



RESEARCH REPORT

Chronic Homelessness Initiative

2021 Progress Report

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Executive Summary

In May 2017, Tipping Point Community, a Bay Area nonprofit organization, announced a \$100 million initiative in partnership with government and community agencies to halve chronic homelessness in San Francisco in five years (called the Chronic Homelessness Initiative, or CHI). To reach this goal, CHI has relied on three strategies: (1) increasing placements of people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing, (2) preventing people from becoming chronically homeless, and (3) changing systems to further the first two goals and increase capacity, accountability, and transparency. This report provides an update on progress made in 2021 toward CHI's goals, as well as describes the challenges the initiative experienced.

Chronic Homelessness Initiative Overview

Tipping Point created CHI to respond to growing numbers of people experiencing chronic homelessness in San Francisco despite long-standing public efforts to assist this population. Tipping Point's ultimate goal is to halve chronic homelessness among individual adults, meaning that if Tipping Point and its city partners meet the goal, 1,056 or fewer individuals will be experiencing chronic homelessness during the January 2023 point-in-time count.

CHI is focused on collaboration between local government, the community, and philanthropy to maximize impact on three central objectives:

- Create more housing, specifically permanent supportive housing (PSH) opportunities for people experiencing chronic homelessness.
- Prevent chronic homelessness by housing people before they become chronically homeless and by improving the systems that serve people vulnerable to homelessness.
- Change systems in ways that help achieve the above and optimize the public sector by increasing capacity, accountability, transparency, and equity as well as elevating the voices of people with lived experience.

Progress in 2021

Progress toward the ultimate goal of halving chronic homelessness remained challenging in 2021. In 2021, San Francisco's government and nonprofit partners placed into housing an estimated 1,271 people experiencing chronic homelessness. Based on modeling and projections of how many people the city would need to place to meet the CHI goal in 2023, city partners fell short of their target by 121 placements. Despite falling short of projected needed placements, the 2021 placements represent significant progress toward placement projections in comparison with prior years, when shortfalls were more than 500 placements. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, city partners were unable to conduct the typical point-in-time count, resulting in gaps in knowledge about progress toward the overall goal in 2023.

Although housing placements for people experiencing chronic homelessness fell short of targets, significant progress on CHI strategies was made in 2021, specifically in efforts to create more housing and prevent chronic homelessness. In 2021, Tipping Point and its partners achieved significant progress in two primary housing programs: the Homes for the Homeless Fund and the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool (Flex Pool). The Homes for the Homeless Fund is a revolving funding strategy to pilot innovative approaches that aim to reduce the time and cost of developing PSH for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in San Francisco. In 2021, Tipping Point's investment resulted in the opening of a 145-unit building at 833 Bryant Street, and funds recycled from that development were used to acquire two additional buildings. The Flex Pool, launched by Tipping Point and partners in July 2020, created a wider supply of units than previously available in San Francisco by opening private market resources. And, owing to this established infrastructure, the Flex Pool was significantly expanded when additional city resources became available to address homelessness.

Tipping Point also invested in efforts to prevent chronic homelessness by increasing capacity to identify and house people at risk. Many of Tipping Point's prevention programs are small pilot programs intended to serve as proof points. In 2021, Tipping Point launched or continued a number of these programs:

- Step Up to Freedom
- Hummingbird Place Peer Respite Center
- Launchpads
- Jail Transition Support Project
- Transgender, Gender-Variant, Intersex Justice Project
- SPARK (Stable Pathways to Achievement, Resilience, and Knowledge) Initiative

Tipping Point continued to work toward lasting systems change by leveraging funds, building capacity, and convening partners. Partners consistently identified these activities as some of the most valuable Tipping Point contributions in 2021 and throughout the CHI effort. Specifically, in 2021, partners highlighted Tipping Point's work to build government capacity to address equity concerns, investments in organizations led by and serving the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, and efforts to elevate the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness.

Challenges

Progress in 2021 was hindered by system-capacity challenges, including a slow and inconsistent pace of referrals of people to housing programs, a failure to fill vacant site-based PSH units, barriers to entry in PSH programs, and struggles to demobilize the hotels used to shelter people during the pandemic. Many of the challenges respondents identified predated the pandemic but were exacerbated by pandemic conditions and pressures. For example, documentation requirements for PSH, such as government-issued identification and social security cards, were a long-standing challenge, but the pandemic resulted in several closures of social security and other offices, making documentation more challenging to obtain than usual.

A Look Forward

In 2021, partners reflected that many were no longer optimistic that the ultimate goal of CHI, halving chronic homelessness by the 2023 point-in-time count, was achievable. Despite this, 2022 will be critical to understanding the effectiveness of CHI-funded programs. The Urban Institute's evaluation of CHI will examine critical questions such as the following:

- Was the Homes for the Homeless Fund successful in decreasing the time and costs of PSH development?
- What were the outcomes for participants in the Flex Pool, Rising Up, and Step Up to Freedom?
- How will CHI evolve in its final year of implementation?
- Did CHI investments effectively help organizations meet CHI goals?
- Did CHI achieve any systems change that will outlast CHI funding?

Chronic Homelessness Initiative: 2021 Progress Report

In May 2017, Tipping Point Community launched a \$100 million initiative to halve chronic homelessness among single adults in San Francisco in five years. Tipping Point's Chronic Homelessness Initiative (CHI) is the largest private investment to address homelessness in the city's history. To reach its goal, CHI relies on three strategies: (1) increasing placements of people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing, (2) preventing people from becoming chronically homeless, and (3) changing systems to further the first two goals and increase capacity, accountability, and transparency.

Tipping Point engaged the Urban Institute (Urban) to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of CHI. The evaluation's primary goal is to evaluate CHI's overall success in helping San Francisco halve chronic homelessness and make long-term, systemwide improvements that support the city's most vulnerable residents. Urban is also conducting program evaluations of specific CHI activities and strategies. The findings here are based on an analysis of publicly available data from the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH), data grantees reported to Tipping Point, and 162 interviews with Tipping Point staff members, grantees, participants in grant programs, and community advisory board members, as well as government and community partners.

Chronic Homelessness Initiative Overview

CHI was created in response to growing numbers of people in San Francisco experiencing chronic homelessness—that is, repeated or prolonged homelessness experienced by a person who has a disability—despite long-standing public efforts to respond. Tipping Point's ultimate goal is to halve chronic homelessness among individuals without children, as measured by the difference between the 2017 and 2023 point-in-time counts—biannual, one-night estimates of people experiencing homelessness. In 2017, 2,112 individuals were experiencing chronic homelessness in San Francisco (ASR 2017, 41). If Tipping Point and its city partners meet the goal, 1,056 or fewer individuals will experience chronic homelessness in January 2023. To achieve this, CHI has three central objectives:

- Create more housing, specifically permanent supportive housing (PSH) opportunities for people experiencing chronic homelessness.

- Prevent chronic homelessness by housing people before they become chronically homeless and by improving the systems that serve people vulnerable to homelessness.
- Change systems in ways that help achieve the above and optimize the public sector by increasing capacity and improving policy, increase accountability and transparency, and elevate the voices of people with lived experience.

Theory of Change

CHI's theory of change is focused on collaboration between local government, the community, and philanthropy to maximize impact on its three central objectives. From the genesis of CHI to its current implementation, the theory of change has been refined through continuous learning and in-depth inquiry into CHI strategies. A Tipping Point internal analysis of CHI's impact and progress, conducted in Spring 2020, identified two key elements of the theory of change to emphasize in the final years of the initiative: system transparency and accountability and innovative solutions to ending homelessness. Since then, Tipping Point has built on early progress across the three objectives by focusing on these elements.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Tipping Point relies on a CHI dashboard tracking tool, developed in partnership with Urban, that models chronic homelessness inflow and housing placements in response to targeted efforts in the years leading to the 2023 PIT count. The dashboard reflects actual housing placements and projected housing placement goals and is updated quarterly. Tipping Point prioritized the development of the CHI dashboard to create a publicly visible tracking system of data not otherwise made available by the city, furthering the goal of system transparency and accountability. Tipping Point has continued to use the dashboard to understand progress in key programs and areas for improvement in processes and systems.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Tipping Point intensified its concentration on housing creation through CHI by gearing its activities toward "expanding the solution space." San Francisco has historically relied on PSH as its primary strategy to create housing, and the city has established a portfolio of project-based PSH options for single adults experiencing homelessness. Tipping Point has expanded the city's portfolio of housing options beyond site-based PSH to address a wider population and a greater diversity of needs. CHI funded the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool, a rapid re-housing program for transition-age youth, and

pathways to housing for people engaged with the criminal legal system. Tipping Point's investments in CHI programs and strategies aim to build a more creative homelessness response system and decrease inflow into chronic homelessness.

