



A GUIDE TO SETUP A NEW WARMING CENTER – TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Review our Malden Warming Center Handbook.....	2
2. Schedule a meeting with your city or town government to see what you can and can't do	3
3. Start developing your program, policies, and budget	4
4. Investigate available grants and funding	6

Thank you for considering opening a warming center in your community!

When the Malden Warming Center opened there were few resources like us in our surrounding community, and we have been moved to see so many communities working to open similar centers over the years.

We often get questions from groups and communities who have just started these conversations and seek guidance or understanding about where to begin.

The subsequent chapters are a suggested checklist / starting place for such situations.

1. REVIEW OUR MALDEN WARMING CENTER HANDBOOK

Reach out to us at sharing@maldenwarmingcenter.org to get a copy of our handbook to look through it.

We would suggest reading through it to get a sense of the rhythm of a night in a warming center:

- Checking guests in,
- Serving dinner (if you have the facilities), and
- How our volunteers ensure folks are safe and treated with respect throughout the night

Remember when you're reading it that we are in our sixth season, and our capacity has grown significantly since season one.

When looking through it, think about:

- How might you set up a check-in procedure in your space?
- Do you have chairs available, or do you use yoga mats on the floor?
- Do you have a commercial kitchen available in the space?
 - If not, are there area restaurants that might consider providing dinner for your guests?

Big questions to focus on at this stage are the basic ones: location, facilities, how guests can get to the location, how are you staffing it, and what services might you be able to provide (meals and a donations closet are the big two, but others might be easier to get up and running in year one).

2. SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH YOUR CITY OR TOWN GOVERNMENT TO SEE WHAT YOU CAN AND CAN'T DO

Specifically, people you should talk to include:

- a. Health Director
 - i. Any outreach, substance use disorder, or social services employees
- b. Building Inspector
- c. Police Chief
- d. Fire Chief
- e. Municipal CEO or their Chief of Staff

There are several reasons these meetings are important; one critical one is that your Health Director and Building Inspector will be able to tell you important information about your responsibilities and limitations in opening a warming center. For example, our capacity is 25 guests, we only serve food prepared in our kitchen or restaurant kitchens, and we wash the blankets guests use between each use — those are all important parts of compliance with health and safety regulations.

Outreach workers and your local police department can be invaluable partners in opening a center, and their work will undoubtedly be impacted by a new center in some way. Bringing them into the conversation early and working with them to make sure those impacts are as positive as possible, and what you can do to mitigate negative impacts, will do a lot to improve your warming center's operations.

It is important to talk to your municipal CEO early for the same reasons. Residents and city employees will bring it to their attention for a variety of reasons, and you want to make yourselves available early to ensure open lines of communication.

3. START DEVELOPING YOUR PROGRAM, POLICIES, AND BUDGET

Start working to outline how you want your center to operate; you can use our handbook as a guide, and/or reach out to other area warming centers to see how they might do things differently.

This is also a time you'll need to answer some broader questions about the philosophy of your center; for example: the MWC is a low-barrier center, which means we have minimal barriers to entry. This is partly a result of our practicing hospitality – the belief that every person is entitled to warmth and safety and should be treated with dignity and respect. We have policies and procedures to govern how we enforce this, and to ensure that we are following our philosophy in a way that keeps all our guests and volunteers safe and healthy.

We use a lot of tools and technology at the MWC to support our work. Some may be useful to you from the outset, and some may be a lot to work with when starting. A partial list of tools includes:

- Signup.com or similar tool for volunteer signups
- MailChimp or similar email service for mass mailings
- Website platform, for sharing information
- Amazon or similar wish list, for sharing Center and guest needs with the community for donations

In year 6, additional tools we've adopted and found extremely valuable include:

- A custom, purpose-built guest check-in app
- Microsoft 365 (Microsoft offers a free version for non-profits)
- QuickBooks for non-profits

Our ability to adopt (or create) these additional tools is thanks to our volunteers, who, in addition to their phenomenal work at the Center, bring many additional skills they've developed in their professional careers.

The Malden Warming Center's budget in FY24 was over \$150,000, but in our first year, our budget was closer to \$20,000. You can see what our budget looked like for the first few years below. The biggest cost increase in the first few years was our decision to pay stipends to overnight volunteers, which can be hard shifts to fill. The capacity to do this depends a lot on funding.

