

The Blueprint to Address Homelessness Frequently Asked Questions

What is The Blueprint to Address Homelessness?

The Blueprint to Address Homelessness (The Blueprint) is a five-year strategic vision plan that reflects community-defined priorities for improving services and resources within the homelessness response system throughout Polk County.

Why was The Blueprint created?

Having safe housing is a social determinant of health and is critical to ensuring individuals and families have the ability to thrive in our community. With access to housing that is affordable being a growing challenge, not just in our community but across the country, leaders across sectors saw an opportunity to convene and create a plan with strategic measures for success that provide housing solutions for individuals and families in times of need. Equipped with data from 2024 Homelessness System Gap Analysis, The Blueprint is a plan intended to be nimble and responsive in the ever-changing landscape of addressing homelessness in our region.

How was the plan developed?

From September 2024 through March of 2025, a variety of community members came together to explore a coordinated way to address growing challenges in homelessness system support services. These community members from various sectors worked with a national consultant to understand and develop key strategies to address homelessness with evidence-based solutions. A series of community conversations were held with service providers, businesses, housing developers, behavioral and mental health professionals, educators, people with lived experience, public safety professionals and elected officials, as well as representatives from municipalities across the Central Iowa region. Homeward, the homelessness planning organization for Polk County, facilitated these convenings with the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines as a strategic partner throughout the planning process. The insights gleaned from these convenings as well as data from the 2024 Homelessness System Gap Analysis helped lay the foundation for a plan that gives individuals and organizations across sectors a role in helping address homelessness throughout Central Iowa.

What is the purpose of The Blueprint?

The purpose of The Blueprint is to focus on improvement within seven defined focus areas which ultimately achieve better housing and quality of life for residents who experience homelessness in Polk County. It will be used as a roadmap by system leaders, partners and stakeholders over the next five years, guiding decision-making, program design, service delivery and funding efforts. At its core, The Blueprint emphasizes Improvement Strategies to reduce inflow into the homelessness system, accelerate exits out of homelessness, and build economic self-sufficiency and well-being of people experiencing a housing crisis. The Implementation Strategy of this plan defines how the work will be actively managed, including a reorganization of the homeless oversight system structure, activating a re-organized Homeless Coordinating Council, and launching prioritized strategies within each focus area.

Who is giving oversight to The Blueprint?

To effectively implement and provide oversight to this important work, The Blueprint recommends reorganizing the Greater Des Moines community's existing Homelessness Coordinating Council (HCC). This group will grow to be comprised of a variety of leaders across industries, sectors and municipalities.

They will convene on an ongoing basis to review plan progress, determine community-wide investments in the homelessness system and work to leverage additional community resources as needed, modeling that everyone has a role in ensuring The Blueprint's successful outcomes. A senior-level staff position will oversee partner outreach and relationship management as well as day-to-day operations connected to advancing the objectives of The Blueprint.

How is the implementation of The Blueprint being financially supported?

Successful implementation of the strategies included in The Blueprint will require *financial investment* from a variety of sources, including public and private contributions. The Blueprint recommends a more defined funding pool to be leveraged as a resource for such investments in the community. Individuals, organizations, foundations, businesses and municipalities are able to contribute to a fund, held by the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines, allowing a nimble and unified approach to investing in innovative solutions for the region. The Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines has seeded the fund with an initial contribution of \$100,000.

What additional contributions are needed for the successful implementation of The Blueprint?

Additionally, community members and leaders can volunteer directly with service providers to advance efforts related to the implementation strategies or engage with a working group that leads implementation of this work. It will also be important for individuals, organizations, foundations, businesses and municipalities to consider how their contributions of time, talent or treasure meaningfully contribute to the community's collective vision outlined in The Blueprint to Address Homelessness.

How can I learn more about The Blueprint to Address Homelessness?

Visit homewardiowa.org/community-collaboration/blueprinttoaddresshomelessness or media contact: Emily Toribio, VP of Marketing and Communications for the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines at 515-447-4205 or toribio@desmoinesfoundation.org.