Evaluation

Tipping Point engaged the Urban Institute to evaluate implementation and outcomes of CHI. The Urban evaluation team's primary goal is to evaluate CHI's success in helping San Francisco halve chronic homelessness and make long-term, systemic improvements. This report focuses on findings from the evaluation in 2021. For a summary of findings from prior years, see Appendix A or prior reports (Batko et al. 2021). In addition to evaluating the systems change impacts of CHI, Urban is conducting program evaluations of specific CHI activities and strategies, including the Moving On Initiative (Feiss, Bamberger, and Leopold 2019; Perez et al. 2019), the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool, the Rising Up program (Batko, Gold, and Williams 2021; Gold et al. 2021), the Homes for the Homeless Fund, Step Up to Freedom, and CHI's community advisory board.

One primary method of measuring success is to track housing placements for people experiencing chronic homelessness across city homeless assistance programs along with placements in key CHI-funded programs. Data on placements come from a variety of sources, including government partners and grantees. HSH provides Tipping Point and the evaluation team with aggregate placement data by month for key programming types. Tipping Point grantees provide placement data by month to Tipping Point and by quarter to the evaluation team.

These data on placements are complemented and contextualized by data collected through interviews with Tipping Point partners and stakeholders about successes of the initiative, challenges faced, and lessons learned. Over the course of the evaluation, Urban has conducted 162 interviews with Tipping Point staff, donors, and board members; community advisory board members; government and community partners; grantees; and participants in programs. The analysis of data from interviews is complemented by a document review of Tipping Point staff reports, donor reports, grantee reports, and media coverage.

Placements in 2021

As previously noted, Urban tracks progress toward CHI goals using data on placements. Urban produces a quarterly dashboard to model this progress, tracking placements against projections for

each program and for CHI overall (see Appendix B for definitions of placement types, details on the assumptions built into the model, and limitations).

In 2021, San Francisco’s government and nonprofit partners placed into housing an estimated 1,271 people experiencing chronic homelessness (table 1). On the basis of modeling and projections of how many people the city would need to place to meet the CHI goal in 2023, city partners made 91 percent of projected needed placements, falling short by only 121 placements. This represents significant progress in comparison with prior years when the system fell far shorter of placement projections (Batko et al. 2021). Available data suggest that the increase in placements is entirely explained by placements in newly developed or acquired PSH units and an increase in voucher and Flex Pool placements. And, placements significantly increased in the latter half of the year.

TABLE 1
Progress toward 2021 Housing Placement Targets in San Francisco, by Key Homelessness Programming Type

Number and Percentage of Housing Placements of People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness

| Program Type | Placements | | | | | % of Target |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Total | |
| Existing and new permanent supportive housing | 170 | 210 | 253 | 273 | 906 | 75.9 |
| Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool | 37 | 35 | 79 | 27 | 178 | 77.7 |
| Voucher/subsidy | 0 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 11 | n/a |
| Problem-solving | 6 | 8 | 8 | 11 | 33 | n/a |
| Adult rapid re-housing | 39 | 16 | 42 | 35 | 132 | n/a |
| Rising Up | 7 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 26.8 |
| Total | 259 | 270 | 385 | 357 | 1,271 | 91.3 |

Sources: San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and Tipping Point grantee monthly and quarterly reporting.

Notes: Existing and new permanent supportive housing are calculated as all placements for adult and transition-age youth (18 to 24 years old), as reported by the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, that cannot be attributed to the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool, rapid re-housing, or Rising Up placements reported to Tipping Point. Voucher placements are placements of people experiencing chronic homelessness through the Mainstream voucher program administered by the San Francisco Housing Authority. Mainstream voucher placements in the first, second, and third quarters are included in the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool placements, accounting for 50 of 250 projected placements. Placements in the Mainstream Voucher program that exceeded those 50 placements are categorized as voucher/subsidy in the third and fourth quarters. Problem-solving placements are calculated as 15 percent of placements in problem-solving programming reported by the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. This method of estimation is consistent with department estimates of the share of problem-solving placements for people experiencing chronic homelessness in previous years. Placement projections are not made for all program types, so a “percentage toward target” is not given. Reported placements estimates are based on the most recently available data provided to the research team. Year over year, reported placements for prior years may change based on retroactively updated data.

n/a = not available.

Consistent with prior years, most of the 906 housing placements for people experiencing chronic homelessness were made into existing or new PSH. Placements into existing PSH are those that turn over when a tenant exits the program, and placements into new PSH are made when the city opens a newly developed or renovated building. Although PSH placements increased across the four quarters of the year, and although they accounted for the majority of 2021 placements, they fell short by 287 in 2021. The Flex Pool, a program established in the second half of 2020, and Rising Up also fell short of projected targets. Projected targets were not available for all programs, and data do not include reporting on the universe of problem-solving activities implemented in San Francisco.

Tipping Point also invests in programming to prevent people from becoming chronically homeless (table 2). Tipping Point exceeded placement goals for one of its programs designed for this purpose—Rising Up. In 2021, Tipping Point projected that partners could make 58 placements in programs targeted to preventing a person from entering chronic homelessness. At the end of the fourth quarter of 2021, Tipping Point Community and its partners made 89 prevention placements. Those 89 placements included 52 prevention placements for Rising Up and 25 prevention placements for the Jail Transition Support Project, which does not currently have projected placement targets. They also made 2 prevention placements in the SPARK program and 10 in the Step Up to Freedom program.

The evaluation was not designed to determine whether these placements actually prevented an entry into chronic homelessness. However, CHI programs are targeted to people who present with risk factors for experiencing chronic homelessness, including people exiting systems that have high rates of homelessness associated with exit, such as the child welfare and criminal legal systems; people with multiple prior episodes of homelessness; and people with disabilities.

TABLE 2

Progress toward 2021 Housing Placement Targets in San Francisco, by Key Prevention Program Type

Number and Percentage of Housing Placements of People At Risk of Experiencing Chronic Homelessness

| Program Type | Placements | | | | | Total | % of Target |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | | |
| Rising Up | 11 | 9 | 15 | 17 | 52 | 136.8 | |
| Launchpads | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | n/a | |
| SPARK | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | n/a | |
| Step Up to Freedom | 6 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 10 | n/a | |
| Jail Transition Support Project | 0 | 0 | 13 | 12 | 25 | n/a | |
| Total | 17 | 13 | 30 | 29 | 89 | 153.4 | |

Source: Tipping Point grantee monthly and quarterly reporting.

Notes: Projected placements were not provided for all programs, so a “percentage toward target” is not given.
n/a = not available.

Progress in 2021

Housing placements for people experiencing chronic homelessness fell short of targets across nearly all programming types. Despite this, there were significant areas of progress in 2021, specifically efforts to create more housing and prevent chronic homelessness.

Creating More Housing

Tipping Point collaborates with nonprofit and government agency partners to deliver on their aim to create more housing, specifically PSH for people experiencing chronic homelessness. And, interview respondents consistently reflected that Tipping Point has made the most progress in creating more housing targeted to people experiencing chronic homelessness. In 2021, Tipping Point continued investments in three primary projects to forward this goal: The Homes for the Homeless Fund (HHF) and 833 Bryant Street, the Flex Pool, and Rising Up. However, specific points of progress were made in both the HHF and Flex Pool efforts.

