



## **Homelessness Prevention & Rehousing Accelerator**

Technical assistance to reduce homelessness

### **Summary**

Today, jurisdictions of all sizes are facing a crisis of housing affordability and availability, struggling to support a homeless response workforce that is strained from more than two years of managing the pandemic, and grappling with what will happen as pandemic-related resources and protections come to an end. But the pressure has been mounting on homeless response systems since long before the pandemic. Local systems originally intended to address temporary housing emergencies have been stretched too thin, responsible for managing the rising numbers of unhoused individuals<sup>1</sup> while also recognizing the urgent need to build a sustainable system that incorporates prevention for future inflow and expanded housing options for outflow. Many jurisdictions are eager to test innovative solutions in homelessness reduction and are seeking additional capacity to support these efforts. The Government Performance Lab (GPL) can provide hands-on support protected from the day-to-day emergencies of agencies' operational work to help move these efforts towards a sustainable model that reduces homelessness.

### **Government Performance Lab Homelessness Prevention & Rehousing Accelerator**

The Government Performance Lab (GPL) is offering selected jurisdictions dedicated capacity to move prevention and/or rehousing initiatives forward over the course of one year. Selected jurisdictions will be awarded pro bono technical assistance from the GPL for 12 months with the possibility of extension. There will be a limited number of pro bono slots available. The GPL plans to provide support in the following areas:

#### **Prevention: Reduce inflow to homelessness through upstream systems or community intervention points and targeting of housing assistance investments.**

- Topic #1: Reduce the likelihood of individuals exiting a system (e.g. criminal justice, child welfare) into homelessness by bringing agencies together to develop shared goals, improve discharge and aftercare processes, and align on prioritized access to housing resources.
- Topic #2: Support individuals to retain their housing in communities with high rates of eviction, rent-burden, or homelessness entry by leveraging trusted local organizations and coordinating services to improve connections to best-fit housing resources.
- Topic #3: Mitigate the harm of reductions in pandemic-related federal rental assistance by designing new, local rental assistance programs or redesigning pre-existing programs.

#### **Rehousing: Optimize existing subsidized housing opportunities by shortening the lease-up time through streamlined, client-centered processes and expand housing opportunities for priority populations through new models.**

- Topic #4: Reduce the amount of time it takes for individuals to move into subsidized housing by making the referral and eligibility verification process more effective, efficient, and client-centered.
- Topic #5: Address structural rehousing barriers for specific homeless populations (e.g. justice involved, young adults, medical needs) by aligning on priorities, improving processes, and developing new programs.

### **Application Process**

**Who should apply:** This opportunity is open to state or local jurisdictions or Continuum of Care (CoC) Collaborative Applicants in conjunction with a government partner.

**How to apply:** To apply, please complete and submit [this application](#) by 5 PM PST on Friday, November 18, 2022. This initial application should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. Register [here](#) for our upcoming informational webinar on November 2, 2022, at 2 p.m. EST to learn more.

**Process:** Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Following submission of the first-round application above, the GPL may invite applicants to participate in 1-2 phone interviews starting in late fall to better understand current work around identified initiatives and needs for support. As part of the final selection process, we may also request letters of support from leadership or other relevant stakeholders and an agreement to sign a memorandum of understanding.



## Overview of Prevention & Rehousing Accelerator Technical Assistance

The GPL will provide selected jurisdictions with significant dedicated capacity for 12 months with the possibility to extend longer. The GPL team will work shoulder-to-shoulder with government staff and other stakeholders on discrete initiatives, from diagnosing key challenges through to implementing and sustaining new initiatives. In addition to dedicated staffing, selected jurisdictions will also receive:

- Exposure to relevant models from other jurisdictions and facilitated opportunities to workshop implementation efforts with jurisdictions tackling similar initiatives.
- Training modules to build agency staff capacity on core GPL tools around data-driven performance management, designing service arrays and referral pathways, and/or procurement.

