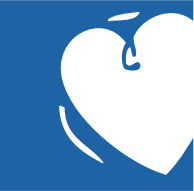




A NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FY24-26





Our Path Toward Housing Justice

When Miriam's Kitchen was founded in 1983, we weren't trying to end homelessness. We saw a need for meals, and we met it. When we saw the same people coming to the dining room year after year, we knew that meals weren't enough. So, we started connecting guests¹ to other basic needs. We connected them to government benefits and other social service providers and eventually offered housing services. We advocated to change policies, systems, and mindsets. We started to follow the leadership of people with lived experience. We went out to meet guests where they were on the street and in encampments. As we grew our understanding of what it would take to end chronic homelessness², we built our capacity to do that work.

We're closer than ever to ending chronic homelessness. Over the past 13 years, we've helped increase the number of housing vouchers to cover all those who are chronically homeless in DC. But the flow of people into homelessness continues faster than we can move people into housing. There can be no permanent end to chronic homelessness without addressing the issues that create homelessness.

Our North Star has been ending chronic homelessness. We're now moving deeper into the constellation of housing justice.



Where We Are Headed

Our work is leading us toward a vision of housing justice – where everyone in DC has access to a safe, stable, affordable place to call home. Achieving housing justice means not only helping people get into housing; it also means helping build equitable policies and practices that prevent housing instability and homelessness. Miriam's Kitchen has advocated for equitable policies and practices in DC for years, but an intentional move into housing justice means putting our whole organization toward this vision by expanding our programs and advocacy to prevent people from becoming homeless. At the same time, we can't do this work alone. We must continue to use our voice in partnership with those advocating on related issues. All of this must be grounded in collective efforts across DC to understand the history of discriminatory policies, advocate for more equitable policies, and together find ways to repair historic racial injustices that still affect guests' vulnerability to homelessness.³

¹"Guests" is the term we use to describe the people who access our services and, more broadly, anyone with lived experience of homelessness in DC. ²Chronic homelessness is defined as anyone experiencing homelessness for more than a year, or repeatedly while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability. ³While many factors influence pathways to homelessness, race is among the most influential. Racially discriminatory policies like redlining and mass incarceration created housing and wealth disparities that leave people of color disproportionately vulnerable to homelessness. Factors such as age, LGBTQ+ status, gender, mental health, and experiences of incarceration (among many others) also increase vulnerability to homelessness. We center race as a key systemic cause of homelessness while attending to other factors as well. Resources on the link between homelessness and systemic racism include the journal article "[Persistent Disparities: Trends in Rates of Sheltered Homelessness Across Demographic Subgroups in the USA](#)," the National Alliance to End Homelessness' article "[Homelessness and Racial Disparities](#)," and PolicyLink's report [Facing History, Uprooting Inequality: A Path to Housing Justice in California](#), among many others.



We also know that how we get there matters. We will keep investing in what makes our work powerful and effective: providing high-quality services that set the bar across DC, centering and fostering the leadership of those with lived experience, and working with the city to improve policies, processes, and practices, informed by our direct service work.



Our DEI Commitment

Miriam's Kitchen holds diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as core values. We strive to address the underlying inequities that create and maintain homelessness, shift our internal policies and practices, and ensure guests are leaders in efforts to end chronic homelessness. As we developed this strategy, we lived out these values by ensuring that guest leaders made up half of our strategic planning team and by selecting strategies that addressed the issues guests prioritized in focus groups and interviews. Our commitment to DEI is reflected throughout the strategy below, including a guest-driven process to design new services (strategy 1), deepening guest leader involvement in delivering services to peers (strategy 2), using our voice and programs to address the root causes of homelessness (strategy 4), and continuing to build our organizational competency around DEI (strategy 5).

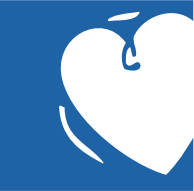
The Strategy

We will bolster our focus on those who are chronically homeless by going deeper to strengthen our support of current guests, while continuing to move further upstream to make change before people become chronically homeless.

Strategy 1: Deepen High-Quality Services

We have helped hundreds of guests move into housing and have served thousands of meals since our founding. Our Social Services, PSH⁴, and Street Outreach staff set the bar for quality citywide with a 99% retention rate for housed guests and 98% who feel that Miriam's Kitchen staff treat them according to what they need regardless of their race, gender, or background. We intend to keep delivering high-quality services while offering new services to meet the needs of those we serve.

⁴ Learn more about permanent supportive housing [here](https://www.miriamskitchen.org/programs/housing): www.miriamskitchen.org/programs/housing.



