

CREATING A TIPPING POINT FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN THE UNITED STATES

2021 IMPACT AND LEARNING REPORT

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**THE FUTURE
WE CAN BUILD,
TOGETHER**



Imagine the future with us.

It's 2026. Cities and counties of all kinds — big and small, urban and rural, red and blue — have made homelessness rare and brief. Homelessness is no longer seen as intractable, and ending it is no longer seen as exceptional. It's expected.

The experience of homelessness has changed. Most people receive the support they need to avoid experiencing homelessness in the first place. The few people who do lose their housing aren't lost in a byzantine system. Instead, their names and needs are immediately known by the community and addressed in a timely and dignified way. The systems and services that are meant to help people into housing deliver equally excellent outcomes for everyone, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Homelessness is no longer accepted as a heartbreaking but inevitable reality. Instead, the United States has forged a better, different reality — delivering on the promise of a healthier and more equitable society.

How did this happen?

Cities and counties work differently.

Communities define success not by how they're managing homelessness — but by whether they are driving it toward zero. Homelessness is not the job of a single organization or sector; instead, it's the responsibility of the entire community. Now, everyone who holds a key piece of the solution is at the table to solve it. Decisions are made by and with people who have experienced homelessness themselves.

Leaders take real accountability for ending homelessness.

Instead of relying on annual street counts, local government leaders publish how many people are experiencing homelessness every single month. This enforces accountability. Community leaders and constituents understand the urgency of the goal of getting to zero homelessness, where their efforts stand, and mobilize to support it.

Areas that have historically slowed progress now accelerate change.

Public policies, local governance structures, funding, and technology all work in service of ending homelessness. Communities use all available tools to close housing supply gaps quickly. >>



This future is not an impossible dream.

It is exactly what the MacArthur Foundation had in mind in 2021, when it awarded Community Solutions \$100 million over five years to support Built for Zero, a movement of communities working to measurably end homelessness. The goal: accelerate an end to homelessness for at least 75 populations in 50 U.S. communities by 2026.

And in some places, you can already see this future unfolding. In 2021, Bakersfield, California; Fremont County, Colorado; and Crater Region, Virginia, became the latest communities to end homelessness for a population. Built for Zero communities have proved that having a single aim, a unified team, and high-quality data can make the difference. **Homelessness is solvable.**

These achievements are profoundly inspiring. They are also only the beginning. Communities in Built for Zero are primed to continue proving it is possible, everywhere.

How urgently we act, and how quickly we learn, will determine how far we can go. In that spirit, this annual report sets out the key insights and opportunities that have emerged in the first year of the MacArthur Foundation's five-year challenge.

The future we described is not an impossible dream. It is a moral imperative, a different set of choices, and a reality within our collective reach. Thank you for helping us build it.



1 | HELPING COMMUNITIES END HOMELESSNESS



Our goal is to marshal enough proof to create a tipping point across the country. By 2026, at least 50 U.S. communities will have reached "functional zero" homelessness for 75 populations, including veterans, youth, families, single adults, and people experiencing long-lasting or recurring homelessness. Five of these communities will have ended homelessness outright, for everyone.

Built for Zero is now a movement of 98 U.S. regions committed to measurably and equitably ending homelessness. More than 70 million people live in these communities — about a fifth of the U.S. population. Together, their leaders are building a new reality, where homelessness is rare, and brief if it ever occurs.

Milestones

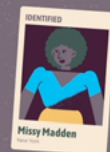
- **Crater Region, Virginia, and Fremont County, Colorado,** reached functional zero for veteran homelessness.
- **Bakersfield and Kern County, California,** announced functional zero for chronic homelessness.
- **63 U.S. communities** had comprehensive, real-time, person-specific data for at least one population.

What is a by-name list?

Communities in Built for Zero that have achieved quality, real-time data maintain a by-name list. A by-name list is a comprehensive registry of every person experiencing homelessness in that community, updated in real time. Using information collected and shared with their consent, each person on the list has a file that includes their name, homeless history, health, and housing needs. This data is updated monthly, at minimum.

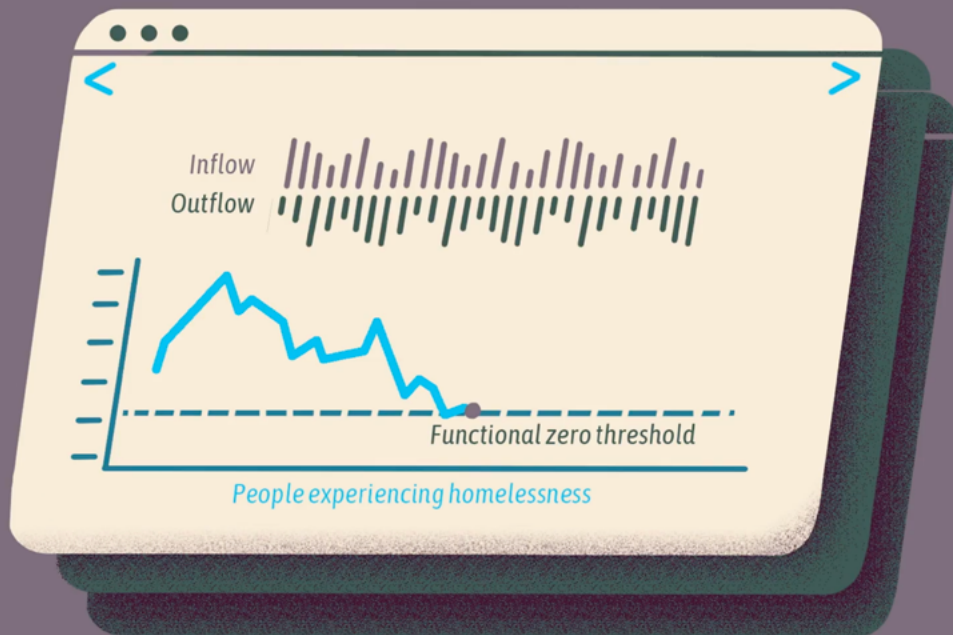
How does a by-name list help solve homelessness?

With current and detailed information on every unhoused person in a population, communities are able to better match housing solutions with the needs of the individuals. They are also equipped with a comprehensive and dynamic picture of how the size and composition of the homeless population is changing, and whether their efforts are reducing overall homelessness toward zero.



What is functional zero?

Defining an end to homelessness is the first step to making it solvable. We cannot end homelessness without a clear, measurable way to track success. The Built for Zero movement works toward an end state where homelessness is measurably rare and brief, with equally strong outcomes for everyone, regardless of race and ethnicity. And because who is experiencing homelessness changes every day, functional zero ensures we can track whether homelessness remains at zero over time.



