



HEADING HOME TOGETHER

— Minnesota's 2018-2020 Action Plan —
to Prevent and End Homelessness



Our Commitment to *Heading Home Together*

Since the Minnesota Interagency Council launched our first *Heading Home* plan in January of 2014, we have seen remarkable results. We have witnessed the impact that commitment, coordination, and strategic investments in solutions have on people's lives.

Today there are 20 percent fewer families experiencing homelessness, thousands of people with disabilities who have been connected with housing and supports, and over 1,300 veterans who were previously homeless are now in their own homes.

While these are very promising results, we know that there is much left to do for the over 7,600 Minnesotans who currently experience homelessness on any given night. At a time when many children still do not have a home where they can do their homework, and while many men, women, children, and youth remain precariously housed in every corner of our state, the urgency of our work continues.

This plan reflects a commitment to deeper collaboration with partners in philanthropy, business, faith communities, tribal and local government, housing and service providers and people with lived experiences of homelessness. It gives us the opportunity to accelerate our progress and have a positive impact on the lives of more Minnesotans.

We are grateful to all the partners who have signed on to this plan and are committed to working across sectors to achieve our collective vision of housing stability for all Minnesotans.



Mary Tingerthal
Commissioner, Minnesota Housing



Emily Piper
Commissioner, Department of Human Services



Cathy ten Broeke
State Director to Prevent and End Homelessness

Homelessness is a problem that can be solved. In order to do this, we all have an important role to play. In a community as prosperous as ours, all should be afforded the basic dignity and stability that a home provides. Housing stability is foundational to children and youth getting an education and succeeding in life, to parents raising healthy and stable families, and to honoring our elders, individuals with disabilities, and those who've served our Country. Our homes are our refuge, the center of traditions and celebrations, and where we build memories. A home is an anchor for so many facets of life.

Heading Home Together reflects a shared belief that through concerted, collaborative effort, we can effectively end homelessness in Minnesota. This new plan represents our shared vision, goals, and guiding principles while holding us all accountable to measurable results for those experiencing homelessness. It dramatically changes the way we *collectively* identify opportunities and solve challenges together, not yet another isolated effort. Most importantly, implementation of *Heading Home Together* will deepen involvement of communities who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness in the problem-solving process, recognizing that the best systemic solutions are grounded in the experience of those closest to the issue.

Through the *Heading Home Minnesota Funders Collaborative*, philanthropic leaders are identifying what we see as our best contribution to helping end homelessness. We have committed to aligning with the vision, goals and principles of this plan and look forward to broadening our work with government, advocacy, faith, tribal, community leaders, and those with lived experience. We applaud State Government for being the first to make their specific commitments and will identify our respective contributions in the coming months. We look forward to others joining in identifying their commitments and contributions and working together to end homelessness in Minnesota.



Brian Paulson
Senior Program Officer, Pohlads Family Foundation
Chair, Heading Home Minnesota Funders Collaborative

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A New Plan, A New Partnership

Heading Home Together: Minnesota's 2018-2020 Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness aspires to be a plan of, by, and for all Minnesotans.

The [Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness](#) (“the Council”) is made up of the Commissioners of 11 state agencies, the Chair of the Metropolitan Council, and the Governor’s office.

In December 2013, the Council developed and released the first version of *Heading Home*. The plan was re-issued in January 2016 with new strategies to guide efforts in 2016 and 2017. This current version of the plan includes strategies to guide efforts to end homelessness in Minnesota from 2018 through the end of 2020.

Previous versions of *Heading Home* have been the product of and guiding document for the Council and its member state agencies. This plan aspires to be something greater: to reflect a growing community understanding and emerging consensus about what is needed to prevent and end homelessness in Minnesota, and the collective, multi-sector strategies necessary to achieve that end. The specific content of the plan reflects local practitioner knowledge, the insights of people with lived

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experience of homelessness, Federal policy requirements and guidance, and extensive input from stakeholders all across Minnesota. Numerous organizations have endorsed the guiding principles for the plan. These partners have also contributed substantially to shaping its strategies. Accordingly, first-person plural pronouns (“we” and “our”) used throughout this document are offered to reflect not only the Council’s perspective, but also a broader community of stakeholders who share similar views and are aligned in efforts to end homelessness.

This document articulates a shared set of goals, principles, and strategies that will help to focus and align the efforts of many partners across Minnesota to prevent and end homelessness.

Each agency on the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness has made specific commitments to advance the strategies, and those specific actions are in the Council’s 2018-2020 work plan (Appendix A).

While the Council will continue to lead the work of State government, a *Heading Home Together* leadership structure is being created in partnership with the Heading Home Minnesota Funders Collaborative to increase momentum toward our shared goals. This structure will include all levels of government, philanthropy, advocates, organizations that offer support and housing, and people with lived experiences of homelessness. Ownership of implementing *Heading Home Together* will be shared. Progress will be tracked and problems will be identified and solved together. All partners are invited and encouraged to identify the specific commitments and activities that they can undertake to advance the plan’s goals, principles, and strategies. These commitments will be incorporated into the work plan over time.

Vision: Housing Stability for All Minnesotans

Heading Home Together advances the vision of housing stability for all Minnesotans. Housing stability means access to a safe and affordable place to live, as well as the resources and supports to maintain stable housing. Housing stability also means that people have choices in where they live, and if and when they move.

This plan focuses on solving the most egregious form of housing instability: homelessness. It recognizes that by preventing and ending homelessness, we will create a foundation for success for a broad spectrum of Minnesotans whose housing stability is continually at risk.

Four Population Goals

While *Heading Home Together* focuses on preventing and ending homelessness overall, focusing on four populations serves to drive and measure progress, which in turn can build momentum, capacity, and understanding to end homelessness for all Minnesotans. The four population goals of the plan are:

1. Finish the job of ending veteran homelessness.
2. Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness.
3. Prevent and end homelessness among youth and young adults unaccompanied by parents or guardians by the end of 2020.
4. Prevent and end homelessness among families with children by the end of 2020.

In addition, this plan and its principles and strategies are intended to set the path to prevent and end homelessness for any Minnesotan at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Homelessness in Minnesota reflects persistent equity disparities. According to Wilder Research's Minnesota Homeless Study, African Americans and American Indians are over-represented among people experiencing homelessness by a factor of eight, meaning there are eight times more African Americans and American Indians experiencing homelessness than would be expected based on the distribution of the general population. Among youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) young people are significantly over-represented. Therefore, this plan also sets out deliberate strategies to achieve equity.

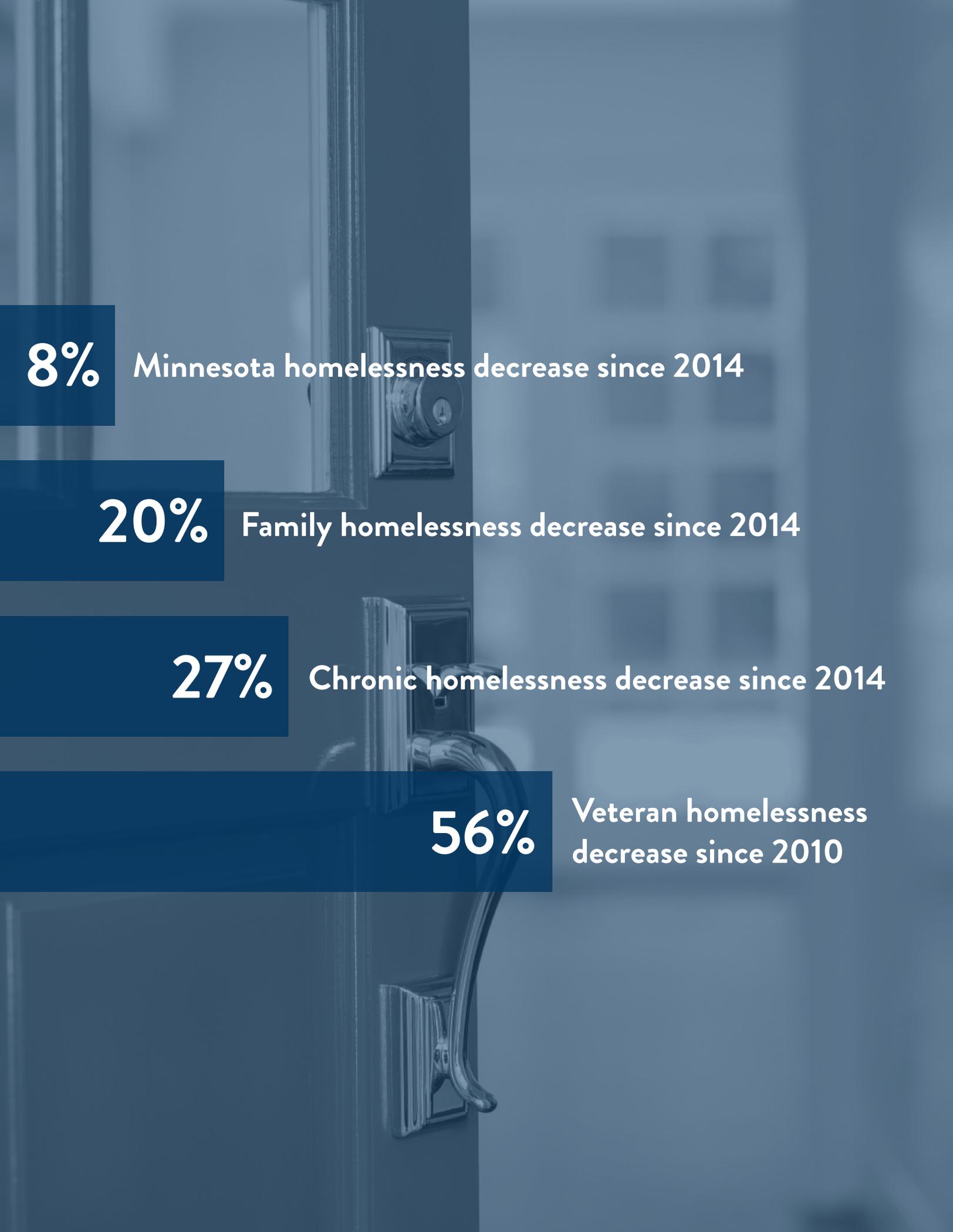
Statewide Stakeholder Engagement and Commitment

The partners who committed to align their work over the next three years with the seven principles of *Heading Home Together* are:

