FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON HOMELESSNESS AND RACIAL DISPARITIES IN OREGON

JANUARY 2022

REPORT TO THE OREGON STATE LEGISLATURE

Adopted in the 81st Session of the Oregon Legislative Assembly, House Bill 2100 established a 19-member Task Force on Racial Disparities in Oregon. This is a report of their findings and recommendations.

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DISPARITIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities was created and charged by House Bill 2100 (2021) to identify methods to decrease racial disparity in homelessness; investigate potential changes to the state's funding structure to address disparities in homelessness; consider additional methods to receive advice and information about needed services; and identify methods to modify contracting processes and eligibility for providers of services to individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

Process Summary and Problem Statement

The Task Force met six times between November 2021 and January 2022—a condensed timeline due to multiple factors including initial timeline and requirements prescribed in HB 2100, delays in appointment of Task Force members, identification and procurement of a third-party facilitator, end of year holidays, and other constraints due to unpredictable COVID-19 conditions, which restricted convenings to virtual formats. Due to the condensed timeline, the Task Force's recommendations represent preliminary work and may not thoroughly reflect or address all areas of potential concern. The Task Force adopted an overarching problem statement to focus 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.

Recommendations

The Task Force recommends that its work be extended through 2025 to provide oversight, ongoing feedback, and overall direction to implement recommendations aimed at addressing racial disparities in homelessness, while further refining the recommended solutions the group has identified, including:

Goal 1: Decrease Rates of Disparity

The Task Force outlined 13 recommendations for the state's efforts to decrease disparate rates of homelessness among people of color. These recommendations aim to promote self-determination among historically minoritized and under-resourced communities and shift power to address the current power imbalances highlighted in the Ecosystem Power Map. Such recommendations include changes in funding and contracting processes, as well as in decision-making and in systemwide outcome evaluation oriented toward racial equity and decreasing racial disparities. Relatedly, the Task Force recommends centering the leadership of people with lived experience of homelessness in state-level decision-making. In developing these recommendations, the Task Force emphasized the role of other public systems in perpetuating racial inequity and the need for those systems – including the criminal justice, health care, long term care, and child welfare systems among others – to align behind a common, statewide strategic framework of solutions, collaboration, and resources to reverse these systemic patterns and achieve the goal of decreasing racial disparities. The Task Force also recommends that there be an audit of OHCS policies, practices, and governing legislation to better understand how racial inequity is perpetuated within the system.

The Task Force recommends establishing a State Interagency Council on Homelessness to work with the Task Force, Economic Council, and local governments to advance these recommendations and support collaboration statewide. It also recommends the state work with the Governor's Racial Justice Council to develop equitable outcomes and metrics, require agencies to prioritize racial equity and inclusion in hiring and employee retention, and develop a praxis of assessment for agencies and organizations to ascertain their cultural competence and develop action plans to reduce racial disparities.

Goal 2: Identify Needs

The Task Force offers 4 recommendations to OHCS and OHSC to improve efforts to understand the scope of services and supports needed for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability. As in the previous set of recommendations, the Task Force recommends compensating people with lived experience of homelessness to support the state in identifying needs, with attention to what additional supports people need to meaningfully engage in services (e.g., childcare access, transportation, shower access, and other needs). The Task Force recommends the state build mechanisms by which consumers can give input and inform decision-makers about their experiences, and make sure the input is used to make improvements. The Task Force recommends the state require input from culturally specific organizations and participants and assess whether and how current services are meeting community needs to phase out what is not working and grow what is working. The Task Force recommends setting aside state resources to fund a multidisciplinary DEI audit examining efforts to actively reduce racial disparities to level-set work across state, local, CSOs, and various partners, and identify what resources and technical assistance are needed to get all partners aligned.

Goal 3: Change Funding Structure

The Task Force developed 8 recommendations for changing the funding structure for homeless services statewide and suggested it continue convening now through 2025 to provide oversight, continuous feedback, and direction to the state on the effectiveness of implemented recommendations that are aimed to address racial disparities in homelessness. The Task Force recommends restructured funding processes centered on accountability and transparency beginning with the 2023-2025 biennium budget, as well as recommendations to increase funding for culturally specific entities and provide technical assistance to build the capacity of those organizations. Recommendations also address the need for technical assistance to support community-based organizations in advancing racial equity. The Task Force recommends that state agencies support models and solutions that work and phases out models that don't work in regard to addressing racial disparities and homelessness, while practicing increased transparency and accountability between OHCS and service providers. The Task Force offers to provide a biennial report to inform continuous improvement.

To support these efforts, the Task Force recommends that the state invest in a robust data system and offers several parameters for a successful data system that integrates both qualitative and quantitative data. The Task Force recommends that the state work to identify the legislative statutes and barriers to effective service provision for communities of color, as well as plans to address them. The Task Force recommends that the Housing Subcommittee of the Racial Justice Council establish a rubric of Racial Impact to inform policy, guide continuous improvement, and ensure Oregon's stated commitment to racial justice.

Goal 4: Modify Contracting

The Task Force developed 6 recommendations for modifying contracting through a transparent process that builds on other state-level efforts to implement outcomes-based contracting and revise internal policies and systems. The Task Force recommends that efforts to modify contracting focus on reducing racial disparities among people experiencing homelessness and increasing access for culturally specific organizations.

The Task Force recommends the state review and remove policies that have a disproportionately negative impact on homelessness among communities of color and articulate how equity goals will be pursued. Additionally, the Task Force recommends that the state review its current systems to ensure that diverse populations have prioritized access to culturally inclusive, low-barrier methods of engagement. The Task Force recommends that contracting processes be revised to reflect clear expectations around reducing racial disparities and consequences or corrective actions when expectations are not met. Other recommended changes to contracts include adding clear parameters and funding for training on best practices in equitable and just homeless service delivery, an established definition of and standard for cultural competence, and requiring meaningful, rich collaboration with local communities, including historically minoritized and excluded populations.

OVERVIEW

HB2100

Oregon has joined states and communities around the country in grappling with the nation's history of structural racism and the toll it has on communities of color, particularly Black and American Indian and Alaskan Native communities. The disproportionate impact of homelessness on people of color is one such result of unchecked structural racism. Recognizing these dynamics, the 81st Oregon Legislative Assembly adopted of House Bill 2100 on June 15, 2021, during the Regular 2021 Session, directing the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department (OCHS) to establish the Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities ("the Task Force") and undertake other policy and funding changes to address racial inequity related to homelessness and housing insecurity.

The Oregon Legislative Assembly directed the Task Force to:

- Identify and investigate methods by which the state may decrease rates of racial disparity among people experiencing homelessness and receiving services.

- Identify and investigate potential changes in this state's funding structure to address racial disparities among people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, including consideration of how housing transition of services delivery could be implemented to avoid service disruptions among people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

- Consider existing methods and recommend additional methods by which the Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) and Oregon Housing Stability Council (OHSC) may receive advice and information about needed services for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

- Identify and investigate methods by which the Housing and Community Services Department and Oregon Housing Stability Council may modify contracting processand eligibility for providers of services for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

- Recommend solutions regarding the funding of services for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, including legislation or rulemaking and modifications to the delivery and eligibility requirements for federal and state funds; the receipt and distribution of information about homelessness and homelessness services by the state; and methods for addressing racial disparities.

The Task Force is composed of 19 members appointed by the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Governor, and the Director of the Housing and Community Services Department. In addition to elected and administrative officials, the majority of the appointees to the Task Force represent organizations with diverse perspectives and experiences, including organizations that focus on street outreach and unsheltered homelessness, shelter, rapid rehousing, homelessness prevention, domestic and sexual violence; organizations that address the needs of various people experiencing .

housing instability, including youth, children and families, adults or seniors; and organizations representing different communities and geographies

As guided by HB 2100 Section 7 (11), OHCS engaged a third-party neutral consultant team of local and national experts to support process design, research and discovery, facilitation, and report production. This report is the product of the work of the Task Force, which convened regularly between November 2021 and January 2022.

> " Racial equity is about applying justice and a little bit of common sense to a system that's been out of balance. When a system is out of balance, people of color feel the impacts most acutely, but, to be clear, an imbalanced system makes all of us pay.
> - Glenn Harris , President, Race Forward "

TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS

The 19 members of the Task Force were appointed by the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Governor, and the Director of the Housing and Community Services Department as outlined below.

Joint Appointments by the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate

- Ariel Nelson, League of Oregon Cities
- Lizzy Atwood Wills, Association of Oregon Counties
- Jimmy Jones, Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency
- Paula Hall, Community Action Program of East Central Oregon (CAPECO)
- Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Urban League of Portland
- David DiMatteo, Latino Network
- Katrina Holland, JOIN
- Marisa Espinoza, Northwest Pilot Project
- Gustavo Morales, EUVALCREE
- Vanessa Timmons, Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
- Nicole Witham, Northern Jackson County Community Member
- Alan Evans, Helping Hands Reentry Outreach Centers

Appointments by the Director of the Housing and Community Services Department

- Sami Jo Difuntorum, Siletz Tribal Housing Department
- Andrea Bell, Oregon Housing & Community Services Department

Appointment by the Governor on Behalf of the Racial Justice Council

- Marcus Mundy, Coalition of Communities of Color

Appointments by the President of the Senate

- Senator Dick Anderson, Oregon Legislature – District 5
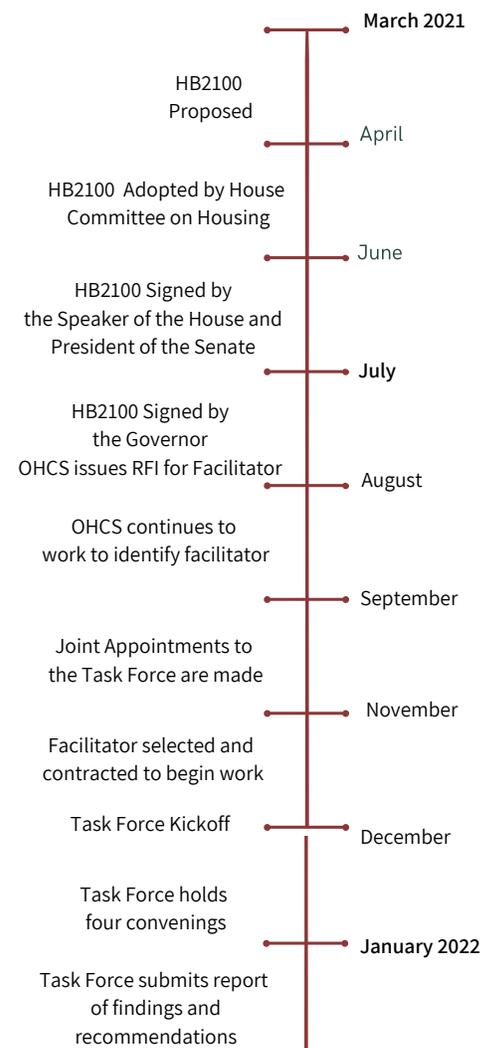- Senator Kayse Jama, Oregon Legislature – District 24

Appointments by the Speaker of the House

- Representative Wlnsvey Campos, Oregon Legislature – District 28
- Representative Jack Zika, Oregon Legislature – District 53

COLLABORATION AND APPROACH

Task Force members convened over the course of seven weeks to guide the discovery process and to design the recommendations outlined in this report.

Timeline of Work

March 2021

HB2100 Proposed

April

HB2100 Adopted by House Committee on Housing

June

HB2100 Signed by the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate

July

HB2100 Signed by the Governor
OHCS issues RFI for Facilitator

August

OHCS continues to work to identify facilitator

September

Joint Appointments to the Task Force are made

November

Facilitator selected and contracted to begin work

Task Force Kickoff

December

Task Force holds four convenings

January 2022

Task Force submits report of findings and recommendations

A confluence of factors precipitated a truncated timeline, including:

- Initial timeline and requirements prescribed in HB 2100
- Delays in appointment of Task Force members
- Identification and procurement of a third-party facilitator
- End of the year holidays
- Limitations and constraints due to unpredictable COVID-19 conditions which restricted convenings to virtual in lieu of in-person

Facilitation Goals and Approach

The recommendation design process was facilitated by a neutral third-party contractor specializing in strategic design for Task Force members to achieve the following:

- Clarify roles, review timeline and deliverables.
- Build a mutual understanding of challenges, aspirations, needs, resource gaps, and perspectives.
- Test and align on approach, key commitments, and shared direction with a prototype of deliverables.
- Stimulate reflection, awareness, iteration, and input; and
- Compile and synthesize outputs in real-time and asynchronously to refine, recommend, inform, and further align decisions and of next steps.

