Framework Project Partners
Launch Next Phase of Work to Support a More Equitable Homelessness Response

An unprecedented partnership of national organizations and experts is launching a new phase of work to support communities to implement equitable homelessness response systems. The intentions for all of our efforts: reducing homelessness and increasing racial equity and housing justice.

The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response project was launched in spring of 2020 to support communities to address both the public health and economic crises created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the inequitable impacts on people experiencing homelessness, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities, and people with disabilities and/or underlying health conditions.

From its inception, the Framework project has been focused on supporting communities to effectively respond to the pandemic and implement stronger homelessness response systems to prevent and end homelessness, with a relentless focus on pursuing equity and justice throughout. As communities scrambled to respond to an unprecedented crisis, the Framework project provided tools and comprehensive guidance to help communities make equity-based decisions and strategically use unprecedented federal investments.

Now renamed the Framework for an Equitable Homelessness Response project this collaborative effort is moving forward with an even more expansive array of partners committed to working together. The project partners will work with communities, who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic, to help generate even greater momentum toward building more equitable systems.

In 2023 and 2024, Framework project partners will focus on the Framework's five Action Areas, driven by a shared vision of a future in which equitable homelessness response systems are being implemented in every community and our country is advancing toward housing justice. *See next page for details regarding the work partners will be implementing.*

**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 • National Low Income Housing Coalition •

• National Coalition for the Homeless • National Homelessness Law Center •

• Urban Institute • Housing Narrative Lab • Housing Justice Collective •

• Barbara Poppe and associates • Matthew Doherty Consulting •

*Supported by funding from the Melville Charitable Trust
and the in-kind efforts of all involved organizations*

Our Vision for the Future and Planned Work

Action Area A: **Ending Unsheltered Homelessness** Build homelessness response systems that can immediately end experiences of unsheltered homelessness through housing and public health focused strategies.	Project partners will: engage national partners and federal agencies to identify strongest practices and disseminate key messages and guidance; educate stakeholders on emerging threats; create a toolkit of legislative alternatives to punitive and counterproductive legislation currently being advanced in many areas; provide support and technical assistance to local stakeholders regarding criminalizing bills; and seek additional funding to support local advocacy efforts that oppose criminalization and advance alternatives; and create case examples and other products highlighting promising practices.
Action Area B: **Sheltering People** Reimagine and transform our approaches to sheltering people through stronger models that are safe, welcoming, and affirming and that can truly support people to end their homelessness.	Project partners will promote the Reimagining Interim Housing resources issued in late 2022, which provide guidance on how communities can pursue a comprehensive transformation of their approaches to sheltering people and strengthen critical elements of existing programs. Partners will also facilitate a series of roundtable discussions to foster peer-learning, create momentum behind such transformation efforts, and strengthen guidance and create additional resources. In 2024, partners will work with one or two communities to directly support transformation efforts.
Action Area C: **Expanding Housing Options** Encourage the scale and range of permanent housing options and essential services needed, so that everyone has the housing, supports, and opportunities to thrive and achieve their goals.	Project partners will be seeking additional funding to convene national and local leaders to identify trends, successes, and challenges communities have faced when pairing health care and other supportive services with rental assistance, and publish case examples, guides, and materials highlighting promising strategies. This work includes assessing how Continuums of Care and Public Housing Agencies are using Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) to serve people experiencing and at risk of homelessness, and how access to services has affected who is being served by EVHs.
Action Area D: **Advancing Diversion and Prevention** Ensure that our homelessness response systems can respond to every housing crisis with diversion and prevention assistance so that people do not fall into homelessness, while also working across systems to prevent housing crises and eliminate risks of homelessness.	Project partners will dedicate in-kind resources to: update the Emergency Rental Assistance Priority Index to support communities to use data to implement and target prevention and housing assistance resources to ensure people do not fall into homelessness; and promote the need for a permanent federal Emergency Rental Assistance program to provide emergency, short-term assistance to help stabilize households in crisis, building upon lessons learned and the infrastructure developed during the pandemic.
Action Area E: **Strengthening Systems for the Future** Continuously improve crisis response and rehousing operations, leading with racial equity and housing justice, featuring effective partnerships across systems to meet the scale of needs, and with the resilience to respond to future public health crises.	Project partners will elevate findings, challenges, and learnings from efforts to integrate equity values within homelessness response systems leadership and accountability structures. This includes continuing to produce the Alchemy of Housing Justice podcast, featuring conversations about lived expertise of homelessness and housing instability within the arc of system transformation and housing justice. Project partners will also dive deeply into strategies that address the stark racial disparities in maternal and child health outcomes among people experiencing homelessness who are pregnant or have infants, particularly among Black women.

Values and Principles for Our Shared Work

In this next phase of work, Framework project partners will collaborate on activities in alignment with a shared set of values and principles, and we encourage communities to center these values and principles within their own efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

1. **Advance racial justice and equity:** Racial justice is necessary for achieving housing justice, which requires: combatting racism, discrimination, and inequities in housing, homelessness, and policing; reversing the over representation of people of color, especially Black and Indigenous people, among people who are unhoused; and ensuring that funding decisions, strategies, and programs are informed by the leadership and expertise of the most impacted communities and people with lived experiences of homelessness.