HOMES FOR THE HOMELESS FUND

The HHF is a revolving funding strategy for piloting innovative approaches to reduce the time and cost of developing PSH for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in San Francisco. Tipping Point’s involvement with the HHF was made possible by a \$65 million gift from the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation. In 2021, Tipping Point’s initial investment accelerated progress in the development of the 833 Bryant Street site, and recycled funds were used to acquire two additional buildings for conversion to PSH. The projects Tipping Point advanced through the HHF aimed to create systems change in how San Francisco approaches housing development and to be replicable models for future PSH development.

833 Bryant Street

The largest single investment Tipping Point made as part of CHI was the development of 833 Bryant Street through the HHF and the San Francisco Housing Accelerator Fund. The philanthropic investment allowed Tipping Point and the Housing Accelerator Fund to complete the project without any upfront public funding. The project’s goals are to evidence decrease in the per unit cost of building

supportive housing and to increase the speed of development through upfront philanthropic financing and modular construction.

In 2020, 833 Bryant Street closed on financing and started construction; modular units were installed, and roofing and exterior work were under way. Development of the building was completed by 2021. In recognition of the building's location within the SOMA Pilipinas cultural district, the project team consulted with Pilipinas staff on the design of the building. Tipping Point's community advisory board later named the building "Tahanan"—a Tagalog word meaning "home," "coming home," or "returning home."

Interview respondents in 2019 and 2020 indicated that 833 Bryant Street was on track to meet a development goal of two years and nine months and to meet the goal of keeping total development costs under \$400,000 per unit, in comparison to the up to \$600,000 estimated cost of a PSH unit in San Francisco.¹ And despite delays in construction in early 2021, several respondents reported that the project would successfully reduce construction costs and timeline and expected positive impacts on future planning in San Francisco. A respondent interviewed in 2021 noted that Tipping Point focused on sticking to the timeline and budget at the outset of the project and that developers were able to take advantage of streamlined zoning and approval processes. This respondent credited what they expected to be on-time completion of the project to Tipping Point's attentiveness to project timeline and budget.

The Urban evaluation team is analyzing final cost and timeline data for Tahanan and will release a brief in 2022 detailing costs, timeline for construction, and lessons learned from the process.

Acquisition Projects: The Granada and the Diva Hotels

The Housing Accelerator Fund employed \$22 million of the \$50 million HHF pool as bridge funding to acquire two buildings—the Granada and Diva hotels—through the Project Homekey program for developing site-based PSH and affordable housing. The Granada Hotel, acquired in November 2020, will house 70 low-income tenants and 162 chronically homeless individuals in studio apartments acquired and rehabilitated by development partners. The cost of bringing each unit online is expected to be no more than \$375,000. The second acquisition project was the Diva Hotel, involving the rehabilitation of 130 studio apartments to house individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. The Diva was acquired in December 2020 and was expected to be complete in early 2022. At the time of interviews, cost per unit was expected to be no more than \$414,000.

FLEXIBLE HOUSING SUBSIDY POOL

The Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool is a novel housing model in San Francisco. Historically, the city has relied on acquisition and development of site-based PSH units. The Flex Pool, launched by Tipping Point and partners in July 2020, created a wider supply of units than previously available in San Francisco by opening private market resources. Interview respondents in 2020 and 2021 praised the utility of the model; some noted that given the cost of building PSH units in San Francisco, the Flex Pool creates greater capacity to house people quickly. Some respondents noted that units provided through the Flex Pool are a particularly desirable option for people experiencing chronic homelessness because of the autonomy associated with choosing a neighborhood and a housing unit.

The Flex Pool is a public-private partnership of HSH, Tipping Point, Brilliant Corners, the Felton Institute, UCSF Citywide Case Management, Dignity Health, and other philanthropic partners. HSH refers eligible individuals to the Flex Pool. Brilliant Corners engages landlords to secure units for prospective tenants and supports tenants in the leasing process. Once tenants are in housing, they contribute 30 percent of their incomes toward rent while receiving rental subsidies and supportive services that help them stay housed for the long term.

Respondents credited the successful launch of the Flex Pool largely to Tipping Point, citing their support to Brilliant Corners in building funding capacity and their persistence and flexibility in advancing the program during the difficult fiscal and operational environment in 2020. Along with other philanthropic groups such as Dignity Health, Tipping Point funded 200 rental subsidies for 18 months and supported housing location, housing stabilization, and case management services. Tipping Point also funded partnerships with two supportive services partners, Citywide and Felton, to provide participants intensive case management services. The San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA) participated by committing 50 Mainstream vouchers to the Flex Pool, and HSH committed to providing long-term housing support for current and future participants.

Brilliant Corners expanded its pool of landlords to accommodate increased referrals and reduced time from referral to housing lease-up from an average of 80 days between July 1 and September 30, 2020, to 50 days between October 1, 2020, and the end of the year—a reduction of 38 percent. Quick lease-up is credited with allowing San Francisco to apply for and receive 100 additional Mainstream vouchers from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. And, when city funding became available through Proposition C in 2020, the Flex Pool expanded to more than 1,000 units and added new service providers. Government respondents said that the Flex Pool scaled up at the right moment to absorb the demand for housing placements required by the shelter-in-place re-housing

plan. Furthermore, the pool enabled the homelessness response sector to quickly employ available resources by substantially expanding scattered-site housing options.

Preventing Chronic Homelessness

Tipping Point aims to prevent chronic homelessness through CHI by increasing the capacity to identify and house people at risk of experiencing chronic homelessness. Many of Tipping Point's prevention programs are pilot programs intended to serve as proof points but too small to substantially decrease the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness. Tipping Point has partnered with organizations that reach individuals transitioning from systems that disproportionately correlate with homelessness, such as the criminal legal and behavioral health systems. Tipping Point also partners with organizations that support individuals historically excluded from the private housing market and insufficiently supported by mainstream systems, including BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, and transition-age youth.

In comparison with earlier years of CHI implementation, interview respondents in 2021 were much more aware of Tipping Point's prevention efforts. This may have been because through 2020, most of Tipping Point's prevention strategies remained in the planning stages. Respondents identified several prevention programs in which Tipping Point had invested, including Rising Up; Step Up to Freedom; Hummingbird Place Peer Respite Center; Launchpads; the Jail Transition Support Project; the Transgender, Gender-Variant, and Intersex Justice Project; and the SPARK Initiative (as well as the SSI/SSDI Advocacy Program). Respondents were aware these programs were prevention programs associated with CHI, and details on the programs that saw notable progress in 2021 are provided in this section. An additional project, a cash transfer pilot, began in late 2021 but was not operating at the time interviews were completed. Future reports will include information on this pilot.

STEP UP TO FREEDOM

Step Up to Freedom is a rapid re-housing program for people involved with the criminal legal system who have prior experiences of homelessness. It was launched in 2020 in partnership with the San Francisco Adult Probation Department and Episcopal Community Services. To date, the program has re-housed 39 people, providing housing location, rent assistance, and housing stabilization services. Participants are identified on the basis of their risks of experiencing homelessness after incarceration and chronic homelessness after past experiences of homelessness. Tipping Point and partners hope the pilot will serve as a proof of concept for intervention with rapid re-housing during reentry for people whose histories indicate possible risk of long-term homelessness. Urban is conducting a

program evaluation of the Step Up to Freedom program and early findings are expected in Spring 2022.

HUMMINGBIRD PLACE PEER RESPITE CENTER

The Hummingbird psychiatric respite center offers both day and overnight services to individuals experiencing homelessness who also have a serious mental health or substance use disorder. In partnership with the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) and on the basis of a report Tipping Point commissioned in 2019 (JSI 2019), the city, with Tipping Point support, established a second Hummingbird respite center in 2021. A primary goal of the Hummingbird center is to actively encourage people experiencing homelessness to access treatment options. Program launch was delayed several times during the COVID-19 pandemic, and interview respondents reported that only a handful of participants were successfully transitioned to treatment.