The process was guided by a human-centered approach aiming for participants to feel seen, heard, and respected, to welcome lived experiences and to honor those identities and perspectives. The approach was informed by emergent approaches to collaborative decision-making based in design thinking, executive management, organizational development, personal learning, and trauma-informed equity transformation, following the general phasing depicted below to support the Task Force's collaborative creation of possibilities and decisions.

Note that while the approach is inherently iterative and nonlinear, the truncated timeline meant that process alignment, discovery and research, recommendations design, and iteration occurred not just iteratively, but also simultaneously and in parallel.

GROUND   DISCOVER   DESIGN   BUILD   ITERATE   IMPLEMENT
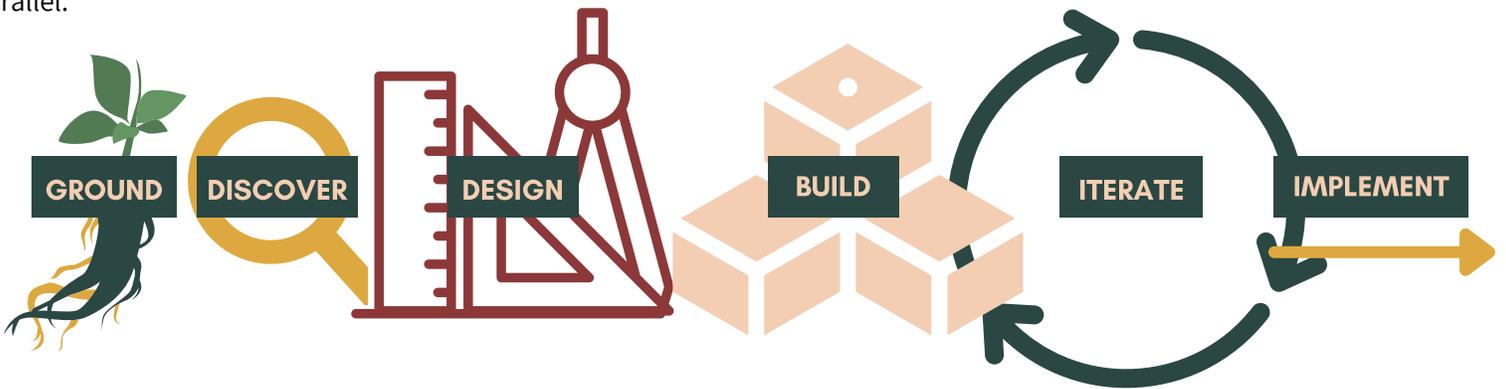
Process and Principles

Towards developing Task Force recommendations regarding the statewide response to the disparate impact of homelessness and housing instability on people of color across Oregon, Task Force members shared their understandings of the current context, including salient considerations and insights regarding the state's approach to funding housing instability and homelessness services. Task Force members also mapped the ecosystem of actors critical to the success of HB 2100, including the challenges and opportunities faced by each. This helped to establish common frameworks for refining problem statements which specifically enabled Task Force members to identify what challenges and opportunities exist, and what is working and

falling short in current efforts. This work resulted in Task Force alignment on four emergent themes, which may be regarded as design principles for the state to enact in its statutes, rules, funding, and programs, as well as for all actors in the ecosystem to align and guide their collective efforts to address the disparate impact of homelessness on people of color across Oregon.

- **Sharing Power:** Include persons with lived experience at every stage of decision-making, including all decision-making processes associated with policy, funding, program design, and implementation.

- **Leveraging Data:** Standardize and require demographically robust practices to increase accuracy in capturing and reporting on the disproportionate impact of homelessness on communities of color.

- **Increasing Access:** Require affirmative marketing and culturally specific outreach for individuals and families least likely to have access to or awareness of the scope of services available.

- **Continuously Growing:** Prioritize learning, experimentation, and iteration in the development of all statutes and rules, resulting in outcomes that are positive in reducing racial disparities through continuous quality improvement.

Members of the Task Force divided into four subcommittees to propose, iterate, and synthesize solutions to problem statements, applying the four principles across each of the four goals outlined above from HB2100 Section 7.3. The solutions framework, goals, and recommendations are outlined in the Recommendations section of this report.

Discovery Process

Parallel to the development of the solutions framework and recommendations, the Discovery Team, led by a neutral third-party contractor, was engaged to support the HB 2100 Task Force by collecting and analyzing new and pre-existing quantitative, qualitative, and archival data to inform its goals and recommendations.

The Discovery Team conducted interviews with Task Force members, designed and conducted a statewide survey, collected, and analyzed pre-existing quantitative data, analyzed archival data regarding federal and state funding priorities, and assessed state policy priorities to better understand efforts to mitigate racial disparities and address the increasing rates of homelessness in the state more broadly.

QUANTITATIVE DATA   Homelessness service system performance data and demographic data were analyzed at the state and Continuum of Care levels. Sources of data include publicly available data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Point-in-Time Count, Stella P data in HDX 2.0 (limited to read-only access), other Oregon-specific publicly available data, and estimates from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

POLICY ANALYSIS   The policy and funding analysis included a document review of strategic plans, funding allocations, budgets, annual reports, master grant agreement templates, program compliance forms, implementation reports, funding formulas, budget notes, and federal guidance to more deeply understand geographic disparities across the state, as well as Oregon's priorities, challenges, and opportunities for addressing racial inequity within and affecting homeless service provision and efforts to prevent homelessness and housing insecurity more broadly.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with individual Task Force members and members of the Discovery Team. The purpose of the interviews was to:

- Understand how Task Force members perceive the state's approach to funding homeless and housing instability-related services across the State of Oregon, including what is working and what needs improvement.
- Understand Task Force members' perspectives on making changes to the state's funding structure, eligibility, and contracting processes to advance racial equity; and to
- Solicit Task Force perspectives on which changes would yield the largest positive impact on advancing racial equity in the state.

Of the 19 members of the Task Force, 11 members participated through written feedback and virtual conversations. Interviews were conducted over a two-week period in December 2021.

SURVEY

A third-party neutral consulting team developed and distributed a survey to more than 300 providers and advocates working to address homelessness and housing insecurity across the state. The purpose of the survey was to:

- Understand how a broad set of stakeholders perceive the connections between structural racism and homelessness in their community
- Understand how the state and their local systems are or are not addressing inequities
- Solicit input from stakeholders on statewide funding and contracting processes
- Generate potential strategies for reducing racial disparities in homelessness across the state

The survey was open for two weeks in December 2021, and 172 individual responses. The survey link was shared on the governmental webpage for the Task Force and promoted to the public during Task Force meetings. For the open-ended survey items, the consultation team conducted thematic analysis to identify common themes and unique perspectives.

Due to the timeline, the Task Force recommendations do not reflect or address all discovery findings. A forthcoming Road Map will offer guidance on how the data and information unearthed through discovery can be leveraged by stakeholders across the state moving forward.

ECOSYSTEM OF HUMAN-CENTERED FINDINGS

Each mode of research in the discovery process shed light on structures and power dynamics that perpetuate racial inequity in Oregon, as outlined in the findings below. This Ecosystem Power Map provides a visual representation of power imbalances in efforts to address homelessness in Oregon, analyzed and identified through Discovery Team through interactions with Task Force members (through interviews), survey responses, and policy analysis.

DECISION-MAKERS

State Government Agencies · Legislative Assembly · Historically Funded Institutions · Lobbyists · Historically Funded Communities · Media

INFLUENCERS

Local Government Agencies · Local Administrative Officials · Service Providers · Statewide Advocacy Organizations · Landlords

BELOW RADAR

Culturally Specific Organizations · Tribal Communities · Historically Underfunded Communities · People Experiencing Homelessness · Seasonal Latinx Migrant Farmworkers · Frontline Provider Staff

Oregon: Ecosystem Power Map

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The Discovery Team's interviews with Task Force members were designed to provide an opportunity for members of the Task Force to understand how Task Force members perceive the state's approach to funding homeless and housing instability-related services across the State of Oregon, including what is working and what needs improvement; understand Task Force members' perspectives on making changes to the state's funding structure, eligibility, and contracting processes as a way to advance racial equity; and solicit perspectives on which changes would yield the largest positive impact on advancing racial equity in the state. Interviews were conducted with individual Task Force members and members of the Discovery Team over a two-week period in December 2021. Of the 19 members of the Task Force, 11 responded to interview requests, offering one written response and ten online interviews.

To inform the work of the Task Force, findings from and analysis of the 11 interviews conducted with Task Force members are

summarized below with a focus on **changing the state's funding structure** and **modifying contracting processes and eligibility**. These findings are grouped according to the ecosystem power map: (1) **Decision-makers**, (2) **Influencers**, and (3) **Below Radar**. The table below represents a high-level summary of interview findings.

Table 2: Task Force Interview Summary of Findings

	WHAT WORKS?	WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?
ALL	• Full state coverage • Greater flexibility during pandemic	• Reduce administrative, data, and reporting burdens and requirements
DECISION MAKERS: STATE ACTORS	• Getting money out the door	• Less "rubber stamping"; more data-driven evaluation and outcomes-based contracting • Better statewide coordination, infrastructure & planning; aligned state funding deadlines • More input from excluded communities; include equity experts in decision-making and benchmarking
HISTORICALLY FUNDED INSTITUTIONS	• Consistent funding • Close collaboration between CAA's and State	• Leave CAA base funding intact; set-aside other funds for CSO's; direct contracts with larger CSO's • Advance communications re: funding and more streamlined and speedier contracting • Focus on population-specific outcomes instead of process/partnerships • Enforce federal best practices and improve data systems
INFLUENCERS	• Diversification of funding and decision-making during pandemic	• Direct contracts to CSO's; support CBO capacity; more administrative funding; streamline contracting • More Lived Experience input • State-level policy leadership and better State and Local coordination • Focus on equity outcomes and minoritized/excluded communities
BELOW RADAR	• Getting money out the door • Diversification of funding and decision-making during pandemic	• Direct contracts to CSO's; support CBO capacity, more admin funding, advance communications • Statewide DEI audit of funding and contracting process; more lived experience & CSO input; more transparency, consistency and equity in scoring rubrics • Contracts focus on equity outcomes and minoritized/excluded communities; encourage/require hiring from culturally-specific populations/communities at State, Local and CBO level; and better define and enforce requirements to partner with tribes and CSO's

Interviewees representing **decision-making groups** were misaligned, with key differences between interviewees representing **historically funded institutions** and those representing **executive and legislative branches** of state government. State-level interviewees focused on:

- Less "rubber stamping" and more evaluation of data-driven outcomes as basis for funding decisions
- More statewide coordination, infrastructure and planning to address homelessness
- Defining an effective delivery system with input from multiple communities and people
- Establishing a defined seat at the decision-making table with authority for an entity or entities that address equity and racial justice as part of core mission
- Designated equity partners create metrics to hold the state accountable
- Bringing more diverse people to inform allocation formula
- Aligning state funding deadlines

Interviewees representing **historically funded institutions** focused on maintaining the current funding structure to CAAs, offering the following:

- Allowing Community Action Agencies to determine how to best serve different populations in their area
- Providing similar levels of state support to CAAs and CSOs
- Providing additional funding to CSOs while leaving CAA funding intact
- Allowing larger CSOs to directly contract with state and subcontract to smaller CSOs instead of allowing municipal governments to fill this role

Modifying Contracting Processes and Eligibility

Task Force members were asked to reflect on how well the state contracting process works for homeless services and how they would improve it. Positive feedback was limited and focused on the reduced administrative burden during the pandemic and a desire for that to continue.

