Denver, CO, US

The challenge: Design an integrated system for efficiently coordinating the delivery of services to those experiencing homelessness and to at-risk populations through many providers across a multi-county region.

Context

- The Denver metropolitan region includes 2.9 million people, 56 local governments and hundreds of private and nonprofit service organizations.
- As the regional economy continues to grow rapidly, housing vacancies have declined while housing prices and rental rates have increased.
- Together, these dynamics create an environment in which more people are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- The effects on social services agencies, the criminal justice system, health and welfare agencies, schools, libraries and parks have all been magnified as a result.

Findings

- The single greatest impediment to addressing the challenge is the fragmented nature of assistance efforts and related data for those experiencing homelessness.
- Services in the region are segmented, delivered by a complex network of government agencies and both private and nonprofit organizations.
- Cities and counties in the area increasingly recognize the benefit of a more coordinated and collaborative approach to funding and providing services for those experiencing homelessness.
- The Denver metro region is known for taking a regional approach to major policy and infrastructure challenges, and it will need to do the same with the issue of homelessness.
- Success will require disciplined governance and change management.

Summary of recommendations

- Develop an integrated regional data management system
- Improve Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) capabilities
- Establish coordinated data entry
- Expand coordinated assessment
- Develop a common mobile/web application
- Build social communities
- Create a governance framework
- Establish a change management plan
- Expand the use of outcome-based metrics
- Drive innovation

Expected outcomes

- Improve regional coordination of data collection, analysis, sharing and reporting
- Strengthen collaboration among service providers
- Simplify how clients gain access to services
- Allocate resources more effectively
- Broader awareness of available services
- Provide better client support and share best practices
- Increase community confidence in program management
- Build trust among regional leaders and stakeholders
- Measure program success more accurately and replicate it more easily
- Expand current and new funding sources

Vision

The Denver metro region has a strong history of coming together to address tough issues through policy and investment. By implementing the recommendations in this report, the region can make a substantial impact on homelessness.

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