



*Engaging Your Entire Agency to  
Effect Measurable Change for the Homeless*

# Who We Are

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# Our Goal for Today

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Provide ways for you to look at your agency holistically to find ways to engage both internal and external factors to effect measurable change for the homeless.



# Who We Are

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JOURNEYS | The Road Home provides both emergency shelter and day support services, including counseling and case management, to the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless in north/northwest suburban Cook County.

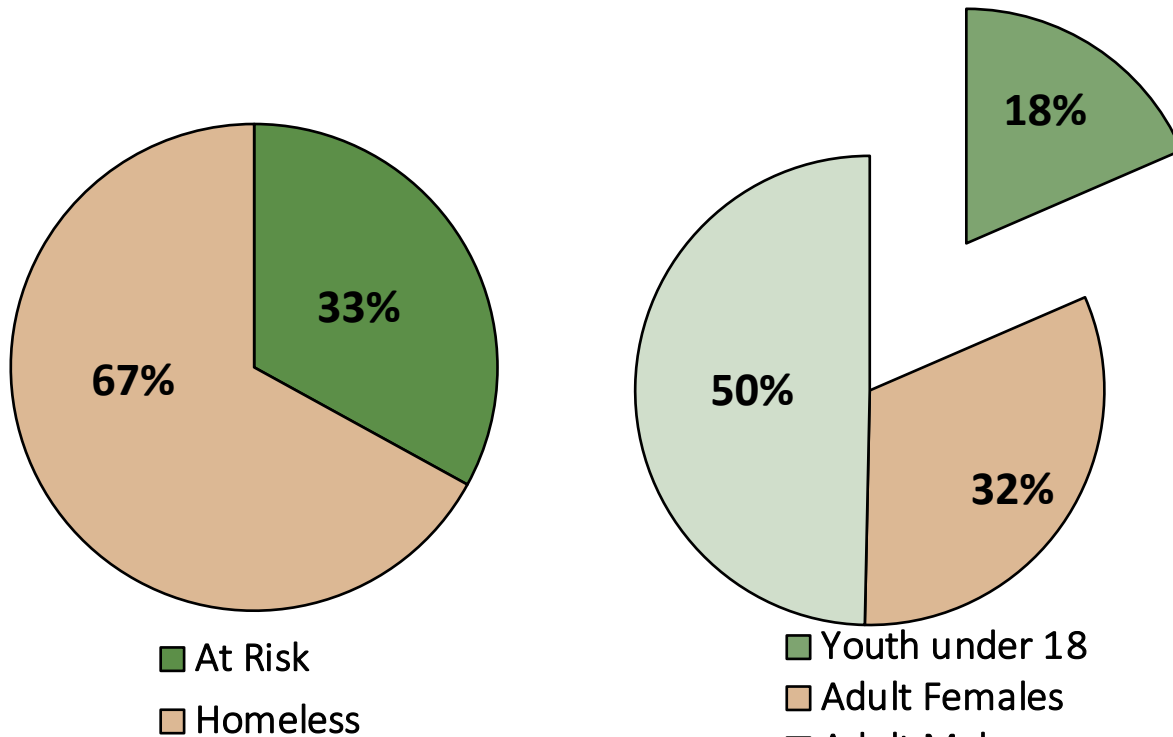






# In 17 – 18, served about 900 clients

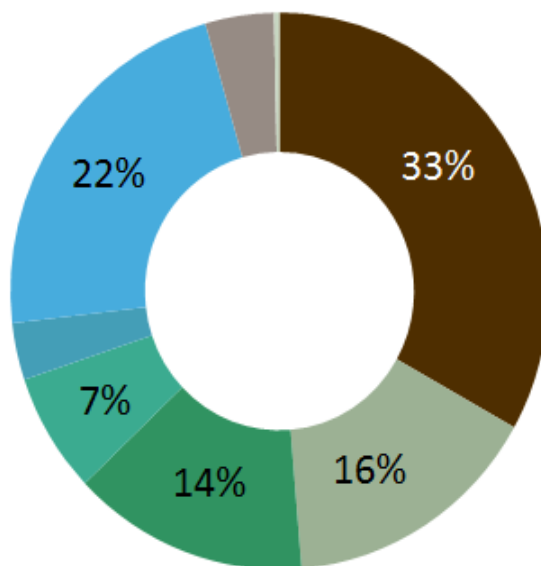
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# Funding Sources

