

ENHANCING FAITH-BASED PARTNERSHIPS IN HOMELESSNESS



LA COUNTY HOMELESS INITIATIVE

RESULTS FROM THE LA COUNTY HOMELESS
INITIATIVE SURVEY OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

APRIL 2023



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I. Executive Summary

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) have traditionally held a historical and long-standing role in responding to the needs of vulnerable people. Many FBOs play a pivotal role in providing services and supports to our neighbors at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The Faith Collaborative to End Homelessness (FCEH) - formerly the Faith Working Group - launched in 2018 to coordinate partnership efforts with FBOs across Los Angeles County and develop a strategic plan to align homeless services provided by FBOs with Los Angeles County's homeless services delivery system. The FCEH consists of representatives from the CEO-HI, faith leaders, homelessness liaisons, and leads from various County agencies and elected offices.

On January 5, 2021, the Los Angeles County (LA County) Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a motion directing the Chief Executive Office-Homeless Initiative (CEO-HI) to conduct a survey of FBOs and identify barriers they face in expanding and aligning services with mainstream homeless services delivery systems. To facilitate the survey process and support this work, the CEO-HI brought on board Communities in Motion (CIM) as the consulting firm to facilitate this process and work with FCEH to complete this survey.

In May 2022, the CEO-HI, with support provided by CIM, launched a survey of FBOs to identify the type of support and services they provide to people experiencing homelessness or living in poverty and to gauge their interest in expanding these efforts. The survey was conducted in two parts: 1) an initial survey focusing on obtaining general information from FBOs about their current efforts in supporting people experiencing homelessness, interest in expanding their efforts, and willingness to partner with LA County on providing homeless services, and 2) a follow up survey distributed to respondents of the first survey, which requested information regarding the current capacity and the capacity building needs.

Over 1,500 FBOs were provided the survey from May to September 2022. A variety of outreach and engagement strategies were utilized, including active involvement of the FCEH, who hosted promotional events and participated in focus group sessions held countywide. A total of 252 completed surveys were returned and used for this analysis.

The survey resulted in a greater understanding of FBOs current commitment and capacity to serve people experiencing homelessness. The survey also highlighted FBOs continued leadership and support to their communities, such as responding to peoples' pressing needs while in crisis.



Based on the results of the survey, the FCEH in consultation with CIM provide recommendations that will strengthen and sustain faith-based partnerships and participation in LA County’s homeless services delivery system. These recommendations, outlined below, are focused on increasing and sustaining FBO involvement and participation as an integral partner and leader in the homeless services delivery system throughout LA County and across different government and nonprofit agencies.

- 1. Establish a Faith-Based Commission on Homelessness (FBCH).** The FBCH would provide guidance and accountability when it comes to implementation of the recommendations proposed in this report, as well as overall engagement with FBOs. The FCEH believes that the faith community needs to have a structure in place to mobilize, engage and involve FBOs in a targeted and focused way. An independent structure would allow for engagement efforts to be inclusive, allowing for greater flexibility to mobilize and engage the faith community.
 - In establishing the FBCH, it is also recommended that this body be closely integrated with the faith-based work underway per the May 17, 2022, Board motion also looking at the integration of FBOs in supporting overall County efforts.
 - Funding and resources will be needed to support the infrastructure of the FBCH, as well as to support the implementation of proposed strategies to increase faith-based services and resources to help address the homeless crisis in LA County. CEO-HI will work with philanthropy partners and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority to identify funding to support the integration of FBOs in homelessness and to support their capacity building needs.
 - FCEH is recommending that FCEH leaders be included in the FBCH to ensure continuity.
- 2. Advance concrete collaboration and engagement.** This recommendation promotes strategies that includes scheduling bi-annual town hall events or conferences, as well as organizing regional-based collaboratives to strengthen the participation and engagement of FBOs in addressing homelessness. This recommendation also includes implementing strategies that achieve alignment between existing faith community efforts and government and nonprofit agency initiatives and programs to expand and deepen services for people experiencing homelessness.
- 3. Increase funding and capacity building opportunities for FBOs to become more involved and effective in the delivery of their services and support.** This recommendation is focused on developing and implementing funding and capacity building opportunities that will result in increased participation of FBOs and reduce barriers to accessing funding.