Functional zero adopts principles used by other fields to mark an end to dynamic, public health challenges. For example, when the World Health Organization declared an end to the 2014-2016 Ebola epidemic, countries had driven cases down to zero and sustained zero over time. However, the declaration did not mean there would be no more infections or outbreaks. Making zero stick requires ongoing vigilance and investments in preventing, detecting, and quickly responding to new cases.

How is functional zero calculated?

1. ACTIVELY HOMELESS COUNT

Functional zero looks at how many people are experiencing homelessness at any given time. This number is drawn from a community's database of every person experiencing homelessness, which is updated monthly.

2. FUNCTIONAL ZERO THRESHOLD

The second number calculated is a community's functional zero "threshold," which is how many people experiencing homelessness can be housed by a community each month. This number is based on a six-month average of how many people exit homelessness into housing every month.

3. ACTIVELY HOMELESS COUNT < FUNCTIONAL ZERO THRESHOLD

Communities reach functional zero by driving their actively homeless numbers below this threshold, and staying below it. The standard can be thought of as a net-zero equilibrium, where there are never more people coming into homelessness than can quickly exit it. This means homelessness is rare, and the community is never overwhelmed by the scale of homelessness, even as new people may face housing crises. Instead, the local housing system can quickly detect and resolve any incidences of homelessness as they occur.

LEARNING

A shared aim, and a system to support achieving it, were the leading reasons communities reached zero.

In every city and county, there is an array of public agencies and not-for-profit organizations working with those experiencing homelessness. We refer to this as the **homeless response system**. While these groups are often dedicated to providing excellent services for those they touch, they are not necessarily working together or with the goal of reducing overall homelessness across their region.

Individual organizations can't get a city or county to zero homelessness on their own, but by working together, a consolidated team can. Communities like Fremont County, Colorado, are proving it.

DeeDee Clement realized that her county did not really have a system at all. She knew that many looked to her organization, Loaves and Fishes, for leadership on homelessness. And her team did their best, operating an emergency shelter and several housing programs for those who walked through their doors. But they were not organized to end homelessness for everyone in the county.

"It felt as if homelessness was Loaves and Fishes' problem to solve, and we weren't solving it," she said. "I didn't know what to do."

In November 2019, she and eight other leaders from Fremont County, Colorado, attended a convening of Built for Zero communities from across the country. As she listened to how cities and counties were building systems to reduce homelessness, she saw the path to zero emerge.



FREMONT COUNTY, COLORADO

Just a few weeks later, she hosted a town hall, where she announced that Fremont County was going to end veteran homelessness. But Loaves and Fishes couldn't do it alone — Clement said that they needed others to join the effort.

Bethany La Loge, who worked for a local mental health and social service agency, was struck by the sense of what was possible.

"As someone on the outside, it hit me like a brick wall," La Loge said.

La Loge, and many other local organizations, agencies, and volunteers decided to join the local team. And they began to transform their collective efforts into a coordinated system. >>

An immediate challenge they faced was that there were no paid staff to conduct outreach to those living in unsheltered settings. La Loge and her organization, Starpoint, took the lead on coordinating a volunteer-fueled street outreach team, which included 20 regular volunteers and 30 more on rotation. With guidance from the community's Built for Zero coach, they developed the first systematic way of conducting comprehensive outreach across their entire region. With a regular line of sight across the entire county, the team identified new veterans experiencing homelessness and added them to their by-name list.

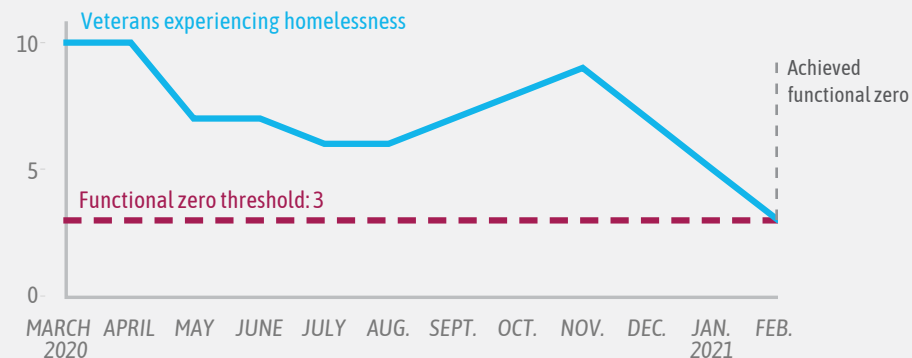
This list became a full, up-to-date picture of veteran homelessness in Fremont County that everyone on the extended team could trust. Built for Zero coaches helped them turn that information into a source for action through a weekly meeting, known as case conferencing. Every week, the local team came together to discuss what each veteran needed to move into housing. When the team realized that one barrier was the lack of a paid staff member to quickly navigate housing options and help veterans move into housing, the local Housing Authority stepped up to create a position to fill that role.



Functional zero for veteran homelessness

is achieved when there are fewer veterans experiencing homelessness than can be routinely housed in a month.

For example, Fremont County can routinely house three veterans in a month. Reaching and maintaining functional zero means no more than three veterans would be in need of housing at any given time, ensuring veteran homelessness is rare and brief.



FREMONT COUNTY, COLORADO

The community came together to deliver what Clement had promised. In February 2021, Fremont County reached functional zero for veteran homelessness. Though veterans may experience homelessness in the future, the community now has a system in place for continuously monitoring and quickly resolving any new housing emergencies faced by veterans to assure the experience would always be rare and brief.

"Homelessness no longer lies on the shoulders of Loaves and Fishes alone, and it doesn't end at an emergency shelter that provides for basic needs," said Jennifer Jones, the Coordinated Entry System Program Manager. "It became a community problem."

LEARNING

Covid-19 posed incredible challenges and also increased the urgency and opportunity to end homelessness.

In the words of one local Built for Zero leader, 2021 was both the best and worst time to work in homelessness.

Covid-19 placed people experiencing homelessness at even greater risk. Yet, an influx of new state and federal emergency Covid-19 resources offered a once-in-a-generation opportunity to put a massive dent in the problem. This included dedicated resources to help people shelter in hotels, pay their rent, and avoid eviction.

Despite the availability of these resources, communities throughout the country struggled to apply these funds quickly and strategically. We saw the impact of having coordinated local teams with comprehensive, real-time data in the Built for Zero communities that were prepared to direct new funding to accelerate progress toward zero homelessness.

Rapid rehousing

is a solution created to quickly end a person's homelessness by offering permanent housing without preconditions like income, employment, or sobriety.

