



Effective Grantmaking to Help End Homelessness

A wide variety of resources are available to help you increase the overall effectiveness of your grantmaking, but very few offer specific advice about grantmaking to end homelessness. This factsheet provides a brief overview of effective grantmaking in general followed by a list of questions intended to help you assess the effectiveness of potential grantees working in homelessness as well as resources to reference that will help guide your homelessness grantmaking.

General Guidance on Effective Grantmaking

We reviewed multiple resources geared toward helping funders make more effective grants and are presenting here a list of 10 steps to help guide your grantmaking in general. This list was adapted from Philanthropy Northwest's *Ending Homelessness: A Guide for Northwest Grantmakers*.

10 Steps to Effective Grantmaking

1. Have a vision and establish clear goals
2. Understand the problem
3. Identify your funding priorities
4. Communicate with all potential partners and with your community
5. Fund what works
6. Advocate for what works
7. Collaborate with partners to inform your work and leverage your investments
8. Evaluate progress through data and outcomes measures
9. Commit for the long term
10. Share what you learn with peers, policymakers, providers, and the public

Questions to Ask Potential Grantees

Effectively implementing housing-based solutions to homelessness often requires non-profit service providers to shift their efforts toward prevention, diversion, rapid re-housing, and housing stability and away from more traditional, temporary shelter options.

Here is a set of questions to ask potential grantees when assessing where they are in terms of making that shift as well as their capacity to effectively implement or expand housing-based solutions. These questions were adapted from materials developed for Massachusetts grantmakers by The Paul and Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation.

Organizational Overview

- How would you describe homelessness in our community? How effective are the safety net services? How can we make those services more effective?
- Do you have a strategic plan that connects your work back to the broader goals of the community (such as the community's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, if one exists)?
- Where does your organization fall along the continuum of care for people experiencing homelessness? Are you committed to housing-based solutions?
- Do you/how do you help people experiencing homelessness move quickly into long-term housing and/or provide tailored services to help them remain housed?

Services and Supports

- Describe the supportive services you offer or connect to that help stabilize consumers in permanent homes.
- What conditions, such as sobriety or mandatory participation in mental health treatment, do you place on people who are accessing temporary shelter, long-term housing, and/or supportive services?
- Describe the homelessness prevention and diversion services you offer or connect to.
- How have you or how do you plan to retrain your staff toward housing-based services?
- If you have already retrained your staff, what outcomes are you seeing as a result?

Connections and Coordination

- How deep are your connections to other organizations in the community that serve homeless people, including other shelters and housing programs as well as hospitals, mental health facilities, and drug treatment programs?
- How deep are your relationships with landlords in the community? Do these relationships help homeless people have shorter stays in emergency shelter? Do they help consumers overcome financial, credit, and other barriers to housing?
- How skilled is your staff at helping people connect to mainstream services for low-income (not necessarily homeless or at-risk) people, such as health care, welfare, Headstart, education, and job training?
- Does the community have a coordinated entry program? If not, why? How can we make it happen? If yes, how well does it work for your organization and the people you serve?

Data, Outcomes, and Advocacy

- Can you measure your success with the people you serve? What outcomes do you track?
- How do you use data to improve your programs and services?
- How does your organization advocate on behalf of those you serve? Do you actively advocate for housing-based solutions to end homelessness?

Resources for Effective Grantmaking in Homelessness

Funders Together to End Homelessness

(www.funderstogether.org) is a national affinity group of foundations and other funders advancing effective, housing-based solutions to homelessness. In addition to valuable information and resources, we provide you with easy access to a collegial and dynamic network of peers involved in grantmaking in homelessness, housing stability, and related social service areas. By joining Funders Together, you become part of a national movement to align public and private resources toward solutions that work to end homelessness.

National Alliance to End Homelessness

(www.endhomelessness.org) is a leading voice on the issue of homelessness. It works with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity, leading to stronger programs and policies that help communities achieve their goal of ending homelessness. It is a useful resource for grantmakers who want to learn more about the issues surrounding homelessness and how communities can respond effectively. The Alliance will provide technical assistance to communities interested in developing or implementing 10-year plans to end homelessness.

Corporation for Supportive Housing

(www.csh.org) can provide grantmakers with expertise in all facets of developing and maintaining permanent supportive housing. CSH helps communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness by: providing high-quality advice and development expertise, by making loans and grants to supportive housing sponsors, by strengthening the supportive housing industry, and by reforming public policy to make it easier to create and operate supportive housing. CSH has offices in 11 states and in Washington, DC.

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

(www.usich.gov) administers Opening Doors, the first-ever federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness in America. The 2010 plan espouses housing-based solutions; seeks to align mainstream housing, health, education, and human services; and calls for an unprecedented level of collaboration between the public and private sectors to prevent Americans from experiencing homelessness. Opening Doors includes several suggestions for ways philanthropy can help end homelessness, including making strategic investments to help expand the supply of affordable housing, service-enriched housing, and permanent supportive housing.

Additional homelessness resources include:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

(www.cbpp.org)

National Center on Family Homelessness

(www.familyhomelessness.org)

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

(www.nchv.org)

National Council for State Housing Agencies

(www.ncsha.org)

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty

(www.nlchp.org)

National Low Income Housing Coalition

(www.nlihc.org)