

Reimagining Interim Housing

Stages and Action Areas for Transforming Approaches to Sheltering People Experiencing Homelessness

December 2022



THE FRAMEWORK
FOR AN EQUITABLE
HOMELESSNESS
RESPONSE

#HousingEquity

***The Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response project
is being collaboratively guided by the following partners:***

- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities • National Alliance to End Homelessness • National Health Care for the Homeless Council •
- Housing Justice Collective • National Low Income Housing Coalition • Urban Institute • National Coalition for the Homeless •
- Barbara Poppe and associates • Matthew Doherty Consulting •

Use of the Term “Interim Housing”

We have purposefully chosen to entitle this project and this document “Reimagining Interim Housing” but want to make the meaning and intentions behind the term “interim housing” clear.

We have received considerable **guidance from people with lived expertise and experiences of homelessness about the stigmatizing and traumatizing impacts of language in current usage within homelessness response systems, including the term “emergency shelter.”**

Based upon that guidance, we have chosen to largely avoid the term “emergency shelter” within this document. Instead, **we have chosen to refer to “interim housing” or, less frequently, to “sheltering people.”**

The term “interim housing” is not meant to refer to one specific program model. Rather, the term is meant to refer to a full range of shorter-term, crisis options for temporary accommodations which may currently be referred to by a variety of terms: congregate or non-congregate emergency shelter; navigation centers; bridge housing; transitional housing; or other models or terms.

The term “interim housing” is also not meant to imply that people who are staying in such programs have ended their experiences of homelessness. People in interim housing programs of any type are still experiencing homelessness, and interim housing programs alone cannot end homelessness within our communities.

We recognize that it will take time to shift language usage consistently and that language will likely continue to evolve as we strive to reimagine and transform our approaches. **We also know that some programs may have to use specific terms for their programs or models based upon funding sources’ eligibility requirements, regulations, or for other reasons.**

In implementing transformation efforts, we encourage people to use the terms that makes the most sense locally, while also listening to and following the guidance and preferences of people with lived expertise within your community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Framework project consultants Matthew Doherty, Shaundell Diaz, Rashema Melson, and Claudine Sipili have played lead roles in the preparation of the content of this document, with thoughtful review and feedback provided by with thoughtful review and feedback provided by representatives of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Barbara Poppe and associates, and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

We especially want to acknowledge the invaluable input provided by people with lived expertise who participated in focus group listening sessions, and the team at the National Coalition for the Homeless for the coordination and facilitation of those sessions and the analysis of the input. Further, we also want to thank everyone who participated in interviews and small group discussions with Matthew Doherty and Barbara Poppe to help shape the thinking and guidance reflected within this document.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Intent of this Document	1
Transformation Stages and Action Areas	2
Partnerships with People with Lived Expertise and Experience	3
Centering Racial Justice and Equity	3
What this Document Does Not Do	4
Interim Housing Alone Cannot End Homelessness	4
Summary of Input Processes	5
Stages and Action Areas for Transformation Processes	6
Getting Ready to Implement Transformation Efforts	8
First Stage - Initiate: Establish the Vision for Transformation Efforts	9
<i>Action Area 1: Identify and describe the values and standards to be embraced within interim housing programs</i>	9
<i>Examples of Qualities and Values</i>	12
Second Stage – Innovate: Pursue Multiple Transformation Efforts Concurrently	13
<i>Action Area 2: Add new models and programs into homelessness response system and assess impact</i>	14
<i>Action Area 3: Assess successes and areas for improvement in the achievement of identified values and standards within programs</i>	16
<i>Action Area 4: Deploy capacity-building and quality improvement efforts</i>	18
<i>Action Area 5: Align interim housing programs within systemic efforts to end homelessness</i>	20
Third Stage – Iterate: Strengthen Transformation Efforts and Increase Momentum	22
<i>Action Area 6: Adapt improvement efforts and initiate shifts to successful models</i>	22
Exhibits	25
Exhibit A: <i>Tools to Support Effective Partnerships with People with Lived Expertise</i>	26
Exhibit B: <i>Findings from Focus Groups of People with Lived Expertise</i>	28
Exhibit C: <i>Findings from Interviews with System and Provider Leaders</i>	30

INTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT

The [Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response](#) project partners, in collaboration with other organizations, are implementing activities **to support communities to pursue transformation of their approaches to sheltering people within their efforts to end homelessness**. The Reimagining Interim Housing project is intended to advance priorities identified in the Framework, which calls upon communities to: sustain and expand interim housing opportunities during the pandemic; *and* to strive to transform their approaches to sheltering people to focus on non-congregate environments and other models, in order to better respond to public health crises, provide healthier environments, and to create more welcoming and efficient systems.

This project is directly responsive to one of the [Top 4 Policy Shifts](#) identified through a series of Listening Sessions held with representatives of historically marginalized communities in 2020. These sessions were coordinated through the then-active National Innovation Service's Center for Housing Justice and a working group of national and local policy experts and advocates, working alongside direct service providers and people serving the communities most impacted by the pandemic.

Policy Shift

Implement a crisis response that ends the use of large congregate shelters and creates dignity-based, safe, temporary crisis options as a bridge to long-term housing.

As we have implemented this project, it has been painfully clear that, **collectively, we have neglected to focus adequately on supporting and guiding the implementation of high-quality, low-barrier, housing-placement focused interim housing options** for people who are experiencing homelessness.

We believe strongly that **making adaptations within current programs and models, however, will not be fully responsive to the guidance and recommendations provided by people with lived expertise regarding the needs and interests of people experiencing homelessness**. Therefore, through this project and in this document, **we have instead sought to develop guidance on how communities and organizations can systematically pursue a comprehensive reimagination and transformation of their approaches to sheltering people**.

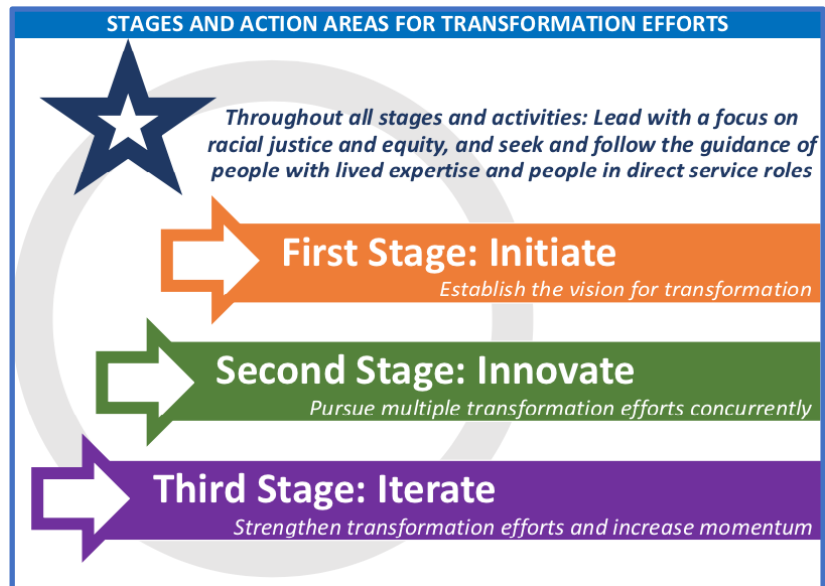
We recognize, however, that even as we pursue such transformation efforts, there is **an urgent need for strengthening the operations and outcomes of existing interim housing programs, and for improving the experiences, well-being, and opportunities for people participating in such programs – right now**.

Therefore, we have also prepared a Supplement document, [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#), which gathers and presents existing documents, guidance, and tools that can be used in support of such urgent improvements, while also assessing gaps in the materials that we have identified to date.

TRANSFORMATION STAGES AND ACTION AREAS

We have organized a recommended approach to transformation into three (3) Stages and six (6) Action Areas with clearly defined objectives, so that:

- First, a **clear and compelling vision is developed and communicated for the planned transformation** of approaches, and for the provision of stronger, welcoming, empathetic, and effective interim housing options to people experiencing homelessness, options that support their ability to end their experiences of homelessness by accessing permanent housing.
- Then, grounded in that vision, **multiple transformation and improvement efforts are pursued concurrently**, with areas of focus being identified based upon local considerations, priorities, and opportunities and in support of national goals and best practices.
- Finally, **these transformation efforts must feature sustained dedication of time, effort, and resources**, adapting and strengthening efforts, seizing new opportunities, shifting to the most successful and sustainable models across the homelessness response system, and **building the momentum that will be necessary to achieve full-scale and ongoing transformation**.