When **Crater Region, Virginia**, joined Built for Zero local leaders encouraged organizations working separately to join one team. Together they created a single list of every veteran experiencing homelessness in the community and a system for updating it each month. Every Wednesday, the team gathered on a call to develop a plan for housing every veteran on their list.

Diversion

is an approach designed to prevent someone from experiencing homelessness by finding immediate and safe alternative housing options.

"To be on the same page and providing the same information to the community was our first challenge," said Erica Holmes, Director of Program Operations at St. Joseph's Villa. "It was a lot of work, but we were able to do it."

When Covid-19 hit, the challenges multiplied with the transition to remote operations and staffing shortages. But the infusion of emergency federal resources was an opportunity they were ready to seize.

"Since 2017, we have struggled with not having consistent shelter to provide and follow-up," Holmes said. "The CARES Act allowed us to provide motel and hotel shelter for people, and we were then able to have that direct contact with them to problem-solve and secure permanent housing."

The systems they had built — knowing every veteran by name, having all the right people at the table and a well coordinated housing process — allowed them to use the new funds to reach zero veteran homelessness.

"We knew where to find people," Holmes said, "And we were able to connect them to rapid rehousing and diversion to get them into housing."

LEARNING

Sustaining functional zero is difficult, critical, and possible.

*An end to homelessness is not a one-time finish line.
It's a new standard that must be sustained.*

Bakersfield and Kern County, California, reached functional zero for chronic homelessness in March 2020 and have maintained it since.

Those who experience chronic, or long-lasting, homelessness are at three to four times greater risk of dying prematurely than the general population and face significant barriers to housing. When Bakersfield and Kern County first set out to end chronic homelessness, more than 200 people needed to be housed.

Chronic homelessness

is long-lasting or recurring homelessness. It is defined by the federal government as impacting people who have experienced homelessness for at least a year, or repeatedly over three years, and live with a disability.

As of 2020, just three Built for Zero communities had achieved this goal. Bakersfield and Kern County faced a larger chronic population than any of them.

"No one thought it was attainable at the beginning," said Heather Kimmel, Assistant Executive Director at the Housing Authority.

This did not deter them. The team brought the key not-for-profit and government organizations together to create a single by-name list, and shifted their approach



BAKERSFIELD/KERN COUNTY COMMUNITY TEAM

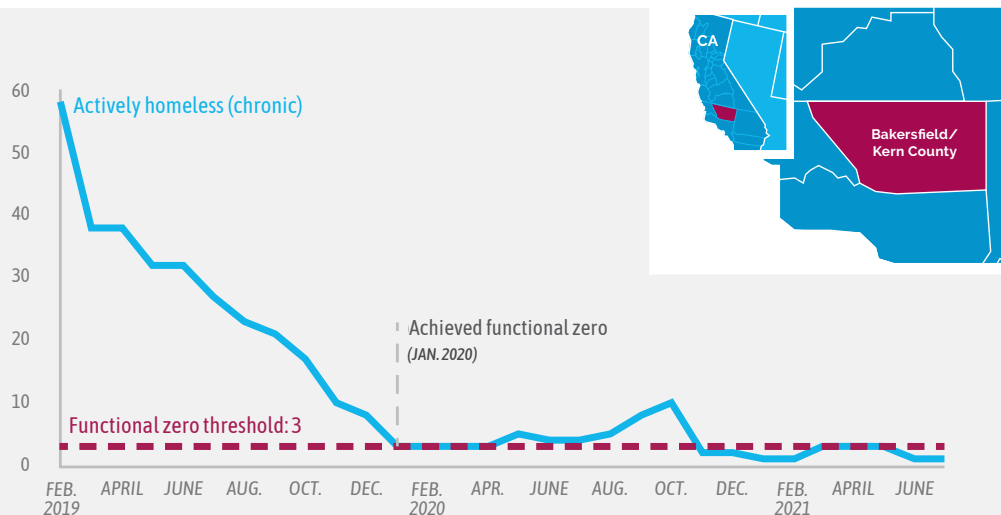
from each organization serving "my clients" to one community-wide group serving "our clients." They adopted the spirit of constant improvement, essential for solving complex problems like homelessness. They overcame fear of failure by testing new ideas in short cycles, trying some that did not deliver results, moving quickly to test other strategies, and continually refining their approach until they reached functional zero for chronic homelessness.

"You didn't want to put your name to something that you didn't think would be successful," Kimmel said. "And it took us six months to get over the fear. But we eventually got to the »

mindset that if we succeed, great. If we don't, we'll just do something a little different." In March 2020, the community first reached functional zero — and the strength of their system was tested almost immediately. The pandemic began, and chronic homelessness also began to rise. But the team continued to employ the same data-driven problem solving and soon drove those numbers back down.

For Bakersfield and Kern County, achieving functional zero wasn't a fleeting achievement. It was the start of a new normal. Throughout 2021, the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness never exceeded three, even getting all the way down to zero.

"We didn't ever let the immediate result become the end of the road," said Dr. Anna Laven, Executive Director of the Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative.



Functional zero for chronic homelessness

is achieved when there are fewer than 3 people experiencing chronic homelessness at any given time (or .1% of the total number of individuals reported in the most recent point-in-time count, whichever is greater).

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING:
Sustaining functional zero is a distinct challenge.

The point-in-time count,

or PIT count, is an annual count of homelessness mandated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for communities that receive federal funding. To collect point-in-time count data, volunteers hit the streets and count the number of people they see experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Traditional efforts to end homelessness have relied on this annual census, but communities are now working to maintain the real-time, person-specific data needed to end homelessness.

With support from the MacArthur Foundation's 100&Change grant, we are supporting communities in learning what it takes to sustain functional zero over time, including conducting annual data reviews to confirm that the standard has been maintained.

Functional zero timeline

SEP. 2015

Gulf Coast Region, MS

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

DEC. 2015

Rockford, Winnebago & Boone Counties, IL

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

DEC 2015.

Arlington County, VA

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

DEC 2015.

