

# INNOVATION PROJECT STAFF ANALYSIS:

## Peer Housing Project

### San Bernardino County

**Total INN Funding Requested:** \$2,089,845

**Duration of INN Project:** 3.5 years

### Review History

**Public Comment Period:** September 22, 2025, to October 21, 2025

**Behavioral Health Board Hearing:** November 6, 2025

**Board of Supervisors Approval:** TBD

**County Final Submission Date:** November 10, 2025

### Project Introduction

San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health (County/SBC-DBH) is requesting up to \$2,089,845 of Innovation spending authority over a period of three and a half (3.5) years to address the housing needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and who are actively engaged in Clubhouse services by exploring a peer-led and recovery-oriented model that will assist with a more effective transition to permanent housing.

### BHSA Alignment and Sustainability

The Peer Housing Project aligns with the Behavioral Health Services Act (BHSA) by supporting early intervention programs that prevent mental illness and substance use disorders from becoming severe and disabling. In collaboration with SBC-DBH Regional Clubhouses, this project will develop relationships with existing early intervention programs to create pathways for access and linkage to services, resources, and other community supports. The Peer Housing Project will also focus on developing a peer-run housing system of care that supports long-term housing and promotes self-sufficiency. The design of the project allows for a seamless transition into the BHSA housing component.

### Statutory Requirements

**WIC Section 5830(a)(1)-(4):** This project seeks to increase access to services including, but not limited to, services provided through permanent supportive housing.

**WIC Section 5830(b)(2)(A)-(D):** This project meets Innovation criteria by participating in a housing program designed to stabilize a person's living situation while also providing supportive services on site.

### Background

Within the past several years, San Bernardino County has seen an overall increase in homelessness. According to the 2025 San Bernardino County Homeless Survey Final Report, twenty-nine percent (29%) of unhoused individuals have a substance use disorder (SUD), twenty percent (20%) are noted as having a mental health challenge, and seventy percent (70%) are living in unsheltered conditions.

While current MHSA-funded programs provide varying levels of care and housing support, none combine a peer-centered approach within a housing setting. Throughout the county, Clubhouses have become a primary navigation point for unhoused residents to seek support; however, existing programs are not managed by individuals with lived experience. This can negatively affect relatability, engagement, and recovery for residents. SBC-DBH analysis of current housing capacity, stakeholder feedback, available resources, and funding reveals an opportunity to make a greater, more positive impact on housing outcomes with the added presence of peer-run components.

## **How this Innovative Project Addresses the Problem**

Peer support is recognized as an evidence-based practice in both mental health and substance use disorder fields by promoting recovery, resiliency, engagement, socialization, and self-advocacy. The Peer Housing Project will increase access to services and housing stability; reduce psychiatric hospitalizations and crises; and improve well-being and social support for participating residents experiencing housing instability by exploring peer-run structures within Clubhouse settings.

Development of a peer-run housing system of care will directly impact residents by supporting pathways to long term/permanent housing and increased self-sufficiency. The program will employ certified peer support staff who will provide mentorship and structured daily living assistance to develop essential life skills and build meaningful community connections. Clubhouse members will drive operational decisions, such as support groups, community engagement, and activity choices.

The target population for this project are adults ages 18 and older of all gender identities, races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations who are currently unhoused, experiencing a behavioral health challenge and/or substance use disorder, and actively accessing services through a SBC-DBH Clubhouse. Participation of qualifying individuals will be encouraged but completely voluntary.

## **Community Planning Process**

SBC-DBH ensured a robust community planning process inclusive of stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds representative of the county's unserved and underserved communities, particularly those experiencing housing instability, behavioral health challenges, and substance use disorders. Populations disproportionately impacted by

homelessness were prioritized in the Peer Housing Project’s planning and decision-making process. Over a four (4) month period, a series of focus groups and public meetings were held to incorporate the voices of community members, providers, Clubhouse participants, and others with direct lived experience. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of peer support services and the relatability they bring that helps engage hard-to-reach individuals who may otherwise not seek services. They emphasized that structured support, skill-building, and a nurturing environment significantly improve residents’ chances of achieving long-term housing stability and independent living.

The public comment period for this Innovative project proposal occurred between September 22, 2025, and October 21, 2025. It was presented at a local behavioral health board hearing on November 5, 2025, and is awaiting Commission approval prior to going to the Board of Supervisors.

