



Pathways
to **Housing** PA

Providing Homes • Restoring Health • Reclaiming Lives

Paving the Way Forward

2025-2028 Strategic Plan



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Introduction

Pathways to Housing PA serves as a lifeline for those experiencing chronic homelessness in Philadelphia, extending vital support, resources, and pathways to transformation.

In 2023, Pathways to Housing PA engaged national consulting firm Schultz & Williams (S&W) to guide a comprehensive strategic planning process to develop a forward-thinking and actionable three-year plan. The plan underscores Pathways to Housing PA's unwavering commitment to empowering the lives of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in Philadelphia. Through its comprehensive programs and services, Pathways provides essential support and care to people who have been marginalized and overlooked by traditional housing and behavioral health systems.

By offering permanent supportive housing, integrated healthcare, and a range of support services, Pathways ensures that these vulnerable individuals receive the help they need to achieve stability and improve their quality of life. Pathways is dedicated to fostering a compassionate and inclusive community, empowering individuals to overcome homelessness, behavioral health challenges, and substance use disorders, and thrive in their new homes and communities.

As a highly resilient, adaptable, and innovative organization, Pathways is positioned to fortify its foundation while growing in dynamic ways over the next three years.

Acknowledgments

The strategic planning process centered on the engagement and inclusivity of many stakeholders, including staff, the Board of Directors, donors, and partners. A Planning Committee comprised of Board and staff members met throughout the process to provide feedback on findings and develop the plan's core competencies.

Planning Committee members included:

- **Christine Simiriglia**, President & CEO
- **Bill Maroon**, Chief Operations Officer
- **Valerie Johnson**, Vice President of Advancement and Social Enterprise
- **Don Stewart**, Chief Finance Officer
- **Randy Perrin**, Vice President of Human Resources
- **Patricia Williams**, Senior Director of Compliance
- **Kristina Scalia-Jackson**, Director, Center of Excellence
- **Rob Wetherington**, Director of Community Inclusion and Advocacy
- **Wakida Williams**, Assistant Clinical Director
- **Alex Lilly**, Executive Assistant
- **Diamond Bertil**, Board Chair
- **Jeff Gibbard**, Board Member, Development & Marketing Chair

Thank you to everyone involved in this important process. This final plan is a testament to your strong and thoughtful participation and critical insights. Moving forward, we will witness the plan coming to life and celebrate our achievements as a team.

History of Pathways to Housing PA

Pathways to Housing PA was established in 2008 as an independent affiliate of Pathways to Housing, Inc., founded by Dr. Sam Tsemberis in New York City in 1992. As its own nonprofit organization, Pathways to Housing PA brought the evidence-based Housing First model to Philadelphia, aiming to address the needs of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, particularly those with co-occurring behavioral health and substance use disorders.

Since its inception, Pathways to Housing PA has remained true to its founding commitment to end homelessness for the most vulnerable individuals in Philadelphia. The organization has consistently expanded its services and programs to meet the evolving needs of the community while maintaining its core principle of providing immediate access to permanent housing without preconditions. Over the years, it has developed strong partnerships with local government agencies, healthcare providers, and community organizations to create a comprehensive support system for its participants.

Situation Analysis

External Environment

Philadelphia faces significant challenges related to poverty and homelessness, with a poverty rate exceeding 21% and affecting over 400,000 residents. This pervasive poverty impacts every aspect of life for individuals, including physical health, nutrition, education, employment, mental health, and housing security. In 2023, homelessness in Philadelphia increased by 5.2% compared to the previous year, with a total of 4,725 people experiencing homelessness. This number is likely an undercount due to limited outreach and people living in overcrowded situations.

The causes of homelessness in Philadelphia are multifaceted, including a lack of jobs at competitive living wages, the disparity between housing costs and minimum wage, lack of affordable health care, inadequate support for behavioral health and substance use challenges, racial inequality, the national opioid crisis, and domestic violence.

