

Module 4: Flex Fund Guide

Understanding & Amplifying Impact

Overview + Acknowledgements

Purpose of the Guide

This dynamic guide is designed to assist communities that have recently obtained or are considering applying for Flexible Funding through Community Solutions. Its purpose is not to dictate the use of flexible funding but to provide insights, learnings from other communities, and best practices. Communities are encouraged to think creatively about how flex funding can enhance their local initiatives to fill critical gaps, drive local progress, and achieve their unique goals. Though this guide speaks largely to the use of Flexible Funding granted through Community Solutions, the guidance and strategies can be applied in any community with any combination of private or public funding. Community Solutions encourages all communities to explore flexible funding opportunities to supplement local strategies to prevent and end homelessness.

Orientation to the Guide

This Guide is broken into separate modules

- Background & Introduction to Flex Funds
- Module 1: Planning for Flexible Funding
- Module 2: Preparing for Implementation
- Module 3: Implementation: Putting Your Community Flex Fund to Work
- Module 4: Understanding & Amplifying Impact for Ongoing Sustainability

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many Built for Zero (BFZ) communities who were interviewed and shared their process and learnings implementing flexible funding. Those insights have been instrumental in shaping this guide.

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4.1 UNDERSTANDING IMPACT

Using Data to Tell the Story

Collecting quantitative data is important, but has its limitations. It is critical to also actively monitor and evaluate your progress using qualitative data to ensure that your Flex Fund program is effectively working towards its intended goals and objectives. Data-driven measurement using both quantitative and qualitative data is key to understanding the impact of the work.

- **Quantitative data:** Collecting individual-level data such as the number of participants served, hours of service provided, and resources distributed, are key, as well as population-level data like changes to actively homeless, length of time on the BNL, or increased housing placement rate. These data points can be a powerful indicator of how flex funds have contributed to population-level impact.
- **Qualitative data:** In addition to collecting quantitative data, gather qualitative data such as testimonials, case studies, and success stories to capture the human impact of your program and to inform continuous improvement.

By systematically measuring the impact of your Flex Fund program, you can demonstrate its value, secure continued support, and make informed decisions for continued impact for those in your community.

Some examples of qualitative data that can be collected to measure the impact of a Flex Fund program include:

- **Testimonials and stories** from program participants about how the program has helped them. This can include stories about how the program has helped them find housing, access services, or improve their overall well-being.
- **Case studies** that provide in-depth examples of how the program has made a difference in the lives of individuals or families.
- **Focus group discussions** with program participants, staff, and other stakeholders to gather feedback and insights about the program's strengths and weaknesses.
- **Observations of program activities and interactions** to gain a deeper understanding of how the program is being implemented and how it is affecting participants.

Check out [this Case Study](#) about the Washington DC Flex Fund.

4.2 AMPLIFYING IMPACT

Planning for sustainability

Thinking about long-term success, start planning for ongoing funding and sustainability early on. Track your progress and share your learnings and outcomes as you go.

Consider the **long-term viability** of this strategy. Create a budget that outlines needs/costs and develop a funding strategy that outlines potential sources of longer-term funding, such as grants, donations, sponsorships, and community fundraising.

Share your learnings and outcomes. Reporting and communication of progress, findings, success stories, and lessons learned to stakeholders and the community will help secure continued support and inform future initiatives.

- Demonstrate impact to funders and government entities
 - ◆ Quantify the impact of your Flexible Funds on the people in your community.
 - ◆ Highlight specific outcomes and improvements that have been tested and achieved.
 - ◆ Provide evidence of the positive changes and the impact the Flexible Funds have had on the people in your community.
 - ◆ Use storytelling and data visualization to communicate the impact of your program in a compelling way.
 - ◆ Include funders in planning conversations and bring them into designing and iterating your Flex Fund.

Tips from Flex Funding Recipients

- ★ Don't underestimate the power of storytelling.
- ★ Provide specific examples and case studies to illustrate the impact of your work.
- ★ Use visuals such as charts, graphs, and images to make your data more engaging.
- ★ Consider combining the flex funding with a specific initiative like the 100-day challenge to make the outcomes very prominent and public, creating momentum and buy-in to continue.
- ★ Regularly celebrate your successes with your team, partners, and community members.