

Flex Funding 101

Facilitators: Megan Klenke-Isgriggs & Michelle Valdez

Panelists: Dena Wittmann, Gulf Coast, MS | Lindsey Earl, Adams County, CO | Grant Winter, Nashville, TN

Overview

Flex Funds can fill individual-level gaps where other resources are not available, but administrative infrastructure, data-driven strategy, and clear, flexible policies and protocols are critical to success. At this session you'll learn the "how-tos" of Flex Funding from communities who have successfully leveraged them to drive community-level outcomes. We'll be previewing the BFZ Flex Fund Guide intended for communities who have received, are applying for, or trying to strategically implement Flex Funds.

Additional Details

From identification to housing placement, the average cost for an unhoused household to be permanently housed can be upwards of \$20K per household. Even with extensive benefits, vouchers, and income, most individuals are not able to cover that entire cost to become housed. Flexible Funds are unrestricted dollars communities can utilize to address individuals' unique barriers to housing and effectively promote stability and prevent individuals from becoming or remaining homeless.

Since 2018, Community Solutions has served as an intermediary funder — receiving funding from private philanthropy to provide targeted grants to communities in the Built for Zero (BFZ) network for the purpose of contributing to ending homelessness. Providing flexible funding to communities showed emerging promise early on, and with the MacArthur Foundation's *100&Change* Award in 2021, Community Solutions scaled up our Flex Fund program.

Now with more than 50 communities receiving flexible funding from Community Solutions, and more receiving Flex Funds from other sources, communities have learned valuable lessons, created efficient, equity-centered processes and protocols, and utilized Flex Funds to achieve their BFZ goals. In conjunction with this session, BFZ is releasing a Flex Fund Guide — composite wisdom and learning from BFZ communities on planning, implementing and sustaining Flexible Funding — to share with the BFZ network and beyond.

This session will provide an overview of the Flex Fund implementation stages from planning to sustaining funding. A panel of community leaders with extensive experience

implementing Flex Funds in their communities will share their approach to each stage, including their successes and challenges, and considerations for equity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- At the core of our Flexible Funding strategy is the ability to be flexible, adaptable, creative, and collaborative with unrestricted dollars to strategically target individuals' unique barriers to becoming and remaining housed.
- Focused Flex Fund strategies aligned with specific outcomes and community needs have shown promise for driving population-level impact.
- Whether considering, implementing or trying to sustain Flexible Funding, communities can access the BFZ Flex Fund Guide for more information and direction on each stage of the process.

This session will include strategies for:

- Creating a collaborative and inclusive process as you plan for Flexible Funding in your community.
- Using data to identify where Flex Funds are needed/can be most effective.
- Setting population-level impact goals for Flex Funding.
- Establishing efficient and equitable Flex Fund processes and protocols.
- Tracking Flex Fund outcomes for ongoing improvement and adaptation.
- Telling communities' Flex Fund stories to enhance visibility and increase potential future Flex Funding.

Considerations for Equity

It's critical that communities take equity into consideration at each stage of Flex Fund planning, decision-making, implementation, and data collection, including but not limited to:

- Including people with lived experience in the Flex Fund design process and funding parameter/approval decisions.
- Understanding the demographic distribution of flexible funding by race, gender, and other key demographic groups compared to the community's overall unhoused population.

FURTHER LEARNING

