



Advance to Zero (AtoZ): Getting started toolkit

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Table of contents

About this toolkit	3
Part 1: Learn about Advance to Zero (AtoZ)	5
Resources	5
Essential reading and viewing	5
Tools and concepts	5
More to explore	5
Part 2: Gather essential information	6
2.1 Key components and first steps	6
What your community will need	6
2.2 Getting started	7
2.3 Gather your basic data and identify collaboration opportunities	7
2.4 Understand your needs and costs	8
Summary of activities associated with Advance to Zero	9
2.5 Talk to your AtoZ coach	11
2.6 Become an AtoZ community	12
Part 3: Build your community action plan	13
3.1 Understanding collective impact (the way we work)	13
Learn more about collective impact	14
3.2 Understand the AtoZ governance framework (Building your teams)	14
3.3 Identify your teams and supporters	15
3.4 Establish your governance framework	16
3.5 Write your community action plan	17
Part 4: Establish your by-name list	18
Resources	18
Essential reading and viewing	18
4.1 Establish and maintain a by-name list	18
A shared database	19
4.2 Build your by-name list	19
The Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool (AHVTT)	19
4.3 Consider Connections Week	20
Part 5: Next steps	21
Stay connected	21
Appendix 1: Full document list/Action checklist	22
1. Learn about Advance to Zero	22
2. Gather essential information	22
3. Build your community action plan	23
4. Establish your by-name list	23
Advance to Zero glossary	24



About this toolkit

This toolkit has been developed to help communities who are considering Advance to Zero (AtoZ) as a framework for ending homelessness. You'll learn more about how AtoZ works and be guided through key concepts, initial steps and decision points to get you started.

This toolkit:

- introduces the AtoZ initiative
- provides a guide that helps you decide if AtoZ is something for your community
- takes you through the steps to create your community's own plan to end homelessness and establish key data to track and prioritise your work.

This toolkit outlines four key actions. **Actions 1 and 2** are primarily self-guided and will help you to review your local situation and collect initial information about AtoZ, so you can make an informed decision.

If you then decide to proceed, **Actions 3 and 4** will help you establish your community's own plan to end homelessness. You'll be supported through these actions by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH).

This toolkit includes links to many documents that will help you along the way – see a full list at [Appendix 1](#). Our AtoZ glossary at the end of this document may also help you get familiarised with key terms.

AtoZ is based on proven international practice, developed by Community Solutions (USA). AtoZ was adapted from Community Solutions' Built for Zero approach to meet the Australian situation. Initiatives in each state have been adjusted further to meet local needs – coaches are available to answer questions and help you along the way.

To get in touch, email info@aaeh.org.au.

How this toolkit is structured

← Parts 1 and 2 are primarily self-driven →



Part 1: Learn about Advance to Zero

Build your understanding of Advance to Zero (AtoZ) and how this national initiative supports local collaborative efforts to end homelessness, starting with rough sleeping.

Key actions: *Explore the AAEH website, fact sheets, strategic plan and training opportunities.*



Part 2: Gather essential information

Thinking of becoming an AtoZ community? In this self-guided step, you'll gather initial data about your current homelessness situation and where your gaps or needs might be.

Key actions: *Use our checklist to assess your homelessness situation, data sources, local needs and partnership opportunities.*



Part 3: Build your community action plan

If you decide to become an AtoZ community, we'll work with you to build your own community action plan.

This will be your community's overarching plan to end homelessness.

Key actions: *Define your community's key partners, roles, priority focus, collaboration structure, governance and milestones.*



Part 4: Establish your by-name list

With your plan in place, it's time to establish your shared, real-time database of people known to be experiencing homelessness in your community – what we call a by-name list or BNL.

Key actions: *Get trained on database management, build your by-name list and consider running a Connections Week event.*

← Parts 3 and 4 are assisted →

Part 1: Learn about Advance to Zero (AtoZ)

Advance to Zero (AtoZ) is a groundbreaking national initiative of the **Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH)** that supports local collaborative efforts to end homelessness, starting with rough sleeping – one community at a time. Using a range of proven approaches from around the world, communities are supported not just to address individual instances of homelessness, or even reduce overall homelessness, but to end it altogether.



Resources

Essential reading and viewing

- **READ:** [Fact sheet: About Advance to Zero](#)
- **READ:** [How we can help on your community's journey to end homelessness: National overview](#)
- **WATCH:** [Introduction to Advance to Zero](#)

Tools and concepts

- **WATCH:** [An Animated Guide to Complex Social Challenges](#)

More to explore

- **READ:** [AAEH 2025-2028 Strategic Plan](#)
- **READ:** [Homelessness is solvable: How we can end it in Australia – Churchill Fellowship report, David Pearson](#)

Part 2: Gather essential information

Advance to Zero brings together services across various systems to know exactly who is sleeping rough in a local area, what they need to access long-term housing and work with them to maintain housing. It's a highly localised, person-centered approach to ending homelessness in a specific area.

