

A Home for Everyone: A United Community Plan to End Homelessness for Portland/Multnomah County

SUMMARY

DRAFT: December 17, 2012

Overview

Over the past eight years, our community has come together in unprecedented ways to tackle the crisis of homelessness. Under our *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness*, launched in 2004, we set community-wide goals, improved how we delivered services, built hundreds of affordable housing units and expanded our investments and partnerships across public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Since the start of the *Ten Year Plan*, despite the worst recession in modern time, we helped thousands of people end or avoid homelessness.

Yet our work is by no means done. With the onset of the recession, we experienced reductions in both government and private spending on anti-poverty programs. As a result, the numbers of people experiencing homelessness began to climb again, and the need to reassess and recommit became apparent. This reassessment was undertaken by a committee convened by the City of Portland, Multnomah County and Home Forward. Our findings and recommendations are summarized in this document, which builds on the success of the *Ten Year Plan* and establishes our priorities and commitments for the next five years.

At the center of *A Home for Everyone* is the understanding that access to safe, decent, affordable housing is not only the solution to homelessness, it is the cornerstone of a person's success in achieving good health, an education, successful employment, and a family's ability to provide for themselves and contribute to the community. Our goal remains the same as it was when we adopted the original plan – to end homelessness for everyone in our community. This updated plan carries forward successful strategies, recognizes what has changed since 2004, and extends our strategic direction into the future by identifying priority populations, stating essential criteria for evaluating investments, and setting measurable goals for the community in each of six service areas.

Framework for strategic investment

We will focus our efforts on those who are the most vulnerable in our community and eliminate disparities based on race and ethnicity.

- Families with children
- Unaccompanied youth
- Adults with disabling health and behavioral health conditions, including addictions
- Women
- Veterans

Within each of these groups, we will focus on those who are most vulnerable, particularly those whose health and safety are most in jeopardy from homelessness, those who have the fewest personal supports to help them escape homelessness, and children whose chances for a full and productive life will suffer the most from even short periods of time on the streets.

We will set specific goals as a community for each priority population. In every case, our goals can be achieved only if sufficient, strategic, and coordinated investments are made by all public and private funders to meet the community's needs for housing units, emergency services, rapid rehousing, permanency, and prevention.

Our first priority must be the creation of rental housing that is affordable to our lowest-income neighbors. Our best estimate is that we need to add a minimum of 19,000 units of rental housing affordable to very low-income households. We also remain committed to providing a network of culturally-specific supports for the diverse people experiencing homelessness, people making including those transitioning back to permanent housing and those at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

Our community will need additional resources and continued improvements in how resources are invested to achieve the goals of this plan. We are committed to seeking resources through a range of strategies, including increased communication, collaboration, and partnership among the public, private, business, faith, and nonprofit sectors. A comprehensive approach includes identifying effective strategies in six program areas:

1. Housing
2. Income and Benefits
3. Health
4. Survival and emergency services (shelter, meal programs, street outreach, etc.)
5. Access to services
6. System coordination

Our community has a significant investment to protect, and this requires federal and state resources. The success of *A Home for Everyone* depends upon increased and more targeted investments by the funding jurisdictions (City of Portland, Multnomah County, and Home Forward), and a continuing commitment to use scarce public dollars as efficiently as possible. Local jurisdictions must be willing to prioritize existing and new funding to achieve these goals.

Success will also require continued improvements in collaboration and leveraging of public dollars with contributions from the philanthropic, business, faith, and secular nonprofit sectors. We will work toward better integration and increased contributions from these sectors.

Changing how we do business

A. Governance

The *Ten Year Plan* brought about an unprecedented level of coordination and cooperation among funding jurisdictions and service providers. Building upon what has worked and recognizing the limitations of our current system, we recommend an even more inclusive, accountable and transparent governance structure for our efforts, which should include:

1. A unified decision-making body responsible for oversight of *A Home for Everyone*. A community plan requires community oversight.
2. Centralized and streamlined public contracting with community providers to ensure consistency in expectations, reporting requirements, outcomes, and data collection.

B. Racial and ethnic justice

In order to eliminate the disproportionate rates of homelessness among many communities of color, we will adopt a comprehensive set of strategies to achieve equity in both access and outcomes in all areas of housing and services.

C. Data-driven assessment and accountability

In order to best utilize our resources, we will continue to improve and expand our community-wide data system so funders and service providers can efficiently collect data, share knowledge for better client outcomes, and report outcomes against the goals of the plan.

D. Community outreach

It is critical that policy makers and community stakeholders understand the magnitude of the challenge, the costs to our community if we do not meet the challenge, our strategy for ending homelessness, and the importance of allocating resources equal to our aspirations.

Next steps: Developing an Implementation Plan

The *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness* has helped us identify a number of highly-effective strategies to date, and we will continue with those that work, are cost-effective, and keep people housed. Locally and nationally, new strategies are emerging. By April 1, 2013, staff of the three jurisdictions will convene subject matter experts, consumers, and other community stakeholders to develop a comprehensive Implementation Plan covering each of the six program areas and identifying the best strategies to end homelessness within the priority populations.

Attached are two supplementary documents:

- A. Current Approach and Accomplishments
- B. Examples of Efforts Meriting Further Exploration