- 4. Improve communication and information sharing among the faith community and LA County.** Developing and advancing a communication and information sharing strategy will promote respect, trust, and relationship building among the faith community and the County. This recommendation includes a combination of centralizing information and communication, as well as establishing consistent and ongoing two-way communication between FBOs and the County.

- 5. Increase the involvement of the faith community in homeless policy and advocacy.** This recommendation seeks to increase FBO knowledge in public policy issues and participation in local and regional advocacy efforts to support homeless solutions and enhance services.

II. Survey Methodology & Outreach

The survey of FBOs included components utilizing a variety of outreach and engagement approaches. Between May to September 2022, a survey, available in English and Spanish, was developed and made available via Survey Monkey and in print form. The survey was conducted in two parts, with the first part focused on obtaining general information from FBOs about their current efforts, interest in expanding their efforts to support people experiencing homelessness, and willingness to partner with LA County. The second part was a follow-up for those who completed the first part of the survey and focused on understanding their current capacity to serve and support people experiencing homelessness, including what would be needed for them to be enhance and/or increase their efforts. An outreach strategy was developed that included:

- **Graphics Materials and Videos:** Promotional videos were created and posted online to promote the survey. Additionally, flyers and postcards were developed and distributed electronically, at in-person events, meetings, and focus group sessions.
- **Electronic Communication and Social Media:** County Supervisor Hilda Solis' office issued a media advisory promoting the survey and encouraging the faith community to participate. The CEO-HI, FCEH, and CIM created an email distribution list of faith-based leaders and organizations that was used to send email notifications about the survey.
- **Survey Outreach and Engagement:** CIM also conducted outreach and engaged FBOs through email, phone calls, in-person meetings, outreach events and focus group sessions. The FCEH members helped promote the survey by contacting leaders and FBOs in their own networks, as well as hosting and attending events and focus group sessions.

Approximately 1,500 FBOs were contacted and engaged multiple times through various methods (email, phone calls, visits and at events) by CIM and the FCEH members. A total of 260 FBOs completed the survey, of which 252 were included in the survey analysis, and 8 that were excluded because they either did not serve people in LA County or were duplicate entries. A second part of the survey, which solicited important information regarding FBOs' resource capacity and needs, was completed by 34 FBOs.

In person engagement was a critical component of the survey, as CIM sought to establish connections with FBOs interested in assisting persons experiencing homelessness. Focus group sessions were held in various regions throughout the County to provide assistance completing the survey and allow FBOs to ask questions and provide feedback about their

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experiences with the homeless services delivery system. In addition, CIM worked with FCEH members to engage FBOs at existing faith events and meetings, which provided an opportunity to promote the survey and encourage them to complete the survey

From July to September 2022, CIM promoted the survey at 14 meetings and focus group sessions; a total of 82 representatives from FBOs and nonprofit organizations were engaged.

This report summarizes the feedback received from completed surveys, focus group sessions, and faith events and meetings. Additionally, CIM conducted interviews and site visits to solicit additional feedback on the second part of the survey to capture information on FBO's capacity, services and support being offered, and support they may need to become more integrated with the homeless services delivery system.

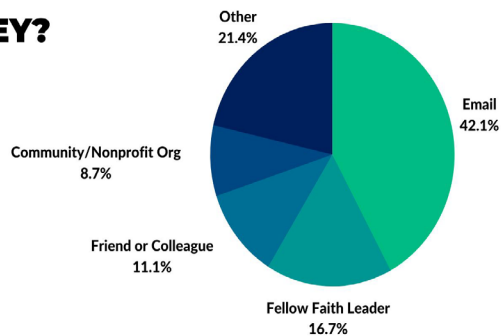
III. Survey Highlights & Results

Survey analysis and results provide a sample picture of FBOs in LA County who are already serving people experiencing homelessness and/or would like to expand their efforts. More importantly, the faith community has historically and holistically been serving many people in need and often have valuable experience that would benefit the homeless services delivery system. The survey results provide concrete examples of where opportunities exist to integrate FBOs into the homeless services delivery system and further support FBOs to provide a greater voice and leadership in the design and development of homeless policies and systems. Information from the survey is provided under the following subcategories:

- A. Demographic Information on FBO Respondents
- B. Current Services and Supports Provided by FBOs
- C. Opportunities for Integration of FBOs into Homeless Services Delivery System
- D. FBO Resource and Needs Assessment

A. Demographic Information on FBO Respondents

HOW DID FBO HEAR ABOUT THE SURVEY?



