

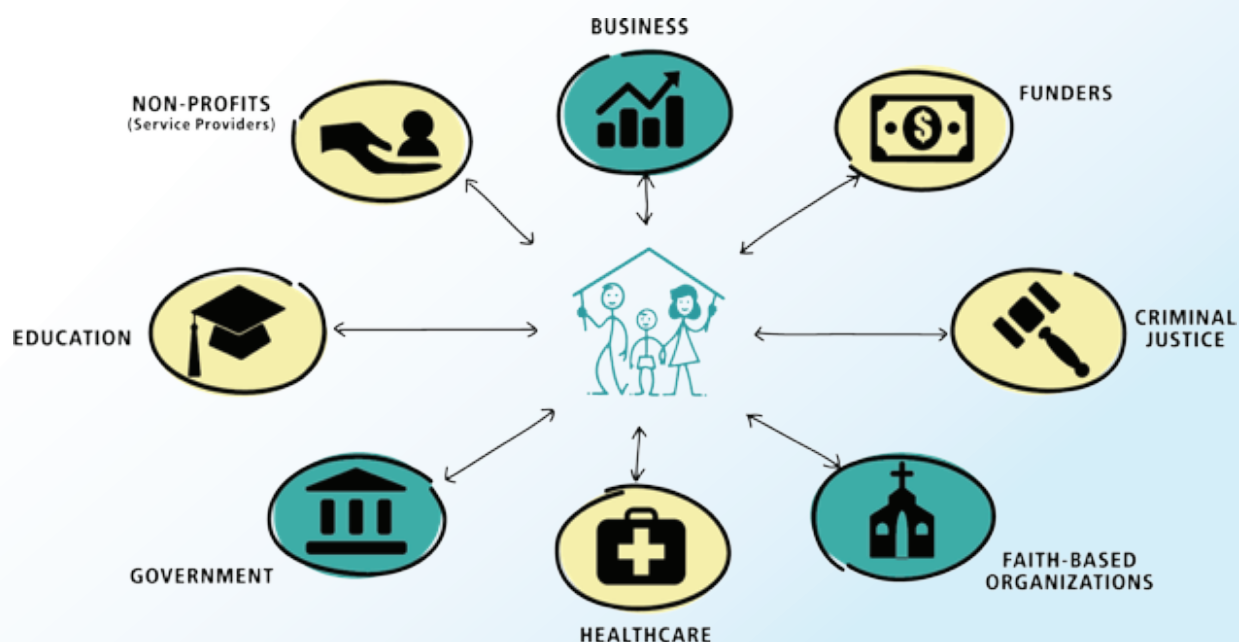
7 STEPS TO SOLVE HOMELESSNESS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

1.

ASSEMBLE A BUSINESS LEADER COUNCIL TO DRIVE YOUR INITIATIVE.

Business leaders are perfectly positioned to drive a communitywide homelessness initiative. First and foremost, business leaders are accustomed to getting results. They are interested in solving problems, and they are always focused on the bottom line and the end goal. In addition, business leaders don't have to pursue votes like elected officials and they don't have to pursue donations like nonprofit executives.

Business leaders can afford to be results-oriented. They are tremendously flexible, and they have the credibility that positions them to lead any cross-sector effort that promotes change. In order to significantly impact homelessness in your community, you need to marshal the collective wisdom, experience, and influence of your local business leaders.



2. UTILIZE DATA TO STIMULATE INTEREST AND TO HELP FORGE A CREDIBLE STRATEGY.

Numbers don't lie, so data can be one of your greatest weapons as you work to solve homelessness in your community. Data that paints a bleak picture of homelessness in your region can be utilized to stir people to action, and data that shows the true costs of a solution (versus the costs of doing nothing) can be utilized to redefine your community's priorities.

Social initiatives often fail from a lack of planning, but there can be no real planning without data. An accurate grasp of the scope of your problem and an accurate understanding of the resources at your disposal can be indispensable to any credible effort to confront homelessness.

3. HOST AN INSPIRATIONAL LAUNCH EVENT TO GIVE BIRTH TO A CUTTING-EDGE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN.

To solve homelessness, you must change beliefs and you must create momentum. A launch event for the most powerful and influential people in your community, if properly executed, can give rise to a dynamic movement for change that cannot be quelled in your community.

Meanwhile, a multifaceted awareness campaign that utilizes traditional media, social media, and the endorsements of key influencers in your region is the best way to confront common misconceptions about the homeless while explaining the proven methodologies for controlling this social blight.

4.

RALLY THE FAITH COMMUNITY AND OTHER ADVOCATES TO JOIN THE MOVEMENT.

Every sector of your community is affected by homelessness, so every sector of your community must be involved in forging a strategy to confront it. Business leaders are best positioned to lead the way and to guide your local initiative through its formative stages. But for your initiative to succeed in the long run, you will have to involve faith leaders, service providers, elected officials, and other dominant figures in your city who have a strong influence over certain segments of the population and the local economy.

Business leaders are interested in results and accountability, faith leaders are interested in the moral issues surrounding homelessness, and elected officials have the power to redirect public spending and public policy. The most powerful leaders from every sector of your community need a seat at the table as you work together to find a lasting solution to homelessness.

5.

BUILD MOMENTUM BY HOUSING THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE FIRST.

In order to succeed in the long run, you need to focus your initial efforts on veterans and the chronically homeless. The “chronically homeless,” according to the federal government, are those who have been homeless for 1 year or more or have been homeless four times in a 3-year period because they have a disabling mental or physical condition.

Veterans and the chronically homeless are the most visible and most vulnerable members of the homeless population, so housing those who have no hope of lifting themselves off the streets will give integrity to your cause while helping you unify your community around a heightened expectation of further successes in the months to come.

6. CREATE A LONG-TERM COLLECTIVE STRUCTURE THAT CAN PROVIDE SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE WORK.

Homelessness is a lot like transportation, water management or any of the other ongoing functions of a community, because this challenge requires continual attention. Homelessness cannot be quickly solved and then forgotten. It must be addressed regularly and repeatedly by people who stay on top of the community's needs and are accountable for their spending and the results that they produce.

Those communities that have successfully solved problems related to homelessness are communities that have created permanent governing structures that continue to use cross-sector approaches to homelessness in order to secure their hard-earned gains and to build upon the successes they have achieved.

7. CREATE A PHILANTHROPIC FUND TO HELP FINANCE THE WORK BY LEVERAGING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DOLLARS.

Because homelessness requires a continual communitywide effort, you will need continual and reliable funding to do the work. And those communities that have achieved this goal most prolifically are the communities that have created a special homelessness fund that is replenished annually by an alliance of philanthropists and foundations that are committed to long-term results.

But a centralized fund can impact a local homelessness initiative in more ways than one. Besides providing you with desperately needed resources to house the homeless, a fund of this type can stimulate additional public funding for the homeless and additional private donations for the continuation of your work.

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