

Local Policy Framework

To make homelessness rare and brief at a community level, cities and counties must establish a central coordinating entity — a “backbone” — with the authority, data, performance systems and housing resources to drive measurable, visible reductions.



THE CHALLENGE

Local efforts to address homelessness often involve a patchwork of disconnected agencies, programs, and funding streams. Without coordination, communities struggle to demonstrate measurable progress or scale proven solutions. A central coordinating entity grounded in data and outcomes, is essential for aligning efforts and creating systemic change.

CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish a central coordinating entity (backbone organization).

Cities and counties must designate, create or strengthen a backbone entity responsible for coordinating homelessness strategy across the local area. This body should have decision-making authority to set and enforce policy across agencies, control over resource alignment and performance funding, capacity to convene and manage diverse stakeholders, and institutional and political backing to drive durable change. The backbone organization does not have to fulfill all key functions for the community, but is responsible for coordinating various local actors to align and multiply existing efforts. The coordinating entity can live within local government or a community-based organization that partners closely with government partners.

Build population specific, real-time data infrastructure.

Standardizing data collection and analysis will provide actionable insights to guide policy and programs, including decisions on ways to leverage and allocate resources. To ensure data is actionable, communities should focus on building a data set that is comprehensive, person-specific and close to real-time.

Establish clear key performance indicators for population-specific reduction outcomes.

Setting and tracking community-wide performance goals and metrics will inform key decisions on strategy, programs, policies, and funding. The coordination of housing and support services will be enhanced through targeted efforts and enhanced collaboration. Incent performance by driving resources to proven reduction of homelessness models and alignment with population-level outcomes.

Broader affordable housing supply and access.

Policy makers should champion targeted deregulation and innovative land-use policies in the broader housing sector — removing unnecessary barriers, expanding housing options at all income levels, fostering new models and ensuring access to existing homes. By strengthening the housing system upstream, communities can keep more people stably housed and prevent homelessness before it begins.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION



Any local coordinating body must be **aligned with the Continuum of Care**. Otherwise, there are risks of friction, redundancy, and inefficient resource allocation. The coordinating body must have a **clearly defined mission, explicit decision-making authority, dedicated resources, and support** from key political allies.



The most impactful housing supply and land-use policies will be **specific to the local and regional context**. Policymakers should consider all leverage points available and ensure there are strategies to specifically **expand housing opportunities for extremely low-income households** reduce monthly inflow into homelessness.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Currently, local efforts to address homelessness often involve a plethora of agencies, programs, and service providers working without a coordinated framework, clearly defined goals, or ways to evaluate their effectiveness.

By creating a framework to establish (or enhance) a coordinating entity, coupled with data collection and analysis requirements, key performance indicators, and an increase in housing supply, communities can transform their local systems to make homelessness rare and brief.