## Prevention & Rehousing Accelerator Topic Descriptions

Below you will find a fuller description of each topic within the Prevention and Rehousing Accelerator along with potential questions the GPL can help jurisdictions answer. This is meant to be a starting point to spark your thinking about potential work that the GPL can lead within your jurisdiction. Note that every GPL project begins with a diagnosis phase to better understand the jurisdiction's unique context and specific opportunities, and solutions are shaped in close collaboration with the jurisdiction.

### Prevention:

*Homelessness cannot be solved without a strategy for preventing individuals and families from becoming homeless in the first place and cannot be solved by homeless response systems alone. The GPL can help jurisdictions implement prevention efforts that are efficient (targeted to those most likely to become homeless), effective (successfully prevent homelessness), and equitable (focused on fairness of outcomes). To that end, the GPL can support jurisdictions in the following topic areas:*

- **Topic #1: Reduce the likelihood of individuals exiting a system (e.g. criminal justice, child welfare) into homelessness by bringing agencies together to develop shared goals, improve discharge and aftercare processes, and align on prioritized access to housing resources.**

People experiencing homelessness frequently touch other systems prior to becoming homeless, such as the child welfare system<sup>2</sup>, the criminal justice system<sup>3</sup>, domestic violence shelters<sup>4</sup>, or ER rooms/hospitals<sup>5</sup>. This presents an early opportunity to intervene and prevent homelessness, as well as an opportunity to support other partner system goals (e.g. decreased risk of child removal for families who are stably housed<sup>6</sup>). However, jurisdictions may struggle to act because they have limited data and unclear ownership of these cross-system dynamics. The GPL can help jurisdictions tackle key questions such as:

- What systems do our homeless populations encounter prior to becoming homeless?
- How can we identify individuals in other systems that are at the highest risk of becoming homeless (e.g. through screening)?
- What new discharge and referral processes/aftercare can we implement to reduce the likelihood of individuals exiting a system into homelessness?
- Are there housing resources that should be earmarked for certain populations most at risk of chronic homelessness, such as individuals cycling between jail, ER, and homelessness?
- How can we connect multi-system involved individuals and families (e.g. families at risk of child removal due to homelessness) with housing resources that best fit them?

The GPL can help jurisdictions bring systems together to align on goals and jointly implement interventions, including by creating or adapting screening tools to identify individuals at high risk of becoming homeless and piloting new discharge, referral, and aftercare processes to connect people to best-fit housing resources. This work could be positioned from a Mayor's or Governor's Office, jointly supported by two agencies (e.g. the homeless & child welfare agencies) or positioned in one agency but with support from a partner agency.



- **Topic #2: Support people to retain their housing in communities with high rates of eviction/rent-burden/homelessness entry by leveraging trusted local organizations and coordinating services to improve connections to best-fit housing resources.**

Due to the legacy of racist housing policies and systemic disinvestment, jurisdictions see certain zip codes, neighborhoods, or micro-neighborhoods with high rates of rent-burdened families and evictions. Ultimately, these areas may see a disproportionate number of residents become homeless. Individuals in these communities often interact with a variety of trusted local organizations, including faith-based organizations and libraries, that could be leveraged to disseminate information and resources related to tenants' rights and eviction prevention. Local eviction prevention services may also be siloed, duplicative, or not comprehensively integrated into communities most in need. The GPL can help jurisdictions tackle key questions such as:

- Are there certain neighborhoods, zip codes, or micro-neighborhoods with disproportionate levels of families being evicted (or at risk of eviction) and becoming homeless?
- How can we meet individuals where they are, screen them for eviction risk, and connect them to the resources that best meet their needs?
- Are there gaps or duplications within the local eviction prevention service array? Do we need to procure for new services?
- Are our eviction prevention/rental assistance service providers coordinating and collaborating to maximize the reach and efficacy of services?