## **Learning Objectives and Evaluation**

The Peer Housing Project seeks to explore whether integration of peer-led components – such as a Peer Housing Manager, peer-directed operations, daily in-home peer support, and proactive system linkages – can improve outcomes that reduce homelessness among individuals with behavioral health concerns who are already engaged in a Clubhouse program. To determine the success of this innovative approach, SBC-DBH has established five (5) learning goals.

### **1. Examine whether peer-led transitional housing interventions offered through Clubhouses promote long-term housing solutions.**

To examine whether peer-led transitional housing interventions offered through Clubhouses promote long-term housing solutions, this project will identify the number of participants that remain in the program and their length of stay, as well as identify the number of participants that successfully transition to long-term housing. The intended outcomes include increased participant retention and successful transition and retention in long-term housing.

### **2. Examine if peer-led housing can result in improved well-being outcomes (e.g., physical health, mental health, and substance use disorders).**

To examine whether peer-led housing can result in improved well-being outcomes, this project will use assessments, self-report surveys, and interviews to track and compare participant engagement and outcomes. Measures include, but are not limited to, number of hospitalizations, crisis services utilization, participant attendance, lengths of stay, and others.

### **3. Examine if providing in-home peer support and promoting choice result in increased satisfaction and engagement in supportive services.**

To examine whether providing in-home peer support and promoting choice result in increased satisfaction and engagement, this project will track participant attendance and measure levels of engagement through self-report surveys and interviews. Participant satisfaction and retention will be evaluated at baseline and upon departure.

#### 4. Examine if peer-led transitional housing interventions result in improvements with obtaining employment and transitioning to independent living.

To examine whether peer-led transitional housing interventions result in improvements with obtaining employment and independent living, this project will identify and track participant goals at baseline, throughout the program, and upon departure. Intended outcomes include increased employment or other self-sustaining outcomes and improved daily living skills. Number of participants who obtain and retain these outcomes will be measured.

#### 5. Examine if peer-led transitional housing interventions result in increased project credence from staff involved in this project.

To examine whether this peer-led transitional housing intervention appears to be an effective approach from the staff perspective, this project will evaluate staff satisfaction through surveys and interviews, as well as track number of grievances or other staff-reported challenges.

### Budget

San Bernardino County is requesting authorization to spend up to \$2,089,845 of MHS Innovation funding for this project over a period of three and a half (3.5) years. One-hundred percent (100%) of the project will be supported by Innovation funding. The breakdown by fiscal year and expenditure category is as follows:

Category	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	FY 27-28	FY 28-29	Total
<b>Personnel</b>	\$112,870	\$237,026	\$248,878	\$261,321	\$860,095
<b>Operations</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Non-Recurring</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Contracts</b>	\$164,250	\$328,500	\$328,500	\$328,500	\$1,149,750
<b>Other</b>	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$80,000
<b>Total</b>	\$297,120	\$585,526	\$597,378	\$609,821	<b>\$2,089,845</b>

Forty-one percent (41%) of total projected expenditures are allocated for personnel costs. This includes two (2) peer program and Clubhouse staff responsible for general oversight and program support; one (1) peer family advocate to provide daily support and group facilitation; one (1) social worker serving as a peer house navigator; one (1) administrative support for monitoring and reporting; and one (1) research and evaluation business systems analyst to assist with development and facilitation of data collection.

Fifty-five percent (55%) of the requested Innovation funds are reserved for contractor and consultant costs, which incorporate onsite operations and management services. This cost is based on a rate of \$150 per filled bed, per day, for 6 beds 365 days a year. It covers food, shelter, hygiene and cleaning products, utilities, and an onsite house manager. Additionally, it includes adequate compensation for Certified Peer Specialist staffing.

The remaining four percent (4%) of project funds will go toward other costs including those associated with training, incentives, direct participant assistance funds, and outreach.

## **Conclusion**

San Bernardino County's proposed Peer Housing Project appears to meet the minimum requirements listed under MHSA Innovation regulations and aligns with the goals of the BHSA; however, before expending any funds, any Commission-approved Innovation plans must also receive approval from the county's local Board of Supervisors before the county can expend Innovation funds.