- Association of Minnesota Counties
- Child Care Aware of Minnesota
- Corporation for Supportive Housing
- Fargo Veterans Administration
- Governor's Early Learning Council
- Heading Home Minnesota Funders Collaborative
- Hennepin County Office to End Homelessness
- Hennepin County Youth Collaborative
- Minneapolis Veterans Administration Healthcare System – Homeless Programs
- Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans
- Minnesota Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
- Minnesota Association of Area Agencies on Aging
 - Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging
 - Central Minnesota Council on Aging
 - Land of the Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging
 - Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging
 - Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Area Agency on Aging
 - Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging
 - Southeastern Minnesota Area Agency on Aging
- Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators
- Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
- Minnesota Coalition of Battered Women
- Minnesota Head Start Association
- Minnesota HIV Housing Coalition
- Minnesota Housing Partnership
- Minnesota Library Association
- Minnesota's 10 Continuums of Care
 - Southwest
 - Southeast
 - Ramsey
 - Hennepin
 - SMAC
 - Central
 - West Central
 - St. Louis
 - Northwest
 - Northeast
- Minnesota Tribal Collaborative to Prevent and End Homelessness
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- Sioux Falls Veterans Administration
- St. Cloud Veterans Administration
- Youth Services Network

We received additional feedback, insight and guidance from the following stakeholders:

- The Regional Council of Mayors
- Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Partners Panel
- State Mental Health Advisory Council
- Metro Counties Adult Mental Health Forum
- Contracted Agency Rule 79 Forum
- MN Corrections Association Conference
- MN Coalition for the Homeless Conference
- St. Louis County youth providers (LSS Duluth, YWCA Duluth, and Lifehouse)
- Southeast CoC youth providers (LSS and Northfield Union of Youth)
- Hennepin County stakeholder group
- Anoka County stakeholder group
- Voices of Change
- Leech Lake youth program representatives
- Bois Forte youth program representatives
- The Commanders Task Force



8%

Minnesota homelessness decrease since 2014

20%

Family homelessness decrease since 2014

27%

Chronic homelessness decrease since 2014

56%

Veteran homelessness decrease since 2010

What it Means to Prevent and End Homelessness: Measuring Progress

Effectively ending homelessness does not mean that no one will ever experience a housing crisis again. Changing economic realities, the unpredictability of life, and unsafe or unwelcoming family environments may create situations where people could be at risk of or experience homelessness.

Rather, effectively ending homelessness means that we **prevent** homelessness whenever possible, and when that is not possible, the experience of homelessness is **rare, brief, and one-time**. Because each component of what it means to end homelessness is important and distinct, four **performance measures** will help monitor progress on preventing and ending homelessness:

- Reduction in the number of people who become homeless for the first time (“prevent”).
- Reduction in the total number of people experiencing homelessness (“rare”).
- Reduction in the length of time people experience homelessness (“brief”).
- Reduction in the number of people who return to homelessness (“one-time”).

Effectively ending homelessness means that we prevent homelessness whenever possible, and when that is not possible, the experience of homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time.

These performance measures will be monitored primarily through data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a statewide database used by homeless assistance programs to identify who is served and to track key outcome and performance information. In addition, the annual Point-in-Time count (PIT count) will serve as our annual measure of progress for reducing homelessness in Minnesota overall and for specific populations. PIT counts are required by the Federal government and are conducted by staff and volunteers across Minnesota on a single night each January. While counting methods and data sources continue to improve, these counts always represent a minimum estimate of the number of Minnesotans experiencing homelessness.

Because resolving disparities is integral to effectively ending homelessness in Minnesota, all of the performance measures listed above will be assessed with respect to distinct groups to ensure that Minnesota’s progress to prevent and end homelessness is equitable progress.

We will also continue to use other available data sources, including Wilder’s Minnesota Homeless Study, counts of Minnesota students identified as homeless by schools and school districts over the course of a year, data from HMIS and State data systems, and other sources of information. Often, each data source comes with its own focus and limitations, which can include differing definitions of who is considered homeless. Using multiple sources of information can help corroborate findings and identify important subpopulations of Minnesotans facing homelessness and housing instability.

Homelessness in Minnesota: Causes

Stable housing is out of reach for far too many Minnesotans. At least 7,600 Minnesotans experience homelessness on any given night, based on the annual PIT count. A much larger group of Minnesotans is precariously housed, and may be only one crisis away from homelessness. According to the 2015 American Community Survey, over 260,000 Minnesota households pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing. More than half of these households are extremely low-income (incomes below 30 percent of their local area median income). With so much of their income going towards housing, families are forced to make difficult decisions, often sacrificing meals, medicine, or safe child care for a place to live. Even with careful planning, a single health, employment, or transportation crisis could result in homelessness.

At least 7,600 Minnesotans experience homelessness on any given night.

Homelessness occurs for many reasons, many of which stem from structural, systemic and social conditions. The circumstances for each family, young person, or individual may be unique. The Wilder Research Center, as part of its [2015 Minnesota Homeless Study](#), identified five key reasons why Minnesotans experience homelessness: lack of affordable housing; lack of employment; chronic health conditions that impede housing retention; domestic abuse and violence; and racism and other systemic inequities.

The lack of affordable housing is a challenge for communities across Minnesota, particularly for people with low or very low incomes. According to Minnesota Housing's [2017 Key Trends for Affordable Housing](#) report, about two thirds of rental housing that is affordable for people with low incomes is "naturally occurring" affordable housing – units that are affordable but are not subsidized by any public funding. Their rents are lower than other properties in the same geographic area, often due to dated, limited, or deteriorating amenities or because they require repairs or improvements. These properties, in particular, have become attractive to real estate investors, who purchase and rehabilitate them for increased rents, often rendering them unaffordable to their previous tenants or other

low-income households. Some developers set rents above the levels that can be used with Federal or State rental assistance programs, so that even former tenants with rent subsidies end up displaced. In recent years, the number of naturally occurring affordable housing units lost to redevelopment has offset the impact of increased affordable housing production, making it difficult for communities to see meaningful improvement in their residents' access to affordable housing.

Homelessness in Minnesota: Progress and Challenges

It is a remarkable testament to the dedicated work of many Minnesotans that in the face of these challenges, homelessness in Minnesota has decreased by eight percent since 2014 when the original *Heading Home* plan was launched. That decrease represents twice the rate of improvement for the nation as a whole over the same period. Previous efforts focused on specific populations of Minnesotans also demonstrate the dramatic and rapid progress that is possible with the right commitments, partnerships, approaches, and resources.

The largest numerical decrease in homelessness in Minnesota since 2014 occurred among **families with children**, where in 2017, one-fifth fewer people in families confront homelessness compared with 2014, a decrease of nearly 1,000 people. Targeted efforts by Hennepin County through the implementation and replication of its Stable Families Initiative contributed substantially to this decrease. Hennepin County proactively identified and reached out to families that had previously been in shelter, offering those families easy access to additional support if they should encounter housing issues after their shelter stay. Many families did access this resource, which gave the County an opportunity to connect these families with a range of programs – mostly "mainstream" programs, not targeted specifically to homelessness – including employment services, county economic assistance programs, and housing supports. This approach reduced returns to shelter for these families while increasing family incomes. Hennepin County is adopting the Stable Families Initiative approach across its homelessness and human service system, and similar approaches hold promise for other communities in Minnesota, demonstrating the kind of impact that a targeted focus and coordinated effort can have.

Another area where significant progress offers useful lessons for other populations and communities has been the coordinated effort across Minnesota to end homelessness among **veterans**. Homelessness among veterans is often measured nationally with reference to 2010. In Minnesota, veteran homelessness has decreased by 56 percent since 2010, compared with a 46 percent reduction across the country. In 2017, three of Minnesota's Continuum of Care regions representing 40 of Minnesota's 87 counties were confirmed by the Federal government to meet the criteria and benchmarks established for effectively ending veteran homelessness. These communities achieved this result through unprecedented coordination, paired with resources, focused on implementing evidence-based practice. In 2014, the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, working closely with the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and many nonprofits and community stakeholders, launched the Homeless Veteran Registry. This tool allows any veteran experiencing a housing crisis to connect, through one short application, with a team of organizations working together closely on a veteran-by-veteran basis to find solutions to each veteran's housing issues. This approach also allowed Minnesota for the first time to have reliable information about how many veterans were successfully moving into housing and how many new veterans experiencing homelessness were being identified each month. The close collaboration – involving weekly meetings among these partners, where every veteran's path back to housing is discussed and refined – has helped to triple the rate of housing outcomes for veterans and close the gap between the new veterans being identified and the number of veterans being housed. Community efforts connected to this initiative have addressed important systemic gaps, such as the difficulty of identifying options for emergency shelter or crisis housing in many rural parts of Minnesota.

Finding stable housing for people experiencing **chronic homelessness** – that is, people with a disability who have been homeless for one year or more – has been the focus of considerable Federal, State, and local efforts since at least 2004. Since 2014, the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness has dropped by 27 percent, more than six times the rate of improvement nationally over that same period. Progress ending chronic homelessness has benefited from intentional efforts focused

specifically on housing solutions for this group. Three counties have 83 percent of Minnesota's chronic homeless population: Hennepin, Ramsey, and Saint Louis counties. New approaches similar to the Homeless Veteran Registry are being used to develop collaborative housing plans for each person experiencing chronic homelessness. This holds significant potential to ensure that these Minnesotans are rapidly connected with safe and stable housing.



Southwest, West Central and Northwest CoC regions were confirmed by the Federal government to meet the criteria for effectively ending veteran homelessness.

Across Minnesota, efforts to end homelessness among **youth**, age 24 or younger, who are not accompanied by their parents or guardians, confront challenges to identify these young people reliably and to connect them quickly with responsive services and housing options. Minnesota's most recent PIT count identified 889 unaccompanied youth, a 21 percent increase compared to the first count in 2015, which may reflect improved efforts to count young people more reliably. Of these young people, 146 youth were experiencing homelessness as *minors* (under age 18). More distressingly, recent research from the Voices of Youth Count suggest that one in 10 young people experiences some form of homelessness over the course of a year, and one in 30 minors faces some form of homelessness annually, which suggests that substantially more young people may be experiencing homelessness than have been identified. In 2017, Hennepin County led a collaborative local effort, connected to a national initiative, to house 150 young people in 100 days, and to connect 75 percent of these young people with employment. At the end of this 100-day challenge, the County and its partners had housed 236 young people and connected 135 young people to employment, vastly exceeding its initial numerical targets. To focus specifically on minors experiencing homelessness, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, and Hennepin County are implementing a pilot initiative focused on the role that the

child welfare system, in partnership with organizations serving homeless youth, can play in addressing homelessness.

Partners working to prevent and end homelessness in Minnesota have made other significant progress toward preventing and ending homelessness over the past several years:

- Since setting the ambitious goal of creating 5,000 new affordable and supportive housing opportunities by 2020, nearly half of these units have been created or are in development.
- The Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) – a critical, statewide tool for effectively targeting homeless programs and resources, for documenting effective and promising practices, and for identifying unmet needs – has been substantially reformed resulting in greater coordination and monitoring of program and population results.
- Through HMIS, coordinated entry processes are being established to help connect people experiencing homelessness with the resources that are most responsive to their needs.
- Mainstream programs – those that are not targeted specifically to people experiencing homelessness – play a more significant role in preventing and ending homelessness in Minnesota, through specific, local efforts and through the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness’ Foundational Service Practices (Appendix C), intended to make these programs work more effectively for people in the midst of a housing crisis.
- Recognizing the centrality of equity to efforts to end homelessness, the Council developed and has shared broadly a set of principles for improving equity in grant-making practices, one of the central roles of State government in supporting local progress (Appendix D).

