

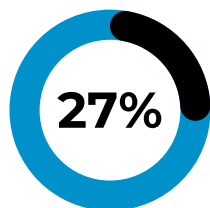
THE FIELD MUST MAKE MORE ROOM FOR MORE LIVED EXPERIENCE LEADERS

ERIC RICHERT | COMMUNITY LEADER WITHOUT LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

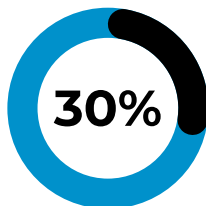
Workers with lived expertise of homelessness (PWLE) are significantly underrepresented in positions of authority and decision making. This is despite the fact that, according to the LEARN Project Survey, most of these workers are employed full-time (**81 percent**) and are devoting their careers to the homeless response system.

This underrepresentation also occurs despite the positive impact that PWLE have in their communities. As Daniel L. points out in his essay, “Packing a Powerful Punch” most leaders slightly, mostly, or strongly agree that PWLE make a significant impact on their community’s work to end homelessness, including by directly preventing homelessness and rehousing people.

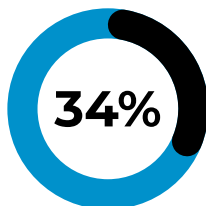
TOO FEW ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENT PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE IN THEIR LEADERSHIP



of CoC and organization leaders say people who have experienced homelessness are on senior leadership teams



of CoC and organization leaders say people who have experienced homelessness participate in funding activities

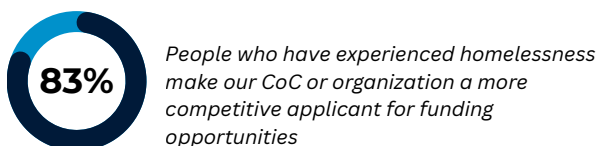
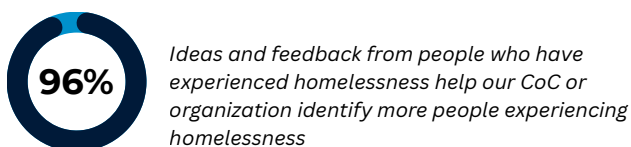
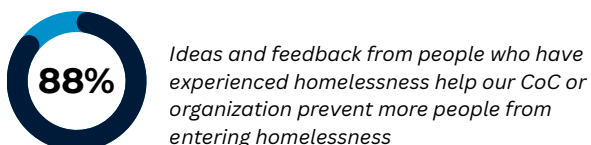
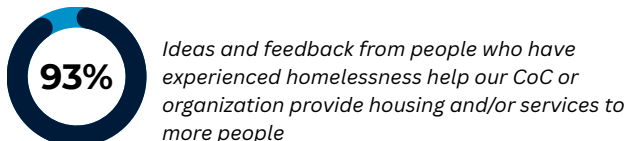


of CoC and organization leaders say people who have experienced homelessness supervise or manage projects

Despite what they bring to the table, most workers with lived experience of homelessness who took the LEARN Survey say they work in roles that typically do not make decisions about how resources are utilized in the homeless response system. While all organizations could benefit from including PWLE in their leadership, less than a third of leaders said their organizations do so.

WHAT **IMPACTS** ARE LIVED EXPERTS HAVING ON ENDING HOMELESSNESS?

According to System and Organization Leaders who
Responded to the LEARN Project Survey



Employing PWLE is a great first step toward inclusion. Street outreach and case management are critically important positions in the response system. However, they also tend to be underpaid and less involved in strategic decision-making. PWLE should have access to direct service roles. But they should also have access to leadership positions. When PWLE are working in the homeless response system, leaders agree that they contribute to funding applications, help to prevent homelessness, and help to connect more people with services.

The LEARN surveys point toward opportunities to improve pathways to leadership roles for PWLE. **For example, 40 percent of PWLE report that they wish their organization would start offering professional development opportunities so they could advance within their organization.** Communities should consider establishing models that support the development of PWLE to enter leadership positions. This would build on the positive impact PWLE are already having on ending homelessness. While this approach offers one opportunity, communities should think about and try to implement others.