



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

DECEMBER 1, 2022





Follow-up on Homeless Services

In completing one recommendation and making progress on the remaining three, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (RHA) increased access to services for people experiencing homelessness. The RHA reduced racial disparities in coordinated entry by expanding the pool of individuals and organizations conducting assessments. It also began a peer navigation pilot to help people with significant needs make it through the housing placement process. Finally, the RHA's Ombuds Office began work conducting investigations and responding to complaints.

Implementing our remaining recommendations will help the RHA show the impact of its initiatives. This can be achieved by, for example, assessing the extent to which the peer navigation pilot reduces administrative housing denials and measuring how the work of the RHA's Ombuds Office affects client refusals. The RHA also needs to test strategies to improve the performance of rapid rehousing programs. For the year that ended June 30, 2022, the RHA reported move-in rate and time metrics that were below program targets, attributing performance to staff turnover and higher rents.

Our 2018 audit made recommendations to King County's Department of Community and Human Services and All Home, the former continuum of care agency for the region. An interlocal agreement created the RHA in December 2019. Therefore, the RHA has responsibility to implement our remaining recommendations.


Of the 12 audit recommendations:


	7 DONE		3 PROGRESS		0 OPEN		2 CLOSED
Fully implemented Auditor will no longer monitor.		Partially implemented Auditor will continue to monitor.		Remain unresolved Auditor will continue to monitor.		No longer applicable Auditor will no longer monitor.	


Please see details below for implementation status of each recommendation.




Recommendation 1	On November 26, 2019	DONE	
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Recommendation 2	On December 1, 2021	CLOSED	
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Recommendation 3	On December 1, 2021	DONE	
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Recommendation 4	On December 1, 2021	DONE	
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Recommendation 5		PROGRESS	
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The Department of Community and Human Services should use data on client refusals to identify community need and work with All Home to devise, implement, and test a strategy to change the homeless system accordingly.

STATUS UPDATE: The RHA’s Ombuds Office started its work conducting investigations and responding to complaints. The office is developing foundational policies and procedures and aims to be fully operational in the first quarter of 2023.


WHAT REMAINS: This recommendation will be complete when the RHA’s Ombuds Office shows how its work reduces client refusals by better meeting community needs.


Recommendation 6		PROGRESS	
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The Department of Community and Human Services should devise, implement, and test a strategy to reduce the number and proportion of people with high vulnerability denied housing because they “did not show up or call.”

STATUS UPDATE: The RHA is piloting a peer navigation model to help people with significant needs make it through the housing placement process. People with experience navigating the homeless response system will work as peer navigators to help with things like documentation, applications, and appointments. The RHA is also working to improve how it stores documents to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the placement process for clients and staff.

WHAT REMAINS: This recommendation will be complete when the RHA completes its pilot project and assesses the extent to which it reduces the number and proportion of people with significant needs who are denied housing for administrative reasons.

Recommendation 7	On December 1, 2021	DONE	
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Recommendation 8	On December 1, 2021	DONE	
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Recommendation 9

DONE



The Department of Community and Human Services should use data to develop, implement, and test a strategy to increase outreach to communities of color that are underrepresented in coordinated entry, as compared to the homeless population.

STATUS UPDATE: RHA data from 2022 showed near parity in the racial makeup of individuals experiencing homelessness and that of individuals assessed through coordinated entry. The RHA increased representation in coordinated entry by expanding the pool of individuals and organizations conducting assessments. To do this, the RHA simplified the process to request training for assessors, streamlined training content, and revised the assessment process. It also provided technical assistance to increase the number of partnerships with Black-, Indigenous-, and people of color-led service providers.

IMPACT: By implementing this recommendation the RHA reduced racial disparities in coordinated entry assessments.

Recommendation 10

On November 26, 2019

DONE



Recommendation 11

PROGRESS



The Department of Community and Human Services should work with All Home and other funders to develop a benchmark for rapid rehousing move-in rates and move-in times, and develop, implement, and test a strategy to address underperformance if it occurs.

STATUS UPDATE: The RHA tracks rapid rehousing move-in rates and times annually as part of the process to distribute federal funding to organizations serving people experiencing homelessness. In 2022, the minimum standards for rapid rehousing move-in rates and times were 85 percent of participants moving into housing, with at least half of them doing so within 30 days of entering the program. For the year that ended June 30, 2022, the RHA reported a move-in rate of 65 percent and an average move-in time of 93 days. The RHA attributed substandard performance to high staff turnover and long vacancies. It said that costlier rents also reduced the number of affordable units on the market.

WHAT REMAINS: This recommendation will be complete when the RHA develops, implements, and tests a strategy to address underperformance in rapid rehousing move-in rates and times.

Recommendation 12

On December 1, 2021

CLOSED



Megan Ko conducted this review. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the King County Auditor's Office at KCAO@KingCounty.gov or 206-477-1033.