Deepen High-Quality Services

Support guests in the dining room and where they're housed

Actions

- Lead a guest-centered design process to identify and expand activities to enhance community, purpose, joy, and support
- Expand activities to support housed guests' mental health needs and sense of community
- Designate team specialists to improve partner coordination with key government and partner agencies, to increase guests' access to aging and behavioral health services

Strategy 2: Deepen Guest Leadership Through Peer Support

One of our core beliefs is that individuals with lived experience of homelessness are critical leaders in ending chronic homelessness. We live out this belief through our Guest Advisory Board, Speakers' Bureau, and Advocacy Fellowship. Centering guests' voices helps us focus on the most important issues and gives our advocacy credibility with policymakers and partners.

Deepen Guest Leadership Through Peer Support

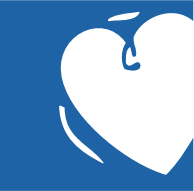
Foster Leadership and connection among guests.

Actions

- Serve as a field placement site for the DC Department of Human Services peer certification program
- Build a Miriam's Kitchen fellowship for peer housing support specialists
- Develop a peer support program to support housed guests' connection and life skills needs

Strategy 3: Connect People to Housing Earlier

The city, and Miriam's Kitchen, have had remarkable success with PSH. Through our advocacy and housing work, we have helped increase the number of people in housing, with many of them housed through Miriam's Kitchen. We will continue to provide top-notch PSH services, case management, outreach to move people into housing, and advocacy to ensure the city continues to resource PSH and improve its ability to deliver on commitments. There is an opportunity for us to move our current guests into housing faster and deepen our ability to serve people who do not qualify for PSH.



Connect People to Housing Earlier

House guests faster and keep them housed

Actions

- Increase the number of case managers to move current guests into housing faster
- Develop case managers' capability to find creative housing options for people before they experience chronic homelessness and for people unlikely to receive PSH
- Create a fund for security deposits to prevent evictions and relocate guests
- Explore providing case management in a non-congregate shelter
- Explore becoming a rapid rehousing provider, potentially with a shallow subsidy for greater sustainability

Strategy 4: Address Root Causes

For many years, our advocacy has gone beyond permanent supportive housing to the broader causes of homelessness and housing stability. We will continue our work on changing city policies, processes, and programs related to homelessness while building our influence and expanding the ways we use our voices to address root causes and related issues. We will explore how our direct services can contribute to these areas. Two areas for expanding our work are shaping public narratives to create the conditions for change and seizing advocacy and programmatic opportunities at the nexus of our criminal justice and homelessness systems, such as addressing the inflow into homelessness from the criminal justice system, the criminalization of homelessness, and the cycle of homelessness and prison.⁵

Address Root Causes

Work upstream to change mindsets, power, and early inflow

Actions

- Develop and implement a narrative change strategy
- Support staff in using their day-to-day work to shift mindsets and narratives
- Expand power-building work to strengthen our ability to address root causes
- Explore programs to house returning citizens as they exit incarceration



Strategy 5: Deepen Organizational Capacity & Sustainability

We must provide staff with the support and resources they need to provide effective and compassionate direct services over the long haul. In addition, to be credible in advocating for change outside Miriam's Kitchen, we must ensure that staff have a strong understanding of how race and other identities intersect with homelessness, the skills to create a racially equitable, inclusive, and welcoming environment at Miriam's Kitchen, and the organizational structures and resources to hold ourselves accountable to those goals. We will also need to increase revenue across multiple sources to support the new strategy.

⁵ Learn more about [narrative change](#) and [power building](#).



