

# Shaping Housing Policy in California: the SCANPH Model

Lauren Fleming, *Occidental College* | Martha Matsuoka, *Faculty Mentor, Occidental College*

## I. Introduction

The Southern California Association of NonProfit Housing (SCANPH) rose in response to the long-standing housing and homelessness crisis, but Reagan-era cuts to federal programs played a critical role in the organization's formation.

In 1981, the Reagan administration terminated the Economic Development Administration and the Regional Development Commissions of the Commerce Department. These agencies were important funding sources for affordable housing developments as well as other types of public works improvement projects.

Many nonprofits were formed in the aftermath of the ended programs due to the resulting gap in funding for nonprofit developers to build and operate housing for low-income and homeless people.

SCANPH was formed in 1985 as a way for affordable housing developers to fund projects and expand the capacity for affordable housing development and expertise. To date, SCANPH is the only organization intended to convene affordable housing developers across the five Southern California counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino and Riverside.



Lauren Fleming  
Occidental College  
Politics  
[lfleming@oxy.edu](mailto:lfleming@oxy.edu)



This project was supported by the Occidental College UEP & UEPI Summer Internship Program.

## II. Strategy

Shifting circumstances and priorities have required a variety of approaches throughout the years to advance SCANPH's mission of facilitating the development of affordable housing in Southern California. In recent years, the organization has narrowed its focus and expanded its staff in order to best fulfill its mission. Policy priorities are decided in November of each year at a legislative visioning session where Board members, a policy working group, the SCANPH Policy Committee, and outside stakeholders gather together to discuss the most important issues and policy goals.

Once the priorities have been determined, the SCANPH policy team selects legislation to cosponsor and support. The policy team takes a grassroots lobbying approach through outreach to elected officials in the form of letters, phone calls, and meetings.

This outreach also serves as a tool to build beneficial relationships with those officials so that SCANPH can communicate and work with them in the future. SCANPH works closely with the Residents United Network (RUN), an organizing group that promotes civic engagement within residents of affordable housing.

In SCANPH's early days, most policy work was done in Los Angeles, but now most policy work is done at the state level with the commitment to serve all 5 counties. While policy priorities in the past were aimed at increasing funding for affordable housing developers, the focus has since shifted to implementation in the face of NIMBY-ist opposition. However, there have been more sudden changes in policy goals in the wake of the circumstances COVID-19 has created.