The GPL can support jurisdictions to identify high risk communities and then bring together stakeholders to identify available supports, assess gaps, and improve coordination, dissemination of information, and referral processes.

- **Topic #3: Mitigate the harm of reductions in pandemic-related federal rental assistance by designing new, local programs or redesigning pre-existing programs.**

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted unprecedented new federal supports to prevent homelessness. Unfortunately, by the end of 2022, many of these new supports will have expired,<sup>7</sup> but people, particularly people of color, continue to face challenges in maintaining stable, safe, and affordable housing.<sup>8</sup> Many jurisdictions are interested in unpacking what worked and what didn't in their targeting and administration of these large, federal rental assistance programs, particularly as they consider what smaller local investments might look like to prevent a surge in housing insecurity and evictions. The GPL can help jurisdictions tackle key questions such as:

- What can we learn from the pandemic-related program investments re: targeting, outreach, and administration of rental assistance programs?
- How do we apply these learnings to smaller, more targeted local rental assistance programs?
- How can we monitor programs for equitable reach?

The GPL can help jurisdictions uncover learnings from federal pandemic-related eviction prevention investments and then design new, smaller, more targeted local housing assistance programs (or improve the targeting and coordination of preexisting rental assistance programs).

### **Rehousing:**

*Homelessness cannot be solved without a strategy for optimizing and increasing access to deeply affordable housing. The national crisis of housing affordability has led to increasingly competitive markets with a limited pool of available units<sup>9</sup> that pits deeply low-income households against one another. Landlords have little incentive to participate in complicated or burdensome housing programs when demand is high in the private market, often shrinking the pool of housing stock further. The GPL can help jurisdictions maximize their dedicated housing stock that currently exists through quick lease-ups, improve the experience for both landlords and housing seekers alike, and address inequities in access to housing for discrete homeless*



*populations that face additional barriers. To these ends, the GPL plans to support jurisdictions in the following topic areas:*

- **Topic #4: Reduce the amount of time it takes for individuals to move into subsidized housing by making the referral and eligibility verification process more effective, efficient, and client-centered.**

Requirements for landlords and unhoused individuals entering subsidized housing can be cumbersome and confusing, resulting in move-in delays that leave precious housing stock unoccupied for months. It can be difficult for jurisdictions to estimate the timeframe to rehouse individuals, hindering their ability to use performance metrics and track progress. Many jurisdictions also struggle to entice landlords to participate in subsidized housing. These communities strive for a frictionless process that would help them recruit new and retain existing landlords. The GPL can help jurisdictions tackle key questions such as:

- What are the current timeframes for key steps of the process to move into subsidized housing (Public Housing Authorities, vouchers, or Permanent Supportive Housing)?
- Where are there inefficiencies and opportunities to streamline and standardize requirements?
- What are the key challenges faced by clients, housing navigators, and landlords in this process?
- How can we monitor the process in real-time?

The GPL can help jurisdictions measure the baseline process, set ideal timeframes for completion of key move-in process steps, develop monitoring systems to spot delays in real time, create toolkits and templates for scalable efficiencies, and co-design user-friendly training materials for clients, landlords, and/or housing staff.

- **Topic #5: Address structural rehousing barriers for specific homeless populations.**

For homeless individuals who are young adults, have a history of justice-involvement, or have physical disabilities or medical needs, the challenge of securing housing is compounded. In most jurisdictions, landlords can deny housing to individuals based on prior convictions and even low-threshold subsidized housing (Public Housing Agencies, Permanent Supportive Housing) typically has some subjective screening process. Young adults may face resistance based on their age and lack of housing history, or they may need alternate housing arrangements such as room or home shares that aren't currently supported by subsidies. Individuals with medical needs that require support such as wheelchair access or home health care are limited to ADA compliant buildings with elevators. The GPL can help jurisdictions tackle key questions such as:

- How can we crosswalk PSH eligibility requirements based on chronic homelessness with periods of incarceration, hospitalization, or foster care?
- Where is information on justice-involvement currently being gathered in publicly supported housing, what are the best practices in assessing risk, and how should it inform housing acceptance decisions?
- How can we support young adults who may prefer or need different types of housing assistance, such as room shares or rent contribution towards a household?
- How can we ensure that homeless individuals with disabilities or medical needs have priority access to appropriate units?

