



COTS
Est. 1988

strategic plan

JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2028



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our story

Founded in 1988, COTS was an expression of two local residents' concern for children and adults who were sleeping in culverts, dumpsters, or other unsafe and unsuitable conditions. Laure Reichel and Mary Isaak, along with hundreds of dedicated and compassionate volunteers, raised money from private donors, enlisted the support of the faith community and fraternal organizations, educated the larger community about homelessness, and monitored sleepovers at temporary shelters throughout the city. Their vision was to end homelessness.

Today, we continue this work, focused on serving the most vulnerable in our community. Through our guiding principles and the outlined pathways of success, we know we can create more opportunities for families and individuals to secure permanent housing. Together, with our supporters and partners, we can create a community where everyone has a place to call home.



Dear COTS Supporters,

It is with great pleasure that the COTS team presents our new 5-year strategic plan. We worked tirelessly to develop a plan which addresses our community's needs, incorporating lived experience, community assessments, and regional goals and objectives. COTS aims to be a valuable community partner, and a strong advocate for innovative programs and policies addressing homelessness.

This strategic plan, comprising goals and objectives spanning multiple areas of expertise, was created by a group of professionals with more than 100 years' combined experience in the homelessness sector. We recognize the importance of integrating qualified and compassionate input from those who know this work best. As communities learn to better coordinate efforts to end homelessness, COTS vows to continue as a trusted service provider in Petaluma and beyond.

Our new strategic plan is designed to approach the issue of homelessness as a collaborative partner—recognizing that we all have a role to play in solving this crisis. Homelessness is a complex issue with diverse root causes, solved only through collaborative efforts and policy changes. COTS is dedicated to remaining at the forefront of this issue, ensuring we live our mission every day: We assist those experiencing homelessness to find and keep housing, increase self-sufficiency, and improve wellbeing.

After 35 years of service to our community, COTS will continue to provide innovative and effective solutions in solving homelessness. We invite you to join us in this mission, ensuring a community where everyone has a place to call home.

Today, we continue this work, focused on serving the most vulnerable in our community. Through our guiding principles and the outlined pathways of success, we know we can create more opportunities for families and individuals to secure permanent housing. Together, with our supporters and partners, we can create a community where everyone has a place to call home.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Cabral'.

Chris Cabral



mission, vision and value

Our Mission:

We assist those experiencing homelessness to find and keep housing, increase self-sufficiency and improve well-being.

Our Vision:

We envision a community where everyone has a place to call home.

Our Values:

Integrity: We act with reliability and honesty and take ownership of our roles.

Respect: We honor the diversity of perspectives, experiences, and the needs of everyone with whom we interact.

Equity: We conduct our work and our interactions with others through a lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Collaboration: We foster constructive relationships within our community and among our colleagues.

Celebration: We take pride in our work and applaud each person's successes.

Outcomes: We rely on best practices to provide data-driven, client-centered services.



our guiding principles

Serve the Most Vulnerable

We implement services tied to specific goals and strategies that transition families, children, and people experiencing chronic homelessness into permanent housing with ongoing support.

Minimize Barriers to Housing

We focus on client expectations and quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without barriers to entry.

Build Partnerships

We build strong partnerships with human services organizations, government agencies, nonprofits, healthcare sector, and businesses in our region that are working together to implement Petaluma's and Sonoma County's strategic plans to end homelessness.

Meet Client Needs

We explore ways to provide for the unique housing needs of clients, such as sober living environments, gender-specific housing, family-friendly housing, and/or LGBTQIA-friendly housing. We serve clients through trauma-informed practices and a lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Prioritize Staff Enrichment

We provide training and tools for staff so they can effectively deliver services to perform well in a housing-focused environment. We support our staff in their well-being and celebrate successes.



pathways to success

Impact

COTS' primary purpose is to make a positive impact in our community by providing programs and services that connect individuals and families to short-term shelter and permanent housing. We approach our work with the expectation that the support we provide for our clients will improve their quality of life and help them become self-sufficient members of our community. COTS recognizes that trauma and social determinants of health affect our clients' outcomes, so we serve our clients through a trauma-informed lens and focus on improving community conditions that contribute to homelessness. To achieve impact in our community, we recognize that we must continually focus on our mission, while taking a flexible and collaborative approach to our work. It is essential that COTS has a diverse team so that we can match clients with the appropriate staff to meet their needs.

