



A Way Home America Grand Challenge FAQs | 6/2/19

Please check back frequently, as this document will be updated to respond to questions submitted by applicants.

What is A Way Home America?

A Way Home America (AWHA) is a national initiative to build the movement to prevent and end homelessness among young people. We are made up of young people with lived expertise, youth homelessness providers, advocates, researchers, government agencies, and philanthropists uniting behind a common goal:

Prevent and end homelessness among all youth and young adults. Ensure that homelessness among youth and young adults is rare, and if it occurs, experiences of homelessness are brief and one-time.

We are the movement who will show it is possible to end youth homelessness.

More information about AWHA, including the membership of our national Steering Committee, can be found at AWAYHOMEAMERICA.ORG.

What is the A Way Home America Grand Challenge to End Youth Homelessness?

The Grand Challenge is a problem-solving initiative grounded in several critical approaches: youth collaboration, LGBTQ and racial equity, and quality improvement. The Grand Challenge builds on strategies which have already resulted in significant reductions in veteran and chronic homelessness throughout the United States. AWHA adds an unflinching focus on, and partnership with, the young people most impacted by youth homelessness. We believe this approach is the swiftest way to achieve dramatic progress.

The Grand Challenge will support 10 communities to achieve one shared result: an effective end to youth homelessness for LGBTQ youth and youth of color within two years, setting the path to ending homelessness for all youth.

What is the goal of the Grand Challenge?

Over a two year period, the A Way Home America Grand Challenge will help 10 communities in the United States end homelessness for LGBTQ youth and youth of color, setting the path to ending homelessness for all youth.

Given that the preponderance of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ and/or youth of color, this result represents a key milestone toward ending homelessness for all young people.

Why is there an explicit focus on LGBTQ youth and youth of color?

The Grand Challenge is a targeted response to the data:



[Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count](#) Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America report revealed that one in 10 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 and at least one in 30 youth between the ages of 13 and 17 experience some form of homelessness over the course of a year.

Youth homelessness is devastating and potentially fatal for any young person who experiences it and research proves that youth homelessness isn't harming all youth equally. LGBTQ youth are 120 percent more likely to experience homelessness. [The Center for Social Innovation's SPARC: Phase One Study Findings](#) found youth of color were most represented among individuals ages 18-24 experiencing homelessness, accounting for 89 percent of this group. Experiences of homelessness are twice as likely to be fatal for LGBTQ youth and youth of color.

The data repeatedly shows that youth of color and LGBTQ youth experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate which can't be explained by poverty alone. To effectively end homelessness for all youth, it is necessary to ensure our systems serving young people address the specific needs of those most impacted. When we improve resources and supports for the youth of color and LGBTQ youth, we set the path to ending homelessness for all young people.

Does focusing on LGBTQ youth and youth of color mean prioritizing these young people for housing over other young people?

No. The Grand Challenge takes a [targeted universalism](#) approach to centering the experiences of LGBTQ youth and young people of color in a community's response to youth homelessness. Essentially, a community will ask "Does this [program / approach / service location / strategy] **best** serve the needs of LGBTQ youth and youth of color? How might we know? Does this strategy align with the recommendations of young people in our community?"

A targeted universal strategy is one that is inclusive of the needs of both the dominant and the marginal groups, but pays particular attention to the situation of the marginal group. Targeted universalism rejects a blanket universal which is likely to be indifferent to the reality that different groups are situated differently relative to the institutions and resources of society. It also rejects the claim of formal equality that would treat all people the same as a way of denying difference. [John a. powell]

Fair housing laws prohibit prioritizing housing by protected class status, and doing so is not what the Grand Challenge intends. In fact, simply reshuffling the line for housing wouldn't be enough to fulfill the goal of the Grand Challenge. The way a community prioritizes housing may change, but only after a reassessment of the entire system. When a community successfully implements targeted universalism, the line will more accurately reflect the needs of the whole community and move faster for everyone.

Who is invited to participate in the Grand Challenge?