The faith community is relational-based, and this survey showed that this is the first step to building strong partnerships with them. The most effective engagement involved FBOs that had an established relationship with a member of the FCEH, LA County, LA County agency and/or CIM.

To the left is the breakdown of the different ways in which FBOs were made aware of the survey, with email being the most effective at 42.1%.

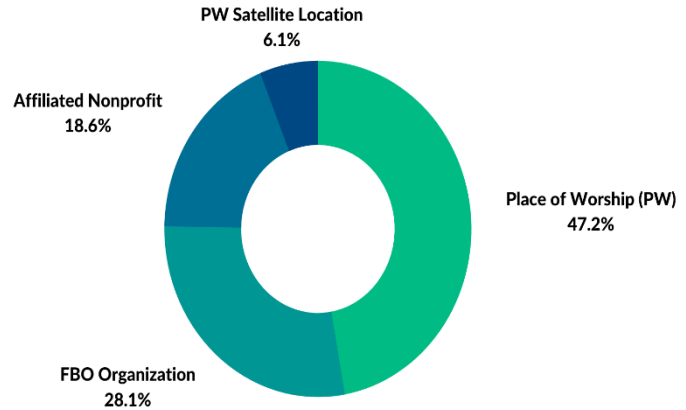
Although most respondents heard about the survey through email, they most likely received an email from someone they knew.

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The survey sought information on the type of FBOs who participated, as there are different types of FBOs, ranging from those that are places of worship, nonprofits that were founded as a faith-based organization, have nonprofit 501(c)(3) status, or satellite locations to a place of worship. In this survey, over 47% reported they represented a place of worship.

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION TYPE

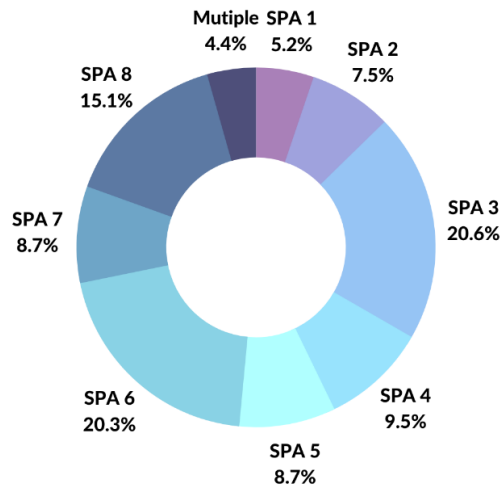


The faith community is diverse and even within a specific denomination, there are various sects which could have their own beliefs and approaches. However, a common denominator among all the respondents is the consistent commitment and leadership provided by FBOs to help address the homeless in LA County. The chart below summarizes the religious affiliation of FBOs who completed the survey.

Religious Affiliation	Number of respondents
Non-denominational Christian	104
Other	24
Jewish	8
Roman Catholic	8
Interfaith	4
Islam	3
Buddhist	3

The geographic breakdown of FBO respondents by Service Planning Area (SPA) was also analyzed, with the highest number of respondents being from SPAs 3, 6 and 8. The level of outreach needed in regions varied, but in all regions, personal contact and in-person engagement was essential. Responses were contingent upon FBOs being able to prioritize the survey, having the background to complete the survey, and in some cases, identifying an FBO representative to complete the survey. Since this was the first survey focused on faith and homelessness, the outreach and engagement process illustrated the need to continue building a consistent, responsive, and proactive relationship between the faith community and LA County.

**GEOGRAPHIC
 BREAKDOWN
 OF
 RESPONDENTS**



The chart and table below provide additional detailed information about the respondents by SPA.

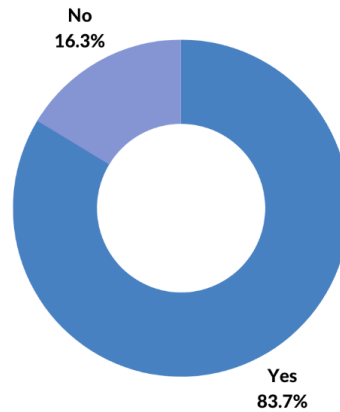
Service Planning Area	FBO Respondents General Survey	FBO Respondents Part II Survey
1 - Antelope Valley	13	1
2 - San Fernando Valley	19	2
3 - San Gabriel Valley	52	6
4 - Metro Los Angeles	24	4
5 - West Los Angeles	22	4
6 - South Los Angeles	51	8
7 - Southeast Los Angeles	22	2
8 - South Bay	38	4
Multiple	11	3
Total	252	34