LAUNCHPADS

Launchpads was a web-based platform to help young people transitioning out of foster care connect with landlords and property managers, managed by Tipping Point grantee Freedom Forward. After a delay caused by a lack of potential “hosts” during COVID-19, Launchpads officially went online in April 2021 with three hosts and five social workers. The Launchpads team continued to work to recruit new hosts and collaborate with social workers to refine processes and make their first placements, but because of the timing of program rollout and pandemic concerns, Launchpads struggled to secure hosts and recruit young people. Given these challenges, Freedom Forward decided in January 2022 to close Launchpads and pivot to other opportunities that better resonate with the community.

JAIL TRANSITION SUPPORT PROJECT

Launched at the end of 2021, the San Francisco Pretrial Diversion Project, also known as the Jail Transition Support Project, connects individuals with criminal legal system involvement at risk of homelessness to housing through local support services and jail in-reach. The project provides people experiencing homelessness who are also frequently incarcerated with case management services and flexible funding to ensure that they have access to the city’s homeless assistance resources.

TRANSGENDER, GENDER-VARIANT, INTERSEX JUSTICE PROJECT

The Transgender, Gender-Variant, Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP), supported by Tipping Point through CHI, is a housing program with the goal of preventing chronic homelessness. TGIJP has historically advocated for and offered services to trans people of color exiting the criminal legal

system and needing employment. Tipping Point partnered with TGIJP because its community is commonly underserved by homeless assistance resources. This project increases access points for individuals from the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities to enter the housing system and feel safe receiving services. In the past year, TGIJP has successfully housed 75 people and has worked to ensure that they sustain that housing.

SPARK INITIATIVE

SPARK (Stable Pathways to Achievement, Resilience, and Knowledge) was a Tipping Point-funded three-county initiative offering peer-to-peer support to engage youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness and help connect them to housing and stabilizing services. This program ended in June 2021. Services were offered through collaborative services teams and included referrals to external services such as civil legal advocacy, education, and employment. CHI also worked with researchers at the University of Southern California to use SPARK data to document a registry of young people experiencing homelessness in California. Between 2020 and 2021, SPARK placed 18 young people from San Francisco in housing.

Changing Systems

Tipping Point aims to create system-level changes to the homelessness response in San Francisco in order to successfully create more housing and prevent chronic homelessness by improving policies and increasing system capacity, increasing accountability and transparency, advancing equity, and elevating the voices of people with lived experience. Tipping Point staff, stakeholders, and partners interviewed in 2020 and 2021 identified four areas where Tipping Point has made the most impactful change: advancing equity and elevating the voices of people with lived experience, leveraging funds, building capacity, and convening partners. Tipping Point also promotes transparency and accountability, as well as public awareness.

ADVANCING EQUITY AND ELEVATING THE VOICES OF PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

Advancing equity and elevating the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness is a policy Tipping Point intended to integrate into all CHI strategies. Tipping Point staff noted that a commitment to equity underscores all its efforts to end homelessness in San Francisco. Respondents identified several ways Tipping Point has advanced equity: supporting government equity efforts, expanding their grantmaking portfolio to increase investments in BIPOC- and LGBTQ+-led organizations and organizations that serve communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness,

creating a community advisory board comprised of people with lived experience of homelessness, and collecting more demographic data to understand and rectify disparities in program implementation.

Building Government Capacity to Address Equity

Respondents cited the funding of an equity consultant for HSH as a step toward a more equitable response to homelessness and a “significant system-changing agent.” A government partner explained, “If you help build equity in the central funding agency in the department, it can have implications for the rest of the system of care.” San Francisco government staff interviewed in 2021 reported increased dialogue about equitable practices and a shift in focus to address inequities in the system that “can no longer be ignored.”

Investing in Organizations Led by and Serving BIPOC and LGBTQ+ Communities

Tipping Point increased investment in programs led by and serving historically marginalized and underserved target populations such as BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, and people reentering from the criminal legal system. These organizations reported that Tipping Point’s intentional grantmaking provided smaller organizations with opportunities to leverage funding and provide services in capacities similar to the large organizations that typically receive city and state funding.

Respondents also felt that CHI investment in BIPOC- and LGBTQ+-led organizations not typically funded by the city increased capacity in the system for equitable and community-driven work. One respondent explained the importance of having organizations led by and focused on the populations they serve: “We don’t take that traditional route; we look at what’s safe for our people individually... a lot of times my community don’t want to go to these specific places because of the hostility and the blatant transphobia and homophobia that’s underlying in the staff that are present. We’ve removed that, and we’ve created a place where we can sit down and talk to people and they see people similar to them.”

Respondents also appreciated that Tipping Point convened conversations on cultural competency surrounding the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. The conversations on cultural competency involved ensuring that members of those communities have a voice in addressing the issues they face, without focusing on what has worked for other communities. Tipping Point brought government and grassroots organizations together to help shape city policies and allow these organizations to be trusted as partners. Respondents noted that these opportunities might have not otherwise been available: “[Tipping Point] comes to grassroots organizations targeting populations that have been left

out. I think the city's efforts have been mainly more gathering stakeholders than really targeting communities.”

Elevating the Voices of People with Lived Experience

Tipping Point invested in including the voice of people with lived experience of homelessness in several ways, but respondents most frequently mentioned the CHI community advisory board (CAB). In 2019, Tipping Point launched the CAB to augment CHI's strategies by including expertise from people with lived experience of homelessness. The CAB, intended to advise and provide recommendations on CHI strategies, funding, and policies, includes a diversity of identities and experiences that reflect those of people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco. Board members collectively have a breadth of expertise grounded in lived experience and community involvement. According to one member of the board, “The benefit of having this community advisory board is that we kind of touch upon some of the other intersectional issues that coexist with homelessness like how race or sexuality or gender identity or other identity issues come in to play, how homelessness impacts members of those communities and puts things into that perspective—I guess that's what does make this a community advisory board.”

Because the CAB was created as an advisory body to provide Tipping Point policymakers and planners with recommendations, the board convenes monthly to review proposals for CHI strategies and programs. Since its launch, the CAB has offered feedback on several CHI initiatives, including Hummingbird, the All In Campaign, Step Up to Freedom, and Tahanan. Members also discuss ongoing challenges in San Francisco relevant to CHI's work, including the effects of systemic racism on people experiencing homelessness and the efficacy of affordable housing development in the city.

Members of the CAB join Tipping Point's Housing Sub-Committee meetings quarterly. CAB members participate in committee discussions and provide feedback on planning decisions, and housing committee members consider CAB opinions before voting. The Tipping Point board considers the housing committee vote when making final funding decisions. Tipping Point staff and Housing Sub-Committee members shared that the CAB changed the tenor of conversations, raised concerns and challenges not previously considered, and leveraged their own networks to increase Tipping Point's reach. Staff and committee members described how these changes manifested, from tangible changes such as the language and terms used to more intangible changes such as discussing programs in terms of impacts on community and individuals instead of costs.

The responsibilities of the CAB have expanded to include participatory grantmaking. Participatory grantmaking was a CAB-led project built from within the CAB and not designated as a CHI project.

Central to the participatory grantmaking process was the CAB members' lived experience participating in services and current involvement with the community. Members identified where funds were needed in the service landscape and who in the community could make impact with funding. Tipping Point staff who work and consult with the CAB noted that members had a clear understanding of what works in practice and which providers are working well. Board members cocreated grants to fund local organizations, and distributed more than \$200,000 by December 2021. These funds will support general operations, capacity building, and project implementation for local organizations. Staff noted that the CAB chose organizations that Tipping Point had not known or funded previously.

In addition to providing feedback on individual strategies and proposed projects, the CAB provides direct communication from Tipping Point decisionmakers to the communities targeted for Tipping Point programming. As one staff member noted, "intentions and ideas can be lost in translation" between philanthropic organizations, their grantees, and the communities with whom they engage. Tipping Point staff reflected that the CAB was one way to ensure CHI efforts were aligned with real need.