Montgomery County, MD

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

AUG. 2016

Bergen County, NJ

Functional zero | chronic homelessness

JAN. 2017

Norman, Cleveland County, OK

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

JAN. 2017

Rockford, Winnebago & Boone Counties, IL

Functional zero | chronic homelessness

MARCH 2017

Lancaster City and County, PA

Functional zero | chronic homelessness

APRIL 2017

Bergen County, NJ

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

NOV. 2018

Abilene, TX

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

DEC. 2018

Lake County, IL

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

OCT. 2019

Chattanooga, TN

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

JAN. 2020

Abilene, TX

Functional zero | chronic homelessness

FEB. 2020

Lynchburg Region, VA

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

MARCH 2020

Bakersfield and Kern County, CA

Functional zero | chronic homelessness

Total Population: 900,000

Type: Midsize city



FEB. 2021

Crater Region, VA

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

Total Population: 31,000

Type: Rural



FEB. 2021

Fremont County, CO

Functional zero | veteran homelessness

Total Population: 47,000

Type: Rural



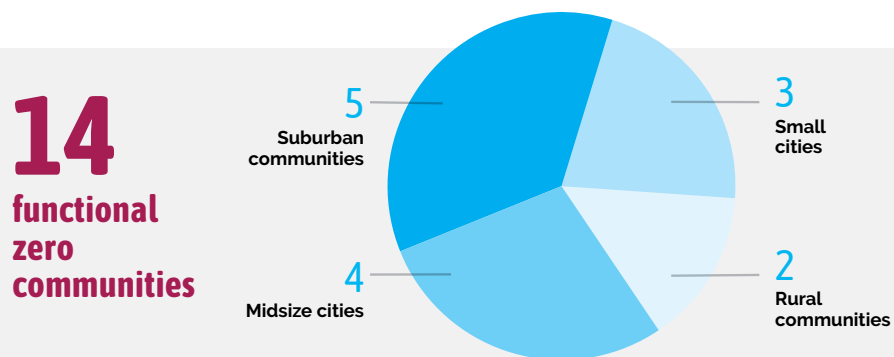
For the full list of Built for Zero communities, visit HomelessnessIsSolvable.org

Proof point communities

Fourteen communities in Built for Zero have achieved functional zero. Altogether, six million people live in communities that have ended homelessness for at least one population.

These communities are geographically diverse and include rural and suburban communities, as well as small and midsize cities.

Large cities are making measurable progress toward functional zero. Community Solutions further refined its strategy to help large cities reach functional zero. By the end of 2021, 22 large cities were participating in Built for Zero, including 20 of the 50 largest cities by population in the country. Six of these large cities drove measurable reductions in homelessness in 2021.



Functional zero community	Population (2019 est.)
Montgomery County, Maryland	1,026,000
Bergen County, New Jersey	930,000
Bakersfield and Kern County, California	871,000
Lake County, Illinois	729,000
Chattanooga and Southeast Tennessee	680,000
Lancaster City and County, Pennsylvania	533,000
Gulf Coast, Mississippi	482,000
Rockford and Winnebago, Boone Counties, Illinois	343,000
Lynchburg Region, Virginia	258,000
Arlington County, Virginia	226,000
Norman and Cleveland County, Oklahoma	200,000
Crater Region, Virginia	177,000
Abilene, Texas	124,000
Fremont County, Colorado	49,000
Grand Total	6.6 million

** Populations have been rounded to the nearest thousand.*

2 | SOLVING KEY DATA AND COLLABORATION CHALLENGES



By 2026, key data, governance, and accountability challenges have been solved, creating the conditions for any community to end homelessness.

Across the country, communities have comprehensive, real-time, person-specific data that enables them to accelerate housing placements, make targeted system improvements, and drive reductions in overall homelessness.

Making technology a catalyst for progress

Most Built for Zero communities report that their technology is a barrier to progress in ending homelessness.

Overwhelmingly, communities are dependent on technology systems that do not provide the functionality or the comprehensive data they need. They rely on a tool called a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

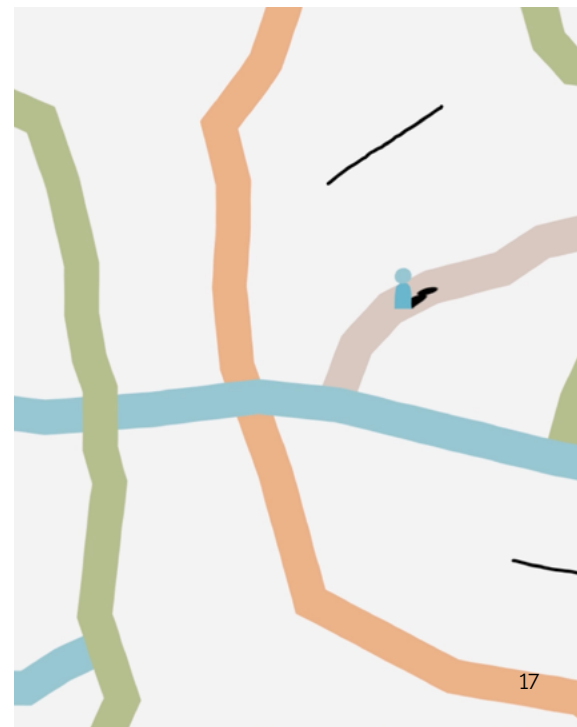
The tool, which is primarily designed for grant and compliance reporting for federally funded programs, is not set up to integrate data across jurisdictions or with other systems, like health care. As a result, communities must expend significant energy to produce the clean, usable data that is needed to collaborate, solve problems, and drive reductions in homelessness. Our communities report that these onerous processes can overwhelm the already limited data capacity they have.

While solutions are urgently needed, existing software vendors lack either the capacity or incentive to address these problems.

In 2021, we worked with the Salesforce.org Impact Management Team to better understand these challenges, and how the burden for solving this problem might be shifted to software vendors and government actors who can create lasting and meaningful change. At the same time, we worked with Tableau to build increased analytics capacity for staff in the field.

Milestones

- **We worked with Salesforce.org** to understand the limitations of current data and technology standards in the homelessness sector, and to explore potential solutions.
- **In partnership with Tableau, we launched the inaugural Built for Zero Data Fellowship** with 16 leaders from Built for Zero communities, focused on building analytics skills across the field and developing a curriculum to support this approach for leaders throughout the movement. »





Learnings

- **Unlocking the potential of data and technology in our sector will require the adoption of new data standards.** Drawing from an initiative in the health care sector known as SMART Health IT, we learned that improved data standards are critical for making the HMIS software market more competitive. In health care, improved data standards enabled improved care coordination, data integration, and the ability to report population-level outcomes — all key requirements for reducing and ending homelessness as well.
- **Communities are eager for targeted learning opportunities and peer connection around data analytics.** Data Fellows reported a desire for sector-specific content and ongoing small groups for continued learning and support, accountability for results, and opportunities to refine their skills.

Bringing sectors together, starting with data

Ending homelessness is not the task of a single sector, but the work of an entire community. Being able to share appropriately protected data is the first step in effectively working as a team.

Homelessness occurs when we allow people to crash through gaps in our social safety net. These gaps are filled when all upstream systems — like housing, health care, and the criminal legal system — take shared accountability for preventing and ending homelessness.

