

# HAVENS *of* HOPE

## ENGAGEMENT GUIDE



CO-AUTHORED BY

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CBAC  
**JUSTICE &  
ADVOCACY**

# ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

*for*

## HAVENS OF HOPE:

*How Atlantic Baptist Churches Can Engage  
the Housing Crisis Along a Spectrum of Solutions*

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# HAVENS OF HOPE ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

*The Engagement Guide is a companion resource to the CBAC Housing Task Force 'Havens of Hope' resource, intended to help guide your church engage with the resource through team meetings, as you discern possible solutions to housing provision in your neighborhood.*

*This engagement resource is structured around 8 meetings that will invite your team to read small, bite-size sections of Havens for Housing, and critically engage through actionable activities.*

*Step one will be for your church to identify and build a team of interested folks, who will meet together over a period of a few weeks to months to both learn, and attempt to discern possible next steps for your church. Each section is intended to guide one Meeting of your team. The first two sections will help guide you as you build your team!*

## PRE-WORK

Before beginning a regular rhythm of meeting, we suggest the following actions be taken:

### 1. Build Church Awareness

The technical aspects of building awareness in your church will depend on the unique governance structure of your organization. However, as you seek to build awareness around needs re the unsheltered in your community, here are some possible actions for your consideration:

- If your community already has a shelter or a community kitchen serving the unsheltered community, volunteer there - start small but always seek to regularly report back to the congregation.
- Find a way for one or two people in your congregation to get connected to a community organization that is involved in addressing issues around needs such as the unsheltered or food insecurity - programs exist in many communities that seek to address housing, clothing or food needs so starting small and getting to know the folks that are already seeking to address needs is a great way to start. For example, if there is a community kitchen, perhaps a few interested folks can volunteer and then some Sunday report to the larger congregation on what's been happening and how many meals are served, etc. Similarly, if a local school has a clothing closet for students/families, perhaps a few individuals from the church can arrange to collect and drop off donations and/or volunteer at the clothing closet and then report back to the church.
- If you can't find programs that already exist, have one or two interested individuals approach a local school and ask to meet with the Principal and ask what is needed for students in the areas of food, snacks and/or clothing. Perhaps the church can provide snacks or lunches one day a month for the children who don't have access to snacks/lunch.
- Volunteer at the school breakfast program - or consider making financial or food contributions.



While most of these awareness activities are not directly related to the unsheltered community, it's imperative that if a church is "starting from scratch" in the area of the unsheltered community, that a few folks get into the community and into spaces where conversations and needs are going to be shared. Once a few folks are involved in the community, start to regularly put statistics from (any of the info from Part I of Havens of Hope) into the church bulletin and have volunteers regularly share in church what they're experiencing and highlight needs and stats.

**2. After some awareness building activities, clarify your ask of potential team members:**

- What are you inviting this person to join? (ex. "Our church is committed to discerning possible solutions to the housing crisis in our area. We are inviting you to team to dream, plan, and implement possible initiatives!")
- Determine the time commitment (1 year? 18 Months? etc.)
- Determine the meeting frequency - we recommend bi-weekly, or monthly to start.

**3. Build a Team**

To advance any kind of housing initiative your church will need a team, with the right people in right seats. Here is a suggested team portfolio:

Who will you need:

- Point Leader
- Justice Worker, Community Development, Missions, Non-profit sector etc.
- Spiritually Minded: Someone who will champion your theology of care, who will be diligent in prayer, who has a mind for integrating faith and works
- Financially Savvy (entrepreneur, Lawyer, Accountant, Mortgage Specialist, etc.)
- Next-Gen Voice (We're not encouraging tokenism, but if you have a young person or group of passionate young people who want to create change, include them! Include your youth and kids pastors/leaders)
- Community Champion (The relational glue. People who will help build church support)
- Community partners - Are there cross-institutional connections your church has in your community? Local organizations, political reps, police force members, municipal government members? Are there other churches that should be represented at this table? (We will explore more on partnership building later)
- Someone with lived experience of homelessness, precarious housing, food insecurity, or someone that has utilized related services such as transitional housing, subsidized housing, supportive housing, etc.



#### 4. Delegate Roles

Within your team, it is important to have a few roles clearly delegated. We would recommend early on in the process delegating the following roles:

- Group Facilitator – this person should be a natural peace-maker, someone that builds bridges, someone with a high level of respect and trust, someone that listens more than they speak, someone skilled in communication, and drawing out more timid voices. Their primary task will involve facilitating the group discussion and movement each time the group meets.
- Team Coordinator & Note Taker – Optional separate role; this person will have the primary task of coordinating meetings (setting times, locations, sending zoom links), taking notes during meetings, and keeping all files and records tidy, organized, and transparent. This role should be delegated to someone that is naturally organized, skilled and unbiased in representing all voices.