The Grand Challenge welcomes communities willing to lead the way to end youth homelessness. These communities are prepared to prove that an end to youth homelessness is possible. The Grand Challenge will include participating communities of varying sizes (small, mid, and large) and geographies. AWAHA understands that the dynamics around youth homelessness present differently in communities.

A consistent community team will lead the effort, participating in in-person strategy gatherings with fellow Grand Challenge communities three times per year. The Grand Challenge application will require the articulated commitment of community leadership, including:



- Youth champion (i.e. youth provider, youth liaison, dedicated funder)
- Youth Action Board
- Continuum of Care lead, and
- Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) data lead

The Grand Challenge is for communities who are ready to be out in front of the movement and accept risk. Communities who move forward in this work are signing up to figure out, with us, what it will take to actually end youth homelessness. As such, you are signing up to do something no one has done before.

How is “community” defined, for the sake of the Grand Challenge?

We anticipate that most Grand Challenge communities will be defined by the geography of a Continuum of Care (CoC), as we are working with communities to use HMIS as the primary vehicle for data collection. However, we anticipate there may be a rationale for a different community definition due to the interest of a tribal nation, a specific city or county within a larger CoC, a consortium of CoCs, or other considerations.

How can my community take part in the Grand Challenge? Where can I get more information?

Visit the Grand Challenge webpage at: <http://awayhomeamerica.org/grand-challenge/> for information and resources available to support your community’s application to participate in the Grand Challenge. Please check back frequently, as this document and others will be refined based on questions submitted from communities preparing to apply.

Sign up for updates by subscribing to AWAHA news alerts and follow us on social @AWAYHOMEAMERICA.

Interested communities that have specific questions or need direct assistance should contact Megan Gibbard Kline, Director of A Way Home America at MEGAN@AWAYHOMEAMERICA.ORG. AWAHA is able to provide tailored webinars or calls with community leaders to facilitate buy-in for a community’s application submission.

On July 23rd the Grand Challenge community application will be released.

How will communities be selected?

Communities will be considered for the Grand Challenge through an application process developed by the [National Youth Forum on Homelessness](#), which will open on Tuesday, July 23rd and will close Wednesday, August 21st. Communities must meet threshold criteria (see below) to be considered.

The National Youth Forum on Homelessness will review all applications and make the final selection of communities. Selected communities will be notified by Friday, August 30th. The announcement of selected communities will be made at the [True Colors United Impact Summit](#) (Sept 3-5, Washington DC).

What are the Grand Challenge community threshold criteria?

The following threshold criteria are required for communities selected to participate in the Grand Challenge:

- Demonstrated awareness around how the community system functions today for LGBTQ youth and youth of color



- Commitment to [transformational equity work](#) and acknowledgement that this work is fundamentally different and difficult
- Articulated commitment of community leadership, including: Youth champion (i.e. youth provider, youth liaison, dedicated funder), Youth Action Board, Continuum of Care lead, and HMIS data lead
- Commitment to collect and share monthly system data transparently with AWA and all participating communities [do not have to have all data elements established at this time]
- Commitment to prioritize sending core team to in-person strategy review three times each year [travel stipend provided to cover cost]

The following additional questions will be included in the application, and while not required, demonstrate additional readiness which make a community more competitive for the Grand Challenge:

- Efforts toward coordinated community responses already in place i.e.: Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racism Communities (SPARC), completion of a Youth Homelessness 100-Day Challenge
- Presence of a “backbone” - a funder or an organizing entity that supports the coordination of youth homelessness and system efforts across a community
- Presence of existing strong AWA leadership in the community [such as a Steering Committee member]
- Demonstrated involvement of key system stakeholders, such as education, child welfare and juvenile justice
- Strong assessment of current community initiatives and community capacity

NOTE: The above criteria are currently under review by the National Youth Forum on Homelessness and may be updated prior to the application announcement.

How will coaching be provided?

