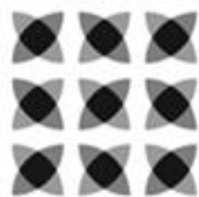


90 Homes for 90 Lives

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CENTRE
for **SOCIAL**
IMPACT

SUMMARY

90 Homes for 90 Lives is a collective impact initiative that works to provide permanent exits from homelessness to rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo, a Sydney suburb with one of the highest concentrations of rough sleepers in the city.

KEY FACTS

Initiative Name: 90 Homes for 90 Lives

Purpose: Provide permanent exits from homelessness

Target area: Woolloomooloo, Sydney

Date commenced: 2010

Number of people housed: 83, as at January 2014

HOW IT STARTED

The 90 Homes for 90 Lives initiative started in 2010. The project developed from a meeting between Doug Taylor, CEO of United Way Australia, and Liz Giles, at-the-time Manager of the Homelessness Unit, City of Sydney, and a shared interest in solving the endemic issue of homelessness in Woolloomooloo.

Woolloomooloo, at the time the project started, had the highest concentration of rough sleepers in Sydney¹, in spite of the numerous organisations involved in servicing homelessness in the area. At the time, around 90 individuals were sleeping rough in this inner city suburb. United Way Australia and the City of Sydney, having witnessed the lack of success in permanently addressing the problem, were ready to look at innovative ways to significantly reduce the number of people sleeping rough in the area. To this aim, they brought together a group of cross-sector stakeholders and started a conversation about what could be done for the rough sleeping population of Woolloomooloo. From this conversation arose the 90 Homes for 90 Lives initiative, with the ambitious goal of providing permanent exits from homelessness for the 90 rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo, as the name of the initiative indicates.

HOW 90 HOMES for 90 LIVES is different

1. Solve rather than manage homelessness
2. Adopt the Housing First Model
3. A Collective Impact approach

¹ <http://www.clovermoore.com.au/woolloomooloo-homelessness/>

Partners

The original partners in the initiative were United Way Australia, City of Sydney, Herbert Smith Freehills and UBS. They were joined later by Neami National, Colliers International, Bridge Housing and, more recently, Lend Lease.

TIMELINE

The 90 Homes for 90 Lives initiative was implemented over 3 main phases

1. Research and influence

In November 2010, the coalition partnered with the Mercy Foundation to survey a sample of rough sleepers from the inner city to gather information on their demographics, health and housing history and the duration of homelessness. Information on the state of rough sleepers was also gathered through the bi-annual street counts run by the City of Sydney, in which UBS employees participate. This built up an important picture around the nature and extent of the needs of rough sleepers, which then informed the actions of the initiative and provided baseline information against which progress and success could be measured.

Cost-benefit
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over **3 years**

To garner support for their initiative, as well as the adoption of the Housing First model² as part of their operations, the initiative investigated the cost of homelessness through a social and economic model developed in partnership with the Centre for Social Impact. The findings from the cost-benefit analysis showed that providing permanent exits from homelessness could potentially save the government in excess of \$4.5 million over a three year period.

Armed with this information, a proposal document was put together and submitted to the then Minister for Finance, NSW State Government. This led to the creation of Platform 70 in August 2011 – a government funded initiative awarded to Bridge Housing and Neami National – to permanently house and support 70 rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo through private head leasing.

² The Housing First model is an approach that involves providing permanent accommodation without prerequisites related to medical or substance abuse treatments “complemented by the provision of services to assist each individual to sustain housing and work towards recovery and reintegration into the community” (Johnson et al., 2012, p. 2)

2. Implement

Once funding was obtained, the focus of the initiative shifted to supporting Bridge Housing and Neami National to secure private rental opportunities. To this end, a marketing document making the business case for private head leasing was put together by graduates from Herbert Smith Freehills and UBS to attract private landlords into providing their properties for rental. Through the support and expertise provided by the two corporates, Bridge Housing's success rate of securing private rental opportunities increased from 11 per cent to 44 per cent. The initiative exceeded its target of housing 70 homeless individuals in 18 months and is now working towards the initial target of 90. The recent confirmation of extension of funding for Platform 70 until the 30th of June 2014 is now expected to provide an opportunity for up to 100 individuals to secure permanent housing.

3. Sustain and replicate

With the initiative exceeding the government's target of housing 70 individuals (83 rough sleepers have been successfully housed as at January 2014) and well on its way to achieving their initial target of 90, the focus of the project has changed to consider future opportunities to sustain and/or replicate the program. One example of new options the partnership is currently exploring is the use of new builds as a source of housing solutions for the homeless. Strategies around stopping the in-flow of individuals into homelessness are also being explored by the initiative.

STRUCTURE

90 Homes for 90 Lives is a cross-sector partnership between government, non-government, corporate and philanthropic organisations, each bringing to the table their sector and industry expertise and perspectives – an element that contributed to the success of the initiative according to the partners. Bridge Housing and Neami National are the two social service providers of the initiative; Bridge Housing is responsible for finding housing while Neami National provides wrap-around support to the individuals throughout their journey from sleeping on the streets to being housed and beyond. The corporate sector is represented by UBS, Colliers International, Herbert Smith Freehills and, more recently, Lend Lease. City of Sydney and United Way represent the government and philanthropic sectors respectively.

FIVE CONDITIONS OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Common Agenda

The aim of the 90 Homes for 90 Lives initiative is to reduce homelessness in Woolloomooloo, through the provision of permanent housing using the Housing First model. The initiative initially adopted the federal and state targets to reduce rough sleeping by 25 per cent by 2013, and applied it to the

baseline of approximately 90 people suffering from homelessness in their target area in 2010. With this target exceeded ahead of time, along with the target set by through Platform 70, the initiative, while still continuing its operations, is currently in the process of developing new goals.