Pathways to Housing PA operates in this challenging environment, providing crucial services to those in the community most at risk of homelessness and housing instability. The organization's client base includes a significant number of individuals with serious mental illness, and projections indicate that within four years, 44% of their behavioral health population will be over 65. This aging population presents new challenges, including the need for mobility-friendly units, home healthcare, and services to combat loneliness.

The opioid crisis has hit Philadelphia particularly hard, with the Kensington neighborhood considered ground zero for the crisis in the country. The emergence of fentanyl in various drugs and the introduction of xylazine ("TRANQ") have led to severe health complications among Pathways' participants, including an increased need for wound care and, in some cases, amputations. Today, the city government is implementing intensive measures to address the dire situation in Kensington. The impacts are to be seen, and Pathways will be on the frontline to respond to what is to come for those who have struggled with chronic addiction and homelessness in that neighborhood.

Responsiveness and Resiliency: Pathways Today

To address these complex issues, Pathways to Housing PA offers a range of integrated services designed to support individuals in their journey from homelessness to housing stability:

- **Housing First Program:** The cornerstone of Pathways' approach, providing immediate access to permanent, scattered-site housing without the preconditions of sobriety or treatment compliance.
- **Integrated Healthcare:** On-site primary care and psychiatric services, ensuring participants receive comprehensive healthcare tailored to their needs.
- **Harm Reduction and Substance Use Services:** Support for individuals struggling with substance use disorders, focusing on reducing negative consequences rather than mandating abstinence. At the same time, Pathways provides accessible MOUD (Medications for Opioid Use Disorder) services onsite and in the community to support recovery.
- **Supported Employment:** Through the Work First program, Pathways provides wage-paid work alongside assistance in finding and maintaining permanent employment, tailored to each individual's skills and interests.
- **Philadelphia Furniture Bank:** A program that provides essential home furnishings to individuals and families moving out of homelessness, including veterans, refugees, immigrants, former foster youth, and victims of domestic violence and natural disasters.

Through a comprehensive assessment based on internal and external stakeholder interviews, surveys, and discussions, a variety of strengths and challenges were identified, summarized below.

Organizational Strengths: Pathways' high-quality services, rooted in the Housing First model, empower participants to overcome obstacles and nurture self-sufficiency. Their exemplary programs also facilitate connections for participants within the community, leading to increased support, partnerships, and resources.

A distinguishing hallmark of Pathways is its participant-centered approach and a strong commitment to fostering an environment where individuals feel valued. Consequently, Pathways is known by participants, staff, and external stakeholders for its high-quality programs that have remained responsive and adaptable to the changing needs of the community. Participants report feeling safe, welcomed, and respected by Pathways staff and more hopeful about their lives due to their connection to the organization.

To improve program effectiveness, Pathways has been at the forefront of adopting new technology to support greater independence of participants and increase program efficiencies. For example, Pathways has installed automatic medication dispensers in select participants' housing units to give them more autonomy and reduce staff time in administering medication to each individual.

Another significant strength concerns Pathways' remarkable negotiations with government funders to provide continued financial stability for the agency. At the start of 2023, Pathways was facing a \$2M deficit due to the outdated billing structure for case management services that provided a fee for each 15-minute increment of direct services provided. The pandemic has shifted how humans interact with each other and brought into focus the challenges with the

billable hour payment model; namely, the model encourages staff to serve easy-to-find participants willing to spend longer amounts of time with them. Participants who are harder to find or prefer shorter interactions aren't prioritized or given equal opportunity for services, not to mention the emergence of technology that has allowed work to happen more quickly and virtually. But with remarkable financial management and negotiation, Pathways was able to implement a per member, per month billing structure that allows all participants to be seen equally and is expected to end the year with a balanced budget and to see an annual surplus next year.