AWA has assembled a team of Grand Challenge coaches from a variety of leading national organizations - the ‘best of the best’ experts with experience in youth collaboration, youth homelessness, LGBTQ and racial equity, and quality improvement. These coaches will provide support to Grand Challenge communities at in-person strategy gatherings three times each year, as well as between these sessions, both in-person and remotely. Each community will have a lead coach, as well as access to content experts on data, youth collaboration and equity.

In all Grand Challenge activities, coaches will support community teams to deepen and spread a shared understanding of racial and LGBTQ equity as they work toward transforming their systems through an equity lens.

What is the coaching model?

The Grand Challenge is rooted in an iterative problem-solving model. Coaches are fluent in the current wisdom in the field, such as proven housing and service models, but also have the skills and expertise to help communities run their own experiments: analyze data, develop hypotheses about what needs to change, test those changes, and analyze the results quickly. Grand Challenge coaches are therefore more than content experts.

Above all else, a coach takes responsibility for helping a community reach the goal of the Grand Challenge. That means their job is to help a community solve an unsolved puzzle. Grand Challenge Coaches bring four core skills:

1. Facilitation (helping communities work together, especially across sectors)



2. Data analytics (helping communities draw lessons from their data to inform strategy)
3. Quality Improvement (helping communities test and refine new ideas in short, methodical cycles)
4. Content expertise around LGBTQ and racial equity, specifically the ability to hold space and competently facilitate conversations in this area

What do communities receive as participants in the Grand Challenge? What is expected of participating communities?

| Grand Challenge Communities Receive: | Grand Challenge Communities Provide: |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A lead coach who supports their progress toward ending youth homelessness every step of the way 2. Access and in-person support from leading national experts in youth collaboration, youth homelessness, LGBTQ and racial equity, quality improvement 3. Travel funding for a 5-person community team to attend 3 in-person gatherings each year with fellow Grand Challenge communities 4. Support to reach quality data and visualization tools - aligned with United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Benchmarks 5. Immediate technical support to improve or launch a “by name list” for young people - a list of all young people experiencing homelessness in their community - and to ensure the quality and reliability of that list 6. Support to generate, test and change ideas to advance toward the Grand Challenge aim, month by month 7. A cohort of communities and national leaders alongside them until the goal is reached 8. National spotlight as one of the leading communities in the fight to end youth homelessness | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consistent team of five community leaders who champion the work and attend 3 in-person gatherings each year with fellow Grand Challenge communities 2. Monthly system data 3. Time, effort, and political will to generate, test and change ideas to advance toward the Grand Challenge aim, month by month 4. A lot of gut and chutzpah |

Communities do not receive any direct funding for programming as part of the Grand Challenge. However, communities participating in the Grand Challenge are well positioned to be increasingly competitive for federal, local, and philanthropic funding opportunities.

All coaching is provided to Grand Challenge communities without cost.

How will A Way Home America measure progress toward the Grand Challenge goal?

When a community achieves the Grand Challenge aim they have:

- Ended sheltered and unsheltered homelessness for all LGBTQ and youth of color in their community ages 13 - 24
- Reached a critical milestone toward ending homelessness for all young people across their community, as defined by the [USICH Criteria & Benchmarks](#)



Specifically, communities are working to achieve the goal of ending sheltered and unsheltered homelessness among LGBTQ youth and youth of color in alignment with USICH Criteria and Benchmarks, specifically Benchmark A, Indicators 5 and 6, and Benchmark B. Measurement tools offered through the Grand Challenge will provide a meaningful gauge of a community's progress toward USICH confirmation of having effectively ended youth homelessness.

We understand this is *a key milestone* toward ending homelessness for all young people.

How is data improved and leveraged?

Grand Challenge coaching will support communities to reach quality real-time data in two ways:

- Qualitative - ensuring a community has a by-name list of all young people experiencing homelessness that represents full coverage of the community; and
- Quantitative - ensuring that the data is mathematically reliable, meaning inflow and outflow data balance each month like a checkbook.