The first step in solving homelessness together is making sure all those who must collaborate can see the problem in the same way. Built for Zero communities maintain real-time, person-specific data on people experiencing homelessness. But actors outside of the homeless response system often cannot access this information in the absence of processes and agreements that address privacy concerns. >>

Health systems

A Health Care and Homelessness Pilot Initiative is identifying new pathways for health care institutions to help reduce chronic homelessness.

Before the pandemic, Community Solutions and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement began to guide an effort to strengthen collaboration between health care and homeless response systems in five Built for Zero communities.

Even as the demands of responding to Covid-19-challenged health systems, the partners remained committed to improving accountability and outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. They started by establishing goals and initiating key lanes of work. This required creating HIPAA-compliant data-sharing agreements and protocols to support sharing communities' by-name data. Armed with this data, homelessness and health teams could more readily identify individuals experiencing homelessness, improve the coordination of care, align resources, and prevent people from being discharged from the hospital onto the street.

In Sacramento, the Continuum of Care lead agency (Sacramento Steps Forward) drafted a formal data-sharing agreement that would enable unidirectional sharing of persons experiencing chronic homelessness with four regional health systems: Kaiser Permanente, Dignity Health, UC Davis Health, and Sutter Health. The data will be matched against patient-level data in each system in order to better understand health trends among chronically homeless patients, the net impact on local emergency departments, and to establish a baseline to measure planned intervention strategies to accelerate housing placements. Aggregate level data will be shared back with Sacramento Steps Forward to create a comprehensive picture of chronically homeless patients served by health local systems, as well as the opportunities for improved coordination with the Continuum of Care to improve long-term patient health and housing outcomes. All of these agreements are undergoing review by each health system for approval.

Health care pilot participants

- Bakersfield/Kern County, California – Kaiser Permanente, CommonSpirit Health
- Washington County, Oregon – Kaiser Permanente, Providence Health System
- Sacramento County, California – Kaiser Permanente, CommonSpirit Health, University of California – Davis Health, Sutter Health
- Anchorage, Alaska – Providence St. Joseph Health
- Chattanooga, Tennessee – CommonSpirit Health



Criminal justice system

The experience of homelessness is deeply intertwined with the criminal justice system. Since 2019, Community Solutions has focused on two zip codes in North Hartford, Connecticut. They are the neighborhoods with the region's highest rates of homelessness. With local partners, our goal is to eliminate inflow into homelessness and learn scalable strategies for preventing it.

After analyzing local system data and conducting interviews with residents who were experiencing homelessness, a clear picture emerged. Almost 40% of those residents cited exposure to the criminal justice system as a driver of their homelessness. Individuals were exiting prison, jail, or pre-trial detention and struggling to access housing, despite the fact that services were available in the community to support them. »

The homeless and criminal justice systems are now working together to address this dangerous gap. The team includes the **Department of Corrections**, which oversees people in jails and prisons; **Court Support Services Division**, which oversees the detention and release of individuals in pre-trial proceedings and probation; **Hartford Police Department**; the **re-entry providers** (**Community Partners in Action** and **Greater Hartford Welcome Re-entry Center**) that supports justice-impacted people returning to their communities; and the **Greater Hartford Coordinated Access Network**, the local homeless response system. »

In 2021, the team worked on barriers to data sharing — like privacy concerns and limited staff capacity — and was able to make progress on agreements across sectors. This shared information allowed interventions to be designed to provide the right support for individuals at risk of homelessness.

Milestones

- **Health and homeless services systems in five communities committed to working together** to reduce and end chronic homelessness.
- **All five communities in the health care pilot made progress on establishing data-sharing agreements**, which would equip the homeless and health systems with information to advance their shared goals and deliver improved health and housing outcomes for those experiencing chronic homelessness.
- **The Connecticut Department of Corrections, Court Support Services Division, Hartford Police Department, Reentry Partners, and local homeless response system** partnered to disrupt the trend of people exiting incarceration and entering into homelessness, focusing on data-sharing, designing joint interventions and services, and identifying individuals at risk of becoming homeless.



Learnings

- **Establishing data-sharing agreements may be one of the most important steps in unlocking the role of health care in ending homelessness.** While health systems must address privacy concerns from various sources — ranging from their own internal legal departments to HIPAA — all the participating systems made progress in addressing barriers to share data.
- **Data sharing between the criminal justice and homeless response systems is a vital step to moving upstream of homelessness.** The ability to share this information across systems creates space for improved policies, programs, and ultimately coordination of resources and care for individuals at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness. As one example, Court Support Services administered housing surveys to identify individuals at risk of becoming homeless and a process for referring them to partners equipped to address their housing needs.

3 | SUPPORTING RACIALLY EQUITABLE HOMELESS RESPONSE SYSTEMS



OUR AIM

By 2026, communities across the country have proven it is possible to work towards and achieve key indicators of a racially equitable homeless response system.

Building equitable systems

The systems responding to homelessness have not historically been designed to identify or address racial disparities. Unsurprisingly, people of color — particularly Black and Native Americans — experience disproportionately higher rates of homelessness.

This also means that people of color are at risk of experiencing worse outcomes throughout the housing process.

Any system that is not set up to identify and respond to inequity is likely to reproduce — or even deepen — the problem. But it does not have to be that way.

Working with racial equity leaders, homeless services staff, and people with lived experience of homelessness, we created a framework for measuring and improving key indicators of a racially equitable homeless response system and are developing interventions for tackling each indicator.

Already, communities have used the framework to take action. Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, for example, analyzed system decision-making power, surveying

agencies and organizations to understand if each racial and ethnic group affected by policies had a position at the table and in leadership roles.

"Of course our main goal is that we have equitable goals throughout the Continuum of Care," said Shamika Agbeviade, Homeless Management Information System Administrator for Mecklenburg County Community Support Services. "Through this assessment, we can find out what we're dropping the ball on so there are more equitable outcomes in the community."

Learnings

In the course of finalizing the framework, we learned there are four critical areas where communities want to track progress.

1. **Equitable system decision-making power.** Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) at all levels of the homeless response system have decision-making power to influence the design of the system.
 - » Practitioners in the field found that decision-making power — which could influence key elements like governance, policies, and procedures — are essential to sustaining improvements in equitable outcomes and lived experience.
2. **Lived experience.** BIPOC receiving services from the homeless response system have experiences that preserve their dignity and have their needs met in a timely manner.
 - » As with any system of care, the homeless response system's outcome data only tells us part of the story. Qualitative data around the experiences of people being served by these systems is vital. People with lived experience of homelessness helped us hone in on "timely services that preserve dignity" as a more relevant expression of what is commonly thought of as customer satisfaction in other sectors. »

3. **Quality data.** All people experiencing homelessness have access to the system and are known by name in real-time. Communities accurately collect data around race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic conditions.