The [AtoZ framework](#) (the way we operate) has been developed collaboratively by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (AAEH) and its many partners since we were established in 2013.

This section outlines the key components of AtoZ and what you'll need to do before you get started.

2.1 Key components and first steps

What your community will need



Based on our experience in Australia, there are five things your community will need to successfully implement Advance to Zero. These include:

1. A clear, community-wide goal to end rough sleeping homelessness within a set timeframe.
2. A committed multi-agency team who can undertake [assertive outreach](#), participate in [service coordination](#) activities, take ownership of setting goals and lead your [continuous improvement](#) activities.
3. Someone to drive your team forward (this role may be called a [local community lead or coordinator](#)). This person doesn't have to formally be in

charge, but they'll take responsibility for convening meetings, getting the right people to the table and driving your broader team of leaders forward.

4. Someone who can lead monthly data collection and reporting (a [local data lead](#)) and support the use of the relevant database and assessment tool – the [Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool \(AHVTT\)](#). We'll also help you build a by-name list to understand your local homelessness situation. This will help you to track your progress and prioritise your group's resources and improvement efforts.
5. Participation in Advance to Zero meetings and learning events. Held online and in person, these help your community stay connected, share experiences and learn from others working towards the same goal.

More information about these steps is included in this toolkit. Before joining AtoZ, your community should carefully consider your situation, how you would be able to implement these key components and who is best placed to do it.

2.2 Getting started

Thinking about joining the Advance to Zero movement? Here are three things you can do to get started before reaching out to AAEH.

1. Read up about AtoZ and how AAEH can help – see Part 1 of this toolkit and read '[How we can help on your community's journey to end homelessness: National overview](#)'.
2. Start collecting basic information about your local community and its homelessness situation, response and collaboration opportunities.
3. Understand your gaps and what you would need to establish AtoZ in your community, including the associated costs.

2.3 Gather your basic data and identify collaboration opportunities

Before you start, make the time to quickly review your community's current situation. Gather information about your community – this can include your local history, populations, stakeholder groups, established networks and relationships, key meetings, community programs and initiatives that are already in place.

Then consider your homelessness situation – where do you see homelessness occurring and what's the situation? Who's responding and what are they doing? Who funds the activities currently in place? What systems do you have in place to collect and manage data?

We have created a community AtoZ information checklist to help you build a picture of your current situation. You'll be able to use this information to discuss your needs with the AAEH. The checklist includes noting down:

1. The geographical location that you think you'll cover
2. How you currently collect local information and data about homelessness
3. How you would describe your local homelessness situation
4. Who is responding to homelessness in your community and how
5. Any multi-agency partnerships and/or collaborations in place
6. Current and future funding opportunities.

The information you gather here doesn't need to be 100 per cent accurate or complete – a brief overview with all you're able to gather is all that's required at this stage.



ACTIVITY: [Checklist 1: Community information](#)

2.4 Understand your needs and costs


As AtoZ introduces a new way of working, there will likely be some new activities you'll need to establish. Each of these activities will have associated costs, mostly related to employing people to do the work. Your community might be in a position to reallocate staff to these roles, or you might need to employ new specialists.



Some elements of AtoZ – like creating and securely storing a [by-name list](#) – are essential. Others, like running a [Connections Week](#) in your community, are discretionary and depend on your community's circumstances, priorities and needs. Some activities, like [assertive outreach](#), might already be funded and in place within your community, or local partners might be able to contribute other activities in kind. There are also minimal yearly costs associated with being an AtoZ community, which cover database use, learning, training, [communities of practice](#) and other project support.


The list below outlines AtoZ activities that you might need to cost or allocate to community partners to deliver. Every community is different, so we recommend that you discuss your specific situation and needs with an AtoZ coach to determine local requirements and actual costs. You can also review the [summary table of all AAEH services and costs](#) in the national 'How we can help your community' document.

We'll work with you to make sure cost isn't a barrier, and support can be staggered, adjusted or reviewed to suit your community's circumstances.