And throughout all of the efforts and activities, there must be a **sustained and leading focus on racial justice and equity, and on seeking and following the guidance of people with lived expertise and people in direct service roles**.

It is expected that transformation will require **repeatedly cycling through each of the Stages and Action Areas over an extended period of time**. The Stages and Actions Areas are described in more detail below and for which we have identified:

- Potential **objectives** to be pursued
- Priorities for **partnering with people with lived expertise from experiences of homelessness**
- Guidance and considerations for **advancing toward racial justice and equity**
- Other **implementation recommendations**
- Where to find additional **tools and resources** that can help support activities in the Supplement document [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#)

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE

Our guidance emphasizes the **importance of partnership with people with lived expertise and experience of homelessness throughout communities' efforts to reimagine and transform their approaches to sheltering people** experiencing homelessness. Within each Action Area we identify specific recommendations for potential roles and areas of focus for such partnerships.

This guidance includes recommendations for a wide range of roles for people with lived experience and expertise inclusive of:

- **Employment** in paid staff and leadership roles;
- **Positions of influence** on Boards of Directors and decision-making bodies;
- **Formal, consistent, and on-going structures** to help guide decision-making; *and*
- **Consultative processes** with a broad range of people with current and prior experiences of homelessness.

People with Lived Expertise

This document uses the term “people with lived expertise” to reflect and value the expertise that people have developed through their lived experiences of homelessness.

We recognize that a variety of language is currently being used to acknowledge the crucial expertise people with experiences of homelessness bring to every element of communities' efforts to prevent and end homelessness. And we expect that such language may continue to evolve and change.

It is not enough to create opportunities for people with lived expertise to express their opinions. Instead, their decision-making and leadership must be empowered and supported, and cultural differences and diversity of perspectives and communication must be valued and embraced. It is also essential that people with lived expertise participating in any roles within homelessness response systems, and within these transformation processes, **receive adequate support and training and are equitably compensated for their time**, using individualized approaches to ensure that such compensation does not conflict with access to other income or benefits they may be receiving.

Because partnerships with people with lived expertise have such central roles in every element of the guidance provided in this document, we have provided links to a variety of tools and resources that can help support communities to implement and strengthen such partnerships in *Appendix A: Tools to Support Effective Partnerships with People with Lived Expertise.*

CENTERING RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY

The guidance in this document also **strives to lead with a focus on racial justice and equity for marginalized communities and populations throughout its recommended approaches to transformation, including explicitly highlighting racial justice and equity guidance within each Action Area.** In addition to racial equity, other critical dimensions of equity include ethnicity, gender and gender identity, disability, sexuality, age, family composition, among others, and our pursuit of equity must understand and reflect the intersectionality of identities.

We want to acknowledge that, while this guidance represents our best current thinking and recommendations, **the Framework partners and communities will need to continuously explore and identify opportunities to re-think, revise, and strengthen our pursuit of racial justice and equity throughout every element of our work to prevent and end homelessness.**

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT DO

We see this document as providing a guiding “road map” that communities can seek to follow and implement, while applying their own creativity and customizing the approaches to best fit the needs and conditions in their community, as they pursue systemic reimagination and transformation of their approaches to sheltering people. We fully recognize that information provided here does not answer every question nor does it document proven best practices for pursuing such transformation efforts. Therefore, we want to clearly and explicitly acknowledge that this document:

- **Does not provide operations and services guidance** for interim housing providers.
- **Does not detail or prescribe specific steps within each Action Area**, and we expect that detailed steps will need to be determined at local levels, based on community conditions, partnerships, and local priorities, planning structures, resources, and processes.
- **Does not identify examples of communities who have already implemented this “road map”** toward transformation of their approaches to sheltering people experiencing homelessness, but we intend to support communities in such implementation in the future.
- **And does not identify specific funding sources or strategies that can support transformation activities or reimagined models of interim housing**, as such sources and strategies are likely dependent upon each community’s array of existing or potential funding.

It is our intention, however, to support communities to understand and implement elements of this “road map” and, over time through such efforts, to be able to answer more questions, to provide more detailed guidance and examples of work, to document transformation practices offering the greatest promise, and to identify funding sources and strategies needed.

INTERIM HOUSING ALONE CANNOT END HOMELESSNESS

This document specifically focuses on transforming approaches to interim housing, an essential, but often neglected or undervalued, component of homelessness response systems - a component that must be strengthened both to better meet the crisis needs of people experiencing homelessness and to create better, more effective pathways to permanent housing for many people.

This focus, however, should not be interpreted as a belief that transforming interim housing alone can end homelessness in our communities. **Within this focus on transforming interim housing options, we recognize that all of the following are true:**

- **Ending homelessness will require vastly increasing affordable housing options, enriched with tailored levels of supportive and health services** to address people’s needs and goals.
- **Interim housing models must be implemented that will provide more accessible, welcoming, dignified, and healthy options for people in crisis** and will better facilitate people’s access to permanent housing.
- **The full success and impact of interim housing programs, however, will remain dependent on the scale and range of affordable housing** and services options within communities, and that the scale of interim housing options needed will vary over time based upon the availability of permanent housing options.
- **People’s access to permanent housing options should not be dependent upon their agreement to enter interim housing programs** and communities should also strive to strengthen their capacity to connect people who are unsheltered directly to permanent housing.

SUMMARY OF INPUT PROCESSES

As described in more detail below, the guidance contained in this document was directly informed by input provided through both focus groups held with people with lived expertise of homelessness and of shelters in particular and through interviews with people with leadership roles within homelessness response systems and provider organizations.

In February 2022, the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) began recruiting individuals with lived experience to participate in a series of listening sessions to solicit opinions on congregate shelters and other sheltering options. In total, NCH conducted seven listening sessions. Participants represented 17 cities and the District of Columbia. The diverse group of individuals represented a wide range of geographic areas, races and ethnicities, sexual orientations, and gender identities. The 33 focus group participants were predominately people of color, with African-Americans being the most represented group at 73%, followed by 16% white, 5% Hispanic, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% Native American. 50% of participants identified as women, 47% as men, and 3% as transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming.

Important Themes from Focus Groups

Participants were **overwhelmingly concerned with safety, cleanliness and sanitation, and service delivery**, and participants unanimously supported the **need for more services within the shelter system.**

People expressed the **need for compassionate treatment of clients, more diversity and lived expertise among staff and leadership, and training for staff**, and most respondents felt that the **lack of resources affects how clients were treated – or mistreated.**

Participants expressed the **need for a wide range of models and environments to be available, so that people have meaningful options and choices** about what will work best for them.

Many options were mentioned as **alternatives to large congregate shelters, including tiny homes, hotels, and smaller shelters being seen as better options**, but most participants thought that **congregate shelter should remain available until other options were produced** to meet needs.

In addition, During the Spring and Summer of 2022, Matthew Doherty and Barb Poppe interviewed and facilitated small group discussions with more than 20 people across the country regarding their perspectives on reimagining and transforming approaches to sheltering people experiencing homelessness. Interview participants were people who hold leadership roles within national organizations, within homelessness response systems, and within organizations operating emergency shelter or interim housing programs.

Exhibits B and C summarize key themes from these focus groups and interviews, and please also see a more detailed summary of findings of the focus groups prepared by the National Coalition for the Homeless, [Focus Groups: Reimagining and Transforming Approaches to Sheltering People Experiencing Homelessness](#). We have sought to reflect that input throughout the guidance provided within this document.

STAGES AND ACTION AREAS FOR TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS

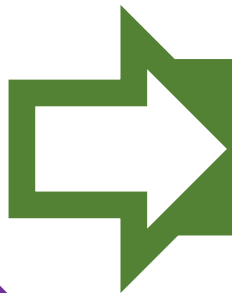


Throughout all stages and activities: Lead with a focus on racial justice and equity, and seek and follow the guidance of people with lived expertise and people in direct service roles



First Stage: Initiate

Establish the vision for transformation



Second Stage: Innovate

Pursue multiple transformation efforts concurrently



Third Stage: Iterate

Strengthen transformation efforts and increase momentum

STAGES AND ACTION AREAS FOR TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS

As illustrated on the previous page, **we are recommending that communities and organizations pursue transformation of the approaches to sheltering people through a staged approach, repeatedly cycling through three (3) Stages and six (6) Action Areas**, with a leading focus on racial justice and equity throughout.

