



Virginia Association of Counties ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2018.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Arlington County, Virginia

Program Title: 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: *Mark J Schwartz* / MARK J. SCHWARTZ

Title: COUNTY MANAGER

Signature: *Mark J Schwartz*

Arlington's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness

Executive Summary

Arlington County's **10-Year Plan to End Homelessness** launched in 2008 with a bold mission. After decades of *managing* homelessness in Arlington, the 10-Year Plan ambitiously embraced the new goal of *ending* homelessness in Arlington. The 10-Year Plan laid out the framework for successful implementation including: a clear statement of the needs, the vision for the future, guiding principles for the work, and action steps needed to achieve the vision. The people involved in these planning efforts worked with tireless commitment and dedication to make the 10-Year Plan's vision a reality.

Significant accomplishments under Arlington's 10-Year Plan include:

- **Decreased homelessness by 46 percent overall since 2008.** In the initial three-year period of the 10-Year Plan, from 2008 to 2010, the annual Point in Time Count showed an average of 485 people living in shelters or on the streets. In the last three years of the Plan (2016-2018), the annual average was 209 people.
- **Attained functional zero status for veteran homelessness,** meaning the monthly housing placement rate for veterans is greater than the number of veterans who are homeless at any given time.
- **Housed 150 chronically homeless individuals** in a three-year period through the 100 Homes Campaign.
- **Successfully advocated for the County Board to dedicate a portion of committed affordable units to Permanent Supportive Housing with a target of 425 total PSH units.** Since 2008, Arlington has added 215 permanent supportive housing spaces specifically for formerly homeless persons with disabilities for a total of 423 total PSH units.
- **Created an Annual Data Report Card** used by all Continuum of Care (CoC) Partners to track key metrics and outcomes. Outcomes included people attaining employment after participation in CoC programs

(over 60% success for family shelters and rapid re-housing programs) and people exiting shelter to permanent or stable housing (over 80% success for family shelters).

After a decade of hard work, homelessness still exists in Arlington. The 10-Year Plan, however, drove a transformative shift in the community's approach to this multifaceted issue. Today, because of the 10-Year Plan, the system Arlington has in place is stronger than ever and is ready to meet the needs of the individuals and families whose lives are impacted by homelessness.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

In 2006, Arlington homeless service providers were assisting more than **1,100 households annually**, providing critical supports that included: emergency shelter, medical care, food, clothing, employment services, and case management. An additional **600 chronically homeless individuals** lived on the streets and were assisted through outreach programs. The price of homelessness to a community is an expensive one in terms of the financial costs of interventions from public safety, medical, and human service programs. Incidents of homelessness can also take a toll on individuals and families directly affected by it – and the generations that follow. Persons living on the streets suffer from exposure to environmental elements, physical and mental illnesses and disabilities, malnutrition and victimization. Families experiencing homelessness overwhelmingly include small children which can lead to developmental delays and negatively impact social, physical, emotional and academic outcomes. Mothers and other caretakers of these children can often be victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. These caretakers may also experience related mental and physical health issues. Domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for families, and the leading cause of homelessness for women.

Since the mid-1970s Arlington County had used private, federal, state, and local funding to address homelessness through a combination of outreach, emergency shelters, and transitional housing. Despite

success achieved through collaborative and coordinated efforts, despite the County being routinely ranked among the “best places to live” and boasting a median household income above \$104,000, Arlington County had a homelessness crisis. In a community known for its commitment to diversity, inclusion, and opportunity for all, more than 1,500 people were grappling with homelessness and poverty.

It was recognized that a more strategic, comprehensive, and preventative approach to homelessness in our community was needed; the solution to that crisis was Arlington’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

(Promote intergovernmental cooperation and/or cooperation with local, state and federal entities and/or a private enterprise in addressing a problem or situation.)

From the day preliminary planning began through the formal completion of the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, multilevel cooperation from all sectors has been the hallmark of this truly collaborative effort.

Through the Department of Human Services (DHS), the 10-Year Planning Committee was established to brainstorm and develop goals and strategies for ending homelessness in Arlington County. The committee began its work in the summer of 2005 working closely with: staff in the Department of Planning, Housing, and Development (CPHD) on discussions about affordable housing stock options in the County; Child and Family Services (in DHS) in planning for youth who age out of foster care as well as other client households who may be at risk of losing housing; Aging and Disability Services (in DHS) to provide information on working with shared clients; Arlington Employment Center (in DHS), for understanding the current and future job market, assessments, training and placements.

