



Breaking Ground commences Project Welcome MAT

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New York, NY Breaking Ground has launched Project Welcome MAT (Moving on an Accelerated Timeline), a three-year, \$6 million initiative that seeks to reduce the time between an unsheltered individual's acceptance into permanent supportive housing and their move-in date.

Project Welcome MAT is funded by a three-year, \$3.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, through the New York City Continuum of Care; a three-year, \$1.7 million grant from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust; and a two-year, \$500,000 grant from Trinity Church Wall Street Philanthropies.

Administrative burdens in the supportive housing process can extend the time people remain in transitional housing or on the streets. Under the current citywide process, even after eligibility has been verified, homeless clients are required to re-verify their eligibility by providing additional or updated documentation. In addition to application challenges, the current system to match applicants to available supportive housing units can delay placement further.

Project Welcome MAT aims to reduce or eliminate these burdens altogether and move people from homeless to housed on an accelerated timeline. Helping unsheltered individuals access housing opportunities faster will narrow the gap between a "paperwork first" approach and a true Housing First approach to addressing homelessness. Over its three-year timeline, the project is expected to accelerate more than 650 individual placements into permanent supportive housing. Furthermore, the project will serve a total of 1,000 individuals experiencing homelessness with critical resources to get on the permanent housing path.

"Every day that someone experiences homelessness is a day too many," said Brenda Rosen, president and CEO of Breaking Ground. "The connection between housing and health is well-established. We believe that helping unsheltered individuals access permanent supportive housing faster will lead to improved quality of life and better health outcomes. We are so grateful that HUD, Helmsley, and Trinity are partners in this work. In particular, Helmsley's commitment enables us to commission a formal evaluation of the three-year program. This will help us prove that housing providers can do this faster and produce better outcomes for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness."

"At a time when the homelessness crisis is at its peak in New York City, Breaking Ground has stepped up to think outside the box and speed up the housing process for deserving New Yorkers," said Alicka Ampry-Samuel, HUD regional administrator for New York and New Jersey. "Project

Welcome MAT is a promise of a better future for individuals who need a hand to get them on the road to stability. HUD is pleased to assist with federal funding and looks forward to the stories of good outcomes this initiative will potentially bring.”

“The NYC CoC is proud to support Breaking Ground’s Project Welcome MAT, an exciting new model for achieving our commitment to accelerating pathways to permanent housing,” said Kristen Mitchell, New York City Continuum of Care co-chair. “We are confident that this new program will serve as an outstanding example of the innovation that our CoC partners are bringing to NYC through HUD’s special funding opportunity.”

“Helmsley’s New York City program works to improve the lives of New Yorkers with complex health and social needs. Maintaining good health can be challenging for anyone, and without place to call home, it’s even harder,” said Tracy Perrizo, program officer of the Helmsley Charitable Trust’s New York City Program. “Breaking Ground’s Project Welcome MAT offers a dynamic approach to shorten the time it takes to move New Yorkers into supportive permanent housing, putting people on a path to security and better health. With a rigorous evaluation, Breaking Ground will be positioned to demonstrate why accelerated placements not only benefit vulnerable individuals, but also lower costs for New York’s social services system.”

“Supportive housing is too scarce a resource in New York. Project Welcome MAT will help reduce an unnecessary level of that scarcity,” said Beatriz de la Torre, chief philanthropy officer at Trinity Church Wall Street. “Trinity is proud to support Breaking Ground’s innovative efforts to cut repeat. Moving people out of shelters and into permanent homes more quickly will protect their mental health and put them on a path to stability.”

Project Welcome MAT will add upwards of 13 new Breaking Ground staff: a director of housing placement services who will oversee the opportunities for accelerated placement across Breaking Ground’s housing portfolio, enabling clients to be placed faster; transition coordinators and transition advocates, including people with lived experience of homelessness, who will assist each client throughout the housing process; intake and eligibility specialists, who will ensure that tenants are matched to the most appropriate units and that paperwork remains current throughout the process; and a SOAR benefits specialist to help connect people to the most reliable sources of income for long-term stability. A fund has also been established that will bridge delays in the activation and payment of rental subsidies to providers.

In addition to accelerating placements to supportive housing, Breaking Ground will conduct a formal evaluation and build internal evaluation capacity. Enhancing the agency’s data collection and analysis capabilities will allow Breaking Ground to gather more robust data on a cohort of people exiting homelessness, and will demonstrate the health-related quality of life improvements generated by accelerated move-ins to permanent supportive housing. At the conclusion of the three-year initiative, the results will be disseminated with the goal of establishing methodologies that can be both replicated across Breaking Ground’s suite of programs and adapted by peer organizations.