Engagement

COTS will continue to build and maintain strong, intentional relationships with community members who can help our clients thrive. We value the opportunity to contribute to Sonoma County's and Petaluma's plans to end homelessness by regularly partnering with county and city leadership. We will continue to educate our community on homelessness and provide opportunities to participate in our mission. COTS has an authentic interest and willingness to engage people with lived experience to help shape our services and policies.

Sustainability

To be sustainable, COTS needs to have the capacity to implement our goals and to make appropriate decisions as to how we can best serve those in need. We place a high value on listening to our clients and staff to continually receive feedback. It's important that we continue to engage and retain staff, board members, and other volunteers who will help build our culture and contribute to our organization's growth. COTS places a high value on environmental sustainability and implementation of practices throughout the organization to reduce our carbon footprint. We work closely with a wide variety of donors to ensure that we receive adequate, diverse funding to offer the services and programs our clients need.

Infrastructure

COTS will maintain a solid infrastructure by continuously viewing our work through a lens of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. We will ensure that we have strong operations by continuing to follow the rigorous standards we have developed for hiring and retaining our workforce. We value the physical safety and security of our clients and staff and take measures to ensure that our facilities and personal data are well protected. COTS believes in measuring our results so that we can track our successes and report them to our funders and other community members. Measuring our results also enables us to make data-driven decisions so that we can continually improve our work to end homelessness.



Impact

1	Improve program outcomes by continuing to enhance the quality of the comprehensive, unique, services we offer to ensure clients become independent and self-sufficient.
1.1	Facilitate the development of a housing plan and medical care plan for everyone participating in our services.
1.2	Provide support for clients to make continuous progress on achieving goals they have created in their care plans.
1.3	Continue providing care and support for clients who have exited our shelter and who are now housed.

2	Continue to increase our clients' access to affordable housing.
2.1	Increase the number of permanent supportive housing units provided in the region.
2.2	Increase capacity and partnerships with affordable housing providers.
2.3	Ensure high utilization of all available housing, reflected in a low vacancy rate.
2.4	Remove barriers to get people into shelter and housing.

3	Provide programs to sustain clients who move into housing and remain housed.
3.1	Offer increased support for clients who are currently housed and connect them with resources to ensure they stay housed.
3.2	Increase the number of clients who are employed through improved job training and employment support services.
3.3	Clients experience an improved quality of life.
3.4	Increase the outcomes that clients experience as a result of case management.
3.5	Create a path for clients to move into assisted living when necessary.

4	Improve and sustain health outcomes for the individuals and families that we serve.
4.1	All staff serve clients through a trauma-informed lens and consider the impact of Social Determinants of Health when analyzing client needs, staff training opportunities, and proposed changes to existing programs or service areas.
4.2	Provide recuperative care after hospitalization as a way to reduce rehospitalization.
4.3	Keep return to homelessness rates below 5% in all housing programs.
4.4	Continue to maintain strong relationships with community-based providers to facilitate positive health outcomes for our clients.
4.5	Provide a nutritious, quality food program for our clients and community members.

5	Expand our service footprint within Sonoma County and surrounding communities.
5.1	Determine the array of services COTS could provide to other community-based service providers and to communities with no homelessness services.
5.2	Identify locations where COTS could provide services without overextending capacity.
5.3	Contact community-based service providers and municipal government leaders in our preferred locations to offer our services.
5.4	Respond to Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs) and Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to serve COTS' targeted expansion locations.
5.5	Evaluate the results of COTS' expansion efforts.



"If it wasn't for this place, I'd be out on the streets dying, but instead, I'm here, living."