In addition to the CAB, Tipping Point funded programs that hired people with lived experience of homelessness. Two people highlighted by respondents were in Step Up to Freedom, which program planners saw as a significant benefit because it grounded their work in solutions that are effective and impactful for the populations they serve, and five were fellows with lived experience for the Jail Transition Support Project. Tipping Point also created a position for a Rising Up participant to advise on program decisions and strategies as a member of the Rising Up steering committee.

LEVERAGING FUNDS

In accordance with the CHI theory of change, Tipping Point staff stress that organizations can use flexible funding to invest in projects that can intentionally leverage untapped state and federal funding sources and be sustained by public resources after the philanthropic investment. In prior years, respondents identified the Moving on Initiative (MOI) as the primary example of Tipping Point leveraging public resources. In 2021, interview respondents credited Tipping Point with jumpstarting the Flex Pool with private investments, leveraging existing housing resources for MOI program launch in the form of Mainstream vouchers and Proposition C funds, and effectively creating a structure that the San Francisco government and partners can continue with public funds.

Respondents viewed Tipping Point's ability to take risks with flexible funding as integral to success in leveraging funds. Tipping Point, they said, is nimbler than the San Francisco government because they are subject to fewer restrictions in spending and compliance and have fewer silos in resource

allocation. Government stakeholders identified Tipping Point's value-add as being able to pivot resources quickly to address immediate needs or fill gaps to maximize the effectiveness of government investments. Interview respondents consistently reported that Tipping Point has the flexibility and capacity to leverage funds to take quick action in areas that need improvement or immediate support. One respondent interviewed in 2021 identified Tipping Point's role as being able to "unstick" funding processes to expedite system improvements. Other respondents noted how Tipping Point can "unlock" public resources through strategic investments.

Tipping Point resources also enabled grantees to more effectively leverage resources. Several nonprofit providers and program directors noted that Tipping Point adjusts funding as programs evolve, enabling nonprofits the flexibility to address specific growth points and thus expand their organizations and services.

BUILDING CAPACITY

Tipping Point has built capacity in the homelessness response system by providing San Francisco government and partners with timely resources to fill gaps not otherwise met with public funding. In prior years of the Urban evaluation, examples of Tipping Point capacity building included the hiring of a part-time staff member to clean and analyze criminal legal system data, the hiring of consultants to draft the San Francisco proposal for the Whole Person Care waiver, and commissioning the UCSF/Tipping Point report on homelessness and behavioral health needs (JSI 2019). In 2020 and 2021, Tipping Point served in an advisory role to the Proposition C oversight committee. When Proposition C money became available, Tipping Point signed a memorandum of understanding with the San Francisco Controller's Office and developed an analysis of the system-level effects of Proposition C funding on the city's homelessness response. This analysis informed Tipping Point's recommendations on how the city could most effectively spend the inflow.

Respondents interviewed in 2020 and 2021, across both government and nonprofit agencies, observed Tipping Point's work to expand capacity in local nonprofits. Many cited Tipping Point's ongoing investments in Brilliant Corners, saying that Brilliant Corners would not have been able to operate at its current level or make many of its housing placements without grants from Tipping Point.

CONVENING GOVERNMENT AND NONPROFIT PARTNERS

Stakeholders commented on Tipping Point's ability to break down silos between government agencies. Respondents from government agencies said that Tipping Point's role as a convener kept agency leaders, particularly those with missions other than ending homelessness, in conversation with

the right people at other agencies to create more collaboration and communication between systems. And, some respondents from governmental agencies reported that Tipping Point's convening enabled collaboration in a sometimes-challenging political environment.

Respondents cited examples of collaboration between DPH and HSH and between the criminal legal and housing systems. Tipping Point convening and funding were attributed with increased collaboration between DPH and HSH to create a more integrated care model that connects people experiencing homelessness and engaged in health services with housing. According to respondents, "CHI helped shape the conversation" and "kept the motivation going" to connect behavioral health services from DPH and housing provision from HSH. Tipping Point funded an analysis of treatment bed and care needs to create a report detailing opportunities to improve outcomes and developed an online system for tracking vacancies in treatment beds across DPH providers. And, the partnership between DPH and Tipping Point led to expansion of the Hummingbird Place Peer Respite Center with a \$3 million Tipping Point grant.

Similarly, respondents interviewed in 2021 mentioned Tipping Point's collaboration with the Adult Probation Department and organizations that support people involved with the criminal legal system as an example of Tipping Point's convening power. Specifically, Tipping Point's involvement with criminal legal system partners was seen as important by those involved in the partnership because Tipping Point was able to facilitate the use of Proposition C resources for housing and to create bridge housing opportunities. In addition to Step Up to Freedom, the Jail Transition Support Project and Tipping Point's recent partnership with TGIJP were mentioned across many interviews as promising efforts supported by this collaboration.

CHI was consistently identified as a galvanizing initiative, bringing local providers, stakeholders, and community members into conversation with funders and the San Francisco government. Tipping Point's nonprofit partners felt their partnership validated their organization to the city and created future opportunities to partner with the city. According to a director of a local organization partnered with Tipping Point, "The city comes to us more directly now, because we have the feedback from Tipping Point as a partner that can be trusted and we have knowledge about this population. So, we are now receiving funding from the city."

Local providers reported that partnership with Tipping Point created greater alignment across agencies implementing discrete programs. One nonprofit stakeholder reflected that the Rising Up program experienced early success because partners were working toward a shared mission: "It has been effective because of that shared group that could say how do we pivot, and how to work

together on challenges encountered. That has been effective for housing people at risk of homelessness, and at the systems-change level.”

SUPPORTING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

An initial goal CHI included in its theory of change is to increase transparency and accountability in government agencies and broader systems of care. Respondents saw Tipping Point as improving transparency and accountability by engaging the community in CHI efforts and strategies and by increasing data tracking and reporting.

Tipping Point aims to improve data collection and sharing across San Francisco’s homelessness response system. Tipping Point, in partnership with Urban, created a dashboard of placements and prevention to mark progress toward its goal of halving chronic homelessness by 2023. Housing placements made by CHI partners and the city are reported by Urban’s evaluation team in a quarterly dashboard. This dashboard is intended to hold Tipping Point and government partners to CHI accountable for placement goals and to fill a gap in public knowledge. CHI also supported the creation of a shelter-in-place re-housing dashboard to track progress on the city’s shelter-in-place re-housing and site demobilization plan. HSH populates this public dashboard with housing placement data, but it does not clearly report progress toward goals.

Some interview respondents commented that these dashboards resulted in siloed accountability. Those who provided data were more likely to face accountability questions, while those who provided no data did not face the same scrutiny. Respondents said that for the dashboard to be a truly effective accountability tool, more and better data would be needed.

BUILDING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

CHI’s All In Campaign engages residents of San Francisco through community organizing, speaking engagements, and social media. Before Tipping Point launched the All In Campaign in mid-2019, interview respondents consistently expressed excitement and optimism that the campaign would be influential. After its launch, interview respondents had positive impressions, despite survey results that showed slight increases in public awareness of solutions to homelessness but low public awareness of the All In Campaign. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors, which passed a resolution backing the campaign, continued to support it.

Throughout interviews from 2019 to 2021, respondents questioned the campaign’s focus, expressing hope that it would better represent people with lived experiences of homelessness and be used more clearly as an advocacy tool to garner local support for evidence-based solutions. Since

launching in July 2019, All In has recruited more than 9,000 individual pledge signers and has grown its coalition to include 95 partners from business, labor, nonprofit, and faith sectors.

Challenges

Tipping Point and its partners have faced challenges since the start of CHI, including changes in the political and economic landscape, organizational shifts, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated issues in the homelessness response system that existed before 2020 and introduced new challenges. Interviews conducted through Fall 2021 indicated mixed views on the feasibility of Tipping Point and CHI partners achieving their ultimate goal, generally as a result of challenges that have emerged during and since the pandemic. Respondents indicated that progress on placements with new resources was not made quickly enough, and progress continued to be hampered by system-capacity challenges, including slow and inconsistent referrals, failure to fill vacant site-based PSH units, barriers to entry in PSH programs, and struggles demobilizing shelter-in-place hotels.