» Unpacking system outcomes for those who are underserved requires comprehensive, person-level data, both quantitative and qualitative, that can be disaggregated by race and other factors. Currently, many communities do not track race and ethnicity data or other socioeconomic data to inform and guide the system changes that are necessary to implement.

4. **System outcomes.** Communities close all racial and ethnic disproportionality in housing placements, returns to homelessness, and the average length of time experiencing homelessness, from identification to housing placement.

» Quantitative metrics on disparities in outcomes across groups can help illuminate who systems might be failing today. For example, by tracking rates of returns to homelessness after being housed, we can understand the effectiveness of the support provided and the sustainability of interventions. By looking at rates of exit from homelessness to permanent housing, we can understand how resources are being allocated and who is being underserved by homeless response systems.

By-Name List

is a comprehensive list of every person in a community experiencing homelessness, updated in real time. Using information collected and shared with their consent, each person on the list has a file that includes their name, homeless history, health, and housing needs. This data is updated monthly, at minimum.

BIPOC:

Black,
Indigenous and
People of Color

Milestones

- **100% of newly enrolled Built for Zero communities committed in principle** to work toward the framework of a racially equitable system in their 2021 work. They are now working on the adoption of key behaviors tied to this commitment.
- **We established a Racial Equity Portfolio** to support our coaching team in building the capacity of communities to achieve equitable outcomes.
- **We continued to partner with C4 Innovations** to help staff at Community Solutions and in Built for Zero communities improve their knowledge and skills around partnering with people with lived experience of homelessness and improving the experiences of Black and Indigenous people and other people of color who interact with the homeless system.
- **We added the ability to include race and ethnicity data** as a requirement for achieving a quality, by-name list.

4 | CREATING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ENDING HOMELESSNESS



OUR AIM

By 2026, leaders will hold themselves accountable for measurably reducing and ending homelessness. Mayors and county executives will release data on how many people are experiencing homelessness every month, creating accountability and transparency for their community's progress.

Importantly, others will hold political leaders accountable for reducing and ending homelessness, too. The media and public narrative will reinforce the idea that homelessness is a solvable, systems issue. Proof that homelessness is solvable will be widely documented, seeding a new understanding of what is possible, everywhere. As a result, the public will expect reductions and hold leaders accountable for ending homelessness.

Elected leaders take accountability for ending homelessness

Larry Morrissey, the former mayor of Rockford, Illinois, reflected on his role in helping his community end chronic and veteran homelessness. In a case study published by the

Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative in 2021, he described his initial caution. "I had thought homelessness was this intractable problem we would never solve," he said. "I didn't want to take a pledge to end veteran homelessness unless I was deadly serious about it. Once I took the pledge, I owned it. I didn't just sign a piece of paper."

Morrissey showcased the powerful contributions that local elected leaders can make in accelerating a community's path to functional zero. He championed the aim of ending homelessness at the population level, insisted that comprehensive, real-time data on homelessness be collected to measure progress, and advocated that all resources and activities supported progress toward zero. With this strong support from Morrissey — which was maintained by his successor, Mayor Tom McNamara — Rockford demonstrated how a community can end homelessness and sustain that standard for years.

In 2021, Community Solutions sought to learn how mayors currently understand their roles in relation to homelessness. With support from Citi and the Rockefeller Foundation, we partnered with Boston University's Initiative on Cities for the 2021 Menino Survey of Mayors. Based on interviews with 126 mayors from 39 states, the survey captured mayoral perspectives on their roles and challenges in ending homelessness.

Milestones

Community Solutions partnered with Boston University's Initiative on Cities for the 2021 Menino Survey of Mayors to understand mayoral perspectives on ending homelessness. >>



Learnings

- **Mayors believe they are held responsible for addressing homelessness in their cities, but feel they have little control.** An overwhelming majority of mayors (73%) perceive themselves as being held highly accountable for addressing homelessness in their communities, but 81% feel that homelessness is outside of their control.
- **A strong majority of mayors do not define policy success as reducing homelessness, and a surprising number do not have clear definitions for success.** In fact, 60% of mayors do not define success by whether their cities are reducing homelessness.
- **Mayors do not have access to the data that they need to solve homelessness, which is exacerbated by challenges in coordination across cities, counties, and nonprofits.** Mayors regularly lack basic information to understand the scale and nature of homelessness in their cities. One in 10 mayors said that they do not have access to city-level data at all. Though homelessness is a dynamic problem that changes every night, the largest proportion of respondents (38%) cited annual estimated street counts as their principal source of information. Mayors observed that it was especially difficult to count members of their unsheltered population.

These findings confirmed the urgent need and value of helping communities establish the operating systems needed to solve homelessness, which are grounded in a shared aim; quality, real-time data; and a single team that can align different areas of government and not-for-profit activity. It also highlighted mayoral perceptions and behaviors that must change to accelerate progress to zero in communities, like defining success as reductions in homelessness. Community Solutions will collaborate again with the Menino Survey of Mayors in 2023 and 2025 to continue understanding and tracking changes in mayoral responses to homelessness.



Creating public accountability

The belief that homelessness can't be solved is a self-fulfilling prophecy. New expectations are needed to place us on a path to making homelessness rare and brief, everywhere.

Communities are proving that homelessness can be ended, not only for individuals, but for entire populations. But history tells us that evidence alone is not enough. Scaling a breakthrough innovation requires shifts in attitudes that create new expectations of leaders. This has informed our #HomelessnessIsSolvable campaign, geared at creating public accountability for ending homelessness and highlighting the behaviors of key leaders who are driving measurable reductions in homelessness.

Milestones

Community Solutions launched #HomelessnessIsSolvable, a campaign to amplify the stories of communities reducing and ending homelessness. These stories have also highlighted the roles played by leaders in business, elected office, faith communities, and health care. >>

Learnings

The media and public can make ending homelessness the expectation by holding leaders accountable for reaching functional zero. Solving homelessness across an entire community is complex. It's impossible if the key actors are not aligned on the end goal and how it will be measured. Accountability begins with a single, shared definition for ending homelessness that is widely understood as the measure of success.

Functional zero provides the clear, objective, and measurable definition required to tell a community that homelessness is rare overall within its boundaries, brief when it occurs, and that this result is being sustained over time.

Communities are increasingly using and reaching functional zero as the gold standard for ending homelessness. Between 2020 and 2021, Community Solutions tracked a greater than 200% increase in references to functional zero in news media. While these mentions signaled increased usage, they also called attention to common misunderstandings and instances of misuse. In 2022, Community Solutions will focus on public and media education around the functional zero definition, both nationally and locally.

