

# Creation of New Governor's Council on Housing

**Arizona Department of Housing**  
Legislative Advocacy: State Advocacy

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Some societal problems are so large and widespread, they simply cannot be solved by a single voice or decision maker. Such is the case with the affordable housing crisis that currently exists in Arizona and across the Nation. To identify and implement solutions, a collaborative, team approach is needed, and that belief is what led to the re-creation of the Governor’s Interagency and Community Council on Homelessness and Housing (GICCHH; rhymes with ‘KICK’). Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs reinstated the Governor’s Interagency and Community Council on Homelessness and Housing through executive order in January 2023. GICCHH convenes members from public, private, nonprofit, faith-based communities from across the State, and includes individuals who have experienced housing insecurity and homelessness themselves. The Council was charged with developing and implementing a plan to address homelessness and will serve as a central policy development and planning resource for the State on the issue of housing insecurity.

The Council was created in the spirit of collaboration and its framework was crafted with invaluable insights from GICCHH members and the Council’s affiliated public working groups. GICCHH exists as a collective effort to address the pressing challenges of homelessness and housing insecurity in Arizona. By combining best practices and integrating elements from existing or previously developed statewide action plans, the Council aims to catalyze meaningful change and foster inclusive solutions to homelessness and housing instability.

The Council and its working groups actively engage, assign responsibilities, and take decisive action on projects to further the goal of reducing housing instability. GICCHH members are committed to translating dialogue into tangible progress, working to connect all Arizonans to safe and stable housing.

## **INNOVATIVE**

Innovation thrives in GICCHH through strategies that are collaborative, data informed, effective, efficient, accountable, and result in meaningful outcomes. Strategies to test new, promising and innovative approaches to housing instability are encouraged and include evaluation to ensure efficacy. Developing strategies to incorporate innovative, lower-cost housing solutions, such as modular construction, 3D printing, and shipping containers, are a core goal of the Council as are efforts to empower manufactured housing to keep pace with mobile home/Factory-built building demand through streamlined service delivery and innovation.

## **REPLICABLE**

As previously mentioned, Governor Hobbs reinstated this Council, which was originally created under former Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, a mentor of Governor Hobbs. Originally named the Arizona Commission on Housing and Homelessness, that Commission’s interagency structure served as a blueprint for other states’ interagency committees on housing and homelessness, and is often cited as a crucial ingredient for community and political goodwill by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). By establishing a similar Council, other states and their housing agencies can replicate and utilize Arizona’s framework to develop and implement strategies that address barriers to

increase housing options and engage their stakeholders meaningfully in strategy development, implementation and evaluation in finding a solution for housing instability.

### **COALITION BUILDING**

More than 37,000 individuals in Arizona received homelessness services in 2021, including large numbers of families, veterans, and seniors. Based on Point-in-Time counts, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Arizona increased by more than 51% from 2017 to 2022. These statistics show the need for more affordable housing as one of the most pressing issues facing Arizona. Coalition building is key to the Council's success as multiple state agencies bear the responsibility of serving those experiencing homelessness. Increasing housing and reducing homelessness requires collaboration among state agencies, local governments, nonprofits, the private sector, faith-based organizations and service providers to coordinate program development, deliver essential services, and provide housing. All these crucial entities are represented in GICCHH and have a voice in helping shape a future Arizona where all individuals are affordably housed.

### **FORGING EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEGISLATORS**

The Council includes several elected officials, including state legislators and local mayors. Incorporating all voices in the Council is an essential part of its effectiveness. Additionally, the data, resources and educational materials developed by the Council are used to inform elected officials and inform policy decisions.

### **ANTICIPATE, IDENTIFY, AND PRIORITIZE LEGISLATIVE ISSUES**

The collaborative voices and efforts of the Council are used to advocate on a federal, state and local level and identify creative advocacy strategies to increase housing and resources for persons experiencing homelessness.

### **BENEFITS OUTWEIGH COSTS**

The incremental cost of creating the Council and the time for in-person and virtual meetings pales in comparison to the extraordinary benefits of this collaboration. The only cost incurred to ADOH was staff time to schedule meetings for the GICCHH to meet and produce the housing affordability Arizona needs, develop strategies to rehouse and shelter more Arizonans, and boost the economic well-being of all Arizonans.

### **EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES**

The Council is also charged with identifying all available funding sources and formulating braiding (or layering) concepts for all related resources to increase the effectiveness of those resources. All state agencies collaborate to streamline access to funding for housing and services through one point of entry.

### **REACH TARGET AUDIENCES & ACHIEVE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

The Council's action framework has three strategic objectives: Produce the housing affordability Arizona needs, rehouse and shelter more Arizonans, and boost the economic well-being of Arizonans. The framework includes seventeen recommendations to achieve the aforementioned objectives and impact

Arizonans in need. Three of the seventeen recommendations have found success in the Governor's first year in office.

**Recommendation #7 - Bolster and Expand Resources for Housing Affordability**

GICCHH achieved this objective by developing a new state program for first-time homebuyers called **Arizona is Home (AIH)**. The program increases homeownership opportunities through down payment assistance and mortgage interest rate relief. The Governor announced and opened AIH in April 2024 and it is already making the dream of homeownership more attainable for many low-to-moderate income, first-time homebuyers through the use of state housing trust funds and mortgage revenue bonds to provide larger down payments and buy-down interest rates.

**Recommendation #8 - Diversify and Expand Housing Options**

GICCHH is helping expand housing options through the increased use of innovative and lower-cost housing typologies and construction models such as modular housing, 3-D printed housing, and housing made entirely of used shipping containers. The Arizona Department of Housing awarded funding for low-cost housing typologies to two projects that are using recycled material (i.e. shipping containers) and innovative design to develop affordable housing.

**Recommendation #11 - Pursue Opportunities for Creative Collaboration**

The Council is proud to have created collaborative data sharing. There is now one source of shared data among all homelessness and human services providers in the thirteen rural Arizona counties and all applicable state agencies. This streamlined system is creating more in-depth data characteristic and reporting capabilities related to our state's homeless system.

GICCHH was instrumental in another major partnership success in assisting the homeless. The Data Warehouse Enterprise for Linkage Arizona (DWEL-AZ), a Georgetown Data Labs program, represents a collaborative effort to establish a unified data repository for Arizona's human services sector. Envisioned as a central hub, DWEL-AZ seeks to integrate data from multiple sources, including the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). This comprehensive approach is equipping stakeholders across Arizona's human services landscape with a powerful analytical tool to assist with their work. By fostering a centralized understanding of homelessness within the state, DWEL-AZ is empowering informed decision-making and the development of more effective intervention and prevention strategies.