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SNAPS Weekly Focus Guest Blog: Building Partnerships to End Homelessness

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At [Funders Together to End Homelessness](#), we believe that we can end homelessness in our communities and in our country. How do we do it? Here's what we know:

1. We have to work together.

It sounds simple. The concept of collaboration, if not the reality, has been around for many years. Private funders have urged, and sometimes required, their grantees to work with each other, yet funders themselves have been less successful at collaborating. Often their own priorities, an emphasis on programmatic outcomes, and the need for individual recognition kept them from partnering successfully. On top of this was the fact that private and public funders often work very separately and in isolation – sometimes even working in opposition to one another without realizing it.

Fortunately, we are now seeing a dramatic and positive shift. Funders are partnering with one another and becoming part of highly effective partnerships with government. With the bigger and more sustainable dollars of government and the smaller but more flexible dollars of philanthropy, innovative and effective solutions *can* be created.

Over the past couple of years Funders Together and its members have been involved in several of these innovative collaborations. We worked with U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) on a pilot project that focused on the most vulnerable homeless veterans. Private philanthropy covered costs that the government couldn't, enabling veterans in 14 cities to get permanent housing and services through HUD and the VA. Through private dollars, these veterans also got the furniture and help they needed to move in to their new homes.

Funders Together members from across the country also joined together with HUD, the Administration for Children and Families, the Department of Education, and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness to do a nine-city homeless youth count. Private philanthropy funded the evaluation of the initiative, ensuring that best practices were collected and then disseminated to communities throughout the country.

2. Conversations need to happen at the national, regional, *and* local levels.

We also know that homelessness is not just a national issue, but very much a community issue. Funders Together members are excited about our ongoing collaboration with HUD and others in cities with high numbers of homeless individuals and families. Through this partnership we can ensure that the efforts of



both private and public funders are aligned, create efficiencies and effective solutions at the systems level, and reduce and even solve homelessness in those communities.

One such example is our [Los Angeles Homeless Funders Group](#), through which local funders establish partnerships with the business community and county, state, and federal governments to bring added long-term resources to address chronic homelessness. In [Seattle](#), many Funders Together members are working with one another and with providers and city and county officials to effectively and efficiently solve the growing problem of youth homelessness in their community. [Funders Together Houston](#) has partnered with their local Housing Authority to ensure that vouchers are dedicated to helping those most vulnerable – individuals and families who are homeless. They have also created [partnerships](#) with the local police force and mental health agencies to help, rather than criminalize the homeless.

We are seeing more and more funders across our country taking part in collaborative efforts to end homelessness. Cities such as Chicago, Phoenix, Boston, Miami, Nashville and others, large and small, are coming together not simply to share ideas, but to actively work on solutions. Our role at Funders Together to End Homelessness is to support our members in these efforts and continue to call on local, state and the federal government for effective funding and policies to end homelessness. We want to continue to build relationships and work with our colleagues in government to achieve our shared goal of helping the most vulnerable.

Collaboration isn't always easy – it takes commitment and it takes resources, both financial and human – but ultimately, it is the *only* thing that will end homelessness.

Please visit the [Funders Together website](#) to learn more.