

Activating Uptake to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness: National Community Survey Findings Summary

What would it take to double or triple the number of communities on a faster, smarter trajectory towards preventing and ending youth homelessness?

Activating Uptake

The number of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness each year in this nation far exceeds existing resources. While initiatives focused on preventing and ending youth homelessness (known as "catalytic projects") have rapidly moved the needle in what we know, the number of communities utilizing this information remains low. The 75 communities involved in catalytic projects represent roughly 19% of the 402 Continuums of Care nationally. In fact, a majority of communities have yet to pivot to a coordinated and systemic response to prevent and end youth homelessness leaving a wide gap between the 75 communities and the rest of the field (86% of Continuums of Care).

The Activating Uptake initiative is designed to address that divide and shift the larger field by equipping and mobilizing a critical mass of communities working on a faster, smarter trajectory toward preventing and ending youth homelessness.

High Leverage Components

Youth Collaboratory distilled and synthesized the critical elements that set communities on a smarter, faster trajectory. Utilizing the work and funding already invested in catalytic projects, eight high leverage components (HLCs) were identified.

The eight high leverage components include:

- Authentic Youth Collaboration
- Centering Equity
- Prevention Focus
- Collective Ownership
- Strong Leadership
- Cross System Collaboration
- Having and Using Good Data
- Capacity to Drive Change

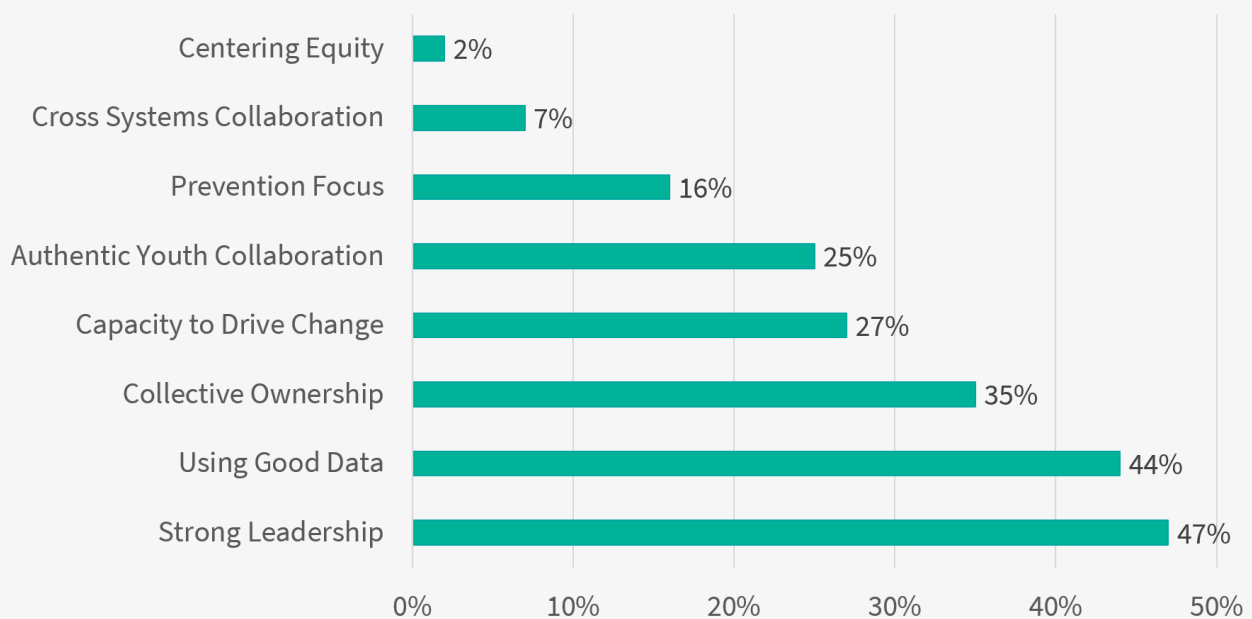
**A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals.*

Activating Uptake Community Survey

The Activating Uptake Community Survey was designed to capture insights regarding the rate in which these components are currently in place and where they are not; and to identify the barriers and opportunities for increased adoption. Communities were surveyed nationally from December 2019 - February 2020. Of the 60 communities surveyed, 24% were rural and 76% were urban. Almost half of the communities (45%) were not involved in any catalytic project and 55% were involved in at least one catalytic project. Urban communities (60%) were more likely than rural communities (38%) to have participated in a catalytic project.

Key Findings from the national Activating Uptake Community Survey helped us understand:

- **The number of high leverage components in place:** No community had all eight high leverage components in place. 20% had between 4-7 components in place and 24% had not yet established any of the high leverage components.
- **Communities that participated in a catalytic project** typically had more high leverage components in place.
- The **most common** high leverage components across all communities were Strong Leadership (47%), Having and Using Good Data (44%), and Collective Ownership (35%).
- The **least common** high leverage components across all communities were Centering Equity (2%), Cross System Collaboration (7%), and Prevention Focus (16%).



Key Takeaways

- **Centering Equity:** This high leverage component was the least frequent across all communities, and is critical to the process and success of preventing and ending youth homelessness. Additional supports are needed for communities to continue to achieve this high leverage component and meet the needs of youth in their communities.
- **Youth and Young Adult Leadership:** Responses from youth and young adults indicate that they are ready for more decision making power and crave the structures and supportive relationships to advance their leadership within communities. Communities need continued support to reduce adultism and strengthen authentic partnerships with young leaders.
- **An Iterative and Ongoing Process:** Activating Uptake is a framework to guide the process and the focus within a community. The measurable indicators reflect progress within each high leverage component. Activating Uptake is an iterative process which is ongoing. Communities and leaders must always strive to advance within each high leverage component. The work is never done until youth and young adult homelessness has ended.
- **Increasing Access for Rural Communities:** Survey results demonstrated an increase in the number of high leverage components established in communities that participated in a catalytic project. Catalytic projects often include additional resources such as funding, technical assistance and momentum that advance the work. There was also more participation of urban communities in catalytic projects than rural communities. Additional support is needed to ensure that rural communities have equal or greater access to catalytic opportunities that increase their ability to advance in these high leverage components.

Next Steps

The Activating Uptake Framework gives us new momentum and focus to support more communities in the work to prevent and end youth homelessness. Our next step includes scaling and learning transfer to support more communities doing the work and advancing in the eight high leverage components, leading to achievement in preventing and ending youth homelessness nationally.

To read the full report visit: youthcollaboratory.org/activating-uptake

To learn more or to contact Youth Collaboratory email us at info@youthcollaboratory.org.