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## 2017-18 Sources of Funding



- Individuals
- Foundations
- Faith Community
- Corporate & Corporate Matching
- United Way
- Local Government
- Service Clubs
- School Fund Raisers



# Organizational Complexity

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- Just one experience, in a unique context
- Two most powerful phrases –
  - “I don’t know” or “I can’t”
- Agencies can learn from each other



# JOURNEYS Elements of Success

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- Clear Communication
- Effective Leadership and Engaged Staff
- Dismantling Barriers
- Client Participation
- Critical Assessments
- Robust Marketing and Outreach





# COMMUNICATION



# Why – Communicate it first

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# Why, How, What - Communicating Mission

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- **Why** do you get up in the morning go to work?
- **How** do you achieve your agency's mission each day?
- **What's** your agency mission?





# Clear Departmental Communication

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- Open Door Policy
- All staff encouraged to walk in for supervision
- Monthly All Staff Meetings
- Weekly Group Meetings
- Peer supervision of difficult cases
- Daily Supervision
- Manager helps problem-solve individual issues



# Measurable Change from Clear Communication

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- Staff feel like they are, and are empowered change agents
  - Staff feedback and exit interviews more positive
- Staff directly raise concerns to supervisors
  - Reduce frequency of inefficient complaining
- Staff have clarity on roles
  - Staff co-create roles and responsibilities
- Clinical staff can internally refer clients quickly
  - Staff initiate client transfer more often
- Staff review co-worker's work
  - Data has fewer errors and fewer mistakes





A leader who produces other  
leaders multiplies their influences.

John C. Maxwell

quote fancy

# LEADERSHIP



# Effective Leadership

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## Effective Leaders

- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Hire to weaknesses
- Staff become leaders themselves
- Ask "Why?"
- Experts in field





## Voice of Logic

A leader who analyzes the data, work to find the most logical path forward, and always makes sure that problems are reviewed from every angle before deciding on a path forward





# The Mother Duck

The supportive, nurturing leader who brings out the best in the staff



# The Preacher

Passionate, inspiring, and dedicated to the mission of the agency



"Strive to be a leader of character,  
competence, and courage"  
-Major Dick Winters

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# Leadership – Character and Courage

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- Lead by example
- Stop multitasking
- Details matter
  - Mistakes have ripple effects
  - Supervisor checks intakes, audits files
- Practice honesty with “I’m sorry”, “I don’t know”, and "Thank you!"
  - Say it early and often
- Clear set of ethical guidelines
  - NASW



# Leadership - Competence

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## ➤ Prioritize training

- Inspirational stories - discuss at least one success each day
- Technical skills – monthly workshops
- Staff leave organizations that do not give adequate training

## ➤ Ask for help

- Leaders are respected who say - “I don’t know, can we figure this out together?”
- Clinical Director asks HOPE Center Manager for direct criticism





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## ENGAGED STAFF



# Effective Leadership Engages Staff

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How do you feel about your work and client?

What keeps you engaged in your work?

- Example - A shared sense of mission

What are effective strategies to engage with other people?

- Example – Spending five minutes on small talk



# Engaged Staff – Mission and Meaning

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## Shared Sense of Mission and Meaning

- Mindfulness, communication, self-awareness improved burnout in primary care physicians (Krasner et al, 2009)
- Person-centered and organization-level interventions prevented burnout for more than 12 months in mental health professionals (Awa et al, 2010)

Leadership demonstrates competence by providing opportunities to explore the meaning of work