Responses to improvements to the current funding structure were more diverse. Interviewees representing **groups below radar** focused on:

- Greater transparency, consistency, and cultural competency in state-level application reviews, including conducting a DEI audit of the review and scoring process to develop an equity-based scoring rubric
- Incorporating equity outcomes for all homeless and housing instability funding that measure how well culturally specific populations' needs are being met
- Using contracting to encourage or require hiring of persons from culturally-specific populations
- Easing contracting requirements while increasing funding so that organizations can connect with people in need in more effective (less transactional) ways
- Introducing accountability and "teeth" in contracting related to partnering with Tribes and CSOs—be specific about what makes a quality partnership

Interviewees representing **influencing groups** focused on:

- Streamlining OHCS' contracting process, including timely or even advance payments to organizations
- Incorporating equity outcomes for all homeless and housing instability funding that measure how well culturally specific populations' needs are being met
- Easing contracting requirements while increasing funding

Interviewees representing **state government** focused on:

- Establishing core expectations, benchmarks, goals, and metrics

- Implementing performance-based contracting

Interviewees representing **historically funded institutions** focused on:
- Providing advance and ongoing communication about funding
- Speedier contracting, reducing cash flow issues
- Standardizing contracts with custom scopes of work and streamlined requirements
- Removing "burn rate" requirements
- Removing requirements to partner with CSOs and instead focusing on population-specific outcomes
- Enforcing federal best practices, including non-discrimination, use of HMIS, and focusing on literally homeless households over prevention
- Improving data collection and reporting systems (HMIS)

Additional Interview Findings

Interviewees identified a number of groups currently excluded, negatively affected, or rendered invisible by the State's current funding structure and contracting process, including Hispanic or Latinx, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Black communities; uneducated single mothers of color, transgender persons of all ages experiencing homelessness and/or fleeing domestic violence, young transgender survivors of domestic violence, undocumented survivors of domestic violence, persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness, rural working poor, and underemployed persons.

More broadly, interviewees spoke to the exclusion and invisibility of communities of color, immigrants, refugees, and indigenous persons, with many interviewers citing racial inequality across the state, impacting different demographics from place to place across the state. At the organizational level, the interviews shared an acknowledgement that the state funding structure excludes any organizations that aren't Community Action Agencies, including CSOs, Victim Service Providers, smaller community-based service providers, and rural service providers.

Recommendations for integrating and prioritizing these groups included:
- Strengthen organizational capacity within CSOs
- Support development of cultural responsiveness in all organizations
- Target rural organizations for support with operating costs, sustaining qualified workforce, and challenges of serving a large low-density geography
- Provide targeted outreach and TA to CSOs and Tribal organizations regarding future funding opportunities and how to successfully apply
- Dedicate additional State funding to serving excluded/invisible populations
- Maintain investment in all geographic areas in the state
- Conduct a statewide gaps analysis to develop a geographically-specific and localized understanding of who has been left out and where

Interviewees illuminated how the current homelessness system's approach does not serve people well and reinforced the idea that equity approaches help the system serve everyone better. Some correctives offered by interviewees included approaching people seeking services as fellow community members instead of consumers meets someone's needs more fully and does not "other" them. Adopting this value of "being in community with those in need" offers an equity lens through which system practices can be evaluated, improving the experience of and power dynamics between those seeking services and those providing services. This value also highlights the importance of fully funding service providers to be in community with those in need instead of the transactional model that dominates the current system.

Concerns About Changing the System

Interviewees had different concerns depending on which power group they belong to. Those with historically funded institutions feared a loss in their funding as well as a loss in funding across all geographic areas. Other interviewees identified these historically funded institutions as being resistant to change, as well as skepticism that changing the funding structure would destabilize these institutions. These interviewees also expressed concern that the power dynamics in the state will not let real change happen.

Interviewees broadly identified the difficulties of implementing "real change," noting that change will require time, resources, the inclusion of missing voices, alignment on what racial equity means, operationalizing equity values into measurable outcomes, developing consequences, and balancing urgency alongside spaciousness to create thoughtful solutions. One interviewee expressed concern that if the Task Force work is unsuccessful, this will be used as a scapegoat for resistance to future equity efforts.

DATA FINDINGS

The Discovery Team collected and analyzed data on the demographics of people experiencing homelessness across the state, system performance metrics across Continua of Care (CoCs), research on the disparate harm of other public systems on communities of color, and current and historic funding for homeless service provision. The findings outlined below show a disproportionate impact of homelessness on Black, American Indian and Alaskan Native, and Hispanic and Latinx communities across the state, but few structural or systemic tools actively addressing racial inequity statewide.

Race and Ethnicity of Those Experiencing Homelessness

4x American Indian/Alaska Native Oregonians are represented in homelessness more than four times their share of the total state population

Table 2 shows racial and ethnic disparities among people experiencing homelessness by comparing the characteristics of total population, population experiencing poverty, and population experiencing homelessness. Homeless population and subpopulation data comes from the 2020 Point-In-Time (PIT) Count data reported in the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to the U.S. Congress. PIT Counts serve as an unduplicated, one-night estimate of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, typically conducted annually at the end of January. Although PIT Count methodologies are widely seen as an undercount of those experiencing homelessness, the use of the methodology across communities provides one statewide metric of homelessness. Because communities' ability to conduct PIT counts in 2021 were impeded by the COVID-19 pandemic, the extent of the pandemic's impact on homelessness in the state is still emerging. Data on the total population and population under 100% of the poverty line come from the American Community Survey (ACS) most recent 5-year data.

These data show that in Oregon, people who identify as Black or African American are 2% of the total population, 4% of those in poverty, and 6% of those experiencing homelessness. In other words, the percentage of Black people experiencing homelessness is 3 times their share of the total state population. People who are American Indian or Alaskan Native are overrepresented at an even greater rate of nearly 4 times their share of the general population. People who are American Indian or Alaskan Native are about 1% of the total population, 2% of those in poverty, and 5% of those surveyed by the PIT Count.

3x Black Oregonians are represented in homelessness more than three times their share of the total state population

Overrepresentation is also seen among Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, while those who identify as white or Asian are underrepresented.

It is important to note that further disaggregating the data within a pan-ethnic racial identity group (e.g., Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Asian American, or multiracial) is needed to provide a full understanding of racial disparities for specific groups within a larger group. For example, it may be that while Asian/Asian Americans on the whole are under-represented among those experiencing homelessness, sub-groups may actually be over-represented. Further analysis is needed to understand these nuances.

Table 2: Oregon Population, Poverty, and Overall Homelessness by Race and Ethnicity

RACE	TOTAL POPULATION	POVERTY	HOMELESSNESS
White	84.4%	78.8%	81.3%
Black	1.9%	3.7%	5.7%
Asian	4.4%	4.5%	0.8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.1%	1.9%	4.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.6%	1.1%
Multiracial or Other	7.8%	10.4%	6.2%
ETHNICITY			
Not Hispanic or Latinx	87.0%	80.2%	90.6%
Hispanic or Latinx	13.0%	19.8%	9.4%

Data Source: ACS 2019 5-year Data and 2020 Point-in-Time Count

The PIT Count data shows that 9.4% of those experiencing homelessness were Hispanic or Latinx. When comparing this to the Hispanic or Latinx share of poverty (19.8%), this could be interpreted as underrepresentation among those experiencing homelessness. However, these data may undercount Hispanic or Latinx homelessness. People may avoid services due to lack of knowledge and outreach, language barriers, and fear among those who are undocumented. Homelessness among Hispanic

Table 3: Oregon Sheltered Status and Household Type by Race and Ethnicity

RACE	SHELTERED HOMELESSNESS	UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS	SINGLE ADULTS	FAMILIES
White	79.1%	82.7%	81.6%	80.2%
Black	8.1%	4.2%	5.6%	6.5%
Asian	1.0%	0.6%	0.7%	0.9%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3.8%	5.5%	4.9%	4.5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1.4%	1.0%	1.1%	1.5%
Multiracial or Other	6.6%	6.0%	6.2%	6.3%
ETHNICITY				
Not Hispanic or Latinx	89.2%	91.4%	91.8%	84.8%
Hispanic or Latinx	10.8%	8.6%	8.2%	15.2%

Data Source: 2020 Point-in-Time Count

Latinx communities may also be more likely to take the form of doubling up (staying with friends or family to avoid shelter or the streets), often in overcrowded households. [1]

Table 3 shows how the race and ethnicity of those surveyed in the 2020 PIT varies across household type and sheltered/unsheltered status. According to the 2020 PIT count, Black people make up a greater proportion of those who experience sheltered

15.2% of Oregonians experiencing homelessness as families identify as Hispanic or Latinx

People who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native ⟫⟫ More Likely to Experience Unsheltered Homelessness

homelessness (8.1%) and homelessness within families (6.5%) than unsheltered homelessness (4.2%) and single adults (5.6%) in Oregon. People identified in the 2020 PIT count as American Indian or Alaska Native are more likely to experience unsheltered homelessness than sheltered; they made up 3.8% of those counted in sheltered and 5.5% of those counted in unsheltered locations. Overall, 9.4% of those experiencing homelessness were Hispanic or Latinx, but 15.2% of those experiencing homelessness as families were Hispanic or Latinx.

Funding Data

There are 41 federal funding streams that can be leveraged to directly address homelessness, but Oregon's funding priorities only reflect homeless services when funding is explicitly or exclusively designed for supporting homeless services. Federal funding structures and allocations perpetuate these disconnects, but statewide efforts to bridge gaps across systems and programs could improve the state's ability to identify racial disparities and develop processes to pursue racial equity within its social service systems. The state's recent Medicaid waiver could be leveraged in beginning to build or strengthen such connections. The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness has offered guidance and recommendations to states on how braiding funding can strengthen social safety nets, address long-standing gaps in services, and achieve better and more equitable outcomes across public systems. Collaboration and strategic planning to address housing insecurity and homelessness across state-funded health care, housing, social services (including domestic violence services, child welfare, behavioral health) criminal justice, and labor systems and programs can strengthen state's capacities to address racial disparities, as all of these systems have played a role in enacting and perpetuating harm against communities of color for the length of the nation's history and before its formal establishment.

Federal and state funding are often disbursed through a layered network of organizations through subcontracting agreements, which may perpetuate longstanding racial and geographic power dynamics in Oregon. Current funding structures obscure the state's diversity by funneling funds regionally. This, in turn, establishes regional and statewide gatekeeping mechanisms that eclipse the visibility of communities of color.

Systemic Racism and Inequity Perpetuate Homelessness

Racial inequities across publicly-funded systems in the United States are known to perpetuate homelessness among people of color. While disproportionate rates of poverty are evident in communities of color, systemic racism is also perpetuated through other public systems, exacerbating the impact of poverty on people of color, leading to more disparate rates of homelessness.

[1] Research has shown lower rates of homeless service use by Hispanic or Latinx individuals and families due to lack of linguistically inclusive and culturally responsive programs, misinformation about shelter eligibility for immigrants, and concerns about family separation and interaction with immigration and customs enforcement. (Chinchilla & Gabrielian, 2019; Culhane et al., 2019).A measure of doubled-up homelessness using ACS data finds that rates of Hispanic or Latinx doubled-up homelessness are high, unlike rates of sheltered/unsheltered homelessness (Richard et al., 2022). Based on that measure for Oregon, 24.3% of those experiencing doubled-up homelessness are Hispanic or Latinx (Discovery team analysis of ACS public use microdata). See: Chinchilla, M., & Gabrielian, S.. (2019). Stemming the rise of Latinx homelessness: Lessons from Los Angeles County. Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless, 29(2), 71-75; Culhane, D., Metraux, S., Treglia, D., Lowman, K., & Ortiz-Siberon, A. (2019). Latinx homelessness in Philadelphia: Rates of services use, perceived barriers and assets, and potential opportunities for leveraging city reform efforts to address service gaps. University of Pennsylvania; Richard, M. K., Dworkin, J., Rule, K.G., Farooqui, S., Glendening, Z., & Carlson, S. (2022). Quantifying Doubled-Up Homelessness: Presenting a New Measure Using U.S. Census Microdata. Housing Policy Debate, In press.