2. **Directly address barriers to housing:** Address inequities to accessing housing for people who are experiencing homelessness by tailoring strategies to meet the needs of people who are harmed by systemic racism, discrimination, inaccessible housing, lack of community support services, and other injustices.

3. **Support people to secure and sustain housing:** Seize every opportunity provided by homelessness, housing, health, and services funding and systems to implement person-centered, Housing First approaches that connect people to the permanent housing options and services they want and need to succeed and thrive.

4. **Act and invest with both urgency and purpose:** Strike a balance between speed and impact, understanding that both are critically important. Mobilize financial resources quickly to address people's urgent housing, health, and service needs. Strive to have the greatest impact possible by implementing best practices, partnerships, and a sustained focus on housing justice. Help make the case for reaching the scale of investments necessary for lasting solutions.

5. **Center the rights and expertise of people experiencing homelessness:** Engage and support the leadership of people with lived expertise, and strengthen partnerships so that efforts reach, serve, and empower historically marginalized communities and populations. Stop implementing policies and practices that punish, criminalize, dehumanize, and/or further traumatize people experiencing homelessness.

Prior Work, Tools, and Resources

When launched in 2020, the Framework project first focused on providing information and materials that could help communities respond to the inequitable threats and challenges created by the COVID -19 pandemic. The project then emphasized guidance for using the new range and scale of federal funds, including CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act funding, to meet public health goals, decrease homelessness and increase housing stability, prevent future increases in homelessness, and drive progress toward racial and housing justice.

The **foundational Framework document** and many other resources developed by project partners since 2020 remain available at the project's website. Some of these materials are deeply grounded in the context of the pandemic and/or focus on specific federal funding sources, others provide guidance on strengthening homelessness response systems more generally – and they all can still help communities think, act, and advocate strategically in support of more effective and equitable efforts to prevent and end homelessness. Examples of these materials are provided on the next page.

Over the course of 2023 and 2024, Framework project partners will continue to develop tools and materials that can strengthen communities' efforts to design and implement homelessness response systems that will drive progress toward racial equity and housing justice.

Please check https://housingequityframework.org/
for all current and future tools and materials.

The Framework project's tools, materials, guidance, and videos created to date are available at https://housingequityframework.org/ and are organized across the following topic areas.

Using Federal Relief Funds, featuring:

- The **Emergency Rental Assistance Priority Index**, developed by Urban Institute researchers to help local leaders prioritize the most highly-impacted neighborhoods and the most vulnerable renters.

- **Having the Greatest Impact on Homelessness and Racial Inequities with Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Resources**, providing guidance on program design and other decisions central to realizing racial justice, and reaching the most highly-impacted communities, within homelessness prevention opportunities.

- And other tools, materials, and videos regarding the most strategic uses of various federal funding sources, providing guidance that can be applied to many other sources of funding.

Equity-Based Decision Making, featuring:

- The **Equity Based Decision Making Framework**, which can help communities ensure that as they respond to challenges and opportunities, their systems, processes, and policies proactively eliminate racial inequalities and advance equity, including within Policy Decisions and Strategy; Business Operations; and Hiring Operations.

- **Equity-Based Decision Making Assessments**, providing assessment tools and tailored recommendations to help strengthen equity-based decision making, especially for homelessness response system administrators and partners who have influence in policy and program design, operations, budgeting, technical assistance provision, contracting practices, and human resources processes.

- And other tools, materials, and videos that can support communities to lead with a focus on racial equity and justice throughout their responses to homelessness.

System and Program Design, featuring:

- **Reimagining Interim Housing: Transforming our Approaches to Sheltering People**, providing recommended approaches to transformation across three Stages and six Action Areas, with a sustained and leading focus throughout on racial justice and equity and on seeking and following the guidance of people with lived expertise and people in direct service roles.

- **Immediate and Flexible Crisis Options for Children and Families**, which describes models for immediate and flexible crisis options paired with strong housing exits that can be replicated, adapted, and scaled up or down as needs and/or scale of resources change in each community, with the goal that no child sleeps outside.

- **Out of the Pandemic, A Better Approach to Homelessness**, which explores how homelessness services were transformed in two communities during the pandemic to keep people safe and how lessons learned can inform homelessness response and prevention efforts post pandemic, and specifically focuses on strategies to advance racial equity, and examines the different challenges facing providers in both urban and rural geographies.

- **Expanding Options for Health Care Within Homelessness Services: CoC Partnerships with Medical Respite Care Programs**, which seeks to improve health care quality and outcomes by strengthening partnerships between homelessness response systems and medical respite care (MRC) providers, features the views of CoCs and MRC staff on how to best integrate operations at the systemic level, and spotlights efforts in Yakima, Washington.

- **Strengthening Partnerships for Better Health Outcomes During COVID-19**, which can help improve health care quality and outcomes for people experiencing homelessness by strengthening partnerships between homelessness assistance systems and health care providers, highlighting partnerships in Atlanta, Chicago, and Connecticut.

- And other tools, materials, and videos that can help strengthen system and program design with a focus on equity and justice.

Webinars and Podcasts, featuring:

- **Webinars** focused on the strategic uses of federal funding, implementing an equitable prevention and rehousing continuum, housing navigation and landlord engagement, flexible crisis options for families and children, and partnering with people with lived expertise to design and implement homelessness response systems.

- The **Alchemy of Housing Justice podcast series** exploring topics focused on lived expertise of homelessness and housing instability within system transformation and housing justice.