# Engaged Staff – Mission and Meaning

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## Encourage mindfulness

- Lunch an hour a day, shut the door for 5 minutes, gripe sessions

## Self-care

- Staff takes time off regularly, exercise, sleep well, find joy

## Organization-intervention

- Karaoke, staff lunches, offsite bowling or concerts

## Person-centered intervention

- Venting, anxiety-coping skills



# Engaged Staff – The Opposite of Burnout

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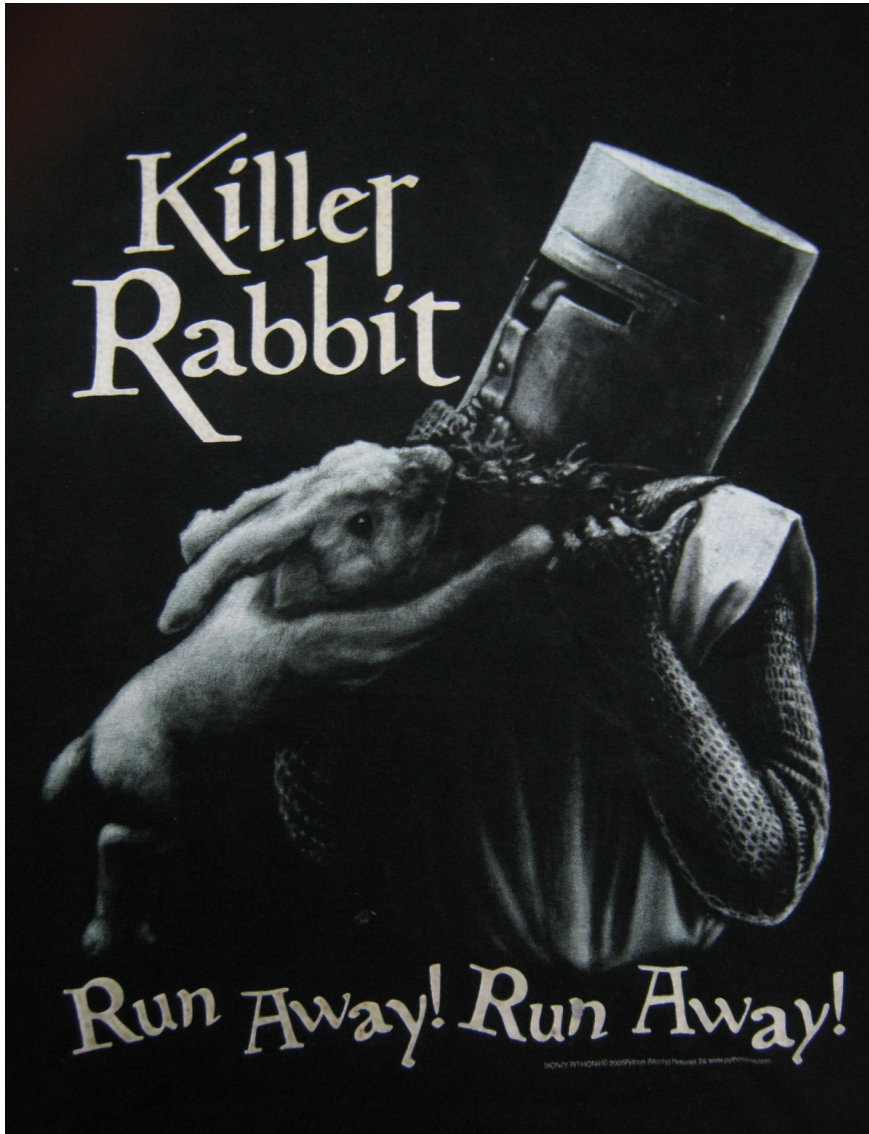
You are probably experiencing some level of burnout, or will in the near future

- 21% to 67% of mental health workers experience high levels of burnout (Morse 2012)

Burnout defined (Maslach et al, 1996)

- Depersonalization
- Loss of personal accomplishment
- Emotional exhaustion





What do you  
find funny?



# Engaged Staff - Humor

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## Sense of Humor – Single Biggest Staff Asset

- Humor decreases depersonalization (Talbot & Lumden, 2000)
- Humor increases sense of personal accomplishment (Talbot & Lumden, 2000)
- Humor associated with less stress and anxiety (Abel, 2000)
- Humor associated with increased problem-solving ability (Abel, 2000)