Summary of activities associated with Advance to Zero

Activity	Essential or optional?	Description	Timing
Connections Week support	Optional	<p>A week-long community event to proactively gather information about all people currently sleeping rough and/or experiencing long-term homelessness in your community. Not all communities will run a Connections Week event, but it can be a useful way of kickstarting your by-name list. Talk to your AtoZ coach to determine your needs.</p> <p> See: Connections Week toolkit</p> <p>Costs: To deliver Connections Week activities, if required.</p>	Once only
Assertive outreach	Optional*	<p>A team of specialist workers (minimum two) that proactively engages and supports people experiencing homelessness who may have complex needs and be hesitant or unable to access traditional services.</p> <p>*While an assertive outreach team is optional, communities need agreed ways to engage with people who are experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>Costs: To cover roles, if none in place. If your community doesn't have assertive outreach, talk to your AtoZ coach about options.</p>	Ongoing
Access to an Advance to Zero database	Essential	<p>An AtoZ database is a secure, locally managed system that helps communities respond to homelessness in real time. It enables the creation of a local by-name list. There are different database systems across Australia depending on which</p>	Ongoing

		<p>state you're in.</p> <p> See: AtoZ database national overview factsheet</p> <p>Costs: Access to a database is a mandatory requirement in AtoZ. There are costs associated with using the database and assigning a role to manage the data.</p>	
Develop and maintain a by-name list	Essential	<p>A by-name list (BNL) is a real-time list of all known people in a local community who are experiencing homelessness, recorded with their consent.</p> <p> See: By-name list factsheet</p> <p>Costs: BNL data is stored in an AtoZ database (see above). You'll need to set up your BNL in your database.</p>	Ongoing
Service coordination	Essential	<p>Collaborative work of various local homelessness services to connect each person experiencing homelessness with the housing and support they need to move forward. In AtoZ communities, the service coordination group is the engine room of local efforts to end homelessness.</p> <p>Costs: Service coordination is mandatory in AtoZ. You'll need to establish your by-name list and database (both above) and assign a dedicated role to manage service coordination. You may be able to adjust and merge existing meetings to meet these needs. Speak to your AtoZ coach about options.</p>	Ongoing
Ongoing Advance to Zero support	Essential	<p>Regular, ongoing learning and professional support to assist your AtoZ community. Includes twice-yearly learning sessions, communities of practice, training,</p>	Ongoing

		<p>advocacy support and access to knowledge hub.</p> <p> See: Why Advance to Zero has costs</p> <p>Costs: See ‘How we can help’</p>	
Advance to Zero coaching	Optional	<p>If needed, AtoZ coaches are available to provide extra one-on-one support, helping you to build an action plan, organise data and run your initiative.</p> <p>Costs: See ‘How we can help’</p>	As required

2.5 Talk to your AtoZ coach

After familiarising yourself with the AtoZ framework and collecting as much information as you can about your local situation, the time is right to reach out to AAEH for a detailed conversation about the activities and costs involved. Make contact with a local AtoZ coach directly or email info@aaeh.org.au.

Your AtoZ coach will take you through all the elements, requirements and costs associated with establishing and running a [Zero project](#). If your initiative is unfunded or needs extra support, you may decide to create a business case to help articulate your situation and make a case for financial support. If you’re concerned about costs, we encourage you to discuss this with your coach – we don’t want cost to be a barrier to participation.



RESOURCE: Business case template

***Speak to your AtoZ coach about completing this activity**

A good understanding of your local homelessness situation, based on real-time data, will significantly strengthen your business case. In the absence of this information, some communities choose to run their own Connections Week to gather the information they need to build their case. The event can also help build buy-in and profile, which partners can use to advocate for future support.



RESOURCE: [Connections Week toolkit](#)



2.6 Become an AtoZ community

When you decide to become an AtoZ community, you'll work with the AAEH to formally or informally sign on, joining a national movement committed to ending homelessness together.

As part of this partnership, your community will have access to resources, networks, technology and guidance from the AAEH. The level of support provided is flexible and tailored to your community's needs and capacity.

Part 3: Build your community action plan

On becoming an AtoZ community, your next step will be to confirm your local collaboration team and set up the foundations of your Zero project by creating your community's own action plan.

An AtoZ 'community' is usually a local government area (LGA) or group of neighbouring areas. Every community is different, so your starting point will be unique. Homelessness is also a dynamic and changing issue, so your response needs to be flexible.

In establishing AtoZ in your community, you'll need to make a number of key decisions based on your local situation and need. This includes who your local partners will be and the roles that each of you will play. You'll need to decide on your priority focus and the structure of your collaboration, make governance agreements and define what you expect to achieve together.

Many communities find it helpful to bring this all together by writing a community action plan. This plan will outline your agreed course, but it'll be dynamic and adjustable over time.

This section outlines the key steps in collecting the information you need and building that plan.

3.1 Understanding collective impact (the way we work)

"Large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations."

