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April 18, 2019

AUDITOR’S LETTER

The first objective of our audit of homeless services was to determine the type and level of funding Denver Human Services and the Office of Economic Development received for and spent on homeless services and prevention between 2014 and 2018. Second, we sought to assess the effectiveness of Denver’s Road Home’s efforts to collaborate and coordinate with other key groups in the City to address homelessness. We also reviewed the effectiveness of the year-old Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness. I am pleased to present the results of this audit.

The audit revealed two major findings. First, gaps exist in Denver’s Road Home’s collaborative efforts and staff resources that impede, among other things, the division’s ability to address homelessness. Second, the fledgling homelessness advisory committee’s draft bylaws lack some important elements, which may compromise its ability to be effective.

By incorporating several key best practices, Denver’s Road Home can bolster its collaboration with other entities, while ensuring the staffing needs of the division are met. In strengthening its draft bylaws, the advisory committee will be better equipped to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain strong governance. Our report lists several related recommendations.

This performance audit is authorized pursuant to the City and County of Denver Charter, Article V, Part 2, Section 1, “General Powers and Duties of Auditor,” and was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

We extend our appreciation to personnel from Denver’s Road Home, Denver Human Services, and the Office of Economic Development who assisted and cooperated with us during the audit. For any questions, please feel free to contact me at 720-913-5000.

Denver Auditor’s Office

Timothy M. O’Brien, CPA
Auditor
Objective
The audit had two objectives. First, we sought to determine the type and level of funding that Denver Human Services and the Office of Economic Development received for and spent on homeless services and prevention between 2014 and 2018. Second, we assessed the effectiveness of Denver’s Road Home’s collaboration and coordination with other key groups within the City.

Background
Homelessness impacts about 3,450 individuals every day in Denver.

In 2007, Denver’s Mayor delegated responsibility for oversight of the City’s homeless strategy and efforts to Denver Human Services. Denver’s Road Home, a division within Denver Human Services, later assumed this responsibility. As the preeminent City entity supporting homeless programs, Road Home partners with other City agencies, community organizations, and committees to facilitate the coordinated delivery of resources to those in need.

Highlights
In our second audit of Denver’s Road Home, we identified several areas in need of improvement.

Gaps in Denver’s Road Home’s Collaborative Efforts and Staff Resources Impede Its Progress in Addressing Homelessness
- Denver’s Road Home Has Strengthened Partnerships but Has Not Established Certain Crucial Elements of Collaboration
  - Road Home lacks a strategic plan to address homelessness and has no communitywide performance metrics
  - Road Home’s collaboration with its partners is fragmented
  - There is uncertainty over who is ultimately responsible for leading strategic planning and policy within the City on homelessness
- Road Home Lacks the Staff Resources Necessary to Carry Out Its Current Role
  - Road Home has not conducted a staffing analysis in the past 10 years
  - Road Home is unable to fulfill some of its responsibilities, including strategic planning, policy development, and data analysis
  - Several employees have had to assume duties beyond the scope of their job descriptions, including contract management and event planning

The Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness Should Strengthen Its Bylaws
- Draft bylaws do not require members to reveal, or take action to avoid, potential conflicts of interest
- Draft bylaws do not require committee performance evaluations

For a copy of this report, visit www.denverauditor.org or contact the Auditor’s Office at (720) 913-5000.
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BACKGROUND

Homelessness is a widespread issue in the United States, impacting thousands of individuals and families every year. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development considers any person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence to be homeless.¹

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, for the second consecutive year, the number of total homeless individuals nationwide grew, with the most recent rise mainly driven by an increase in the number of unsheltered homeless individuals. In 2018, roughly 553,000 total individuals nationwide were homeless. Included in this total were about 180,000 individuals with families, including children under 18, and 373,000 other individuals.

Also, part of this total was nearly 89,000 people considered “chronically homeless.” A chronically homeless person is defined as “an individual with a disability who has been continuously homeless for one year or more or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years where the combined length of time homeless in those occasions is at least 12 months.”² Estimates of the national homeless population over the past 10 years are shown in Figure 1 on the following page.³

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development reported that roughly 29 percent of the nation’s total homeless population was female, while males made up just over 70 percent; the remaining 1 percent were either transgender or gender nonconforming.

African Americans accounted for nearly 35 percent of all homeless individuals, with 54 percent identifying as white, and other groups such as Native Americans and Pacific Islanders made up the remaining 11 percent. Those with Hispanic and Latino ethnicity accounted for roughly 19 percent of all homeless individuals.

¹ This includes individuals and families who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not intended for human habitation, are living in a shelter providing temporary living arrangements, or are exiting an institution where they have resided for 90 days or less and resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.


³ Data are based on 2018 Point-in-Time counts, in which local collaboratives manually count homeless individuals and families at a single point in time early in the calendar year. While these counts do not provide definitive numbers, it is currently the best and most widely used approach to estimate the homeless population.
About 32 percent of Colorado’s homeless population is concentrated in the City and County of Denver. In 2018, the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative identified 3,445 individuals experiencing homelessness in the City, while the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimated 10,857 people were homeless statewide.\(^4\)

The Metro Denver Homeless Initiative is the lead organization for the region’s federal Continuum of Care Program, which coordinates services and housing for people experiencing homelessness.\(^5\) In this role, the organization funds homelessness prevention and diversion programs, emergency shelter, and housing for homeless individuals.

The City’s homeless population represented nearly two-thirds of the

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\(^4\) The Metro Denver Homeless Initiative is responsible for administering the region’s Point-in-Time count, an annual census of homeless individuals and families in the metro area, and the region’s Homeless Management Information System, which is a centralized system mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to record the services provided to homeless individuals.

5,317 homeless individuals in the metro area in 2018, as shown in Figure 2. Most of Denver’s homeless population occupied emergency shelters and transitional housing while roughly 18 percent were unsheltered. Additionally, nearly 29 percent of Denver’s homeless individuals were classified as chronically homeless.

In 2018, 54 percent of Denver’s identified homeless population were white, while African-Americans made up 22 percent of the homeless population. Other groups such as Native Americans and Pacific Islanders represented another 6 percent of Denver’s homeless population. Meanwhile, 10 percent identified as multi-racial, while the remaining 8 percent did not provide a racial classification.

Those with Hispanic and Latino ethnicity, who could be included in multiple racial classifications, accounted for about 22 percent of all homeless individuals.

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6 Local counties considered part of the metro Denver Continuum of Care include Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson counties.
Like other cities, Denver faces the complex problem of homelessness. Specifically, the lack of affordable housing, prevalence of mental health issues in homeless populations, and existence of data-related challenges are some of the factors complicating the City’s efforts.

First, the City’s strategic housing plan for 2018-2023, “Housing an Inclusive Denver,” acknowledges that the greatest need for the poorest residents is permanent housing with additional support programs, along with permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing solutions. To address these needs, the City outlined the following in its housing plan:

- Expand investments in housing options for residents experiencing homelessness and communicate those options to shelter providers for possible referrals;
- Build housing capacity through policy and funding alignment; and
- Prioritize supportive services funding for approved supportive housing projects, including building a supportive services funding program.

Mental health issues also continue to be pervasive in the homeless community, with many people needing additional support beyond basic housing assistance. According to the Treatment Advocacy Center, a national nonprofit focused on mental illness, one-third of the U.S. homeless population has an untreated “serious mental illness,” such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or major depression. That rate is smaller, yet still significant in Denver; of the 3,445 homeless individuals identified in 2018, 927 of them—or roughly 27 percent—indicated they had a mental health issue.

Another daunting challenge the City faces is collecting, verifying, and maintaining accurate information related to the homeless population and the services individuals receive. As the lead agency in the region’s Continuum of Care, the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative provides funding for communities to address homelessness. Under the Continuum of Care, the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative administers the region’s

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10 Supportive services are designed to help homeless individuals sustain their permanent housing or achieve a stable residential career. The services are often meant to assist those with chronic problems such as illness or addictions.


Point-in-Time count, where staff and volunteers survey and tally the number of homeless persons in the metro area on a single night.

This system of counting, despite being the most reliable option currently available, results in conservative estimates of the homeless population, as not all individuals can be located and many refuse to participate in the survey. Further, when services are provided to homeless individuals and families by Continuum of Care- or Emergency Solutions Grant-funded service providers, data should be collected in a centralized system.\textsuperscript{13}

However, not all service providers have reported data into the system mainly because it is not required for those providers who do not receive Continuum of Care funding. Further, it is seen as inefficient.\textsuperscript{14} Specifically, some service providers have their own data-tracking systems and have not traditionally entered information into the centralized system because of the duplicative effort required.

In August 2018, the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative took over as lead administrator of the centralized system and switched to a new software, in hopes of improving its functionality and usage by shelters and other regional providers.

\textbf{Denver’s Lead Agency for Homeless Services}

Denver Human Services’ mission is to partner with the community to protect those in harm’s way and help all people in need. Regarding homelessness, Human Services provides preventive services to financially unstable residents and assistance programs designed to help families gain greater financial independence.

In 2007, then-Mayor John Hickenlooper issued Executive Order 91 designating Human Services as the agency responsible for managing the City’s services to the homeless. The order includes the following duties and responsibilities for Human Services:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Coordinate and streamline the City’s resources for the homeless;
  \item Assume decision-making authority to ensure clear governance in matters requiring action in response to homeless issues except where authority is otherwise granted by the charter or ordinance;
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{13} The Emergency Solutions Grant, previously known as the Emergency Shelter Grant, is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grant that provides funding to various homeless shelters and service providers. City and County of Denver, “Mayor’s 2018 Budget.” Accessed June 6, 2018, https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-department-of-finance/financial-reports/city-budget.html.

\textsuperscript{14} The centralized system is the region’s Homeless Management Information System, which is a locally administered electronic data collection tool used to collect continuous data on the portion of the homeless population who receive assistance from homeless and human services providers.
• Take the lead in developing a clear, written statement of policy for the City in regard to its response to the needs of the homeless;
• Ensure opportunity for all appropriate independent agencies or City agencies to contribute to comprehensive City efforts for the homeless;
• Initiate efforts to form public/private partnerships that promote long-term solutions to the homeless problem; and
• Coordinate information-gathering on issues of homelessness to ensure the Mayor is informed of homeless issues and make recommendations for appropriate action by the City.

