PATHWAYS FORWARD:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEDERAL ACTION TO INCREASE ECONOMIC MOBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS OR HOUSING INSTABILITY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Heartland Alliance would like to extend its deep appreciation to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and Funders Together to End Homelessness (FTEH) for their partnership in developing the October 2017 Preventing & Ending Homelessness through Employment: Lessons Learned & Pathways Forward summit in Washington, D.C.

Many thanks to the Melville Charitable Trust and the Oak Foundation for their generous support of our work to expand and strengthen the national conversation and action agenda focused on the import of income, employment, and economic mobility in the fight to prevent and end homelessness and specifically the Pathways Forward convening.

Finally, we are forever grateful to the Connections Project communities and their leaders who have pioneered systems collaboration efforts in partnership with us in order to support pathways to income, employment, and economic mobility for a greater number of individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability nationwide. We are indebted to their participation in the event and willingness to share their learnings to help advance national progress and accelerate federal, state, and local action. The communities and leaders who participated in the Pathways Forward event are:

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**Chicago, IL | Destination Jobs**
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"WE NEED CONSUMER VOICE TO CREATE SYSTEMS THAT ENSURE PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY FOR ALL."

SHEILA SEBRON, HOMELESS NETWORK, SEATTLE, WA
Heartland Alliance, in partnership with Funders Together to End Homelessness, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and with the support of Melville Charitable Trust and the Oak Foundation, convened over 60 stakeholders in October 2017 for the Preparing & Ending Homelessness through Employment: Lessons Learned & Pathways Forward summit in Washington, D.C. The event brought together and galvanized a cross-section of experts including individuals with lived experience of homelessness, community-based organizations, government partners, philanthropy, national workforce, homelessness, and anti-poverty policy experts, and researchers to consider the lessons learned, challenges, and successes in supporting pathways to employment and economic mobility for individuals who have experienced homelessness or housing instability. In particular, lessons were drawn from Heartland Alliance’s efforts to seed, incubate, and spread public systems collaboration efforts through the Connections Project, which is focused on increasing employment and economic mobility for individuals who have experienced homelessness or housing instability.

One of the primary goals of the event was to identify action steps that could support pathways to employment and economic mobility for a greater number of individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Intended to drive action at the federal level, Heartland Alliance has developed this brief, which puts forward a series of recommendations for federal agencies to take action. Informed by convening participants, the recommendations highlight the role of federal agencies, as well as partners from the public and private sector to support implementation of key activities. Providing additional context for the recommendations, this brief outlines significant challenges facing communities in supporting pathways to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

Heartland Alliance has developed the following four-pronged strategic framework for the recommendations and their intended outcomes. This framework highlights actions federal agencies can take to:

1. Address data or knowledge gaps to support communities in accessing and being able to use the information necessary to identify the scope and scale of employment-related needs for individuals experiencing homelessness; effectively and efficiently connect individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability to resources; identify, develop, and scale promising practices; and more equitably design system responses.

2. Support new or continued pilot or demonstration efforts to spur action and innovation in the field aimed at improving employment-related services and supports for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

3. Support community, provider, or system capacity building to increase access to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

4. Clarify policies or provide guidance to the field to more efficiently leverage resources and supports to strengthen pathways to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

Supporting the employment and economic mobility interests and needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability requires the commitment of a myriad of stakeholders. Recognizing this, participants at the convening also identified the need to equip other key stakeholder groups with recommendations for action in the future. To that end, Heartland Alliance, alongside partners, may release subsequent briefs and resources that offer action steps for various stakeholder groups. A summary of the additional action strategies identified at the convening can be found in the conclusion of this brief.
1. **Lift up and translate** what we have collectively learned—our efforts, challenges, and successes—working to elevate employment and quality jobs in the fight to prevent and end homelessness through systems collaboration and innovation at local levels.

2. Generate **actionable recommendations** that can be advanced now among a cross-section of people and perspectives including community-based partners and providers, individuals impacted by homelessness, government partners from across federal agencies, philanthropy, researchers, and national policy and advocacy groups, networks, and coalitions.