The GPL can help jurisdictions pilot population-specific housing initiatives with an aim to address the specific challenges young adults, individuals with a criminal justice history, and individuals with disabilities or medical needs face in the private and subsidized housing markets.



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### *1. What is the Government Performance Lab?*

The mission of the [Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab](#) (GPL) is to speed up our nation's progress on difficult social problems by improving how state and local government human service agencies function and how their dollars are spent. We hire and train full-time employees, pairing them with government agencies to lead 12-36 month intensive reform projects. The GPL conducts research on how governments can improve the results they achieve for their citizens. An important part of our research model involves providing technical assistance to state and local governments. Through this hands-on involvement, we gain insights into the barriers that governments face and the solutions that can overcome these barriers.

### *2. When is this application due?*

Completed applications are due by 5 PM PST on Friday, November 18, 2022.

### *3. What is required to submit an application?*

You will be asked to provide information on the agencies submitting the application, identify a point of contact, provide some basic information about the homeless response system in your jurisdiction, self-assess your greatest areas of opportunity, and then provide more detail on the 1-2 topics your jurisdiction is most interested in working on.

We encourage you to be specific in the open response boxes about the topic(s) you select. We want to better understand the challenge your jurisdiction is facing, any existing efforts or resources to address that challenge, and what you see as the opportunity for GPL support.

### *4. How will selections be made?*

There are a range of factors we will consider, including:

- Feasibility, including commitment and buy-in from necessary stakeholders & existence of the necessary resources for implementation
- Scale of impact (both direct and indirect) & impact for BIPOC communities in particular
- Potential for transferable/scalable learnings
- Geographic diversity of ultimate portfolio

### *5. What will the interview process be like?*

In advance of being invited to interview, we may ask a couple of follow-up questions related to your application to better understand the stakeholders involved and confirm internal agency buy-in. We may require additional stakeholders to be present at an interview in order to proceed. Interviews will be held via phone or video call and will be scheduled for one hour. They are designed to help us learn more about the specific challenges your jurisdiction is facing, and the way GPL support might be leveraged. Jurisdictions will be asked to bring key representatives from relevant government and community agencies to participate in the interview. Following the interview, there may be follow-up requests for information or second interviews. As part of consideration for final selection, jurisdictions will be asked to verbally confirm their ability to sign a Harvard memorandum of understanding (MoU) and may be asked to provide letters of support from jurisdiction leadership. More guidance will be sent in advance to jurisdictions selected to interview.

### *6. How many jurisdictions will be awarded pro bono TA through the Accelerator?*

The number of pro bono slots will depend on the applications received, but we anticipate initially awarding 2-4 jurisdictions with pro bono TA this round. There may be opportunities to expand this pool depending on what projects are being proposed and funder interest. We would encourage you to apply.



*7. What can I expect if I am awarded a TA through the Prevention & Rehousing Accelerator?*

Possible TA activities include:

- Defining target populations through new data collection, analysis of existing data sources including data matching with other systems, case reviews, and stakeholder interviews
- Adapting or creating new risk screening tools to better identify individuals at risk of homelessness
- Mapping available resources and referral pathways
- Aligning stakeholders around priorities & opportunities
- Co-designing new streamlined, standardized, and client-centered referral partnerships and pathways (or improving existing pathways) in collaboration with other system stakeholders and individuals with lived experience
- Creating user-friendly tools/materials for clients, agency staff, housing provider staff, and developers
- Launching a pilot, monitoring for efficacy, and iterating real-time
- Creating performance management processes
- Developing plans for sustaining / scaling new models

*8. What is the timeline for award notification and project start?*

Jurisdictions will be notified of decisions in early 2023 and projects will start in Spring, 2023.