Organizational Challenges: Pathways' strong leadership and compelling mission inspire passionate and dedicated staff who work tirelessly to support participants in their journey toward stable housing and improved well-being. However, the challenging nature of the work, coupled with the emotional investment required, can lead to burnout among staff. In addition, a sector-wide shortage of experienced staff in social services work and case management has made it challenging to fill key positions and attract talent within a competitive hiring environment.

With the rapid growth in services over the past several years, Pathways also struggled with updating their organizational infrastructure to support that growth, including increased stable funding when emergency COVID funds expired, IT needs, staffing structure, and clarity around roles and systems to evaluate the performance of programs.

Vision Café: Possible Pathways to the Future

One of the highlights of the strategic planning process was the Vision Café, a gathering of close to 40 Pathways participants, partners, funders, and Board members. Together, they developed rich answers to these three questions regarding the possible future for Pathways:

1. How can we **work together as a community** (community members, government, and organizations) to end homelessness and its root causes?
2. How can Pathways **increase impact** through its programs and services? (Thinking about specific populations and innovative approaches.)
3. How can Pathways **serve as a leader** to end chronic homelessness and prioritize vulnerable populations?

The themes that arose for each question are as follows:

Collaborate as a Community	Increase Impact	Serve as a Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on addressing the root causes of homelessness • Collaborate with service providers to reduce silos, pursue joint grant opportunities and advocate for better contracts together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide mentorship to staff to help develop the next generation of leaders in housing services • Increase community education and involvement in supporting the unhoused population • Expand programs and services to specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise Pathways' profile and educate the community on Pathways' work and the Housing First model • Create a coalition to speak to "power-brokers" about Pathways' perspective and work • Pathways can use data to track the changing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for citywide measures to increase affordable housing options • Come together around challenges that may arise with the change in federal administration • Foster more connections among residents that Pathways helps to house • Reach out to other areas of the city, such as Mt. Airy and Mayfair 	<p>populations (e.g., those who were recently incarcerated)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand shared housing; while limited, it can be effective and cost-efficient • Create alliances with other organizations tackling homelessness to share results with the city • Collaborate with medical agencies to provide medical assistance in the community (e.g., wound care in Kensington, etc.) 	<p>demographics of the unhoused population and share with local and national governments to help inform future programming and funding strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways can modify the Housing First model to better serve the opioid-use population (can do this via impact measurement, experimenting with approaches and tactics, monitoring of progress, etc.)
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Looking Ahead: The Pathways of Tomorrow

Opportunities for Continued Growth and Strength: The strategic planning discovery and assessment revealed key opportunities in the coming period for Pathways to Housing PA to build on its strong history of growth and success, ensuring its continued thriving over the long term. Many opportunities are woven into the strategic goals and objectives described in the following pages. Below are two highlighted areas for exciting opportunities on Pathways’ doorstep.

Housing Availability and Options

The launch of Pathways Housing Wellness Corporation, an affordable supported housing developer, presents a significant opportunity to increase the housing stock available for low-income members of the community, including Pathways' participants. This initiative has the potential to greatly expand the organization's impact, provided it is supported by a robust and sustainable business model.

A tremendous win for Pathways is having been awarded a \$2.5M, multiyear grant from Pew Charitable Trusts. A portion of this grant will be used to provide the necessary framework to increase affordable housing for members of the community who have been chronically homeless, particularly those living with mental illness or substance use disorder challenges. With this transformative grant, Pathways will be able to invest in programs that help more people reclaim their lives and build the internal infrastructure needed to implement them, as well as kick-start social enterprises that will provide sustainable funding.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Pathways can build new and deeper relationships with other housing agencies, local governments, and grassroots nonprofits to broaden Pathways’ reach. Partnerships with research institutions and colleges/universities could connect academic work with on-the-ground impact and potentially create a pipeline for future staff. Exploring collaborations with nonprofit real estate

developers and building stronger relationships with landlords could help address the growing challenge of finding quality housing for participants.