B. Current Services and Supports Provided by FBOs

A significant percentage of FBOs responded that they provide consistent and ongoing support to people experiencing homelessness, even if they are not formerly involved with LA County’s effort to address homelessness. *83.7% of respondents shared that they provide support, services and/or programs for people experiencing homelessness.* Most of their efforts are clustered around providing tangible goods, such as clothes, groceries, and meals. The survey also revealed that many FBOs are currently conducting some level of outreach and engagement with people experiencing homelessness, and partnerships with LA County can strengthen those efforts. FBOs indicated they wanted to increase their support and participation in the homeless services delivery system, confirming FCEH and CEO-HI’s intentional focus of using the survey results to create opportunities to better integrate the faith community into the homeless services delivery system.

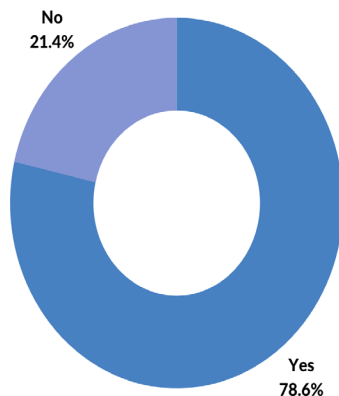
CURRENTLY PROVIDING SUPPORT, SERVICES AND/OR PROGRAMS

	Number	%
Yes	210	83.7%
No	41	16.3%
Total	252	



FBOs reported that they partner with other organizations and groups to serve people experiencing homelessness. 78.6% reported they partner with government agencies, homeless service agencies and food banks. Several FBOs reported they rent out their facilities, allowing services to be provided at their sites. Others shared that they also coordinate with other FBOs in their community.

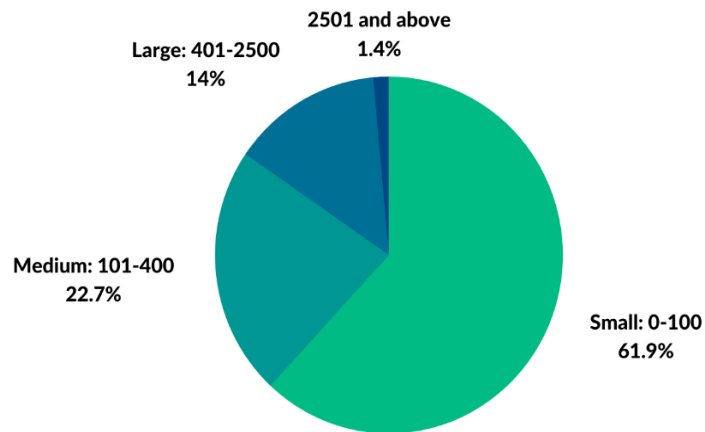
PARTNERSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENT AND NON PROFIT AGENCIES



The level of support and services provided varies across FBOs. Many of the services are not always tracked and measured, largely due in part to the FBOs capacity, as many of their services are led or conducted by volunteers. *61.9% of FBOs serve under 100 people monthly, with 36.7% of FBOs serving between 101-2500 people monthly.*



PEOPLE SERVED MONTHLY



C. Opportunities for Integration of FBOs into Homeless Services Delivery System

Overwhelmingly, FBOs shared their willingness to expand and offer more support and services. Many of the comments provided also demonstrate the enthusiasm and willingness of FBOs to partner with LA County to expand services to people experiencing homelessness. Below are some of the comments received from FBO leaders who completed the survey.