*9. Does the GPL provide new housing resources, programs, or funding?*

No. The GPL provides guidance and implementation support through staffing and training. We do not provide housing resources, programs, or funds.

*10. Can I still receive support if I am not awarded a pro bono TA slot in the Accelerator?*

If your jurisdiction is not selected for a pro bono TA slot, there may be the opportunity to self-fund or collaborate with the GPL to fundraise for TA. There may also be opportunities to participate in peer learning sessions and receive other materials/templates that the GPL develops.

*11. I'm a nonprofit – can I apply?*

Nonprofits that are not CoC Leads as defined by HUD are not eligible.

*12. I'm a CoC – can I apply?*

CoC Lead Agencies as defined by HUD are the only non-governmental entity eligible for this opportunity and can be the lead on an application and project. However, you will need demonstrated commitment from a government partner, including participation in the interview process and agreement that they will be engaged in the project. A government agency needs to be part of the puzzle – bringing a resource to the table or owning a process we would be modifying all together (CoC, GPL, gov't). While government partners do not need to lead the project (a CoC staff person can be the designated project lead), we will likely need access to government data and people directing operations, both to understand the existing processes and to propose changes in service delivery. Government partners should be selected based on what you are trying to solve and who has ownership over what, but could be a city, county, or state agency.

If you are a CoC Lead, tell us in your application if you have a government partner onboard already or what government agency it would be if you haven't yet gotten their commitment. We may ask for additional information or confirmation prior to an interview.

*13. I'm not a homeless response agency, I work for a different government agency – can I apply?*

Yes, if the project has a homelessness reduction component and the relevant homeless response agency is onboard with any necessary collaboration. We may request letters of support from collaborating agencies or ask that they are included in the interview. We especially encourage agencies to collaborate for any multisystem coordination topics, such as Topic #1 (system interventions) and Topic #4 (streamlining lease-up).



*14. I'm a small town / county – can I apply?*

Yes. We are very interested in geographic diversity and working with more rural and small localities. However, if you are a smaller city or locality, we'd encourage you to think about how you could expand the reach of your project – can this work be taken to the county level? Or can you collaborate with multiple cities or counties who all use same process/resource? Think about the maximum impact you could have with this project, while still having a unifying target of the work (i.e. one process, program, or partnership that all are working on).

If you have more specific questions about how to put forward the application, send us an email at [govlab@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:govlab@hks.harvard.edu).

*15. Many non-gov't partners would be involved in our project – do we include them in the application?*

If your initiative's feasibility/impact is highly dependent upon a non-governmental partner, we would encourage you to note the organization(s) in your application as well as their commitment/buy-in if you have already secured it. We may ask additional follow-up questions in advance of being invited to an interview or request attendance from partners at the interview.

*16. Should I apply if I'm unsure about the impact of upcoming elections on agency priorities and operations?*

Yes, we would still encourage you to apply, and we can discuss in the interview feasibility, concerns, and options.

*17. I'm not sure what category my project idea/challenge fits into – can I propose something different?*

Yes. We are interested in hearing from you about the most difficult challenges and exciting opportunities you are facing and are open to expanding our scope beyond these topics, particularly if they are still related to prevention or rehousing.

*18. What if I have a special population in mind that isn't addressed in the topics?*

We have two topics that are intended to be a starting place for ANY population-specific work: topics #1 and #5. Under prevention, topic #1 about system exits into homelessness could easily apply to unsheltered individuals by examining if there are specific systems that people are exiting from and becoming unsheltered. This topic can also apply to folks exiting foster care or domestic violence shelters, or individuals with medical needs. Under rehousing, topic #5 can include work to support any distinct population that faces specific challenges for rehousing, including unsheltered homeless individuals or refugees. For example, if there are specific barriers around accessing required documentation, if there is aftercare that is needed for those that are transitioning into housing from the street or from domestic violence situations, or if there are economic mobility-related services needed for recent immigrants – these could all be considered as part of the rehousing design process for those specific populations.