Data on inequities outside of the homelessness response systems can provide policymakers with greater understanding of the housing, economic, and social conditions that lead to high rates of homelessness among people of color and the barriers individuals and families face when trying to exit homelessness.
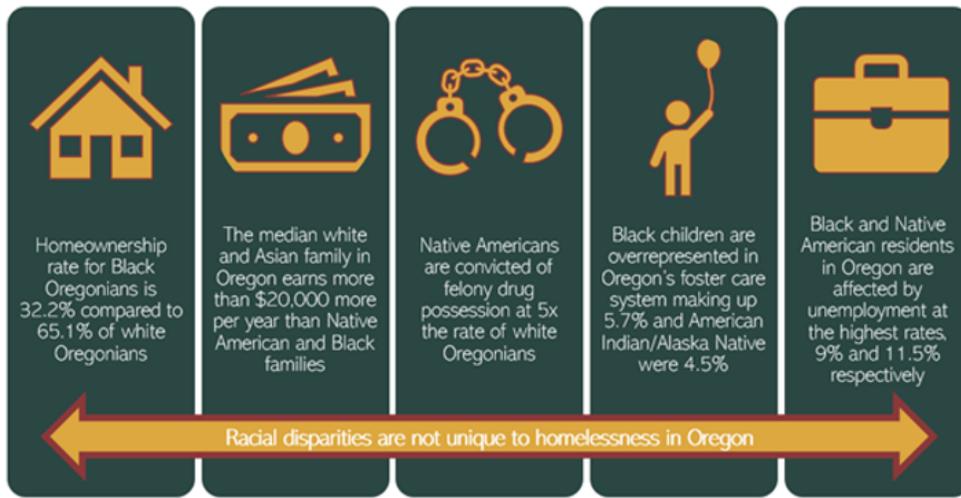
Homeownership. In 2019, a state task force reported that Black Oregonians had the lowest rates of homeownership, with 32.2% of households owning a home, compared to 65.1% of white households. [2]

Income. Racial disparities in household income remain high in Oregon. For example, the median income of both white and Asian households is $20,000 more per year than Native American or Black households. [3]

Renter Cost Burden. Households of color in Oregon spend a greater share of their income on rent and are more likely to be housing cost-burdened than white households. [4] A 2020 survey of Oregon tenants examined renter needs during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. By the summer of 2020, 35% of those surveyed owe back rent, a rate that increased to 56% among people of color. [5]

Wealth. Data on wealth and assets by race are not available at the state level, but Oregon likely mirrors national trends. Across the U.S., racial disparities in wealth are even more stark than income. Black families' median wealth is less than 15 percent that of white families, at $24,100. Hispanic families' median wealth is $36,100. Families from other racial/ethnic groups have lower wealth than white families but higher wealth than Black and Hispanic families. [6]

Unemployment. Black and Native American residents are affected by unemployment at the highest rates across all racial and ethnic groups, with rates of unemployment at 9% and 11.5%, respectively, compared to 5.2% of white residents. [7]

Child welfare involvement. Children of color are overrepresented in foster care in Oregon. In 2019 children who identified

2 Oregon Legislative Policy and Research Office. (2019). Joint Task Force Addressing Racial Disparities in Home Ownership: Report on Addressing Barriers to Home Ownership for People of Color in Oregon. Salem, OR: Author. https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_engagement/Reports/2019-JARDHO-Addressing%20Barriers%20to%20Home%20Ownership%20for%20People%20of%20Color%20in%20Oregon.pdf
3 American Community Survey, 2015-2019
4 Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2017
5 Bates, L. (2020). Stability, Equity, and Dignity: Reporting and Reflecting on Oregon Tenant Experiences During the Covid-19 Pandemic . Portland, OR: Community Alliance of Tenants and Portland State University. https://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/sites/g/files/znldhr1791/files/2020-09/Renters%20in%20Covid-Oregon%20summer%202020.pdf
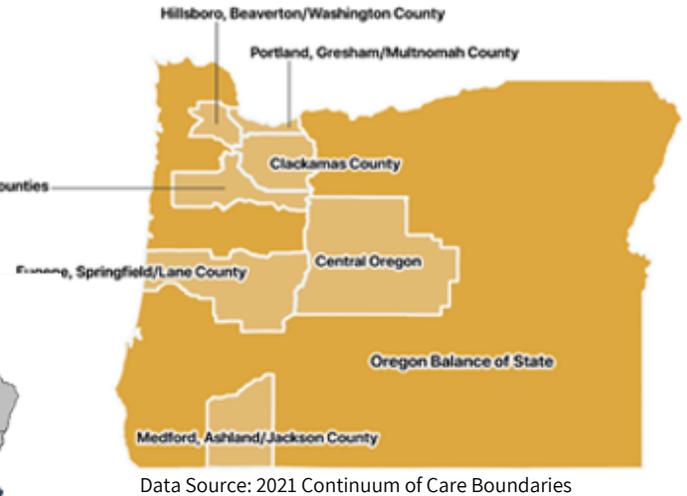Joint Center for Housing Studies. (2017). Renter Cost Burden by Race and Ethnicity. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/ARH_2017_cost_burdens_by_race
6 Bhutta et al. (2020). Disparities in Wealth by Race and Ethnicity in the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances. Washington, D.C.: The Federal Reserve. https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/disparities-in-wealth-by-race-and-ethnicity-in-the-2019-survey-of-consumer-finances-20200928.htm
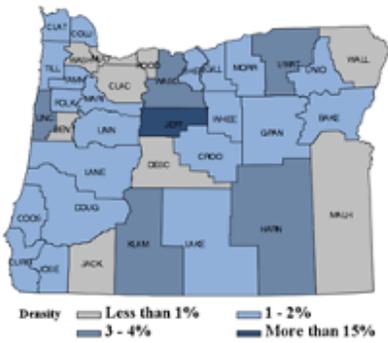
as Black or African American were 5.7% of those in foster care and those who identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native were 4.5%. [8]

Criminal legal system. In Oregon, the total jail population has increased 316% since 1970. Black people constitute 2% of the of the state residents, however 9% of people in jail and prisons. In 2017, Black people were incarcerated in prisons at 3.9 times the rate of white people. Native Americans were incarcerated at 2.1 times the rate of white people. According to a report of 2015 data, Native Americans were convicted of felony drug possession at five times the rate of white Oregonians, the highest of any racial or ethnic group. Black residents were convicted at a rate more than double the rate of white residents. [9]
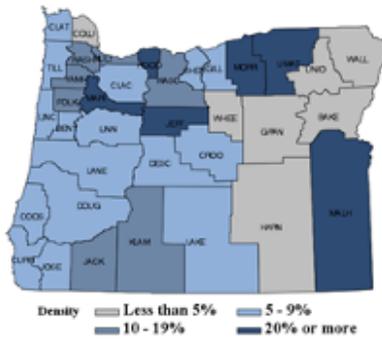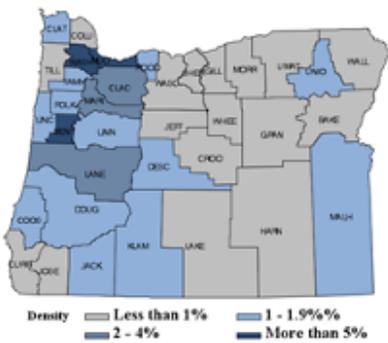

Data Source: 2021 Continuum of Care Boundaries

Data Source: Racial and Ethnic Impact Statement Historical Data Report
Note that due to differences in the relative size of racial and ethnic minorities, the scales on each map above are different. Take care when making comparisons across racial/ethnic categories.

7 American Community Survey, 2015-2019
8 Our Children Oregon. (2021). 2021 Oregon KIDS COUNT Data Cards Release. Portland, OR. https://ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-kidscount-datacards-available/
9 Vera Institute of Justice (2019). Incarceration Trends in Oregon. : https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-oregon.pdf. Brooklyn, NY.
Oregon Criminal Justice Commission. (2019). Update to possession of controlled substances report. Criminal Justice Commission: State of Oregon. https://www.oregon.gov/cjc/CJC%20Document%20Library/2019PCSReport.pdf
10 A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a core network of interconnected programs and services to assist people experiencing homelessness or housing instability
11 Brookings Institution. (2021). Mapping rural America's diversity and demographic change. Mapping rural America's diversity and demographic change (brookings.edu)

Race, Ethnicity, and System Performance
The Discovery Team was able to obtain Stella P data from each of the 8 Continuums of Care (CoC) within Oregon.[10] The Stella P system or Stella Performance Module uses data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to illustrate how households move through the homeless system and enables analysts to highlight disparities in outcomes.

Though six of the state's eight CoCs are managed at a county-wide level, the other two CoCs cover unreasonably large portions of the state, which also contain more racially diverse populations. The Oregon Balance of State CoC contains more people experiencing homelessness than the Portland, Gresham/Multnomah County CoC, the state's largest urban hub. The tri-county CoC of Central Oregon contains some of the state's larger groups of individuals and families who identify as Hispanic and/or Latinx, Native American, and Alaskan Native. The tri-county region also has more people experiencing homelessness than any of the other CoCs apart from the Balance of State and Portland, Gresham/Multnomah County. Rural counties in Oregon include some of the most diverse across the state, correlating to national data on rural demographics. According to the Brookings Institution, 24% of rural Americans were people of color in 2020. [11]

Many communities in Oregon that are home to larger groups of Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Hispanic or Latinx individuals and families are nested within a broader regional funding structure, making it more difficult to recognize and tailor services to their needs. This is true for the state's largest concentrations of Hispanic or Latinx people, as well as many of the state's largest groups of Black and Native American and Alaskan Native people living outside of reservations.

The Discovery Team analysis of Stella P data concluded the following:

- Across all eight CoCs, there is a higher proportion of white, non-Hispanic head of households and adults accessing permanent supportive housing than those who access emergency shelter, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing.
- Each CoC has its own unique disparities that do not mirror characteristics of other CoCs across Oregon.
- Further interrogation of quantitative data coupled with qualitative data and the insights of people with lived experience of homelessness will help each CoC more accurately understand the human experience of individuals and families accessing their systems and create effective strategies to address disparities.

All regions have a higher proportion of white, non-Hispanic heads of households and single adults accessing permanent supportive housing than those who access emergency shelter, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing

Each region needs further interrogation of data, with qualitative data to more accurately understand lived experience and uncover deeper insights

Disparities do not look the same across each region in Oregon

SURVEY FINDINGS

To inform the work of the Task Force, findings from and analysis of the 172 survey responses received are summarized below based on the four goals of the Task Force to identify: (1) methods to decrease racial disparities in homelessness in Oregon, (2) methods to understand and address needs of people experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity in the state, (3) recommendations to change the state's funding structure, and (4) recommendations to modify contracting processes and eligibility. In addition, data included in the appendices summarize the characteristics of survey respondents and their experience and interest in professional development and training related to racial equity (Appendices A and B).

The purpose of the stakeholder survey was to provide an opportunity for a wide audience (primarily those working in the homelessness response system), to share their understandings of the connections between structural racism and homelessness in their community, how state and local systems can address inequities, and solicit feedback specifically on the statewide funding and contracting processes as part a strategy to advance equity. The results from the survey generate potential strategies for reducing racial disparities in homelessness across the state, with ideas for specific subpopulations and geographies.

Methods to Decrease Disparities

Decreasing disparities in homelessness rates by race and ethnicity requires shared understanding of the causes of those disparities. The survey asked respondents to consider the causes of disproportionate rates of homelessness among people of color in the state. The results of the stakeholder survey reflect existing national research on homelessness, are supported by state data on inequities perpetuated by other public systems as outlined above, and highlight issues especially pertinent to Oregon. Ultimately, responses emphasize the role of systemic racism across time and across intersecting social structures.

First, survey items asked respondents to consider the factors that contribute to disparate rates of homelessness among people of color in the state. Respondents were asked to rate the most significant challenges or barriers that people of color experiencing homelessness in Oregon face, according to a list provided. The following table shows the average rating for each factor. Respondents identified generational poverty as the most severe barrier/challenge, but every factor (from discrimination across employment, criminal justice, and housing, to bias in the service system) was seen, on average, as a significant barrier (a rating higher than 50).

