

Backbone Organizations 101

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Overview

Continuums of Care (CoCs) and homeless system leaders often face the challenge of coordinating across many cities, counties, regions — sometimes entire states — where data systems, partners, electeds, and strategies are not aligned. Pulling all of these key contributors and geographies together to try and function as a cohesive system can be difficult and frustrating. Learn how applying a backbone model with dedicated systems capacity is advancing success across Built for Zero communities, regions, and states by establishing a framework that enables everyone to work together toward shared goals.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Coordination has to be somebody's job, or it doesn't happen.
- A Backbone Organization needs to ensure all of the necessary functions are fulfilled but does not need to be the entity that fulfills all those functions.
- Sector leaders and models outside of homeless systems can be thought partners and examples that our sector can learn from.
- Start by identifying which key backbone functions are present or missing within your community.

Considerations for Equity

Equity is a significant component of backbone framing by:

- 1) Grounding the work in data and context, while adopting targeted solutions
- 2) Shifting power within the collaborative to center people most impacted, through inclusive facilitation and relationship building
- 3) Promoting an accountable coalition of leaders who listen, learn, and seek out diverse partnerships