- a Studios at Montero resident

Engagement

6	Engage the community as an authentic partner in ending homelessness.
6.1	Support increased landlord engagement throughout COTS' service area.
6.2	Provide opportunities to inform the community about homelessness and ways they can become engaged to help end homelessness.
6.3	Engage the community to increase the number of in-kind donors who provide creative services that support COTS' mission.
6.4	Communicate our value of consistently implementing best practices to end homelessness.

7	Actively engage with city and county government to improve policies and practices related to ending homelessness.
7.1	Align COTS' policies and practices with city and county homelessness plans and practices.
7.2	Continue to align with Petaluma's and Sonoma County's Permanent Supportive Housing goals.

8	Include the journey of people with lived experience by increasing our engagement with them internally and externally.
8.1	Provide opportunities for peer leadership.
8.2	Honor lived experience by infusing the voice of clients in all programs.
8.3	Include the voice of lived experience on the COTS Board of Directors and within the workforce.

9	Engage strategic partners to meet the needs of our clients.
9.1	. Engage community partners to provide services to support a whole person approach to serving the needs of clients.
9.2	Understand and address the needs of sub-populations among our clients.
9.3	Continue to be a trusted partner by engaging with other community partners who can refer clients to COTS.
9.4	Work with community providers of social services to focus on prevention.

10	Sustain a healthy and engaging work environment.
10.1	Place diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging at the center of our culture and practices.
10.2	Ensure that we have strong, skilled leadership to provide effective communication and support to the staff.
10.3	Provide a robust compensation package.
10.4	Establish strategies for developing work-life balance.
10.5	Maintain an intentional culture of acceptance, accountability, support, and customer satisfaction.



I love the COTS community. They are such huge supporters. They come in to volunteer, bring their kids in to volunteer, and they have a real respect for our facility and for what we do.