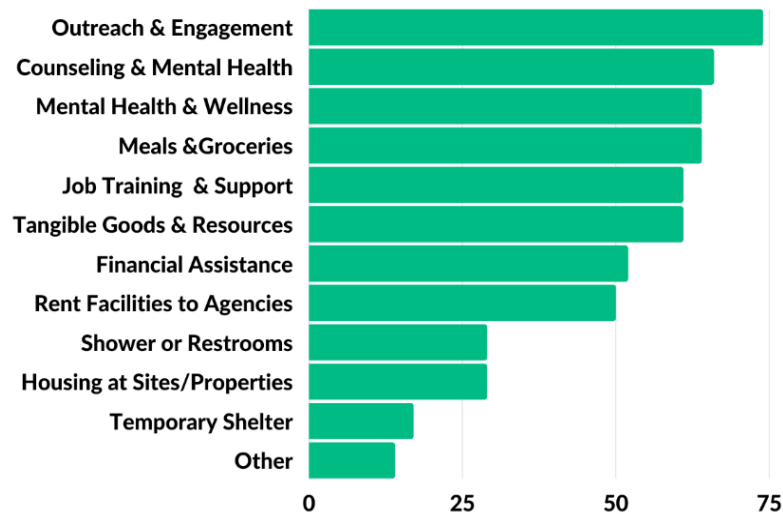
- "This is an important project for our community, and we need to move forward to find the best practices and solutions..."
- "I look forward to assisting our community. "
- "We would love to participate. It's needed."
- "Where can we go to help even more?"
- "Thank you for doing this! May God bless your efforts and may we all find ways and bridges to help our neighbors."
- "We are willing to partner with any CBO or FBO who are truly helping the community..."
- "We are eager to grow our capacity to engage with unhoused neighbors, who we have come to know well, in a reliable, safe, respectable way, and to leverage their trust into functional engagement with existing services. Our services are currently 100% volunteer-based."

FBOs reported that they would like to be more involved in homeless outreach efforts and mental health related services. Because they understand the communities they serve and are mission focused, they believe they can build relationships and trust with those they serve, but they often do not have the training and/or information to resources and services that could be helpful to

people experiencing homelessness. In focus group sessions, several FBOs shared examples of the important work they do to connect people to resources, often acting as resource coaches and navigators. Partnering with FBOs in these areas can lead to greater coordination and increased service capacity.

Although not reported often in the survey, it is important to recognize there are FBOs interested in providing housing and shelter services. Many FBOs indicated they are willing to expand and/or utilize their sites or properties for housing and shelter, but this will require building trust and developing a climate of collaboration and partnerships with the County. In this area, significant capacity building and funding will be needed to support faith involvement in developing permanent housing and shelter.

WAYS IN WHICH FBOS WANT TO SERVE OR EXPAND



D. FBO Capacity Resources and Needs

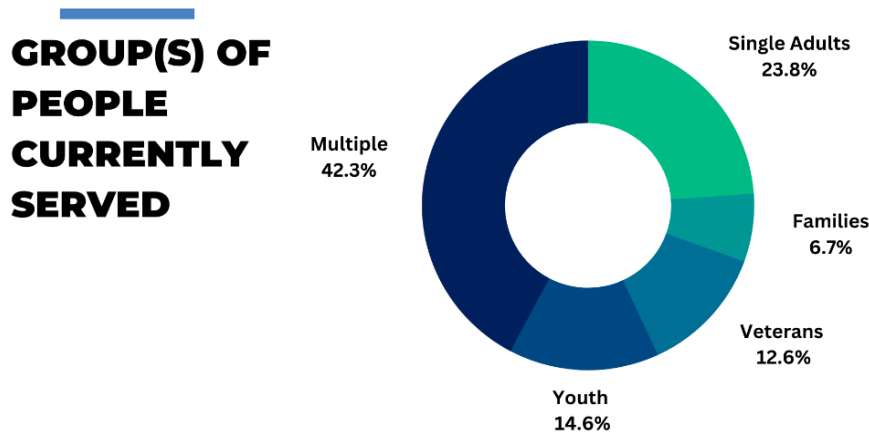
The survey captured vital information and insights on how to best support the integration and increased involvement of FBOs in the homeless services delivery system. FBOs have expressed and shown their interest and commitment to serving people experiencing homelessness. The survey results show that FBOs need a variety of capacity building and training resources to better equip and support them.

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FBOs often have different groups within their congregations who lead efforts focused on specific areas or populations. For larger FBOs, they often have multiple efforts being led and driven by volunteers. Many FBOs also focus on specific issues and populations based on the needs of the communities they serve.

FBOs reported they serve multiple populations (42%) and Single Adults (23.5%). If they serve families, they are also serving children. FBOs noted that the system is often designed in silos, yet their focus is holistic, so it is often difficult for them to access resources and information they need to serve and support people. Also, FBOs indicated they can play a larger role in prevention, as they see people or are contacted by people when they are in crises.