Significant challenges remain to achieve the vision of housing stability for all Minnesotans. Unsheltered homelessness – that is, people experiencing homelessness in outdoor locations, living in vehicles, or staying in places not fit for habitation – has increased significantly in Minnesota and nationally over the past several years. Similarly, the number of single adults who are neither veterans nor chronically homeless is going up in Minnesota and nationally. Different regions of Minnesota have experienced different levels of progress and face different challenges.

Inequities in who experiences homelessness and how well programs and systems equitably help resolve homelessness need to be better examined.

Heading Home Together: Minnesota’s 2018-2020 Action Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness is a direct response to these challenges. The principles and strategies laid out in this plan describe a path to preventing and ending homelessness for specific subpopulations in every region of the state. The launch of this plan marks an unprecedented level of collaboration to prevent and end homelessness between county, tribal, State and Federal governments, philanthropic organizations, nonprofits and other private sector partners, and Minnesotans with lived experience of homelessness. Our collective action will help reconnect Minnesotans facing homelessness with housing, and will substantially prevent homelessness by addressing barriers to housing stability.

The Plan:

Principles and Strategies for *Heading Home Together*

Heading Home Together is organized in two levels:

- **Seven principles identify the principle ingredients needed to prevent and end homelessness.**
- **Each principle contains several strategies that focus and guide specific activities to achieve those principles.**

Local implementation of strategies may vary from one location to another. They are intended to capture strategic work needed by multiple sectors and partners statewide. As more partners and sectors engage in this work, additional solutions may be brought to bear.

Thanks to a newly emerging understanding nationally about what it means to prevent and end homelessness, *Heading Home Together* is organized around seven principle ingredients needed for communities to achieve this result. These principles are:

1. **Identify and engage** all people experiencing homelessness.
2. Ensure that everyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness can access a safe and appropriate **crisis response** through diversion, prevention, shelter, or crisis housing with appropriate services.
3. Rapidly link people experiencing homelessness with **housing and services** tailored to their needs, prioritizing the most vulnerable.
4. Prevent the loss of affordable housing and **fill the gap** in the number of affordable and supportive

housing opportunities available to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

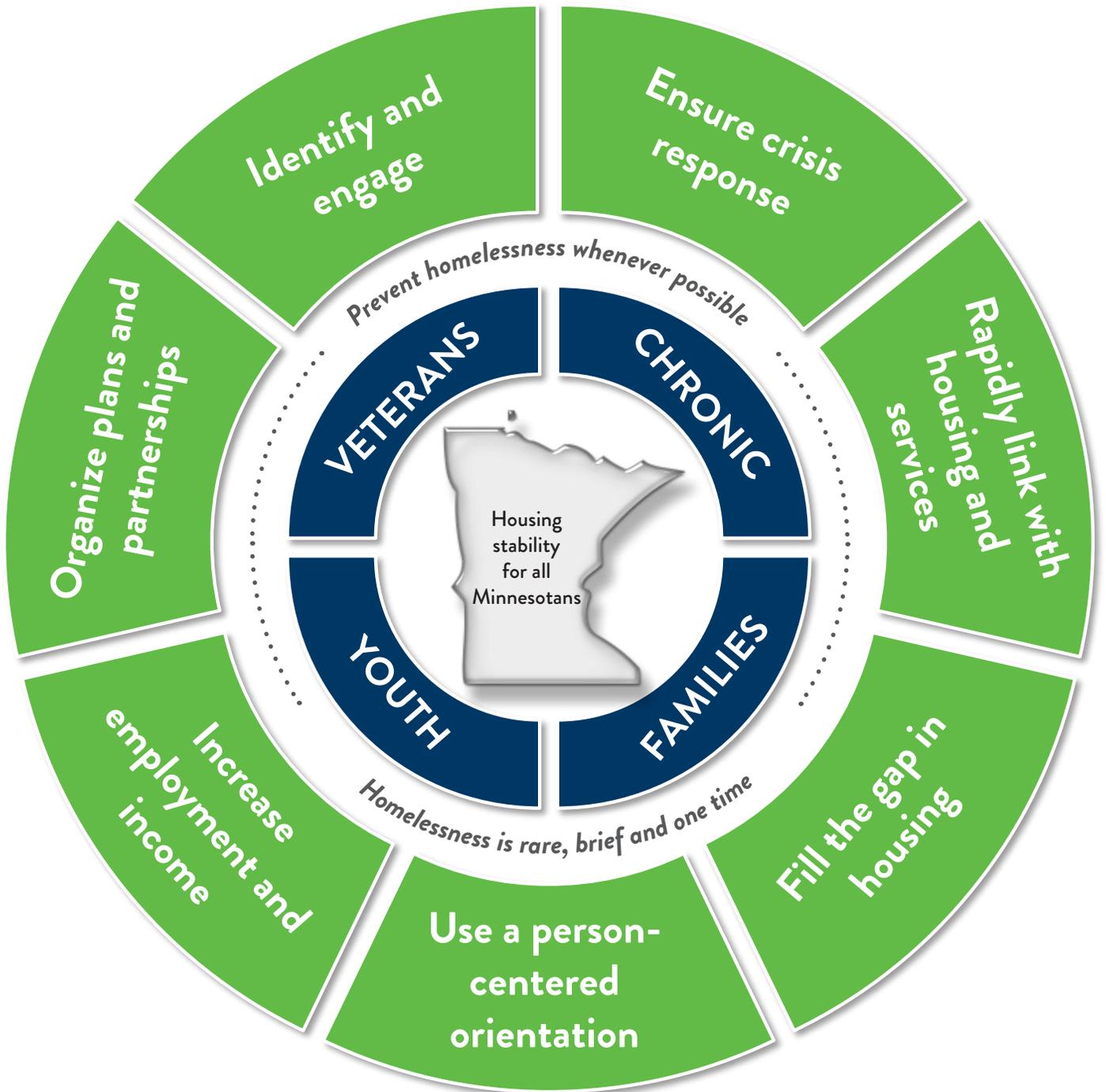
5. Use a **person-centered**, trauma-informed, Housing First orientation in our response to homelessness.
6. Help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness **increase employment and income**.
7. **Organize plans and partnerships** and increase system capacity to prevent and end homelessness on an ongoing basis.

Initially, these seven principles were derived from two sources of Federal guidance: the Continuum of Care system performance measures established by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the criteria and benchmarks established by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and its member agencies to establish whether a community has effectively ended homelessness for specific populations. These principles have been refined through review and input from a wide variety of stakeholders, and serve as the organizing structure for the plan.

What follows is a more detailed description of each principle and the strategies needed to realize each principle.

Preventing and Ending Homelessness

Effectively ending homelessness and creating housing stability for all Minnesotans means that we prevent homelessness whenever possible, and when that is not possible, the experience of homelessness within our communities is rare, brief, and one-time. We will do this through the adoption of seven main principles - essential ingredients needed for communities to achieve this result.





Principle #1: Identify and engage all people experiencing homelessness.

Reason for this principle: We cannot effectively end homelessness if people experiencing homelessness remain unknown, invisible, or disconnected from the resources they need. Increased identification and engagement will also improve understanding of the scope of the problem and the specific needs and resources of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Strategy 1A: Ensure that Minnesotans experiencing or at risk of homelessness have a low barrier way to connect with housing support and assistance.

Why? While many communities in Minnesota have some resources to respond to homelessness and housing crises, navigating these resources or knowing where to start when in crisis is often challenging. A simplified and transparent path to resources will be more responsive to the needs of people experiencing homelessness across the state.

Strategy 1B: Ensure that every region of the state has the capacity to conduct reliable and routine outreach in areas where people are living in unsheltered settings, with the goal that everyone experiencing homelessness is connected to and known by appropriate support systems.

Why? People who are living primarily outside or in settings not fit for habitation are more likely to be disconnected from any type of supports or resources and are most vulnerable. While some parts of the state have strong outreach capacity, this is not true in many areas. Additionally, outreach staff often work in isolation and would benefit from better connections with other

outreach agencies, shelter staff, homeless response systems, and mainstream programs.

Strategy 1C: Educate the public about homelessness, and support and train “natural points of contact” to identify and connect people experiencing housing crises to coordinated entry and other resources.

Why? Most Minnesotans do not have a complete understanding of who experiences homelessness and why and where someone might go for help. Someone experiencing a housing crisis does not usually seek out targeted homeless services. More likely, an individual or family may reach out to friends or family or will engage a system with which they are already familiar, such as schools, libraries, a faith community, or a hospital. These systems must have the information and resources to respond effectively when people in crisis come to them.

Strategy 1D: Expand the strategic use of statewide data systems to identify people experiencing homelessness and rapidly link people to appropriate supports.

Why? Existing data systems, including HMIS, hold helpful information about people experiencing homelessness and could be used in a more strategic way to help create better outcomes for people.



Principle #2: Ensure that everyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness can access a safe and appropriate crisis response through diversion, prevention, shelter, or crisis housing with appropriate services.

Reason for this principle: Too many Minnesotans face homelessness without shelter: staying outdoors, in vehicles, or in places not meant for habitation. Whenever it is possible to prevent the trauma and disruption of homelessness, we should do so. Dedicated homelessness prevention and diversion resources need to be available to stabilize housing or to identify other housing options without an episode of homelessness. We must also create immediate access for people who are unsheltered to some form of immediate shelter that is safe and supportive, and provides low-barrier access to services designed to help people quickly resolve their housing crisis.

When a community lacks sufficient emergency shelter capacity and development of new shelter capacity is not feasible or appropriate, other approaches must be put in place to reduce the trauma of homelessness and quickly help people into a more stable situation. This can include providing a crisis response, such as motel voucher programs or emergency host homes for youth, in addition to developing immediate pathways to more permanent housing.

Strategy 2A: Increase resources for prevention and diversion to avoid shelter when possible and to leverage potential housing options and natural supports prior to an episode of homelessness.

Why? When a crisis arises, avoiding homelessness from occurring in the first place is always the best outcome for families or individuals, as well as the most efficient use of resources. Currently, there is wide variation in the extent to which prevention and diversion resources exist and how they are deployed.