Kania, J and Kramer, M, "Collective Impact", Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011

Before starting on your journey, it's important to note that AtoZ is a collaboration between a broad range of communities, organisations and individuals that are equally committed to ending homelessness. This work is based on the [collective](#)

[impact](#) methodology. It's useful to familiarise yourself with collective impact to understand the way we work.

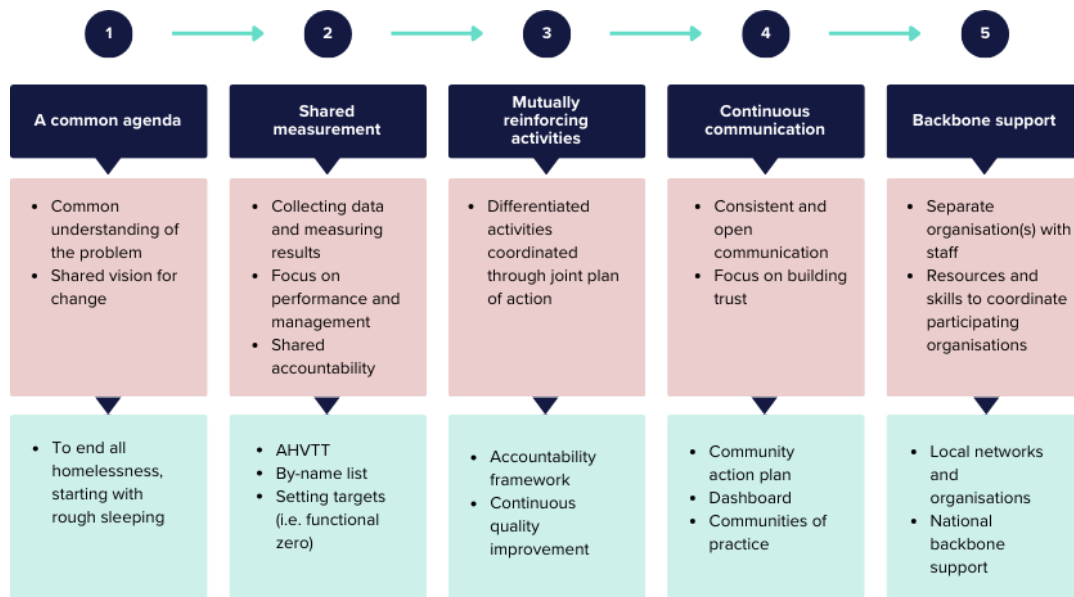
Collective impact is a collaborative approach used to address complex issues. It consists of five conditions that enable this work:

1. A common agenda
2. Shared measurement
3. Mutually reinforcing activities
4. Continuous communication
5. Backbone support.

Learn more about collective impact

- **READ:** [Kania, J and Kramer, M, "Collective Impact", Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2011](#) (journal article)
- **VISIT:** [Collective impact forum](#) (website)
- **WATCH:** [Tacking complex social problems through collective impact](#) (YouTube video: 2 minutes)

This is how collective impact guides the Advance to Zero framework:



3.2 Understand the AtoZ governance framework (Building your teams)

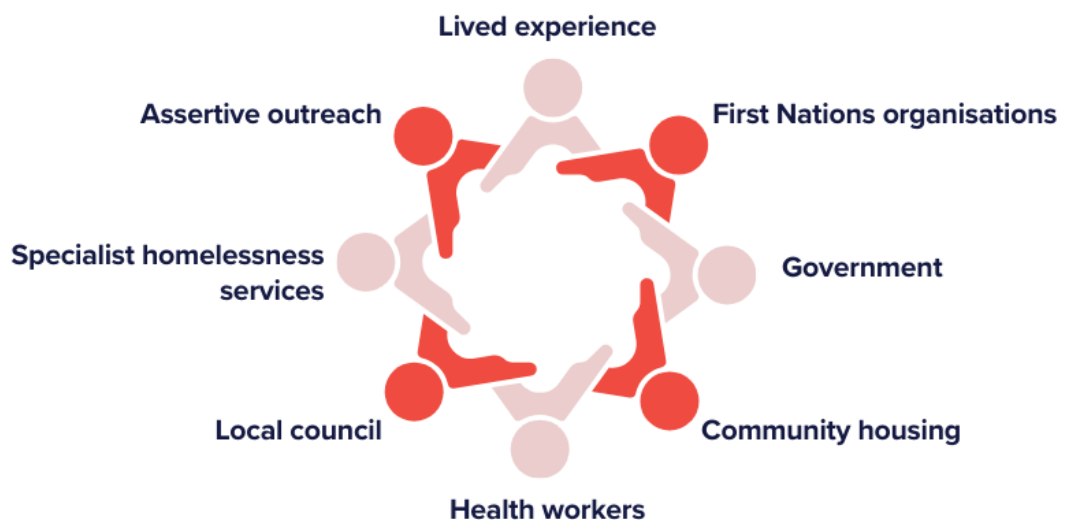
At a local level, AtoZ is a collaboration between community and service partners who together will lead and provide [backbone](#) resources for the project. You'll need

to build this team, which involves finding the right partners and collaborators and establishing the governance tools you'll need to run AtoZ in your community.