According to Human Services’ previous strategic plan, the agency’s efforts included housing-related assistance, shelter referrals, motel vouchers for women and children, and eviction assistance. Its three-year strategic framework, released in 2019, describes Human Services’ five strategic goals including increasing equity and access and ensuring safety and wellness.

Around $37 million was budgeted for homeless services in 2018, according to the Department of Finance, but in 2019 the City increased its budget for homeless services to more than $51 million. In addition to Human Services and the Office of Economic Development, agencies such as the Department of Public Health and Environment and the Department of Finance have received funding for homeless-related services.

Several key divisions within Human Services are responsible for administering and evaluating services to the homeless population.

**Denver Human Services’ Divisions** – The Community Outreach and Resource Engagement Division works with community partners to increase individuals’ and families’ access to assistance, benefits, and other wellness services. The division’s staff assists those in need with accessing federal Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (formerly known as “food stamps”) and Medicaid coverage, as well as financial coaching and other support.

The Process Improvement and Accountability Division serves the

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17 Auditors were not able to validate these budget amounts due to the late stage at which these figures were provided.
agency by evaluating the effectiveness of Human Services’ programs and services. The division also offers data and technology, internal audit, and other professional support services to the agency.

Denver Day Works is a work program designed to help people experiencing homelessness gain valuable work experience. The program launched in 2016 and, according to Human Services, has since connected nearly 300 individuals to work opportunities, which allowed 27 participants to acquire housing.19

Finally, Denver’s Road Home is the driving force behind Human Services’ homeless services efforts and oversees many of the City’s services and programs targeting homelessness prevention and alleviation. Road Home is also a critical partner in the Denver metro area’s wider effort to mitigate homelessness by connecting individuals and families to housing and specialized services across the region.20

**Denver’s Road Home** – Established to carry out the duties and responsibilities specified in Executive Order 91, Road Home is charged with implementing strategic initiatives and coordinating the cost-effective delivery of health, employment, and housing services in response to specific community needs.

Between 2015 and 2018, contracts managed by Road Home helped service providers place an estimated 3,200 individuals into housing units.

The following are just some of the many contract organizations partnering with Road Home to provide a broad range of services—from shelter operations to workforce programs, street outreach, and housing assistance:

- Bayaud Enterprises provides job placement and workplace retention services to low-income individuals and outreach and recruitment for job readiness programs for homeless individuals.
- BUSCO Inc. provides transportation for homeless individuals to and from shelters throughout the City.
- The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless provides rental assistance to chronically homeless individuals and those with

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substance abuse issues, disabilities, and medical needs. The nonprofit organization also provides supportive services to help individuals obtain employment and navigate other services that may be available.

- Denver Rescue Mission primarily funds emergency housing and overflow emergency shelter services to homeless adults.
- Volunteers of America provides referral services to Denver’s homeless veteran population and those recently discharged from the hospital. It also provides housing for families and single women.

In 2018, Road Home had seven employees, including the Director and Program Manager, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Road Home staff and operations are primarily supported financially through the Community Impact Fund, which is funded by dedicated property taxes. Road Home’s operating expenditures have increased since 2016, as shown in Figure 4 on the next page.

**Other Efforts and Collaboration on Reducing Homelessness**

Various organizations, both within and outside City government, take part in the joint effort to serve those at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Aside from Human Services and Road Home, advisory groups and other City agencies play a supporting role, while regional organizations include the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative and a wide variety of nonprofit service providers.

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21 Special revenue funds, such as the Community Impact Fund, are established to collect monies restricted for specific activities and purposes.
Within City Government – In 2003, then-Mayor Hickenlooper appointed 41 individuals to the newly established Commission to End Homelessness, which was tasked with creating a 10-year plan to end homelessness. Members of the committee included government officials (including City Council members), nonprofit representatives, financial supporters, and homeless individuals.

In 2017, the Commission to End Homelessness was disbanded and replaced with the Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness. Mayor Michael Hancock appointed 15 members to the advisory committee who represent area service providers, businesses, regional and interfaith organizations, and people who have experienced homelessness. One-third of the current committee members reported experiencing homelessness in their past.

The new committee was tasked with advising the Mayor on best practices, strategies, and innovations for housing homeless individuals. The advisory committee coordinates with the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee and Road Home, which provides staff support to the new advisory committee. The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee was established in 2017 to provide strategic input on uses of the Dedicated Fund for Housing, which was established in January 2017. The committee consists of 23 members, many of whom are government and community leaders.

The Office of Housing and Opportunities for People Everywhere, or HOPE, was established in 2017 within the Mayor’s Office. Now part of the

**FIGURE 4.** Denver’s Road Home’s Operating Expenditures, 2014-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$6,000,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$5,841,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$5,834,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$6,242,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>$7,281,446</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Auditor’s Office analysis of expenditures from Road Home’s operating fund reported in the Mayor’s annual budgets.

*Note:* *The dollar value for 2018 is estimated.*
Office of Economic Development, HOPE is referred to as the Housing Policy, Programs and the HOPE Initiative and is led by a Director who collaborates with Road Home’s Director on various projects, including the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee.\textsuperscript{22} The office is focused on connecting individuals to affordable housing and jobs using a “housing-first” approach.\textsuperscript{23}

In November 2018, a new Housing and Homeless Program Officer joined the Office of Economic Development to enhance the agency’s communication and collaboration with Road Home and other City agencies who serve residents experiencing homelessness.

\textbf{Outside City Government} – The mission of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, a nonprofit organization responsible for allocating federal dollars to local organizations, is to lead and advance collaboration to end homelessness in the Denver region. As the administrator for the region, it ensures organizations receiving funding comply with the requirements set forth by the federal government.

In addition to its responsibilities for the region’s centralized data system, the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative manages OneHome, a federally mandated, regional coordinated entry system that assesses the needs of homeless individuals so they can be matched with the appropriate housing intervention. Road Home assists with OneHome, while the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative monitors its use and is responsible for informing service providers of the system’s policies and procedures.

Additionally, numerous nonprofit organizations and service providers offer a range of services to mitigate homelessness in Denver and to meet other community needs, such as addiction recovery, job-skills training, day-laborers’ rights, and food assistance. Service providers who offer shelter to the homeless include the Denver Rescue Mission, Urban Peak, and SafeHouse Denver Inc. Some of the organizations providing longer-term and permanent supportive housing include Joshua Station and Providence Network.

Nonprofit organizations also provide food, work placement assistance, and other services to those in need, including the homeless. Among these providers are El Centro, Hunger Free Colorado, Metro Caring, and more. The Mental Health Center of Denver, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, Jewish Family Service, Irving Street Women’s Residence, and the VA Eastern Colorado Health System all provide mental health services for the homeless.


\textsuperscript{23} A “housing-first” approach focuses on simplifying the process of applying for housing by removing unnecessary documentation, preconditions, and other barriers to accessing housing.
FINDING 1

Gaps in Denver’s Road Home’s Collaborative Efforts and Staff Resources Impede Its Progress in Addressing Homelessness

In 2015, we reported on the challenges Denver’s Road Home faced in achieving its mission to reduce homelessness, including not using data to track and demonstrate progress and not structuring or managing the Commission to End Homelessness to effectively support Road Home efforts.24

Although homelessness continues to be a problem in Denver, Road Home is making some strides to address it by convening committees and forging partnerships within Denver Human Services and among other City agencies, nonprofits, and service providers to coordinate and collaborate on targeted initiatives and systemwide events.

While these efforts are consistent with leading practices, Road Home lacks other key elements found in effective collaborative organizations, such as a strategic plan with goals to direct homelessness efforts, communitywide data-sharing tools to track performance, and joint policies.

Also, we could not determine whether Road Home has clear authority to fully lead the City’s strategic efforts to combat homelessness because of the overlapping roles of Road Home and other entities. Finally, due to the wide variety of tasks Road Home personnel must tend to on a daily basis, their ability to carry out the responsibilities of Road Home is negatively impacted by current staff resources.

Collaboration involves engaging in coordinated, collective action to achieve outcomes a single organization may not be able to achieve on its own. For a complex social problem such as homelessness, collaboration between organizations can be more effective than working in silos.

According to leading practices, certain elements are key to successful collaboration. Further, several large cities we researched have consistently used these key elements. Organizations— including the National Academy of Public Administration, a nonprofit organization that provides expert advice to government leaders—report that

collaboration, such as a framework that enables cross-system interaction, is necessary for effectively addressing a problem such as homelessness.\textsuperscript{25} Also, the key elements of collaboration lead to a unified approach to solving the problem.

As shown in Table 1, key collaborative elements recommended by organizations such as the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the National Academy of Public Administration include shared strategies and goals that are broadly accepted communitywide, common performance measures, cross-system collaboration to align and integrate services, joint policy and guidance, and common data.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|p{0.7\textwidth}|}
\hline
\textbf{Key Elements} & \textbf{Description} \\
\hline
Shared Strategies and Performance Measures & Developing formal strategies or plans that include shared vision, goals, objectives, and performance measures agreed upon by all stakeholders \\
\hline
Systems Collaboration To Align Services & Sharing resources with co-located staff and alignment of city agencies with homelessness issues \\
\hline
Convening Committees & Convening intra-agency and cross-agency sessions and engaging people through committees and the community \\
\hline
Sharing Systems Governance & Issuing joint guidance, aligning policies and procedures, and integrating definitions and approaches \\
\hline
Collecting, Sharing, and Integrating Data & Aligning, integrating, and sharing data systems; agreeing on common data sources to track performance; establishing central data collection and joint sharing agreements; and creating central dashboards and online tools for data collection \\
\hline
Breaking Down Silos & Collaborating on integrated, innovative approaches and opportunities for continued sharing \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Key Elements of Effective Collaboration to Address Homelessness}
\end{table}

\textit{Source:} Auditor’s Office analysis of leading collaborative practices.

sources to inform communitywide decision-making.26

**Key Collaboration Elements in Road Home’s Approach to End Homelessness**

Although it lacks certain critical elements of best practices for collaboration, such as a strategic plan, Road Home has employed some key collaborative practices as part of its role to work with partners and more than 20 community-based service providers to administer coordinated shelter, outreach, and other services for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. For example, the division has convened a wide variety of committees to better engage the community and is working to build stronger relationships with key partners in the City.