#### 5. Gather Necessary Resources

- A notebook / journal for each team member
- Printed or digital versions of the Havens of Hope (Housing) Resource for each team member
- Neighbourhood Assessment Workbook
- Access to Digital Resources Referenced in this workbook

#### 6. Once you've built your team, set your first meeting!

Try to keep your meetings to no more than 90 minutes, preferably 60 minutes. This will encourage team members to be ready for the meetings but to also be concise with their comments. If the meetings are too lengthy, you will lose focus and momentum and you risk some of your key folks losing interest.



# MEETING 1: SEEING THE PROBLEM

- **Pre-work:** Read 'The Problem' section from Havens of Hope
- **Goal of this meeting:** To begin to raise awareness of the needs in our local community.
- **Open the meeting with prayer.** If you have folks on your committee from outside the church community, you may want to make a comment such as, "It's our custom here at Neighbourhood Baptist Church to open each of our meetings with prayer, asking God to guide us and to give us wisdom to know best how to serve our community. If you're comfortable doing so, please join us as we pray....."
- **Review** the section entitled, "Why Does This Matter to Atlantic Baptist Churches?" Section in Havens of Hope. "In Acts 11 we see how these actions continued. The church in Antioch was home to many believers from different nationalities, and was growing. At this time a prophet Agabus, revealed that there would be a great famine- as the Spirit revealed it to him. The church in Antioch did not respond by the blame-game, or looking to civic authorities in the region to see who was responsible for these conditions. Instead, they asked three questions: 1) "who is going to be at special risk when this happens?", 2) "what can we do to help?", 3) "who do we send?" (Wright, 2020, p. 32)". Have someone Read Acts 11 aloud to the group. Discussion question: Who is at special risk in our community?
- **Together:** Watch Housing Masterclass Pt. 1: <https://vimeo.com/970105008> start at 3:25 and pause at 24:30. Discussion question: What surprised you about what you just saw/heard?
- **Homework and ongoing work:** using the NAW as your guide, go on a group or individual prayer walk or drive in the community around your church, using the questions as discussion/reflection questions for yourself.



# MEETING 2: SEEING THE PROBLEM (CONTINUED)

- **Goal of this meeting:** to continue to raise awareness of the needs in our local community.
- **Open with prayer**
- **Feedback & Discussion from last meeting:**
  1. What is still on your mind after what we read and saw last time we met?
  2. What did you notice when you went on a walk or a drive in our community?
  3. Referring to Havens of Hope, Part 1: Understanding the Problem – *Depending on the size of your team, divide your members into the following groups. Have one or two people re-read the designated sections and report back to the full group with a two sentence summary of the issue and how it leads to homelessness/housing insecurity:*
    - Affordability and Availability
    - Poverty and Food Insecurity
    - Mental Health and Addiction Issues
    - Domestic Violence, Health Issues, Disabilities
    - Colonialism and Youth Aging Out of Care
    - Adverse Childhood Experiences
    - Criminal Justice System Challenges and Climate Change
    - Discrimination
  4. Referring to NAW, page 23 go to stats Canada site for your community:  
[www12.statcan.gc.ca](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca)
    - How many people in each age category live in your Neighbourhood?
    - How do these age demographics compare to the age demographic in your church?
    - How many low income households are in your community?
    - What percentage of children/youth in your community are living in poverty?
- **Homework:** In your journal, write down three key ideas that are still floating in your head after the initial two meetings. Thinking about your community and the needs you see and have learned about, what is on your mind?
- **Homework:** Review the section in Havens of Hope entitled, Part 2: Theoretical Approaches - Hope-Filled Tools for Neighbour Care



# MEETING 3: SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

- **Goal of this meeting:** To consider what we can do, based on our existing community assets
- **Open in prayer**
- **Start a large chart with three columns:** Skills, Experiences, Resources
  1. Brainstorm and record the various skills individuals in your church have gained at home, work or in the community
  2. Brainstorm and record the community work (experiences) in which individuals in your church have participated.
  3. Brainstorm and record the resources you have at your disposal, through the church/ individuals in the church
- **Journal:** Before the meeting ends, each participant journals three key ideas that are floating around their minds
- **Homework:** Read the section in the resource entitled, “Housing First”.





# MEETING 4: SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

- **Goal of this meeting:** To inform ourselves about the idea of “housing first”
- **Open with prayer**
- **Share** the three key ideas that you recorded last time at the end of the meeting.
- **Review** the definitions of “housing first” in Havens of Hope
- **Read** “The Principles of Housing First” together and determine what category of supports your church could first provide: Complementary Supports, Clinical Supports and or Housing Supports.
- **Homework:** Read the section entitled Housing is a Continuum in Havens for Hope



# MEETING 5: UNDERSTANDING THE SPECTRUM OF SOLUTIONS

- **Goal of this meeting:** Understanding that there are a spectrum or continuum of solutions to the housing crisis.
- **Open with prayer**
- **Watch:** Housing Masterclass Pt. 2 (start at 30:00 mark and go to 1 hour, 7 minute mark)  
<https://vimeo.com/970105008>
- **Discussion Questions**
  1. Divide the group into partners. Have each partnership reflect on what they've just seen: what surprised each of you? what don't you understand? What questions do you still have? what was new information for you? Where were the a-ha moments?
  2. Have each partnership (or group of three, depending on numbers) share with the larger group some of their key a-ha moments and surprises.