Your governance framework will consist of four activity tiers:

1. **A leadership team:** Senior leaders who will guide strategy, remove barriers and enable system-wide change to help end homelessness.
2. **An improvement team:** Bringing together people with lived experience, subject expertise and system knowledge to collect and interpret the data and lead targeted changes in the local homelessness response.
3. **A service coordination team:** Frontline workers coordinating efforts and connecting people experiencing homelessness to the right services, using the by-name list.
4. **A backbone team:** Coordinating collaboration, data, communications and strategy, with dedicated roles to keep the work focused, inclusive and sustainable.

3.3 Identify your teams and supporters



Your first step in building your community action plan is to consider who will form your key teams. We've created a checklist to help you collect the information you need to consider potential partnerships across your community and establish and support your local backbone.

This checklist will guide you through identifying:

1. Your core partners and members of your core teams
2. Any supporting organisations, agencies, groups or government entities who aren't 'experts' but may have a role to play

3. Supporters who can champion your work
4. Political supporters
5. Potential funders.



ACTIVITY: [Checklist 2: Identifying your teams](#)

Once you've identified your key stakeholders and discussed membership of your future AtoZ collaboration with your AtoZ coach, you'll need to start the process of bringing everyone on board. In some communities, these connections are already in place. In others, you'll need to facilitate information and planning sessions to form your new group. Your AtoZ coach will be able to advise and guide you through any activities you need to complete.

3.4 Establish your governance framework

With your AtoZ partners on board, your next step will be to reach agreement and put in place your governance structures. Ask your AtoZ coach to help you complete an action planning scorecard.

This process will take you through the key elements needed to establish AtoZ in your community – it is a group activity facilitated by your AtoZ coach that assesses where your local collaboration is strong, and where you could improve or make changes to reach your goal of ending homelessness. This collaborative process helps to:

- check your community's commitments and aims
- review how you plan to collect and evaluate data
- agree on your community's targets and milestones
- set routines for information sharing and communication
- finalise resources and partnerships.

Once you've gathered this information, you'll be able to work with your coach to establish your governance framework – the important foundations that'll keep your AtoZ collaboration running. This includes establishing agreements to guide your membership, roles and responsibilities, implementation operations processes, terms of reference for various functions and group agreements.

Having set an initial baseline, over time you'll be able to return to the scorecard and check your community's progress.

3.5 Write your community action plan

With all the information you've now collected, you're ready to write your community action plan. Your action plan will include information about your community's:

1. Scope
2. Homelessness story
3. Agreements and values
4. Collaborators
5. Theory of change (goals)
6. Governance agreements and structures
7. Governance documentation.

As we know, homelessness is a dynamic problem that's constantly changing. That's why we need a response that changes with it. Your action plan won't be a static document – it'll need to change, as the nature of homelessness in your community changes. Likewise, this plan will help you through many phases of your initiative by:

- providing an agreed framework from the start that establishes a clear picture of what your community aims to achieve together, and how you'll do that.
- assisting your team as you progress through your milestones – to see how far you've come, and to identify the wins and pain points so that you can keep continuously improving.
- helping you identify and make the final reach to your end point, when you achieve functional zero – making homelessness in your community rare, brief and once-off.



ACTIVITY: Writing your community action plan
***Speak to your AtoZ coach about completing this activity**

Part 4: Establish your by-name list

With a team in place and your governance structure agreed, it's time to start looking into how you'll build your by-name list (BNL).

A by-name list is an integral part of AtoZ. It's a shared, real-time database of people in your local community who are known to be experiencing homelessness. This includes people currently sleeping rough, as well as those who have recently moved into temporary accommodation or refuge.

With this information, you can:

- understand the scope of these forms of homelessness in your community
- understand how people move in and out of your system on an ongoing basis
- have accurate information to set goals to reduce rough sleeping
- have accurate information to understand if you're making progress in ending rough sleeping in your community.

Your by-name list keeps a close eye on your local homelessness situation. By recording and maintaining names, histories and health and housing needs in real time, the BNL aims to ensure that people are connected to the support they need. Like an emergency department, the by-name list allows services to triage support based on vulnerability and urgency, so that those in greatest need receive help first and no one is left behind.