**Convening Committees** – The Road Home Director and staff reported collaborating and networking on 43 committees and workgroups that meet weekly, biweekly, or monthly to discuss homelessness issues. The committees and work groups include staff from divisions within Human Services and from other local government agencies.

For example, the Road Home Director attends monthly meetings for the Office of Economic Development’s Housing Advisory Committee and serves as the chairman of its Policy and Program Subcommittee. The Director also participates in a weekly phone call with representatives from the Mayor’s Office, the Department of Public Safety, the City Attorney’s Office, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Public Health and Environment, and others, which has been occurring for more than a year. Road Home staff also hold monthly shelter and service provider meetings and participate in several monthly meetings about OneHome and various monthly gatherings of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative board and committees.

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Approaches to Break Down Silos – According to the 2018 Mayor’s Budget, Road Home’s critical role is connecting and collaborating both internally within Human Services, and with external partners such as nonprofit service providers to empower what they are doing to address homelessness. Road Home has taken steps to fulfil this role by building relationships with its partners to coordinate on targeted initiatives, and systemwide events. For example, following a 2018 assessment of Denver’s homeless shelter system, Road Home will be working with local shelter providers to analyze the feasibility and cost associated with reconfiguring the current shelter system over the next few years. Within Human Services, Road Home staff report they consult with Human Services’ Community Outreach and Resource Engagement, or CORE, division which provides case management, employment, behavioral health, and emergency housing services to the homeless population.

For instance, Road Home helped CORE develop policies for emergency housing for the homeless. Outside of Human Services, Road Home staff reported their engagement with many other organizations in the City to accomplish better integration with the City’s housing efforts as well as planning for future changes to the City’s approach to homeless shelters.

Specifically, Road Home is coordinating with the Office of Economic Development on funding and procurement processes to ensure collective resources are invested efficiently and effectively across partners and agencies. The two agencies are determining how to avoid duplication and achieve mutually defined outcomes.

Road Home also partnered with the Office of Economic Development on the development of the new five-year housing plan, titled “Housing an Inclusive Denver,” which includes strategies and investment priorities from homelessness to housing. For instance, the plan recommends expanding investments in housing options for residents experiencing homelessness and integrating providers to better serve those in need of services and housing investments across the housing continuum.

Convening committees and building partnerships is consistent with guidance from the Heartland Alliance, an anti-poverty organization that says working across silos can spur collaboration and allows organizations to recognize they share responsibility in supporting the homeless.


28 Heartland Alliance is dedicated to ending chronic unemployment and poverty. The nonprofit researches and creates guides and toolkits for designing and improving programs, creates and conducts trainings for program leadership and staff, and consults with leaders of employment initiatives to design, implement, and improve employment services for people in need.
Further, the U.S. Government Accountability Office reported that work groups, task forces, and committees are common mechanisms for collaborating.\(^{29}\)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development also emphasizes the critical need for cross-agency connections to ensure homeless clients are provided access to mainstream benefits, such as Medicaid, food stamps, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, a major federal-state welfare program for families.\(^{30}\)

**Collaborative Elements Road Home Lacks in Addressing Homelessness**

Road Home has employed some key elements of collaboration but we identified gaps where Road Home could do more to ensure a unified, collaborative approach to address homelessness.

**Shared Strategies and Performance Measures** – Even though Human Services’ previous strategic plan indicated Road Home should develop its own strategic plan specifically for homelessness, Road Home does not have a strategic plan that establishes common goals or citywide performance metrics that measure progress to achieve strategic goals and objectives.\(^{31}\) The recently issued Human Services strategic vision framework, “Human Together,” describes the agency’s five strategic goals but does not include specific priorities or actions related to Road Home or homelessness.

The Government Finance Officers Association recommends the use of strategic planning to provide a long-term perspective for service delivery and budgeting. It further directs that this effort should include preparation of a mission statement, an assessment of environmental factors, the identification of critical issues, and agreement on a small number of broad goals that then inform strategies, action plans, and performance measures.\(^{32}\) Also, the U.S. Government Accountability Office reported that shared goals that resonate with and are agreed upon by all participants are essential to achieving outcomes. Even more important is articulating these agreements in formal documents.

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which further strengthen the participants’ commitment to work collaboratively.\textsuperscript{33}

Since our previous audit in 2015, Road Home personnel have developed some standardized performance metrics, but these metrics are more narrowly focused on Road Home’s portfolio of service provider contracts associated with homeless employment and transitional housing services. Further, we noted in our 2015 audit that Rebound Solutions, a Denver-based consulting firm hired to conduct a program evaluation of Road Home in 2012, could not perform an evaluation of Road Home because the division had no way to show progress in ending homelessness. Rebound Solutions made several recommendations in its report, including directing Road Home to establish evaluation processes and metrics to measure performance.\textsuperscript{34}

The U.S. Government Accountability Office and the Government Finance Officers Association both say performance measures can help agencies track progress toward meeting strategic goals and objectives.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Systems Collaboration to Align Services} – Road Home has collaborated with government and nongovernment partners on various initiatives, pilot programs, and events to provide homeless individuals access to services. However, City efforts are often fragmented because they are managed by different agencies, further complicating the alignment of the City’s efforts. For example, Road Home personnel are involved with, but not primarily responsible for, multiple efforts, including the Social Impact Bond Initiative.


\textsuperscript{34} Rebound Solutions, “Summary Findings for Denver’s Road Home” (January 2013). The report describes findings and recommendations for Road Home on areas in need of improvement.

• **Social Impact Bond Initiative** – Denver developed a Social Impact Bond Initiative in February 2016 as a long-term sustainable solution to end homelessness. Although the program focuses on homelessness, Denver’s Department of Finance manages it, and according to Road Home personnel, Road Home’s role has been minimal and specific to discussions in early 2017 pertaining to housing units developed for the initiative. The initiative is intended to provide supportive housing for more than 300 chronically homeless individuals who frequently encounter parts of the criminal justice system, including police, jail, and courts, as well as emergency medical services. Many entities have been involved in the initiative, including early investors and nonprofit supporters—such as the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless and the Mental Health Center of Denver which provide ongoing supportive services such as case management.

Further, a data dashboard, that provides initiative stakeholders with monthly updates on the housing status of program participants, was developed for the initiative, yet Road Home continues to function without such a tool to track and communicate the status of all programs and services provided to homeless individuals in Denver.

• **Short-Term Action-Item List** – When the Office of Economic Development’s Office of Housing and Opportunities for People Everywhere was part of the Mayor’s Office, prior to its transition to the Office of Economic Development in February 2018, HOPE developed a short-term action-item list that included tasks related to homelessness and housing. Thirteen agencies, including the Mayor’s Office and Road Home, were assigned responsibility for implementing the plan’s 33 action items. Ten items are specific to homelessness, and Road Home was assigned a lead role on six of the 10 items and a supportive role on two. The list included projects such as developing a pilot shelter-diversion program and integrating a regional homelessness data system. Although several agencies were assigned lead responsibilities for each of the individual projects, it is not clear who has the leadership or authority to oversee and monitor the progress of the entire collaborative effort.

As a result, about half the items have yet to be addressed or reviewed to determine whether they are still applicable. Only four of the 10 items for which Road Home was responsible were addressed or found to be no longer applicable.

The 2013 Rebound Solutions report outlined recommendations for developing a strategy to better align City resources and capabilities, such as understanding the intersections of the homeless community with

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It is not clear who has the leadership or authority to oversee and monitor the progress of the entire collaborative effort.
City agencies. Leading practices state that organizational boundaries can lead to fragmentation, but bridging boundaries through a common vision can lead to the coordination and alignment of activities in a way that drives progress.36

**Shared Governance** – Once a shared strategy is developed to address homelessness, policies should be aligned to achieve results. However, Road Home has not aligned policies with other stakeholders addressing homelessness or worked with City agencies to develop joint policy and guidance to address homelessness.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Policy Development and Research states that joint goals, followed by protocols for each agency involved means that each agency’s work is complementary and supportive of the work done by all.37 For example, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness identified the need for agencies at the federal level to develop joint guidance on how to better integrate the homeless assistance and workforce assistance systems.

Elements of the joint guidance could include performance measures, data sharing, and understanding the definitions of program eligibility for both areas.38

Although Road Home has collaborated with the Office of Economic Development on a shared definition for permanent supportive housing to ensure consistency in interpretations, Road Home could collaborate further to establish a clear set of policies aimed at aligning services to avoid redundancies. For instance, the Heartland Alliance references

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**SHARED GOVERNANCE IN OTHER CITIES**

Houston is working on a guidebook, created with stakeholder input, to clarify stakeholder roles and responsibilities and promote transparency and communication.

Portland, Oregon, held a series of community discussions to simplify criteria and access to services; to articulate shared values, priorities, and performance goals; and to evaluate effectiveness in several program areas such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. Portland also developed a coordinated policy to address racial inequity in homelessness.

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the close link between employment success and housing stability and the need for accountability mechanisms, such as joint performance measures, that push both systems to work collaboratively.\textsuperscript{39}

Leading practices consider collaborative governance essential to effectively addressing homelessness because it could lead to achievements not otherwise possible through silos.\textsuperscript{40}

**Collect, Share, and Integrate Data** – Road Home lacks dashboards that would allow it to track and share performance data. According to the Director, Road Home is in the best position to analyze homelessness data because it gets it directly from service providers and is the custodian of the data. However, the division’s current process is time-consuming because Road Home personnel must manually input the data into a spreadsheet.