Malden Warming Center Budget

Income	Yr 2018-2019 Apr-Mar	2020 Apr-Mar	Projected 2021
Grants	\$8,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$56,000.00
Donations/Gifts	\$6,074.00	\$24,094.00	\$30,000.00
Total	\$14,074.00	\$34,094.00	\$86,000.00
Expenses			
1. Office Supplies (paper, photocopying, pens, etc.)	\$300.00	\$640.00	\$700.00
2. Kitchen Supplies			
a. Food	\$445.00	\$2,880.00	\$3,000.00
b. Paper products	\$670.00	\$6,720.00	\$7,000.00
3. Operational Needs			
a. Supplies (signs, gloves, plastic bags, etc.)	\$1,586.00	\$5,760.00	\$7,000.00
b. Utilities			
1. Water	\$604.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,800.00
2. Electric	\$6,324.00	\$30,000.00	\$32,000.00
c. Equipment	\$1,123.00		
d. Cleaning Service	\$3,150.00	\$7,500.00	\$7,500.00
4. Building needs			
a. Maintenance/repair/upgrade	\$4,719.00		\$1,000.00
5. Stipends (2 overnight room monitors - Volunteer Coordinator)			\$26,000.00
Total	\$18,921.00	\$55,000.00	\$86,000.00

4. INVESTIGATE AVAILABLE GRANTS AND FUNDING

Places to start including:

1. City government: does your city have CDBG or ARPA funding available you could apply for?
2. Local foundations: in Malden, we have Junior Aid and Adelaide Breed Bayrd foundations, which exist to serve local programs.
3. Houses of worship: the MWC was created from an initiative of the Malden Interfaith Counsel, so our ties to the religious community have always been strong. Houses of worship, especially those that align with the work you're preparing to do, are good places to turn for both volunteers and funding.
4. Private donations: we use a platform called [Givebutter](#) to collect individual donations and run specific fundraising drives. It is very user-friendly, provides lots of tutorials, and you can use it without being a 501(c)3.
5. Work with your City to have a meeting about the initiative. Invite residents of your and surrounding communities—potential volunteers—to come and learn more about your warming center. Talk to them about what volunteering will look like, and the different ways people will be able to help. Share your plan and your vision. Make sure to collect email addresses to start cultivating a volunteer base.

6. Recruit leadership team.

Priority areas:

- a. Director
 - b. Assistant Director
 - c. Volunteer coordinator
 - d. Food management
7. Continue recruiting volunteers! Some ideas for how you can do this include:
 - a. Use social media
 - b. Put up posters in coffee shops and transit stations
 - c. Table at community events
 - d. Talk to pastors and find a few minutes to speak at religious services
 - e. If your city has a newsletter see if you can add a note about the volunteer opportunities in it
 - f. Use word of mouth! As your current volunteers and leadership team to talk to their friends and family

8. Run a training

Plan to walk your volunteers through what a typical evening will look like, and what situations they should be prepared for. Include information about worst-case scenarios (Narcan training is always a good idea) but emphasize that similar facilities like MWC have gone entire seasons without an overdose on Center property.

A typical training at the MWC follows this pattern:

- 0:00 Welcome & agenda
- 0:20 How we serve – a section on how we operationalize treating guests with respect and dignity and an introduction to the complexities of homelessness. Some of your guests will be struggling with SUD, but some will have lost their housing and not have the savings for first, last, and broker fees so they are sleeping at the center and getting up early to travel to their full-time jobs.
- 0:35 Narcan demonstration (using YouTube video) and pointing out where Narcan is stored in the center.
- 0:45 Breakout groups 1; at the MWC volunteers can choose to learn more about being a room monitor, working in the kitchen, or the donations closet.
- 1:00 Breakout groups 2; volunteers can pick a second station to learn about
- 1:15 Logistics: how to sign up for shifts, signing in on your shift, other administrative information
- 1:30 CORI forms and Q&A
- 2:00 Wrap up

This guide is just a starting place; we know how difficult the process you're embarking on can be and we hope this helps you to feel a little less lost in it.

After reading this guide, put some thought into the different questions and prompts, and we are available to talk further when you want to reach out at sharing@maldenwarmingcenter.org.

Thank you for considering this work! We are very glad to have you in our community.