

Catalytic Case for Investments:

Supporting PLEH Engagement & Infrastructure

Summary + Rationale

Communities that have meaningfully engaged people with lived experience of homelessness (PLEH) create an environment where people with lived experience of homelessness are able to share their truth about what is working and what is not working in the system, without fear of retaliation. **Through this meaningful engagement of people with lived experience of homelessness, a community develops and sustains interventions to end homelessness.** Meaningful engagement with persons who have experienced homelessness is essential for developing effective policies, programs, and services to address the complex issues they face. Including PLEH matters because:

- They are powerful advocates for change
- PLEH know what's broken and have the knowledge to solve the issues
- Partnering with PLEH is essential to addressing systemic racial inequities within system

Guiding Practices*

To ensure respectful practices and an inclusive infrastructure to support PLEH engagement, investment applicants should consider the following best practices in their approach to supporting PLEH:

- **Building Trust & Relationship:** In order to do this work, it is critical to spend deliberate time getting to know PLEH advisors, cultivating trust on multiple levels, including between staff and the advisors, and between the advisors as a group.
- **Respecting & Honoring their Stories:** It is critical to make time and space for advisors to share their story.
- **Trauma and Healing Informed Approach:** Engaging PLEH in advisory and decision-making requires leading with empathy and a trauma-informed lens.
- **Leaning into Discomfort:** What is asked of PLEH advisors may feel intrusive leading to discomfort in conversations. Realities may surface that the work is not progressing as hoped. All decision-makers should be prepared for and open to these moments in order to improve the system and advance the partnership to drive outcomes.
- **Balancing Paternalism and Adequate Support:** Individuals impacted by homelessness may not be asked to or able to participate because of the time and resources it requires. In order to meet people where they are, continually check intentions to ensure support is adequate and not paternalistic.
PLEH must be equitably compensated: Equitable compensation is critical partnership. This is one means of honoring the value of an advisor's expertise and advancing equity.

**Co-developed with BFZ Housing Equity Strategists, TSTJ LLC and based off guidance from USICH and HUD*

PLEH Engagement & Infrastructure: Catalytic Investment Uses

Catalytic Investments can be used to support the implementation of the above guiding practices in the following ways. While there is no guarantee of funding, cases for investment may request funding to support multiple guiding practices.

Guiding Practice	What this might look like...	Possible investment uses	What to include in the BfZ Case for Investment...
Building Trusting Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting with a small to medium group of advisors to build relationships Taking time to build relationships among advisors and between advisors and key system stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compensation for PLEH advisors time participating in on-boarding, orientation, and trust-building activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of PLEH advisors Plan for recruitment, onboarding, and trust-building with advisors Realistic timelines & hour projections for recruiting, onboarding, and building relationships with PLEH advisors
Respecting & Honoring PLEH's Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building agendas that make space and account for the time it takes for PLEH narratives Building expectations with decision-makers who are housed to listen and take time to understand and process PLEH stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hourly compensation for PLEH advisors that accounts for the time necessary to incorporate shared story-telling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for engaging housed people in preparing listening skills and expectations Realistic number of hours for meetings and listening sessions that allow for ample time to share and receive PLEH stories and perspectives
Leaning into Discomfort Through Trauma and Healing Informed Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cycling "business meetings" and debrief and learning conversations with a trauma-informed facilitator to process and improve interactions and outcomes Training and preparing PLEH advisors and housed stakeholders in trauma-informed communication practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trauma informed training costs Hourly compensation for PLEH advisors to participate in process and learning conversations (in addition to "business" meetings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for integrating trauma informed practices into the PLEH advisor's role and participation Identify trauma-informed leaders and/or those who need to be trained to lead this effort
Balancing Paternalism and Adequate Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing constraints of "business hours" & "professionalism" by considering meeting times and venues Offering professional development opportunities to advisors Sourcing needs from PLEH to address unique barriers to participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development training Resources and Support Tech equipment to ease participation for PLEH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approaches for overcoming the digital divide or education levels Plan for providing training for PLEH Anticipated resources to enable participation such as childcare, meals, transportation, locker storage, etc.
PLEH must be equitably compensated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing the PLEH advisor rate with other advisor rates in the sector/system Ensuring that all of PLEH advisors' hours are compensated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of the above considerations in the number of hours expected for successful PLEH engagement and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisor hourly rate Number of PLEH advisor hours anticipated

About Catalytic Investments

This Catalytic Investment opportunity is invitation only. If your BfZ coach or the investment contact listed at the end of this document has sent you this invitation then your community is eligible to apply. If you received this FAQ from a source other than your BfZ coach, please check with your coach before applying.

What do you mean by ‘Catalytic Investment’?

A Catalytic Investment is meant to catalyze a solution to a system-level problem that - if solved - stands to change your system and lead to better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness in your community.

What makes for a strong Case for Investment (CFI)?

Name the system condition(s) this investment is aiming to change: “Systems change is about shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place.” [ESG](#) Catalytic Investments aim to impact system conditions to solve a system-level problem; however, when the systems are the “water we swim in” it can be challenging to step back and see what conditions need to be changed for this investment to be effective. **Catalytic investments are not intended to add additional staff or resources to the existing system**, but rather to test changing one (ideally more) of the [six conditions of system change](#) - policies, practices, resource flows, relationships and connections, power dynamics and mental models - to create a lasting impact on the system.

Cases for investment should be informed by best and guiding practice: The system-level challenge your community faces is experienced by other communities, too. **The above “Guiding Considerations” are compiled from community experience across the BfZ network, our national partners, and field research. The CFI should build from these promising practices and describe the local application and testing of these approaches.** Local context and adaptation will be critical to these recommended practices being a success in a particular community.

What is the standard dollar amount and time frame for Catalytic Investments?

BFZ Catalytic investments are intended to be part of creating a long-term system solution. Because system change can take time and significant investment, BFZ funds are most impactful when accompanied by resources from committed local, national, or statewide funders. That said, the size and duration of a Catalytic Investment varies, but has typically been between \$10,000 - \$250,000 over 6 months to two years.

Are other funding commitments required?

Because of the complexity and effort involved in system-change work, it's highly recommended that communities strategically braid resources together to rally behind the effort. That said, **Communities seeking Catalytic Investments should have a resourcing and support plan for their idea that includes BFZ funding, but doesn't rely solely upon the Catalytic Investment for the success of the effort.**