

Creating the Stanford Housing Equity Project: Lessons in Community University Partnership

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ABSTRACT

Background: The Stanford Housing Equity Project (SHEP; <https://housingequity.stanford.edu/>) was built to connect university resources and human capital with community partners working to address chronic homelessness in the Bay Area. At Stanford, work on homelessness is often isolated to short-term analyses or service projects without longitudinal support. Many students across departments to whom we've spoken are unaware of opportunities at Stanford to serve the unhoused. SHEP is a student-driven initiative established to bridge the gap between community partner needs and university resources through the implementation of quality improvement projects, collaborative research efforts, and direct service provision.

Methods: Leveraging principles of organizational behavior theory and Brookeman-Frazer and colleagues' model of Research-Community Partnership, we describe the tools and processes our team leveraged to create the first community-university partnership for longitudinal capacity building-efforts and research related to homelessness.

Results: We identify that successful facilitating factors included knowledge exchange, the creation of tangible products, and partnership synergy/trust while hindering factors include operational factors and misaligned incentives between community partners and academia. To date, SHEP has established four community partners, completed several quality improvement projects, established direct pathways to service for students, and leads 3-4 research projects.

Conclusions: We illustrate the potential of community-university partnerships moving resources towards complex, ill-structured issues such as homelessness. Such a partnership can be a productive and fruitful endeavor to improve student learning, build capacity for community partners, and advance community member outcomes.

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