Open-ended comments from survey respondents provide more detail on drivers of racial disparities in homelessness and potential points of intervention. Primary themes across these comments were:
- Historical and ongoing racism and discrimination across society,
- Discrimination specific to the housing market,
- Generational poverty and a lack of opportunities to build wealth, and
- Contemporary service systems that fail to redress harm and adequately meet the needs of people of color, especially Black and American Indian or Alaskan Native people.

Stakeholder Survey Perspectives on Barriers & Challenges People of Color Experiencing Homelessness Face
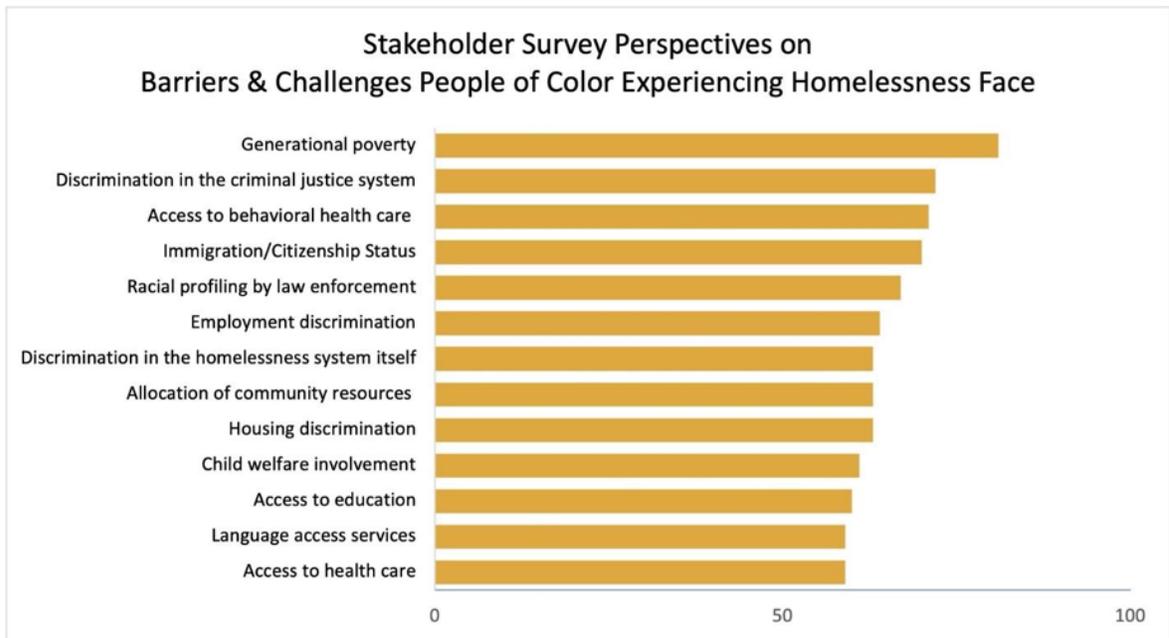
Systemic Racism
Answers from respondents about the causes of racial disparities in homelessness point to the underlying racism that has guided, and continues to guide, societal conditions in the state.

Housing Discrimination
Comments from survey participants also describe how the housing choices of people of color, especially Black, American Indian, and Alaskan Native peoples, have been severely restricted by institutional and individual decision-making. Ranging from a historical understanding of explicitly racist policies to the ways in which property owners, real estate agents, banks, and lenders perpetuate racism today, these comments can inform approaches to reduce disparities in homelessness through implementation of strategies to reduce housing discrimination and further fair housing goals.

> "Systemic racism and white supremacy have historically oppressed Black and Native communities in all aspects of their lives, which has led to their socio-economic disempowerment. They are more likely to face homeless[ness] because they are the least institutionally and socially supported groups of people.
> -Survey Respondent"

Exclusion from Wealth-Building Opportunities

In addition to emphasizing the role of racism and discrimination in the housing system, respondents connected those policies and practices to generational poverty and lack of generational wealth. Without inherited wealth derived from a family home, for example, too many people of color in Oregon are without the resources to buffer economic distress caused by rising rents and stagnant wages.

> Oregon has [one of] the highest levels of housing unavailability in the nation, this creates an even larger burden on people of color to get what little amount is available.
> - Survey Respondent

> Institutionalized racism, redlining, little or no access to mortgages/loans due to discriminatory practices, racial zoning ordinances. All of this reinforces segregation and inequities amongst these populations. Without safe and stable housing, a person cannot address the other basic needs of life (food, health, employment, childcare).
> - Survey Respondent

> Wealth in America is intertwined with home ownership and generational homeownership. Redlining, segregation, [and] income disparity means that people of color are more vulnerable to housing instability.
> - Survey Respondent

Supply of Affordable Housing

A common concern across responses was the state's high housing costs, especially in urban and suburban areas. In addition to income disparities putting people of color at greater risk of housing cost burden and inability to pay rent, the competition for scarce affordable rental housing heightens the risk of housing discrimination by race and ethnicity. Comments called for measures to increase the supply of truly affordable housing that is in good condition, in areas connected to employment and social support, and designed for intergenerational families. They also called for rent control policies, stronger government affordable housing assistance, and protections based on source of income.

Cross-system Exclusion and Disparate Treatment

In addition to the ways in which racism and discrimination impact access to housing and access to the economic resources to afford it, respondents emphasized the role other intersecting systems play in increasing risk of homelessness for people of color in Oregon. These factors include employment discrimination, criminal legal system discrimination and subsequent housing barriers, lack of access to quality medical and behavioral health care, and inequitable educational opportunities.

> Lack of cross-system alignment and collaboration to meet the needs of folks most impacted by multiple systems (such as healthcare, criminal justice, child welfare, etc.), lack of flexible funding to reduce barriers and rapidly stabilize households to prevent entry into homelessness.
> -Survey Respondent
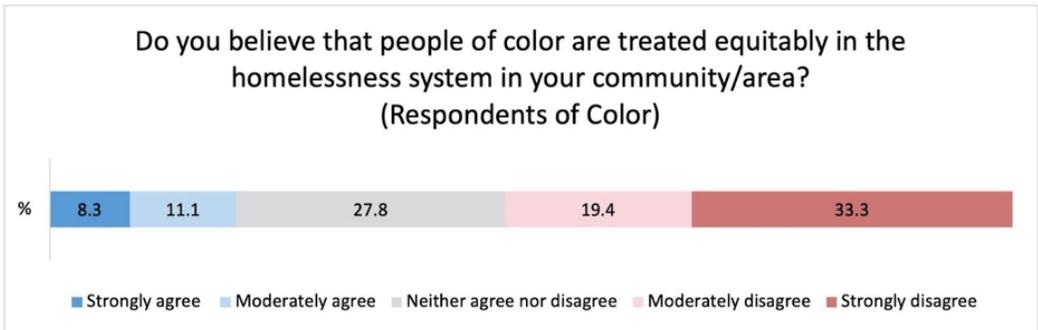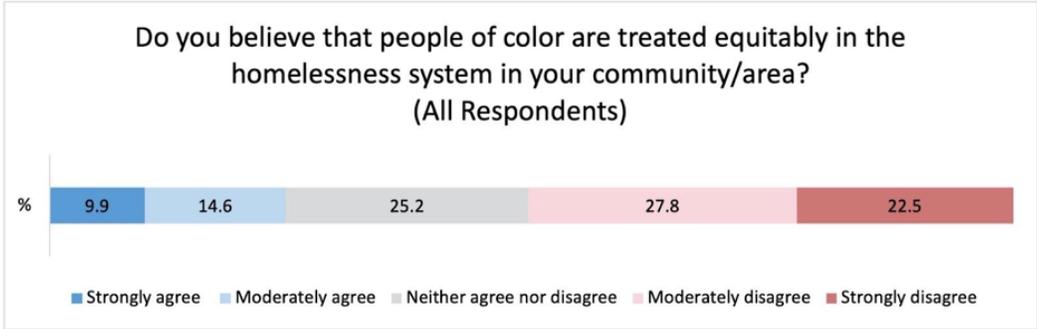
Experience in the Homeless Service System

Although respondents identified societal conditions as the primary drivers of homelessness, they also commented on the ways in which the system designed to respond to homelessness and housing insecurity perpetuates inequities. These comments point to potential intervention and change for preventing homelessness for those at risk and helping people of color exit homelessness.

Specific areas for improving the effectiveness of homelessness response are outlined in the next section. However, respondents demonstrate broad critiques and emphasize the importance of addressing racial inequities in service response, not just in the societal conditions that cause homelessness.

> I've observed a perspective among many people in the social services world that people of color must not be from Oregon, and thus implicitly or explicitly are less deserving of state/local resources. While many unhoused or marginally housed people are indeed from other states, I have not ever seen this standard applied to white people (who in my experience are just as likely if not more so to be from a state other than Oregon).
> -Survey Respondent

Identify and Address Needs

The previous section summarized the primary causes of higher rates of homelessness among people of color in Oregon, according to stakeholder survey respondents, and suggestions for points of intervention to prevent homelessness. The second goal of the Task Force is to identify methods to understand and address the needs of people of color experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity in the state to inform the design of the homelessness response system. This section summarizes participant feedback on the system, including assessment, prioritization, and the design of programs (services and housing). It includes concrete program and policy ideas in these areas, as well as recommendations for continuously soliciting feedback from affected communities.

Do you believe that people of color are treated equitably in the homelessness system in your community/area? (All Respondents)

Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
9.9	14.6	25.2	27.8	22.5

Do you believe that people of color are treated equitably in the homelessness system in your community/area? (Respondents of Color)

Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
8.3	11.1	27.8	19.4	33.3

First, participants were asked if they believe people of color are treated equitably in the homelessness system in their community. Approximately half of all respondents disagreed, 25% agreed, and another 25% neither agreed nor disagreed. Looking only at respondents of color (n=36 participants who identified with at least one racial/ethnic identity beyond white), a greater share strongly disagreed (33% versus 22.5%). These results support the importance of advancing racial equity in the homeless service system, especially from the perspective of people of color working within the system. Several people provided comments alongside their choice:

> " I think the system is often racist even when the individuals perpetuating that system may not be racist and may be wholly ignorant of the ways they are perpetuating systemic inequalities.
> - Survey Respondent "

> " I also think that informal processes of assessment and prioritization are generally inequitable since most service providers are not incorporating racially equitable practices in their frontline service provision or service access protocols.
> - Survey Respondent "

> " Providing opportunities for BIPOC individuals to engage in the system should be more of a priority than I view it is currently. Providing multiple access points, more outreach staff engaging individuals where they are at, and providing services to meet their housing needs first is what is needed most.
> - Survey Respondent "

Assessment and Prioritization
The survey asked respondents to comment on how their community's current process of assessment and prioritization for housing and services reduces or contributes to racial and ethnic disparities. Of those who commented based on familiarity and experience with the system, only a few provided examples of ways in which the processes reduce disparities. These included of increased diversity among frontline staff, translation of resources into Spanish, and culturally-specific organizations and targeted outreach.

A greater number of open-ended comments observed ways in which assessment and prioritization contributes to racial disparities. Respondents suggested that the scarcity of housing and service options makes it difficult for the system to provide equitable resources. Within the current context of limited resources, barriers to navigating the system (technology, language, geography, complexity) contribute to disparities in access. Some comments noted that in their communities, coordinated entry access is not always available or consistently implemented. Other comments described factors that contribute to disparities once people are in touch with the system. For example, the content of assessment tools may not adequately identify the housing barriers of non-white populations, and individual providers may be biased in their administration of the assessment and prioritization process.