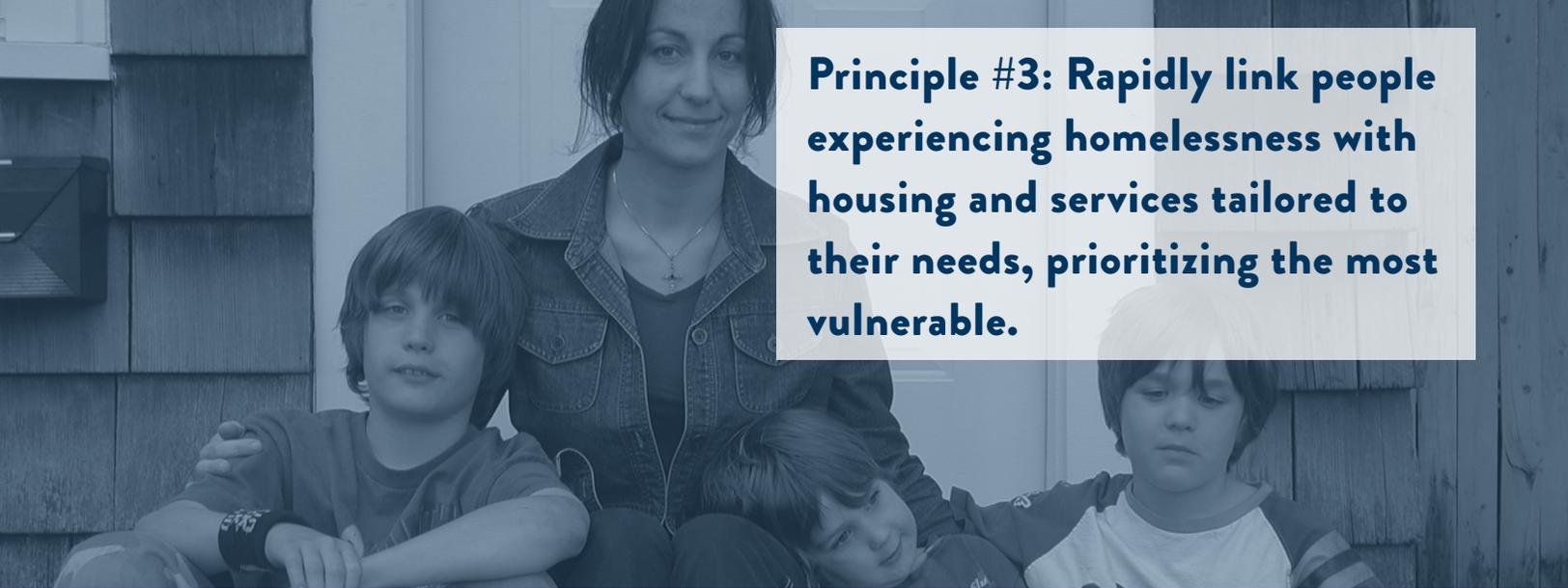
Strategy 2B: Increase capacity in communities to provide access to a form of low-barrier, safe, and dignified shelter or other crisis response to meet demand for everyone who needs it on a same-day basis.

Why? When shelters or other types of crisis response work well, they provide much-needed stability and safety, a place for people to engage with services and supports,

and a stable place to begin to identify a path to more permanent housing. In most parts of the state, shelter capacity (in terms of both beds and services) is limited based on available funding, rather than scaled to the capacity needed to meet the need.

Strategy 2C: Ensure that systems serving low-income or vulnerable Minnesotans are responsive to the needs of people experiencing a housing crisis and do not exit people to homelessness.

Why? Transitions out of systems like corrections, hospitals, substance use treatment, and youth foster care are common entry points into homelessness.



Principle #3: Rapidly link people experiencing homelessness with housing and services tailored to their needs, prioritizing the most vulnerable.

Reason for this principle: The available resources for ending homelessness must be used in the most efficient and impactful way possible. Doing so requires understanding the needs of people experiencing homelessness and making connections to resources that best meet those needs. Continuum of Care regions across the state have made significant progress in these connections through coordinated entry systems. Coordinated entry streamlines access and referrals to services and housing, using standardized tools and practices for everyone who requests help, allowing regions to prioritize homeless assistance for those with the greatest vulnerability or needs.

Strategy 3A: Collaborate with Continuum of Care regions and tribal nations so that all coordinated entry systems in Minnesota are trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and meet or exceed Federal standards.

Why? Coordinated entry is new in most areas of Minnesota, but a strong foundation has been laid. We need to build on this foundation, increase coordination among regions, and integrate best practices and culturally appropriate services in these systems.

Strategy 3B: Ensure that coordinated entry systems assess needs and provide referrals to critical mainstream programs, including mental health care and economic assistance.

Why? Resources not specific to homelessness can play an important role in ending homelessness by addressing underlying crises. Mainstream programs typically provide more people with a greater array of supports than homeless-specific programs can. Leveraging all potential resources available to a household provides better service and ensures the most efficient use of limited homeless-specific resources.

Strategy 3C: Provide navigation services to support the most vulnerable people assessed through coordinated entry and help connect them to housing and supports that best fit their needs.

Why? In some areas of the state, households can easily lose contact with the coordinated entry system after they have been assessed and placed on a waiting list, or they may not be prepared when they get a referral to housing. A navigator can maintain contact with households, help gather any documentation, make connections to other services, and assist with housing search. Even where this service exists, there is typically no stable source of funding to support these activities.

Strategy 3D: Engage communities with the highest rates of chronic homelessness to explore best ways to increase stable housing outcomes and coordinate with the work of Minnesota's Olmstead Plan.

Why? Today, over 1,000 Minnesotans experience chronic homelessness (homeless for 12 months or more with a disability). People experiencing chronic homelessness are often extremely vulnerable and need expedited access to supportive housing or similarly intensive resources to effectively end their homelessness.



Principle #4: Prevent the loss of affordable housing and fill the gap in the number of affordable and supportive housing opportunities available to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Reason for this principle: The only true cure for homelessness is housing that is affordable, accessible, and stable. It is essential that people have access to housing and, when necessary, have supports in place to ensure long-term stability.

Strategy 4A: Align efforts with the Governor’s Task Force on Housing to identify gaps in housing opportunities for Minnesotans with the lowest incomes and greatest barriers to housing and recommend actions to meet the need.

Why? At the core of the issue of homelessness is the systemic lack of affordable housing. Any efforts to prevent and end homelessness will be successful only if we act boldly to fill known gaps in the availability of affordable housing while continuously refining our understanding of the need and developing strategies to meet those needs.

Strategy 4B: Preserve existing affordable housing stock, especially naturally-occurring affordable housing.

Why? While creating new affordable and supportive housing opportunities is essential, it only works if those opportunities expand the affordable housing stock. Naturally-occurring affordable housing, in particular, represents an important, finite, and precarious resource to provide rental options for low-income Minnesotans. Today, we are losing this important housing at a rapid pace.

Strategy 4C: Develop a statewide initiative that uses an incentive-based approach to partnering with property owners and managers to increase willingness to rent to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Why? Many people at risk of or experiencing homelessness are locked out of the housing market simply because property owners or landlords are not willing to rent to them. A tight rental market enables property owners to screen out anyone with a perceived risk, such as criminal background, credit issues or poor rental history, which has a disproportionate impact on people experiencing homelessness.

Strategy 4D: Increase services available in supportive housing.

Why? Housing stability is critical to a person’s health, and when left “untreated” housing instability can result in worsened illnesses and negative health outcomes. Medicaid has recognized this connection, and provides us with an opportunity to use health care dollars to deliver services that help stabilize housing. This, in turn, will increase health and reduce health care costs.

Strategy 4E: Create a systematic way for people to move out of permanent supportive housing when they are ready to move on.

Why? Some tenants of supportive housing no longer need or want the level of support offered, but stay because financial and/or health supports are not in place to help them transition to a less intensive housing model. Addressing this issue can ensure our limited homeless-specific resources are being used as efficiently as possible, while honoring participant choice and preserving the stability that supportive housing has helped to achieve.

Strategy 4F: Reduce the use of unnecessarily restrictive tenant screening and zoning practices to increase housing access for those with criminal histories, prior evictions, or other barriers.

Why? Minnesota has seen an increase in city and local ordinances and targeted zoning practices that negatively impact those with a criminal history or a disability, and those experiencing domestic violence. These policies tend to have a disproportionate impact on people experiencing homelessness.

Strategy 4G: Increase the number of Housing Choice Vouchers, Public Housing units, and other mainstream housing resources used by people experiencing homelessness.

Why? Homeless-specific resources alone are not enough to address the amount of affordable housing needed to end homelessness. Yet, mainstream housing resources are often difficult or impossible to access for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Waitlists for Public Housing vouchers can be years long and are often closed. Housing Choice Vouchers go unused because many property owners are not willing to accept them. People experiencing homelessness are often screened out of Public Housing. Effectively engaging mainstream housing resources is critical to increase the rate of housing outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

Strategy 4H: Ensure sufficient capacity for responsive and flexible housing options for youth unaccompanied by parents or guardians experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Why? The transition to adulthood for many young people includes some degree of housing instability and often relies on shared housing or nontraditional housing settings. Homelessness programs are often premised on living arrangements for adults and have been slow to support living situations more commonly used by youth. In addition, performance expectations and eligibility requirements can often create penalties or disincentives for levels of mobility that are common and developmentally appropriate for young people.



**Principle #5:
Use a person-
centered, trauma-
informed,
Housing First
orientation in
our response to
homelessness.**

Reason for this principle: To be successful, solutions to homelessness must work for people in crisis, meet people where they are, and prioritize rapid access to housing with no preconditions or requirements. Person-centered, trauma-informed, Housing First approaches will advance these goals. These three best practices should be integrated throughout the homeless response system and other key mainstream systems. A person-centered approach means taking into account and responding to what individuals need and want, rather than organizing programs so they are easier for providers and administrators. Trauma-informed approaches recognize that homelessness is both a source of and often the product of traumatic experiences and respond intentionally and effectively to the impact of trauma. Housing First approaches reduce barriers to housing and prioritize rapid access to permanent housing when working with someone facing a housing crisis, so that housing can serve as a platform for stability. While the evidence supporting these approaches is clear, practice remains uneven.

Strategy 5A: Promote broader adoption of person-centered, trauma-informed and Housing First approaches by providing standards, definitions, guidance and support.

Why? For these best practices to be effectively adopted, everyone must have a clear understanding of what each means and why they are important. Funders must support providers to make any needed changes to ensure their programming is person-centered, trauma-informed, and Housing First oriented.

Strategy 5B: Ensure enough culturally-specific services, programs, and housing opportunities to better reflect the needs and preferences of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Why?

The racial disparities in homelessness require deliberate focus and attention to ensure that solutions to homelessness are specifically responsive to populations disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

Strategy 5C: Bolster existing information and referral services so they are able to provide useful and accurate information directly to people experiencing homelessness.

Why? People experiencing homelessness often do not know where to go for help or what resources or supports may be available to them. It is important that people have good information about their options so they can have meaningful choice in addressing their homelessness.



**Principle #6:
Help people
experiencing or at
risk of homelessness
increase employment
and income.**

Reason for this principle: The best way for an individual or family to achieve housing stability is to increase income, whether through wages, disability benefits, or other cash benefits. Increasing financial resources for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness also includes connecting people to benefits such as food support, child care subsidies, and health care so that more of their income can be available for housing.

Strategy 6A: Create connections to employment support and economic assistance programs as part of coordinated entry.