Deepen Organizational Capacity & Sustainability

Support staff well-being and capacity to implement strategy

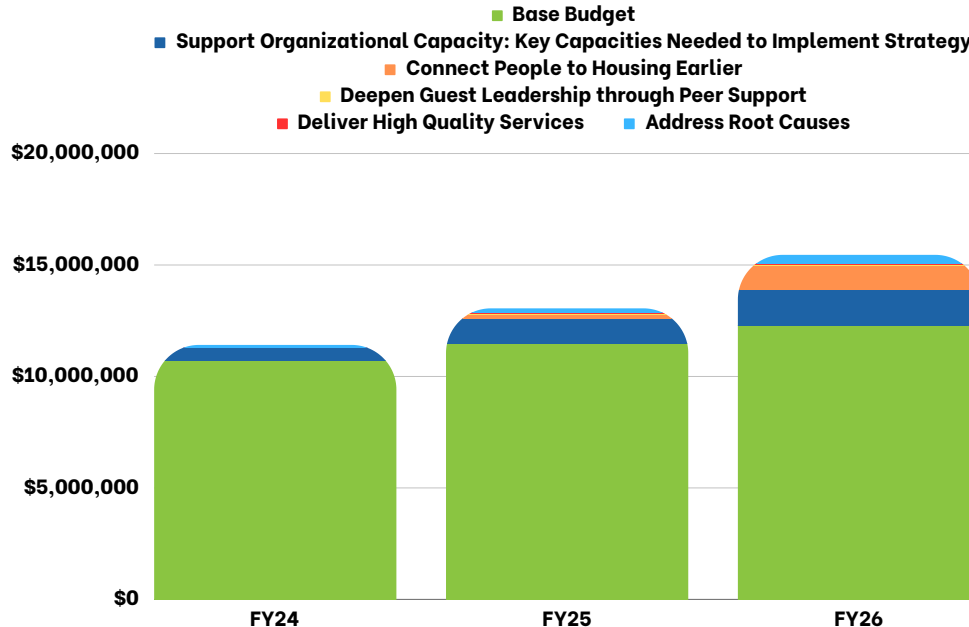
Actions

- Support staff well-being and healthy organizational growth
- Strengthen DEI capacities: clarify goals and accountability; build shared competency across staff; center DEI in talent attraction and retention; and continue to embed DEI in guest services
- Increase revenue from private and philanthropic sources to support new strategic programs and initiatives

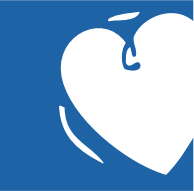
Financial Estimates

To support our new strategy, we will need to increase resources to support new programs and initiatives while carefully managing the costs of existing services. If we execute the new strategy fully, annual costs covered by Miriam's Kitchen will be \$15.4 million in FY26, or \$3.1 million (25%) higher than otherwise projected in our base budget.⁶

Figure 1: Miriam's Kitchen FY24-26 Organizational Budget with Strategic Implementation Costs

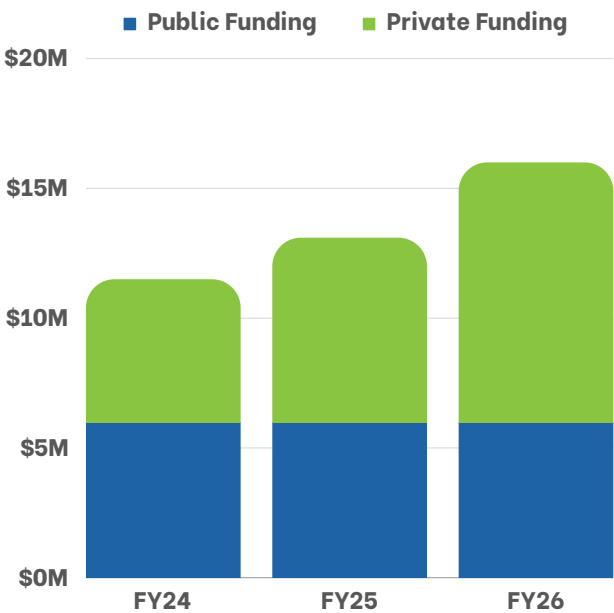


⁶ These costs do not include expenses that would be fully covered by government contracts for rapid rehousing or case management in a non-congregate shelter, as this revenue will fully cover expenses and is difficult to estimate without a specific opportunity. However, estimates do include additional operations staff that are not fully covered by these contracts but will be needed to deliver on them.



Our strategy intentionally starts with low-cost activities that we can largely accomplish in FY24 without significant new funding. This gives us time to build relationships with funders and individual donors to support more resource-intensive strategies in FY25 and FY26.

Figure 2: Projected Sources of Revenue, FY24-26



Measuring Our Impact

Since ending chronic homelessness in DC requires being nimble and responsive to a dynamic, changing environment, we have established continuous measurement, evaluation, and learning practices to guide our work.

Incremental progress toward ending chronic homelessness is tracked city-wide through a regular dashboard of how many people are currently experiencing homelessness, how many people have newly entered homelessness or have returned to homelessness, and how many people have obtained housing or are no longer accessing the DC homeless services system. Trends from these dashboards, other tools for measuring system performance, and collaborative input from our guests, staff, and other provider partners will give us regular feedback on how to direct our programs and advocacy work.

Miriam’s Kitchen continues to monitor progress on our organizational goals through regular review of our balanced scorecard. We review progress against each department’s annual and monthly targets quarterly, which allows us to continuously measure progress while being nimble and responsive to the environment.⁷

⁷ During the implementation phase, we will review existing measures and develop new measures for areas of the strategic plan that are newer work for us. We will also review and update measures for tracking our progress against internal well-being and DEI goals.