If you have an idea for a project that isn't covered here, feel free to propose it under topic #6 (choose your own topic) or reach out at [govlab@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:govlab@hks.harvard.edu) to discuss where it might fit.

*19. Can we propose a project about racial equity?*

All of our efforts, across all of our topics, will consider and work to advance racial equity. This will look like disaggregating data by race, setting targets with racial equity in mind, tracking progress, evaluating success, and iterating based on targets, partnering with proximate, culturally responsive providers whenever possible, and other topic-specific work.

If you have a project in mind related to racial equity that falls outside of the five topics in the Accelerator, feel free to propose it under topic #6 (choose your own topic) or reach out at [govlab@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:govlab@hks.harvard.edu) to discuss.



**20. Can my jurisdiction apply for multiple topics / multiple projects?**

Please use the allocation of points to indicate all topics your jurisdiction is interested in, but we ask for more detailed information about the two topics you allocate the most points to. Ultimately, it is unlikely we would work on multiple projects within one jurisdiction, but we are open to exploring multiple ideas during the interview process and collaboratively determining the best path forward.

**21. If selected, what is required of my jurisdiction to participate?**

We encourage you to select a topic where you already dedicate staff time/resources (or are ready to dedicate new staff time/resources). This project should be a high priority for your agency and while the GPL will drive work forward, there will be the need for close, ongoing collaboration with government/CoC staff to advance the initiative successfully. As part of this, the GPL will require that you designate a project lead who will be the GPL's day-to-day contact to support work progression, sign an MOU, and potentially sign a data-sharing agreement.

**22. What should I do if I have questions about the application?**

Reach out to [govlab@hks.harvard.edu](mailto:govlab@hks.harvard.edu) with any questions.

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, Henry, M., Sousa, T. de, Roddey, C., Gayen, S., & Bednar, T. J.. 2021. The 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness.

<sup>2</sup> Dworsky, Amy, Laura Napolitano, and Mark Courtney. 2013. "Homelessness during the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood." *American Journal of Public Health* 103 (S2): S318–23. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2013.301455>.

<sup>3</sup> Couloute, Lucius. 2018. *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among Formerly Incarcerated People*. Prison Policy Initiative. [prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html](https://prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html).

<sup>4</sup> The Administration for Children and Families. "Domestic Violence and Homelessness: Statistics (2016)." 2016. [www.acf.hhs.gov](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/fact-sheet/domestic-violence-and-homelessness-statistics-2016). <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/fact-sheet/domestic-violence-and-homelessness-statistics-2016>.

<sup>5</sup> Treglia, Dan, Eileen L. Johns, Maryanne Schretzman, Jacob Berman, Dennis P. Culhane, David C. Lee, and Kelly M. Doran. 2019. "When Crises Converge: Hospital Visits before and after Shelter Use among Homeless New Yorkers." *Health Affairs* 38 (9): 1458–67. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05308>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. 2017. *The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) Report 24*.

<sup>7</sup> Review of *Expiring Federal Provisions That May Impact Homelessness: Funding, Flexibilities, and Waivers Set to Expire in FY 2022*. April, 2022. U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. [https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset\\_library/Expiring\\_Federal\\_Provisions\\_That\\_May\\_Impact\\_Homelessness.pdf](https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Expiring_Federal_Provisions_That_May_Impact_Homelessness.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Fernald, Marcia, ed. n.d. *The State of the Nation's Housing 2022*. Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies. [https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/reports/files/Harvard\\_JCHS\\_State\\_Nations\\_Housing\\_2022.pdf](https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/reports/files/Harvard_JCHS_State_Nations_Housing_2022.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.