> " The current system does not take into account the impact of intergenerational poverty and systemic racism in prioritizing BIPOC communities.
> - Survey Respondent "

Identifying Homeless Service Needs

Several questions aimed to solicit feedback on what about the current housing and services landscape is working well and what could be improved. Ideas include increased diversity at all levels among those working and leading the system and service agencies, improved pay and benefits, training and professional development, more culturally specific and responsive services, and improved outreach strategies informed by people with lived experience. Themes from open-ended responses included:

- Increase workforce diversity at all levels
- Sustain staff through improved pay, benefits, and caseloads
- Provide anti-racism and cultural competency training and incorporate into supervision and accountability
- More culturally-specific services
- Improved outreach strategies

> Require that providers actively work towards and make gains in reducing racial disparities in homelessness- and in order to do this, increase fluency in racial equity and build capacity to incorporate racially equitable practices in services and systems.
> - Survey Respondent

> Focus on culturally specific organizations in a non-tokenist way, if traditional approaches to solving homelessness do not work then alter approaches. For example, if homelessness among a group does not present as a problem in the same way as it does for the majority group, the very definitions of a program may make it more difficult for existing networks to serve those populations. Terms like "homeless" and "literally homeless" are often effectively ways of reinforcing systemic racism."
> - Survey Respondent

Addressing the Affordable Housing Problem

Within questions aimed to solicit feedback on the current homelessness response system, participants consistently emphasized the importance of tackling the issue of affordable housing to get at "the root of the problem." These comments include the importance of implementing non-discrimination and fair housing, regulating rent levels, building new housing, and designing affordable housing in different ways. These comments align with those summarized above (Goal 1: Methods to Decrease Disparities). However, one comment could inform the production of site-based affordable housing run by nonprofits: "Offer group housing opportunities, similar to a quad unit, so groups of people can remain together without breaking lease agreements and standards of living, such as, an apartment unit that has four en-suite rooms that connect in the center with a shared kitchen and common space. This could greatly improve mental health as individuals can be housed and still benefit from peer support of cohabitating and "surviving" with the people they trust."

> Provide more materials and help in Spanish and other languages. Provide outreach into the specific communities in need.
> - Survey Respondent

Intersectionality

Respondents were asked to consider what populations were marginalized in conversations about disparities among those experiencing homelessness. People mentioned a variety of identities and experiences whose needs should be understood and addressed. This list should not be seen as a list of who is left behind in every conversation, but a reminder that people of color experiencing homelessness are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, household composition, needs, and housing barriers, and policy and program response should consider targeted needs for:

- American Indian and Alaskan Native communities, including those in urban areas, rural areas, and reservations
- Asian and Pacific Islander communities
- Hispanic individuals and families in rural communities, especially those who migrate

seasonally for work.
- Immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, with language barriers, and arriving as refugees
- Doubled-up households
- LGBTQ populations, especially trans and non-binary individuals outside of urban centers
- People with serious mental illness
- People with visible and invisible disabilities (e.g., chronic illness)
- Parents with adult children with disabilities
- Older adults
- Unaccompanied youth, especially those transitioning out of foster care

Much of the feedback on service and housing needs were aligned specifically with subpopulations. For some of these, we summarize the feedback below (for other groups/identities, not enough information was provided, highlighting the importance of additional work to determine needs).

Immigrant Communities: "The immigrant/undocumented community is concerned about public charge affecting their path to citizenship and language barriers exacerbate the probability of this group not seeking assistance."

American Indian and Alaskan Native Communities: "Native Americans have a well-earned distrust of governmental programs, so when you factor in the challenges of poverty, when they do become homeless, they don't seek public assistance. Tribal services are uneven and often inadequate, and so they have greater difficulty rising out of homelessness."

Black Communities: "For the Black community, I fear that racism still plays a negative role in the way people are treated by their landlords, the court system, and society in general. When they do lose their housing, they face additional barriers to being rehoused simply because of the bias they face from landlords."

> "
> Leadership and decision makers must include people of color and people who have experienced homelessness. They are the experts, and their input should be valued (and compensated for).
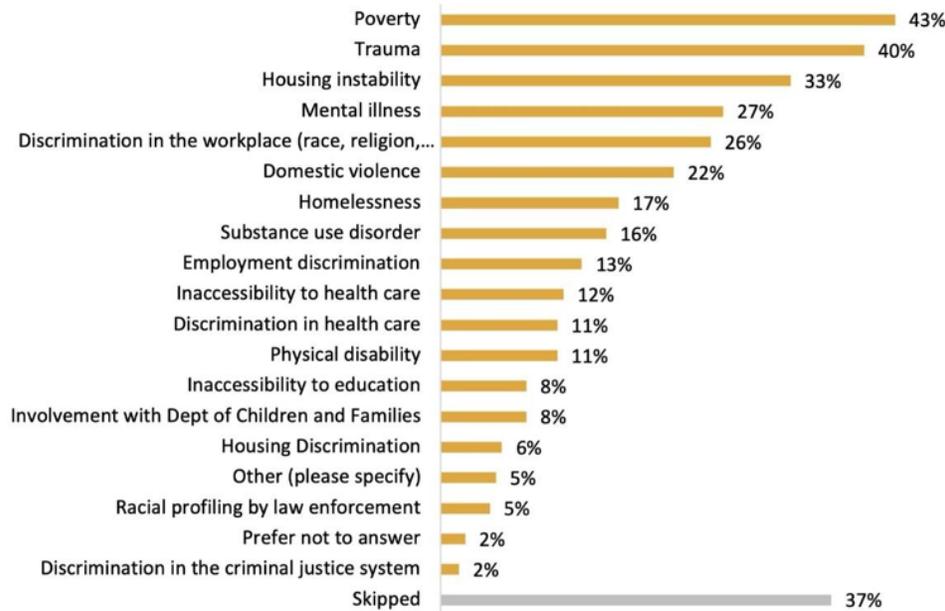> - Survey Respondent
> "

Including and Engaging People with Lived Experience
An additional theme from participants was the importance of engaging people with lived experience of homelessness in all processes to identify needs and implement homelessness response.

To understand how the background of the homelessness and housing workforce in Oregon reflects the people served by the system, the survey asked respondents to indicate their experience with issues often faced by those experiencing homelessness. Poverty and trauma were the most selected experiences among survey respondents. About a third of respondents had experienced housing instability, and 17% had experienced homelessness.

Respondents were also directly asked how people with lived experience of homelessness were included in the decision-making processes for their CoC. Responses were mixed, with many indicating that there was no representation, or none that they were aware of. However, several respondents provided examples of inclusion from their community, such as people with lived experience on staff and recruitment and engagement strategies for boards and committees. Although examples include representation on decision-making boards, others may be limited to advisory boards, where perspectives may or may not be considered by those in power. And although team members with lived experience is vital, there were fewer comments observing people with lived experience in leadership positions.

Respondent Lived Experience
(Percentages based on total respondents, n=172)

Category	Percentage
Poverty	43%
Trauma	40%
Housing instability	33%
Mental illness	27%
Discrimination in the workplace (race, religion,…	26%
Domestic violence	22%
Homelessness	17%
Substance use disorder	16%
Employment discrimination	13%
Inaccessibility to health care	12%
Discrimination in health care	11%
Physical disability	11%
Inaccessibility to education	8%
Involvement with Dept of Children and Families	8%
Housing Discrimination	6%
Other (please specify)	5%
Racial profiling by law enforcement	5%
Prefer not to answer	2%
Discrimination in the criminal justice system	2%
Skipped	37%

> "
> In much of the work I have done throughout the years there are not many BIPOC voices involved in decision making processes. This is often lacking in Oregon.
>
> - Survey Respondent
> "

> "
> I think Community Action Agencies have been engaging local organizations that serve historically marginalized groups pretty well. I also think there is room for improvement but the recent heavy-handed requirements that don't acknowledge the partnerships already built are insulting and generate a message which isn't accurate. OHDC is part of the Community Action network, and they specialize in providing services to farmworkers, who are primarily non-white.
> -Survey Respondent
> "

Connecting and Engaging Culturally Specific Organizations

Participants were specifically asked if Community Action Agencies worked to engage local organizations that served historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups. Some observed that CAAs in their communities engage well with local organizations serving marginalized groups, while others observe lack of connection.

In interpreting these comments, it is important to note that intentions are not always aligned with impact. CAAs may be designed with the intention of serving historically marginalized populations, and those leading them may perceive efficacy in reaching marginalized households. However, it is vital to listen to people with lived experience of homelessness from those communities about whether they are aware of services, feel welcome, or have recommendations for improvement.

Ongoing Research and Improved Data Collection

Participants also described the importance of better data collection to best identify current and changing needs. Although data collection is important for system improvement, the many comments uplifting the issue of racial disparities and suggesting concrete ideas to advance equity suggest readiness to engage in racial equity work regardless of issues with the quality of data. One respondent shared how they use their current data to examine equity:

Changes to the Funding Structure

Survey respondents were asked to reflect on what is working well about the current state system for funding homelessness services and what they would do to improve the current funding system. Comments came from varied perspectives, and many reported having too little information and understanding to provide feedback on the funding structure.

For those that gave substantive feedback, positive reflections on what was working well in the current system, including coordination of resources, the influx of new resources during the pandemic, and the consistency and stability of non-competitive funding.

Comments containing recommendations for improvements highlighted the needs of rural areas, changes to the allocation process, specific recommendations for program design to serve people of color in Oregon, and ideas to improve upstream homelessness and poverty prevention. Themes included:

- Improved funding for rural areas
- Improved allocation processes
- Funding for homelessness response programs to meet the needs of people of color
- Upstream funds for housing and health care, not just emergency services

Responses to other questions throughout the survey provide insight for funding structure, although some go beyond state funding and pertain to federal funding and priorities for and other sources of funds. A few comments suggest support for expanded eligibility for federal funds to include doubled-up households. There were also comments on the level of funding, some of which can be seen as state responsibility, while supporting the need to advocate for greater funding at the federal level.

Modify Contracting Processes and Eligibility

Respondents were asked how well the state contracting process works for their organization and how they would improve it. Positive feedback was limited, with most responses emphasizing needed improvements or reasons why their agencies or communities have opted out of state funding processes. Common concerns included difficulty navigating the process (technical issues, personnel capacity), slow or delayed receipt of funds, and lack of diversity and inclusion in designing the process. Comments and themes related to contracting included:

Challenging to navigate and complete, especially for small and medium sized communities

Slow or delayed funding

Lack of diversity and inclusion in designing the process

> "
>
> I would hire more competent leaders of color to hold policy level changing positions. Stop tokenizing our people of color, provide oversight and frequent audits to make sure the dollars are reaching the targeted populations, increase communications and transparency, increase state participation overall.
>
> - Survey Respondent
>
> "

RECOMMENDATIONS

PRINCIPLES AND SOLUTIONS FRAMEWORK

The Task Force created principles for addressing racial disparity in homelessness across Oregon based on their analysis of the current context, trends, opportunities, and unmet needs, is outlined in the Overview section. The final solutions framework includes seven distinct themes, with specific recommendations to meet the Task Force's four goals:

- Identify and investigate methods by which the state may decrease rates of racial disparity among people experiencing homelessness and receiving services.

- Identify and investigate potential changes in this state's funding structure to address racial disparities among people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, including consideration of how housing transition of services delivery could be implemented to avoid service disruptions among people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

- Consider existing methods and recommend additional methods by which the Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) and Oregon Housing Stability Council (OHSC) may receive advice and information about needed services for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

- Identify and investigate methods by which the Housing and Community Services Department and Oregon Housing Stability Council may modify contracting process and eligibility for providers of services for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

The seven themes include:

1. Clarify equity expectations, including key definitions
2. Collaboratively create systemic accountability to reduce racial disparities
3. Collaboratively create a statewide commitment to equity
4. Institutionalize the inclusion of historically minoritized and excluded communities in Oregon
5. Lower barriers to state and federal funding
6. Support and build organizational capacity
7. Uncover barriers to equity

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities offers 35 recommendations to address the four goals outlined by Oregon's Legislative Assembly. These recommendations prioritize the voices of people of color with lived experience of homelessness as well as the guidance and leadership of communities of color and culturally specific organizations in guiding system-level change across the state's homeless service system. Task Force members hope for the state's partnership in expanding the funding available to prevent and address homelessness in Oregon and offer equity-based strategies for strengthening funding approaches and contracting practices to move the State of Oregon toward greater racial justice.

Note: The recommendations outlined below are not offered in order of priority.