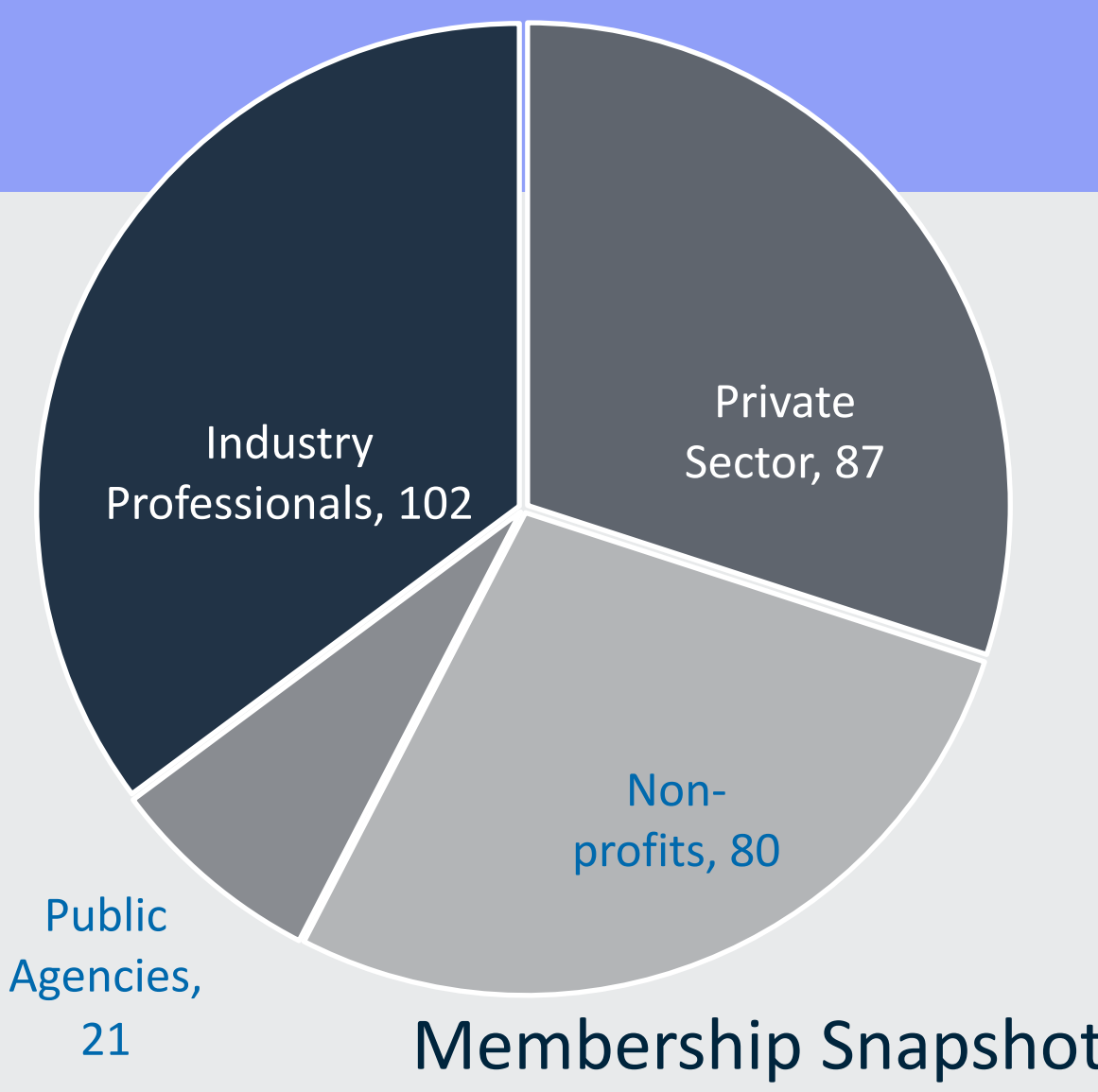
In-district meeting with a state Senator

## III. Internship Role

I worked closely and exclusively with the policy team. State legislation is the focus, though SCANPH does follow and interact with legislation at the local and federal level as well. Some of my tasks include:

- Meeting with legislators and staff with SCANPH team as well as RUN members
- Crafting support letters for bills
- Doing outreach for legislation
- Researching affordable housing solutions
- Attending meetings and webinars for housing-related issues (NLIHC Working Groups, Policy Committee Meetings, Local and State Legislative Hearings)

I put together a short summary of research regarding motel conversion for permanent supportive housing in California, a solution that has been more prominently addressed with the conditions of COVID, as tourism falls but homelessness remains a dire issue.



I included what short-term hotel and motel housing has looked like due to the pandemic, what the long-term solutions might look like with state and local efforts to permanently house people, and the various barriers to implementation. Another major and more recent project was lobbying for Assembly Bill 1703 with RUN members and SCANPH staff. I did the scheduling for meetings with several Senator's offices, assisted with training RUN members for the meetings, and took part in the meetings. It was an involved organizing effort, though ultimately rewarding, because the RUN members were able to give personal testimony and voice their support for the bill directly to a state congressional staff member.

## IV. Conclusions

SCANPH's goal of facilitating development of affordable housing exists at an especially pivotal time in the movement for affordable housing. The financial instability many people experience due to the

pandemic threatens mass evictions and for some, homelessness. As organizations work together, it is clear that a variety of solutions are necessary to prevent the impending large-scale housing crisis.