There are also opportunities to work more closely with the city government to take advantage of Philadelphia's empty properties that could become available units in the future. Additionally, Pathways could seek partnerships (under HIPAA regulations) with organizations that share participants to have more comprehensive information on each participant, such as emergency rooms and Keystone First.

There's an opportunity to work with partners to close the gap when it comes to transitioning participants from Medicaid Health Choices to Community Health Choices. Pathways can look to other states like California, Arizona, and North Carolina that are providing waivers to pay for security deposits for those leaving nursing facilities or providing up to 6 months' rent for those experiencing homelessness.

By capitalizing on these opportunities, Pathways will continue to grow, solidify its leadership, and address chronic homelessness in Philadelphia.



Providing Homes, Restoring Health, Reclaiming Lives

We believe that housing is a basic human right. It's that simple.

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2025-2028 Strategic Framework

The situation analysis highlights Pathways to Housing PA as a highly resilient, mission-driven organization that provides essential services, hope, and stability to individuals experiencing housing insecurity in Philadelphia. With its long service history, track record of success, and commitment to the Housing First model, Pathways is uniquely equipped to continue its critical work for decades to come, even in the face of a rapidly changing society.

Vision, Mission & Values

As part of the strategic planning process, Pathways to Housing PA refreshed its vision, mission, and core values to reflect who the organization is today and further become in the years ahead.

Vision: A Philadelphia where everyone has a safe home, enjoys a healthy life, and is accepted and celebrated.

Mission: Empowering unhoused people with disabilities to reclaim their lives through providing stable housing, supportive services, and a caring community.

Values: Adaptability, Inclusion, Accountability, Respect, Collaboration, and Empathy

Strategic Pillars

The following five strategic pillars, which form the core of the strategic plan guiding Pathways' work over the next three years, build on the organization's strengths and respond to the challenges and opportunities revealed by the assessment:

- **Participant-Centered Programs**
- **Thought Leadership**
- **Culture and Internal Operations**
- **Financial Sustainability**
- **Shared Governance**

Through focused attention on these five areas, Pathways will not only strengthen itself as an institution but will expand its impact on the communities served for years to come. These strategic goals reflect Pathways' commitment to addressing the complex needs of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness while also strengthening its internal structures and external influence.

The following pages provide brief descriptions and breakdowns of specific objectives associated with each of the defined Strategic Goals. This information will offer a more detailed view of the work that needs to be accomplished, ensuring clarity and alignment as Pathways embarks on this strategic journey.

A comprehensive action-plan for achieving each of the strategic goals accompanies this report.

Participant-Centered Programs

Goal:

We are committed to delivering consistently high-quality, participant-centered programs that empower individuals through fostering dignity, self-sufficiency, and long-term success.

Pathways to Housing prioritizes a participant-centered approach that fully integrates participants as partners in addressing the challenges they face. This commitment involves actively learning from participants, applying their insights to shape solutions, and ensuring their experiences are empowering. By incorporating trauma-informed and harm-reduction strategies, Pathways recognizes the systemic barriers contributing to participants' struggles and responds with compassion and dignity.

To fully embed this participant-centered approach across all programs and services, Pathways will ensure that staff understand what being participant-centered means within their areas of work and the outcomes they aim to achieve. Increased fidelity to service delivery will be emphasized, along with responsiveness to each individual's unique support needs.

Pathways will advance this approach by expanding models that promote participant independence, collaborating with partner organizations to address the root causes of homelessness, and establishing continuous feedback loops to monitor, assess, and refine services. These initiatives will ensure Pathways remains responsive, innovative, and aligned with its mission of empowering individuals through holistic, participant-centered care.

Objectives to Achieve the Goal:

- Promote a participant-centered mindset across the organization.
- Continue to address the changing needs of participants, especially around the growing aging population, mental health, and newer drugs on the market.
- Strengthen relationships with landlords for better quality and sustainable housing options.
- Continue to grow and/or evolve the Shared Housing program.
- Create and communicate a plan to monitor, evaluate, and report on the quality and effectiveness of Pathways' services and programs.
- Create a plan on how Pathways and the Housing Wellness Corporation will coordinate and complement one another to increase life-long access to support by participants.

