



MENTAL HEALTH INNOVATION: BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

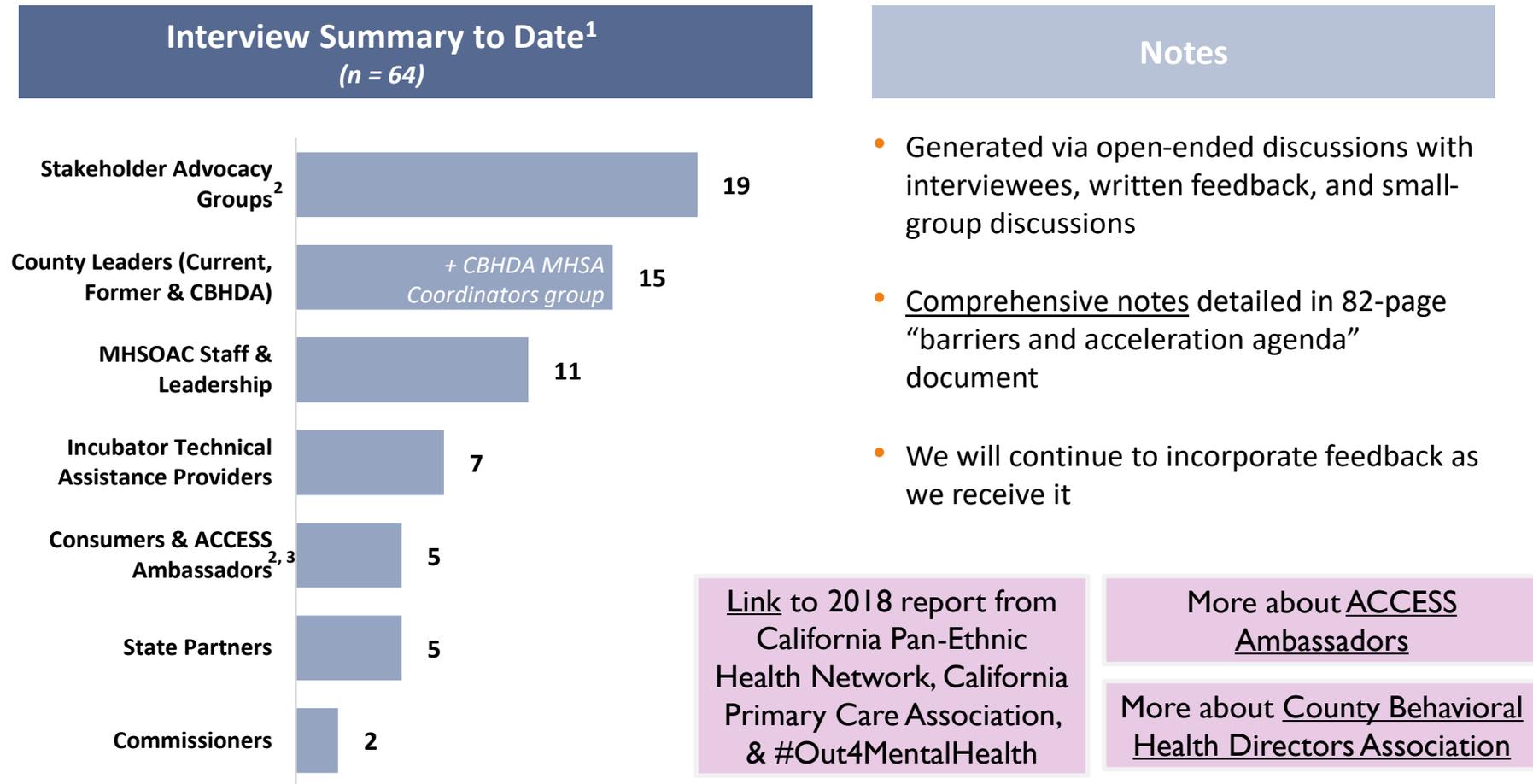
APRIL 2021

Jake Segal, Vice President Social Finance

Sharmil Shah, Psy.D, Chief –Program Operations-MHSOAC

▶ BARRIERS ANALYSIS PROCESS

Informed by 64 interviews, written feedback from 8 interviewees, 16-member discussion group, MHSA coordinator meeting, and 102 innovation plans



¹If multiple individuals from the same organization or agency participated in the same interview, we counted that as **one** interview.