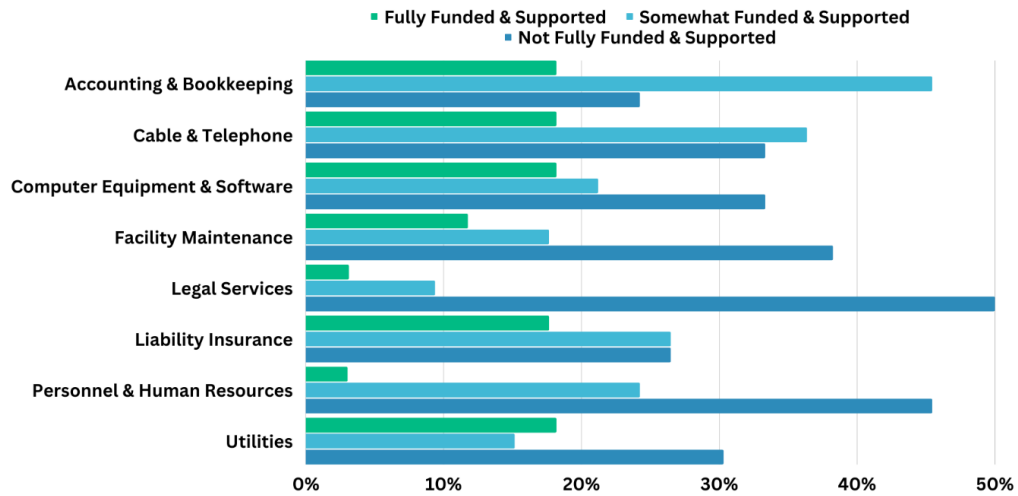
The survey included a series of questions about the capacity building needs of FBOs with the intent to inform strategies that would focus on expanding the capacity of FBOs through training, technical assistance, information sharing, and funding. Key themes that emerged include:

- FBOs reported their primary sources of funding has been through private funding or donations, while their support and staffing come from volunteers.
- A majority FBOs reported they are not fully funded or supported to provide services, which confirms the need for additional resources, funding, and capacity building.
- FBOs need training and technical assistance in partnering with government to expand housing and shelter services.
- Administrative functions and requirements are not often supported, making it difficult for FBOs and smaller organizations to expand and sustain effective levels of services.

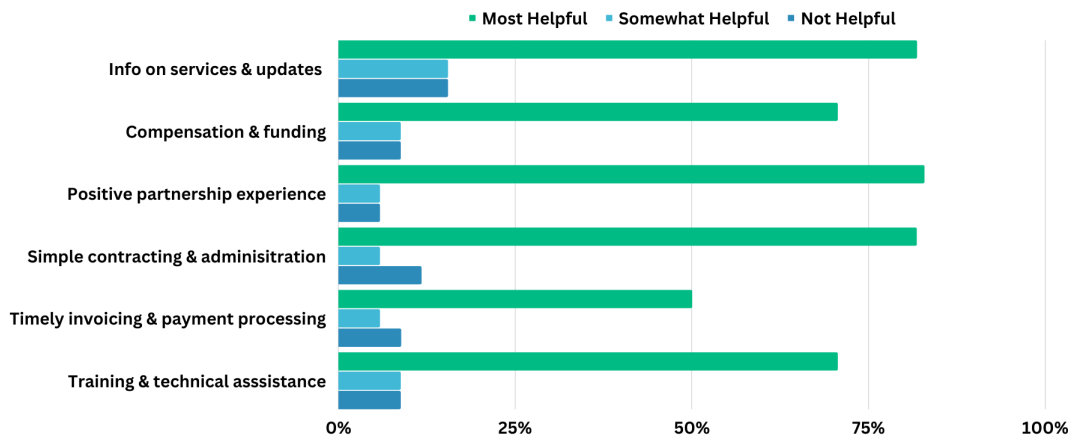
Based on the results from the survey, a comprehensive capacity building program for FBOs is essential to effectively expanding the role of FBOs in homelessness.