Resources

Essential reading and viewing

- **READ:** [What is a by-name list?](#)

4.1 Establish and maintain a by-name list

Your AtoZ coach will help you establish and maintain your by-name list. Your community will use the by-name list scorecard to take a snapshot of your local situation and compare change over time. This can also help you track certain populations of interest, including veterans, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals and those experiencing chronic homelessness, who might need additional focus.

While developing and maintaining a BNL can be time-consuming, it's essential work to get the most out of your service systems and leverage your available resources.

Access to real-time information is also extremely useful to identify and advocate for solutions, to fund resource gaps and target areas for improvement.



ACTIVITY: By-name list scorecard*

*Speak to your AtoZ coach about completing this activity

A shared database

An Advance to Zero (AtoZ) database is a secure, locally managed system that helps communities respond to homelessness in real time. Information held in the AtoZ database is only available to specific organisations and agencies that have signed a database management agreement. Local data leads in each community take responsibility for the data and managing consent.

While different versions of these databases exist across Australia, they all share a common goal: to support person-centered, data-driven efforts to end homelessness.



RESOURCE: [About Advance to Zero databases](#)

4.2 Build your by-name list

Your community can take one of two paths in building a by-name list:

- Build your BNL through your existing community resources. This includes using the Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool (AHVTT) to gather initial information.
- Kickstart your Zero project by hosting a Connections Week event in your local community to bring your community together and proactively gather information about all known people currently sleeping rough and/or experiencing long-term homelessness within that area. Connections Weeks may also use the AHVTT, or similar triage tool.

The Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool (AHVTT)

The [Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool \(AHVTT\)](#) is a tool that helps homelessness services to triage support for the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness in their community. The AHVTT replaces the former VI-SPDAT triage tool.

Based on people's disclosed information, the AHVTT helps to provide the right housing, healthcare and community services for individuals and families according to their current needs. Communities can also use collective, de-identified data from the AHVTT to advocate for the changes and resources needed to end homelessness locally.

The level of use of the common assessment tool varies by community and in each state and territory. Supporting the use of the tool is a key part of the work for the backbone team, including a community and data lead – and is a regular focus of the ongoing AtoZ support that the AAEH provides, including through learning sessions and regular community of practice calls.

4.3 Consider Connections Week

Connections Week is a specific event held in a community to proactively gather information about all people currently sleeping rough and/or experiencing long-term homelessness within that area.

As the name infers, this event generally takes place over a week, although some communities prefer to take more time – and that is OK. What's important is momentum, so you get the work done as quickly as possible.

Whether it's over one week or longer, the process involves teams of volunteers conducting surveys with people experiencing homelessness in the community. They analyse the data collected from these surveys and present results to the sector, community, philanthropy and other interested groups at the end of the agreed period.

By being a clear and distinct task that's achievable for a community in the early phases of collaboration, a Connections Week can help you kickstart collaborative work and bring together people from a wide range of services to work on a shared goal.

AAEH provides a kit for communities undertaking Connections Week events and works with local, state-based partners with experience in supporting communities to undertake these activities.



RESOURCE: [Connections Week toolkit](#)

Part 5: Next steps

It's important to remember that homelessness is a solvable problem, but we've become accustomed to thinking that it's not. AtoZ offers a pathway for solving homelessness, one group of people and one community at a time.

There can be a lot involved in becoming an AtoZ community, but at its heart, it's about three steps:

1. Ensuring everyone is working together with a common strategy
2. Building and maintaining a local by-name list
3. Using the information you have in a Housing First service coordination forum.

The hardest step you might ever take is the first one – and we'll help you along the way. Reach out, because there are other communities across the country who might be at the same stage as you or doing similar work, and we can connect you.

We hold regular community of practice calls to facilitate connections, because over time, we've learned that sometimes a remote community in WA has more in common with a remote community in QLD than one in their own state. Similarly, inner-city communities are complex and can have similar challenges.

Stay connected

The AAEH regularly runs a variety of Advance to Zero activities, including in-person events, online training sessions and community of practice meetings. Here are the best ways to get involved and stay connected:

- Subscribe to the [AAEH mailing list](#)
- Check the [events page](#) on the AAEH website
- Join our regular [community of practice meetings](#)

Appendix 1: Full document list/Action checklist

Below, you'll find a list of all external documents referenced throughout this toolkit. Use this as a way to track your progress.

1. Learn about Advance to Zero

Introduction and links to key documents about concepts, methodologies and benefits of Advance to Zero.