Challenges Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

CHI has faced challenges resulting directly from the need to slow the spread of COVID-19. At the start of the pandemic, the city's main focus shifted to keeping people safe from infection by temporarily housing people in shelter-in-place hotels, including reducing the number of people housed in congregate shelters where COVID-19 spread rapidly. Additional challenges included the transfer of staff from HSH's housing team to San Francisco's COVID crisis command center and staffing-capacity challenges at nonprofits operating programs at all levels of the system. Permanent housing placement slowed during this time, likely because of this necessary shift in focus.

Furthermore, the pandemic prevented the point-in-time count in 2021, which limits the ability to assess the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in San Francisco and understand CHI's progress. There will be a count in 2022, but the missing count in 2021 limits partners' ability to correct course toward meeting goals by 2023.

Systemic Challenges

Interview respondents mentioned challenges unrelated to COVID, some of which predated the pandemic and others that emerged as the city tried to implement new housing programs, including the

shelter-in-place re-housing plan. These included inconsistent referral pace, vacant PSH units, San Francisco's housing market, and political challenges.

REFERRAL PACE

A common challenge throughout 2020 and 2021 was the inconsistent pace of referrals from coordinated entry to housing providers. When the referral pace is inconsistent and there is a lack of communication about the pace of referrals, providers are unable to predict demand and scale the availability of units and services accordingly. Respondents reported either wasted program resources if units were held and not filled, or scarcity in the number of units available if there was a large inflow of referrals.

In 2021, the city innovated a process of batch referrals whereby providers received many referrals simultaneously to fill housing openings more quickly. Early indications are that batch referrals were successful in speeding housing placements, but it was not clear whether certain subgroups, such as people experiencing chronic homelessness and members of groups historically marginalized in the housing market, were equally successful at entering housing through the batch referral process.

PSH VACANCIES

Another constant challenge from 2020 through 2021 was site-based PSH vacancies. At one point in 2020, San Francisco had an approximately 10 percent vacancy rate in PSH. Respondents identified multiple causes, including units being offline because of maintenance needs, challenges matching people waiting for housing with vacant units, and documentation barriers for potential tenants.

According to respondents, many units were offline during and following shelter-in-place orders as a result of maintenance work being deferred. Some respondents, however, indicated that the vacancy challenges predated the maintenance challenges. A second challenge was that the system to track unit vacancies did not directly connect to the coordinated entry system to track potential tenants. There was hope that batch referral would address this challenge. Whether it effectively accomplished this goal is an outstanding question. Finally, even if potential tenants were referred to a PSH program, programs had varying and sometimes arduous documentation requirements. For example, many PSH programs required social security cards, but social security offices were closed during the pandemic, making it impossible for potential tenants to obtain that documentation. (This documentation challenge, however, also predated the pandemic.) Many PSH programs also required background checks, but each program would require that a different company conduct the background check. One respondent indicated that, upon surveying individuals in the hotels, only 27 percent had the required

documents to get housed. Respondents also indicated that potential tenants and program participants could be impossible to reach because their contact information was outdated or they were slow to respond to outreach efforts. Throughout the year Tipping Point and partners worked to minimize documentation burdens and by the end of 2021, several new policies were in place to mitigate some of these challenges.

HOUSING MARKET SHIFTS

The private housing market and the cost of rent are challenging in every community in the country, but especially in the San Francisco Bay area. In 2020, interview respondents suggested they were optimistic about placements for market-based programs such as the Flex Pool and Rising Up because the pandemic had shifted the private rental market by increasing vacancy rates and decreasing rents. Respondents observed that these shifts incentivized landlords to participate in rental assistance programs. Unfortunately, in 2021, these trends reversed and providers reported having difficulty keeping up with the housing market.

Respondents also identified the cost of living as an ongoing issue for program participants. Because housing is expensive in San Francisco, it is difficult for providers to build or find the capacity to meet program goals. Even if a program were able to house participants in the city, respondents felt that participants would be unlikely to remain if assistance were to end (as it would in a rapid re-housing program, which provides only time-limited rental subsidies and services).

Moreover, respondents repeatedly highlighted that the high cost of living means staff cannot afford to live in the city to carry out work. This has been the case for a long time, but respondents stressed this was especially important for positions such as case managers, who are essential for providing supportive services.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE CHALLENGES

Interview respondents in 2021 indicated their belief that the government has taken on a greater role in ending chronic homelessness in San Francisco since the start of CHI. However, respondents thought that a reluctance to change systems persisted in the city, and that power was concentrated among narrow interest groups such as large businesses. This reluctance for change was attributed to a mentality that the status quo is fine. Respondents also identified among city leaders a lack of emphasis on workforce development and stabilization services as an essential component to addressing chronic homelessness.

Lessons Learned

Tipping Point balances many roles in San Francisco. At different times in the initiative, respondents have described Tipping Point as an advocate, a funder, a convener, an advisor, and an overseer of government transparency. Respondents widely acknowledge the positive impacts of Tipping Point's hands-on approach to project implementation and its active role in the city's response to chronic homelessness. Examples of positive outcomes, as described, include the launch of the Flex Pool and the connections Tipping Point facilitated between government departments. In these areas, Tipping Point is an effective systems-level change maker. One primary goal of the evaluation is to describe lessons learned for philanthropic entities that want to tackle complex social issues such as homelessness. Next, the report describes lessons learned from the successes and challenges Tipping Point has encountered throughout CHI, as well as how respondents see Tipping Point's role in San Francisco moving forward.

Maximizing the Impact of Flexible Resources

When asked about Tipping Point's strengths, almost all respondents noted that the organization could be nimbler and take more risks than government agencies. Respondents noted that Tipping Point could fund innovative projects, such as Step Up to Freedom and shared housing. Respondents also observed that Tipping Point was especially responsive during the pandemic, moving quickly in a time of crisis without complex and prolonged procurement or hiring procedures. Respondents recognized Tipping Point's assistance to the neighborhood organizations its CAB identified and its help in staffing and hiring when nonprofit capacity was stretched thin. These activities added housing placements that would not have occurred within the normal operating practices of government agencies.

Some respondents noted that Tipping Point should pay attention to the functioning of government systems when they inject flexible funding. Grant recipients also expressed concern about whether Tipping Point's projects would be sustainable after CHI funding ends and noted the complexity of private-public braided funding strategies. Grantees felt that Tipping Point could better support them by cocreating long-term sustainability plans at the outset of program design, preventing budget debates with local government.

Leveraging Resources

As previously noted, interview respondents were aware that a main goal of CHI was to leverage underutilized government resources. When discussing Tipping Point's role in accomplishing this, respondents most commonly mentioned two of Tipping Point's housing investments: MOI and the Flex Pool. Early in the implementation of CHI, MOI earned the most praise from interview respondents. When asked to describe key successes for CHI, respondents consistently mentioned MOI for freeing more than 200 units of PSH to be filled by chronically homeless individuals and leveraging nearly 200 Section 8 housing vouchers. The Flex Pool was mentioned for similar reasons in more recent interviews, namely that it has helped organizations leverage Mainstream vouchers. Furthermore, creation and support of the Brilliant Corners housing platform through a capacity-building grant from Tipping Point enabled the organization to leverage Proposition C resources.

When Proposition C resources became available, Tipping Point staff advised local organizations on effective allocation of these resources. A few respondents noted that Tipping Point did not publicly endorse Proposition C when it was being considered by voters. This was interpreted as Tipping Point not wishing to alienate the donors they depend on for funding yet taking credit for leveraging resources once they were won. Respondents commented that Tipping Point and other philanthropic groups should have clearer public policy positions to demonstrate their principles and values.

Building Capacity in Government and Community Nonprofit Agencies

Adding capacity to government and nonprofit agencies by funding staff positions and hiring consultants is a recurring CHI investment and one that was praised by interview respondents. As noted, Tipping Point supported consultants to draft reports, analyze data, and act as strategic planners for multiple government agencies, including HSH, DPH, and the Sheriff's Office.

