



CENTRAL IOWA
SHELTER & SERVICES

2025

ANNUAL REPORT

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Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the past year, I am deeply grateful for the ways our community has come together to meet both urgent needs and bold opportunities at Central Iowa Shelter & Services.

This year, we celebrated several milestones that will shape the future of our mission:

- **The launch of Bindl, our companion app**, which empowers case managers and clients alike with tools that streamline access to resources and increase accountability. Already, Bindl is helping us reimagine what's possible in client engagement and long-term stability.
- **The opening of the Grinnell Empowerment Command Center**, a first-of-its-kind hub in rural Iowa designed to expand services and create scalable solutions statewide. This center represents a major step toward our vision of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring across the state.
- **Innovation in our greenhouse with the sale of shrimp**, adding to our well-known food production program. These efforts not only provide nutritious food but also create job training opportunities for the people we serve.

Each of these accomplishments reflects the dedication of our staff, the resilience of those we walk alongside, and the unwavering generosity of our donors and partners. Together, we are proving that innovation and compassion can go hand-in-hand in building sustainable solutions.

As we look ahead, we know there is much more work to do. But with your continued support, we are ready to meet the challenge and create lasting change in Central Iowa and beyond.

With Gratitude,



Melissa O'Neil

*Chief Executive Officer
Central Iowa Shelter & Services*



2025

IN REVIEW

CISS-TISTICS

≈ 60%

Of Those In-Shelter Have Had
A Traumatic Brain Injury

DID YOU KNOW?

CISS Has A Fellowship
Program To Grow Staff &
Provide Leadership Growth

CISS-TISTICS

\$68

Cost Of Food & Shelter
For 1 Person For 1 Day

DID YOU KNOW?

CISS Piloted An Acute
Care Center With The
DSM Fire Department

At Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS), we know that ending homelessness takes more than shelter, it takes connection, compassion, and opportunity. Every service we offer is rooted in the belief that when barriers are removed and people are supported, lasting self-sufficiency becomes possible.

That vision guided us throughout 2025. Across our Des Moines campus, 2,287 adults found safety and stability through our low-barrier shelter, where they received not just a bed, but access to case management, health care, and employment resources that help turn survival into progress.

Food remained a foundation of care. This year, we served over 260,000 meals and harvested more than 2,500 pounds of produce through our greenhouse and aquaponics program. Two initiatives that nourish both body and spirit while providing valuable job training opportunities.

Beyond our walls, CISS strengthened its reach through partnerships with The Bridge Home in Ames and the Rolling Hills Coalition, expanding services and building stronger networks of support statewide. Our programs also continued to help veterans secure stable housing and rebuild their futures, serving 96 individuals in 2025.

As we reflect on the past year, one truth stands out: progress happens when people and purpose come together. With the commitment of our staff, partners, and community, CISS continues to prove that homelessness is not a life sentence, it's a challenge we can overcome together.



BY THE NUMBERS

264,222
MEALS SHARED

96
VETERANS SERVED

2,287
PEOPLE SERVED

1,553
VOLUNTEERS

2,587
POUNDS OF PRODUCE

STRATEGIC

MOVES

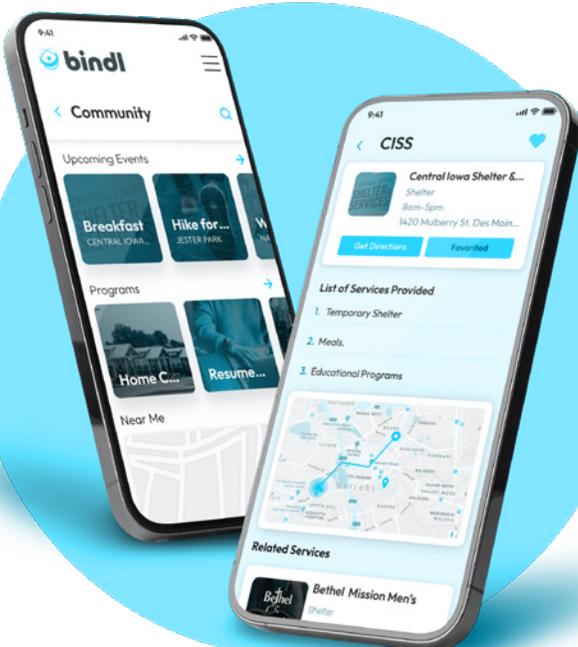
AND MILESTONES

2025 was a year of purposeful growth and innovation at Central Iowa Shelter & Services. Each initiative we undertook was designed to strengthen our programs, expand access to critical resources, and deepen our impact on the people and communities we serve. Through bold strategic moves and key milestones, CISS continues to demonstrate that thoughtful investment in infrastructure, technology, and partnerships can create lasting solutions to homelessness.