Why? Because stable housing is dependent on income, addressing income should be done concurrently when determining housing options. Currently, coordinated entry systems typically take into account a household's income without looking at ways income could be increased. Working on increasing income while also working to find stable housing can lead to more housing options and raise the likelihood of long-term stability.

Strategy 6B: Increase partnerships and alignment between homeless-specific programs and mainstream education, employment, and training services to access career pathways and increase earned income.

Why? Participants of supportive housing or other homeless programs would greatly benefit from the resources and expertise that mainstream employment and training services can offer. At the same time, mainstream employment and training services would greatly benefit from the knowledge and insight housing and homeless programs can provide on successfully serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Strategy 6C: Increase the number of families experiencing or at risk of homelessness who have access to affordable and flexible child care and after school care.

Why? The cost of quality child care is out of reach for most families experiencing homelessness. Without child care, it is extremely difficult to find and maintain employment to help afford housing. With access to affordable child care, parents are more likely to be employed and will have more of their income to put towards housing, and children are more likely to receive the early childhood education needed to create the foundation for future educational success.

Strategy 6D: Increase the number of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who have access to affordable transportation options.

Why? Accessible and affordable transportation allows people to maintain employment, keep their health care appointments and get their children to school—all important components of being able to maintain stable housing.



Principle #7: Organize plans and partnerships and increase system capacity to prevent and end homelessness on an ongoing basis.

Reason for this principle: This plan calls for substantial improvements in capacity and coordination, understanding that such changes must be robust and sustainable so that momentum toward ending homelessness in Minnesota increases and progress is lasting. Sustaining the impact of these improvements must, itself, be a significant focus.

Strategy 7A: Develop a multi-sector, statewide structure to drive implementation, accountability, and oversight of this plan.

Why? Ending homelessness requires effective ways for all concerned stakeholders to work together. Each individual agency's or sector's efforts are amplified when there is a cohesive structure to guide work, leverage each other's strengths, and hold each other accountable.

Strategy 7B: Coordinate, streamline, and simplify access and requirements for funding to support responses to homelessness, particularly for communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

Why? Multiple application processes, reporting requirements, and monitoring procedures with varying timeframes and expectations create burdens for grantees and potentially duplicative work among funders. Funding decisions made in isolation mean that we are not addressing homelessness in a systematic way and that we lack clarity on the overall impact of funding on homelessness, particularly across programs. Finally, there is a potential for current funding strategies to inadvertently perpetuate disparities.

Strategy 7C: Use data to identify existing resources, service gaps and ongoing resource requirements to sustainably prevent and end homelessness.

Why? High quality data and analysis drives better planning, policy, and results. Preventing and ending homelessness require a solid understanding of what resources exist, how well they are being used, and what will bridge the gap to ultimately achieve the goals in this plan.

Strategy 7D: Ensure that people with lived experiences of homelessness provide ongoing guidance to continually improve implementation of this plan.

Why? People with lived experience of homelessness have developed expertise and perspectives about responses to homelessness, what gaps or systems issues impede access to housing, and what approaches may be most (or least) effective. Leveraging this expertise can improve systems and expedite efforts to improve Minnesota's response to homelessness.

Every Minnesotan Has a Role to Play

The State has a significant role to play in preventing and ending homelessness, and this plan includes, at Appendix A, what the State has committed to do to advance this work.

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness also recognizes that State Government alone cannot end homelessness. In fact, every Minnesotan has a role to play. Solving a problem of this magnitude requires Minnesota's best thinking, contributions from every sector, and a truly collective effort. Minnesotans in many roles can play a part in ending homelessness. As this plan is being launched, work is being done to create a multi-sector Heading Home Together leadership table that will bring together all levels of government, nonprofits and the private sector. There, we hope to gather and organize, monitor and update, the contributions that all will make to advance this plan in the coming years.

Having a solid plan is important, but implementation and course correction over the next three years will drive what we are able, together, to achieve.

Public Officials at Federal, State, Tribal, County, Regional and Municipal Levels

- Affirm a shared vision, goals, principles and strategies to prevent and end homelessness.
- Provide leadership and accountability for progress and linkages between government entities.
- Provide the policy framework and public investments to prevent and end homelessness.
- Support the delivery of coordinated and integrated services at the community level.
- Foster implementation of proven and promising practices, innovative research and programming, and opportunities to share knowledge about lessons learned among all stakeholders.

Continuums of Care, Housing and Services Providers, Advocates, Organizations

- Provide direct and indirect support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness through effective, evidence-informed programs and services.
- Create strong, community-level response systems and effective programs designed to identify people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and deliver sustainable housing solutions.
- Collaborate to create, document, and share best practices, and to identify emerging trends.
- Work with government partners to identify needs and issues and to shape strategic directions.
- Inform and influence government priorities, public awareness and participation, and community approaches to solutions to homelessness.

Private Sector - Philanthropy and Business

- Provide leadership, critical resources, and shared ownership for preventing and ending homelessness.
- Convene partners to resolve challenges, maintain momentum, and sustain a shared vision.
- Provide vital economic and employment opportunities for people experiencing homelessness.
- Support broader civic engagement on the issue.

All Minnesotans

- Learn and tell the stories of children, youth, families and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Create community awareness of, engagement in, and responsibility for efforts to prevent and end homelessness.
- Engage policymakers at every level of government about efforts to prevent and end homelessness.
- Connect community organizations and institutions, including faith and cultural communities, in local efforts to prevent and end homelessness.
- Partner with schools and school districts to identify and support students experiencing homelessness.
- Donate resources, goods, and time to organizations serving people experiencing homelessness.

Appendix A: Council Work Plan

The following list presents the work plan that agencies of the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness will use to advance the strategies, principles, and goals of this plan.

Principle #1: Identify and engage all people experiencing homelessness.

Strategy 1A: Ensure that Minnesotans experiencing or at risk of homelessness have a low barrier way to connect with housing support and assistance.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Provide guidance to counties on child welfare best practices related to housing instability, including on the importance of proactive follow-up with families at-risk of homelessness as a means of reducing repeat maltreatment.	March 2019
	Use Senior Linkage Line to identify older adults in long-term care facilities and hospitals experiencing homelessness and coordinate their services to address the complexity of health care needs among homeless older adults, including referrals to service providers, medication management, access to transportation and mental health care.	Ongoing
MDVA	Audit the Homeless Veteran Registry to identify current users, and increase engagement and training to stakeholders to increase participation.	March 2018
Minnesota Housing	Implement a prevention targeting tool to prioritize those most likely to become homeless without receiving immediate assistance.	July 2019

Strategy 1B: Ensure that every region of the state has the capacity to conduct reliable and routine outreach in areas where people are living in unsheltered settings, with the goal that everyone experiencing homelessness is connected to and known by appropriate support systems.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Ensure that homeless outreach activities prioritize people who are living in unsheltered settings and that housing access is the primary objective of the outreach.	June 2020
	Engage underserved communities with technical assistance for responding to mental health grant opportunities, and/or working with DHS partners in the technical assistance efforts.	Ongoing
MDVA	Expand purpose of the Homeless Veteran Registry by increasing capability of the Registry to include veterans at risk of homelessness.	December 2018

Strategy 1C: Educate the public about homelessness, and support and train “natural points of contact” to identify and connect people experiencing housing crises to coordinated entry and other resources.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Ensure DHS Member Help Desk, Health Care Eligibility Operations enrollment and case management staff have resources and talking points available to them so they can refer the call appropriately if a caller discloses homelessness and is looking for assistance.	September 2018
	Ensure programs for older adults (Senior Linkage Line, Caregiver Consultants, Cultural Consultants) and grantees (Senior Corps, Dementia grantees, Eldercare Development Partnership and Live Well At Home) make the appropriate referrals if the individual discloses homelessness and is looking for assistance.	Ongoing
MDE	Provide professional development opportunities to Early Childhood Family Education providers about reaching out to people experiencing homelessness, offering sessions at times and locations that are accessible, and allowing for multiple methods of communication.	January 2019
	Analyze school homeless identification rates to flag potential outliers for outreach and follow-up.	January 2020
	Assist libraries and library staff to better serve people experiencing homelessness, including supporting local partnerships between libraries and community organizations, training library staff, and removing barriers to accessing library services.	January 2019
	Expand and replicate local partnerships among schools, government and community-based organizations that have been successful in resolving student homelessness as part of the Homework Starts with Home initiative.	June 2019
	Promote McKinney-Vento services as a tool to address chronic absenteeism.	June 2020
MDVA, DEED	Increase outreach, education, and identification of homeless and at-risk veterans through increased participation in the Mayor’s Challenge and local veteran service organization outreach.	December 2018
Minnesota Housing	Provide technical assistance to grantees to better connect people experiencing homelessness to the coordinated entry response system.	July 2019
MnDOT	Implement established policy to train MN Department of Transportation staff to have more effective interactions with people experiencing homelessness.	June 2018
OHE	Explore opportunities to train participating teachers in the Get Ready! Program on how they can support students affected by housing instability.	August 2018
	Develop relationships with the McKinney Vento local homeless education liaisons in order to more effectively support students affected by housing instability.	September 2018
	Encourage other higher education leaders across the state to adopt best practices by disseminating information. Partner with institutions to implement the best practices models on identification and services for homeless college students.	October 2018
	Provide information and resources to financial aid administrators group on homelessness exemptions for independent student status.	June 2019
	Review all Office of Higher Education programs and policies to evaluate how they support students experiencing homelessness, what barriers they create, and what opportunities there are for improvement.	December 2020

Strategy 1D: Expand the strategic use of statewide data systems to identify people experiencing homelessness and rapidly link people to appropriate supports.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Provide annual updates on legislative report on current homelessness by county.	Ongoing
	Improve data quality for living arrangement and homeless indicators in MAXIS, the system used to determine eligibility for public assistance and health care, through increased training and modification to forms.	June 2019
	Explore opportunities to improve data collection and reporting on people experiencing homelessness who may also be enrolled in a public health care program.	Ongoing
	Develop priorities and training protocols within Senior Linkage Line (web referral) and Return to Community when an individual is identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness.	June 2019
MDE	Improve quality of data collected by the Early Childhood and Family Education Program on housing status by adopting the approach used by the PreK-12 system, which captures varying degrees of housing instability.	June 2018
	Enhance how achievement gaps for homeless youth and foster youth are assessed and include this information in relevant public reporting.	January 2019
MDVA	Launch a public-facing dashboard designed to make Homeless Veteran Registry de-identified outcome data readily available to stakeholders, and to increase the ability of all stakeholders to monitor and evaluate progress, improve data literacy, and accelerate community engagement and impact.	August 2018
	Increase communication and synchronization among data collections systems (Veteran Registry-HMIS-Coordinated Entry).	December 2018
	Continue to support and advise communities as they compile and submit Homeless Veteran Registry data and evidence of reaching the federal benchmarks and criteria for ending veteran homelessness.	Ongoing

Principle #2: Ensure that everyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness can access safe and appropriate crisis response through diversion, prevention, shelter, or access to crisis housing with appropriate services.