Throughout all stages and activities

- **Lead with a focus on racial justice and equity, and seek and follow the guidance of people with expertise and people in direct service roles**

First Stage: Initiate, establishing the vision for transformation

- **Action Area 1:** Identify and describe the values and standards to be embraced within interim housing programs

Second Stage: Innovate, pursuing multiple transformation efforts concurrently

- **Action Area 2:** Add new models and programs into homelessness response system and assess impact
- **Action Area 3:** Assess successes and areas for improvement in the achievement of identified values and standards within programs
- **Action Area 4:** Deploy capacity-building and quality improvement efforts
- **Action Area 5:** Align interim housing programs within systemic efforts to end homelessness

Third Stage: Iterate, strengthening transformation efforts and increase momentum

- **Action Area 6:** Adapt improvement efforts and initiate shifts to successful models

This staged approach and implementation of these action areas can help ensure that:

- First, **a clear and compelling vision is developed and communicated for the planned transformation of approaches**, and for the provision of stronger, welcoming, empathetic, and effective interim housing options to people experiencing homelessness, options that support their ability to end their experiences of homelessness by accessing permanent housing.
- Then, grounded in that vision, **multiple transformation and improvement efforts are pursued concurrently**, with areas of focus being identified based upon local considerations, priorities, and opportunities.
- Finally, these transformation efforts will require sustained dedication of time, effort, and resources, adapting and strengthening efforts, seizing new opportunities, shifting to the most successful and sustainable models across the homelessness response system, and **building the momentum that will be necessary to achieve full-scale and ongoing transformation**.

And throughout all of the efforts and activities, there must be a **sustained and leading focus on racial justice and equity, and on seeking and following the guidance of people with lived expertise and people in direct service roles**. It is expected that **transformation will require repeatedly cycling through the Stages and Action Areas over an extended period of time**. The Stages and Action Areas are described in more detail below and we have identified:

- Potential **objectives** to be pursued;
- Priorities for **partnering with people with lived expertise**;
- Guidance and considerations for **advancing toward equity and justice**;
- Other **implementation recommendations**; and
- Additional **tools and resources** that can help support activities.

GETTING READY TO IMPLEMENT TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS

We recognize that this vision for approaching the reimagining of interim housing is ambitious and will require the dedication of significant time, leadership, and planning and implementation resources over an extended period of time – likely years, rather than months. It will also require strengthened coordination across organizations and systems, including the Continuum of Care, provider organizations, and local government agencies and systems. And it will require stronger and deeper partnerships with people with lived expertise.

As your community determines feasibility and considers implementation efforts across these Stages and the Action Areas, you'll likely need to lay the groundwork for such efforts through advance planning and recruitment of partners and allies. Special consideration should be given to the following advance activities:

- **Exploring interest and engaging potential allies:** Identify and meet with people who are interested in “reimagining interim housing” within your community’s response to homelessness, including people with lived experience of homelessness in your community. For example, you may want to schedule meetings to review this document together and discuss if and how the suggested approaches could be applied to your community.
- **Developing a high-level project plan:** If there is sufficient interest, collaboratively determine how to create a potential work plan. For example, your community may want to empower a representative group to map out the basics for a project plan that: centers on equity and racial justice; identifies the membership of the group that will lead the process, including leadership from the Continuum of Care; determines whether the focus will be on all types of interim housing or on specific sub-populations; considers which key stakeholders should be included in the process; develops a general scope for the project and a few value statements; establishes some key milestones and a general timeline; considers how the project could be convened and facilitated; determines how the project will be staffed; assesses availability of data that can be used to support the planning process; and establishes a working budget.
- **Ensuring access to essential data:** You’ll need to make sure that your efforts can be informed by meaningful data and analyses, including data overseen by the Continuum of Care (CoC), such as Homeless Management Information System data, Point-in-Time Count data, performance and outcome data, and other sources of data about interim housing and other components of the homelessness response system.
- **Securing the staffing and resources to implement the project plan:** Resources and staff time to support the implementation of the project plan will be essential, and you’ll want to explore whether support could come from philanthropic grant awards, local or CoC planning grants, loaned staff, and/or donated logistics support and meeting spaces. Based on the resources available, you may need to tailor and revise the project plan.

Essential Ingredients

Interest, engagement, and support for people with lived expertise to participate and lead this process.

Willing partners among at least some system leaders, interim housing providers, and funders.

Engagement with other key stakeholders, including outreach teams, housing providers, mainstream systems, and other community-based organizations.

Adequate staffing and infrastructure to support activities across the Stages and Action Areas.



First Stage: Initiate

Establish the vision for transformation

Action Area 1

Identify and describe the values and standards to be embraced within interim housing programs

Key Objectives

- **Implement collaborative, open planning and engagement processes** to identify and understand the values and standards your community will strive to achieve in its provision of interim housing options to people experiencing homelessness – and any current values and standards that need to be discarded.
- Ensure that the values and standards identified **reflect and center the current and future needs, interests, and guidance of people experiencing homelessness.**
- Use these processes to **create community support and engagement into the transformation processes** that will be needed to achieve those values and standards.

Partnering with People with Lived Expertise

- **Initiate planning processes with paid roles for people with lived expertise and other forms of consultation from people with lived expertise**, so that their perspectives and recommendations shape all planning and discussions that follow.
- Ensure your processes are **hearing from people with current and recent experiences of shelter or interim housing programs in your community and from people who are unsheltered.**
- Focus specifically on **understanding what prevents people from entering current programs and what would help ensure that interim housing programs are seen as meaningful, useful options** to people who are unsheltered in your community.
- **Establish on-going, compensated roles for people experiencing homelessness to guide all of the implementation activities** that follow this stage of your process.
- **Partner with training and educational programs to support people with lived expertise** to develop their skills and to pursue their goals.

Racial Justice and Equity Guidance

- Analyze data about current **access, usage, and outcomes of existing programs and identify disparities and inequities by race, for other marginalized communities, and across intersectional identities.**
- **Center issues of racial justice and equity** throughout all discussions, including **purposefully identifying current values and standards that are reinforcing inequities** and that will not be embraced or supported moving forward.
- **Partner with communities and neighborhoods most impacted by housing instability and homelessness** for the development of the values and standards.
- Ensure that values and standards developed **address issues of access to interim housing, geographic distribution of options, and how interim housing options will support and strengthen neighborhoods and communities.**

Additional Implementation Recommendations

- **Engage broad range of stakeholders, from across the homelessness response system and from outside that system, into community conversations to:**
 - Explore the values and standards to be embraced or to be discarded;
 - Inventory existing operating standards and guidelines with which programs will need to continue to comply;
 - Identify and delineate the roles that interim housing programs need to play with long-term strategies for preventing and ending homelessness; and
 - Determine how interim housing programs can best be supported to enhance Housing First pathways that empower people to exit their experiences of homelessness to permanent housing.
- **Ensure that the exploration of values and standards delves deeply into a wide range of areas, including but not limited to:**
 - Leadership and decision-making roles for people with lived expertise
 - Healthiness, cleanliness, and safety of physical environments being used for interim housing
 - Clients' well-being, privacy, and safety priorities
 - Self-determination and autonomy of clients
 - Array of services, including health care services, that should be available to interim housing participants
 - Client experience and communications that respects and supports people's dignity
 - Addressing needs of all members of self-defined households and families
 - Compensation and skill-development for staff
 - Equal access
 - Cultural responsiveness, competency, and humility, culturally-specific models, and language accessibility
 - Social supports and community-building
 - Approaches to mental health and substance use concerns
 - Providing range of models and true choices
 - Facilitating connections to permanent housing
 - *See box below for more ideas*
- Convene dialogues and **discussions specifically with current shelter and interim housing providers, including their Boards of Directors, to ensure that such providers see their organizations' and their clients' experiences and expertise reflected in the emerging values and standards** and recognize how the transformation processes can support and strengthen their achievement of their missions.
- Look for and engage with voices with diverse opinions and perspectives, but **do not strive for 100% agreement, consensus, or support, and when perspectives are in conflict, give the greatest weight to the opinions and perspectives of people with lived expertise.**
- Engage both **public and private funders of existing programs to understand their perspectives and their investments' intentions and impact**, and seek commitments to align future investments with the values and standards emerging through your processes.
- Engage and educate **elected officials and community leaders about the processes you are implementing and identify what support you need from them** in establishing, advancing, and achieving the values and standards emerging through your processes.
- Spend enough time in this stage of work to **both ensure the values and standards identified have been thoroughly informed by a broad range of perspectives and to create awareness and support for the need for transformation** in your community's provision of interim housing options.
- Once the values and standards have been determined, **ensure that they are clearly and consistently communicated to all interim housing program participants and front line staff.**