Coaches will support each community to improve their by-name list as a first priority, as a community's ability to improve its performance is tied to the quality of this list. The Grand Challenge will provide a user-friendly, monthly data reporting format and live dashboards via Tableau to help all participating communities track their data quality and progress over time and to facilitate decision-making.

How will progress and results of the Grand Challenge be shared?

Progress and results of the Grand Challenge will be tracked transparently and publicly on the AWA website.

The Grand Challenge will provide a user-friendly, monthly data reporting format for communities and live dashboards to offer ongoing reports of Grand Challenge communities targets and progress. These dashboards will be designed to support both internal community learning, as well as communicate progress to the movement at large.

Ending youth homelessness in two years sounds ambitious. Is this goal realistic?

We've seen the evidence, and know that ending youth homelessness is possible. We are learning from successful efforts which have ended veteran and chronic homelessness in dozens of communities across the country.

As these communities have done, we are following the "model for improvement." This model encourages communities to use data to understand the nature of youth homelessness in their community, rapidly test strategies, understand if those different strategies helped get any closer to ending youth homelessness, and repeat this iteration until they reach the goal.

Ending homelessness for LGBTQ youth and youth of color represents a key milestone toward ending homelessness for all young people, as confirmed by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. Measurement for the Grand Challenge will align with the finalized USICH Criteria and Benchmarks.

Not only is this goal realistic, it is critical for us to pursue.



Does using an approach that worked for veterans and other chronic homeless populations suggest that a one size fits all approach to ending homelessness works?

No. Homelessness is not a technical problem, so no one size fits all approach to ending homelessness will work. We are learning from the *new type of problem-solving* applied across communities that ended or made sustainable progress on veteran homelessness. We anticipate that the actual approaches and solutions to youth homelessness will be comparable, yet unique.

How does the Grand Challenge fit with the overall national strategy and activities to end youth homelessness?

The Grand Challenge is a complement to existing national efforts to move the needle toward our shared goal: ending homelessness for all young people, in every community. The USICH Criteria and Benchmarks outline how we measure progress toward that goal, and represents the technical definition of success in achieving it. We know we are not there yet, but the Criteria and Benchmarks outline our shared vision and direction.

Over the last few years, a number of initiatives and demonstration projects - such as 100-Day Challenges and YHDP - have sparked new energy across our movement and have helped communities implement the level of collaboration and innovation they need to move toward that goal. But there is still work to be done.

The Grand Challenge is building on those efforts as well as the progress we have already made, bringing a targeted focus and investment in racial and LGBTQ equity and youth collaboration. It is designed to help communities move closer to our shared goal of ending youth homelessness, and will help inform the best practices, data strategies and policies we will use to bring that progress to every community.

What if my community is waiting to hear about YHDP round #3?

AWHA understands that many front-runner communities may be currently anticipating a response from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regarding their Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program application. The Grand Challenge is complementary to YHDP, and our coaching model has been designed to in part leverage the skills and expertise of several existing YHDP technical assistance providers. In addition, the Grand Challenge measurement framework is aligned with the USICH Criteria and Benchmarks, and as such, the specific aim statement of the Grand Challenge contributes to a community's progress towards meeting all of the criteria and benchmark indicators.

A community can participate in both YHDP and the Grand Challenge and AWAH will work with awarded communities to align the support offered as part of both efforts. Communities awaiting notification on their YHDP round 3 application should be reasonably confident in their capacity to manage multiple efforts, should they be selected for both.

Is the Grand Challenge just about housing? What about education, employment, well being, and permanent connections?

AWHA aligns with the four broad core outcome areas identified in the [USICH Framework to End Youth Homelessness](#), and the complementary - and quite recent - [Youth Outcomes Project](#) led by Youth Collaboratory and Chapin Hall.

We expect that communities will need to make progress in the four core outcome areas in order to effectively end youth homelessness. Education, employment, well being, and permanent connections are all critical components to ensuring that young people who are or have experienced homelessness have the necessary support and skills to maintain success.