3. Identify a **range of bold policy, research, and systems solutions and innovation** for the future among a cross-section of people and perspectives including community-based partners and providers, persons with lived experience, government partners from across federal agencies, philanthropy, researchers, and national policy and advocacy groups, networks, and coalitions.

4. **Spark action** among a cross-section of stakeholders to make progress on ensuring that every homeless jobseeker who wants to work has access to employment and quality jobs and that access to economic opportunity prevents homelessness and supports pathways out of homelessness.
An extensive body of evidence links housing and income stability together. Many individuals experiencing homelessness identify unemployment as a primary cause of their homelessness.¹ Numerous studies find that increased income is a strong predictor of a person exiting homelessness.² Income improves access to food, clothing, housing, and healthcare - increasing personal, family, and community wellbeing.³ Eviction and displacement from housing can lead to job loss and has the potential to trigger a host of negative consequences that can make it more difficult for individuals and families to be successful in work, therefore perpetuating their housing and employment instability.⁴ Research on the propensity of youth homelessness indicates young people with lower household income are more likely to experience homelessness and a lack of a GED is a significant risk factor among youth.⁵ Research tells us that individuals experiencing homelessness consistently rank paid employment alongside healthcare and housing as a primary need.⁶ When parents of families experiencing homelessness are asked to name one thing that would most help get their family back on its feet, the most common answer is employment.⁷

Most people experiencing homelessness or housing instability want to work or may be working already but are not earning enough to make ends meet or keep a stable roof over their heads. Indeed, as many as 44 percent of people who experience homelessness earn some income through work.⁸ Many individuals who are experiencing homelessness have a job training certificate or license and/or some college experience. Most individuals experiencing homelessness have a high school degree or equivalent. Research on youth homelessness indicates that many youth have work experience but that jobs alone may not be enough to prevent young people from becoming homeless.⁹

Alongside the research and these data, there is growing national attention among policymakers, systems leaders, and philanthropy about the importance of meeting the employment and economic mobility interests and needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. For example:

- Since 2010, the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness has highlighted the importance of increasing economic security for people experiencing homelessness. Indications are that an anticipated revision to the plan will make an even stronger case for the need to expand strategies that support people to secure and retain jobs, particularly through stronger connections with workforce development systems and more supported employment opportunities.

- As homeless service systems across the country implement the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, communities are required to report changes in employment income for homeless jobseekers as they exit the homeless services system through the system-wide measures. Moreover, communities will increasingly be held accountable to measures focused on returns to homelessness. Together, these accountability mechanisms have the potential to drive a greater number of communities to consider and develop solutions that address access to income and employment through their homeless services systems. 2016 system-wide data reported by the Department of Housing and Urban Development indicates that nationally only 19 percent of individuals exiting the homeless system are doing so with increased income.¹⁰

- On the public workforce side, the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has created more system accountability around serving the employment needs of a greater number of individuals facing barriers to employment. As communities implement WIOA, they have the potential to leverage WIOA’s funding and flexibility to develop a greater number of employment, training, education, and support service solutions for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

- Finally, philanthropy is increasingly focused on the critical roles that employment and economic mobility play in preventing and ending homelessness and housing instability.
The challenges to supporting pathways to economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability that surfaced at the Pathways Forward convening are summarized below. Many of these challenges are inherent to advancing public systems collaboration and have been highlighted by Heartland Alliance in previous publications. However, several challenges that surfaced at the convening stem from the existence of policies that perpetuate poverty and inequity, particularly for individuals of color and women. In the sections that follow, Heartland Alliance has offered additional data and research to illuminate the impacts of these policies.

Not all of the challenges surfaced at the convening can be addressed solely by federal public agencies or through the recommendations outlined in this brief. We do, however, include all of the challenges that surfaced at the convening in this summary report in order to call attention to the need for public policy, advocacy, research, and other stakeholder action in addition to the recommendations identified for action by federal agencies. To employment and quality jobs and that access to economic opportunity prevents homelessness and supports pathways out of homelessness.

Public Systems Are Not Consistently Incentivized to Meet the Employment Needs and Interests of Jobseekers Experiencing Homelessness or Housing Instability.