CURRENT ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES AVAILABLE

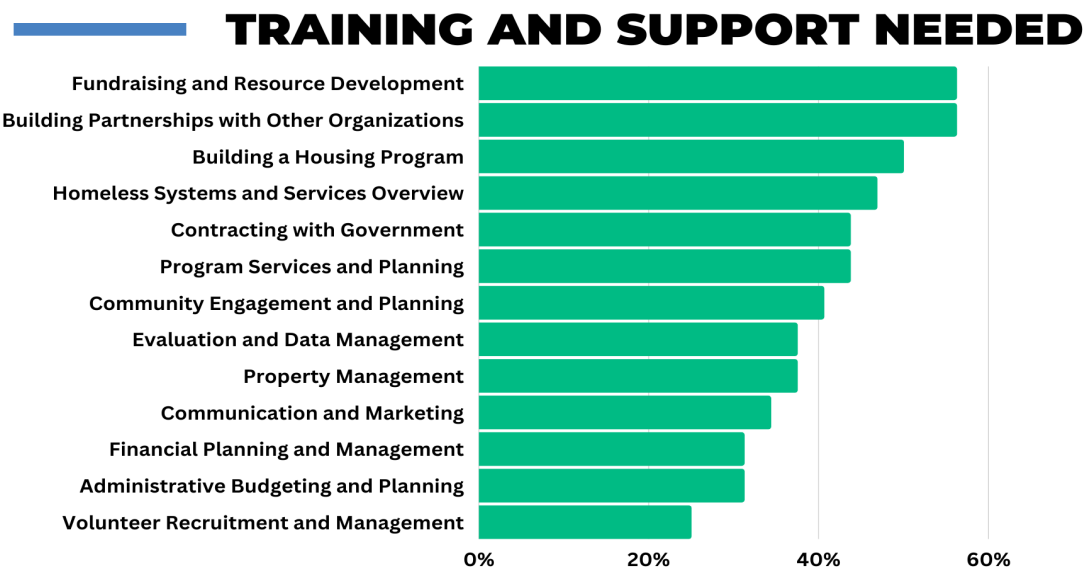


WHAT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL TO FBOS





FBOs were asked to identify specific training and support that would be helpful to them. There is strong interest in fundraising and resource development and building partnerships with other organizations. The interest in these areas is consistent, as many FBOs identified that they would be interested in expanding in the areas of housing and housing supports. To do this, they need additional information, resources, and education for them to successfully expand their efforts into these areas. Below is a chart that highlights training and support needed as identified by FBOs.



IV. Recommendations

The FCEH and the LA County CEO-HI recommend the following to increase FBO participation and leadership in the LA County homeless delivery system:

Recommendation 1: Creation of the Faith-Based Commission on Homelessness (FBCH)

The survey results demonstrate that FBOs have a strong interest to participate or increase their participation in addressing homelessness if resources and support can be provided. Increased, coordinated, and strategic involvement of FBOs in addressing homelessness has the potential to expand and enhance homeless services, as well as increase interim and permanent housing capacity. Therefore, the FCEH recommends the establishment of a FBCH to successfully implement the other recommendations outlined in this report. At minimum, the FBCH should be comprised of: 1) faith leaders and partners representing the FCEH; 2) faith leaders representing all regions in LA County; and 3) faith leaders representing diverse faith communities. Upon receiving direction to establish the FBCH, FBO leaders will be engaged to help develop an organizational and infrastructure plan and outline specific responsibilities of the FBCH. Additionally, a series of strategic planning sessions will be planned and scheduled with the FCEH, CEO-HI, and other faith-based stakeholders to move forward on implementation of the recommendations.

A FBCH would be in a strategic position to collaborate with the CEO-HI and County departments on specific homeless-related programs, policies, and concerted efforts, such as those resulting from the May 17, 2022, Board motion looking to develop a robust and comprehensive partnership with FBOs to serve various vulnerable populations.

Recommendation 2: Advance concrete collaboration and partnership engagements

The results of the survey provided important feedback about collaboration and partnerships with the faith community. FBO respondents are seeking a mutually benefiting relationship in which trust will need to be built over time. There was consistent feedback received from FBOs regarding being able to network and collaborate with each other on a regular basis to share information, receive training, and find ways to work together to increase their capacity and resources. Main components of this recommendation include:

- a. Developing a plan to host bi-annual town hall events or conferences to engage FBOs on a regular basis.



- b. Establishing and supporting faith collaboratives in each SPA throughout LA County, focused on homelessness, or at minimum, explore the creation of a faith subgroup within each homeless coalition in the county.
- c. Developing partnerships among FBOs, public agencies and service providers around homeless outreach efforts.
- d. Aligning efforts with LAHSA Faith Coordinators.