Action	Description/link	Done?
READ	About Advance to Zero	
VISIT	AAEH website: aaeh.org.au	
READ	AAEH 2025-2028 Strategic Plan	
READ	How we can help – National overview	
REFER	Advance to Zero glossary	
WATCH	Introduction to AtoZ	
WATCH	An animated guide to complex social challenges	

2. Gather essential information

Prepare your community for the AtoZ initiative by gathering essential information and assessing your readiness. Complete a pre-action planning checklist to build a picture of your community's current situation and potential needs and costs before scheduling your first meeting with an AtoZ coach.

Action	Description/link	Done?
FILL OUT	Checklist 1: Community information	
FILL OUT	Business case template *Speak to your coach about completing this activity	

3. Build your community action plan

Your community has decided to participate in Advance to Zero – now it's time to start working on a collaborative action plan. Working with your AtoZ coach, familiarise yourself with the principles of collective impact (the way we work), AtoZ governance and team structures before identifying your community team and starting off your community action plan.

Action	Description/link	Done?
READ	Kania, J and Kramer, M, "Collective Impact", Stanford Social Innovation Review. Winter 2011.	
VISIT	Collective Impact Forum (website)	
WATCH	Tackling complex social problems through collective impact	
FILL OUT	Checklist 2: Identifying your teams	
FILL OUT	Build your action plan *Speak to your coach about completing this activity	

4. Establish your by-name list

Start the process to create and maintain your community's by-name list – a shared database using real-time data to understand the scope of homelessness, track progress and prioritise resources. Learn about and determine whether your community will run a Connections Week.

Action	Description/link	Done?
READ	By-name list fact sheet	
FILL OUT	By-name list scorecard *Speak to your coach about completing this activity	
READ	AtoZ database fact sheet	
READ	Connections Week toolkit	

Advance to Zero glossary

Advance to Zero framework

A descriptive framework that is used to support efforts to make homelessness rare, brief and once-off in a community. A copy of the framework can be found [here](#).

The AtoZ framework is modelled on the Built for Zero methodology developed and used by [Community Solutions](#), with evidence-informed adaptations by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness to make it ideal for use in Australian communities.

Fundamentally, the Advance to Zero framework is:

- descriptive, not prescriptive
- constantly evolving, based on our learnings
- open for everyone to use, learn and contribute to it.

Assertive outreach

A planned, active approach to engage and support people experiencing homelessness, especially those who may have complex needs and be hesitant or unable to access traditional services. A team of specialist workers (minimum two) meet people where they are, find out their needs and connect them to housing, health and support services, aiming to help them get and keep stable housing.

Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool (AHVTT)

The AHVTT is a tool that helps communities understand the needs of people experiencing homelessness. It takes the form of a survey that homelessness services go through in conversation with a person to learn about their housing, health and support needs. There are three AHVTT surveys: individual, family and youth.

Like a hospital emergency department, the AHVTT helps to triage by identifying who has the most urgent needs and what type of support or housing is most appropriate. This makes sure people are connected with the right help as quickly as possible.

The AHVTT was developed by the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness with partners. Input from frontline workers, First Nations representatives and people with lived experience was vital in making sure the tool reflects people's real experiences of homelessness and their immediate needs. The AHVTT replaces the previous tool known as the VI-SPDAT.



When looked at together, de-identified AHVTT data can also show what resources are missing in a community and help advocate for the changes needed to end homelessness.

Backbone

The team responsible for the coordination of AtoZ activities. Backbone teams can exist at the local, state or national level. Backbone teams or organisations are part of the collective impact approach, which the AtoZ movement uses.

By-name list

A by-name list (BNL) is a real-time list of all known people in a local community who are experiencing homelessness, recorded with their consent. Information is entered and updated by local services to reflect people's current housing situation and support needs. In some cases, people may be included anonymously or with limited identifying information. This shared information helps services work together to offer support, connect people with housing and track who still needs help.

A BNL also helps communities move from responding to homelessness in a fragmented way to working together with a clear, shared understanding of who needs support and what's needed to end homelessness locally. By-name lists are the first step to ending homelessness because we can't solve what we can't see.

Community

A local community in Australia that participates in the Advance to Zero movement. Communities are a defined geographic region, often a single local government area (LGA) or cluster of LGAs. A community can also be called a **Zero project**.

Community action plan

A community action plan is a shared plan developed by a community working to end homelessness through Advance to Zero. It outlines what the community wants to achieve, how everyone will work together and the roles each partner will play.

Every community starts in a different place, so each plan looks different. The plan usually includes the community's story of homelessness, agreed values, key partners, how decisions will be made, goals for reducing homelessness and the structures that will guide the work.