The launch of Bindl, CISS's companion app, marked a major step forward in connecting clients with the services and support they need. Designed with both clients and case managers in mind, Bindl streamlines access to shelter information, meal schedules, appointments, and program milestones—all in one intuitive platform. The app also includes reminders, goal-tracking features, and progress notifications, helping clients stay engaged and accountable while empowering them to take control of their own journey toward stability.

Since its rollout, Bindl has been adopted by a growing number of clients and staff, showing measurable improvements in engagement and service coordination. Case managers report that the app has reduced administrative burdens, improved communication, and enhanced clients' ability to follow through on plans. For guests, Bindl provides a tangible tool to track their progress, connect with available resources, and visualize their path toward independence. Early results demonstrate that technology, paired with compassionate case management, can significantly enhance outcomes in addressing homelessness.



EMPOWERMENT COMMAND CENTER



EMPOWERMENT COMMAND CENTER GRINNELL

The Grinnell Empowerment Command Center opened its doors as a groundbreaking hub in rural Iowa, bringing together services, training, and community support under one roof. The ECC is designed to extend the reach of CISS beyond urban areas, making critical programs accessible to more individuals who may otherwise face barriers to care. At the center, guests can access case management, housing assistance, employment and skills training, and health resources, all coordinated in a single, welcoming location.

Since opening, the ECC has already begun to demonstrate the power of centralized, holistic support. By combining resources in one location, the center fosters stronger community connections and allows CISS to scale its services more effectively across the region. The ECC embodies the organization's belief that homelessness can be addressed proactively, using innovative models that meet both immediate needs and long-term goals.



CISS's ongoing partnership with The Bridge Home in Ames strengthens supportive housing and wraparound services for adults experiencing homelessness across the region. Through this collaboration, clients gain access to low-barrier shelter, consistent case management, and individualized pathways to independence. The partnership also allows both organizations to share expertise, align services, and build more cohesive networks that ensure no one falls through the cracks.

In 2025, The Bridge Home partnership helped numerous individuals secure stable housing, access workforce development programs, and connect with mental health and healthcare services—creating measurable improvements in both personal outcomes and community well-being. The collaboration highlights how strong partnerships amplify impact, demonstrating that ending homelessness requires more than individual programs; it requires a coordinated, community-driven approach.





MULBERRY FARM

In 2025, Mulberry Farm continued to grow, as a cornerstone of CISS's commitment to food security, job training, and sustainable innovation. What began as a vision to provide skill development and fresh produce for our clients has evolved into a thriving urban agriculture initiative that feeds the community and creates pathways to employment. This year, the farm produced more than 2,500 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, along with an expanded aquaponics program that introduced shrimp cultivation to diversify both production and training opportunities.

Every harvest at Mulberry Farm represents more than food on a plate. Guests gain hands-on experience in sustainable agriculture, aquaculture, and food production, as well as learning skills that translate directly to meaningful employment. The farm also supplies fresh produce to the CISS kitchen, reducing costs and improving nutrition for the thousands of meals served throughout the year.

Mulberry Farm has become a living example of what happens when innovation meets compassion: sustainable systems that nourish people, strengthen the environment, and restore purpose. As it continues to evolve, the farm stands as a model for how urban and rural communities alike can grow opportunity from the ground up.

Our Shrimp are White Pacific Shrimp. They are raised at a hatchery in Florida where they're bred. From there they are picked up by RDM Shrimp, our partner, where they feed and nurture the baby shrimp for about a month before they deliver them to CISS where we continue to feed them a pure protein diet and take over water management. These measures guarantee our shrimp are well taken care of! After 2 months onsite at CISS, the shrimp are ready for harvest and consumption. Unlike shrimp in the stores that have been frozen and thawed at least once, our shrimp are harvested FRESH on your day of pickup!