Two significant challenges to advancing employment and economic mobility for people experiencing homelessness or housing instability include a lack of: 1) consistent resources dedicated to this work and 2) clear accountability mechanisms and performance measures within public systems to demonstrate success over time.

Nationally, there is no single program or system – and very few dedicated funds – directed at meeting the employment needs and interests of individuals and families experiencing homelessness or housing instability. In addition to limited funding and resources, there is also no clear, consistent system of accountability that holds federal public workforce, homeless service systems, and on-the-ground programs responsible for advancing employment and economic opportunity specifically for homeless or housing unstable jobseekers.

Practically speaking, this lack of sufficient resources and clear accountability mechanisms has a number of ripple effects that thwart efforts to address the employment interests and needs of homeless and unstably housed individuals. Stakeholders expressed that without dedicated resources, they often do not have clear pathways for developing, scaling, or streamlining effective employment programs and services aimed at people experiencing homelessness or housing instability in their community. Moreover, with the levers of accountability for serving these jobseekers being either weak or nonexistent, it is difficult to spur stakeholders to action and to cultivate champions that recognize the import of connecting individuals experiencing homelessness to employment and economic mobility. Finally, stakeholders pointed to the reality that the lack of consistent incentives to address the employment and economic mobility needs of homeless and unstably housed individuals has resulted in a lack of ownership around advancing solutions at all levels of government.
Lack of Data Collection, Sharing, and Integration Contribute to Knowledge Gaps and Blind Spots Between Public Systems and Stakeholders.

A lack of information and gaps in data related to the employment needs, interests, services received, and efficacy of services on behalf of individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability thwart efforts in communities to address issues of employment and economic mobility or build buy-in among relevant stakeholders.

Identified data gaps include information about the employment needs and interests of homeless and unstably housed jobseekers, what employment services these jobseekers do receive, and the efficacy of those services. Stakeholders also reflected that inconsistencies or lack of capacity of systems in collecting demographic data such as race and gender can make it difficult to examine, analyze, and understand the efficacy of their systems and services from the perspective of populations who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

While many programs that fall under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) ask staff to record data related to the housing status of individuals entering the system, there are often challenges at the local level in consistently collecting this information. The degree to which local communities track and analyze information about who receives services and their housing status at the time of service receipt is most often incomplete as well.

Communities and stakeholders at the convening highlighted that Continuums of Care (CoCs) have faced challenges in accurately collecting and reporting on employment and income growth for adults staying in and exiting CoC-funded housing interventions. Moreover, these data elements focus on changes in income from employment and non-employment sources rather than the employment needs, interests, and employment-related service activities of homeless and unstably housed individuals. Stakeholders consistently articulated that there is substantial variation in how and if homeless service organizations and communities gather this information.

Gaps in data and information make it more difficult for stakeholders to address issues of employment and economic mobility for individuals who experience homelessness or housing instability. Resulting challenges include, among others: how to fund and target employment services; how to identify the types of employment services that are needed or of interest to homeless or unstably housed jobseekers; where to geographically place services in communities; and how to understand system efficacy or equity in meeting these goals.

The Impact of the Criminal Justice System Perpetuates Poverty, Inequity, and Housing Instability in Communities.

The role of the criminal justice system in perpetuating poverty, inequity, and housing instability was a recurring theme among the communities represented at the convening. Stakeholders identified the need for concerted policy and systems change to reduce the reach and impact of the criminal justice system on the lives of individuals and especially individuals of color who are disproportionately represented among individuals experiencing homelessness. Up to 50 percent of people experiencing homelessness have a history of incarceration,¹¹ and as many as 15-3 percent of all people in jail in the U.S. report experiencing homelessness in the year prior to incarceration.¹² Individuals experiencing homelessness are found to be arrested more often, incarcerated longer, and re-arrested at higher rates than people with stable housing.¹³ The criminal justice system disproportionately impacts people of color and individuals living in poverty who are more likely to be impacted by homelessness or unstable housing. A full third of the black adult male population is incarcerated, on probation, or parole in the United States.¹⁴