Strategy 2A: Increase resources for prevention and diversion to avoid shelter when possible and to leverage potential housing options and natural supports prior to an episode of homelessness.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Prioritize frequent or long term users of shelters, or other crisis services, with outreach services to help them access and remain in stable housing.	June 2020
OHE	Implement emergency grant program for students experiencing housing and food insecurity.	June 2018

Strategy 2B: Increase capacity in communities to provide access to a form of low-barrier, safe, and dignified shelter or other crisis response to meet demand for everyone who needs it on a same-day basis.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Develop shelter protocols and standards, and provide support to shelters around low barrier access that will increase access to shelter and services promoting dignity and respect, and facilitating rapid access to housing.	December 2019
MnDOT, MDVA	Pursue better coordination across all sectors and establish a formalized process and/or system to create solutions for people living in encampments by creating more meaningful interactions with inhabitants and ensuring they are connected with needed services and opportunities for housing.	May 2018
OTPEH	Develop policies to promote safety of people experiencing homelessness during weather events or natural disasters.	January 2019

Strategy 2C: Ensure that systems serving low-income or vulnerable Minnesotans are responsive to the needs of people experiencing a housing crisis and do not exit people to homelessness.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Identify ways for families involved in the child welfare system and experiencing housing instability to be more likely to gain housing assistance through the Keeping Families Together pilot.	December 2018
	Implement agency-wide DHS policy to emphasize the importance of stable housing within human services and provide alignment and clarity on housing-related issues.	December 2018
	Pilot a more effective response to older minor youth experiencing homelessness that would later be replicated in various forms across MN.	December 2019
	Implement Foundational Service Practices (please refer to Appendix C) in select mainstream system programs, including Adult Mental Health services and child welfare.	December 2019
	Complete pilot project with the Department of Corrections that connects people leaving correctional facilities with public assistance and healthcare programs. People in the pilot project are at high risk of recidivism and many have past histories of homelessness and most are at risk of homelessness. Use lessons learned in pilot to increase successful transitions from correctional facilities, mental health and substance use disorder treatment centers.	December 2019

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Support the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division grant recipients that serve felony level, criminal justice involved individuals, pre-release and recently released from incarceration, who have a substance use disorder (SUD) to ensure connections to housing opportunities.	Ongoing
	Provide guidance to counties on child welfare best practices related to resolving housing instability, including the importance of inquiring about housing stability for the purpose of connecting the family with resources.	March 2019
	Improve and enhance discharge planning for older adults at risk of homelessness by working with Community Living Specialists (Return to Community initiative) and the Office of Ombudsman for Long Term Care.	June 2019
DOC	Continue building relationships with the MN Association of Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCAC), the MN Association of County Probation Officers (MACPO), and the MN Sheriffs Association to better align and partner on strategies to help stabilize individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness who are involved in corrections and county systems.	Ongoing
MDE	Support schools with evidence-based practices to increase consistent attendance.	June 2020
	Develop and promote Minnesota-specific guidance on expectations of McKinney-Vento liaisons.	December 2018
	Establish and deliver Indian Home School Liaison (IHSL) training on identifying and tracking American Indian homeless or at-risk students.	December 2020
	Collaborate with McKinney-Vento liaisons to assess options for strengthening liaison peer support groups.	Ongoing
	Increase the impact of early learning programs for children experiencing homelessness and their families by increasing sustained involvement with appropriate resources, improving coordination among programs and practitioners, and monitoring participation in relevant programs.	Ongoing
MDH	Ensure collaboration between Family Home Visiting and mainstream systems to increase referrals of families at risk for homelessness. For example, explore with the MN Department of Corrections whether there are ways to increase the likelihood that pregnant mothers being released from prison are connected with their local Family Home Visiting program.	December 2019
	Facilitate new opportunities for Family Home Visiting local partners to learn and share best practices related to the foundational service practices.	December 2019

Principle #3: Rapidly link people experiencing homelessness with housing and services tailored to their needs, prioritizing the most vulnerable.

Strategy 3A: Collaborate with Continuum of Care regions and tribal nations so that all coordinated entry systems in Minnesota are trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and meet or exceed Federal standards.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
OTPEH	Create a mechanism for continuously improving coordinated entry, including routinely assessing outcome data, participant experience feedback, and assessment tools to improve coordinated entry systems and better identify community needs.	December 2019

Strategy 3B: Increase capacity in communities to provide access to a form of low-barrier, safe, and dignified shelter or other crisis response to meet demand for everyone who needs it on a same-day basis.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
OTPEH	Clarify options and requirements for how mainstream systems and programs should interact with coordinated entry to respond to housing crises faced by people at risk of homelessness.	December 2018
DHS, MN Housing	Identify and pilot options for implementing progressive engagement approaches for families experiencing homelessness using multiple funding sources.	September 2020
DHS	Build upon the work started with Substance Use providers to address gaps in access and service delivery for individuals with a severe substance use disorder (SUD) that are also at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness. This work includes ensuring connections to services through coordinated entry.	Ongoing
	Align work of Indian Elder Coordinator with MN Chippewa Tribe – Indian Area Agency on Aging to identify and develop protocols for referrals for American Indian elders who are homeless.	Ongoing
	Develop shelter protocols for older women who are also victims of abuse to address housing supports.	Ongoing
	Work with Continuum of Care Coordinators to identify opportunities to connect people assessed through the Coordinated Entry system to Emergency Assistance, Housing Support, Social Security or Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA) when appropriate.	December 2019

Strategy 3C: Provide navigation services to support the most vulnerable people assessed through coordinated entry and help connect them to the housing and supports that best fit their needs.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
Minnesota Housing	Evaluate the impact of utilizing state resources to fund housing navigators through the Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund Pilot Program.	December 2019
	Ensure rapid rehousing models include the components necessary to provide housing stability.	July 2019

Strategy 3D: Engage communities with the highest rates of chronic homelessness to explore best ways to increase stable housing outcomes and coordinate with the work of Minnesota’s Olmstead Plan.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Align policies around Olmstead and the creation of affordable housing/permanent supportive housing.	Ongoing
	Ensure care coordination for individuals with a substance use disorder addresses housing issues concurrently to improve treatment outcomes.	Ongoing

Principle #4: Prevent the loss of affordable housing and fill the gap in the number of affordable and supportive housing opportunities available to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Strategy 4A: Align efforts with the Governor’s Task Force on Housing to identify gaps in housing opportunities for Minnesotans with the lowest incomes and greatest barriers to housing and recommend actions to meet the need.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Increase training and support for providers interested in developing new supportive housing options.	June 2020
	Increase use of Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA) Housing Assistance through expanded training and outreach and implementation of 2017 legislative changes.	June 2020
	Prioritize Live Well At Home grants (community service development dollars) for affordable, low cost, independent housing development for older adults.	December 2020
DPS	Identify the need in housing opportunities, service dollars and staff capacity to ensure that victims of domestic violence at risk of homelessness have access to emergency and safe affordable housing.	June 2018
	Explore the creation of a Domestic Violence Housing specialist position that would act as a point of contact and expert on where the housing and homelessness systems and the domestic violence systems intersect.	June 2019
Minnesota Housing	Continue to work towards the goal of 5,000 new housing opportunities, including but not limited to new permanent supportive housing.	December 2020
Minnesota Housing, Met Council	Work with other government and non-governmental partners to align funding and policy around the issues of homelessness and affordable housing.	December 2019

Strategy 4B: Preserve existing affordable housing stock, especially naturally-occurring affordable housing.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
Minnesota Housing	Explore programs and policies to preserve housing that is not federally subsidized but otherwise affordable to low-income Minnesotans. This will be done in addition to the priority of preserving federally-assisted housing.	Ongoing
	Support the Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) Impact Fund and other efforts that work with landlords to preserve rental properties at risk of conversion to higher rents.	Ongoing
DHS	Educate homeless service providers on needs of older adults and explore ways to help current supportive and affordable housing providers better assist their tenants in aging in place.	Ongoing

Strategy 4C: Develop a statewide initiative that uses an incentive-based approach to partnering with property owners and managers to increase willingness to rent to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
OTPEH	Identify and disseminate incentive strategies for promoting access to rental vacancies for people experiencing homelessness.	December 2018
Minnesota Housing	Explore opportunities to work with landlords and property managers to increase access to non-subsidized housing for individuals and families in need of affordable and stable housing.	Ongoing
	Continue to build on and expand the work started with the Risk Mitigation Fund Pilot to encourage landlords to house people with the greatest barriers to housing.	Ongoing
DPS	Create an "Understanding Criminal Charges" document to educate public housing providers, landlords and employers on the definitions of criminal charges and provisions in laws that protect the rights of domestic violence victims.	June 2018
MDHR	Provide education to landlords, tenants, prospective tenants, and service providers (government and nonprofit) about housing discrimination laws in Minnesota.	January 2019

Strategy 4D: Increase services available in supportive housing.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Increase the capacity of supportive housing providers to provide Medicaid services directly or to partner with Medicaid providers.	June 2020
	Increase the flexibility of the Home and Community Based (HCBS) waiver services to support a wide array of service options in the community, including services in real-time or through remote support. The development of the Tiered Standards and the implementation of Individualized Home Supports (IHS) are working towards this goal.	December 2020
Minnesota Housing	Regularly provide informational materials on best practices related to tenant selection plans to owners and manager of properties of Minnesota Housing financed rental developments.	Ongoing

Strategy 4E: Create a systematic way for people to move out of permanent supportive housing when they are ready to move on.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
Minnesota Housing	Conduct an evaluation of the Step-Down pilot and if found effective, explore the resources needed to bring the program to scale.	December 2019

Strategy 4F: Reduce the use of unnecessarily restrictive tenant screening and zoning practices to increase housing access for those with criminal histories, prior evictions, or other barriers.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Explore innovative housing models that increase housing access for older adults in rural communities (examples include: Golden Girls, rooming housing etc.)	December 2019
DOC	Provide education to cities, counties, and relevant public safety entities on the impacts of local ordinances and residency restrictions on those with a criminal history.	January 2020
MDHR	Pursue actions to limit restrictive zoning, non-safety based occupancy limits, and covenants by communities and home owners associations.	June 2018
	Identify options to address tenant screening issues (criminal histories primarily, but also credit and housing history).	January 2019
MDHR, Minnesota Housing	To increase housing access, explore options such as automatic expungement to address evictions issues, particularly evictions due to non-payment of rent.	January 2019

Strategy 4G: Increase the number of Housing Choice Vouchers, Public Housing units, and other mainstream housing resources used by people experiencing homelessness.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
Met Council	Engage with Housing Choice Voucher Administrators (HRAs, PHAs, CDA's, etc.) to identify and implement strategies to reduce voucher turnback rates, and to identify strategies to best serve those on program waiting lists who are experiencing homelessness.	December 2019
	Support local efforts around expanding Housing Choice Voucher opportunities.	December 2020
	Engage with Housing Choice Voucher Administrators to identify and implement strategies to increase the number of property owners and managers willing to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.	December 2019
Minnesota Housing	Continue to prohibit properties with funding through Minnesota Housing from refusing to lease to a tenant based on the status of the tenant as a voucher-holder or recipient of similar rental assistance.	Ongoing

Strategy 4H: Ensure sufficient capacity for responsive and flexible housing options for youth unaccompanied by parents or guardians experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Ensure consistent application of the Fostering Connections Act including the use of supervised independent living settings.	December 2018
	Prioritize and target parenting youth in foster care with housing and wrap around services to ensure stability.	July 2019
	Ensure that state homeless funds that target youth can be used to support informal housing options and youth's existing support network.	December 2019

Principle #5: Use a person-centered, trauma-informed, Housing First orientation in our response to homelessness.

