This brief is one in a series specifically designed to provide community leaders and rapid re-housing providers with information on available funding sources for taking rapid re-housing to scale.

In 2008, Congress passed the Veterans Mental Health Act granting authority to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. Modeled after rapid re-housing programs operated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the program was intended to complete the array of homeless assistance services made available through VA. The SSVF program awards grants annually to nonprofit applicants through a competitive process. The nonprofit grantees provide counseling, training, education assistance, direct and time-limited financial assistance, transportation, child care, rent, utility payments, and other services aimed at preventing homelessness or housing very low-income eligible veterans and their families. Grantees can also use SSVF funds to conduct housing identification and landlord engagement activities. SSVF is intended to be used for a short-term intervention that will help veteran families keep or rapidly access permanent housing. As such, the program targets families who are to be imminently homeless through eviction or are currently homeless (living unsheltered or in emergency or transitional housing). The program funds all of the core components of rapid re-housing: housing identification, rent assistance (up to 12 months), and rapid re-housing case management and services.

SSVF has expanded dramatically in recent years, from initial funding of $60 million (representing 85 grants) in fiscal year (FY) 2011 to $300 million in FY 2014, representing over 300 grants serving approximately 115,000 veterans and their families.

### COMMUNITY EXAMPLES

#### Rapid Re-Housing Families:

**FRIENDSHIP PLACE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Friendship Place is a large, urban SSVF provider located in Washington, DC. Friendship Place received $2 million in SSVF grants in FY 2014 and served 415 households, including 173 children, through rapid re-housing and prevention services. 92 percent of those households served exited the program into permanent housing. Friendship Place uses almost exclusively SSVF funds for this veterans program.

#### Rapid Re-Housing Families:

**SALVATION ARMY IN CENTRAL OHIO, OHIO**

The Salvation Army, based in Columbus, OH, serves eleven rural and suburban counties surrounding Columbus and receives approximately $480,000 annually in SSVF grants. The Salvation Army uses the flexible SSVF funds to help families through rental assistance, utility payments, car maintenance, child care, and other needs. The Salvation Army in Central Ohio either prevents or ends homelessness for approximately 100 veteran families a year plus many more single veterans, with over 90 percent of those veterans remaining successfully housed one year later.

#### Rapid Re-Housing Individuals:

**VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

Volunteers of America of Los Angeles (VOALA) is a branch of a nationwide organization administering SSVF grants in the greater Los Angeles area. VOALA received $4 million in SSVF grants in FY 2014 and served 491 individuals through rapid re-housing and prevention services. 88 percent of people served were stably housed at program exit. VOALA predominantly uses SSVF funds to serve veteran individuals and families, but leverages some external funds and donations for needed items such as eyeglasses, pantry items, and other needs. VOALA is also working with other SSVF providers in the area to coordinate services and entry into programs.
IMPORANT PROGRAM DETAILS

How are funds distributed?
Program funds are administered through the VA’s Veterans Health Administration directly to nonprofit grantees. Grantees apply through an annual competitive Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) process. Funding levels are awarded based on need, capacity, and strength of application. SSVF program funds are some of the most flexible funds available for rapid re-housing. They can be used for a variety of activities aimed at ensuring veterans and their families are placed in or remain in stable, permanent housing.

Who is eligible for assistance?
To be eligible for SSVF funds, veteran families, as defined as an individual or family with a veteran member, must be low-income and either homeless or at risk of homelessness. In addition, SSVF prioritizes assistance to veteran families earning less than 30 percent of area median income, with at least one dependent, veterans located in rural areas, and veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

How can funds be used?
Grantees are required to provide the veterans families with outreach and case management services, and assistance in obtaining VA benefits and obtaining and coordinating other public benefits. Grantees must also work with the veteran family to develop a plan for preventing future housing instability.

Temporary financial assistance allowed through SSVF can be used for rental assistance, child care, transportation, education services, and to meet other needs. This is assistance is generally limited to 10 months over a 3 year period for low-income veterans and 12 months over a 3 year period for extremely low-income veterans. Grantees are able to spend up to 50 percent of their funds on temporary financial assistance activities.

There is no limit on the amount of funds grantees can use for prevention assistance, though VA strongly encourages its grantees to focus first on rapidly re-housing those veteran families that are literally homeless and it is likely that limits on the use of funds for prevention will be set in the future.

Grantees are statutorily required to participate in the Continuum of Care’s Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) and in addition, must report the outcomes, accomplishments, and other details of the program quarterly through a form submitted to VA.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
If you are a grantee, work closely with non-veteran service providers and other veteran homeless programs in your community to ensure all veterans are housed quickly and efficiently.

If your organization is not a grantee, find out which nonprofit SSVF grantees are serving your community and work with these providers to ensure that SSVF funds are being used to effectively rapidly re-house homeless veteran families and individuals.

All community members, grantees or not, should work to make sure SSVF grantees are integrated with the local VA Medical Centers and the Continuum of Care.

This document was produced by the National Alliance to End Homelessness with the support of the Melville Charitable Trust as part of an effort to increase the use of effective rapid re-housing practices nationwide. The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a leading national voice on the issue of homelessness that accomplishes its mission through research and education, policy analysis and advocacy, and capacity building. The Melville Charitable Trust is the largest foundation in the U.S. that is exclusively devoted to supporting solutions to prevent and end homelessness.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (Alliance) is a leading national voice on the issue of homelessness. To accomplish its mission of ending homelessness, the Alliance uses data and research to identify the nature of, and solutions to, the problem. It analyzes policy to determine how best to advance these solutions. And, it helps build the capacity of communities to implement strategies that help them end homelessness.