# MEETING 6: DISCERNING A SOLUTION FOR YOUR CONTEXT

- **Goal of the meeting:** to begin to discern a course of action for your church
- **Open with prayer**
- Read the Bright Spots in the community and Bright Spots in your church sections in the NAW
- **Discuss:**
  1. As it pertains to Housing, what are the existing bright spots in our community?
  2. What about in our church?
- **Dot Voting:** take everything from Neighbourhood assessment / whats our puzzle piece
  - Give everyone a stack of post it notes
  - Each person writes one possible step for your church on a single post-it note and keeps generating post-it notes with ideas for about 4 minutes
  - Each person partners with someone and they share their ideas (if they have a duplicate/same idea, they can eliminate the duplicate post it note)
  - Have partners join another set of two and share their ideas (if they have a duplicate/same idea, they can eliminate the duplicate post it note)
  - Share ideas with the large group - record each idea on one larger post it note or on a chart paper
  - Give each person dot stickers (if there were 15 ideas generated, give participants 5 dots (give each person about 1/3 the number of dots - if there were 20 ideas, give each participant 7 dots)
  - Allow for multivoting to determine priorities - participants can give all their dots to one item if they feel strongly, they can vote with their dots any way they wish.



# MEETING 7: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

- **Goal of the meeting:** to identify partnerships, which may or may not already exist, to support our work?
- **Open with prayer**
- **Review from last time:** our multi-voted priorities
- **Read** the 'Existing Connections' section in the NAW
- **Identifying Possible Partners** (use NAW to guide partner identification)
- **Making connections with potential partners:** who will do what?

Remember: partnerships are best built by reaching out to potential partners and asking them how your group can best support them. That will likely mean volunteering for existing initiatives organized by that organization, such as assisting with meal services or helping collect donations of high-in-demand items for clients utilizing their services. This posture of partnership lays the groundwork for any sort of collaborative project as it will be difficult to get buy-in without recognizing and responding to the needs partners are already trying to address.

Additionally, use the list below.

- **List of ways to support front line organizations and workers**

In conversation with front lines workers, we have collected some ideas of things local organizations need / can use / would appreciate in the following list:

- Start a furniture bank (this is not a junk drop off, but rather, should meet a targeted need expressed by a local org engaged in housing interventions) such as bed frames, mattresses, or bunk beds, living room set ups, etc. rent a container or source a tractor trailer container that the local organization can access when they need items.
- Create 'welcome home kits' (kits for folks coming out of homelessness into housing) that include cleaning supplies, pantry staples, brooms, clothes, etc.
- Create Linen kits (sheets, towels, blankets)
- Create winter clothing kits (coats, boots, mitts, hats, all in good condition - children too!)
- Baby Kits
- Annual 'Blessing kits' for organizations your church 'adopts' - these can include notes to the support staff, good quality goodies, gift cards, and more!
- What else can your group think of?



# MEETING 8: EXPLORING AND SECURING FUNDING

## *Resourcing and Next Steps – What do we need to move forward?*

- **Goal of the meeting:** to ascertain / articulate what resources we may need to take a next step.
- **Open with prayer**
- **In partners, answer the following questions:**
  1. Based on all of the meetings to date, what is your next step? It could be small or it could be large.
  2. To do the next step, who do you need to do what?
  3. What money / financial resources do you need?
  4. What other resources do you need?
- **Come back together as a large group and share your ideas**
- **Read and explore the funding options in the Housing handbook**

Follow along with the following prompts to determine the funding options that work best for your church context
- **Questions to consider:**
  1. What do WE need to do to secure resources?
  2. Changing or updating your space?
  3. Accessing a course (ex. Food safety)?
  4. Getting a particular certification (kitchen certified)?
  5. What is our plan for getting the resources we need to move forward?
  6. Do we need to create a non-profit business plan? (Who could help with this?)
  7. Do we need to go back to the church with a specific ask or are we able to move forward and take action?

By the end of meeting 8, you will have copious notes and probably a good sense of a step or two that you could take forward. If necessary, appoint a small group from your committee to take your list of suggested steps forward and narrow it down even further to take the next step.

Connect with Laura Bennett at CBAC to share how this process has gone, and see guidance or get connected with resources to help you move to the next step.

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