

- **Problem assessment, the challenge or need that prompted the local government to develop the program**

The City of Riverside, California is the 59th largest city in the United States, 12th largest city in California, and the largest city in California's Inland Empire metro area. Through the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness and the 25 Cities, local leaders across the United States marshalled federal, local, and nonprofit efforts to end veteran homelessness within their states and communities. In June 2015, City of Riverside Mayor, Rusty Bailey, eagerly accepted the challenge. Riverside's goal was to permanently house 86 veterans by December 31, 2015. These veterans were living on the streets, parks, shelters, vehicles and other places not meant for human habitation throughout the City.

Through partnerships and collaborative efforts with Veteran Affairs, Riverside County Housing Authority, Riverside University Health System Behavioral Health, Riverside County Department of Public Social Services, faith-based organizations, and local businesses, the City was able to exceed its goal and assist 89 veterans throughout the City with housing and reach "functional zero." Functional zero is reached when, at any point in time, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness, both on the streets and in shelters, is no greater than the City's monthly Veteran housing placement rate.

- **Program implementation and costs**

The Mayors Challenge carried no dedicated funding from federal, state or regional levels. The City allocated federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds towards a Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program to help veterans with rental assistance and security deposits.

Additionally, Riverside's Homeless Outreach Team dedicated its efforts and resources to strengthening the Mayor's commitment to ending veteran homelessness in the City. Moreover, the initiative required augmenting partnerships among veteran service organizations, community-based providers, faith-based organizations, public housing agencies, affordable housing operators, and other stakeholders that provided Outreach Specialists, Housing Navigators, Case Managers, rental assistance and permanent supportive housing towards this effort. Prior to the Mayors Challenge, these organizations were working in silos and not making advance headway in addressing veteran homelessness.

Riverside has applied the following strategies to ending veteran homelessness:

(1) *Housing First principles*: Prioritizes providing people experiencing homelessness with permanent housing as quickly as possible – and then providing voluntary supportive services as needed;

(2) *Coordinated Entry*: A process developed to ensure that all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access to housing and are quickly identified, assessed for, referred, and connected to housing and assistance based on their strengths and needs; and

(3) *By-Name list*: A real-time, up-to-date list of all people experiencing homelessness which can be filtered by categories, and shared across agencies. The first step in identifying which permanent housing placement best suited the veteran was determined by a combination of discharge status and corresponding program eligibility. Once a veteran's status had been confirmed, the case was presented and assigned to a housing navigator at weekly case conferencing meetings. Weekly follow-up and collaborative partnerships allowed the

collaborative to streamline the housing process as well as minimize the frequency in which a veteran may "fall through the cracks." The team of Navigators were continually shoring up and building relationships with landlords to help provide a path to housing. The City and its partnering agencies successfully hosted several Landlord Fairs, which were designed to educate and increase the number of landlords willing to work with housing vouchers. Landlord Fairs were one of the community's most successful tools in ensuring a swift housing placement.

- **Tangible results or measurable outcomes of the program**

The partnering agencies took steps needed to identify all veterans experiencing homelessness. This included veterans who were both unsheltered and sheltered, in transitional programs or in other temporary institutional settings. A total of 89 veterans were identified and housed before the December 31, 2015 deadline.

The process was employed through the creation and implementation of a Coordinated Entry System known as Homelink, which has generated an active real time By-Name list. The list was utilized by all agencies for both tracking purposes and to provide a streamlined accurate process and timeline of the housing process. Veteran focused case conferencing meetings were held on a weekly basis and housing plans were discussed amongst the group. The By-Name list continues to expand and reach new areas throughout the County, as a direct result of Riverside's ongoing efforts to introduce and recruit new agencies to participate using the County's Coordinated Entry System software program. The By-Name list also helped the partnering agencies identify gaps in services and resources needed to develop affordable and permanent supportive housing and provide rental assistance.

Having a real-time system allowed the partnering agencies to pull the most recent up-to-date list at any given time. Furthermore, having the ability to track new additions and updates to profiles immediately was one of the key strategies we utilized to execute swift and efficient housing intervention plans.

The City was recognized by the White House, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and Community Solutions for ending veteran homelessness through the Mayors Challenge and 25 Cities Initiative.

- **Lessons learned during planning, implementation, and analysis of the program.**

The lessons learned through the Mayors Challenge initiative are both replicable and transferable when addressing homelessness as a whole. Building strong partnerships with service providers and government agencies, as well as sharing data resources, has allowed Riverside to coordinate and execute collaborative efforts focused on identifying and ultimately housing homeless veterans as quickly as possible.

Riverside will continue to have a need for additional housing stock such as affordable and permanent supportive housing. Also, funding which will allow officials to provide resources without the restrictions that are germane to grant funding has been a key strategy for housing homeless Veterans in the City of Riverside. This community's dedication to the population it serves, paired with an accurate needs assessment and access to immediate response teams aided and ensured that fewer veterans experience periods of homelessness. In the future, a veteran who has become homeless will, and those who are willing to accept housing, will have shorter episodes since there are resources and housing units available to serve this population.

Riverside also learned that the community at-large is key to helping transform units into actual homes. These partnerships included local businesses, churches, food banks, transportation agencies, resource centers, medical facilities, grocery stores, and service providers that have the same goal to help veterans become self-sufficient and retain housing. An adequate support system has proven to greatly benefit veterans when it comes to long-term stability and retention of housing.

- **How the program raises awareness of the contributions of Local Government Managers**

The program amplified the need for local government to identify veterans in need and connect them to housing and related supportive services.

The Mayor and the City Manager of the City of Riverside recognized and promoted the urgency for effective programs such as Tenant-Based Rental Assistance and permanent supportive housing, proven practices and partnerships to aggressively connect homeless and at-risk veterans with services to receive the help they needed to become permanently housed. Further, the public commitments of Riverside's government officials served to galvanize residents to begin advocating for safer, and healthier communities by supporting initiatives to help reduce and end veteran homelessness, and continue efforts in ending chronic, family and youth homelessness. To continue the discussion on addressing homelessness in the City and throughout the region, the City of Riverside's City Manager and City Council hosted an all day workshop on October 11, 2016 where fifteen (15) homelessness experts shared nationwide best practices to ending homelessness.