

The Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness (“Network”) seeks state support to continue its role in preventing and ending homelessness in the Western region and across the Commonwealth. Since 2009, when the Network was created with state funds, the Network has become a leader in facilitating innovative and collaborative solutions to the challenge of homelessness. When state funding ended in 2011, that leadership has been made possible exclusively through local foundation support and Network partner contributions. State funding in Fiscal Year 2015 is critical for the Network to continue its unique role, and to provide a template for multi-faceted and coordinated strategies to prevent and end homelessness in and beyond Western Massachusetts.

I. **Vision: Implement Opening Doors across Western MA**

In 2010 the [U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness](#) published **Opening Doors: A Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness**. Updated in 2012, the data-driven plan relies on evidence-based practices to accomplish 4 goals:

- Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness in 5 years
- Prevent and end homelessness among veterans in 5 years
- Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children in 10 years
- Set a path to ending all types of homelessness

The Western MA Network to End Homelessness wants to do the same. Our intention is to use **Opening Doors** as our roadmap, creating an on-the-ground version of the plan tailored to the needs of our communities and informed by our partners' realities and wisdom.

Specifically, we will expand our current activities beyond coordination and outreach to include outcomes measurement and systems evaluation. Doing so will enable the Network to evolve to a new level of leadership aligned with the first theme of **Opening Doors**:

Opening Doors Theme 1: Increase Leadership, Collaboration, and Civic Engagement

Objective 1: Provide and promote collaborative leadership at all levels of government and across all sectors to inspire and energize Americans to commit to preventing and ending homelessness: *What the Network does now throughout Western Massachusetts.*

Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of public and private organizations by increasing knowledge about collaboration, homelessness, and successful interventions to prevent and end homelessness: *What the Network will do by tracking outcomes, assessing impact, and identifying opportunities for innovation.*

With staff capacity to foster collaboration and coordination *and* build an outcomes-driven culture, the Network can develop, implement and assess local strategies relevant to the remaining themes of **Opening Doors**:

- Increase access to stable and affordable housing
- Increase economic security
- Improve health and stability
- Retool the homeless crisis response system

II. Action Plan

The Network will implement Opening Doors over 12-16 months based on 3 phases of work.

Phase 1. Laying the Foundation: Creating the Plan [Month 0 to Month 4]

- A landscape analysis will be conducted to gather information about current activities, align those activities with the goals and objectives of **Opening Doors**, and assess gaps.
- Data and information from relevant programs, CoCs and meaningful ancillary activities will be integrated to create baseline measures from which to track our progress and assess our impact.
- A draft plan of **Opening Doors in Western MA** will be created.

Phase 2. Nuts and Bolts: Implementing Opening Doors in Western MA [Month 4 to Month 12]

- Reporting mechanisms and report templates, including interactive visualizations, will be devised for ongoing assessment of outcomes and impact (e.g. quarterly reporting of outcomes and annual assessment of impact).
- Committees and work groups will be aligned with core components of our plan and their purpose will evolve from sharing information to achieving outcomes.
- Opportunities for innovation will be identified and strategies for launching these innovations will be pursued.
- A final version of **Opening Doors in Western MA** will be published.

Phase 3. Our Open House: Sharing our Work with Others in MA [Month 12 to Month 16]

- Our first annual report, 'Opening Doors in Western MA: One Year Progress Report' will be published.
- We will develop templates for plan development, implementation and outcomes monitoring for other Networks and CoCs in Massachusetts. This could result in a Toolkit for others in the state and across the country.
- We will outreach to our community, to CoCs and to Massachusetts' Networks and advocate for the use of actionable, measurable strategies to reduce and end homelessness in the Commonwealth.

III. Funding Request

The Network currently receives funding from local foundations including the United Way of Pioneer Valley, the Community Foundation of Western MA, and the Davis Foundation. In addition, approximately two dozen of our partners have elected to contribute annually in order to sustain our work. Our total funding is approximately \$70,000 which permits us to staff the Network with a half-time Director (.5 FTE) who oversees all Network-based activities across the region as well as to cover the administrative fees of our fiscal sponsor.

Our request for \$125,000 will provide us with the capacity we need to 1) ensure the continuity of a half-time director; 2) fund a co-director (.5 FTE) who will implement **Opening Doors in Western MA**; and 3) cover all related project costs.

We will maintain our current funding/operations strategy of using the United Way of Pioneer Valley as our fiscal sponsor and hiring professional Consultants to provide the staffing we need. Staff oversight will be provided by the Network Steering Committee while the [Network Leadership Council](#) will hold the Steering Committee and the Co-Directors accountable for meeting our goals.