Other Resources

- Review the full inventory of tools and resources identified within the Supplement document [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#) for other tools and resources that may be helpful to your efforts in this Action Area.
- The Framework project document [Immediate and Flexible Crisis Options for Children and Families](#) provides guidance and recommendations that may be useful for shaping your communities values and standards, including exploring six key practices: ensuring capacity to serve all families; centering equity and culture throughout every element of planning and programming; utilizing hotels/motels, vouchers, and master-lease units strategically and effectively; implementing homelessness diversion activities across the system; connecting sheltering strategies to rehousing assistance; and embedding homelessness assistance within broader community systems of services and support.
- [Minnesota’s Task Force on Shelter](#) may be a useful model for communities seeking to initiate work in this area. The Task Force has been established to develop standards for the provision of shelter, including examining existing shelter policies and practices, engaging stakeholders, identifying values for their work, and discussing what an ideal shelter experience and process should be. The Task Force’s [interim report](#) was issued in February 2022 and final report is projected for completion by end of 2022 or early 2023.

Examples of Qualities and Values

In the focus groups and interviews performed for this project, people were asked about the qualities and values that should be emphasized within communities' approaches to sheltering people.

Some of the most frequent themes within people's responses included:

Dignity and respect	Human-centered design
People are valued	People-centered
Privacy and autonomy	Consumer-driven
Equity and justice	Ability to stick with people
Anti-racist	Breaking stigma
Empathy and kindness	Clear communication and options and expectations
Empowerment	True choice
Open, inviting, and welcoming	Engagement and building trust
Quiet, a chance for peace	Wholistic services
Rest and recovery	Addressing health care needs
Safety, without over-policing	Making the time valuable
Smaller facilities	Options and choices
Smaller spaces within larger facilities	Fewer rules
Trained, well-compensated and supported staff	Cohesiveness across programs
Housing-focused	Connecting people to services, community, identity
Pathways out of shelter	Effectiveness
Springboard to housing stability	Opportunities for community and leadership
Trauma-informed, healing environments	Peer expertise and supports
Harm Reduction	Possessions treated with care
Low-barrier	Time to take next steps
Meeting people where they are	Pursuit of quality and excellence
Motivational Interviewing	Range of models and options
Housing First	Strengths-based approaches
Flexibility, nimbleness, and adaptability	Social supports



Second Stage: Innovate

Pursue multiple transformation efforts concurrently

During the Second Stage of their transformation efforts, communities are encouraged to innovate and pursue change and progress across multiple action areas at the same time. Testing approaches across multiple Action Areas will increase breadth and reach of the transformation efforts and will serve to create more momentum than a traditional, more narrowly-focused plan-implement-evaluate cycle.

The priorities and specific areas of focus across these Action Areas should be identified based upon local considerations, priorities, opportunities, and the guidance of people with lived expertise.

Action Area 2

Add new models and programs into homelessness response system and assess impact

Action Area 3

Assess successes and areas for improvement in the achievement of identified values and standards within programs

Action Area 4

Deploy capacity-building and quality improvement efforts

Action Area 5

Align interim housing programs within systemic efforts to end homelessness

See the following pages for guidance for implementing activities across each of these Action Areas.

Action Area 2

Add new models and programs into homelessness response system and assess impact

Key Objectives

- **Create and test a range of alternative approaches to sheltering people that do not exist, that are very limited within your current homelessness response system, or that will better address the needs of different subpopulations, which may include non-congregate models and other models, in alignment with the values and standards determined during the First Stage.**
- **Compare ease of access, client satisfaction, performance, and outcomes** of new models and programs to existing programs, including analyzing issues of equity across race, ethnicity, gender and gender identify, sexuality, disability status, age, and other dimensions.
- **Transparently and rapidly report and discuss and implications of these new approaches** for your homelessness response system's effectiveness and progress.

Partnering with People with Lived Expertise

- Directly involve people with lived expertise into the **design and implementation of all activities**, and ensure that they are equitably compensated for their roles and work.
- Deeply and respectfully **engage with people with lived expertise to identify models and programs that should be added, expanded, or transformed** within your homelessness response system and to help make funding decisions.
- Create structures through which **clients and other people with lived expertise can shape and inform the operations and services** of new or expanded programs.
- Ensure that **client experience, well-being, and interactions and communication with staff within programs are critical elements** of all activities.
- Center and uplift the voices of people with lived experience when **determining the impacts and recommendations and when promoting and creating awareness of the results.**
- **Ensure that new programs being implemented create jobs that offer growth and advancement opportunities** for people with lived expertise.

Racial Justice and Equity Guidance

- Ensure that **communities and neighborhoods most impacted by housing instability and homelessness are shaping decisions about models and programs** that should be added or expanded.
- Partner with highly-impacted communities and neighborhoods on **design and implementation of culturally-responsive and culturally-specific models and programs.**
- **Contract with organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities,** for the implementation of new models and programs, including culturally-responsive and culturally-specific models and programs.
- **Embed equity analyses within all elements of assessment and evaluation activities,** including any disparities in access, experiences, interactions with staff, and outcomes, and ensure that assessment and evaluation activities are being performed by people with expertise in such analyses.
- Center and uplift the voices of people representing highly-impacted communities and neighborhoods when **determining impacts and recommendations and when promoting and creating awareness of the findings.**

Additional Implementation Recommendations

- **Use the values and standards determined during the First Stage, and continued guidance from people with lived expertise, in the design, funding award processes, and operations of any new or expanded programming**, including looking for opportunities to repurpose existing facilities if they can be transformed into environments that can support new models or programs well-aligned with those values and standards.
- **Consider any lessons learned or assessments from interim housing options provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the use of hotels or motels to provide non-congregate options**, and explore feasibility of sustaining, expanding, or recreating such options within your homelessness response system on an on-going basis.
- **Prioritize models that include environments and services that can better meet the needs of people with complex health and services needs** and people not well-served within current interim housing programs.
- **Analyze data and qualitative information, such as client surveys, across current programs to determine differences in performance, client experience, costs, outcomes, and other dimensions**, to identify models or programs that should be expanded to play more significant roles within homelessness response system.
- Review and adjust current funding and contracting mechanisms to **ensure funding and contracting with BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities, and provide capacity-building assistance to such organizations**, if needed.
- In the creation of any new interim housing sites, **emphasize the creation of environments with the potential to be converted in the future to other essential uses, including permanent housing**, if and when demand for interim housing is reduced and the facilities will no longer be needed for those uses.
- **Establish new or stronger partnerships with other systems, such as health care, aging services, disability services, youth and family services, and other systems** that can more fully address the goals and needs of people accessing interim housing programs, and actively engage their participation into planning and program design and implementation.
- **Embed the focus on the measurement of impact, including equity analyses, within funding for any new programs**, including resources necessary to compensate for staff time and the time of people with lived expertise in supporting and informing such activities.
- As findings from assessment and evaluation activities are developed, **host community conversations with broad range of stakeholders to discuss findings, equity analyses, implications for homelessness response system, and next steps** for acting upon the findings. (Stakeholders should include, but not be limited to: people with lived expertise, homelessness services and housing providers, elected officials, community leaders, policy makers, health care providers, corporate and private philanthropy, business leaders, among others.)

Other Resources

- See the *Implementing Low-Barrier, Housing-Focused Approaches* section, the *Addressing Physical and Behavioral Health and Safety Needs of People Staying in Interim Housing* section, and the *Implementing Standards and Assessing and Strengthening Programs* section of the Supplement document [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#) for other tools and resources that may be helpful to your efforts in this Action Area.