As a result of the lasting collateral consequences of involvement with the criminal justice system, communities shared that the system often perpetuates poverty and inequity for individuals experiencing homelessness in their communities and has had profoundly negative impacts on entire communities. Stakeholders shared that this is largely due to the federal, state, and local laws that restrict rights and opportunities for people with a criminal record long after their release from incarceration. These collateral consequences create barriers that limit or deny access to employment, eligibility for basic assistance programs and services, professional and business licenses, volunteer opportunities, housing, access to safe banking products and loans, and a myriad of other things.
Baltimore’s Journey to Jobs Connections Project team has worked to improve access to stable housing and economic opportunity for people experiencing homelessness by reducing the incidence and impact of interactions with the justice system. In partnership with Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Services, the team has linked data on people involved with criminal justice and homelessness systems in order to document the intersections, understand disparate impacts, and reduce barriers to employment and housing.

Baltimore’s work revealed sobering trends about how the criminal justice system and racism perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequity. For example, in Baltimore City, 48 percent of adults experiencing homelessness have at least one criminal record. People of color are also overrepresented in the homeless services system: 63 percent of Baltimore residents are black, compared to 79 percent of Baltimore residents experiencing homelessness. Baltimore’s data show that 43 percent of homeless individuals have at least one expungeable record; among these clients, 83 percent are African American or black and 12 percent are white. Among black or African American youth ages 18 to 24 within Baltimore’s homeless services system, one in ten has at least one expungeable record.

In 2018, the Journey to Jobs team will release the findings from its work alongside a set of policy recommendations for the future. These data are helping to build momentum toward policy change and helping providers and other leaders understand the need for greater access to legal services in the community.

Stakeholders identified that these barriers only prolong the cycle of homelessness and exacerbate the likelihood that a person will get re-arrested or re-incarcerated. All told, there are over 44,000 collateral consequences for persons who have a criminal record across the United States. Among the Connections Project states represented at the convening, Minnesota has fewer than 600 collateral consequences in state law for people returning from incarceration. Every other Connections Project state at the convening has well over 1,000 collateral consequences recorded in law — the majority which restrict access to housing, employment, education, and occupational licensing. The state of Texas has nearly 1,700 of these laws on the books. Communities at the convening highlighted that the reach and lasting impact of the criminal justice system creates significant barriers to supporting individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability in achieving housing and employment goals.

Limited Buy In Among Cross-System Stakeholders Often Undermines Efforts.

Efforts to collaborate among systems and advance the goals of employment and economic mobility for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability require buy in from frontline staff, managers, and other key decision makers across systems that they can—and should—work together to address this population’s unmet employment interests and needs. That said, participants at the Pathways Forward convening said that “culture issues” between the public workforce and homeless service systems can undermine collaborative efforts. As articulated by participants, these “culture issues” manifest as an uncertainty among staff in both systems that 1) people experiencing homelessness need to, want, and can work and 2) their system plays a key role in helping to make that happen.

As it relates to the public workforce system, common concerns shared at the Pathways Forward convening are that leaders, managers, and frontline staff may have preconceptions about whether the majority of people experiencing homelessness are “ready,” willing, or able to enter and succeed in the workforce. Moreover, these stakeholders may question whether it’s “their job” to develop specialized knowledge about workforce development strategies for homeless jobseekers in order to deliver appropriate and effective employment services to this population.

On the homeless service side, participants expressed that managers and frontline staff may not be fully persuaded that:

- employment is a critical component of helping clients successfully exit homelessness and achieve stability;
- their clients are employable in the near term;
- employment supports—rather than threatens—the stability and recovery of their clients; and
- their role includes facilitating access to and success in employment for their clients.
Not all workforce development and homeless service professionals question whether people experiencing homelessness or housing instability need to, want to, and can work, nor do all of these professionals question that their system plays a key role in advancing employment and economic opportunity for these jobseekers. Feedback from stakeholders at the convening suggests however that these are pervasive uncertainties that act as significant barriers to initiating and facilitating systems collaboration efforts.

**Inequities Perpetuated By Federal, State, & Local Policies Must Be Addressed.**

Racial and ethnic minorities experience homelessness in greater numbers and for longer durations. Families experiencing homelessness are most often headed by individuals who report being female. About half of people in families with children experiencing sheltered homelessness identify as African American or black. This is 3.8 times the proportion of African Americans among all families with children in the U.S. (13.6 percent) and 2.2 times the proportion of African Americans in families with children in the U.S. living in poverty (23.4 percent). African American youth are especially overrepresented among youth experiencing homelessness, as are youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT).

