



Strategic Plan

2025 - 2028

Together we can end
homelessness



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE

At the Homeless Alliance of Western New York (HAWNY), we believe that when homelessness happens, it should be rare, brief, and non-recurring. For nearly two decades, HAWNY has been committed to leading, supporting, and advocating for our region's homeless response system. As we continue this journey, we recognize that addressing homelessness requires more than services—it demands collective vision, bold leadership, and strategic action to create lasting solutions.



This 2025-2028 Strategic Plan represents the culmination of an intensive and inclusive planning process, shaped by the voices of over 150 stakeholders, including service providers, policymakers, funders, and community members. Through this process, we identified key priorities to strengthen our role as a network leader, a trusted resource, and an advocate for systemic change. **Over the next three years, we will focus on deepening collaboration, amplifying awareness, and strengthening HAWNY's internal capacity—ensuring our team, governance, and operations are equipped to meet the evolving needs of our community and adapt to the challenges of our time.**

We are grateful to the staff, board, and community partners who have contributed their time, expertise, and passion to this plan. Your commitment fuels our mission, and your partnership is essential in bringing these strategies to life. Together, we will continue to challenge barriers, advocate for change, and create pathways home.

With appreciation,

Kexin Ma
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kexin Ma". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right. It is positioned below the printed name and title.

The Homeless Alliance of Western New York (HAWNY) traces its roots to 1992 when the Erie County Legislature established the Commission on Homelessness to coordinate efforts to reduce homelessness. Over time, the organization evolved beyond its government origins, becoming an independent nonprofit in 2005. That same year, HAWNY was designated as the lead agency for the Erie County Continuum of Care (CoC). In 2013 and 2015, the CoC expanded through mergers with Niagara, Orleans, Genesee, and Wyoming Counties, forming the current NY-508 CoC. Today, HAWNY serves as the CoC Lead and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administrator, driving data-informed strategies and regional collaboration to prevent and end homelessness.



100+
**Community
Partners**

5,000+
Individuals &
Families served by
our Partners Every
Year

INTRODUCTION

The Continuum of Care (CoC) programs, established under the McKinney-Vento Act and supported by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), promotes a community-wide commitment to the ambitious goal of ending homelessness.

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) plays a critical role in this effort by collecting and analyzing client-level data on housing services and helping communities make data-driven decisions. As the lead agency for both the CoC and HMIS, HAWNY is dedicated to supporting partner agencies in their collective vision to end homelessness.

Western New York, like many other parts of the country, continues to see an increase in the number of people and families near or experience homelessness. In 2023, within our five-county service area, HAWNY estimates that 8,504 people experienced homelessness.

To best position HAWNY to continue to serve our communities and strengthen our long-term impact, HAWNY embarked on a strategic planning process dedicated to deepening the understanding of stakeholders' perceptions and perspectives on our current state and future direction. The process culminated in a visionary strategic plan that will guide HAWNY for the next three years.



PLANNING PROCESS

HAWNY engaged Strategy Design Partners (SDP), a strategy and communications firm headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, with expertise in strategic planning, to facilitate the process. Through a collaborative effort, SDP guided HAWNY through its Mission to Message approach with the goal of aligning its strategy, structure, and story through the process and into the execution of the plan.

For nearly a year, HAWNY underwent a comprehensive, inclusive planning process led by a Strategic Plan Task Force consisting of staff and board leadership. The process involved intensive research and comprehensive stakeholder engagement to establish a strong foundation for building the plan. **SDP engaged more than 150 stakeholders, including staff, board members, county agencies, homeless services providers, funders, and community partners.**

The HAWNY board and staff participated in a full-day retreat to leverage the research and engagement findings, collaboratively exploring and addressing key strategic questions about the organization's mission, vision, values, goals, and more.

SDP synthesized the retreat outcomes into a strategic plan framework, which the Task Force augmented and refined over several months into a final draft strategic plan. Staff led the development of an action plan to operationalize and prioritize the goals and strategies, identifying tactics, ownership, success metrics, and more, with support from SDP. The HAWNY Board of Directors adopted the final strategic plan on January 26, 2025.



Mission

To unify and lead providers to improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness by sharing expertise, maximizing resources, and advocating for change

Vision

A community committed to ending homelessness.



VALUES



EXCELLENCE

We consistently deliver the highest-quality support to providers while improving our ability to best serve the community and its efforts to address homelessness.



COLLABORATION

We work together across teams, organizations, and communities, recognizing that collective effort and expertise are essential to achieving our shared mission and creating lasting impact.



TRANSPARENCY

We cultivate trust and accountability by communicating openly and ensuring that our decisions and actions are clear, accessible, and understandable to all stakeholders.



INTEGRITY

We are committed to doing what is right by acting with honesty, fairness, and accountability in all our decisions and actions.



RESPECT

We foster a welcoming and supportive environment where everyone is valued, heard, and treated with dignity.



STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

To achieve the mission, HAWNY developed three overarching goal areas and eight focus areas to guide its work.



The goals focus on expanding and establishing HAWNY's role as a leader in the community, continuing to serve as a resource and advocate to the homeless network, and cultivating a sustainable model and collaborative organization best positioned to achieve these goals.

NETWORK LEADER & EXPERT

Establish HAWNY as the trusted leader and expert in homelessness.



Key Strategies:



Evaluate the feasibility of becoming a Unified Funding Agency to enhance funding coordination and impact



Strengthen the governance and structural support for the CoC to enhance engagement and accountability



Develop a community plan for addressing homelessness



Establish continuous quality improvement processes to enhance system performance and outcomes



Identify and engage other, more non-traditional, partners to assist in collective efforts

COMMUNITY RESOURCE & ADVOCATE

Serve as the primary resource and advocate for the homeless network by engaging a wide range of audiences through compelling storytelling, consistent education, and targeted advocacy.



Key Strategies:



Enhance branding and storytelling efforts across all platforms to amplify the CoC's mission and impact



Implement a targeted marketing campaign to raise awareness of homelessness and drive community engagement



Deepen public understanding of homelessness to reduce stigma and build empathy and support



Cultivate and deepen relationships with targeted audiences (media, political officials, etc.)

STRONG & SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION

Build a strong and collaborative organization with effective governance, engaged leadership, and sustainable resources to support long-term impact



Key Strategies:



Collaborate with provider agencies to cultivate leadership within the CoC with a focus on increasing representation



Revise and re-align our governance to best support the goals of the organization



Identify opportunities to bring additional resources into the CoC and develop alternative funding sources for non-grant initiatives

STRATEGIC PLAN TASK FORCE



A special thank you to the members of our Task Force who invested countless hours in meetings, brought energy and excitement to the process, and helped champion HAWNY's efforts to complete this plan dedicated to supporting those experiencing homelessness.

Kexin Ma

Executive Director

Ashley Matrassi

CoC Director

Nathan Pyzikiewicz

HMIS Director

Tracy Schmidt

Senior Program Manager

Ken Gholston

Board Chair

Children's Hospital of Buffalo
Foundation

Joyelle Tedeschi

Vice Chair

Belmont Housing

Van Jorgali

Treasurer

ZLC Group CPAS





Homeless AllianceTM
of Western New York
Together We Can End Homelessness



[716-853-1101](tel:716-853-1101)



info@wnyhomeless.org



<https://wnyhomeless.org/>

