investments in rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing; expansion of Oregon’s Housing Development Grant Program (“Trust Fund”); creation of an Oregon Special Needs Assistance Program – a set aside of locally flexible funding for historically underfunded institutions that represent historically underserved populations; preservation of existing services and funding for antipoverty programs that intersect with homelessness; establishing a state-funded housing choice grant program for rent-burdened working families, individuals with disabilities, and aging seniors; a stopgap fund to bridge over the benefits cliff, reduce turnover, and ensure living wages for frontline service providers; expansion of the landlord risk mitigation fund; additional capacity building grants to establish local planning groups within the Oregon Balance of State; and development of an insurance mitigation fund for smaller organizations that are typically disadvantaged by state insurance requirements to receive funding. Relatedly, the Task Force recommends Oregon Housing and Community Services may include culturally specific organization or culturally responsive organization as defined in ORS 456.005 like historically funded institutions outlined in statute for disbursement of state and federal homelessness funds through grants and loans. Lastly, the Task Force recommends the Legislative Assembly grant Oregon Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) authority to allocate homelessness funding in any method that ensures statewide geographic coverage without regard to existing or prior distribution formulas, including through a competitive grant or contract process.

## AREA 2: CHANGES TO THE STATE’S FUNDING STRUCTURE

The Task Force recommends OHCS work with its partner state agencies in the Interagency Council on Homelessness to establish universal goals to address homelessness across the state and employ the tools of targeted universalism to then design and implement coordinated programs and policies that are tailored to meet the needs of all Oregonians. The Task Force recommends the state adopt a competitive funding structure for administering state and federal resources to address homelessness that prioritizes maintaining existing service levels **and** expanding funding availability and eligibility beyond historically funded organizations, geographies, and institutions by direct allocation to 1) the nine federally recognized tribes that border within Oregon, 2) Community Action Agencies for initiatives that intersect with homelessness priorities, 3) Continuums of Care and local planning groups similar to the coordinated homeless response offices established in House Bill [4123](#) (2022); and within the 2023/2023 fiscal year, culturally specific, culturally responsive, culturally based, and other organizations that are focused on reducing disparities.

## AREA 3: MODIFICATIONS FOR CONTRACTING PROCESSES

The Task Force recommends the Legislature expressly direct and grant OHCS the authority to create opportunities for people with lived experience of homelessness and/or housing insecurity to inform state policymaking and to provide direct compensation to people with lived experience of homelessness or housing insecurity for their expertise. The Task Force recommends the legislature authorize OHCS to identify, procure, and implement a comprehensive grants and financial management system no later than December 2025. Relatedly, the Task Force recommends the legislature direct both the Oregon Department of Justice and the Oregon Department of Administrative Services to review, revise, and negotiate language changes to contracts within 21 business days of receipt and review and revise insurance requirements for smaller organizations that are typically disadvantaged by state insurance requirements with the intention of investing in historically underfunded and underrepresented communities and organizations. Lastly, the Task Force recommends OHCS adopt a new funding cycle by the end of the 23-25 biennium on a biannual timeline to support transparency for current or prospective grantees.