Stakeholders at the convening highlighted that understanding the relationship between income and housing instability requires considering and doubling-down to address the historic and current policies and practices, rooted in racism and sexism, that perpetuate income, wealth, and opportunity divides today. Heartland Alliance has documented over 400 years of policy actions that have denied African Americans, in particular, from accessing employment, education, training and other opportunities, including access to workplace benefits, protections, and equal wages, among other things. A significant share of workers—especially those in historically female-dominated professions—do not enjoy the benefits of basic worker rights, wage and hour laws, and the ability to organize, which exposes them to exploitation in the form of wage theft and human trafficking. Equally important, throughout U.S. history and continuing today, a number of policies have denied or restricted access to basic assistance services, which can be critical to supporting the success of individuals in work.

Finally, research continues to demonstrate that companies are reluctant to hire men of color—especially black men—because they are seen as unreliable, dishonest, or lacking in social or cognitive skills. Research indicates that even post-secondary education and credentials do little to combat racial discrimination in the labor market.

Today, black workers still make only 82.5 cents on every dollar earned by white workers. In 2015, black men’s average hourly wages were 31 percent lower than white men’s and black women’s wages were 34.2 percent lower. In the same year, black women’s wages were still 12.2 percent lower than black men’s. In 2017, the black unemployment rate was 7.5 percent — roughly twice the white unemployment rate. In addition, African Americans are 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty than whites, and the median white family has almost ten times as much wealth as the median black family. This makes it far more likely that white families can weather a financial crisis and avert homelessness altogether. Indeed, research indicates that a lack of economic capital within social networks precipitates homelessness for many people of color. Research indicates that African Americans living in poverty are more likely to experience homelessness compared with white families living in poverty.

**Supporting Pathways to Economic Mobility Requires Adopting A Holistic Framework.**

Pathways Forward participants stressed that supporting pathways to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability requires taking a holistic approach to ensuring access to the supports individuals need to engage and succeed in employment. The two most-cited unmet needs for individuals in their communities were childcare and transportation.

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¹ This feedback is consistent with interviews and site visits that Heartland Alliance has engaged in for the development of other resources and briefs.
Most families experiencing homelessness have young children. Almost half of children in shelters across the United States are under 6 years old and even more are sharing housing with others due to economic hardship.²⁹ Without access to child care, these families struggle to secure housing and employment. Having a safe and stable child care arrangement allows families experiencing homelessness the time and flexibility to look for and maintain work and participate in the job training, education, and other resources that are essential to resolving homelessness. Families experiencing housing instability often face many barriers to accessing child care including cost, hours of operation of child care centers that do not align with work schedules, geographic proximity to employment and housing, and restrictive documentation and eligibility requirements that may make qualifying for child care subsidies difficult or impossible.³⁰

Over 30 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness cite transportation as a major barrier to employment.³¹ Across the country, about 45 percent of American households lack any access to transit. Nearly two-thirds of all residents in small towns and rural communities have few if any transportation options. Nearly 20 percent of African American households and 14 percent of Latino households live without a car. Insufficient access to transportation correlates with areas with the highest unemployment and the lowest incomes.³² The longer an average commute in a given county, the less likely low-income families living there will move up the income ladder.³³
The Pathways Forward convening highlighted the need for cross-system collaboration across federal agencies, as well as public and private partners, to effectively address the employment and income needs and interests of individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability. We encourage federal agencies, philanthropy, and other key stakeholders to identify the ways in which they can partner to implement the recommendations outlined in this report.

We also know that sustained federal agency leadership and interagency coordination will be critical to advancing progress under this body of work. To this end, it will be important for the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to continue to drive federal action across its member agencies in support of the recommendations. We strongly recommend that USICH establish and convene an interagency working group focused on the integration of strategies to increase income and access to employment and economic mobility with efforts to prevent and end homelessness. Such a group should include all relevant federal agencies in collaboration with key stakeholders including national experts and public and private partners.