Thought Leadership

Goal:

We will position Pathways to Housing PA as a thought leader in housing solutions, known for fostering innovation, influencing policy, and cultivating strategic partnerships.

Pathways to Housing PA is at the forefront of innovative housing-first approaches, addressing not only homelessness but also the intersections of economic instability and behavioral health disorders. To solidify its role as a thought leader, Pathways must become a leading voice within the homelessness field and bridge gaps in advocacy leadership, while strategically disseminating its groundbreaking work both locally and nationally.

By engaging peers, city and state leaders, and the public, Pathways will be positioned to drive broader, sustainable solutions to housing and homelessness. Innovative pilot projects that gain traction will be expanded, backed by sustainable business plans, and those that falter will provide rich information to deepen a shared understanding of different issue areas and opportunities.

Objectives to Achieve the Goal:

- Create mechanisms that foster thought-leadership across the organization.
- Shape professional and public perceptions around homelessness, mental illness, and substance use.
- Establish Pathways as a convener and leader of homeless services organizations in the city.
- Build Pathways' role in the policy advocacy space.
- Create a comprehensive approach to launching pilot projects.
- Build partnerships to create, scale, and disseminate innovative, replicable programs.

Culture and Internal Operations

Goal:

We are committed to cultivating a supportive and productive work environment that fosters professional growth, consistency, and promotes a shared sense of purpose in achieving our mission.

Coming out of the pandemic, Pathways, along with so many organizations, especially those in the social service sector- must turn its attention to rebuilding a culture that reassures and unifies staff.

By reinforcing core values, cultivating a participant-centered approach, and improving staff recognition, Pathways will ensure that all team members are engaged and aligned with the organization's goals. Staff wellness initiatives will be expanded through new programs tailored to reduce burnout, promote team-building, and offer trauma-informed support. Additionally, Pathways will improve internal communication by establishing regular feedback loops between leadership and staff, promoting open dialogue, and fostering cross-team collaboration.

Operationally, Pathways will standardize internal procedures and implement consistent accountability measures. In addition, professional development efforts will be bolstered by revisiting onboarding processes, facilitating cross-team learning, and implementing leadership pathways to increase staff retention and growth.

A unique aspect of Pathways is the concept of radical hospitality, which was lost during the pandemic and will now be reintroduced. This involves staff welcoming every participant that comes into Pathways' office areas, engaging them to feel part of a community, and making the physical space warm and inviting.

Objectives to Achieve the Goal:

- Foster staff alignment with Pathways' mission and core values.
- Enhance the approach to supporting staff wellness.
- Improve internal communications and collaboration.
- Enhance consistency and accountability across all levels of staff.
- Improve onboarding and professional development to increase staff retention and growth.
- Practice radical hospitality to ensure all participants are welcomed and supported at Pathways.

Shared Governance

Goal:

We will establish a dynamic shared governance model that empowers staff and the Board to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes and instills collective ownership and accountability for the success of the organization.

During the planning process, Pathways' Board and staff members coalesced around the concept of shared governance as a unique approach to guiding the strategic development of the organization and ensuring a collective stake in fulfilling its mission.

To embody shared governance, Pathways will build a framework that invites and supports active participation from all staff, departments, and leadership levels, while reinforcing the Board's role in organizational governance. The frameworks will include structures for staff to provide input on decisions and ways to systematize accountability by connecting individual goals to organizational objectives. Principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion will be embedded into the strategic discussions and addressed head-on through a revived Board DEI committee.

Board and staff leadership development is essential for ensuring continuity and consistency of shared governance. For both groups, establishing clear roles and expectations, coupled with mentoring and building a leadership pipeline will strengthen the foundation for broad ownership of Pathways' sustainability and growth trajectory.