Action Area 3

Assess successes and areas for improvement in the achievement of identified values and standards within programs

Key Objectives

- **Consistently assess, and identify opportunities to strengthen, the achievement of identified values and standards** within existing and new interim housing programs.
- **Identify and support existing interim housing programs with greatest potential for transitioning into new or improved models** to align with values and standards more closely.
- **Educate public and private funders regarding opportunities to better align funding** with the achievement of community's values and standards.

Partnering with People with Lived Expertise

- Engage **people with lived expertise into paid roles within all elements of assessment activities** and analyses of findings.
- Create structures through which **current and recent participants in interim housing programs, and other people with lived expertise, can shape and inform the design and implementation of the assessment activities**, and ensure that they are equitably compensated for their roles and work.
- **Engage and hear from people with broad range of lived experiences to determine impact of program shifts, including current and recent participants of interim housing programs, but also people who are unsheltered** in the community.
- Ensure that **client experience, well-being, and interactions and communication with staff within programs are critical elements** of all assessment and evaluation activities.
- Center and uplift the voices of people with lived expertise when **determining impacts, when promoting and creating awareness of the findings, and in determining recommendations and steps to be taken in response.**

Racial Justice and Equity Guidance

- Analyze data about **access, usage, and outcomes of programs – including analyzing differences by subpopulations – in alignment with central focus on racial justice and equity for marginalized populations embedded within identified values and standards.**
- **Partner with communities and neighborhoods most impacted by housing instability and homelessness** to assess achievement of the values and standards, including regarding **access to interim housing, geographic distribution of options, and whether interim housing options are supporting and strengthening neighborhoods and communities.**
- **Embed racial and other equity analyses within all elements of impact measurement**, including any disparities in access, experiences, interactions with staff, and outcomes, and ensure that impact assessment activities are being performed by people with expertise in such analyses.
- Center and uplift the voices of people representing highly-impacted communities and neighborhoods when **determining the findings from impact assessment activities, when promoting and creating awareness of the findings, and in determining steps to be taken in response to findings.**

Additional Implementation Recommendations

- **Educate Continuum of Care leadership, public agencies, policymakers, and providers (including their Boards of Directors), regarding the values and standards** identified for interim housing programs in your community and the planned approach to assessing programs' alignment with those values and standards.
- **Engage providers and clients into designing the assessment processes and tools to be used to assess alignment with the values and standards**, including engaging staff in front-line roles and peer positions, including training and compensation for any additional responsibilities.
- **Work with BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities**, to ensure that all activities intended to assess alignment with values and standards are culturally responsive and competent.
- **Implement assessment activities at a pace that will allow organizations, especially smaller organizations, to participate meaningfully and thoughtfully**, to be fully responsive to requests for information and documentation, and to use the assessment process itself as an opportunity for strengthening their programs and performance.
- **Work with public and private funders to ensure that participation in assessment activities is an expectation within funding agreements**, including supporting staff costs and other costs that might result from supporting the design and implementation, or from participating in, impact assessment activities.
- **Fairly and transparently document participation in impact assessment activities**, including noting both participating interim housing programs and any programs that have opted out of assessment activities.
- **Summarize and broadly share the most significant findings regarding successes and areas for improvement in the achievement of values and standards that cut across interim housing programs within the community and that require systemic changes**, as well as program-specific reports of findings that should drive program-specific strategies and quality improvement efforts.
- **In considering program-specific impact assessments, also consider factors that may be affecting impact, such as discrepancies in funding levels, facilities, access to training and support, access to housing resources**, and other factors that may be influencing achievement of values and standards.
- **Highlight examples of strong achievement of values and standards and create cross-program learning opportunities** to support adoption of strong and consistent practices across interim housing programs.
- **Analyze whether any new interim housing models introduced into the community are demonstrating higher levels of achievement of the values and standards** and, if so, whether there are existing programs that can begin to transition to those models and/or adapt significant elements of those models into their physical environments and/or programming.
- **Educate public and private funders and policy makers regarding the findings, systemic changes needed, and investment strategies necessary to strengthen alignment with values and standards, program quality, and performance**, and regarding opportunities for existing programs to transition to models that are more fully achieving values and standards and/or to adapt significant elements of those models into their physical environments and/or programming.

Other Resources

- See the *Implementing Standards and Assessing and Strengthening Programs* section of the Supplement document [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#) for other tools and resources that may be helpful to your efforts in this Action Area.

Action Area 4

Deploy capacity-building and quality improvement efforts

Key Objectives

- **Design and implement inter-related, but distinct, capacity-building and quality improvement strategies** to address needs associated with: staffing levels, compensation, recruitment, retention, and career pathways; training and skill development; facilities; and data, performance measurement, and monitoring.
- **Create consistent, meaningful opportunities for wide range of providers, and for staff at all levels, to strengthen their capacity** to achieve the community's identified values and standards for interim housing programs.
- **Support and develop the skills of people with lived expertise engaged in these efforts, and of staff working within interim housing programs**, including staff working in direct service and day-to-day operations roles, and create purposeful opportunities for promotion and advancement into leadership roles.
- **Identify and seek to fill funding gaps that inhibit the performance and quality** of interim housing programs.

Partnering with People with Lived Expertise

- **Deeply engage with people with lived expertise, including creating paid staff positions, to design, develop, and implement capacity-building and quality improvement efforts**, and ensure they are provided with onboarding and training and are equitably compensated for their roles and work.
- Create structures through which **current clients and other people with lived expertise can shape and inform the capacity-building and quality improvements efforts**.
- Include a strong focus on addressing any issues related to **client experience, well-being, and interactions and communication with staff within programs** that were identified through assessment activities.
- Create opportunities for provider organizations to **learn from program participants about the findings from assessment activities and areas of focus for capacity-building and quality improvement efforts**.
- **Engage staff with lived expertise working in peer positions and other positions into the design and implementation of capacity-building and quality improvement efforts**, including compensation for any additional responsibilities.

Racial Justice and Equity Guidance

- **Engage BIPOC front-line staff into the design and implementation of capacity-building and quality improvement efforts**, including compensation for any additional responsibilities.
- Develop tailored and targeted capacity-building strategies for **BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities**.
- Prioritize focus on capacity-building and quality-improvement **directly related to impacts assessments regarding racial inequities and other disparities and in access, client experiences, interactions with staff, and outcomes**.
- Analyze funding support being provided to organizations and **redress any inequities in funding being provided to BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities**.
- Focus on **recruitment, retention, and promotion of BIPOC staff into more senior and leadership-level positions** within provider organizations, planning and systems coordination organizations, and funding entities.

Additional Implementation Recommendations

- **Work with the Continuum of Care and provider organizations, including front-line staff and clients with recent, direct experiences of programs, to interpret findings from impact assessment activities** and generate capacity-building and quality improvement priorities and strategies.
- While capacity-building and quality improvement efforts should not solely focus on findings of assessment activities regarding achievement of values and standards, **ensure that there is a strong, clear, and transparently communicated connection to those findings.**
- **Strategies should include efforts to address discrepancies in funding levels, facilities, access to training and support, and other factors that are influencing achievement of values and standards,** and work with public and private funders and policy makers to identify opportunities to redress such discrepancies and inequities.
- **Work with BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities,** to ensure that all such strategies are culturally responsive and competent, and tailor capacity-building strategies for such organizations.
- **Work with public and private funders to ensure that participation in capacity-building and quality improvement efforts is an expectation within funding agreements,** including supporting staff costs and other costs that might result from supporting the design and implementation, or from participating in, such activities.
- **Convene private philanthropic funders into discussions to identify opportunities for private funders to align investments** to complement public agencies' capacity building and quality improvement efforts.
- **Ensure that staff working in peer positions and front-line staff are deeply engaged in identifying quality improvement strategies,** including strategies and training activities focused on addressing client experiences, access to services and supports, interactions with staff, and outcomes.
- **Develop training plans that offer consistent and on-going opportunities for people with lived expertise and staff to develop their skills,** and seek guidance from federal and national organizations regarding any available support or low-cost or web-based curricula and materials, such as through NAEH's on-line Center for Learning.
- **Provide regular and consistent racial justice-focused training opportunities** for people with lived expertise, staff across organizations, and Boards of Directors, and policy makers.
- **Fairly and transparently document participation in capacity-building and quality improvement activities,** including noting both participating interim housing programs and any programs that have opted out of such activities.