Strategy 5A: Promote broader adoption of person-centered, trauma-informed and Housing First approaches by providing standards, definitions, guidance and support.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
OTPEH	Compile best practice information and guidance on person-centered, trauma-informed and Housing First approaches and disseminate to Council agencies to use in communication with grantees, providers, and the broader community.	January 2019
DOC	Continue to refine and increase the quality of exit planning in Mental Health, Substance Use, and Criminal Justice Systems to ensure successful transitions out of institutions into stable housing. Partner and align with coordinated entry systems.	Ongoing
DHS	Provide in-person training and quarterly coaching for providers in Permanent Supportive Housing Evidence Based Practice Fidelity Standards.	December 2020
	Ensure that DHS licensing requirements of homeless youth and Safe Harbor licensed facilities are person-centered, trauma-informed, and operate from a positive youth development approach.	June 2019

Strategy 5B: Ensure enough culturally-specific services, programs, and housing opportunities to better reflect the needs and preferences of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
MN Housing, DHS	Identify and implement strategies for the 2019 RFP round that will require more diverse, inclusive, and culturally competent processes and programming. This work will be undertaken by the Coordinated Grant Making Work Group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These strategies will incorporate the updated Office of Grants Management policies. • Additionally, one or two universal measures will be included that aim to hold the state and partners accountable for producing equitable outcomes across programs. These additional measures will not be scored in the 2019 RFP round, but will be used to help inform and target our strategies to serve those most disproportionately impacted by homelessness. 	January 2019
DHS	Support Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) grant recipients that provide recovery support to persons who are also deaf, deafblind, and hearing impaired so they are able to make connections to housing opportunities.	Ongoing
	Engage MN Board on Aging Cultural Consultants to ensure culturally-specific services, programs, and housing opportunities are made available. This would better reflect preferred options and choices responsive to the needs and interest of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.	June 2019

Strategy 5C: Bolster existing information and referral services so they are able to provide useful and accurate information directly to people experiencing homelessness.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Educate older adults on affordable housing resources by engaging Senior Linkage Line.	Ongoing

Principle #6: Help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness increase employment and income.

Strategy 6A: Create connections to employment support and economic assistance programs as part of coordinated entry.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DEED	Partner with the Department of Human Services on their “Integrated Delivery of Human Services” initiative to enhance the connectedness of employment and training programs with human services supports.	June 2018
	Promote collaboration strategies at the local workforce area level so that the impact is at the point of service delivery.	June 2018
	Explore broader use of the Workforce One data system by community partners so they can share data related to eligibility to better connect people to benefits and supports that will bolster their workforce readiness.	January 2019
DEED, MDVA	Expand access to disability income benefits through better identification of potentially eligible individuals and increase assistance for people in applying for those benefits. When a veteran is identified, ensure connections are made to all potential veteran benefits and the MDVA SOAR program.	January 2020
	Ensure connections are made to eligible veterans benefits for those participating in the following DEED employment initiatives: Native American Veterans Program, The Women’s Veteran’s Program, and Incarcerated Veterans Program, including veterans with significant barriers to employment.	January 2019
DHS	Partner with counties to devise a strategy to ensure all participants receiving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Assistance (GA); • MN Family Investment Program (MFIP), particularly children and those also receiving Family Stabilization Services (FSS); • Deaf and hard of hearing services; and • Foster care, particularly transition age youth are screened for Social Security benefits and referred to a Social Security disability or SOAR advocate for assistance.	December 2018
	Coordinate with the Social Security Administration (SSA), Disability Determination Services (DDS), and the Department of Human Services to enhance clarity of the Social Security and disability determination process.	Ongoing
	Align process to assist with forms completion for economic assistance programs for older adults through Senior Linkage Line, AASD grantees and Area Agencies on Aging (Special Access Programs). This includes, but not limited to setting up a bank account, assisting with pensions, entitlement programs (social security, Medicare and Medicaid) and other public assistance programs.	June 2020

Strategy 6B: Increase partnerships and alignment between homeless-specific programs and mainstream education, employment, and training services to access career pathways and increase earned income.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DEED	Identify local workforce areas that are specifically doing outreach to homeless residents and spotlight their work to share with other local workforce areas as a best practice on how to engage and work with those individuals who are experiencing homelessness.	December 2018
	Host learning session(s) for DEED staff and employment providers on the Foundational Service Practices (Please see Appendix C) and the Document Vault to increase access to employment programs and services.	December 2018
	Provide greater integration of services through on-site employment readiness activities to become more effective in shortening the time to become “work ready”.	January 2019
	Create better access to services and service providers for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness through the Workforce Innovation Grant project.	Ongoing
DHS	Increase the number of providers who utilize SNAP E&T reimbursement to provide employment and training services to eligible households, tailoring these services to the specific needs of homeless households and increasing their potential earned income.	December 2018
	Engage statewide MN Family Investment Program (MFIP) and Tribal Employment Service providers to ensure they have the knowledge and resources to help address housing instability and homelessness, and are collaborating with homeless service providers.	June 2019
MDVA	Partner with the MN Department of Labor and Industry to prioritize veterans who are eligible for their apprenticeship programs streamlining referral process to ensure veterans who are interested can easily apply and get connected to interested employers.	January 2019

Strategy 6C: Increase the number of families experiencing or at risk of homelessness who have access to affordable and flexible childcare and after school care.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Provide a three-month presumptive eligibility period for childcare benefits while verifications are secured for families experiencing homelessness.	May 2018
	Identify and build upon the number of child care providers serving children experiencing homelessness and their families.	Ongoing
	Offer training to child care providers to increase use of best practices in serving children experiencing homelessness and their families.	Ongoing

Strategy 6D: Increase the number of people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness who have access to affordable transportation options.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
MnDOT	Fully implement the Regional Transportation Coordinating Councils (RTCCs) with participation from those providing services to people experiencing homelessness. Along with the RTCCs, work with transit providers to make transit services more effective through connections and collaboration.	December 2019
DHS	Prioritize Senior Corps grantee and Live Well At Home funds (Community Services Development dollars) to build transportation capacity in rural communities and connect volunteer drivers to older adults.	December 2020

Principle #7: Organize plans and partnerships and increase system capacity to prevent and end homelessness on an ongoing basis.

Strategy 7A: Develop a multi-sector statewide structure to drive implementation, accountability, and oversight of this plan.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
OTPEH	Organize Council agency partnership in the development of a broad, multi-sector implementation structure.	July 2018
DHS	Explore the establishment of regional administration hubs to build capacity among providers, serve as third-party billing agencies, and provide backroom support to providers when needed.	June 2020
	Incorporate housing and homelessness into 2 Gen initiatives.	Ongoing
Minnesota Housing	Explore how geographic boundaries of programs impact the delivery of homelessness resources.	July 2019
MnDOT	Continue the ongoing alignment work with efforts to reduce barriers to transportation through the MN Council on Transportation Access, the work of the Department within the Olmstead Plan, and other initiatives that are ongoing or may be initiated within the timeframe of this plan.	Ongoing

Strategy 7B: Coordinate, streamline, and simplify access and requirements for funding to support responses to homelessness, particularly for communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
Minnesota Housing, DHS	Continue implementation of coordinated grant making across homeless specific programs. This work includes developing a set of data, principles and practices to access regional need, developing universal program and service definitions, and utilizing statewide data in targeting resources to communities across the state using MNFACT 2.0 and coordinated entry data.	June 2019
OHE	Incorporate foundational service practices (please refer to Appendix C) into the guidance for the Office of Higher Education Emergency Grant Program that was established during the 2017 legislative session.	December 2018

Strategy 7C: Use data to identify existing resources, service gaps and ongoing resource requirements to sustainably prevent and end homelessness.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
DHS	Complete pilot to combine the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) with the DHS data warehouses for housing, income supports and health care.	December 2018
	Incorporate housing and homelessness data needs into systems modernization and Integrated Services Delivery planning.	Ongoing
	Identify people experiencing homelessness with the highest health care costs and build cost savings argument to provide housing for this group.	July 2019
	Utilize Wilder Research data to identify existing resources, service gaps and ongoing resource requirements to develop strategic plan with partners and stakeholders to sustainably prevent and end homelessness among older adults	December 2019
	Align data from the Office of Ombudsman for Long Term Care, Adult Protection, Return to Community Expansion to identify older adults who are displaced from hospitals and long term care facilities and develop processes to sustainably prevent and end homelessness.	December 2019
DOC	Track and report on the housing outcomes for individuals discharged from corrections systems with the inclusion of housing information in the Court Services Tracking System (CSTS).	Ongoing
MDE	Analyze student achievement data for homeless students and key sub-populations including students of color, American Indian students, and students with disabilities to document school-level variations and any outliers.	January 2020
Minnesota Housing	Develop reports to measure outcomes for individual and families that have received homelessness resources to show the relationship between housing stability and indicators of well-being including health, workforce and education.	December 2020
DHS, Minnesota Housing	Incorporate common outcomes measures from the HMIS Core Report to be used as a baseline to measure impact across all homeless specific programs. This will be undertaken by the Coordinated Grant Making Work Group.	January 2019

Strategy 7D: Ensure that people with lived experiences of homelessness provide ongoing guidance to continually improve implementation of this plan.

Agency	Action	Targeted Completion Date
OTPEH	Engage people with lived experience of homelessness in the implementation of Heading Home Together in partnership with the MN Coalition for the Homeless and the MN Funders Collaborative.	Ongoing
	Create contact lists of existing advisory groups of people with lived experience of homelessness for all Council agencies to utilize and access for guidance in implementation.	December 2018
Minnesota Housing	Ensure people experiencing homelessness are engaged and consulted with for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program.	July 2019
DHS	Develop training for counties, providers and other partners on older adult homelessness to be offered at the statewide Odyssey Conference. This includes capturing stories of homelessness and involving the experience of individuals who are at risk of being homeless.	December 2019

Appendix B: Letters of Support



Dear Cathy ten Broeke, State Director to Prevent and End Homelessness

I write on behalf of Minnesota Tribal Collaborative in support of the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness State Wide Plan to End Homelessness. The Minnesota Tribal Collaborative strongly supports these 7 principal strategies and the focus on reducing homelessness among not only Minnesotans but also Native Americans living on/off reservations in Minnesota. These 7 principals remind me of the 7 Ojibwe Grandfather Teachings.