AGRIHOOD

In 2025, CISS laid the groundwork for one of its most ambitious projects yet: the creation of a 4-acre Agrihood on the Mulberry Farm & Food campus. Set to open in 2026, the Agrihood will transform an unused flood zone into a vibrant community space. Using specially designed floating garden beds, this innovative model will grow produce in challenging terrain while featuring art installations, community gathering areas, and opportunities for education and engagement.

When complete, the Agrihood will supply fresh produce for meals served in CISS's emergency shelter and community kitchen, as well as other meal sites across Des Moines. The space will be open to the public, ensuring that anyone in need can access fresh fruits and vegetables at no cost, while surplus harvests will be donated to the Food Bank of Iowa. Maintained by CISS employees, job trainees, and volunteers, the Agrihood reflects our belief that access to nutritious food and community connection can grow from the ground up.



TINESHA'S STORY

Before entering the Shelter, Tinesha was a certified nurse's aide and was determined to carve out a successful future for herself. But when a cascade of obstacles hit her all at once, she found herself with a financial stressor that many of us fear: car failure. This costly and frustrating barrier caused her to step away from work, and the foundation she had spent her early adulthood building up.

Despite facing these challenges, Tinesha remained determined. She found the strength to turn to our emergency shelter for housing and support. Upon stepping through our doors, she made a conscious decision to immerse herself in the opportunities for growth and empowerment offered at CISS. In a short span of time, her progress was evident, leading to a successful transition from the emergency shelter to one of our single-unit efficiency apartments.

One day, a job training opportunity in the greenhouse caught her attention. "I was interested in the productivity of it. I could wake up in the morning and have somewhere to go while making money and ultimately doing something positive," Tinesha recalled. "I am an Iowa girl. I have always enjoyed agriculture and planting in the garden. It wasn't something that would just be work, it would also be fun," she added.

Embracing the role wholeheartedly, Tinesha flourished in the greenhouse, finding fulfillment in nurturing plants and fostering growth. Now, nine months into her job training journey, she reflects on the profound impact of this experience, not just for herself but for others looking to rebuild their lives. "Training in the greenhouse gives people an opportunity to want more. Once you get started, you want to do better."

"Ultimately, I am working to get my own place and be the best that I can." – Tinesha