²Includes some groups who hold/have held stakeholder contracts with MHSOAC and some who have not. Also, includes some groups who are also service providers.

³[ACCESS Ambassadors](#) are mental health clients from across the state of California who provide perspectives to inform the MHSOAC’s work and perform wider advocacy-related activities both locally and statewide. Consumers includes both consumers and family members of consumers.

▶ OVERVIEW: KEY BARRIERS



Limited County Capacity



Unclear What “Good” Looks Like



Complex County Politics & Local Relationships



Uneven Stakeholder Engagement



Incomplete Evaluation & Data



Volatile One-Time Funding Source



Burdensome Plan Approval Process

▶ WHAT WE'VE HEARD: KEY THEMES (I)

Need for more effective community engagement

Mismatch in relative priorities

- **County leaders spend more time and energy on INN Plans vs. other funding sources**
- But for some programs and groups, **INN funding is the most accessible (or only) way to access PMH dollars**

Challenges with identifying innovative ideas

- County behavioral health departments are **designed first for service delivery** (vs. “innovation”); leaders have training and experience as clinicians
- Innovative ideas exist within County communities, **but don't always translate to Innovation Plans**: lack of capacity / resources to engage stakeholders in an authentic, non-extractive, culturally competent way; ideas driven in part based on what approval bodies want to hear

▶ WHAT WE'VE HEARD: KEY THEMES (II)

Need for greater clarity

How INN dollars can be used

- **Unclear “what a good innovation project looks like,”** inconsistent bar for review
- **Varied understanding about allowable uses:** Overly focused on what has “never been done before,” equation of “innovation” with “technology”

How INN dollars have been used

- **Need more robust way to track, evaluate, and learn** from Innovation Projects
- Counties (especially smaller ones) **do not always have the technical capacity to create robust evaluation plans;** lack the data infrastructure to on community needs, health disparities, and outcomes
- **Few opportunities to share lessons learned;** turnover among County leadership

▶ WHAT WE'VE HEARD: KEY THEMES (III)

More consistent, nuanced, and earlier feedback needed in approval process

Tension between efficiency vs. detail

- **Nuance of plans is not always appreciated** during brief approval meetings, with limited Commissioner time/capacity
- **Staff cannot perfectly predict** focus or key issues of approval meetings; meanwhile, overreliance on staff analysis can move responsibility away from appropriate Commissioner role

Desire for earlier feedback

- Counties could address potential issues in advance with **earlier feedback from the Commission**
- **Planning grants** sometimes useful, but seen as adding additional burden

▶ SELECT IDEAS TO OVERCOME KEY BARRIERS

Thought-provoking ideas

Improve access to resources and knowledge

- Lift up project learnings and examples by highlighting successful case studies; organizing annual convening; conducting annual reviews of lessons learned.
- Make Innovation resources more accessible through curated resource library (esp. practical materials) and hotline support (to navigate resources).

Optimize plan development and review process

- Clarify guidance: supplement with **guidelines and examples**; describe requirements and **signals of quality**; define **standards for community engagement**.
- Enable Commissioners to provide feedback on plans earlier in the process to allow for relevant adjustments and clarification.
- Develop a rubric to use in evaluating plans.

Expand and deepen technical assistance

- Strengthen support functions to meet county needs (esp. for smaller counties), providing targeted **technical assistance** (e.g., to enhance CPP processes).
- Disseminate resources and toolkits describing best-practice approaches.

▶ REMINDER: WHO WE ARE AND HOW TO GET IN TOUCH
We'd love to hear from you!



jsegal@socialfinance.org



Sharmil.Shah@mhsaac.ca.gov