Early in CHI's implementation, respondents most commonly praised Tipping Point's funding of fellowship positions at HSH for helping expand government capacity, yet noted that the program was not sustainable, with one position being eliminated and the other experiencing turnover. Other respondents cited other successful examples of CHI resources being spent on increasing government capacity: the hiring of a part-time staff member to help update and clean and analyze criminal legal system data, the hiring of consultants to draft the San Francisco proposal for the Whole Person Care waiver, and the commission of the UCSF/Tipping Point report on homelessness and behavioral health needs (JSI 2019).

In 2020 and 2021, interview respondents across both government and nonprofit agencies lauded Tipping Point's investment in capacity building at community-based nonprofit Brilliant Corners. Many respondents believe that Brilliant Corners would not have been able to operate at its current level or make many of its housing placements without a capacity-building grant from Tipping Point.

Convening Partners

Respondents also identified Tipping Point as a helpful convener for partners implementing strategies. Many respondents credited this to Tipping Point staff having the bandwidth for collaboration and convening activities while implementation partners are fully immersed in daily operational activities. Some respondents also credited Tipping Point's convening power as perceived neutrality among partners and effective communication strategies with diverse partner types. Tipping Point has used this convening power in various effective ways:

- **Creating and funding programs.** The Flex Pool was the primary example interview respondents cited when discussing Tipping Point's power to convene organizations and build programs. The successful start of the Flex Pool, after development of the program had stalled, resulted from Tipping Point's success in bringing together partners to create a cohesive funding and implementation strategy.
- **Building system collaboration.** Respondents from government agencies that have missions other than addressing homelessness said that Tipping Point's role as a convener kept leaders in conversations with the right people to create more collaboration and communication between systems.
- **Sharing lessons learned.** Interview respondents said that Tipping Point shared lessons on the development of Tahanan (formerly referred to as 833 Bryant Street) in real time, aiding development of at least three other modular sites. Information on rezoning and entitlement approval, as well as convening efforts early in the acquisition, zoning, and financing stages of the project, were especially beneficial.
- **Maintaining quality services.** After launching the Flex Pool, Tipping Point regularly convened implementation partners to provide thought leadership, maintain the quality of services for participants, and to navigate partner relationships during design and expansion conversations.

While convening was frequently cited as a strength of Tipping Point, some acknowledged that Tipping Point was more embedded in operations than typical philanthropic groups. One suggestion

was for Tipping Point to consider strategies in which they “lead from behind,” and consult partners on whether to play an active role in project implementation.

Building Accountability

One role Tipping Point had undertaken throughout CHI, with mixed success, has been to build public accountability. Respondents acknowledged that the dashboards Tipping Point used to encourage accountability have been helpful and have held CHI partners accountable to specific goals.

Respondents indicated, however, that data-capacity challenges have resulted in siloed accountability, sometimes resulting in “finger-pointing” at or “blaming” agencies that are more transparent with their data and therefore easier to monitor.

Early in the implementation of CHI, government partner respondents were frustrated by Tipping Point’s calls for accountability, which they felt were attacks. In more recent interviews, the capacity-building support Tipping Point has lent government partners has softened such criticism, perhaps because the agencies felt supported in achieving mutual goals. One respondent noted that Tipping Point dedicated considerable attention to tracking the outcomes of their investments, but perhaps did not spend enough time investigating and rectifying the reasons outcomes were not meeting expectations and projections.

Some respondents also called for more transparency and accountability from Tipping Point, specifically about how they decide what types of programming and agencies to support. The adherence to data as a strategy for transparency and the public reporting of data were acknowledged as beneficial. Yet, respondents said Tipping Point could be more accountable to ensuring that CHI’s strategies function in the long term.

Conclusion

Tipping Point and partners did not meet the projected placement numbers needed in 2021 to meet the overall CHI goal of halving chronic homelessness by the 2023 point-in-time count. However, Tipping Point and partners came much closer to projections than in prior years, and the estimated number of placements is the highest since modeling and consistent tracking began in 2019 (table 3). This success appears to be the result of large increases in the number of placements in the second half of the year, placements specifically in newly developed or acquired PSH, new vouchers, and the Flex Pool.

Overall, respondents reported throughout the year that placements continued to be stymied by the pandemic as well as systemic challenges present in San Francisco for years, including slow or inconsistent referral pace, barriers to entry to existing PSH, and a shifting housing market with high rents and few vacancies. Tipping Point and partners shared that significant effort was expended in 2021 to address some of these systemic challenges, including implementing batch referrals and working with nonprofit partners to reduce barriers to PSH.

TABLE 3

Estimates and Projections of the Chronic Homelessness Initiative’s Progress on Halving Chronic Homelessness in San Francisco

Number of Housing Placements of People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness

| | Estimates | | | Projections | |
|--|-----------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Point-in-time count of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness | 2,853 | 2,871 | 2,882 | 2,717 | 1,730 |
| Estimated inflow/undercount | 1,003 | 1,195 | 1,195 | 1,195 | n/a |
| Housing placements of people experiencing chronic homelessness | 985 | 1,068 | 1,271 | 2,052 | n/a |
| Housing placements to prevent chronic homelessness | 0 | 116 | 89 | 130 | n/a |

Sources: San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and Tipping Point grantee monthly and quarterly reporting.

Notes: Placements for 2019, 2020, and 2021 are from aggregate data of placements by month provided to Tipping Point and the Urban Institute evaluation team by the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and Tipping Point grantee monthly and quarterly reporting. Inflow/undercount is an estimate of the people who become chronically homeless during a year or who could have been missed during the previous year’s point-in-time count. It is a constant based on placements and changes in point-in-time counts from 2009 to 2017. This constant was increased for 2020–22 to account for potential increases in homelessness because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing placement projections are based on Tipping Point investments in Chronic Homelessness Initiative (CHI) programming types and estimates from the San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing of placements in existing permanent supportive housing units, the Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development timelines for development of permanent supportive housing, and estimates of placements from planned Proposition C funding. Projected point-in-time counts are calculated as the previous year’s point-in-time count plus the estimated inflow/undercount minus projected placements of people experiencing chronic homelessness in all programming types and placements in CHI-targeted chronic homelessness prevention programs. Reported placements estimates are based on the most recently available data provided to the research team. Year over year, reported placements for prior years may change based on retroactively updated data.

n/a = not available.

Respondents were less optimistic in 2021 that Tipping Point and their partners could meet the goal of halving chronic homelessness by 2023, despite increased resources from the federal government and Proposition C. This skepticism was primarily the result of the short remaining time frame as opposed to the commitment of the partners, growing capacity to house people quickly, and increased investment in promising strategies.

The remaining years of the evaluation will focus on examining individual programs, as well as critical questions related to the success of the initiative and lessons learned. Program evaluation results from Rising Up, the Flex Pool, the CAB, and Step Up to Freedom are expected in 2022. And, in the final two years of the systems change study, the evaluation team will focus on questions related to which investments most impact the ability to achieve CHI goals, what systems changes will outlast the initiative, and what lessons were learned for other philanthropically driven efforts to make progress on complex social challenges.

Appendix A. Review of Progress through 2020

Starting in Spring 2019, interview respondents noted that Tipping Point's public announcement of the CHI goal to halve chronic homelessness in San Francisco by 2023 garnered attention at the local and state levels, contributed to a sense of urgency about addressing homelessness in the city, and encouraged other local private sector partners to invest in addressing homelessness. Respondents' perceptions of the feasibility of the CHI goal varied. However, the sentiment that ambitious goal setting increased urgency in San Francisco's response to homelessness remained consistent and was reflected in interviews with respondents through 2020 (Batko et al. 2021).