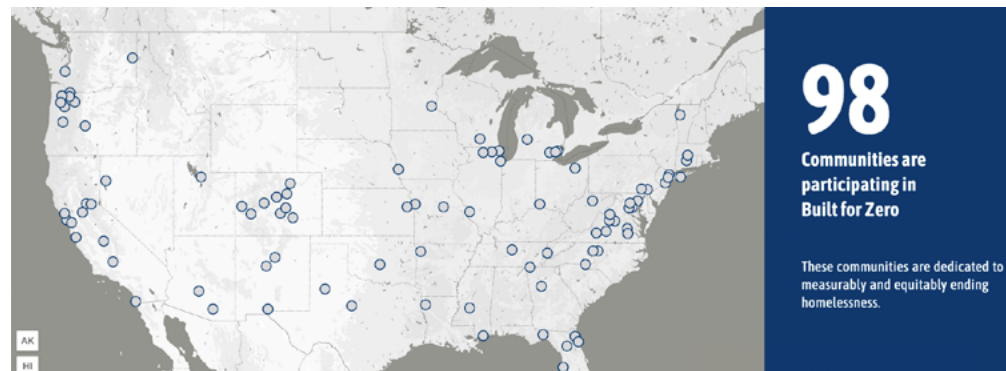
Solving homelessness requires a new understanding of the problem. Homelessness is widely misunderstood as a problem stemming from individual choices or circumstances, rather than failing systems. For decades — and still today — policies and approaches grounded in this mindset have failed to reduce and end homelessness.

By contrast, the communities reducing homelessness, like Rockford, Illinois, concentrate on where their systems are failing and on building accountability to fix them.

Jennifer Jaeger, Community Services Director in Rockford, Illinois, has a rule. No one is allowed to blame a person's homelessness on their individual characteristics. She keeps the local team's conversations focused on the real cause of homelessness: system barriers.

"Nobody is allowed to say something like, 'we can't house him, because he's drunk all the time,'" Jaeger said. "We must focus on: what is it about our community, and our housing structure, and our landlords, and our other systems that is keeping that person on the street. How can we overcome that system barrier and house that person?"

This understanding must drive the work of service providers, elected officials, leaders, and constituents across a community. To advance this message — and understanding of what accountable systems can achieve — Community Solutions launched the Homelessness is Solvable campaign in October 2021.



#HomelessnessIsSolvable

Visit HomelessnessIsSolvable.org to see if your community is a part of Built for Zero and read the latest stories of communities reducing and ending homelessness. Understand what actions you can take to support progress within your community, whether as a citizen, a faith leader, a health system, or an elected official.

5 | CLOSING THE HOUSING SUPPLY GAP



Communities can leverage powerful, dynamic ways to close housing supply gaps to accelerate progress to functional zero homelessness.

More affordable housing, faster

How we're using social impact capital to help communities end homelessness

Communities in Built for Zero have proven the power of setting a shared aim, knowing those experiencing homelessness by name, and working as a single team to drive toward functional zero.

In some cases, these changes have propelled communities all the way to functional zero homelessness for one or more populations. But in others, additional housing is required to finish the job. Right now, Built for Zero works with a quarter of all "Continuums of Care" across the country, including some of the fastest growing cities in the United States.

The truth is, traditional ways of creating affordable housing are typically too slow or rigid to adapt to dynamic housing needs. Community Solutions continues to test and scale new models of financing and providing housing directly linked to reaching functional zero homelessness. Projects share four characteristics:



1. **Properties are directly connected to the homelessness system.** Units are linked to the local homeless response system and specifically matched to those who are most in need.
2. **They utilize social impact capital.** Social impact capital enables the nimble acquisition of existing properties for mission-driven purposes on favorable terms.
3. **Owned by national or local nonprofits with shared goals.** This shifts properties into affordable use for the long term.
4. **An enhanced property management model.** Property management and social services staff are trained together in the problem-solving practices that result in successful tenancies and prevent future homelessness.

We first tested this model in 2018 in Metro Denver. We secured a large rental property in just 90 days with the help of local social impact investors. By working with the local Continuum of Care, veterans exiting homelessness are prioritized for vacancies. In 2021 we laid the groundwork to scale this model to other large Built for Zero communities.

Milestones

- Community Solutions repurposed **Santa Fe Suites**, a 120-unit, extended-stay hotel, to serve those exiting chronic homelessness and low wage workers.
- Community Solutions acquired **Centra Villa**, a 132-unit affordable housing development located near the Fort McPherson VA Clinic in Atlanta. Centra Villa is now serving veterans exiting homelessness and low-wage workers.
- Our organization assisted **Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries** in converting a temporary shelter for homeless veterans into 61 units of permanent housing for veterans, with support from Rocket Mortgage and The Home Depot Foundation. >>

Learnings

- **Using social impact capital, we can unlock a more rapid and flexible process for closing housing supply gaps.** The traditional model for developing affordable housing, which relies on Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, is inadequate for meeting communities' affordable housing needs. Tapping into the resources of mission-oriented investors can deliver projects in far less time at lower costs. New federal resources can also be applied to this approach to secure existing properties, preserve their affordability, and make housing immediately available to those in greatest need.
 - » The city of Santa Fe partnered with Community Solutions to use a mix of public, private, and philanthropic funds to acquire an extended-stay hotel, which provides safe accommodation for more than 120 people. The \$9 million budget was funded by:
 - \$3.9 million in debt financing
 - \$2 million in CARES Act funds from the City of Santa Fe
 - \$1.99 million CARES Act funds from the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority
 - \$600,000 from nonprofit investors
 - » Centra Villa Apartments, a 132-unit apartment building in Atlanta, was acquired through a public-private partnership of national and local organizations. The \$12 million budget was funded by:
 - \$2.6 million HomeFirst grant from the City of Atlanta
 - \$1.8 million social impact loan from the Atlanta Affordable Housing Fund
 - \$7.6 million Fannie Mae-backed mortgage through Bellwether Enterprise Real Estate Capital
 - \$500,000 from The Home Depot Foundation
- **We are racing against private equity and hedge funds to secure existing affordable housing and keep it affordable.** With rental properties being acquired quickly by corporate investors, a new acquisition fund will allow us to move quickly to secure properties in targeted Built for Zero communities.
- **Housing alone cannot end homelessness: a coordinated system is also necessary, that links available homes to those experiencing homelessness.** Across the country, many efforts are underway to develop affordable housing. But in many cases, new properties are not directly linked to the homeless response system. Because Built for Zero communities have coordinated systems in place, new housing units can be matched directly to those most in need to steadily, and measurably, reduce and end homelessness.