More than 100 stakeholders and participants from all parts of the community came to the table: government agencies, nonprofit organizations, the faith and business communities, residents, the school system, and people with a history of homelessness.

Safety net nonprofits including Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless (AACH, now known as Bridges to Independence), Arlington Street People's Assistance Network (A-SPAN), Community Residences (CR), Doorways for Women and Families, and Volunteers of America Chesapeake (VOAC) were represented on the committee. Representatives from the Arlington Interfaith Council also participated throughout and the League of Women Voters joined later in the process.

Upon completion, the 10-Year Plan was formally adopted by the Arlington County Board as a blueprint to end homelessness in the community. As the initiative transitioned out of the planning phase and into its decade-long implementation phase, cooperation among partners reached new heights. United behind a shared set of goals and strategies, 10-Year Plan partners came together to create a Continuum of Care (CoC) where the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. Two excellent examples of this are the Centralized Access System (CAS) that featured a single access point for services across the entire CoC, and processes that were put in place to manage funding applications submitted on behalf of the CoC.

The Centralized Access System was launched in 2014 to improve access to critical services across the entire continuum. The Department of Human Services is now the primary initial access point for individuals and families at-risk for or experiencing homelessness. The new approach focuses on matching people, as quickly as possible, with the intervention that will most effectively and efficiently prevent or end their homelessness and lead to stability. These interventions have included Diversion, Prevention, Rapid Re-Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Emergency Shelter. The cooperative elements include shelter providers maintaining real-time bed availability to ensure prompt placements, and non-profit service providers staffing the 24/7 emergency housing hotline for the CAS on a rotating basis.

Cooperation among Continuum of Care partners has been a key factor in successful funding applications to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Virginia Homeless Solution Program (VHSP) through the state's Department of Housing and Community Development. County agencies and non-

profit partners have worked together to identify community needs and priorities as the basis for funding strategies rather than seeing issues solely through the lens of a single organization.

Other components of the 10-Year Plan where a high degree of cooperation was demonstrated include:

- The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which all partners use as a shared database and which tracks performance metrics and demographic data for the entire CoC.
- Staffing the 10-Year Plan 100-member consortium, executive committee, sub-committees and working groups. The established consortium and committee memberships include a diverse body of stakeholders from non-profit organizations. Committees have included Data and Evaluation, Housing, Outreach and Education, and Integrated Services.

How Program Was Carried Out

National experience from more than 200 cities and localities has shown that strong political leadership and meaningful participation from leaders in all sectors of the community are vital to the successful implementation of plans to end homelessness. Arlington created a governance structure for the 10-Year Plan that embraced this best practice.

A **Leadership Consortium** was created to serve as the principle body to lead and govern the 10-Year Plan. It was an alliance of community leaders from private and public agencies, the faith community, and others committed to ending homelessness. To ensure broad community support, there were two co-chairs -- a County Board member and a leader from the private sector. The Leadership Consortium's role was to ensure that timely and effective actions were taken to accomplish the plan's objectives.

An **Implementation Task Force** was appointed by the Leadership Consortium. Representatives from the Housing Commission and the Community Services Board served as co-chairs of the task force, with

membership drawn from all sectors of the community. Under the guidance of the Leadership Consortium, the Implementation Task Force formed committees that executed the strategies and activities of the 10-Year Plan.

Data and Evaluation Committee: This committee was charged with maintaining data integrity for information placed into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) – the official information management system of the 10-Year Plan. The committee developed policies that ensured information was captured for the HEARTH Act and the housing goals and targets, and for the annual report on the state of homelessness in Arlington County. The committee initiated development of an Annual Data Report Card that tracked key metrics and outcomes, and all CoC partners were held accountable for data tracking, analysis, and reporting.