Road Home does not have the automated tools or resources to quickly convert the data into charts and graphs to respond to inquiries and to track performance using data dashboards. We also found in our 2015 report that Road Home could not leverage data to reduce homelessness because it did not have a formalized process for tracking and analyzing service provider performance. Even now, Road Home does not have the ability to collect, analyze, and share performance data with real-time information in a central location.

Although the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative is implementing a new data system, it is not clear if the system will provide a means to collect and analyze quality data from homelessness service providers across the community.\textsuperscript{41}

According to leading practices, mechanisms that can aid effective collaboration include shared databases, dashboards, and web portals. Cities we reviewed such as Houston, San Francisco, and Seattle use


\textsuperscript{40} Nichols, Naomi; Doberstein, Carey (Eds.), *Exploring Effective Systems Responses to Homelessness* (Toronto: The Homeless Hub Press, 2016). The book was developed by the Homeless Hub, which is a Canadian research institute. The research focuses on wide-spectrum service collaboration among agencies and government and the need for agencies to strategize, collaborate, and work toward a common goal and plan and integrate systems from a governance and policy perspective.

\textsuperscript{41} A new Homeless Management Information System was under development at the time of this audit, to improve data collection and coordination among service providers.
visual displays such as dashboards software to summarize and display data.

Figure 5 is an example of a dashboard used by San Francisco to document changes in homelessness over time. Dashboards are becoming an important means of tracking key performance indicators because they use informative graphics to summarize key performance metrics. With comprehensive data at the center of collaborative decision-making, communities can understand their resource needs and target efforts to get better results.

**FIGURE 5.** Example of San Francisco’s Homelessness Data Dashboard

![Homelessness Over Time](source)


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**Lack of Clear Authority and Overlapping Roles Limits Road Home’s Ability to Address Homelessness**

According to Road Home personnel, they are not considered the sole leader of homeless efforts in the City, because their work is done collectively through service providers. However, it is not clear which City entity is ultimately responsible for leading or directing the City’s overall strategic planning and policy development efforts on homelessness.

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because for more than 10 years, various groups have had responsibility for strategy- and policy-related planning for and implementation of the City’s approach to addressing homelessness.

First, the Commission to End Homelessness, established in 2003 by the Denver Homeless Planning Group, was tasked with creating and implementing Denver’s Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. The commission, not Road Home, was given the responsibility of creating and implementing the plan and its eight goals between 2005 and 2015. During our 2015 audit, we found that the commission was plagued with problems and not effectively used as intended to reduce homelessness. The commission was disbanded in 2017, and the City’s strategies to combat homelessness were never updated. The commission has since been replaced with the new Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness.

Next, in April 2007, Mayor Hickenlooper issued Executive Order 91, which designated Human Services as the lead agency responsible for managing City services to the homeless community. According to the Executive Order, this role included assuming decision-making authority to ensure clear governance in matters requiring action in response to homeless issues and informing a clear written policy for homelessness. While Executive Order 91 provides some guidance on Road Home’s responsibilities, it states that procedures for implementing the Executive Order shall be defined by the Manager of Human Services and become part of the executive order. However, we were unable to review the specific procedures for implementing the order because Human Services and other City officials could not locate the attachments. Nonetheless, the job description for the Director of Road Home implies that Road Home is tasked with making decisions and developing policy for the City.

Later, the Mayor announced in his 2016 State of the City address that HOPE would knock down silos, refocus City agencies, ensure coordination, and create a unified policy and forceful effort to help the homeless. HOPE was created to work across City departments to better coordinate and leverage investments in housing, health services, and workforce training.

Early last year, HOPE’s role was further emphasized with the appointment of a new Director who would develop a coordinated and comprehensive strategic roadmap for City policies, programs,

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44 The Denver Homeless Planning Group consisted of stakeholders representing local government and nongovernment entities. It prepared the September 2003, “A Blueprint for Addressing Homelessness in Denver,” which proposed strategies to address homelessness such as developing a Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness and creating the Commission to End Homelessness. The impetus behind both the blueprint and the 10-year plan was a national challenge put forth by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness in January 2003 that encouraged cities to develop plans to end homelessness within 10 years.
and projects along the homelessness to homeownership spectrum. Moreover, before it was disbanded, the Commission to End Homelessness recommended a framework for its successor, the new advisory committee. One of the framework’s recommendations included forming a subcommittee to work closely with HOPE, not Road Home, on strategic goals across all departments. However, in February 2018, HOPE’s team of one full-time and two on-call employees was moved from the Mayor’s Office to the Office of Economic Development’s Housing Division. With limited resources, the office is focusing its efforts on leading Denver’s five-year strategy for future housing policy and investments while collaborating with Road Home and other City agencies.

Finally, the Rebound Solutions 2013 report said Road Home’s role is not clear and that without a strong defined role, the organization is not as powerful as it should be in meeting its mission.

With various stakeholders given lead roles in developing and implementing the City’s homeless-related policy and bridging agency silos, it is unclear what group has the authority and lead role over developing strategies and policies to address homelessness. While homelessness is a difficult problem to solve, taking effective steps such as implementing an overall citywide strategy that guides all homelessness efforts, and enhancing collaboration, the City could make better progress toward reducing the number of people who experience homelessness.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.1**

**Reassess Responsible Agency for Homelessness** – The Mayor’s Office should reassess what City agency, agencies, or other groups are responsible for developing and implementing the City’s strategic plan and related policies for homelessness. Executive Order 91 should be revised or replaced to clearly document the responsible party.

**Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – July 2019, January 2020**
**RECOMMENDATION 1.2**

**Create Homelessness Strategic Plan** – After the Mayor’s Office makes its determination of which agency or agencies are responsible for developing and implementing the City’s strategic plan and related policies for homelessness, the responsible party should develop a comprehensive citywide strategic plan and related policies specific to homelessness. The strategic plan should include citywide performance measures that help the City assess ongoing efforts to reduce homelessness.

Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – August 2020

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**Denver’s Road Home Lacks the Staff Resources Necessary to Carry Out Its Current Role**

Our analysis revealed two important gaps in Road Home’s staff resources. First, staff are not devoting enough time and attention to strategic planning and policy development. Second, Road Home lacks a dedicated data analyst with the time and subject matter expertise to fulfill Road Home’s responsibilities related to homelessness data.

In 2007, with the adoption of Executive Order 91, Human Services was designated as the lead agency responsible for managing City services to the homeless. Later, the responsibility to administer coordinated shelter, outreach, job placement, training, and other services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness was assigned to Road Home, a team within Human Services’ Assistance Division.

From 2014 to 2018, Road Home’s expenditures increased by 16 percent, from $6 million to $7.28 million. During that time, however, staff size decreased from nine to seven employees—six full-time employees and one part-time intern. Staff size at Road Home is expected to increase to eight full-time employees in 2019 when a new Shelter and Outreach Program Administrator and a Housing Policy and Program Administrator join the team. Although Road Home is a small group within Human Services, its staff is responsible for a large scope of responsibilities, ranging from administrative duties and contract management to responding to media and data requests. Responsibilities assigned to Road Home personnel, include the following:

- Administration and office management;
- City homeless policy research, analysis, and development;

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45 The increase in expenditures between 2016 and 2018 was largely due to an increase in spending on professional services, i.e., contract-related expenses.
Citywide and OneHome homelessness data collection, analysis, and reporting;
Contract management;
Event planning and coordination;
Financial management;
Fundraising;
Job placement and training;
Media/public relations;
Stakeholder engagement;
Strategic planning; and
Volunteer engagement.

Our review of Road Home’s staff resources, and whether they align with the group’s mission and priorities, identified several gaps.46

Strategic Planning and Homelessness Policy Development Received Limited Time and Attention

Our analysis demonstrated that important tasks—such as strategic planning and City homelessness policy development and analysis—were not the primary focus of Road Home personnel. Instead, outreach and contract and program management duties took up significant portions of their time in 2018, as depicted in Figure 6 on the following page.

Strategic Planning and Policy – As previously mentioned, Road Home has been operating without a strategic plan since 2015, when both the previous Human Services strategic plan and Denver’s Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness expired.47 Further, Human Services’ previous strategic plan only indirectly referenced Road Home or homelessness topics, instead indicating that “a separate revised strategic plan for Road Home” would be developed.

The job descriptions for Road Home’s Director and Program Administrator both indicate strategic planning is an essential responsibility. Although one Road Home employee worked with Human Services officials to better incorporate homelessness-related elements into the agency’s overall strategic plan, the newly issued strategic plan...

46 We did not conduct a formal staffing analysis that involves the determination of key occupations, skills, and competencies critical to achieving an entity’s mission, goals, strategic plans, and future needs. Instead, our review used testimonial evidence and documentation, where it existed, to identify patterns and gaps in staff activities as of late 2018.

framework for Human Services does not include specific priorities related to homelessness. Therefore, Road Home is still without a guiding strategy and associated policies to guide its work.\(^\text{48}\)

In addition to strategic planning responsibilities, we found that greater attention could be paid to policy development and analysis related to homelessness. Our review of Road Home personnel’s job descriptions found that three employees are expected to perform duties on policy development and analysis. However, those employees reported spending little time on that effort compared to other duties. This is not consistent with Executive Order 91 that states it is Human Services’—and thereby Road Home’s—responsibility to “take the lead in developing a clear, written statement of policy for the City regarding its response to the needs of the homeless.”

Further, our analysis demonstrated that several large cities—Houston, San Francisco, and Seattle—have dedicated staff assigned to strategic planning and policy development related to homelessness within

\(^{48}\) According to City officials, it was uncertain whether Road Home would remain part of Human Services until early 2018.
their lead agency for homeless services. For example, in Houston, the Mayor’s Office for Homeless Initiatives is the city’s lead agency on homelessness. It works collaboratively with the Houston region’s Continuum of Care organization, The Way Home, to produce a regionwide strategic plan specific to homelessness. The Mayor’s Office is also responsible for coordinating the city’s response to homelessness, providing policy and direction to departments that handle homeless response, and advising the Mayor on homeless policy efforts and initiatives.