To meet the CHI goal and match a projected increase of inflow into homelessness, Tipping Point invested heavily in housing creation in the early years of CHI implementation. Four major housing investments were central to CHI's efforts:

- The **Moving On Initiative** (MOI) was launched in December 2016 as a public-private collaboration between Tipping Point, HSH, SFHA, and Brilliant Corners (Feiss, Bamberger, and Leopold 2019; Perez et al. 2019). MOI supported individuals who had stabilized in PSH to move into more independent living situations by providing a voucher for private market rental housing (also known as scattered-site housing). The initiative also assisted with housing search, acquisition, and moving services. Between December 2016 and August 2019, 262 single adults had successfully moved out of PSH and into scattered-site housing. The program was halted in 2019 when SFHA stopped receiving federally funded housing vouchers because of a \$30 million budget deficit at the start of the 2019 fiscal year. Respondents perceived the pause and ultimate termination of MOI as a serious setback for CHI.
- The **Homes for the Homeless Fund** (HHF) is the largest single investment Tipping Point has made as part of CHI. Using a dedicated donation from the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation of \$65 million, Tipping Point funneled resources through the San Francisco Housing Accelerator Fund for the development of a 145-unit PSH building at 833 Bryant Street.² The project's goal is to decrease the per unit cost of building supportive housing and to increase the speed of development through upfront philanthropic financing and modular construction. In 2020, the project completed construction financing and broke ground, modular units were installed, and roofing and exterior work were under way.

- The **Rising Up program**, launched in mid-2019, aims to reduce youth homelessness at least 50 percent by 2023 by housing 500 transition-age young people and preventing homelessness for an additional 450. The Rising Up program is also funded through a public-private partnership of Tipping Point, the city, and other philanthropic partners. At the end of 2020, Rising Up exceeded projected goals, housing a total of 163 young people, including 92 who were experiencing chronic homelessness (Gold et al. 2021). And, young people were satisfied overall with the program, stating that it helped them achieve their primary goal of housing and that they trusted their service providers (Batko, Gold, and Williams 2021).
- The **Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool (Flex Pool)**, launched in July 2020, is a private-public partnership that provides a scattered-site supportive housing program that pairs rental assistance with individually tailored case management services for people experiencing chronic homelessness. Eighty-one single adults were housed through the Flex Pool in the second half of 2020.

In 2019, most community stakeholders interviewed, other than Tipping Point staff and its direct grantees, were not aware of and did not understand the CHI prevention activities. But, in 2020, Tipping Point made significant strides. CHI funded several programs that could prevent a person from becoming chronically homeless. These included a new program that showed early success in its pilot year: Step Up to Freedom. Step Up to Freedom is a rapid re-housing program for people who have been involved with the criminal legal system and have prior experiences of homelessness. The program rapidly re-housed 29 people in 2020. Tipping Point hopes the pilot will serve as a proof of concept for intervening with rapid re-housing during reentry with people whose histories indicate they might be at risk for long-term homelessness. Planning investments were also made in other prevention programming, including Launchpads, the SPARK Initiative, and shared housing, which were expected to result in housing placements in 2021.

The third objective of Tipping Point's CHI theory of change focused on systems change, which included what was described early in CHI implementation as "optimizing the public sector." This framing resulted in some resentment from government partners, despite those same partners acknowledging that Tipping Point's investments did help government work faster and better. Respondents identified the hiring of staff and consultants, including "fellows" at HSH, improvements in the contracting process, and increased convening capacity as ways Tipping Point helped government partners in 2019 and 2020. Other systems change activities, including the development of the All In public campaign to engage and educate the public and the CAB, were implemented in 2019 and continued in 2020. During the time the CAB was under development, Tipping Point

coordinated with several nonprofits to recruit peer researchers with lived experience of homelessness, including some eventual members of the CAB, to conduct and analyze interviews with people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco. The findings were compiled into a report titled “The View from Outside” to include the perspectives of people interacting with CHI so that the homeless services sector might better understand their needs (Tipping Point Community 2018).

Despite Tipping Point and partner efforts, CHI fell somewhat short of the placements needed to meet the CHI goal in 2023. San Francisco placed an estimated 4,433 single adults experiencing chronic homelessness (or identified to be at particular risk of chronic homelessness) in housing between July 2017 and December 2020. These shortfalls were consistent with information gathered through interviews and reflect the challenges faced in the implementation of CHI:

- political turmoil following the death of Mayor Ed Lee, with three mayors between December 2017 and June 2018
- organizational challenges, with staff turnover at Tipping Point, HSH, and other government agencies
- a voucher issuance freeze at SFHA that stalled MOI and affected voucher availability throughout San Francisco
- systems flow challenges, such as inconsistent referral flow and a high percentage of vacant PSH units
- challenges related to COVID-19, such as decreased PSH turnover and decreased agency staff capacity at both HSH and nonprofit community partners

Appendix B. CHI Modeling Sources, Definitions, Assumptions, and Limitations

Urban tracks progress toward CHI goals by comparing placements with projections for each program and for CHI overall. The sources, definitions, assumptions, and limitations used in the evaluation are as follows.

Sources

Estimates of placements are from aggregate data on monthly placements delivered to Tipping Point and the evaluation team by the HSH and Tipping Point grantee monthly and quarterly reporting.

Housing placement projections are based on Tipping Point investments in CHI programming types, historical estimates from HSH of turnover in existing permanent supportive housing units, Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development timelines for PSH development, and estimates of placements from planned Proposition C funding.

Definitions and Assumptions

Existing and new permanent supportive housing placements are calculated as all placements for single adult and transition-age youth (18 to 24 years old), as reported by HSH, that cannot be attributed to the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool, rapid re-housing, or Rising Up placements.

Voucher placements are placements of people experiencing chronic homelessness through the Mainstream voucher program administered by SFHA. Mainstream voucher placements in the first, second, and third quarters of 2021 are included in the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool placements and account for 50 of 250 projected placements. Placements that exceed those 50 placements are categorized as voucher/subsidy in the third and fourth quarters.

Problem-solving placements of people experiencing chronic homelessness are calculated as 15 percent of total placements in problem-solving programming reported by HSH. This method of

estimation is consistent with HSH estimates of the share of problem-solving placements for people experiencing chronic homelessness in previous years.

Inflow/undercount is an estimate of the people who become chronically homeless during a year or who could have been missed during the previous year's point-in-time count. The estimate is a constant based on placements and changes in point-in-time counts from 2009 to 2017. This constant was increased for 2020–22 to account for potential increases in homelessness because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Projected point-in-time counts are calculated as the previous year's point-in-time count plus the estimated inflow/undercount minus projected placements of people experiencing chronic homelessness in all programming types and placements in CHI's targeted chronic homelessness prevention programs.

Limitations

The methods used for projections and limitations have limitations such as the following.

- Because of the pandemic, San Francisco was unable to conduct a point-in-time count in 2021. This would have served as a marker of progress and helped the evaluation team continue to refine modeling assumptions.
- Projections are based on available data on PSH turnover, new resources from Proposition C, and new placement opportunities made available by Tipping Point and partners, but over the course of the pandemic, prioritization processes and standards changed to reflect public health priorities. Some of the assumptions based on prior prioritization processes and standards may not accurately reflect the placements of people experiencing homelessness under current standards. For example, before the pandemic, HSH estimated that 15 percent of problem-solving placements would be received by people experiencing chronic homelessness. And, Proposition C resources were dedicated to helping people exit the shelter-in-place hotels, but people were placed in those hotels on the basis of public health prioritization, and the estimates of people in hotels who were experiencing chronic homelessness have changed over time.
- Placement numbers are based on most recently available data. Changes to data due to data quality checks and retroactive reporting can occur after data is shared with the research team.

- Placements reported in existing and new PSH may include people moving between PSH units, resulting in an overestimate of people placed in PSH. HSH aimed to minimize the likelihood of overestimation.
- The modeling assumes that each person served by Tipping Point-funded “prevention” programs results in one less person becoming chronically homeless. The evaluation has no method of determining this to be true, yet it is included in the model.

Notes

- ¹ Ted Andersen, "Charles, Helen Schwab's \$65M Gift Props Up SoMa Housing Development," San Francisco Business Times, October 22, 2020, <https://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2020/10/22/charles-helen-schwab-give-65m-toward-sf-homeless.html>
- ² Ted Andersen, "Charles, Helen Schwab's \$65M Gift Props Up SoMa Housing Development."

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