LavaMae® media fact sheet

LavaMae® is a nonprofit accelerator that's building a worldwide network of providers who take critical services to the street, where the unhoused need them most. With an approach rooted in Radical Hospitality®—meeting people, wherever they are, with extraordinary care—LavaMae® is changing the way the world sees and serves our unhoused neighbors, and helps restore dignity, rekindle optimism and fuel a sense of opportunity for people experiencing homelessness.

Recognizing that the most sustainable solutions come from the communities where the challenges exist, LavaMae® accelerates local responses to homelessness with open-source toolkits, in-depth training and strategic partnerships. Radical Hospitality is at the core of everything they do, based on the belief that opportunity unfolds when people are treated with dignity and that people everywhere will rise to the level of respect they are offered.

Replicating Radical Hospitality around the world

LavaMae® evolved from Lava Mae, a nonprofit provider of mobile hygiene services. The organization restructured in January 2020 in response to rising interest in replicating its services globally, proving the massive need for street-based services and training others to deliver Radical Hospitality.

Since its launch, the organization has fielded more than 4,500 inquiries from city agencies, nonprofits, governments, refugee aid organizations and individuals in 38 countries seeking to provide similar services—and has already trained, directly advised or inspired more than 230 programs in 200 communities in 12 countries to create mobile hygiene services based on LavaMaex–designed programs.

LavaMae® aims to help communities develop programs that serve 100,000 unhoused individuals around the globe by 2024. In order to succeed, LavaMae® offers replicators tools such as the buildIt online platform, a free DIY toolkit and forum that helps anyone, anywhere launch a mobile hygiene program. The kit covers everything from getting started to finding funders to taking Radical Hospitality to the street. Additionally, LavaMae® provides hands-on training for effectively operating a mobile hygiene service and safely managing guest behavior. When possible, it connects replicators to resources, including funding opportunities.

Care through service and action

Meanwhile, LavaMae® keeps a finger on the pulse of the street by providing mobile hygiene services in San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles so that it can give replicators real-world training, and hosts Pop-Up Care Villages (PUCVs) and Hygiene+, recurring events that model collaborative, multi-provider service delivery.

At PUCVs guests can get haircuts, medical care, legal advice, employment assistance and other free services from 25+ service providers. A new toolkit for providing Pop-Up Care Villages is already in the works. At the Hygiene+ station, LavaMae® partners with local providers that bring targeted resources including haircuts, clothing and legal advice on a regular basis at shower service sites.
The power of a village

A partnership with the new Unilever brand, The Right to Shower, is providing core support for LavaMae. Built as a social enterprise, The Right to Shower donates profits to shower initiatives that help people moving through homelessness, including LavaMae. In turn, LavaMae draws on its expertise to advise the brand, identifying, vetting and recommending initiatives for The Right to Shower to fund.

Impact & results

Since its founding as Lava Mae in 2013, LavaMae has:

- Served more than 32,350 Californians with showers and PUCVs, providing more than 78,100 total showers
- Provided 43 PUCVs that mobilized 185 service partners and more than 1,680 volunteers serving over 10,110 guests (San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles and one at SXSW in Austin, Texas)
- Distributed over 7,000 COVID-19 hygiene kits to over 35 locations including encampments and shelters in Los Angeles and the Bay Area
- Fielded over 4,500 requests from 38 countries for advice on replicating mobile hygiene services
- Produced the DIY buildIt toolkit, which has been downloaded more than 4,100 times
- Trained, directly advised or inspired more than 230 programs in 200 communities in 12 countries to create mobile hygiene services
- Joined the Handwashing for All initiative in May 2020 in partnership with Love Beyond Walls and deployed 540+ DIY handwashing stations to 12 communities, serving nearly 1.5 million handwashes.

Facts & figures

HQ: San Francisco
Founded: 2013
First Pop-Up Care Village: 2016
Impact goal: Help communities serve 100,000 unhoused individuals around the globe by 2024
Total volunteers: 2,410+ (720+ mobile hygiene volunteers and 1,680+ PUCV Volunteers)
Replicators trained: Trained, directly advised or inspired more than 230 programs in 200 communities in 12 countries
Staff: 11
Budget: $1.9 million in 2019 (launched with an $800,000 annual budget)
Corporate partnerships include Unilever and Goodness

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