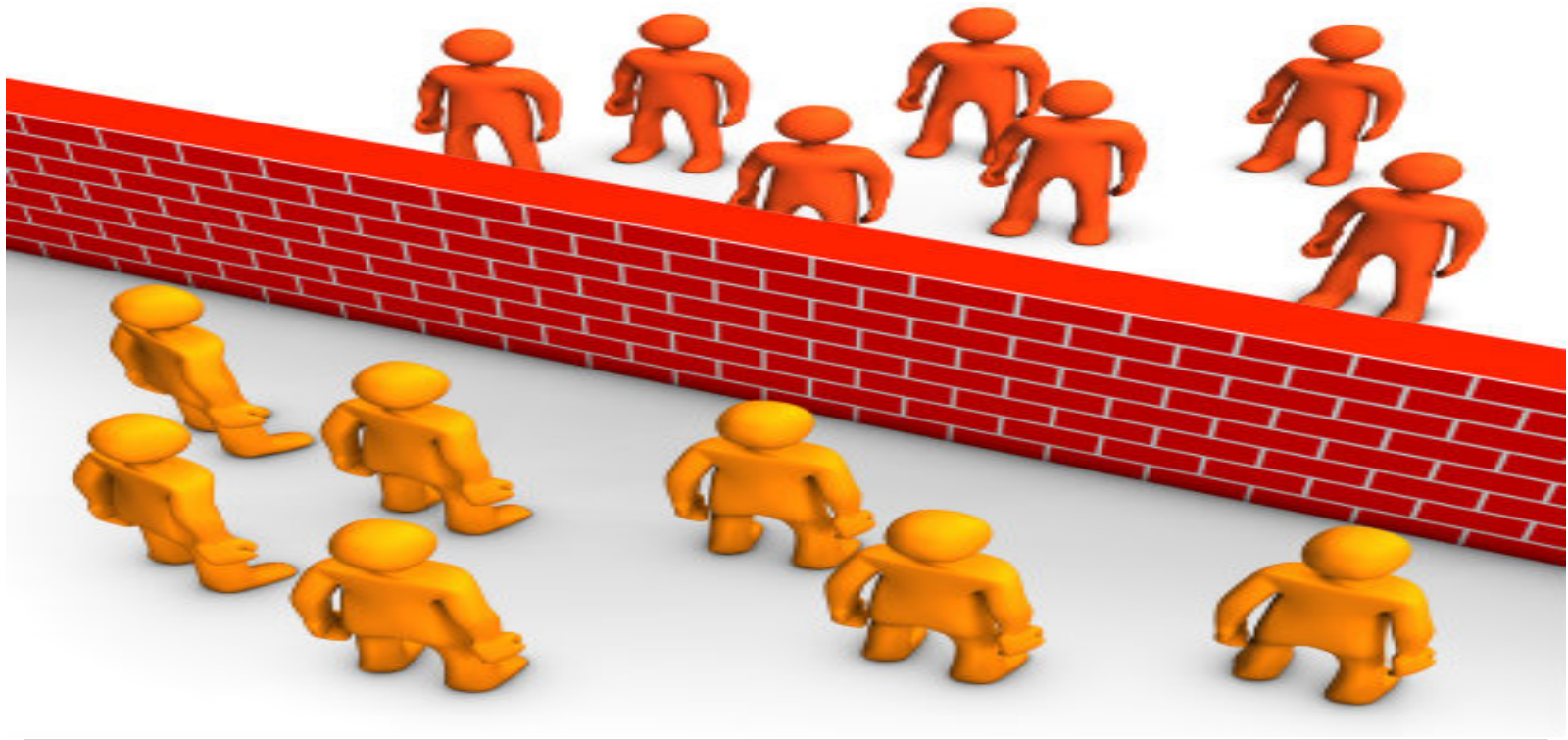


# Measurable Change from Effective Leadership and Engaged Staff

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- Staff that stay at your agency
  - Average clinical staff 6+ years – very high length – experts in field
- Expertise from tenure translates to more people out of homelessness
  - 14 years ago 50 people out of homelessness each year
  - Now 150 people out of homelessness each year – 3X increase
- Happy resilient staff
  - Stay through rough periods, two left for school, two left to be close to home
- Clients with disabilities housed more quickly
  - Knowledge of all major local housing programs at top of brain, experience filling out paperwork for Coordinated Entry





# DISMANTLING BARRIERS



# Evaluate Process Barriers

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What processes assist staff and clients?

- EX. - Walk in and out quickly for food pantry

What processes are roadblocks for staff and clients?

- EX. – Long waits to complete complicated intake

Why are processes in place?

- EX. – To triage limited services
- EX. – To dissuade or punish clients from accessing services



# Dismantling Process Barriers

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- Access to Support Center
  - Agency buzzes in clients to limit flow
  - Keep high need clients out
- Eligibility Criteria
  - Geographic, Behavioral
  - Ongoing debate about geography criteria
- Laundry and Showers
  - Used to be “privilege” service, used to motivate change but not working
  - Changed to all clients get access to showers as basic dignity
- Client-Case Manager Assignment
  - Client quickly meets Case manager to develop rapport



# Measurable Change from Dismantling Barriers

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- Clients happier
  - Focus groups, client surveys, client self-reports
- Clients demonstrate fewer aggressive behaviors
- Staff happier, feel like mission congruent with actions
  - Staff narrative interviews
- Staff less stressed because of fewer rules, more time to meet clients where they are at



# CLIENT PARTICIPATION

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# Client Participation

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Why does your agency want client feedback?

