

The Anatomy of an Initiative: How to Operationalize Reducing Homelessness

Presented by:
Emily Kenney, LCSW
Erika Olson, APSW
July 2024

Check In

Where are we from? What roles do we play?

Let's Start With Data

- ▶ During the COVID-19 pandemic the nation saw a dip and then steady return to pre-covid homeless levels
- ▶ Milwaukee, WI for families saw the dip, but a slower rise in unsheltered following

What was different in Milwaukee?

- Strong and diverse partnerships
- Funder buy-in (beyond CoC)
- Political will
- Framework and Systems Thinking



Why break it down
like this? Why not
focus on all
homelessness?



Why An Initiative

- ➔ More manageable
- ➔ Comparing distinct data sets
- ➔ Buy in is easier with specific populations
 - ➔ Partners may be different for each population
- ➔ Can focus interventions
 - ➔ Core pieces stay the same!! Housing First, Rapid Rehousing, Client-Centered Best Practices
 - ➔ Specific design may differ: CE Prioritization, Use of and design of Joint Component, Outreach and Service best practices

Choosing an Initiative

Data- what each data set shows

- ➔ System Performance Measures
- ➔ PIT/HIC
- ➔ New Dashboards
- ➔ Data integrations

Job and income
growth for
homeless
persons

Decrease in
number of
homeless
persons

Increase in
successful
placement in
permanent
housing

Decrease in
returns to
homelessness

Increase in
Homeless
prevention and
placement

Decrease in
length of
homeless
episode

Decrease in
number of
persons
homeless for
the first time

With a partner....

1. How does data inform your day to day activities?
2. Who has a seat at the table looking at data- are line staff there?
3. How does your community define success in reducing homelessness?

Components of homeless initiatives in Milwaukee, WI

Inter-agency case
conferencing

Regular Macro
meetings

CoC reporting and
feedback

Lived experience
representation

Alignment and
space for discussion
on best practices

Data and reporting

Alignment on goals

Spotlight on Lived Expertise

- We involved people with lived expertise on our advisory groups, our CoC Board, and throughout our initiatives.
- We recognize we can do better, and are working to integrate voices of lived expertise into all levels of this work.

Anatomy of an Initiative

The background of the slide features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the slide, creating a modern, dynamic visual effect.

Macro Mezzo Micro

- ➔ None can exist without the other two
- ➔ Incredibly inter-dependent
- ➔ Division in social work practice

We realized that the disconnection between these three was the reason our efforts to end homelessness weren't moving forward!



Macro

- CoC wide projects, Statewide initiatives, how all the things we have learned contribute to our broader initiatives
- Often the group charged with reducing homelessness: CoC boards, government groups, etc.
- “The Brain,” which makes overall decisions about priorities.
- Needs feedback from the rest of the body AND the environment.

Generating partnerships at the macro - no one organization can do this alone!

What other systems do you need to align in order to have success?

What community initiatives are happening that might benefit your goals?

MUST be more than your CoC board.

- ↵ Local government
- ↵ Schools
- ↵ Health systems
- ↵ ADRCs
- ↵ BIDs

Mezzo

Agency policies, procedures, practices

This is the group who might feel that they are responding to the funders (and maybe not able to be super innovative themselves): Agency Leaders.

The “Nerves”: the group that implements that decision from the brain *and also* gives feedback to the brain for decision-making.

Need to be involved in goal-setting, working together toward shared goals, data review, implementations and adjustments.

Generating partnerships at the mezzo - no one organization can do this alone!

- ➔ Regular agency meetings to review data, share best practices, etc.
 - ➔ At first monthly, then perhaps quarterly
 - ➔ Doesn't have to be just CoC members! Invite agencies in partner systems as well.
- ➔ Get closer through the work - having something to chew on promotes natural connections
- ➔ Group applications for grants/advocacy beyond CoC work
- ➔ Eliminate unnecessary meetings - be clear on purpose (have snacks 😊)

Micro

- Alignment on best practices for the specific sub-population
- These are the folks carrying out the work/impacted directly by the work: case managers, street outreach workers, service providers.
- The “Blood,” running throughout and giving life to everything. Needs rejuvenation and rejuvenates the body. There must be a regular feedback loop.
- Ensure involvement in decision-making! Empower to carry out the work and give feedback on how it’s going. Involve in looking at the data to encourage that feedback.

Generating partnerships at the micro - no one organization can do this alone!

- Case management cohorts/peer sharing
- Connecting at or after a staffing
- Seeking clinical or group supervision from a different organization
- Training and coaching on unfamiliar best practices

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the frame, creating a modern, dynamic feel. The central area is a plain, light grayish-white, providing a clear space for the text.

Space for questions

Initiative case studies

Chronic Initiative - where we fell short

Level of Intervention	Action	Initiative Component
Macro	Regular macro meetings with decision-makers	Regular macro meetings
Macro	Peer collective representation on CoC board	Lived experience/CoC reporting and feedback
Macro	Reporting on trends to CoC board	Data and reporting
Mezzo	Case conferencing	Regular case conferencing
Micro	Housing First & chronic preference in CE implementation	Alignment on best practices
Mezzo/Micro	Group supervision and emergency staffings	Alignment on goals/best practice discussions

Category 4 Initiative- headed in the right direction

Level of Intervention	Action	Initiative Component
Macro	Regular macro meetings with decision makers	Regular macro meetings
Macro	Peer Collective, representation on CoC board	Lived experience/CoC reporting and feedback
Mezzo	Case conferencing	Regular case conferencing
Mezzo/Micro	Regular implementation meetings	Alignment on goals/best practice discussions
Micro	Alignment and discussion on best	Annual fall summit; Annual housing first fidelity roundtable, policies and procedures discussion
Macro	Data and reporting	HMIS dashboard, qualitative interviewing
Macro	Alignment on goals	USICH metrics and regular changes to the plan - came up with action steps together
Micro	Best Practice implementation	CE implementation, Housing First implementation

Family Initiative - where we succeeded

- Started 2019 as an operationalization of CE for families

Level of Intervention	Action	Initiative Component
Mezzo	Family staffing twice monthly	Inter-agency case conferencing
Macro	Started as monthly full meetings, switched to quarterly for monitoring progress	Regular macro meetings
Macro	Monthly updates, annual full presentations on how the initiative was doing	CoC reporting and feedback
All levels	Qualitative interviewing with families throughout program implementation	Lived experience representation
Mezzo	Annual fall summit; Annual housing first fidelity roundtable, policies and procedures discussion	Alignment and discussion on best practices
Macro	HMIS dashboard, qualitative interviewing	Data and reporting
Macro	USICH metrics and regular changes to the plan - came up with action steps together	Alignment on goals
Micro	CE implementation, Housing First implementation	Best Practice implementation

Readiness Matrix

Important/Not ready <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth• Chronic• It is important to the CoC, but there is not sufficient buy in	Important/Ready <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Families• Category 4• It is important to the CoC, and you have buy in and partnerships
Not Important/Not ready <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Veterans• There are not forces driving its importance, and there is not buy in	Not Important/Ready <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Healthcare• There are not forces driving its importance, but partners are willing and ready

With a partner...

- ↪ Think about the different components for the different sub-populations
- ↪ Which sub-population might be ready for an initiative?

Discussion

- Thinking about homelessness for a specific sub-population, what are micro components of an initiative that might already be in place in your community?
- What information can you gather from the micro? Types of housing individuals are interested in? Length of time to housing?
- Where do you already interact with the mezzo in your role?
- Who is missing from your Macro table? (The Brain)