Goal 1: Decrease Disparate Impact of Homelessness on Communities of Color

The Task Force offers the recommendations below as methods by which the state may decrease rates of racial disparity among people experiencing homelessness and receiving services.

a. Align criteria/model for demographically robust practices across state agencies and funding.

b. Require that agencies take measurable steps towards prioritizing racial equity and inclusion in their hiring and employee retention practices.

c. Require that some percentage of changes to funding structure and modifications to contracting, as well as specified goals for decreases in racial disparities in homelessness, directly address the current power imbalance between CBOs and CAAs (especially CSOs).

d. Align systems that feed into homelessness in a common strategy, solutions, collaboration, and resource sharing (i.e., criminal justice, healthcare, long term care, child welfare, and others) with key performance indicators related to inflow. Recommend a statewide interagency council on homelessness to work in collaboration with the HB 2100 Task Force, as well as economic council involvement and local government coordination.

e. Work with Governor's Racial Justice Council in shaping equitable outcomes.

f. Provide support (rental assistance, public housing, other housing resources) in child welfare and criminal justice systems.

g. Intentionally include and compensate people with lived experiences of homelessness in decision-making at the State level.

h. Incorporate learnings from the Ecosystem Power Map generated through the Task Force's work when working to shape equitable outcomes and changes to decision-making structures.

i. Incorporating learning from the Ecosystem Power Map, system changes and new policies should take measurable steps towards promoting self-determination and power-sharing to benefit "below radar" groups (i.e., CSOs, tribal communities, historically underfunded communities, people experiencing homelessness, seasonal Latinx migrant farmworkers, and frontline provider staff).

j. OHCS begin changing existing funding structure beginning in 2023-2025 biennium with the goal of addressing power imbalances between CBOs and CAAs, especially CSOs. Task Force continues to meet to evaluate successes, tweak and refine (e.g., competitive RFP process, targeted universalism pilot with x% of existing dollars, etc.).

k. An independent entity shall be created to develop a praxis of assessment for use by agencies and/or partner organizations for ascertaining their cultural competency and develop specific action items to take to reduce disparities with findings from those assessment reported to this Task Force.

l. Conduct an audit of OHCS' policies and practices that may influence racial disparities

m. Review historic legislation that mandates current models in use at OHCS and determine appropriate updates to those pieces of legislation

Goal 2: Identify Needs

The Task Force offers the recommendations below to support the Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) and Oregon Housing Stability Council (OHSC) in receiving advice and information about needed services for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

a. Set aside state resources to fund a multidisciplinary DEI audit examining efforts to actively reduce racial disparities to level set work across state, local, CSOs, and various partners, and identify what resources/TA are needed to get everyone aligned/level.

b. Compensate people with lived experience of homelessness to identify needs with the State, with attention to what people need to meaningfully engage, (e.g., childcare access, transportation, shower access, and other needs).

c. Build mechanisms by which consumers can give input and inform decision-makers about their experiences, and make sure the input is used to make improvements

d. Require the state to receive input from culturally specific organizations and participants.

e. Assess how/if current services are meeting needs, identifying redundancies unnecessary to meet the volume of needs, what's working/what's not? Phase out what's not working and grow/continue what is - recognize that's what's working may not live within your organization.

Goal 3: Change Funding Structure

The Task Force recommends the methods below as approaches by which the Housing and Community Services Department (OHCS) and Oregon Housing Stability Council may receive advice and information about needed services for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

a. The task force shall continue convening now through 2025 (with the option to continue) to provide oversight, continuous feedback, and direction to the state on the effectiveness of implemented recommendations that are aimed to address racial disparities in homelessness. State agencies supports models and solutions that work and phases out models that don't work re: racial disparities and homelessness. The Task Force will provide a biennial report to inform continuous improvement and the report will be sent to stakeholders.

b. More transparency and accountability from OHCS and service providers (particularly with respect to demographic/cultural breakdown of who is receiving services, and in what dollar amounts (e.g., utilizing the RealD framework to track data).

c. Investment in a data system that provides a snapshot but also robust details beyond that which accurately reflects the stories of the work being done on the ground. System should allow inclusion of qualitative data and not create additional burden on agencies mandated to use federal systems, either through ease of use or through additional funding to support data position. Additionally, stakeholders will have access to and the ability to download disaggregated data.

d. OHCS must provide direct funding from the state to CBOs, CSOs, and CAAs beginning in the 2023-2025 biennium. During the 2023-2025 biennium, the first iteration of this direct funding would take place and then be evaluated by an outside, neutral, culturally competent facilitator – (some recommended funding structures include targeted universalism in non-competitive procurement, competitive RFP processes, amended CAA distributions, etc.).

e. Within a framework of accountability to meet outcomes related to reducing disparities in homelessness, state provides flexible funds to CBOs.

f. In order to reimagine funding protocols, the surrounding infrastructure must include specific capacity building, funding for culturally specific entities, public transparency, evolving best practices (e.g., incorporate community-based participatory action research).

g. Provide ongoing culturally appropriate technical assistance and support (funding) for all CBOs/providers as well as state

h. Provide ongoing culturally appropriate technical assistance and support (funding) for Community Action Agencies who need help improving outcomes

i. Clearly identify the barriers to access in statute, rule, what's state and federal, what can we change sooner than later upon identifying the barriers to access (to resources for CSOs, CBOs, and participants) in statute and rule, utilize the Housing Subcommittee of the Racial Justice Council to establish a rubric of Racial Impact and inform policy, guide continuous improvement, and to ensure Oregon's stated commitment to racial justice.

Goal 4: Modify Contracting

The Task Force offers the recommendations below as methods by which the Housing and Community Services Department and Oregon Housing Stability Council may modify contracting process and eligibility for providers of services for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity.

a. Align contracting timelines and processes across state agencies.

b. OHCS, in alignment with other State agencies, articulate how equity goals will be measured and made transparent to the public in contracts. Consider use of dashboards for greater transparency.

c. OHCS, in alignment with other State agencies, including the Racial Justice Council, builds in clear expectations around reducing racial disparities in contracts (numbers should "overrepresent" impact for populations disproportionately impacted by homelessness), with consequences or corrective actions when expectations are not met.

d. Contracts require all agencies to engage in and complete training in Best Practices on equitable and just homeless service delivery; contracts include funding for agencies to meet this requirement.

e. Review current systems to ensure that diverse populations have prioritized access to processes such as language-friendly application systems and culturally inclusive and low barrier methods of engagement.

f. Contracts require meaningful, rich local collaborations to include historically minoritized and excluded populations.

g. OHCS contracts establish a definition of and standard for cultural competence and require organizations receiving funding to meet the standard.

h. OHCS, in alignment with other State agencies and through a transparent process, builds on outcomes based contracting efforts, examining its internal policies and systems, as well as including transparent local reporting on

outcomes, and strengthens focus on reducing racial disparities/increase access for CSO's. As part of these efforts, State agencies review policies with an eye toward removing policies that feed greater proportions of homelessness among communities of color and remove disparities.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ACRONYMS

AHAR   Annual Homelessness Assessment Report

CAA   Community Action Agency

CBO   Community-based organization

CoC   Continuum of Care

CSO   Culturally specific organization

EHA   Emergency Housing Assistance

HMIS   Homeless Management Information System

HSP   Housing Stability Program

OHCS   Housing and Community Services Department of Oregon

OHSC   Oregon Housing Stability Council

PIT   Point-in-Time Count

SHAP   State Housing Assistance Program

TBA   Tenant-Based Assistance

APPENDIX B: CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Q29 What best describes the type of organization you represent? Check all that apply.

Answered: 98   Skipped: 74
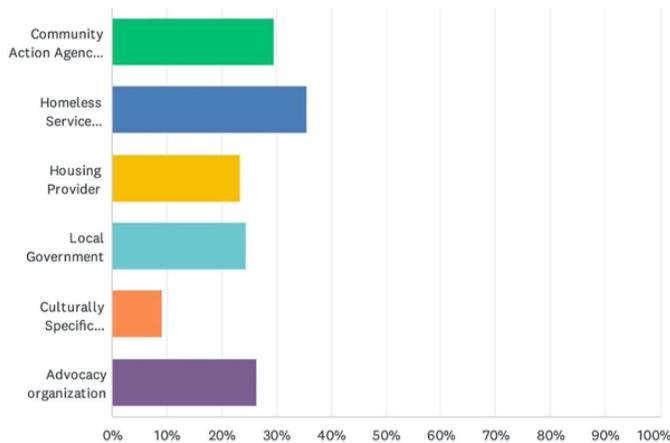
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Community Action Agency (CAA)	29.59%	29
Homeless Service Provider	35.71%	35
Housing Provider	23.47%	23
Local Government	24.49%	24
Culturally Specific Organization	9.18%	9
Advocacy organization	26.53%	26
Total Respondents: 98		

Of those who selected "other," organizations included state government, schools, tribal offices, faith-based organizations with broader missions than homelessness, and community health agencies.

## Q30 What best describes your role in the organization?

Answered: 122   Skipped: 50
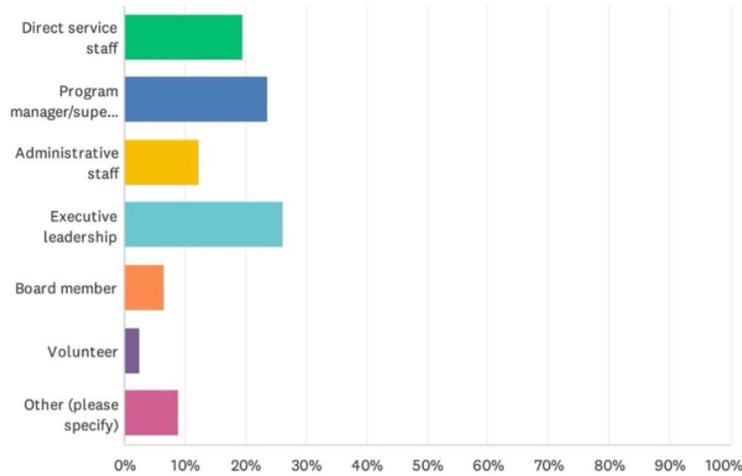
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Direct service staff	19.67%	24
Program manager/supervisor	23.77%	29
Administrative staff	12.30%	15
Executive leadership	26.23%	32
Board member	6.56%	8
Volunteer	2.46%	3
Other (please specify)	9.02%	11
TOTAL		122

Of those who selected "other," positions included CoC staff, professional development trainer, communications, finance, and social scientists.

Q31 Age

Answered: 125   Skipped: 47
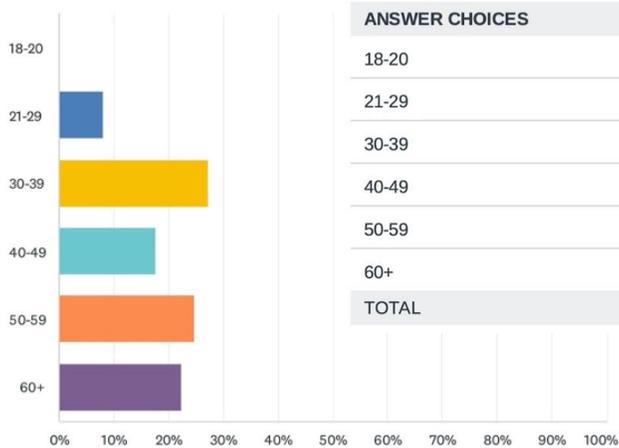
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18-20	0.00%	0
21-29	8.00%	10
30-39	27.20%	34
40-49	17.60%	22
50-59	24.80%	31
60+	22.40%	28
TOTAL		125

Q32 How would you describe your racial/ethnic identity? Check all that apply.