Housing Committee: In Arlington, obtaining affordable housing can be a challenge for those with little income and special needs. The Housing Committee has focused its energies on three areas:

- Facilitating access to affordable housing.
- Increasing the supply of rental assistance available.
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Outreach and Education Committee: This committee was responsible for developing and implementing an ongoing education campaign to provide the community with information about the causes of homelessness and services available, Arlington County's 10-Year Plan and related efforts to prevent and end homelessness, and ways individuals and community groups can play a role in ending homelessness in Arlington County.

Integrated Services Committee: This committee was responsible for developing an implementation plan for:

- Providing effective supportive services to keep people in housing.
- Increasing the income of homeless people through employment and benefits.
- Developing and implementing prevention strategies to reduce the number of persons who enter homelessness.

The Integrated Services Committee reviewed the delivery of Arlington services in these areas, identified best practices being implemented in other parts of the country, and started to implement action steps to provide effective supportive services and increase income for individuals who are homeless. The committee also updated CoC policies and procedures related to homelessness prevention (e.g. effective discharge planning, early warning system).

Goals, Strategies and Milestones

Four main goals were identified, each supported by several strategies that, when executed by the committee teams, would move us closer to accomplishing each goal. Goals also had short- and long-term milestones to help ensure that efforts were on track.

Goal 1: Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing

- Housing Strategy 1: Rapidly re-house persons who become homeless.
- Housing Strategy 2: Increase the supply of housing affordable to homeless individuals and families.
- Housing Strategy 3: Increase the supply of rental assistance provided to homeless individuals and families.
- Housing Strategy 4: Facilitate access to affordable housing for homeless individuals and families.

Goal 2: Provide Effective Supportive Services to Keep People in Housing

- Support Services Strategy 1: Enhance resources for provision of services to those in supportive housing.
- Support Services Strategy 2: Promote an integrated, comprehensive system of care.
- Support Services Strategy 3: Expand capacity to serve people with mental illness and/or substance use disorders.

Goal 3: Prevent Homelessness at Every Opportunity

- **Prevention Strategy 1:** Educate service providers, landlords, persons at risk of homelessness, and others on indicators of potential homelessness and the availability of services.
- **Prevention Strategy 2:** Develop proactive homelessness prevention strategies.

Goal 4: Increase Income of People Who Are Homeless Through Employment and Benefits

- **Income Strategy 1:** Expand access to employment and training opportunities for homeless persons.
- **Income Strategy 2:** Facilitate access to public benefits programs such as supplemental income (SSI), veteran's benefits, food stamps, and child care.

Staffing and Financing

As the coordinating body for homeless services in Arlington, the Department of Human Services provided staffing and administrative support for the 10-Year Plan. The DHS Homeless Services Coordinator served as “air traffic controller” for the initiative, scheduling meetings for the Leadership Consortium and Implementation Task Force. Each committee had two co-chairs who were subject matter experts, with broader committee membership including stakeholders and community members.

Financing of 10-Year Plan activities came from a combination of local, state, and federal resources. By the end of the 10-Year Plan, funding averaged about \$5.7 million a year, or 8% of the County's overall housing budget. In FY 2019, the funding breakout for CoC programs is \$3.8 million in local funding, \$2.2 million in federal funding, and \$700,000 in state funding. In true collaborative spirit, CoC partners share financial information so that the County will have needed information for competitive grant applications. Community support of 10-Year Plan activities was evidenced when a private developer donated \$500,000 as part of the 100 Homes Campaign.

Program Results

The 10-Year Plan was the unifying, driving force behind Arlington's success in reducing homelessness from 2008 to 2018. The 10-Year Plan is responsible for many initiatives, campaigns, and systemic changes that remain in place – and continue to be effective – today.

Number of People Experiencing Homelessness: In the initial three-year period of the 10-Year Plan, from 2008 to 2010, the annual Point in Time Count showed an average of 485 people living in shelters or on the streets. In the last three years of the Plan (2016-2018), the annual average was 209 people -- a 46 percent decrease.

Veteran and Chronic Homelessness: During three years, the CoC housed 150 chronically homeless individuals through the 100 Homes Campaign. Arlington was among the first jurisdictions to reach functional zero for veteran homelessness when it accomplished this in 2016. Functional zero for chronic homelessness is currently within our reach. Success in housing homeless veterans and chronically homeless individuals was largely a result of the 100 Homes Campaign and the follow-up Zero: 2016 Campaign. These collaborative efforts included targeted outreach to the most vulnerable homeless members of the community and using "by name" lists and monthly meetings to propel individuals toward stable housing.