- Nichole Bankson, Care Manager

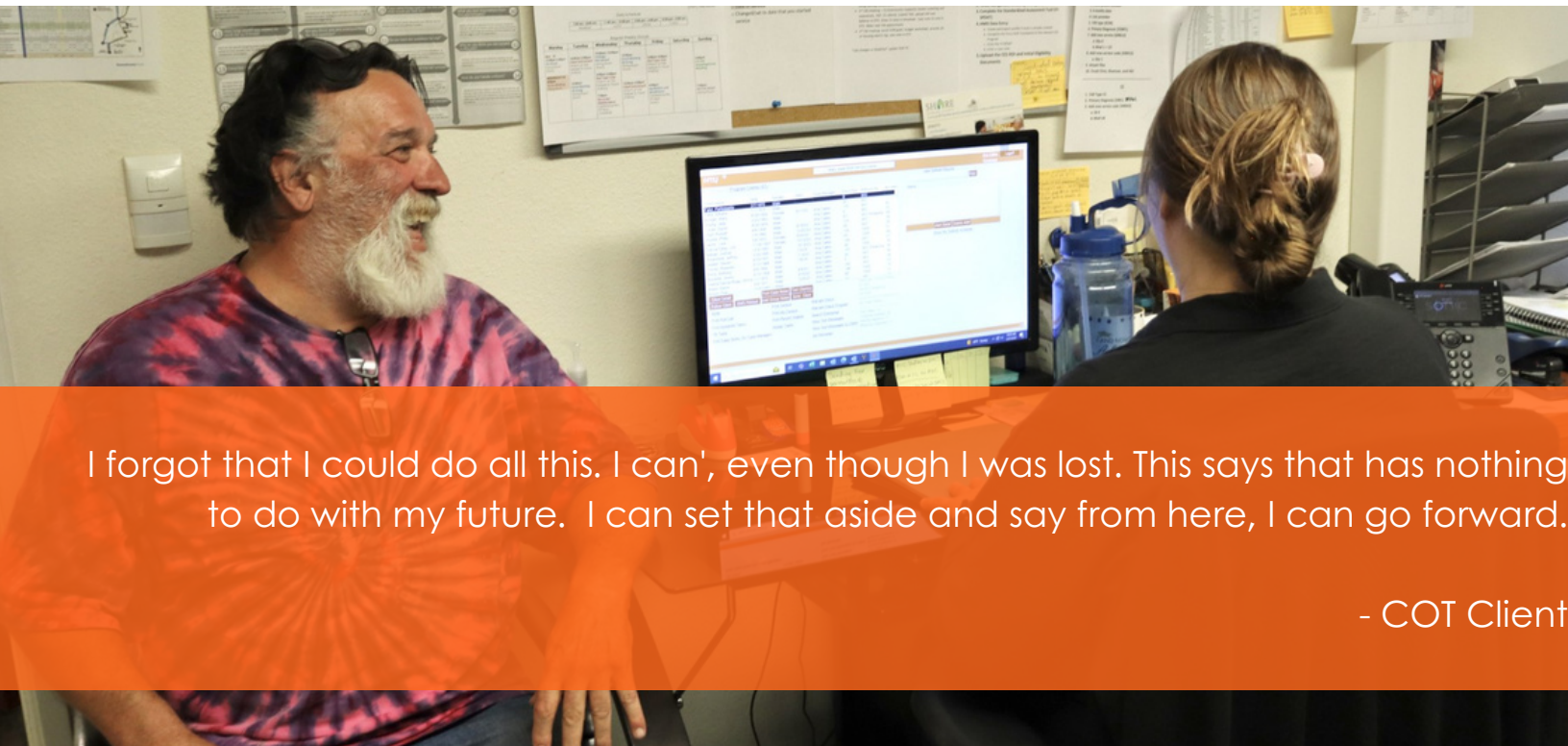
Sustainability

11	Ensure that COTS has strong leadership to successfully guide the organization into the future.
11.1	Ensure we have thought partners in a variety of sectors to support our work.
11.2	Maintain an engaged board that represents the community's characteristics.

12	Ensure environmental sustainability in all practices.
12.1	Continue to model best practices in ecological sustainability.
12.2	Provide solar in our Integrity Homes.

13	Our clients, board and staff are fully engaged in our mission and are encouraged to use their strengths to improve the quality of life for all.
13.1	Support staff through professional development, wellness time and activities, and maintaining a healthy environment.
13.2	Our board is committed to ensuring the success of the strategic plan through active participation with the organization.

14	Ensure we have diversified, adequate funding to achieve our goals and growth.
14.1	Increase unrestricted private funding resources by 5% year over year.
14.2	Increase communication and stewardship with donors.
14.3	Be sure that the issue of homelessness stays on the agenda of local and county government leaders.
14.4	Ensure that COTS' revenue comes from diverse sources.
14.5	Ensure compliance with funders' directives, wishes, agreements, and policies.
14.6	All board members contribute to COTS through a financial gift that's meaningful to them.
14.7	Increase/stabilize our donor retention rate.
14.8	Improve communication with existing donors through improved segmenting.



I forgot that I could do all this. I can', even though I was lost. This says that has nothing to do with my future. I can set that aside and say from here, I can go forward.

- COT Client

Infrastructure

15	Ensure physical safety and personal information security for staff and clients.
15.1	Expand the Safety Committee membership and scope to ensure safety and security compliance.
15.2	Ensure that cyber and personal information safety systems are robust and compliant.
15.3	Expand staff safety and security training.

16	Ensure our physical spaces meet the needs of the organization.
16.1	Ensure that our physical space can accommodate staff.
16.2	Plan for additional non-congregate housing and shelter options.
16.3	Ensure we have private spaces for confidential conversations.

17	Ensure we have sufficient personnel and technical resources to accomplish our goals.
17.1	Ensure we have a balance of technology and human services.
17.2	Document what we're doing and how well we're doing it.
17.3	Ensure we have the right people in the right positions to meet our current needs and to enable strategic growth.

18	Use accurate, timely data to make informed decisions.
18.1	Ensure we have data systems to capture the information we need to enable accurate and efficient reporting.
18.2	Utilize data to inform strategic growth and improve program performance.
18.3	Use data to support a healthy workplace.
18.4	Utilize data to support philanthropic growth and retention.



board of directors

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Vice-President*
Raymond Dougherty,
Secretary
Stefanie Giani,
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Sam Yee

*Members of the 2023-2028 Strategic Planning Committee