

Checklist of Considerations for Projects

Projects are the front door of the homeless response system in every community. Staff carry out the community's plan to care for people in crisis. Clients and residents depend on these services to help them stay stable and safe.

When funding becomes uncertain, projects cannot fully protect themselves from sudden cuts. Even the risk of losing funds has already caused programs across the United States to close.

Avoiding the impact of system level shocks is not possible; planning can limit harm and confusion.

This document focuses on service providers at the project level. As community leaders make funding and policy decisions, each project should prepare for possible changes. Clear communication with residents, clients, staff, and partners is critical. This list is a starting point. Not every item will apply to every project.

1. Planning for Instability

When funding becomes unstable, the first step is to notice the risk. Once you notice the risk, you must understand how soon changes could happen.

◆ Signs your project may be disrupted or closed:

- You and your leaders have spoken clearly across with partners, local leaders, and funders about possible budget cuts, and no meaningful new source of funds has been found.
- Your project depends on various partners to deliver and sustain stability. If your project provides the housing subsidy, it may be a partner agency that provides case management. Homeless response systems have developed interdependent approaches to service delivery. If a key partner closes or stops providing services, your project may not be able to continue.
- Existing fund sources have altered the intent of the funds so drastically as to require disenrolling existing clients and implementing incompatible requirements.
- You cannot cover basic costs, such as office rent, and there is no way to close the gap
- Project has less than 6 months of funding remaining.



- ◆ **If your project can continue with changes, decide what work is most important and what can pause. Ask:**
 - What is the most meaningful, impactful, service that your project offers? Have you asked your clients what is most meaningful to them?
 - Can another agency provide services that are not core to your mission?
 - Have you talked with partners about how to keep the most important parts of the system running?
 - Have you met with others in your agency to find creative ways to keep key services going?

- ◆ **You may decide to pause new enrollments to protect your budget. Meet with finance staff before making this choice. Meeting with finance and budget experts will help inform that decision. Questions to consider include:**
 - Can resources be reorganized to serve more people?
 - Are existing financial obligations only enough to meet the commitments made to existing clients?
 - Would reducing new enrollments trigger any repayment obligations?
 - Can your agency share administrative cost and space with another agency to save on expenses?

2. Logistics/Tactics

Every project and community is different. Still, the ideas below may help you prepare for change.

- ◆ **Has your agency considered ways to reduce services to conserve resources?**
 - Shorten daily service hours
 - Close on certain days of the week (Tuesday/Thursday)
 - Target services to a smaller geographic area
 - Limit new enrollments, either on a nightly basis or pause all new enrollments

- ◆ **Have you considered using volunteers in new ways?**
 - Local colleges and faith communities are good resources for new volunteers
 - Define clear volunteer roles, tasks, and training needs
 - Create or identify locally developed and state supported training tools that meet project needs (for example does your state department of public health train volunteers and can you tap into both the training and the volunteer base?)



- Consider parallel service providers, for example shelter providers may look to disaster responders' Mass Care trainings as a resource. ([Here's a link to the Massachusetts' Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council online training resource, as an example](#))
- Identify both volunteer and staff leaders
- ◆ **How will you communicate operational and programmatic changes to your staff and clients? See this [excellent resource on speaking with clients](#).**
Other activities to consider are:
 - Host trainings for staff at shift changes or at all team meetings
 - Announce changes to clients during common gathering times, such as after a meal
 - Provide written information at the front desk and other key areas
 - Post information about changes in project on bulletin boards and other communal information areas
 - Send written notices to staff and clients
- ◆ **What is your plan for moving or transferring clients in special populations (such as survivors of domestic violence or trafficking) who you can no longer serve?**
 - Speak with subject matter experts to assess health and safety risks
 - Consider special risks with survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking
 - Make sure clients have copies of key identity documents and records
 - Provide a summary document or note that may help a client to stay connected to services at a later time
 - Consider providing a generic email address for future communications from clients
 - Consider utilizing local trauma counselors to discuss the impact among staff and clients
 - Inform local and state authorities to advise them if project clients must be exited
 - Plan transportation and accommodations for people with disabilities