After the San Francisco Homelessness and Supportive Housing division was reorganized in 2016, it developed a five-year strategic plan. The San Francisco division’s policy team analyzes and interprets local, state, and federal policies and regulations. In Seattle, the policy team is responsible for systems improvement, providing strategic advice to the mayor, and determining whether the city’s Homeless Strategy and Investment Division and other stakeholders in the city are working effectively together. The Homeless Strategy and Investment Division developed the city’s overall homelessness strategic plan.

**Day-to-Day Operations** – We found that several Road Home staff were overextended in 2018, taking on additional time-consuming tasks outside their job descriptions. Between September 2017 and August 2018, Road Home’s Interim Director was responsible for carrying out the duties of two positions—Director and Program Administrator—that are key to fulfilling Road Home’s role and that make up half of Road Home’s management structure. After officially assuming the position, the Director continued to fulfill the Program Administrator duties for several months. The Director’s job duties include coordinating and streamlining City homelessness programs, staff management, City policy development, and strategic planning while the Program Administrator is responsible for contract management, event planning, homeless data collection, analysis and reporting, among many other tasks.

Additionally, Road Home personnel reported that a variety of time-intensive activities, such as contract management and event coordination, required their time and attention in 2018.

First, the Road Home team manages about 33 contracts per year, that involve around $6 million in City funds. Contract management responsibilities include:

- Writing, reviewing, and scoring requests for proposals;
- Conducting and approving scope and budget negotiations with contracted partners;

Reference Appendix B for more information on staff dedicated to homeless-related work in other major cities.
• Conducting site visits with the contracted partners;
• Reviewing and approving monthly invoices;
• Reviewing quarterly contract performance reports; and
• Providing feedback and answering questions about the contracts from Human Services’ central contracts group.

Although only two employees were assigned contract management and administrative duties in their job descriptions, a third employee was working on these tasks as well.

Second, in 2018, Road Home organized the annual Project Homeless Connect event even though in past years a contractor helped to plan and stage the event. Project Homeless Connect involves more than 100 organizations that offer child care, medical services, pet care, veterans services, youth services, housing opportunities, and insurance accessibility to homeless persons who attend the one-day event. Most of the responsibility to organize and stage the event fell on one Road Home employee who was also expected to work on higher-level program administration and strategic planning activities. Staff also attended regularly occurring fundraising events and stakeholder sessions. Further, even though the job duties of Road Home personnel stipulate that event coordination and planning are part of two employees’ job descriptions, these activities required the time of three full-time employees and one intern in 2018.

Third, data collection, analysis, and reporting is a duty that several employees have been tasked with. These duties range from reporting homeless program data to the Mayor and City Council to data tracking and analysis for contract performance monitoring. They also include keeping up with trends for nightly shelter use and data analysis and reporting in the OneHome system, which matches homeless individuals with the appropriate housing intervention. In 2018, there were four full-time employees and one intern who collected, analyzed, and reported on City homeless program data. However, only one of those employees has data duties and experience requirements in their job description. Although several Road Home employees must work on data-related requests from time to time, the team lacks an internal employee who can dedicate time to meeting with external and internal partners to discuss data needs, creating dashboards, and providing statistical analyses.

Finally, all seven Road Home employees served on various committees or workgroups in 2018 even though this duty was not listed as a responsibility for two Road Home employees. Serving on committees is an important aspect of stakeholder engagement, which is a central job duty for several Road Home personnel. Examples of the various committees or workgroups that Road Home personnel participate in
include the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative board of directors, the weekly Mayor’s Office meetings to discuss homelessness, OneHome workgroup meetings, the Office of Economic Development’s housing summit, and workgroups focused on other topics such as shelter services, complex homelessness cases, and the housing voucher program with Volunteers of America.50

In addition to a general lack of focus on homeless strategic planning and policy, Road Home lacks a dedicated analyst with the time and expertise necessary to fulfill the division’s responsibilities related to homelessness data.

Road Home Lacks a Dedicated Data Analyst

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, measuring the extent of homelessness is essential to combating it. Data has become a critical component of these efforts. Documenting the number, characteristics, and needs of homeless persons in American communities, as well as the capacity of these services, is essential to identifying the proper strategies to tackle the problem of homelessness. However, as the federal agency notes, it is very difficult to manage what one cannot measure.51

Road Home personnel recognize the importance of homelessness data collection and analysis in demonstrating the collective impact of homeless services. In fact, they requested a full-time dedicated data analyst in their 2017 and 2019 budget requests, but Human Services leadership denied both staffing requests.52 Instead, in 2019, Human Services approved an additional data analyst position for its Performance Improvement and Accountability Division to serve as a shared resource for the data-related needs of the entire agency.

Executive Order 91 states that Human Services will “coordinate information gathering on issues of homelessness to ensure that the Mayor is informed of homeless issues and make recommendations for appropriate action by the City.” Additionally, Human Services’ previous strategic plan specifically referenced the need to gather meaningful data to assess effectiveness and identify areas of improvement for homeless shelters and other related services.

Further, our 2015 audit of Road Home identified its limited use of data as a weakness. For example, Road Home was unable to evaluate the

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50 The Annual Housing Summit provides an opportunity for residents and leaders to convene and discuss policy tools and investment strategies.


52 For the 2018 budget cycle, Road Home did not submit a request for a dedicated data analyst.
impact of its programs due to limited data collection and analysis and could not use data to strategize for future programs and plans. In 2016, our follow-up audit found the agency had taken steps to standardize data collected from some service providers but was still in the process of evaluating how data are collected and analyzed.

According to Road Home leadership, the organization needs a dedicated data analyst who understands Road Home’s organization, operations, opportunities, and challenges to:

- Answer questions from leadership and other partners;
- Collect and analyze data;
- Create data dashboards;
- Meet with external and internal partners, such as the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative, to discuss data needs and reporting requirements; and
- Respond to data requests.

Although Human Services’ Process Improvement and Accountability Division has assisted Road Home with projects in the past, including helping contract managers apply consistency and standardization to reporting and tracking processes and analyzing a transportation proposal to bus people to and from shelters, Road Home staff report that the regular data requests they receive frequently have to be addressed quickly by one or more members of their team.

We learned from various Human Services personnel that its smaller divisions are not typically allocated a data analyst. However, our review of several smaller-sized agencies within the City found that the size of an agency or its budget is not a strong indicator of whether a dedicated data analyst is allocated to an agency. For example, the City’s Office of Behavioral Health Strategies has 29 employees, one of whom is a full-time data analyst. Also, the Office of HIV Resources has four employees, one of whom is a full-time data analyst, while one of Housing Policy, Programs and HOPE Initiative’s five full-time employees as of late 2018 was a full-time data analyst.

Finally, several large U.S. cities place a significant emphasis on data in their approaches to homeless services. We found that:

- In Houston, the region’s Continuum of Care lead agency, The Way Home, has a team of data analysts responsible for collecting and analyzing data to creating data dashboards

53 “Management analyst” is one of several classifications the City uses for positions with data-related responsibilities. In the City agencies we reviewed, data analytics responsibilities were also associated with Program Coordinator, Deputy Director of Policy and Analysis, Data Administrator, and Program Administrator positions.

54 Reference Appendix B for more information on staff dedicated to data analysis in other cities.
for leadership and stakeholders, as well as collaborating with partners on making data-driven decisions.

- San Francisco and Seattle have dedicated data analysts in their lead agencies for homeless services.
- Seattle’s staff dedicated to data analysis use data dashboards to communicate the number of single adults experiencing homelessness.
- In San Francisco, data staff create dashboards to show changes in the homeless Point-in-Time counts, the number of direct exits from homelessness due to city programs, and the total units of permanent supportive housing for every 100,000 residents.55

Denver’s Road Home has not undergone a staffing analysis in at least 10 years.

Road Home Has Not Undergone a Staffing Analysis

To determine the necessary current and future staffing needs of an organization, quantitative and qualitative analyses are required. However, Road Home has not undergone a staffing analysis in at least the last 10 years.

According to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, workforce planning is the foundation for managing an organization’s human capital. Such planning enables organizations to strategically meet current and future workforce needs.56 The more effective the development and execution of the staffing plan, the more the organization can leverage staff to accomplish its strategy.

Also, the U.S. Government Accountability Office recommends that organizations should ensure their staff size aligns with their mission and strategic goals. The more effective the staffing plan, the more the organization can leverage staff to accomplish its strategy. Additionally, an official from the City’s Budget and Management Office stated that staffing analyses are key for complementing or augmenting a staffing or budget request. It can be difficult to assess the need for a new position based on only a narrative. However, presenting data that substantiates a request is extremely beneficial for making a compelling case for a staffing request.

The City’s Budget and Management Office performs staffing analyses for other agencies but has not completed one for Human Services since

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55 Direct homeless exits through city programs is a metric that measures the number of individuals that were able to leave homelessness due to San Francisco’s programs. These programs include permanent supportive housing, subsidized housing with case management services, and Homeward Bound, which assists individuals in reuniting with family or friends. “City Performance Scorecards: Direct Homeless Exits Through City Programs,” City and County of San Francisco, accessed February 4, 2019, https://sfgov.org/scorecards/safety-net/direct-homeless-exits-through-city-programs.

at least 2009. Additionally, at that time, the Budget Management Office delegated the authority for position management, full-time employee reconciliation, and staffing analysis to Human Services. When we asked budget office personnel who in Human Services completes staffing analyses for the agency, officials said there is no team with sole responsibility for this task. There is also no collaboration between the budget office and Human Services on conducting staffing analyses. Further, when asked whether Road Home would undergo a staffing analysis in the near future, Road Home and Human Services personnel said there were no plans.

Although Road Home has not been through a staffing analysis, it is participating in Human Services’ agencywide workforce readiness process that began in 2017. This process is designed to encourage the transfer of institutional knowledge and to prevent knowledge loss due to retirements or voluntary/involuntary terminations. Workforce readiness reviews, however, are not the same as staffing analyses.

According to the Society of Human Resource Management, staff planning should be used to come to a clear understanding of the current status of the division and its activities and the desired future state as well as to determine how to get there. The steps for an effective staffing analysis include:

- Evaluating goals;
- Identifying influencers;
- Analyzing the current status;
- Envisioning needs;
- Conducting a gap analysis; and
- Developing a solution plan.