Other Resources

- See the *Implementing Low-Barrier, Housing-Focused Approaches* section, the *Providing Equal and Equitable Access and Outcomes* section, the *Operating and Assessing Impact of Non-Congregate Interim Housing* section, and the *Addressing Physical and Behavioral Health and Safety Needs of People Staying in Interim Housing* section of the Supplement document [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#) for other tools and resources that may be helpful to your efforts in this Action Area.

Action Area 5

Align interim housing programs within systemic efforts to end homelessness

Key Objectives

- **Implement system modeling activities to identify the mix of resources and program types, including identifying the scale of interim housing opportunities needed and targets for outcomes,** to maximize exits from homelessness to permanent housing.
- **Support, incentivize, and/or eventually require interim housing providers to participate in planning efforts, policy decisions, and capacity-building efforts** intended to advance your community's identified values and standards for its provision of interim housing options.
- **Support partnerships and engagement of other community-based resources, adapt coordinated entry policies and processes, and enhance programs' capacity,** so that the full portfolio of interim housing programs can: reach and serve people who are currently unsheltered; improve client experience; remove barriers to access and serve people with complex health care and service needs; and connect people to permanent housing options.

Partnering with People with Lived Expertise

- **Support and sustain ongoing structures through which people with lived expertise have consistent leadership and decision making roles** regarding alignment of interim housing programs within systemic efforts to end homelessness.
- Engage with and compensate people with lived expertise, including people who are unsheltered, to:
 - **Analyze and document the most significant system-level and program-level barriers to access** to interim housing and identify strategies for removing such barriers.
 - **Prioritize improvements to facilities, physical environments, and operations,** to enhance privacy, health, safety, and client experiences and well-being.
 - **Identify services needed within interim housing programs, or to be made readily available to interim housing participants, to both address people's immediate health and services needs** and better facilitate people's access to permanent housing options.
 - **Provide guidance on coordinated entry policies and processes** and outreach and engagement strategies, and how they can better support people's pathways from unsheltered and sheltered homelessness to permanent housing.

Racial Justice and Equity Guidance

- Analyze and **transparently report racial and other inequities in who is accessing interim housing programs and programs' outcomes** in connecting people to permanent housing options.
- **Engage BIPOC front-line staff into the design and implementation of strategies** for removing barriers to access and improving outcomes.
- **Develop tailored, targeted strategies for BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, highly-impacted populations and communities,** to support their capacity to serve people with complex needs, remove barriers to access, and improve permanent housing outcomes.
- **Analyze funding support being provided to organizations and redress any inequities** in funding being provided to BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities.
- Ensure policies supporting, incentivizing or requiring interim housing providers to participate in related efforts **do not have inequitable impacts on BIPOC-led organizations, culturally-specific programs, or organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities.**

Additional Implementation Recommendations

- **Work with public and private funders to support, incentivize, or require interim housing providers to participate in planning efforts, policy decisions, and capacity-building efforts** intended to create more systemic and consistent approaches to providing interim housing within your community.
- **Implement cross-program planning and training efforts that engage people with lived expertise and staff from outreach programs, interim housing programs, coordinated entry systems, and housing navigation programs**, to design and implement strategies for creating stronger and clearer pathways from unsheltered and sheltered homelessness to permanent housing.
- **Engage interim housing provider organizations and their clients into the design and implementation of capacity-building and training opportunities** to support the removal of barriers to access to interim housing and to strengthen programs' permanent housing outcomes.
- **Analyze and document the most significant system-level and program-level barriers to access to interim housing and identify strategies for removing such barriers**, in alignment with Housing First principles and practices.
- **Review coordinated entry policies and processes and how they are or are not supporting people's pathways from unsheltered and sheltered homelessness to permanent housing**, and assess capacity of coordinated entry system to connect people to permanent housing.
- Design and implement modifications to coordinated entry policies and processes to **ensure that entering interim housing can meaningfully support people's access to permanent housing**.
- **Adapt budgets for interim housing programs to include resources that can support both the diversion of people from needing to enter interim housing and can support people to rapidly exit interim housing and homelessness** through financial assistance, problem-solving services, and other short-term forms of assistance.
- **Strengthen connections between Housing Navigation services and interim housing programs** to support successful exits from interim housing into permanent housing options.
- **Work with health care and human services sector to identify funding resources and partnerships that can better address complex health and services needs** among people staying within interim housing programs.
- **Develop training plans that offer consistent and on-going opportunities** for provider organizations and staff at all levels to improve access, enhance client experience, and strengthen outcomes.
- **Fairly and transparently document participation in planning efforts and capacity-building efforts intended to create more systemic and consistent approaches to providing interim housing within your community**, including noting both participating interim housing programs and any programs who have opted out of such activities.

Other Resources

- See the *Implementing Low-Barrier, Housing-Focused Approaches* section, the *Projecting Interim Housing Needs in Communities* section, and the *Aligning Diversion-Focused Strategies* section of the Supplement document [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#) for other tools and resources that may be helpful to your efforts in this Action Area.



Third Stage: Iterate

Strengthen transformation efforts and increase momentum

Action Area 6

Adapt improvement efforts and initiate shifts to successful models

Objectives

- **Truthfully and transparently assess your community’s efforts in Action Areas 1 – 5 and your progress toward achieving your community’s values and standards** for the provision of interim housing options to people experiencing homelessness.
- **Identify and expand interim housing models that are demonstrating the greatest promise or achievement** in access, client satisfaction, performance, outcomes, and other values and standards identified.
- **Overtime, shift funding away from models and programs that are unable or unwilling to meaningfully pursue achievement of your community’s identified values and standards**, while seeking to ensure that capacity to meet needs for interim housing is not reduced.

Partnering with People with Lived Expertise	Racial Justice and Equity Guidance
---	------------------------------------

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hire people with lived expertise into paid roles within all elements of assessment activities and analyses regarding your community’s transformation efforts to date and the identification of interim housing models demonstrating the greatest promise and achievements. ▪ Create structures through which current and recent participants in interim housing programs, and other people with lived expertise, can shape and inform the design and implementation of these assessment activities, and ensure that they are equitably compensated for their roles and work. ▪ Ensure that these assessment activities are engaging and hearing from people with broad range of lived experiences, including current and recent participants of interim housing programs, and also people who are unsheltered in the community. ▪ Engage people with lived experience into equity analyses, assessments of impacts of shifting of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure assessment activities include analyses of data about access, usage, and outcomes in alignment with central focus on racial justice and equity for marginalized populations embedded within identified values and standards. ▪ Partner with communities and neighborhoods most impacted by housing instability and homelessness in the assessment of your community’s transformation efforts to date and the identification of interim housing models demonstrating the greatest promise and achievements. ▪ Partner with BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities, to assess the effectiveness, impact, and failings of tailored capacity-building and quality improvement strategies implemented. ▪ Ensure that identification of models that are demonstrating the greatest promise or achievements include consideration of the |
|--|---|

funding away from models and programs, and decision-making regarding any such shifts in funding.

- Center and uplift the voices of people with lived experience when **determining the findings from these assessment activities, when promoting and creating awareness of the findings, and in determining steps to be taken in response to findings**, including any shifting of funding away from models and programs that are unable or unwilling to meaningfully pursue achievement of your community's identified values and standards.
- **Support and sustain consistent, on-going roles for people with lived expertise** in all elements of the next round of transformation activities.
- **Analyze equity and access impacts of shifting of funding away from models and programs and identify further capacity building strategies as alternatives to shifting funding away from BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities.**
- Center and uplift the voices of people representing highly-impacted communities and neighborhoods when **determining the findings from assessment activities, when promoting and creating awareness of the findings, and in determining steps to be taken in response to findings**, including any shifting of funding away from models and programs that are unable or unwilling to meaningfully pursue achievement of your community's identified values and standards.