SANTA FE SUITES, NEW MEXICO





WORKING UPSTREAM TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS IN HARTFORD



SWIFT FACTORY, NORTH HARTFORD

Moving upstream

We're working to prevent homelessness in Hartford, Connecticut.

Steven Harris knows North Hartford, Connecticut. Born and raised there, he's been living in this neighborhood for 72 years and has seen it through many seasons. Now, it's in a season of hope.

"I don't know if they realize what that means to us — those of us that live in this neighborhood," he said. "That somebody will take a chance on us."

Decades of racial segregation and disinvestment left residents of Hartford's North End neighborhoods with few of the opportunities available to residents of the region's

wealthier, whiter neighborhoods. The consequences of this neglect are reflected in high unemployment, poverty, and the highest rates of homelessness in the region.

In Hartford, we are working with partners across the North End to transform the conditions that make residents vulnerable to housing crises in the first place. Formal partnerships are taking shape with actors like the criminal legal system to prevent homelessness before it happens. *(More details about this work can be found in Section 2: Solving key data and collaboration challenges for ending homelessness.)* Through our sister organization in Hartford, Northeast Neighborhood Partnership, Inc., community-driven development initiatives are addressing gaps in income, health, and housing stability.

The Swift Factory, located in North Hartford, is one catalyst for this progress. The factory was once a prominent manufacturer of gold leaf and a major employer in the neighborhood. When the business closed in 2005, hundreds of jobs were lost. Since 2010, Community Solutions has worked with residents to transform the vacant factory into a hub for jobs, health, and learning.

After a \$37 million redevelopment, the Swift Factory reopened its doors in 2020. Since then, the factory has become home to many Black-owned businesses and an incubator for locally owned startups.

In 2021, new partnerships were established with the Hartford Public Library, which will create a new branch library and workforce training center at the Factory, and with Chase Bank, which will open a community center branch to bring financial services and investment capital to this historically underserved community. >>



Milestones

- **The Swift Factory welcomed new small businesses, local entrepreneurs, and food producers** and prepared for new tenants, including the Hartford Public Library, Chase Community Development, and the Capitol Region Education Council Head Start and Early Head Start program.
- **The North Hartford Community Land Trust** secured its lead investor, Trinity Health, to support the preservation and improvement of affordable housing in North Hartford.
- **Partnerships deepened across the Connecticut Department of Corrections, Court Supportive Services, and the local homeless response system**, which are working together to prevent North Hartford residents from becoming homeless. *(Read more in Section 2)*



THE SWIFT CAMPUS IS NOW HOME TO A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Learnings

- **The new Hartford Public Library branch at the Swift Factory demonstrates the powerful way that federal stimulus dollars have advanced community-led development.** The federal American Rescue Plan provided the critical resources needed to fund the build-out of the library at Swift and meet the community's long-standing needs for learning resources for children and teens, internet access, employment training, and educational programming.
- **Housing is a component of health.** Trinity Health Care became the lead investor in the North Hartford Community Land Trust, recognizing that promoting health extends beyond the delivery of medical care to essentials like stable and healthy homes.



COMING IN 2022: THE NEW HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BRANCH

Thank you to our partners!

CORE PARTNERS



STRATEGIC PARTNERS

- Bank of America Charitable Foundation
- Colorado Health Foundation
- CommonSpirit Health
- Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
- JPMorgan Chase Foundation

- Larson Family Foundation
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- RX Foundation
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- Sirius Fund
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SUPPORTING PARTNERS

- Anne J. Caudal Foundation
- Charles Nelson Robinson Fund
- Maximilian E. & Marion O. Hoffman Foundation
- Richard David Donchian Foundation
- Sills Family Foundation

Introducing our evaluation partners, ORS Impact and Equal Measure

For decades, our goal has remained the same: to understand what it would take to end homelessness. Over the course of that time, our theory of change has evolved, over and over again. That journey has brought us closer to the solution, enabling us to support more than 90 communities proving that homelessness is solvable.

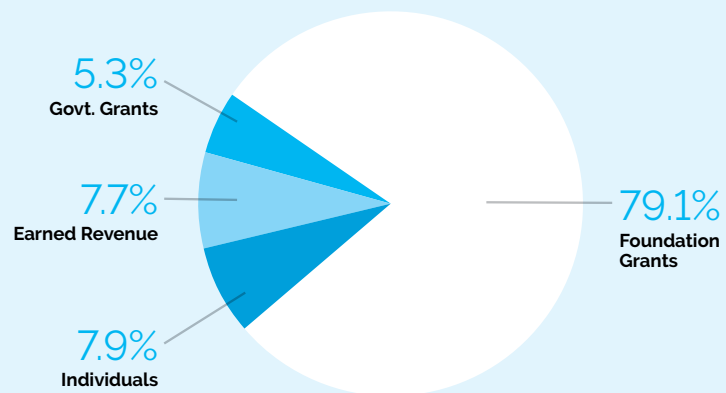
We understand that how much, and how quickly, we are able to learn will determine our success in driving to a tipping point in the United States. After a several months-long process of meeting several outstanding candidates, we partnered with ORS Impact and Equal Measure for a five-year learning and evaluation partnership.

Together, we will be examining the roles that communities play in overcoming obstacles to homelessness, the factors that affect local confidence in solving the problem, and the local and national conditions that enable communities to end homelessness.

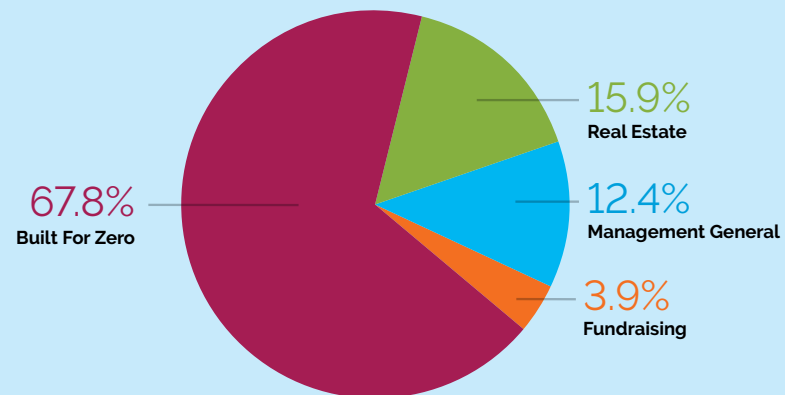
2021 Financials

PRE-AUDITED

Revenue
\$17,226,146



Expenses
\$13,326,215



**For a lasting end
to homelessness
that leaves
no one behind**

**COMMUNITY
SOLUTIONS**

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