How does your agency discourage client participation?

- EX. – Clients who complain lose access to services

How does your agency encourage client participation?

- EX. – Formal feedback group, client appointments

What does your agency believe clients have to offer?

- EX. – Experts in their experiences, experts in their solutions





# Client Participation

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- Many agencies have inconsistent application of client participation
- Client feedback that is critical is hard to hear
- Staff feel defensive after putting forth their best effort
- Some client feedback is based on misunderstood practices or distorted perceptions



# Attitudes about Client Participation

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- Approach each client feedback opportunity as if you've never been here before
- Privilege the client's experiences as a true and valuable tool to reach goals
- Have a sense of honest curiosity to each interaction
- Leave defensiveness at the door
  - It is one person's or group's perspective, but it does not mean another perspective is invalid or wrong



# Measurable Change from Client Participation

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## ➤ Change in clinical policies

- Lottery system iterated quickly, did not have to physically be at agency for lottery, certain clients prioritized

## ➤ Clients expressed higher levels of trust in agency leadership

- Client said Clinical Director was a decent person after engagement in feedback sessions

## ➤ Headshot photos of staff at the agency entrance





“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you still come out of it.”

• -Maya Angelou

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# CRITICAL ASSESSMENTS

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# Critical Analyzing "Failures"

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Why have a process of critical assessments?

How do staff feel about criticizing "failures" and the agency's processes?

- EX. – Staff are confident there are no negative consequences for discussing things they are unhappy with

What process is currently in place to internally criticize and analyze?

- EX. – The Naysayer (World War Z)



# Redefining "failure"

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What is failure?

- Not meeting goals?
- Emotional state?

Courage – The willingness to risk failure and say “I don’t know”

- Failure is normal
- Resilience – The ability to bounce up and forward from failure or stress

True failure only occurs when unwilling to learn from event and improve process

- Debrief sessions

“There is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in” – Leonard Cohen



# Why failure should be encouraged

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- Organizations that thrive seek out manageable failures and risks
- Staff encouraged to be creative problem solvers
  - If a solution does not work, no one is in trouble
- Adult learners need to feel empowered and trusted
  - Pat a person on the back ten times for every time you offer frank criticism
  - Explicitly celebrate successes daily

Critical assessments of "failures" lead to improvements!





# Benefits of Critical Assessments

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- Funders are attracted to agencies that are aware of their limitations and can explain them
- Processes cannot be effectively changed without honest discussion
- Staff feel buy-in to agency and mission when they have a safe space to discuss parts of the job that are difficult



# Measurable Change from Critical Assessments

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- Human resource policies changed
  - Time off became PTO, extra summer time became codified
- Response to violent incidents (suicide) improved
  - Emergency process simplified, debriefs mandatory
- Client's summer shelter needs became priority
  - Large change from the historical roots of sheltering agency closing in summer to give volunteers a break
- Staff encouraged to take risks by speaking their truth
  - Staff report more confidence when dealing with donors, board members, and clients
  - Talk at events like Women's Luncheon



Moving from Internal to External

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# TELL YOUR STORY!

Marketing

&

Outreach



# Cohesive Marketing

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- Website
- Newsletters
- Social Media
- Direct Mail
- Collateral Material



# Creating Content

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- Not just the job of Development
- Clinical Staff have crucial knowledge
- Stories illuminate Numbers
- Effective content personalizes the experiences to the audience



# Shine the Spotlight

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- Find opportunities to present to groups
- Recognize existing partnerships
- Raise profile of staff members



# Measurable Change from External Efforts

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- Increased recognition of need in the community
- Recognition of expert front-line knowledge
- Top of mind for giving opportunities
- Agency is sought out for partnerships
- More resources to move people out of homelessness and stabilize lives



# Need for Constant Questioning

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- Why no regular rental assistance?
- Do we have enough partnerships? The right types?
- What can we do to increase client motivation? What can we do to offer services that are more empowering?
- How do we connect with donors on an even deeper level?
- Where do we fit in the Continuum of Care in our area?
- How do we reduce the low number of client complaints to zero?





# Thank You!

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## Questions?

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