Recommendation 3: Increase funding and capacity building opportunities for FBOs

A majority of FBOs who completed the survey indicated that capacity building and funding is priority and will have the most significant impact on equipping and supporting their commitment to serve people experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, the survey also informed concrete strategies and approaches that reflect the needs of FBOs. Key components under this proposed recommendation include:

- a. Creating a separate funding stream for FBOs that is flexible and easily accessible and where all funding sources, inclusive of private donations and philanthropic funding are managed in the same way. To support faith-based participation in homeless services throughout LA County, the management and coordination of this fund could be overseen by a third-party administrator. The overall goal is to increase faith-based participation and provide financial opportunities to support their involvement. Funding will be identified with the aid of CEO-HI, philanthropy, LAHSA and FCEH partners. Funding priorities for FBOs include funding for capacity building, supportive services, safe parking, hygiene locations, and housing.
- b. Developing a comprehensive capacity building approach focused on increasing FBO participation in homeless services:
 - i. Identify Individuals, FBOs, and CBOs that can partner with smaller FBOs to provide mentorship, help develop capacity, provide administrative and financial support, and offer training and technical assistance.
 - ii. Expand and build upon the LAHSA Centralized Training Academy with a focus on supporting and building capacity of FBOs.
 - iii. Identify administrative and funding barriers experienced by FBOs to develop and implement capacity solutions.

Recommendation 4: Improve communication and information sharing among the faith community and LA County

FBOs highlighted that communication and information sharing was critical to their ability to partner and serve people experiencing homelessness. As such, the following objectives are proposed:



- a. Improve the centralization and access of homeless information and resources for FBOS.
- b. Develop a system and an approach to provide regular updates to FBOs, which can include a newsletter, email updates, and announcements about homelessness.
- c. Provide a mechanism for the FBOs to provide feedback and guidance to LA County and LAHSA about resources and needs of people experiencing homelessness in their communities FBOs serve.
- d. Develop effective and consistent opportunities for FBOs to communicate and connect with the homeless services delivery system locally and through the FBCH.

Recommendation 5: Increase the involvement of the faith community in homeless policy and advocacy

The development of policies and solutions to homelessness would greatly be strengthened with the involvement of the faith community. The faith community plays a significant role in local communities, responding to the needs of individuals, families, and children when they have little resources or support during times of crises. FBOs and their leaders are seeking ways to be better equipped to understand how they can advance and support policies and solutions that have positive outcomes for the people they serve. This recommendation seeks to increase the participation of FBOs in policy and advocacy efforts by:

- a. Developing countywide information and policy priorities that faith communities and their leaders can access and apply in their communities and regions.
- b. Designating faith representatives to be involved in policy and advocacy efforts that are convened countywide and regionally.
- c. Developing and implementing a training and technical assistance system focused on increasing the faith community's policy and advocacy knowledge and experience.

V. Conclusion

The survey of FBOs was a monumental step in developing a comprehensive approach to strengthen faith-based partnerships with LA County to address homelessness. The leadership and support provided by the FCEH, resulted in a survey that provides a better understanding of the landscape of support and services FBOs provide to people experiencing homelessness or living in poverty. Also, the survey helped inform the development of strategies on how FBOs can be better integrated into the homeless services delivery system to expand their footprint providing support and services to our unhoused neighbors.

Prior to the survey, much of what was known about the faith community and its historical and long-standing commitment to serving people experiencing homelessness was not documented

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in a comprehensive manner. The development and issuance of the FBO survey is an important component of a comprehensive and strategic approach to better involve and engage FBOs in addressing homelessness. The survey helped capture a picture of the type of services being provided by FBOs, as well as the assistance needed to increase their capacity to provide services and housing options.

In an effort to continue building trust and strong relationships with the faith community, particularly with FBOs, this report and the recommendations were discussed with faith partners and other participants who attended a Faith Summit that was held on March 9, 2023, in Pasadena, California. During the listening sessions of the Faith Summit, there was overwhelming agreement that homelessness is an urgent priority and there was strong consensus that FBOs need and want to be at the forefront of being a part of the solution to addressing homelessness.

Unless otherwise directed by the Board, the CEO-HI will work with members of the FCEH and other key partners to begin planning and operationalizing the recommendation outlined in this report to integrate the faith community into the countywide effort to prevent and combat homelessness in LA County. The CEO-HI will also work with Board offices and County Counsel on the requirements and authorities needed to establish the FBCH.

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