Upon review of various state and local government workforce and staffing plans, we noted that in addition to the steps listed above, organizations recommend that staffing plans, which document the staffing requirements of an organization, should include a time frame for which the plan is relevant. For example, the University of Vermont recommends a staffing plan be in effect for two to three years.

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57 The exact date of the last Human Services staffing analysis could not be identified by City staff.
58 The authority that position management and FTE, or full-time equivalent employee, reconciliation gives to Human Services is the ability to approve their respective agency’s position requests in Workday, the City’s financial system of record. Reconciling full-time employees is the process by which the FTE counts between the current year and the future year and between Workday and Questica, the City’s budgeting software, are 100 percent accounted for, according to the Budget and Management Office.
the latest Texas Health and Human Services System Strategic Staffing Analysis and Workforce Plan is effective for a four-year time frame.\textsuperscript{61}

Without a staffing analysis, Road Home is unable to assess its current and future staffing needs. Consequently, Road Home is unable to fulfill duties and initiatives detailed in Executive Order 91, including strategic planning, policy development and analysis, and data and performance monitoring to help lead the City’s efforts to reduce homelessness.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.3**

*Conduct Staffing Analysis* – The Director of Denver’s Road Home should work with Denver Human Services and the Budget and Management Office, as needed, to ensure a staffing analysis is conducted of Road Home’s current staff resources that considers Road Home’s role and responsibilities.

*Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – August 2019, August 2020*

**RECOMMENDATION 1.4**

*Align Road Home Staff Resources* – After completing the staffing analysis, the Director of Road Home should work with the Executive Director of Denver Human Services to ensure Road Home’s staff resources align with the division’s responsibilities.

*Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – August 2019, August 2020*

FINDING 2
The Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness Should Strengthen Its Bylaws

The City hired a consultant in 2018 to help the Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness develop its governance structure, including the creation of bylaws. However, the consultant failed to fulfill the contract requirements. As a result, the advisory committee was required to develop bylaws on its own, which has led to delays in both establishing its bylaws and providing the City with advice on homelessness. In fact, a survey of advisory committee members identified a strong pattern of dissatisfaction among members over the advisory committee’s progress. The committee has since developed some governance structures, including draft bylaws; however, we found the draft bylaws lacking in several areas.

The evolution of Denver’s use of citizen advisory bodies to address homelessness began in 2003, when the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness issued a challenge to mayors nationwide to create plans to end homelessness within 10 years. Figure 7 on the following page illustrates the City’s use of advisory bodies to alleviate homelessness.62

By the end of 2003, Mayor Hickenlooper established the advisory body known as the Commission to End Homelessness with the goal of creating and implementing Denver’s 10-year plan to end homelessness. By 2007, Road Home, a division within Human Services, was budgeted personnel for the first time. The Commission to End Homelessness was disbanded in May 2017 after years of work to create and implement the 10-year plan, and by April 2018, Mayor Hancock announced the establishment of the new Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness.

According to Road Home’s contract with the consultant hired to assist the advisory committee, three products were to be provided by October 2018—two status reports and draft bylaws. However, the consultant failed to deliver these requirements. As a result, the advisory

FIGURE 7. Timeline of Denver’s Homeless-Related Efforts and Advisory Bodies since 2003

2003 to 2015:
The Commission to End Homelessness creates and implements its 10-year plan, entitled “Denver’s Road Home.”

2007:
The organization Denver’s Road Home was established within Denver Human Services.

January 2003:
U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness challenges mayors to end homelessness in 10 years.

June 2003:
Mayor John Hickenlooper forms the Denver Homeless Planning Group, which released “A Blueprint for Addressing Homelessness in Denver” report four months later.

October 2003:
Mayor Hickenlooper forms the Commission to End Homelessness.

April 2007:
Mayor Hickenlooper signs Executive Order 91, delegating the Denver Human Services as the lead agency for City homeless services.

February 2017:
Mayor Michael B. Hancock announces Office of Housing and Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE).

May 2017:
Commission to End Homelessness disbands.

February 2018:
Office of HOPE moves out of the Mayor’s Office and into the Office of Economic Development.

April 2018:
Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness forms.

Source: Auditor’s Office analysis of publicly available reports, agency documentation, and interviews.

committee was required to establish bylaws on its own. To date, the advisory committee has developed draft bylaws but has yet to finalize them. Consequently, it has yet to begin to fulfill its role of advising the Mayor, even after more than nine months of existence.63

We reviewed the advisory committee’s draft bylaws to identify areas in need of improvement and found they lack a few common best practices, including guidance on preventing conflicts of interest, regularly assessing the group’s performance, and documenting its meetings.

Conflict-of-Interest Policy – The draft bylaws lack definitions for what constitutes a conflict of interest, requirements for reporting potential or actual conflicts of interest, and procedures on how to address conflicts of interest should they arise.

63 As of this report’s publication, the bylaws were still in draft form, but the advisory committee expects to approve and adopt bylaws by April 2019.
Our review of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative’s board of directors’ bylaws found that it requires all board members to sign a conflict-of-interest disclosure statement, which requires members to identify potential conflicts and provides instructions for members to recuse themselves, as needed, from committee votes. Additionally, BoardSource, an organization focused on strengthening and supporting board leadership, recommends a conflict-of-interest policy be reviewed and signed by each member on an annual basis.

Without a documented process for identifying, reporting, and managing potential conflicts of interest, the advisory committee may not adequately recognize and address potential conflicts, which could negatively impact the quality of its advice and recommendations.

**Regular Performance Review** – Best practices also recommend advisory bodies and other groups regularly review their performance; however, the advisory committee’s draft bylaws do not include this requirement. Both BoardSource and the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington State, a nonprofit that provides policy guidance for local governments, recommend advisory bodies go through a periodic assessment of performance to ensure objectives are being met.

Without a documented requirement to periodically evaluate its own performance, the advisory committee could miss opportunities to change course or adjust practices to improve its performance and meet its objectives.

**Documentation of Meetings** – Although the advisory committee has documented its meetings to date, its draft bylaws do not include a requirement for keeping meeting minutes nor do they include guidance on the type of information to include in the minutes, such as the voting record of members. Our review of various best practices from the Municipal Research Services Center of Washington State and the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative’s board of directors’ bylaws found that it is common practice to require the documentation of meetings, including details such as approved motions and members’ voting records. This practice is also outlined in Robert’s Rules of Order.

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Without such a requirement, the group could keep inconsistent or incomplete minutes, which may impair its ability to track its discussions and decision-making and the transparency of these activities.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.1**

**Strengthen Bylaws** – The Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness should include the following important elements in its bylaws:

- A description of the committee’s process for avoiding potential conflicts of interest, which should include annual submissions of disclosure forms and recusal from voting in the event of a conflict;
- A requirement for the committee to perform self-evaluations on a regular basis, including the frequency of self-evaluations; and
- A requirement to keep meeting minutes with guidelines for what topics should be recorded (such as vote tallies and abstentions).

**Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – July 2019**
RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 **Reassess Responsible Agency for Homelessness** – The Mayor’s Office should reassess what City agency, agencies, or other groups are responsible for developing and implementing the City’s strategic plan and related policies for homelessness. Executive Order 91 should be revised or replaced to clearly document the responsible party.

**Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – July 2019, January 2020**

Agency Narrative: The Mayor’s Office agrees that more focused and clearly defined roles and responsibilities will be beneficial in the development and implementation of a new strategic plan to address homelessness in Denver. The Mayor’s Office will complete an assessment of which agency, agencies, or other groups are responsible for developing and implementing the City’s strategic plan and related policies for homelessness. This assessment will include review, revision, or replacement of Executive Order 91 and will be completed by the end of July 2019. It will be fully implemented by January 2020.

1.2 **Create Homelessness Strategic Plan** – After the Mayor’s Office makes its determination of which agency or agencies are responsible for developing and implementing the City’s strategic plan and related policies for homelessness, the responsible party should develop a comprehensive citywide strategic plan and related policies specific to homelessness. The strategic plan should include citywide performance measures that help the City assess ongoing efforts to reduce homelessness.

**Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – August 2020**

Agency Narrative: Following completion of recommendation 1.1, the city will create a comprehensive citywide multi-year strategic plan to guide the development, coordination, implementation, and measurement of effective, efficient, human-centered strategies to prevent homelessness and to house and support people who experience homelessness. The plan will be informed by, connect, and amplify current relevant planning efforts in Denver’s Road Home, Denver Economic Development & Opportunity, Denver Human Services, and other partner agencies. The plan will include a multi-agency approach, data-analysis, measurable citywide strategies and outcomes, a staffing plan, and policy recommendations to support the sustainable implementation of the plan. The new plan will comply with all current and future federal and state funding requirements.

1.3 **Conduct Staffing Analysis** – The Director of Denver’s Road Home should work with Denver Human Services and the Budget and Management Office, as needed, to ensure a staffing analysis is conducted of Road Home’s current staff resources that considers Road Home’s role and responsibilities.

**Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – August 2019, August 2020**

Agency Narrative: The city will complete both a short-term and longer-term review of staffing
around homeless services within the City and County of Denver. The City will launch a staffing and resource analysis that considers Denver’s Road Home’s current role and responsibilities. Following a greater review of the city’s homelessness strategy and organization, a longer-term staffing plan will be developed as part of a new citywide strategic plan for homelessness services.

1.4 **Align Road Home Staff Resources** – After completing the staffing analysis, the Director of Road Home should work with the Executive Director of Denver Human Services to ensure Road Home’s staff resources align with the division’s responsibilities.

**Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – August 2019, August 2020**

Agency Narrative: Following the completion of the recommendations 1.1 – 1.3, the city will ensure overall resources are aligned with the responsibilities of Denver’s Road Home and/or the applicable lead agency for homelessness services.

