

## What Mayors Can Do: 10 Recommendations for Addressing the Employment Needs of People Experiencing Homelessness in Your Community

October 2018

The leadership of Mayors and Mayors' offices can drive commitment and action to addressing the employment needs and interests of people experiencing homelessness in order to promote housing stability among all individuals. Here are 10 recommendations from cities across the country aimed at describing the ways that Mayors can drive and support this work in their communities.

### LEVERAGE YOUR LEADERSHIP POSITION.

- 1. Use the Mayoral platform to combat stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness and work.** People experiencing homelessness want to work, can work, and many people already are working. Research indicates that up to 44% of people experiencing homelessness are working full time but still experiencing homelessness. Mayors can help combat negative stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness and their interest or willingness to work through their public positions and communications campaigns.
- 2. Cultivate a shared vision in your community.** Ending homelessness for good requires that people have adequate income to keep a stable roof over their heads. Mayors can charge their agencies with a shared vision that ending homelessness is a responsibility that belongs to every public system. Mayors can leverage their authority to bring together workforce and homeless service leadership to develop shared agendas, develop data-sharing protocols, dedicated staffing capacity, and set short- and long-term goals for aligning public resources.
- 3. Leverage Mayoral leadership to ask questions and drive data-informed decision making surrounding the employment needs and interests of homeless jobseekers.** Mayors' offices can be asking if the workforce system and the homeless response systems in their communities are connected and the strength of the partnership. Mayors' offices have the unique ability to ask questions and look at data across public systems to better understand the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness and interaction with the labor market. This information can help communities design better interventions and improve existing interventions.
- 4. Cultivate employer partners and leverage municipal job opportunities to provide access to employment opportunities for homeless jobseekers.** Mayors should be asking how their city can use its position as an employer to provide employment opportunities to people who are experiencing housing instability and assess if there are barriers within city hiring practices that would preclude people experiencing homelessness in successfully applying for city jobs. Moreover, Mayors can use their leadership and

relationships with the business sector to open doors to employment opportunities for these populations with local employer partners.

## COMMIT RESOURCES TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE.

1. **Invest in system planning capacity.** In order to effectively address the employment and income needs of people experiencing homelessness communities must dedicate staff and resources to planning and designing systems and supporting stakeholders to operationalize system changes. Mayors' offices are critical to supporting these processes, allocating resources to this end, and providing leadership over planning processes.
2. **Align and commit resources and attention to developing workforce development and support service interventions that meet the needs of homeless jobseekers.** Mayors' offices can and should align existing resources and commit additional resources as necessary to developing targeted workforce interventions like transitional jobs programs, supported employment, on-the-job training and others to meet the interests and needs of people experiencing homelessness. Likewise, communities should identify and address support service needs such as child care, transportation, and other supports that can support homeless jobseekers in being successful in work.

## LEAD WITH AN EQUITY LENS.

1. **Recognize and work to address root causes of unemployment.** Mass incarceration and overpolicing mean that many people, disproportionately people of color, face barriers to employment that can only be eliminated through multi-agency efforts and significant policy reform. Encourage employers, including local government, to revisit job descriptions and hiring processes to eliminate unnecessary screening factors. Support and take an active role in addressing policies that criminalize individuals living in poverty and address the collateral consequences of having a criminal record.
2. **Place equity at the center of solutions.** Understand that addressing the barriers faced by homeless jobseekers is inherently tied to past and current policies and practices rooted in racial discrimination. Advancing program and policy solutions at the city level that lead to racial equity should be a non-negotiable principle for Mayors' offices and municipal systems.
3. **Require meaningful engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness across systems.** Mayors' offices should actively support and require meaningful engagement with people with lived experience of homelessness in designing, planning, and operationalizing efforts to address the employment and income needs of homeless jobseekers. These constituents should be an equal partner at the table and public systems should establish and support feedback loops that allow for people with lived experience of homelessness to continue to inform challenges and solutions.

## ENGAGE EXPERTS TO SUPPORT EFFORTS.

1. **Do not go it alone.** A myriad of resources exist to support cities in planning and designing systems solutions to address the employment needs of people experiencing homelessness. Mayors' offices should consult these [resources](#) to get started and reach out to experts in the field to support planning efforts.