Centralized Access System: This approach focuses on matching people, as quickly as possible, with the intervention that will most effectively and efficiently prevent or end their homelessness and lead to stability.

Unified Single Shelter: With two shelters in the community for homeless individuals, implementing the Unified Single Shelter approach streamlined access and ensured continuity of services for clients.

Homeless Services Center with Medical Respite Program: The Homeless Services Center opened in October 2015 featuring 50 year-round shelter beds, 25 winter hypothermia prevention beds and five medical respite beds. Center-based programs and services include: employment and life skills training; benefits enrollment; mental health and substance abuse counseling and treatment; nursing services and medical respite program; and meals, shower, laundry and mail facilities. With its three distinct service areas — shelter, day program and

medical respite — the Homeless Services Center has become a critical component of the community's efforts to end homelessness.

Arlington Landlord Partnership (ALP): Launched in 2016, this collaboration includes the County Housing Assistance Bureau, human services nonprofit agencies, and local landlords and property managers. The goal of the ALP is to increase the availability of rental housing for homeless individuals and families with high leasing barriers such as poor credit, evictions and criminal history. Components include:

- Guaranteed response to landlord concerns within two business days.
- Case management, including home visits for tenants enrolled in the Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing Programs.
- Facilitated communication by case managers between landlords and tenants to help resolve crises or conflicts that may jeopardize housing stability.
- Eviction prevention assistance for eligible clients if they encounter financial difficulties (provided through Arlington County Homelessness Prevention funding).
- Access to a Risk Reduction Fund for either damages or lost rent. Landlords can make a claim up to \$3,000.

Emergency Needs-Homelessness Prevention Fund: Established a \$500,000 community-funded grant program that provides up to \$10,000 for 501(c)(3) organizations that operate programs which reduce or prevent homelessness among individuals and families in Arlington County and are looking to enhance, revitalize and/or change a part of their organization to be more effective in meeting future needs of the population they serve.

Employment Programs: Launched skill development and employment programs for individuals and families served in County homelessness programs. These include the popular Culinary Arts Training Program that teaches culinary skill and life skills, but also provides important industry certification and job placement in the culinary arts field.

Permanent Supportive Housing: 10-Year Plan advocacy and efforts have increased the number of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units in the community. For example, in 2013 the 10-Year Plan was the driving force behind funding a new PSH program at the Marbella Apartments in Rosslyn. Local non-profit Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing owns the Marbella and oversees the housing. Funding came from a \$500,000 Arlington Community Foundation grant paired with a matching \$500,000 contribution from the County. The money was used to “buy down” the affordability of 10 existing committed affordable units to 30 percent of Area Median Income (income of about \$22,500 a year) via mortgage reduction payments to the developer, and to subsidize tenant rents in the units.

Strengthening Services for Domestic Violence Survivors: The link between domestic violence and homelessness is indisputable. By co-locating the County’s 24/7 Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline at Doorways for Women and Families, which also operates the Domestic Violence Safehouse, we have streamlined the linkage to services for those in crisis.

Brief Overview for Press Releases, etc.

Arlington’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness launched in 2008 with a bold mission. After decades of managing homelessness in Arlington, the 10-Year Plan ambitiously embraced the new goal of ending homelessness in Arlington. The 10-Year Plan laid out the framework for successful implementation including: a clear statement of the needs, the vision for the future, guiding principles for the work, and four broad goals for achieving the vision. The people involved in planning efforts worked with tireless commitment and dedication to make the 10-Year Plan’s vision a reality.

Highlights from this true community collaboration include reaching “functional zero” for veteran homelessness (with functional zero for chronic homelessness within reach), opening a new comprehensive

Homeless Services Center in the heart of the community, strengthening supports for those affected by domestic violence, and bringing together an incredibly strong and unified Continuum of Care.

The system in place today in Arlington is prepared to build on the foundation established by the 10-Year Plan to (1) prevent homelessness before it happens for Arlington households, (2) quickly re-house those who become homeless quickly and permanently, and (3) tackle new challenges in our community related to homelessness, housing instability, and housing affordability.