Because homelessness changes over time, a community action plan is a living document. It is updated as new information, challenges or opportunities arise. The plan helps communities stay aligned on a common agenda, track progress, understand what's working and continuously improve on the path to making homelessness rare, brief and once-off.

Community of practice (CoP)

[Communities of practice \(CoP\)](#) are groups of people who care about the same topic and regularly come together to share ideas, learn from each other and improve what they do. The AA EH has [two primary CoPs](#) for improvement and data, as well as a CoP for large-scale change leaders and AHVTT trainers.

Collective impact

The [collective impact](#) approach is a structured form of collaboration where organisations and individuals from different sectors work together on a common agenda for solving a specific problem.

Connections Week

A Connections Week (formerly called a Registry Week) is a local effort to find out exactly who in a community is experiencing homelessness and what support they need. It brings together volunteers and local organisations to speak directly with people sleeping rough or without a safe, permanent home. The goal is to know each person by name, so the community can start working towards housing and supporting every individual.

In places where few or no services exist, a Connections Week can also be used to gather data that helps advocate for the services a community needs.

Continuous improvement

Continuous improvement is about regularly looking at how a service or process is working and finding practical ways to make it better over time. This can involve small, gradual changes, or at times, bigger changes when something isn't working well.

The focus is on improving quality, efficiency and outcomes by trying ideas, learning from what happens and adjusting as needed. Simple improvement methods, such as the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, are often used to help identify issues, test changes and embed what works.

→ Learn more: [IHI's Model for Improvement](#)

Housing First

Housing First is an evidence-based approach to ending homelessness that prioritises access to permanent housing as the first step. Housing is not conditional on addressing health, substance use or other challenges. Instead, people are offered flexible, person-centered support once housed, with engagement encouraged but not required to maintain housing.

Housing First is most commonly used to support people experiencing chronic or rough sleeping homelessness and removes barriers that can prevent people from achieving and sustaining long-term housing.

→ Learn more: [Housing First Principles for Australia](#)

Large-scale change (LSC)

Within the AtoZ framework, large-scale change (LSC) refers to strategic, high-level efforts that are coordinated across multiple local communities within a specific region. These activities aim to create meaningful and widespread impact that benefits all the communities involved, and align with the collective impact approach.

LSC activities are typically led by a LSC entity, like the Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (WAAEH), which works to align resources, strategies and actions across the region to achieve shared goals.

Learning session

A learning session is a national gathering of Advance to Zero communities, held twice a year – once online and once in-person. It brings together local teams, community leaders and experts to share progress, learn new skills and strengthen collaboration towards ending homelessness.

Learning sessions include keynote speakers, practical workshops and peer-to-peer learning. They're a key part of the AtoZ movement, providing space for inspiration, connection and practical tools that communities can use to strengthen their work.

Local community lead

The person responsible for coordinating and driving their community's efforts to achieve zero homelessness. They are usually employed by the local backbone organisation, but may also be employed by a government or service organisation. Their role includes:

- documenting and updating the community's strategy (e.g. through driver diagrams)
- building local support and engagement
- helping to set up and support local governance
- convening and leading meetings
- motivating and coordinating action across partners.

Generally, local community leads will only be responsible for one community.

Also known as: Local community coordinator, project lead, community lead

Example job description: [Local Community Coordinator - Bunbury](#)

Local data lead

The person responsible for coordinating and overseeing the use of data to support their community's efforts to end homelessness. They help ensure the by-name list is accurate, trusted and actively used to inform decision-making, service coordination and continuous improvement. The role may be held by one person or shared across a small team. Their role includes:

- coordinating regular data collection, review and reporting
- supporting the use of the local by-name list database and assessment tools, including the AHVTT
- overseeing data quality, standards and governance, including consent, privacy and ethical use of data
- supporting and building the data capability of frontline workers and services
- analysing and presenting data to identify trends, gaps and opportunities for improvement
- using data to help the community understand homelessness dynamics, track progress and inform action
- working closely with the local community lead and partners to support continuous improvement and system change.

Local data leads are usually employed by a local backbone organisation or service provider, and may support one or more communities depending on scale and capacity.

Example job description: [Data Lead - Logan Zero Project](#)

Service coordination

Service coordination is the collaborative work of local homelessness services to connect each person experiencing homelessness with the housing and support they need to move forward. In AtoZ communities, the service coordination group is the engine room of local efforts to end homelessness. This group works with the by-name list, safeguards personal information and works together to help people move from sleeping rough into safe and stable housing.

Zero project

A Zero project operates at the local level to implement the AtoZ framework, typically with the support of a large-scale change partner. At its most basic level, a



Zero project includes a local backbone, a by-name list and service coordination group. A Zero project can also be called a community.