Answered: 122   Skipped: 50
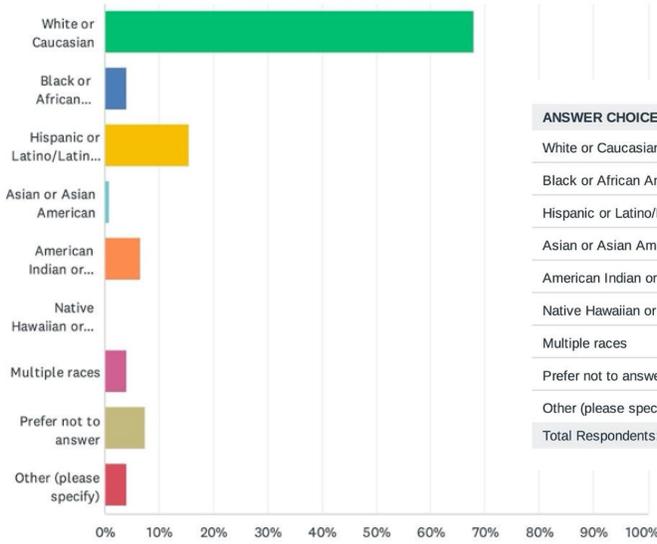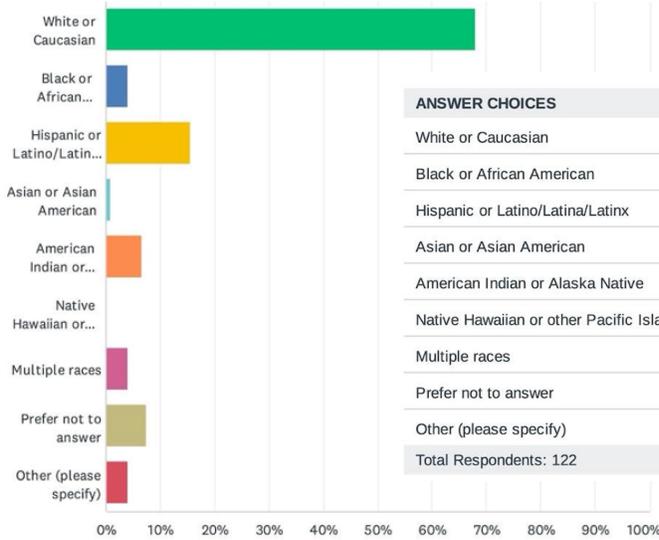
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
White or Caucasian	68.03%	83
Black or African American	4.10%	5
Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx	15.57%	19
Asian or Asian American	0.82%	1
American Indian or Alaska Native	6.56%	8
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.00%	0
Multiple races	4.10%	5
Prefer not to answer	7.38%	9
Other (please specify)	4.10%	5
Total Respondents: 122		

Q33 How would you describe your gender identity?
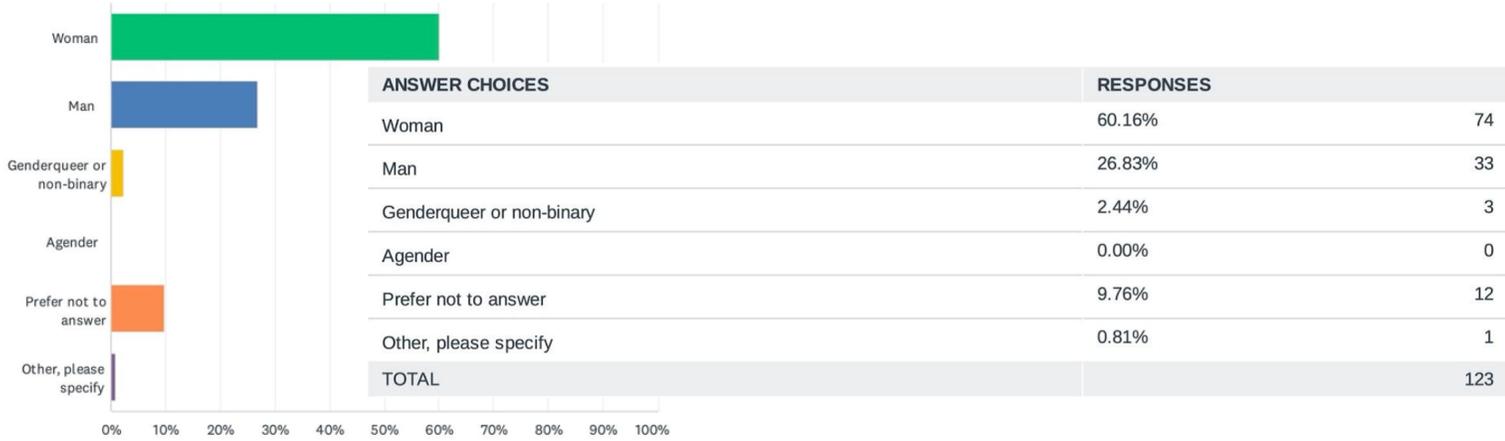
Answered: 123   Skipped: 49
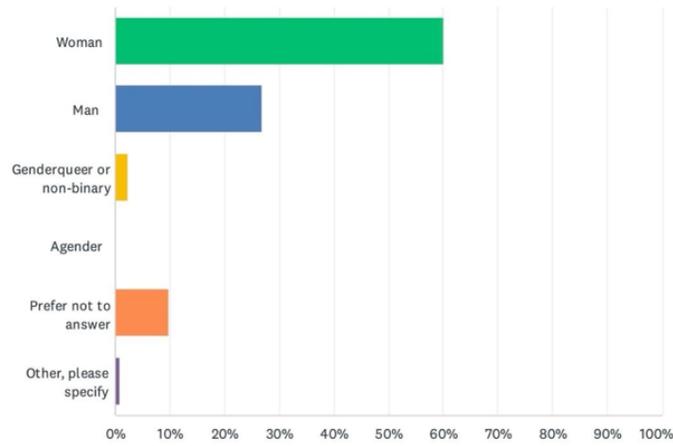
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Woman	60.16%	74
Man	26.83%	33
Genderqueer or non-binary	2.44%	3
Agender	0.00%	0
Prefer not to answer	9.76%	12
Other, please specify	0.81%	1
TOTAL		123

Q33 How would you describe your gender identity?

Answered: 123   Skipped: 49

Q34 How would you describe your sexual orientation? Check all that apply.

Answered: 123   Skipped: 49
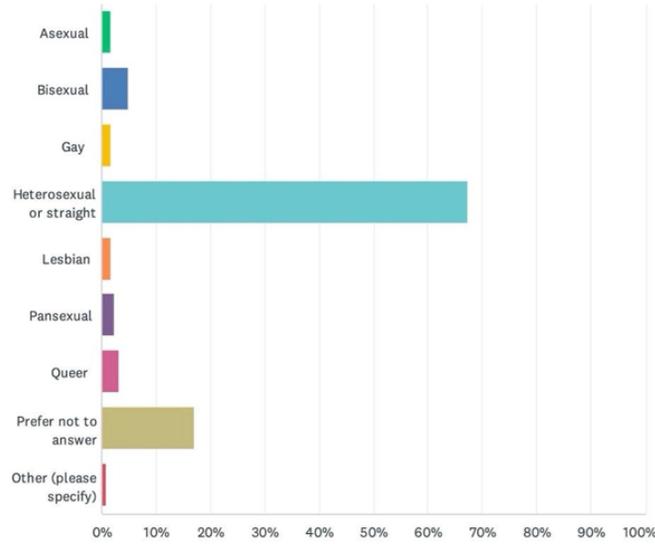
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Asexual	1.63%	2
Bisexual	4.88%	6
Gay	1.63%	2
Heterosexual or straight	67.48%	83
Lesbian	1.63%	2
Pansexual	2.44%	3
Queer	3.25%	4
Prefer not to answer	17.07%	21
Other (please specify)	0.81%	1
Total Respondents: 123		

Q36. Location of Organization (City, County, or Region)

Less than half (n=74) of respondents opted to include the location of their organization. The frequency of respondents who indicated each location is in the table below. Although specific urban areas had high numbers of participants, there was geographic diversity among respondents.

### Location Count of Responses

- Salem: 17
- Portland: 8
- Eugene, Lane County: 5
- Lane County: 5
- Marion County: 4
- Statewide: 4
- Clackamas County: 3
- Albany: 2
- Coos Bay, Coos County: 2
- Corvallis: 2
- Jackson & Josephine Counties: 2
- Klamath Falls: 2
- Multnomah County: 2

- St Helens: 2
- Willamette Valley: 2
- Baker County: 1
- Bend, Deschutes: 1
- Columbia County: 1
- Eastern Oregon: 1
- Prospect: 1
- Rural Northwest Oregon: 1
- Rural Oregon: 1
- Rural Polk County (outside of West Salem): 1
- Tillamook County: 1
- Washington County: 1
- Yamhill: 1

Total (Respondents who answered this question): 74

Q21 Which of the following topics have you received training on? Check all that apply.

Answered: 133   Skipped: 39
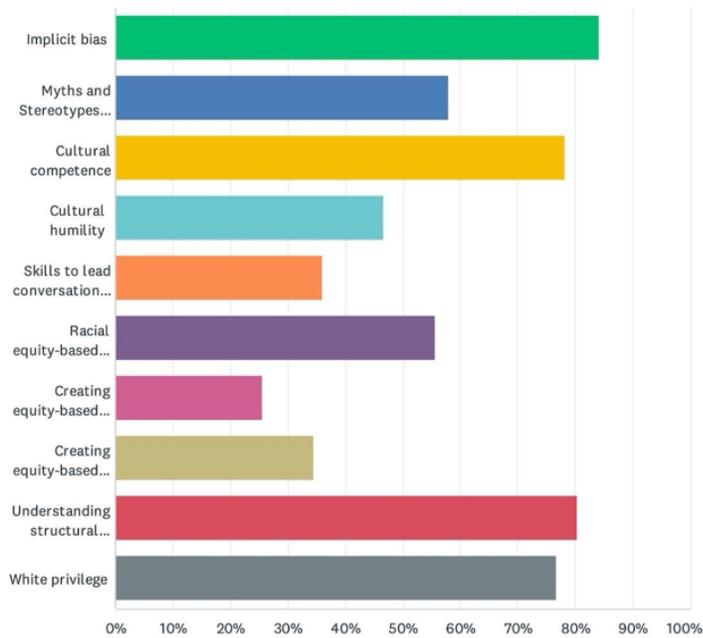
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Implicit bias	84.21%	112
Myths and Stereotypes about Homelessness	57.89%	77
Cultural competence	78.20%	104
Cultural humility	46.62%	62
Skills to lead conversations about race	36.09%	48
Racial equity-based data and outcomes	55.64%	74
Creating equity-based coordinated entry systems	25.56%	34
Creating equity-based service delivery models	34.59%	46
Understanding structural racism	80.45%	107
White privilege	76.69%	102

Q22 Which of the trainings listed below would you like to learn more about? Check all that apply.

Answered: 122   Skipped: 50
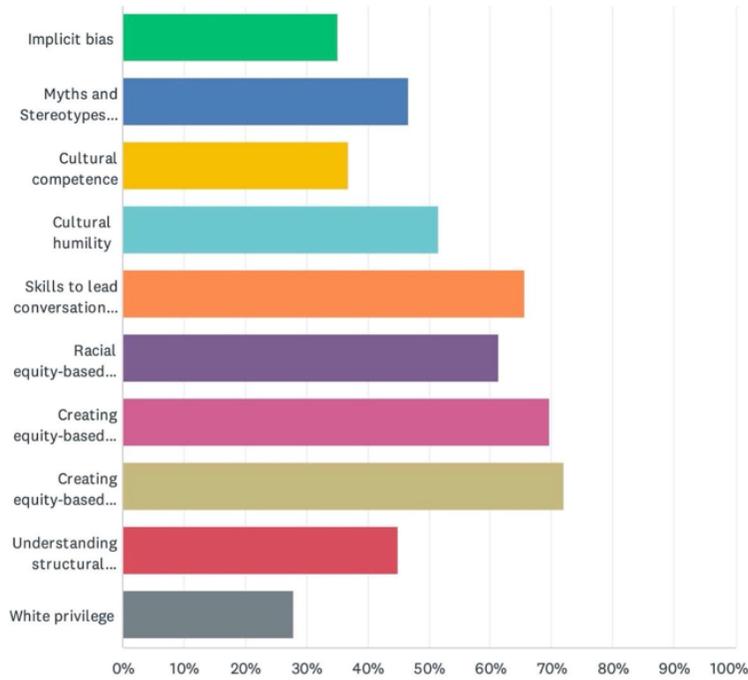
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Implicit bias	35.25%	43
Myths and Stereotypes about Homelessness	46.72%	57
Cultural competence	36.89%	45
Cultural humility	51.64%	63
Skills to lead conversations about race	65.57%	80
Racial equity-based data and outcomes	61.48%	75
Creating equity-based coordinated entry systems	69.67%	85
Creating equity-based service delivery models	72.13%	88
Understanding structural racism	45.08%	55
White privilege	27.87%	34

Total Respondents: 122