Objectives to Achieve the Goal:

- Create inclusive shared governance frameworks.
- Enhance Board engagement and Board governance practices.
- Reinvigorate the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Board and staff committees.
- Build a pipeline for staff leadership, professional development, and succession planning.

Financial Sustainability

Goal:

We will continue to strengthen financial sustainability to support Pathways' mission, services, and growth.

Pathways is entering its next chapter on solid financial standing due to proactive, transparent financial management, and is committed to strengthening its financial sustainability moving forward. This will be achieved by educating staff on how their roles impact financial sustainability, increasing the Board's understanding of its fiduciary role, and strengthening revenue streams across government contracts, earned income, and donor support.

For public funding, Pathways will continue to review and improve city and state funding contracts and will explore new payment systems that have been implemented in other states, such as the value-based payment system, which rewards providers for the quality of care they provide.

For contributed revenue, Pathways will take a comprehensive approach to fundraising by conducting a development assessment with outside expertise. This will include donor analysis, major donor prospecting, and the development of a capital campaign. The \$2.5 million five-year grant from Pew can be leveraged to attract additional major gifts. In tandem with the fundraising program, Pathways will strengthen its marketing efforts to support fundraising goals and build the organization's profile across a wide range of audiences.

Pathways will also enhance its compliance efforts by hiring a contracts/grants manager to oversee adherence to funding requirements. Strategic use of financial surpluses will be a priority, with plans to invest in program expansion, social enterprise growth, and building a financial reserve to ensure long-term sustainability.

Objectives to Achieve the Goal:

- Foster a shared responsibility for financial sustainability throughout the organization.
- Continue to explore new funding strategies related to addressing social determinants of health.
- Ensure there is full and consistent compliance with contracts and grants.
- Use financial surpluses strategically to build long-term financial sustainability and growth.
- Strengthen the business plans for social enterprises.
- Conduct a development assessment with a third-party consultant to build the fundraising program and increase revenue.
- Develop a comprehensive marketing program that directly supports the fundraising plan.
- Strengthen board development and training around fundraising goals.

Pathways to Housing PA created this strategic plan to guide its work through the next three years. The planning team solicited the input of partners, supporters, staff, the Board, and other stakeholders during the creation of this plan, ensuring its relevance and practicality.

Equipped with creative ideas, diverse voices, and vast experiences captured herein, Pathways is confident and excited to deepen its impact as a service leader in partnership with the clients and greater community it serves.

Recommendations for Implementation:

This strategic plan is intended to be a living document, a resource to be used, shared, and updated as Pathways to Housing PA continues its journey to fulfill its mission and goals to best serve its stakeholders. To ensure successful implementation of the plan, here are a set of guidelines to employ:

- Communicate and celebrate the successful completion of the strategic plan, thanks to the high level of input, engagement, and commitment by the Board and staff.
- Designate a staff member to drive the continuous implementation and convene individuals to share progress regularly.
- Designate leaders for each strategic goal who will drive, monitor, and report on implementation activity. These individuals are not responsible for carrying out all the activities themselves. They will lead the conversations around them with individuals involved in carrying out the activities to ensure progress is made and there is evidence that there has been advancement towards achieving the goal each year.
- Regularly reference the plan and key initiatives within it during staff and Board meetings to keep the big picture goals top-of-mind throughout the organization and promote accountability to each.
- Regularly review progress made on the action-plan, evaluating what efforts have been successful and which are challenging to move forward, requiring adjustments to the approach and strategies. As strategies evolve, track the adjustments, and communicate out.
- Share milestones that Pathways has achieved in advancing the goals to all key stakeholders, including volunteers, partners, and others, recognizing that their support continues to play a key role in the organization's success.
- On an annual basis, review the full plan and assess what needs to be reprioritized in terms of resource allocation and focused efforts of staff and Board.



Pathways
to Housing PA

www.pathwaystohousingpa.org