Additional Implementation Recommendations

- **Educate providers regarding the transformation activities implemented to date, the planned approaches to assessing implementation of your community's efforts in Action Areas 1 – 5**, and your progress toward achieving your community's values and standards.
- **Engage providers and their clients into designing the processes and tools to be used to assess the transformation activities implemented to date**, including engaging staff in front-line roles and peer positions, including compensation for any additional responsibilities.
- Work with BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities, to **ensure that all activities intended to assess alignment with values and standards are culturally responsive and competent and recognize the unique value of culturally-specific models and programs.**
- **Implement assessment activities at a pace that will allow organizations, especially smaller organizations, to participate meaningfully and thoughtfully**, to be fully responsive to requests for information and documentation, and to use the assessment process itself as an opportunity for strengthening their programs and performance.
- **Work with public and private funders to ensure that participation in such assessment activities is an expectation within funding agreements**, including supporting staff costs and other costs that might result from supporting the design and implementation, or from participating in, assessment activities.
- **Based upon assessment activities, adapt and strengthen cross-program planning and training efforts that support the skills of people with lived expertise and staff** from outreach programs, interim housing programs, coordinated entry systems, housing navigation programs, and other programs.
- **Fairly and transparently document participation in such assessment activities**, including noting both participating interim housing programs and any programs who have opted out of assessment activities.

- **Ensure analyses identify continued discrepancies in funding levels, facilities, access to training and support, and other factors** that may be influencing which models are demonstrating the greatest promise or achievement.
- **Highlight models that are demonstrating the greatest promise or achievement of identified values and standards and create cross-program learning opportunities** to support adoption of strong and consistent practices across interim housing programs.
- **Analyze whether any new interim housing models introduced into the community are demonstrating higher levels of achievement of the values and standards** and, if so, whether there are **existing programs that can begin to transition to those models and/or adapt significant elements of those models** into their physical environments and/or programming.
- **Educate public and private funders and policy makers regarding the findings, systemic changes needed, and investment strategies necessary** to: strengthen alignment with values and standards, program quality, and performance; to transition existing programs to models that are more fully achieving values and standards and/or to adapt significant elements of those models into programming; and to support the next phase of transformation activities.
- **Coordinate across public and private funders regarding decisions to shift any funding away from any existing models and programs, with an emphasis on programs that are unable or unwilling to meaningfully pursue achievement of your community's identified values and standards** and on the provision of capacity building strategies as alternatives to shifting funding away from BIPOC-led organizations and organizations representative of, and with deep connections to, the most highly impacted populations and communities.
- **Prepare public summary report of the most significant findings regarding the implementation of transformation efforts to date** and areas of improvement and/or increased focus needed within those efforts.
- **Determine priorities, objectives, and strengthened approaches for future efforts within each of Action Areas 1 through 5 and develop a formal, public action plan** for the next phase of transformation efforts within your community.
- **Host community conversations with broad range of stakeholders to discuss impact of transformation activities to date, equity analyses, implications for homelessness response system, and plans and priorities for the next phase of your community's transformation efforts.**

Other Resources

- Review the full inventory of tools and resources identified within the Supplement document [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#) to identify information and materials that can help support the next phase of your community's transformation efforts across all of the Action Areas.

EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT A:

Tools to Support Effective Partnerships with People with Lived Expertise

EXHIBIT B:

Focus Groups of People with Lived Expertise

EXHIBIT C:

Interviews with System and Provider Leaders

EXHIBIT A:

Tools to Support Effective Partnerships with People with Lived Expertise

Because partnerships with people with lived expertise have such central roles in every element of the guidance provided in this document, this Appendix provides links to a variety of tools and resources that can help support communities to implement and strengthen such partnerships. We also encourage people to consult the Supplement document [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#) for other tools and resources that can help support the implementation of these Stages and Action Areas.

[Engaging Individuals with Lived Expertise](#)

This brief, prepared by HUD TA consultants who are individuals with lived homelessness expertise, provides guidance regarding engaging people with lived expertise as urgent and necessary as communities grapple with how to create more equitable systems, including contrasting meaningful engagement with inauthentic engagement.

[Guidance for Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining People With Lived Experience and Expertise of Homelessness](#)

This document prepared by HUD TA providers discusses key requirements for the recruitment, hiring, effective onboarding, and retention of people who have experienced homelessness, including: inclusive and equitable hiring practices; staff orientation to racial equity and trauma; a supportive workplace that creates a sense of belonging; and a workplace environment that values the awareness, knowledge, and wisdom that comes from experiencing homelessness.

[Paying People with Lived Experience and Expertise](#)

The document prepared by HUD TA providers acknowledges that truly valuing the expertise and power of people with lived experience and expertise requires that people be appropriately compensated for contributing their time, energy, and valuable expertise, and discusses: approaching conversations about when and how people would like to be paid; compensation considerations; and potential funding streams.

[Webinar: Partnering with People with Lived Expertise to Design and Implement Homelessness Response Systems](#)

This Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response webinar focuses on experiences of co-designing and implementing products and work as stakeholders in the movement toward justice, exploring what co-design and authentic collaboration have meant within this work and what it might mean for you to take these kinds of approaches into your own community.

[What We Heard about COVID-19, Homelessness, and Services from People with Lived Experience](#)

The then-active National Innovation Service, through the Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response project, undertook a series of focus groups with people with current and past experiences of homelessness to better understand these compound impacts and the implications they have for policy and service priorities. From these listening sessions, NIS produced a series of population-specific briefs to summarize the ideas and recommendations of individuals from ten historically-marginalized communities.

Integrating Lived Experience into the Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response

This document describes how Framework partners have sought to incorporate lived-experience into the deliverables associated with the Framework project itself, experimenting with a more authentic and participatory process and describes key design elements and results of the teams that were created.

Equity-Based Decision-Making Framework

Developed by the then-active National Innovation Service in support of the Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response project, this decision-making structure is designed to deconstruct the processes that perpetuate oppression and, instead, establish accountability to people experiencing homelessness and position customers of our homelessness service systems and programs as decision-makers and power-holders within these systems. This framework is designed to be applicable at all levels of homelessness service systems, including in policy and program design, operations, budgeting, technical assistance provision, contracting practices, and human resources processes.

Nothing About Us Without Us: Seven Principles for Leadership & Inclusion of People with Lived Experience of Homelessness

Prepared by the Lived Experience Advisory Council, a group of leaders from across Canada who share lived experience of homelessness and poverty, this document articulates principles for the inclusion and leadership of people with lived experience in organizations and initiatives that aim to address homelessness.

The Value of Lived Experience in the Work to End Homelessness

This USICH guest blog by Sheila White, Advocacy Fellow at Miriam's Kitchen in Washington, DC, identifies ways that organizations can better engage people with lived experience in the work to end homelessness, empowering people as advocates for their communities.

Beyond Mere Principle: Strategies for Truly Partnering with People Who Have the Lived Experience in Our Work

This USICH guest blog by Katherine Cavanaugh, Consumer Advocate, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, explores challenges and lessons learned from the Health Care for the Homeless community's efforts to invest in consumer engagement in governance and leadership.

Three County Continuum of Care Racial Equity Action Plan Summary

Three County Continuum of Care (Franklin, Hampshire, and Berkshire Counties in Western Massachusetts) made an explicit commitment to center racial equity in their homelessness response and the Racial Equity Action Plan provides an example of bringing people with lived experience of homelessness into decision-making roles as an element of that commitment.

EXHIBIT B: Findings from Focus Groups of People with Lived Expertise

Please also see a more detailed summary of findings prepared by the National Coalition for the Homeless, [Focus Groups: Reimagining and Transforming Approaches to Sheltering People Experiencing Homelessness](#).

Implementation of Focus Groups:

In February 2022, the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) began recruiting individuals with lived expertise to participate in a series of listening sessions to solicit opinions on congregate shelters and other sheltering options. In total, NCH conducted seven listening sessions in total. Participants represented 17 cities and the District of Columbia. The diverse group of individuals expressed a wide range of geographic areas, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and gender identities.

The 33 focus group participants were predominately people of color, with African-Americans being the most represented group at 73%, followed by 16% white, 5% Hispanic, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% Native American. 50% of participants identified as women, 47% as men, and 3% as transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming. Discussions were facilitated using the following questions:

Q1: What qualities/values should be emphasized within communities' approaches to sheltering people?

Q1a: What **kinds of environments** for sheltering people best express/achieve those qualities/values?

Q1b: What **kinds of services and operations practices** within sheltering programs best express/achieve those qualities/values?

Q2: Are there appropriate role(s) for congregate shelter within communities' sheltering of people experiencing homelessness?

Q2a: If so, **what are those roles – and what needs to be in place (or improved)** about congregate settings for them to play those roles?

Q3: As communities have experimented with sheltering people in hotels/motels during the pandemic, what has worked well about those settings/programs and what helped such sites/programs be successful?