In addition, we recommend that USICH and its member agencies identify opportunities to reflect the strategies outlined below as part of the revised Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness and other interagency work planning in order to anchor this work as part of future federal priorities.

**ADVANCING LASTING CHANGE:**
**THE NEED FOR SUSTAINED, DEDICATED RESOURCES & COMMITMENT TO POLICY CHANGE**

The recommendations for federal agencies in this section of the brief are focused on actions to address the employment and economic mobility needs and interests of individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

It is important to note that the challenges that surfaced at the convening and the recommendations that participants put forward illuminate the need for dedicated federal resources and a commitment to reimaging the supports and protections offered to all workers across the country.

We are acutely aware that sustaining efforts to address the employment needs and interests on behalf of individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability requires recognizing that these workers are not a monolithic group. Addressing their collective employment interests and needs requires dedicated federal attention, a commitment to identifying and applying sufficient resources, a focus on upholding and expanding legal protections and rights, removing structural barriers to education and employment, and advancing solutions that ensure that every person who wants to work, regardless of the barriers they face, can gain access to the labor market.
As described earlier, Heartland Alliance has developed a framework for organizing the recommendations for federal agencies. Under the following strategic action areas, we have identified a series of actions federal agencies can take to:

1. Address **data or knowledge gaps** to support communities in accessing and being able to utilize the information necessary to identify the scope and scale of employment-related needs for individuals experiencing homelessness; effectively and efficiently connect individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability to resources; identify, develop, and scale promising practices; and more equitably design system responses.

2. Support **new or continued pilot or demonstration efforts** to spur action and innovation in the field aimed at improving employment-related services and supports for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

3. Support **community, provider, or system capacity** building to increase access to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

4. Clarify **policies or provide guidance** to the field to more efficiently leverage resources and supports to strengthen pathways to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
ADDRESS DATA OR KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Address data or knowledge gaps to support communities in accessing and being able to use the information necessary to identify the scope and scale of employment-related needs for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability; effectively and efficiently connect individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability to resources; identify, develop, and scale promising practices; and more equitably design system and program responses.

1. Build the capacity and infrastructure of local workforce data systems to ask questions about the housing status of participants upon intake into the workforce and education systems and accurately record, report, and analyze changes in income over time by service received in all relevant workforce and education programs.

2. Make available system-wide performance measure data by participant housing status upon entry and exit for all relevant workforce and education programs and services received across federal agencies.

3. Build the capacity and infrastructure of local homeless data systems and staff to ask questions about a participant’s employment, education, income, and work history upon intake into the homeless services system and annual homeless counts and build infrastructure and capacity to accurately record, report, and analyze changes in employment income and changes in non-employment cash income of individuals served through the homeless services system and relevant programs.

4. Make available system-wide performance measure data on the change in employment income and non-employment income from entry into and exit from the homeless services system for all populations experiencing homelessness.

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC & PRIVATE PARTNERS

USICH, Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), Department of Education (ED), Department of Agriculture (USDA), and other federal agencies as appropriate.

Other leaders and experts including persons with lived experience, national and local homelessness, workforce and anti-poverty experts, philanthropy, and others.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES.

SUPPORT NEW OR CONTINUED PILOT OR DEMONSTRATION EFFORTS

Support new or continued pilot or demonstration efforts to spur action and innovation in the field aimed at improving services and supports for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

1. Pilot or advance demonstration projects that combine innovative housing, employment, education, and supportive services to promote housing stability and leverage housing and employment as springboards to economic mobility for adults and youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

2. Pilot or advance local demonstration efforts to advance evidence-based workforce and education interventions adapted for distinct sub-populations of people experiencing homelessness or housing instability, e.g., youth.

3. Pilot or advance local demonstration efforts that apply therapeutically oriented approaches and case management structures such as trauma-informed practice, cognitive behavioral therapy, and motivational interviewing integrated with workforce development services targeting adults and youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

USICH, DOL, HUD, HHS, ED, USDA, Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Transportation (DOT), and other federal agencies as appropriate.