- Minwaadendamowin – Respect - Place others before yourself in your life don't look down on anyone.
- Zaagidiwin – Love - I have to love myself before I can love anyone different
- Debwewin – Truth - You have to look at yourself before you judge another's way of walking.
- Aakodewewin – Bravery - Right now to hold firm thoughts and strongly stand when you don't know what will happen
- Nibwaakawin – Wisdom - I am able to speak well and to take well (what) someone says.
- Miigwe'aadiziwin – Generosity - Ability you have and generosity to disperse to others
- Dibaadendiziwin – Humility - You are equal to others, but you are not better.

Through this letter, we acknowledge specific roles and responsibilities we will fulfill in this partnership, we would expect our role in the State Wide Plan to End Homelessness to include:

- Forming a genuine partnership to reduce homelessness in our communities
- work with the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness on this effort using the 7 principle strategies
- Minnesota Tribal Collaborative will take responsibility to assist the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness to reduce Homelessness in Minnesota

We look forward to working with you in reducing homelessness in our Native American communities and achieving health equity.

Sincerely,



Tammy Moreland

Minnesota Tribal Collaborative Chair

tammy.moreland@hhs.millelacsband-nsn.gov



Association of Minnesota Counties

Commissioners Mary Tingerthal and Emily Piper, Co-Chairs
Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness
400 Wabasha Street North, Suite 400
Saint Paul, MN 55102

January 19, 2018

Dear Commissioners Tingerthal and Piper:

Thank you for your leadership in the development of *Heading Home Together: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness 2018-2020*. We affirm and support the plan's vision of "Housing Stability for All Minnesotans."

Counties are critical partners to the State of Minnesota in many ways, including ensuring our residents are safe and secure. When the people we serve experience homelessness, it directly affects progress on other areas of their lives. Stable housing leads to a healthier, better educated, and more self-sufficient population. We recognize that local and state government cannot achieve this vision alone and we agree with the Interagency Council's decision to increase its focus on partnerships between state agencies, federal agencies, counties, continua of care, philanthropic partners, business partners, faith communities and others. Our collective success on Veteran homelessness is an excellent example of results we can achieve when we align our efforts.

This letter of support does not indicate any specific financial commitments on the part of counties, but it does indicate our desire to partner together toward the pursuit of the seven principles that make up the structure of this community-wide, statewide plan and initiative:

1. Identify and engage all people experiencing homelessness.
2. Ensure that everyone experiencing or at-risk of homelessness can access a form of safe and appropriate crisis response through diversion, prevention, shelter or crisis housing with appropriate services.
3. Rapidly link people experiencing homelessness with housing and services tailored to their needs, prioritizing the most vulnerable.
4. Prevent the loss of affordable housing and fill the gap in the number of affordable and supportive housing opportunities available to people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.
5. Use a person-centered, trauma-informed, Housing First orientation in our response to homelessness.
6. Help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness increase employment and income.
7. Organize plans and partnerships and increase system capacity prevent and end homelessness on an ongoing basis.

The Interagency Council showed the commitment to partnership early by working directly with counties on input for the upcoming *Heading Home Together Plan*; we look forward to working with you moving forward as well.

Thank you for your commitment to housing stability and to preventing and ending homelessness for all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,



Susan Morris, President
Association of Minnesota Counties



Julie Ring, Executive Director
Association of Minnesota Counties



Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

December 20, 2017

Commissioners Mary Tingerthal and Emily Piper, Co-Chairs
Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness
400 Wabasha Street North, Suite 400
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Commissioners Tingerthal and Piper:

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Counties are critical partners to the State of Minnesota in many ways, including helping to ensure our residents are safe and well. When the people we serve experience homelessness, it directly impacts progress on other areas of their lives. Stable housing leads to a healthier, better educated, and more self-sufficient population. We recognize that local and state government cannot achieve this vision alone, and we agree with the Interagency Council's decision to increase its focus on partnerships among state agencies, federal agencies, counties, continua of care, philanthropic partners, business partners, faith communities and others. Our collective success on Veteran homelessness is an excellent example of results we can achieve when we align our efforts.

This letter of support does not indicate any specific financial commitments on the part of counties, but it does indicate our desire and intention to partner together toward the pursuit of the seven principles that make up the structure of this community-wide, statewide plan and initiative:

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4. Prevent the loss of affordable housing and fill the gap in the number of affordable and supportive housing opportunities available to people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.
5. Use a person-centered, trauma-informed, housing-first orientation in our response to homelessness.
6. Help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness increase employment and income.
7. Organize plans and partnerships and increase system capacity to prevent and end homelessness on an ongoing basis.

The Interagency Council showed the commitment to partnership early by working directly with counties on input for the upcoming *Heading Home Together* Plan; we look forward to working with you moving forward as well.

Thank you for your commitment to housing stability and to preventing and ending homelessness for all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,

Rex A. Holzemer, President

Eric Ratzmann, Executive Director

January 22, 2018

Commissioners Tingerthal and Piper,

Thank you for your leadership in the development of *Heading Home Together: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness 2018-2020*. The seven Greater Minnesota Continuum of Care (CoCs) are pleased to partner with the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness (MICH) to make homelessness in Minnesota rare, brief and non-recurring.

To support alignment of our efforts, each of our respective CoCs have voted to support and incorporate the seven principles identified in the plan into our regional planning efforts. These principles are:

1. Identify and engage all people experiencing homelessness.
2. Ensure that everyone experiencing or at-risk of homelessness can access a form of safe and appropriate crisis response through diversion, prevention, shelter or crisis housing with appropriate services.
3. Rapidly link people experiencing homelessness with housing and services tailored to their needs, prioritizing the most vulnerable.
4. Prevent the loss of affordable housing and fill the gap in the number of affordable and supportive housing opportunities available to people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.
5. Use a person-centered, trauma-informed, Housing First orientation in our response to homelessness.
6. Help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness increase employment and income.
7. Organize plans and partnerships and increase system capacity to prevent and end homelessness on an ongoing basis.

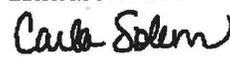
Moreover, the CoCs commit to working with MICH and other statewide partners to further develop action steps and to measure progress on each of the principles. The CoCs have long recognized that ending homelessness can only be achieved with unified efforts, so it only makes sense to further align state and regional planning and look forward to working in partnership moving forward.

Thank you for your commitment to preventing and ending homelessness for all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,



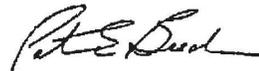
AG Huot
Central MN CoC



Carla Solem
Northwest & West Central MN CoCs



Justin Vorbach
Southwest MN CoC



Patty Beech
Northwest MN CoC



Jennifer Prins
Southeast MN CoC



Charles Obijie
St. Louis County CoC

Commissioners Mary Tingerthal and Emily Piper, Co-Chairs
Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness
400 Wabasha Street North, Suite 400
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Commissioners Tingerthal and Piper,

The Governor's Early Learning Council (ELC) was privileged to hear a presentation from Eric Grumdahl on Homelessness and Early Childhood Challenges, Opportunities and Resources as well as the Heading Home Together: Minnesota's Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness 2018-2020. After hearing the presentation, the ELC wholeheartedly decided to support the plan. As you can see below the Guiding Principles of the Early Learning Council concur with the plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL

- 1) Healthy development begins prenatally;
- 2) Equitable representation is needed to advance racial equity;
- 3) Thriving families and communities depend on empowered parents and communities;
- 4) Policy should be shaped by research and authentic community input; and
- 5) A "whole family" approach should be embedded into more early childhood practices.
- 6) Safe and stable housing is essential for families to thrive.

Thank you for your commitment to preventing and eliminating homelessness and seeing that early childhood is an integral part of this issue.

Sincerely,



Nancy Jost, Chair
Governor's Early Learning Council

Appendix C: Foundational Service Practices

People experiencing homelessness are often unable to access and use mainstream programs that can help end or prevent homelessness.

While all low-income populations face barriers to applying for, retaining, and using the services provided by mainstream programs, these barriers are compounded by the inherent conditions of homelessness, such as transience, instability, and a lack of basic resources. Furthermore, the underlying structure and operations of mainstream programs are often not conducive to ensuring that the unique needs of homeless people are met.

Informed by interviews with key partners from around the state, in 2014 the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness established five foundational service practices:

1. Know the housing status of the people you are serving.
2. Actively reach out to people experiencing homelessness.
3. Limit requirements for in-person appointments at a particular location or office.
4. Assist with the process of gathering required verifications or documentation.
5. Allow for multiple methods to communicate about benefits and services.

These practices, if implemented to the greatest extent possible, can help mainstream programs play a significant role in preventing and ending homelessness in Minnesota.

Appendix D: Grant-making Practices Checklist for Homeless-targeted Programs to Promote Equity

This checklist provides sample criteria to consider in grant-making to promote equity in homeless programs and their outcomes. These criteria could be conveyed as values and priorities in grant-making opportunities, as questions for applicants, and in the evaluation of responses (e.g., scoring).

Organizational criteria

- Composition of all staff reflecting communities affected disproportionately by homelessness
- Composition of staff in leadership reflecting communities affected disproportionately by homelessness
- Composition of board/governing board reflecting communities affected disproportionately by homelessness
- Cultural agility of staff
- Cultural agility of board/governing board
- Equity/Diversity embedded into mission statement, values and/or strategic plan
- Whether organization's employment practices promote equity (e.g., does the organization offer cultural agility training, do they proactively do outreach to different communities)
- Whether organization's contracting practices promote equity (e.g., does the organization contract with minority-owned construction firms)

Programmatic criteria

- Whether the program can break out client and outcome data demographically

- Ability to provide culturally specific programming
- Ability to provide culturally specific outreach
- Composition of program staff reflecting communities affected disproportionately by homelessness
- Composition of program leadership reflecting communities affected disproportionately by homelessness
- Success in reducing disparate outcomes
- Ability to serve people in different languages
- Involvement of those affected in designing programming

Review process

This section identifies options to ensure that grant review processes are as equitable as possible.

- Ensuring diversity of reviewers
- Ensuring equity and cultural agility are built into the scoring/rating system
- Tracking the diversity of applicant pools vs. grantee pools. (e.g., are organizations led by people of color more or less likely to receive a grant?)
- Tracking the size of grants by organizational types. (e.g., are organizations led by the LGBTQ community more likely smaller grants?)
- Regularly reviewing applications and requirements to ensure that applications are not needlessly complicated and only ask for is actually needed. (e.g., are application requirements creating unnecessary barriers for smaller community-based organizations for receiving grants?)
- Providing technical assistance to complete an application
- Providing technical assistance to fulfill grant terms and report on progress
- Providing funds specifically for capacity building



For more information:

Cathy ten Broeke, State Director to Prevent and End Homelessness
Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness
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