Shared Measurements

The initiative's overall measure of success was quite straightforward: success would be measured by the number of rough sleepers that would be provided with permanent housing. The project had an overall goal of housing 90 individuals, the number of rough sleepers in the area at the time of the project's inception, and set an incremental goal of housing a minimum of 22 homeless individuals³ by 2013. Providing rough sleepers with permanent exits from homelessness, not temporary shelter, was an important focus of the initiative and affected how success was measured. It was agreed that placing individuals in boarding houses, hostel beds or transitional housing would not be counted as outcomes; it had to be permanent supportive housing.

The project also aimed to prevent further homeless people from becoming permanently established in the area by working with local services, the police and residents, and by intervening early with new arrivals in the area.

Progress on the target is reported by Bridge Housing and Neami National during the initiative's meetings. The development of a shared and specific measure of success not only allowed the initiative to track its progress, it ensured that the collective's efforts remained focused. It also formed an essential basis for advocating to government for support, to sustain and continue the project.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

In the 90 Homes for 90 Lives initiative, each partner brings a specific set of skills to the table: the service providers Neami National and Bridge Housing are involved at the ground level. UBS, through Philip Coleman – chair of the 90 Homes for 90 Lives initiative – provides leadership, networks and influence, as well as some funding.

Colliers International, Herbert Smith Freehills and Lend Lease bring their industry expertise – real estate, social justice and advocacy, and property development respectively – crucial to the issue at hand, as well as a fresh view of the existing opportunities and challenges in tackling homelessness. The City of Sydney is the content expert and, through Liz Giles, provided leadership and direction to the initiative. The City of Sydney is also a co-funder of the Neami outreach and support team. United Way Australia plays the role of facilitator and convenor, brokering relationships between existing and potential members of the initiative as well as dealing with administrative tasks like organizing meetings.

³ 25 per cent (as per the federal and state targets) of the initial 90 rough sleepers in the area

Continuous Communication

The members of the initiative convene regularly, usually every four to six weeks, to discuss progress, brainstorm ideas and innovative ways to achieve their goal and next steps. Minutes of the meetings are then distributed outlining action points and follow up matters. Significant informal communication also occurs among partners giving them the opportunity to discuss and update each other. External communication is also carried out through articles and presentation of the initiative at various forums. Partners, mainly UBS and United Way, also endeavor to communicate progress to relevant state and federal bureaucrats and Ministers. External communication is an important component of building and sustaining a successful collective impact initiative as it allows the collaborative to identify the areas they should be targeting, as well as build public support for the collective effort.⁴ External communication has been critical to the success of the initiative.

Backbone Organisation

The functions of the backbone organisation are shared across multiple partners, with United Way Australia playing an administrative role and ensuring the constant flow of communication, and that partners are all on the same page in terms of understanding the vision and strategy of the initiative. UBS and City of Sydney provide leadership and influence through the status and networks of their representatives; they are the champions of building public will and advancing policy. Neami National and Bridge Housing ensure aligned activities and sharing of information around the initiative's progress with the rest of the collaborative partners.

ADVICE AND INSIGHTS

Cross-sector partnerships are invaluable

One of the strengths of the 90 Homes for 90 Lives initiative is that it brings together players from various sectors, who may not otherwise have come together, and leverages their core skills to achieve a common social goal. Engaging cross-sector organisations brings to the initiative a combination of assets and perspectives, and harnesses the skills of multiple rather than singular sectors, allowing them to address an entrenched issue in an innovative way. However, implementing cross-sectoral partnerships can be a challenge as different work cultures and views will collide and, if not managed properly, may result in conflict rather than creative dissent. It is thus crucial to build buy-in into the

⁴ Bridgeland, J., Hecht, B., Murphy, L., Rice, N., Schmitz, P., Shelton, J., Stewart, S., Stonesifer, P., Young, M. L. and Zimpher, N. 2012. Q&A: Rountable on Collective Impact. *In*: Nee, E. and Jolin, M. (eds.). Stanford Social Innovation Review.

overarching goal so that partners may rise above disagreements in the interest of pursuing a common goal.

Do not underestimate the soft skills

Strong leadership was identified by partner organizations as a critical element to the success of the initiative. The key skills associated with effective leadership were the ability to identify and recruit strategic players, drive the common agenda and keep partners engaged, as well as provide guidance on individual roles and highlight members' contributions to achieving the shared

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target. A good leader, partners believe, commands respect from all members and is thus granted the authority to lead; has a clear vision; and participates proactively in all aspects of the initiative. Trust was also mentioned as an important contributor to collaborative success. Conflict is an inherent element of collaboration and often plays an important role in driving change and innovative solutions, and trust in the other partners and their commitment to the common agenda is critical to overcome challenges associated with cross-sector partnerships.

Working in line with government is key to success

The involvement of the government sector, both through the City of Sydney and through the funding of Platform 70, helped the initiative progress towards its goal of reducing homeless in Woolloomooloo. Indeed, working with government, rather than against – implicitly or explicitly – increased the chances of achieving the outcome by improving the initiative's understanding of the administrative, policy and regulatory aspects of government. 90 Homes for 90 Lives ensured support from the government by not only aligning their targets to pre-existing federal and state goals, but also by strategically choosing their target area. Achieving success in Woolloomooloo would not only reduce homelessness figures in the City of Sydney LGA, it would also translate into a lower rate of homelessness state-wide given the high concentration of rough sleepers in the inner-city area and the further concentration of those numbers (roughly a third) in Woolloomooloo.