2.1 **Strengthen Bylaws** – The Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness should include the following important elements in its bylaws:

- A description of the committee’s process for avoiding potential conflicts of interest, which should include annual submissions of disclosure forms and recusal from voting in the event of a conflict;
- A requirement for the committee to perform self-evaluations on a regular basis, including the frequency of self-evaluations; and
- A requirement to keep meeting minutes with guidelines for what topics should be recorded (such as vote tallies and abstentions).

**Agency Response: Agree, Implementation Date – July 2019**

Agency Narrative: We agree with this recommendation and will work with the Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness to ensure inclusion in the committee bylaws.
AGENCY RESPONSE TO AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

April 1, 2019

Auditor Timothy M. O’Brien, CPA
Office of the Auditor
City and County of Denver
201 West Colfax Avenue, Dept. 705
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Mr. O’Brien,

The Office of the Auditor has conducted a performance audit of Homeless Services.

This memorandum provides a written response for each reportable condition noted in the Auditor’s Report final draft that was sent to us on March 8, 2019. This response complies with Section 20-276 (c) of the Denver Revised Municipal Code (D.R.M.C.).

AUDIT FINDING 1
Gaps in Denver’s Road Home’s Collaborative Efforts and Staff Resources Impede Its Progress in Addressing Homelessness

RECOMMENDATION 1.1
Reassess Responsible Agency for Homelessness — The Mayor’s Office should reassess what City agency, agencies, or other groups are responsible for developing and implementing the City’s strategic plan and related policies for homelessness. Executive Order 91 should be revised or replaced to clearly document the responsible party.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree or Disagree with Recommendation</th>
<th>Target date to complete implementation activities (Generally expected within 60 to 90 days)</th>
<th>Name and phone number of specific point of contact for implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>July 2019, January 2020</td>
<td>Evan Dreyer (720) 865-9020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Narrative for Recommendation 1.1
The Mayor’s Office agrees that more focused and clearly defined roles and responsibilities will be beneficial in the development and implementation of a new strategic plan to address homelessness in Denver. The Mayor’s Office will complete an assessment of which agency, agencies, or other groups are responsible for developing and implementing the City’s strategic plan and related policies for homelessness. This assessment will include review, revision, or replacement of Executive Order 91 and will be completed by the end of July 2019. It will be fully implemented by January 2020.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2
Create Homelessness Strategic Plan — After the Mayor’s Office makes its determination of which agency or agencies are responsible for developing and implementing the City’s strategic plan and related policies for homelessness, the responsible party should develop a comprehensive citywide strategic plan and related
policies specific to homelessness. The strategic plan should include citywide performance measures that help the City assess ongoing efforts to reduce homelessness.

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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>August 2020</td>
<td>Christopher Conner (720) 944-2681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Narrative for Recommendation 1.2**

Following completion of recommendation 1.1, the city will create a comprehensive citywide multi-year strategic plan to guide the development, coordination, implementation, and measurement of effective, efficient, human-centered strategies to prevent homelessness and to house and support people who experience homelessness. The plan will be informed by, connect, and amplify current relevant planning efforts in Denver’s Road Home, Denver Economic Development & Opportunity, Denver Human Services, and other partner agencies. The plan will include a multi-agency approach, data-analysis, measurable citywide strategies and outcomes, a staffing plan, and policy recommendations to support the sustainable implementation of the plan. The new plan will comply with all current and future federal and state funding requirements.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.3**

**Conduct Staffing Analysis** – The Director of Denver’s Road Home should work with Denver Human Services and the Budget and Management Office, as needed, to ensure a staffing analysis is conducted of Road Home’s current staff resources that considers Road Home’s role and responsibilities.

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<td>Christopher Conner (720) 944-2681</td>
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**Narrative for Recommendation 1.3**

The city will complete both a short-term and longer-term review of staffing around homeless services within the City and County of Denver. The City will launch a staffing and resource analysis that considers Denver’s Road Home’s current role and responsibilities. Following a greater review of the city’s homelessness strategy and organization, a longer-term staffing plan will be developed as part of a new citywide strategic plan for homelessness services.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.4**

**Align Road Home Staff Resources** – After completing the staffing analysis, the Director of Road Home should work with the Executive Director of Denver Human Services to ensure Road Home’s staff resources align with the division’s responsibilities.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>July 2019</td>
<td>Christopher Conner (720) 944-2681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Narrative for Recommendation 2.1**
We agree with this recommendation and will work with the Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness to ensure inclusion in the committee bylaws.

Please contact Christopher Conner at (720) 944-2681 with any questions.

Sincerely,

Christopher Conner
Director

cc: Valerie Walling, Deputy Auditor, CPA, CMC®
    Dawn Wiseman, CRMA, Audit Director
Emily Owens Gerber, MPA, Audit Supervisor
Evan Dreyer, Deputy Chief of Staff
Don Mares, Executive Director, Denver Human Services
Eric Hiraga, Executive Director, Denver Economic Development and Opportunity
Brendan Hanlon, Chief Financial Officer, Denver Department of Finance
OBJECTIVE

The audit had two objectives.

1. To determine the type and level of funding that Denver Human Services and the Office of Economic Development received for and spent on homeless services and prevention between 2014 and 2018.

2. To assess the effectiveness of Denver’s Road Home’s collaboration and coordination with other key groups within the City, including:
   a. Analyzing the extent to which Denver’s Road Home’s coordination and collaboration with other departments within Denver Human Services, as well as the Office of Economic Development, enable the City to better serve its homeless population;
   b. Reviewing Denver’s Road Home’s allocation of staff resources to assess whether it aligns with its mission and priorities and adheres to leading practices; and
   c. Determining the degree to which the governance structure and membership of the Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness enable it to function as an effective advisory body.

SCOPE

The scope of the audit was Denver’s Road Home and the Office of Economic Development’s financial resources for homeless services and prevention between 2014 and 2018 and the level of collaboration and coordination between Denver’s Road Home, the Office of Economic Development, and the new Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness.

METHODOLOGY

We used several methodologies to gather and analyze information related to the audit objectives. The methodologies included, but were not limited to:

- Interviewing the following individuals:
  - Director, Program Administrators, Operations Coordinator, and Homeless Systems Coordinator from Denver’s Road Home
  - Key personnel from City agencies, including Denver Human Services, the Office of Economic Development, the Budget and Management Office, the Department of Finance, the Mayor’s Office, and some members of Denver’s City Council
  - Officials from the University of Denver’s Burnes Center for Poverty and Homelessness
  - Executive Director of the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative
  - Homeless services representatives and consultants with benchmark city governments
including Houston, Texas; Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon (Multnomah County); and San Francisco, California

○ Personnel from the Office of the City Auditor, Austin, Texas
○ Officials from the following institutions regarding Denver’s Social Impact Bond Initiative: the Urban Institute; the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice; the Corporation for Supportive Housing; and Enterprise Community Partners
○ Officials from the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine regarding the Santa Clara County pay-for-success program

• Reviewing the following criteria:
  ○ Descriptions of Denver’s Road Home’s mission and purpose as outlined in annual City budget books and City Executive Order 91
  ○ Job descriptions of Denver’s Road Home employees
  ○ Leading practices regarding advisory committees such as BoardSource Inc., the National Council of Nonprofits, and the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington
  ○ Benchmarking research to identify common practices in coordination, collaboration, staffing, and advisory committees using the following cities: Houston, Texas; Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon (Multnomah County); and San Francisco, California. Selection criteria included whether the city had a lead agency responsible for coordinating or administering homeless services, employed collaborative strategies, and had a proportion of homeless individuals to overall population similar to Denver’s.

• Analyzing the following:
  ○ Previous evaluations of Denver’s Road Home, including the Audit Services Division’s 2015 audit, 2016 audit follow-up report, and Rebound Solutions’ 2013 strategic report
  ○ Denver City Charter, the Denver Revised Municipal Code, and Executive Order 91 regarding Denver Human Services and Denver’s Road Home
  ○ Mayor’s budgets between 2014 and 2018 and City comprehensive annual financial reports between 2014 and 2017
  ○ Denver Human Services’ current and previous strategic plans and the Office of Economic Development’s five-year housing plan, “Housing Inclusive Denver”
  ○ Existing collaboration between Denver’s Road Home and other City agencies and departments, including the nature and frequency of interactions
  ○ Organizational structure, job descriptions, and time management information for Denver’s Road Home personnel
  ○ Staffing and workforce analyses undertaken by various agencies and departments
  ○ Records and survey data concerning the establishment, purpose, governance, and membership of the new Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness
  ○ Governance, structure, and oversight of Denver’s Social Impact Bond Initiative
• Observing the following:
  ○ City Council Safety, Housing, Education, and Homelessness committee meetings
  ○ City Council Housing and Homelessness Working Group meetings
  ○ Advisory Committee for Housing People Experiencing Homelessness meetings
  ○ Denver’s Road Home Operational Standard Work reporting session
  ○ Project Homeless Connect event
  ○ Social Impact Bond Operations Committee meetings
APPENDICES

Appendix A – City-Funded Homeless Service Providers

Table 2, below and continued on the following page, lists the various service organizations that received funding from Denver Human Services and Denver’s Road Home, as of late 2018, to provide homeless services in the City.

**TABLE 2.** Homeless Service Providers Funded by Denver Human Services and Denver’s Road Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Service Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>• Bayaud Enterprises</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Colorado Coalition for the Homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• St. Francis Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>• Burgwyn Fourth Quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Colorado Coalition for the Homeless</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mercy Housing Bluff Lakes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Volunteers of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>• Colorado Coalition for the Homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Salvation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Re-Housing</td>
<td>• St. Francis Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Volunteers of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>• Denver Health and Hospital Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Family Homestead</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Joshua Station</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mental Health Center of Denver</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Mile High United Way</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Salvation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Urban Peak</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Volunteers of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Warren Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>• St. Francis Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day Shelter</td>
<td>• Volunteers of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightly Shelter</td>
<td>• Catholic Charities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Delores Project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Denver Rescue Mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shelter Programs</td>
<td>• Salvation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Urban Peak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation to Nightly Shelter</td>
<td>• BUSCO Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Safehouse Denver</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Metro Taxi</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Denver’s Road Home.
*Note:* Table continues on the following page.
### TABLE 2, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Service Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Street Outreach</strong></td>
<td>• Colorado Coalition for the Homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Salvation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversion Programs</strong></td>
<td>• Family Promise of Greater Denver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• St. Francis Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motel Vouchers</strong></td>
<td>• Volunteers of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respite Care</strong></td>
<td>• Christ Body Respite Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Volunteers of America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Denver’s Road Home.

