

Redirecting Federal Goals from Program Compliance to Data-Driven Population-Level Outcomes

URGENT NEED

Federal oversight of homelessness programs must move from compliance-based monitoring to an outcomes-focused framework that measures population-level reductions in homelessness and rewards proven strategies.

This shift will free up the people running the programs to do their jobs instead of proving that they are meeting abstract requirements, freeing up time and resources that can go towards reducing homelessness. Granting states and localities greater flexibility to apply approaches that work will also allow the federal government to concentrate on its core role: financing and incentivizing results that measurably reduce homelessness.

CORE RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Transition from Compliance to Measurable Outcomes

Federal oversight should prioritize achieving measurable reductions in homelessness and population-level outcomes rather than monitoring program compliance and procedural adherence. This rebalancing will simplify the process for local decision-makers, give them the flexibility to test and learn, and free up their time to focus on delivering successful outcomes.



2. Empower Local Problem-Solving and Flexibility

States and communities should have greater freedom and autonomy to test different strategies to achieve results, and learn which ones best drive population-level reductions in homelessness in their specific contexts. We must dramatically reduce restrictive federal program guidelines.



3. Establish Clear, End Goal Accountability

Federal attention should be on the creation of data infrastructure that enables productive oversight of the impact of federal investments, clearly tracking progress toward meaningful, measurable reductions in homelessness.



4. Cross-System Integration and Accountability

Federal data modernization efforts should concentrate on integrating data across homelessness, housing supply, health, and other relevant systems. Creating this robust data and tracking infrastructure is the most impactful federal role, as it enables and equips states and communities to efficiently implement and iterate on their strategy to reduce homelessness in a lasting way.



5. Broader Affordable Housing Supply and System Deregulation

Elected officials can play a key role in unlocking the strengths of local housing markets by advancing targeted reforms that enable communities to build on what already works. Streamlining outdated regulations, fostering innovative housing models, and expanding development opportunities can amplify the capacity of builders, nonprofits, and residents to create stable, affordable options. By leveraging these existing assets and strengthening the housing system upstream, communities are better positioned to keep people securely housed and prevent most instances of homelessness.

ANTICIPATING & MANAGING RISKS

1. **Avoiding the potential unintended consequences** of outcome-based accountability, such as communities losing funding due to worsening housing outcomes for reasons beyond their immediate control (e.g., natural disasters, broader economic disruptions).

2. **Encourage federal policymakers** to adopt safeguards and flexible mechanisms to support states and communities experiencing exceptional challenges in maintaining stability and continuous progress.

CONCLUSION

A strategic shift in the federal government's role in reducing homelessness is overdue. By shifting from an approach that prioritizes compliance and micromanaging processes to an approach focused on outcomes and needed flexibility, the federal government can enable states and communities to make significant progress in reducing homelessness.

At the federal level, prioritizing innovative and flexible, outcomes-focused solutions, investing in local problem-solving infrastructure, and in more productive oversight with less micromanagement can deliver dramatic reductions in homelessness. Proven to work in communities of all sizes, this strategy has already delivered measurable reductions in homelessness.

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