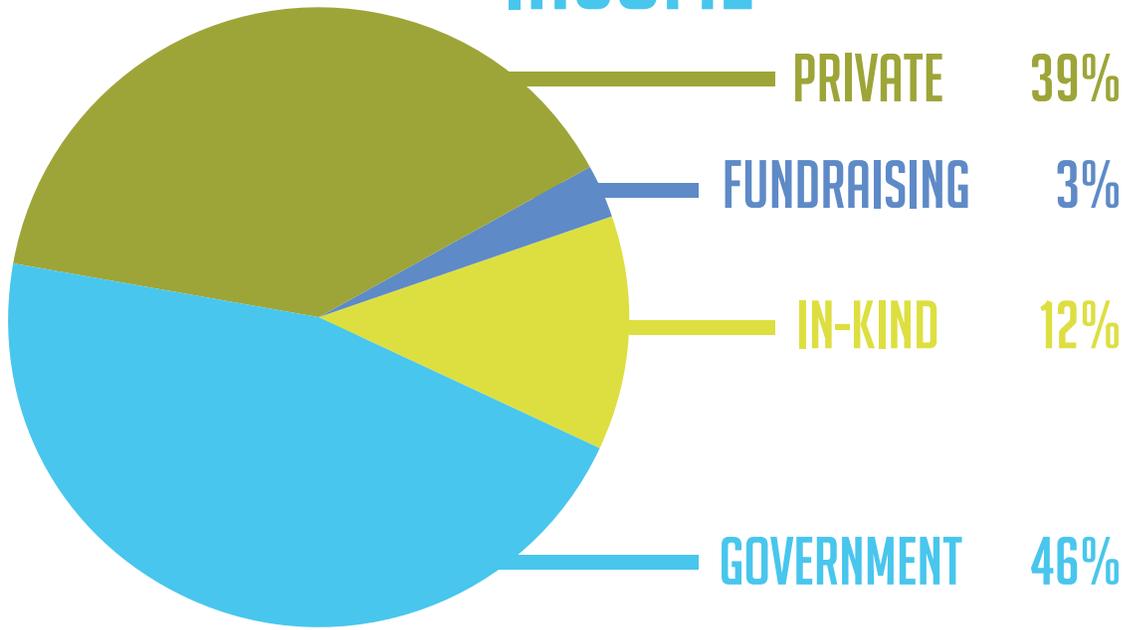
REVENUE AND SUPPORT

In FY2025, Central Iowa Shelter & Services maintained a diversified and resilient revenue base. Government funding remained the largest source at 46%, continuing to provide essential stability for core operations. Private support accounted for 39% of total income, demonstrating sustained commitment from individuals, foundations, and corporate partners. In-kind donations represented 12%, reflecting meaningful non-cash contributions that directly offset operational costs, while fundraising activities contributed an additional 3%. Together, these revenue streams illustrate a balanced funding model that reduces overreliance on any single source and strengthens long-term sustainability.

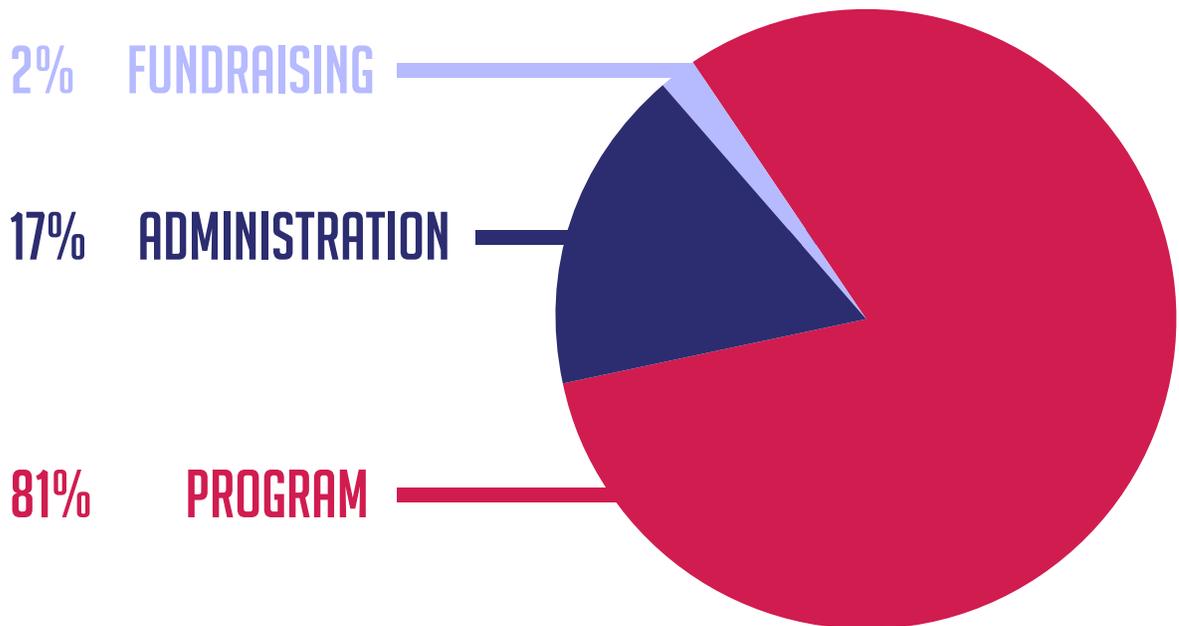
On the expense side, the majority of resources (81%) were directed to the program's services, underscoring CISS's primary focus on delivering shelter, food, and supportive services to individuals experiencing homelessness. Administrative expenses accounted for 17%, supporting accountability, compliance, and effective organizational management. Fundraising expenses were held to just 2%, indicating a high return on investment and ensuring that the vast majority of funds raised directly support mission-driven work. These allocations reflect a disciplined approach to stewardship and a clear prioritization of impact.



INCOME



EXPENSES



OUR TEAM



MELISSA O'NEIL
Chief Executive Officer
Serving Since 2016



TAMMY WEIR
Chief of Staff
Serving Since 2021



AMBER TOMPKINS
Vice President of Operations
Serving Since 2020



SAM CARRELL
Vice President Strategy & Rural Development
Serving Since 2023

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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ELLIS**



SUPPORT OUR MISSION

VOLUNTEER. DONATE. FUND. ADVOCATE.

Get started at www.centraliowashelter.org



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