**Note:** Table is continued from the previous page.

- Diversion programs seek to prevent homelessness by helping those in need identify alternate housing arrangements and by connecting them to services and financial assistance, when needed, so as to return them to permanent housing.
- Respite care is medical care for homeless individuals who have no place to recover after being discharged from a hospital.
Appendix B – Supplementary Benchmarking Information

To compare Denver’s structure and efforts to address homelessness to other cities, our team conducted benchmarking research with Houston, Texas; Portland, Oregon; San Francisco, California; and Seattle, Washington.

Our research, as illustrated in Figure 8 on the following page, identified varying approaches for addressing homelessness such as in the designation of lead agencies, strategic planning, shared governance, dedicated staff resources, and the use of data.

Although we did not evaluate the extent of progress made by these cities to reduce homelessness, we found commonality in their structures and efforts, which align with leading practices for effective, communitywide collaboration. Denver City leaders could look to these other cities for guidance in improving Denver’s approaches to reduce homelessness.

**Strategic Plans and Policy** – Houston, Portland, and San Francisco each have regional efforts to align strategic plans and policies.

Houston adopted “The Way Home Action Plan,” a layered approach to designing its homeless response system that included steps such as establishing a lead agency, strategic planning, bridges to other systems, and performance standards.

Portland has a communitywide initiative called “A Home for Everyone,” which involved several jurisdictions and was developed by a diverse group of stakeholders including people experiencing homelessness and service providers, using input from the community to develop a strategic plan and five action plans. The action plans focus on key areas including veterans, health, housing, safety, and workforce opportunity.

San Francisco’s plan, “Toward Ending Homelessness in San Francisco,” is a unified homeless strategy, supported by the mayor, board of supervisors, city departments, nonprofit agencies, and people experiencing homelessness. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, these comprehensive strategic plans and policies that better align regional partners are essential to achieving outcomes with interagency groups.

**Governance** – Best practices recommend using shared, communitywide planning and guidance, such as aligned policies, procedures, definitions, and approaches to governance. Houston has aligned procedures for its partner agencies in the “The Way Home Guidebook,” which includes procedures to promote transparency and open communication among all entities involved in the program such as designating responsibilities of partner agencies, program procedures, and a glossary of terms. Portland developed communitywide guidelines that will inform implementation plans, measurable outcomes, and timelines. Additionally, policy staff have prioritized addressing racial inequities by requiring the review of all policies, programs, and decisions to determine if they will result in inequitable outcomes.

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### FIGURE 8. Characteristics of a Unified Collaborative Response to Address Homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strategic Plans and Policy</strong></th>
<th><strong>Governance</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Houston:** Collaborates communitywide through its “The Way Home Action Plan”  
**Portland, Oregon:** Has a comprehensive strategy through its communitywide “A Home for Everyone” initiative, which includes a strategic plan and action plans  
**San Francisco:** Developed a unified five-year strategic framework that provides a road map for reducing homelessness | **Houston:** Published its “The Way Home Guidebook” that lays out governance procedures for several programs, all of which are overseen by a steering committee  
**Portland:** Implemented communitywide guidelines, including a coordinated policy to address racial inequities |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Continuum of Care</strong></th>
<th><strong>Leadership and Authority</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Houston:** Consolidated oversight under its “The Way Home” initiative  
**Portland:** Consolidated oversight under its “A Home for Everyone” initiative | **Houston:** Manages city’s response by having the mayor’s Office of Homeless Initiatives lead communitywide collaboration among city, state, regional, and federal government entities  
**Portland:** Administers and consolidates all city- and county-level homeless programs through the city’s Joint Office of Homeless Affairs  
**San Francisco:** Consolidates stakeholders’ efforts to provide homelessness and supportive housing under the city’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Performance Metrics</strong></th>
<th><strong>Staff Resources</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Houston:** Uses communitywide performance metrics  
**Portland:** Shares and tracks performance metrics in quarterly reports that are available online  
**San Francisco:** Developing performance metrics across all homeless programs and services | **Houston:** Has dedicated policy and strategy staff  
**San Francisco:** Has dedicated data, policy, and strategy staff  
**Seattle:** Has dedicated data, policy, and strategy staff |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Staff Resources</strong></th>
<th><strong>Data Systems</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Houston:** Manages city’s response by having the mayor’s Office of Homeless Initiatives lead communitywide collaboration among city, state, regional, and federal government entities  
**Portland:** Administers and consolidates all city- and county-level homeless programs through the city’s Joint Office of Homeless Affairs  
**San Francisco:** Consolidates stakeholders’ efforts to provide homelessness and supportive housing under the city’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing | **Houston:** Shares knowledge on child welfare and homelessness through cross-training among city agencies  
**Portland:** Partnered with a nonprofit organization to align workforce development resources with homeless individuals’ needs  
**San Francisco:** Teamed up its police and Department of Public Works to test a new data collection system and conduct outreach |

Source: Auditor’s Office analysis of benchmarking research. Graphic designed by Auditor’s Office staff, using icons made by Freepik from www.flaticon.com.
Continuum of Care – Some municipalities and regions have centrally organized their federal Continuum of Care programs. While Denver’s Continuum of Care is overseen by an external organization—the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative—Portland established oversight of its Continuum of Care program within the city’s lead agency, the Joint Office of Homeless Services. Houston’s Continuum of Care lead agency—Coalition for the Homeless—is a nonprofit that closely coordinates with the mayor’s office and over 100 partners to implement the city’s collaborative framework known as “The Way Home.” San Francisco’s Local Homeless Coordinating Board is the lead entity for the city’s Continuum of Care that works closely with the mayor, the Board of Supervisors, city departments, nonprofits, and the community, including those experiencing homelessness, to create a unified homeless strategy.

Performance Metrics – To track progress toward set goals, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness suggests the development and utilization of annual performance management plans that include specific target actions, milestones, and deadlines. In turn, this assessment informs future revisions to strategies and goals. Houston and Portland have performance measures in place, such as tracking the rate of exits to permanent housing, returns to homelessness, and length of time in shelters. San Francisco is developing citywide performance measures that will track bed utilization by shelter, outreach attempts, and referrals.

Leadership and Authority – In Houston, the Mayor’s Office of Homeless Initiatives manages the city’s response to homelessness by coordinating efforts of various city agencies, federal, state, and regional governments, national experts, and local housing authorities. In Portland, the Joint Office of Homeless Affairs was formed to administer all of Portland’s city- and county-level homeless programs. San Francisco established the Homelessness and Supportive Housing division in 2016 to partner with stakeholders to achieve the goals set in its strategic plan and establish a more coordinated approach.

Staff Resources – Our research found that other cities had certain essential tasks covered by dedicated staff members, such as strategic planning, policy creation, and data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Houston has dedicated staff members working on policy and strategy initiatives. In these roles, the Houston team coordinates the city’s response to homelessness through the allocation of funding to community partners and the coordination of resources with the regional The Way Home Continuum of Care partners. It also serves as policy advisor to the Mayor of Houston, and provides policy and direction to departments in the city that handle homelessness response.

Both San Francisco and Seattle have staff members dedicated to all three essential tasks: policy; strategy; and the collection, analysis, and reporting of data. San Francisco’s Homelessness and Supportive Housing team developed its most recent five-year strategic plan. When the strategic plan was being developed, the staff conducted numerous interviews, surveys, focus groups, community meetings and forums to gather input and receive feedback. San Francisco also researched best practices in other cities that have made significant reductions in homelessness. San Francisco’s policy staff analyzes and interprets local, state, and federal policy. The data analysts on San Francisco’s team set performance measures, build and evaluate the performance measure scorecard, develop dashboards, and collect and analyze data.

[69] Continuum of Care is the federal government’s program designed to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness and to provide services needed to help such individuals move into transitional and permanent housing, with the goal of long-term stability.
Seattle’s Homeless Strategy and Investment Division is made up of four groups—Planning and Development, Grants and Contracts, Direct Response and Community Investment, and Policy. The Policy group focuses on policy and systems improvement and meets regularly with the mayor’s staff. Data analysts, located within the Direct Response and Community Investment group, measure the performance of programs and contractors as well as track the city’s progress with regional goals. The Seattle data team also handles all data requests from the media, the mayor, and other political leaders.

**Systems Collaboration** – To ensure cross-system collaboration, data should be collected, shared, and, where possible, integrated to better serve the homeless population. For example, Houston’s lead agency held cross-training sessions with the child welfare department and other departments that share clients. In Portland, a workforce-related nonprofit that administers workforce funding connects employment resources to the housing resource system. In San Francisco, the Homelessness and Supportive Housing division partnered with police and the Department of Public Works to pilot a new consolidated data collection system.

Although each city’s organizational structure and characteristics vary, this information demonstrates some common practices and approaches to achieve better collaboration and coordination, which, according to leading practices, are fundamental elements that can help reduce homelessness.
The **Auditor** of the City and County of Denver is independently elected by the citizens of Denver. He is responsible for examining and evaluating the operations of City agencies and contractors for the purpose of ensuring the proper and efficient use of City resources. He also provides other audit services and information to City Council, the Mayor, and the public to improve all aspects of Denver’s government.

The **Audit Committee** is chaired by the Auditor and consists of seven members. The Audit Committee assists the Auditor in his oversight responsibilities regarding the integrity of the City’s finances and operations, including the reliability of the City’s financial statements. The Audit Committee is structured in a manner that ensures the independent oversight of City operations, thereby enhancing citizen confidence and avoiding any appearance of a conflict of interest.

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**Our Mission**

We deliver independent, transparent, and professional oversight in order to safeguard and improve the public’s investment in the City of Denver. Our work is performed on behalf of everyone who cares about the City, including its residents, workers, and decision-makers.