Q3a: **What hasn't worked well** and should be improved if communities are to use such settings moving forward?

Q4: Are there innovative approaches to sheltering people that communities should be trying and experimenting with?

Q5: Since difficult decisions about funding often have to be made, how should communities think about best balancing investments into sheltering programs vs. investments into permanent housing options (including RRH, PSH, etc.)?

Q6: Within communities' efforts to do better at preventing and ending homelessness, what level of priority should be placed on dedicating time, effort, and resources to transforming and improving approaches to sheltering people – and why?

Key Themes and Perspectives from Focus Groups:

- **Overwhelmingly concerned with safety, cleanliness and sanitation, and service delivery, and participants unanimously supported the need for more services within the shelter system**, with case management with an individualized holistic approach, housing navigation and placement assistance, money management support, employment programs, trauma-informed care, more mental health and substance use services were specifically cited.

- **Expressed the need for compassionate treatment of clients, more diversity and lived expertise among staff and leadership, training for staff,** and most respondents felt that the lack of resources affected how clients were treated - or mistreated - in most cases.
- **Importance of shelters being open to people working non-traditional shifts, accommodating pets, and other modifications** to support people's individual circumstances.
- Several respondents wanted to clarify that **security and safety were critical, but should not depend upon presence of law enforcement,** as presence of police officers may prevent many individuals from accessing shelter.
- **There was no clear consensus on the role of congregate shelters,** but many other options were mentioned as alternatives to large congregate shelters, including tiny homes, hotels, and smaller shelters being seen as better options.
- **Most participants thought that congregate shelter should be available until other options were produced to meet the need** of the population, and that all congregate shelters should be temporary.
- **Suggestions were provided for creating separate spaces for different populations or for different uses,** including within congregate settings, such as for people in recovery from substance use disorders, seniors, and/or by gender and age groups, or for uses such as playroom for kids, libraries, quiet spaces, garden, etc.
- **Respondents who had stayed in a hotel-based program expressed many positives,** including privacy, showers, refrigerators, temperature control, hot water, learning house management skills, locked doors, opportunity to meet with case managers, the ability to isolate during COVID-19, a greater sense of community and safety, as well as positive impact on self-esteem.
- **People also identified things that did not work well within hotel-based programs,** including the sharing of rooms between individuals who did not know each other, the absence of staff and difficulty in coordination with staff in some programs, experiences with police raids in one program, and the fact that many people were returned to experiencing homelessness as funding for hotel-based programs dried up and programs ended.
- **Participants expressed the need for a wide range of models and environments to provide meaningful options for people.** Tiny homes were mentioned most frequently, although there were mixed opinions about such settings. Similarly, 3D printed houses were another approach that was mentioned several times. Abandoned hotels, unused schools, and other buildings were also mentioned as possibilities for conversion to interim housing.
- **Most (but not all) participants leaned heavily towards permanent housing as the place where most resources should be targeted,** although all respondents thought that interim housing should still be a part of the funding mix, and there was **also strong support for dedicating time, effort, and resources to strengthening approaches to sheltering people.**

EXHIBIT C: Findings from Interviews with System and Provider Leaders

Performance of Interviews:

During the Spring of 2022, Matthew Doherty and Barb Poppe interviewed more than 20 people across the country regarding their perspectives on reimagining and transforming approaches to sheltering people experiencing homelessness. Interview participants were people who hold leadership roles within national organizations, within homelessness response systems, and within organizations operating emergency shelter or interim housing programs.

Interview questions focused on the following issues:

- What would a **reimagined or transformed approach to sheltering people** experiencing homelessness look like?
- What **qualities/values should be emphasized within communities' approaches to sheltering people** and how can environments, services, and operations practices support the achievement of those qualities/values?
- How are communities/organizations thinking about **approaches to sheltering people experiencing homelessness moving forward**?
- What **lessons are being taken away from experiences during COVID-19** pandemic?
- How should we be thinking about appropriate **role(s) for congregate shelter** within communities' sheltering of people experiencing homelessness?
- Are there **other innovative approaches** to sheltering people that communities should be trying?
- How should communities think about **best balancing investments into sheltering programs vs. investments into permanent housing options**?
- What **level of priority** should be placed on dedicating time, effort, and resources to transforming and improving approaches to sheltering people?

Key Themes and Perspectives from Interviews:

- **Emergency shelter / interim housing has been a neglected part of our homelessness response systems** – both in terms of resources, but also in terms of guidance, clarity of guidance and standards, definition of roles and expectations, and capacity-building efforts.
- **Consistent expressions of the values that we should be bringing to our efforts to shelter people**, and of the qualities that should be embedded within programs – but general assessment that **we are currently mostly failing to operationalize those values or achieve those qualities**.
- **Necessity of leading with a focus on racial equity and justice was recognized**, but more guidance and support for how to center equity within processes and changes needed and regarding how interim housing models can best support the creation of equitable, justice-focused systems and outcomes.
- **The necessity for cultural competency across all programs, but also the essential and unique value of culturally-specific programs**, such as interim housing programs led by, and targeted to, indigenous populations.

- **Need to do more to ensure that people with lived experience and expertise are truly guiding and informing decision-making, are playing key leadership and staff roles** within organizations and programs, and are **consistently engaged and listened to within quality assurance and quality improvement efforts.**
- **Strong interest in being able to transform approaches – or at least to shift to better and stronger approaches and models** – but only some communities are seeing meaningful opportunities to pursue such changes and **financial resources are, not surprisingly, a major constraint or complete obstacle** in most places.
- Broad support that **transforming our approaches should be a high priority**, although level of prioritization might vary from community to community – with the **caution that efforts won't succeed without also addressing critical and growing shortage of affordable rental housing, strengthening the implementation of Housing First *and* housing-focused services, and ensuring people have access to tailored services and supports after exiting homelessness.**
- **General recognition of the need for a wide range of options and models, so that people have true choices**, and so that systems can connect people to opportunities that feels right to the person – with caution that all options must be **aligned with the values and qualities that have been identified and prioritized**, and costs must be analyzed as well.
- **Varied opinions on what are appropriate roles (if any) for larger congregate models of shelter moving forward** - but expectation that we will need to rely on existing facilities at least for a while and there **may be some appropriate short-stay roles that such settings can play well** on an on-going basis.
- General agreement that any congregate settings should not be very large, but **no clear consensus on what appropriate/optimal size range would be.**
- **Experiences with implementing non-congregate shelters in hotels/motels have been mixed** – potential **benefits of non-congregate sites recognized**, including for reaching and serving people who are not accessing existing congregate settings, but **some organizations experienced challenges with implementation**, including with staffing, services, neighborhood objections, and health and safety of participants, including related to mitigating risks of substance use.
- **Ensuring adequacy and quality of services, and welcoming and respectful treatment of clients is essential within all models and settings**, including by expanding peer support positions, supporting and developing the skills of staff, ensuring high-quality communication and treatment of clients, providing access to health services, and supporting clients' ability to use their time productively – but **access to resources to support exits to housing is also essential to ensure strong outcomes for programs.**
- **Recognition of the importance of implementing person-centered changes to design and environments within existing settings, including congregate settings**, to better achieve intended values/qualities – especially changes that can reduce trauma, enhance privacy, and support people's dignity.

Help Us Strengthen this Information and Identify Other Tools and Materials

We hope that people with lived expertise, community leaders, and interim housing and shelter provider organizations will find ways to use this document and guidance to pursue a reimagined and transformed approaches to sheltering people experiencing homelessness.

We would welcome your thoughts and insights on its content, your experiences implementing its guidance, or any other feedback that you have.

We also encourage you to consult [Tools for Strengthening Current Interim Housing Programs and Services](#), a Supplement to this document, which gathers and presents existing documents, guidance, and tools that people and organizations can use in support of urgent improvements within existing interim housing and shelter programs.

That Supplement also identifies gaps in the materials that we have identified to date. If you wish to share other tools and documents to help us expand its content, or if you have strong examples of policies and procedures or other documents that your own programs use, we welcome receiving them and considering them for inclusion in any future editions of these documents.

You can send your thoughts, feedback, suggestions, and other tools and materials to matthewdoherty.consulting@gmail.com



THE FRAMEWORK
FOR AN EQUITABLE
HOMELESSNESS
RESPONSE

#HousingEquity