Other leaders and experts including persons with lived experience, national and local homelessness, workforce and anti-poverty experts, philanthropy, and others.
**Support Community, Provider, or System Capacity Building**

Support community, provider, or system capacity building to increase access to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

**Strategic Action Area**

1. Support the capacity of states and communities to realize the intent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to serve a greater number of people facing barriers to employment, including jobseekers experiencing homelessness or housing instability, through the system’s planning, prioritization, resource identification, program or model development and implementation, data infrastructure, and performance measures.

2. Support the capacity of states and communities in realizing the goals of the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act to support access to income and employment for a greater number of youth and adults exiting the homeless response system through planning, prioritization, resource identification, program development, and data infrastructure.

3. Support the capacity of states and communities to design and implement basic assistance and support service systems and accompanying programs in such a way as to ensure that individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability gain equitable access to all services and supports available to them and such services are complimentary to other services available in communities.

4. Support the capacity of states and communities to address barriers to employment, education, or housing for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability who may also have criminal records.

**Essential Public & Private Partners**

USICH, DOL, HUD, HHS, ED, USDA, DOJ, and other federal agencies as appropriate.

Other leaders and experts including persons with lived experience, national and local homelessness, workforce and anti-poverty experts, philanthropy, and others.
CLARIFY POLICIES OR PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO THE FIELD

Clarify policies or provide guidance to the field to more efficiently leverage resources and supports to help support pathways to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

1. Promote guidance that encourages and supports communities in prioritizing and serving youth experiencing homelessness in summer and year-round youth subsidized employment programs and through Job Corps programs.

2. Promote guidance that encourages and supports communities to expand access to pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships for youth experiencing homelessness or who are unstably housed and participating in Job Corps, and individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated.

3. Promote guidance and expand communication to local workforce systems related to self-attestation for workforce services among youth and adults experiencing homelessness.

4. Promote guidance that supports adult and youth homeless services providers and system leaders in developing and implementing plans, strategies, and programs that support access to employment, training, or education for these populations consistent with the goals of ending homelessness and current systems alignment and demonstration projects underway.

USICH, DOL, HUD, HHS, ED, USDA, and other federal agencies as appropriate.

Other leaders and experts including persons with lived experience, national and local homelessness, workforce and anti-poverty experts, philanthropy, and others.
The Preventing & Ending Homelessness through Employment: Lessons Learned & Pathways Forward event in Washington, D.C., brought together a cross-section of experts to consider the lessons learned, challenges, and successes in supporting pathways to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability from the Connections Project and efforts nationwide. The discussions were grounded in systems work happening across the country to address this issue.

It is important to note that participants at the Pathways Forward convening identified additional sets of strategies to equip and support other stakeholder groups in their efforts to address employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness and those who are unstably housed. These strategies, while not an exhaustive list, represent some of the areas where Heartland Alliance and our partners may focus additional efforts in the future. For example:

- Alongside philanthropy, stakeholders urged Heartland Alliance and the field to identify opportunities and ways in which the philanthropic sector might advance local and national discussions and action steps focused on increasing employment and economic mobility for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and those who are unstably housed.

- Alongside national partners, stakeholders urged Heartland Alliance and the field to develop and disseminate a range of legislative recommendations for specific federal programs and policies impacting individuals and families experiencing homelessness and those who are unstably housed. In addition, stakeholders had a number of far-reaching legislative and budget policy solutions that would positively impact the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

- In partnership with the research community, stakeholders urged Heartland Alliance and the field to identify gaps in research evidence and data related to increase employment and economic mobility for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and those who are unstably housed and disseminate research and data questions and areas for further exploration for the field.

We know that supporting pathways to employment and economic mobility for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability requires the commitment of a myriad of stakeholders. While this brief focuses on federal agency action areas, it is designed to be a catalyst for all of us in this work – community-based organizations, government partners, philanthropy, national workforce, homelessness, and anti-poverty policy experts, and researchers – to advance efforts to increase access to employment opportunities and upward economic mobility in the fight to prevent and end homelessness.
REFERENCES


⁸ Burt et. al., 1999.

⁹ Morton et. al., 2017.


¹⁶ Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2018


Morton et. al., 2017.


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Jones et. al., 2018.


Olivet et. al., 2018.


