



Workforce & Economic Opportunity Workgroup ACTION PLAN

Goal: Develop an action plan to increase the alignment of employment and housing support for people who are experiencing homelessness, precariously housed or formerly homeless. Within one year, meet 1/3 of the need by providing employment and housing support for 440 households, of whom at least 50% will be families or individuals of color.

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Workgroup Participants:

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Summary of Action Plan Recommendations

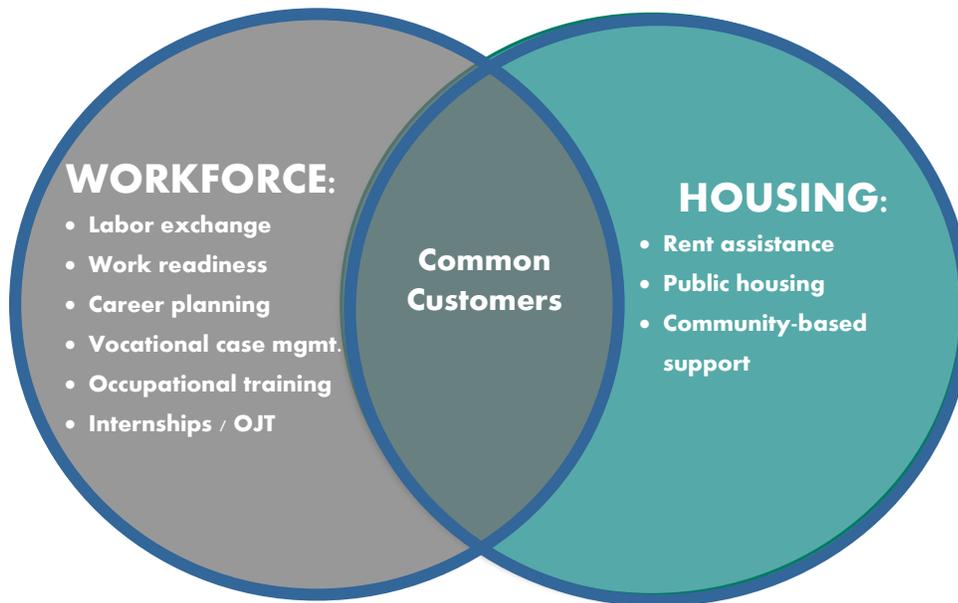
The Action Plan proposes three recommendations, intended to better align workforce and housing resources. This will assist households who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability by providing access to flexible, responsive workforce and housing support that leads to greater housing stability and increased economic self-sufficiency through employment and career-track training. The total request for new funding is \$1,725,000. All recommendations can begin implementation immediately and will demonstrate outcomes within 12 months. They include strategies to:

- Align DHS Community Works, career track employment services, housing resources and community-based support
- Align housing resources with career-track training & employment placement
- Broaden access to public workforce resources for people currently served by housing and homeless service agencies

The Frame of Alignment: “Bring Workforce to Housing, Bring Housing to Workforce”

Our group identified the alignment of workforce and housing resources as the most strategic and impactful place to start. Given the short three-month timeline to deliver the action plan, we focused on resources the HFE Executive Committee and Coordinating Board has direct control of and/or has significant ability to influence through partnerships and policies.

The primary goal of alignment is to more effectively assist households who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability (“common customers”) by providing access to a range of workforce and housing support that is flexible and responsive to people’s needs. As a result, households achieve improved outcomes of greater housing stability and increased economic self-sufficiency through employment and career-track training.



Guiding Principles

The planning process and action plan are anchored in the principles of *A Home for Everyone*. All recommendations directly serve and benefit one or more of the five priority populations.

We adopted four additional guiding principles to direct our work:

1. Increased income improves housing outcomes.
 - Placement into housing
 - Housing stability/retention
 - Homelessness prevention
2. Families and individuals who are working on employment need housing stability.
3. Intensive relationship-based support, culturally-responsive approaches and other effective practices are required to effectively serve diverse groups who experience a wide range of barriers to employment:
 - Communities of color
 - Adults with disabilities (including chronically homeless individuals and people with criminal records)
 - Families
 - Veterans
 - Women
 - Youth

4. Systems-level alignment produces the greatest and long-lasting impact - better outcomes for people and more cost-effective use of community-wide funding resources.
 - Effectively leverage funding resources (“braided funding”)
 - Spark innovation through connecting public, private sector and community-based investments and practices
 - Acquire improved data on community-level needs and gaps
 - Improve capacity for scalability

An Intentional Focus on Advancing Racial Equity

The importance of advancing racial equity was central to our process, planning and final product. We took the following actions:

- Reached out to organizations with expertise serving communities of color. The workgroup brought together the collective experience of six culturally-specific agencies and many agencies delivering culturally-responsive programming.
- Almost 50% of workgroup participants were people of color
- Set the expectation to advance racial equity through our action plan at our first meeting and re-enforced it in subsequent meetings
- Used race-specific data (quantitative and qualitative) to provide context for our discussions and decisions. One primary example was defining households in need of assistance more broadly to include those who are in the midst of a housing crisis and/or imminently at risk of losing housing, which is responsive to the needs seen in many communities of color.
- Focused on programs and strategies that have a proven track record of success serving communities of color
- Incorporated into each recommendation one or more of the following:
 - Expanded support to culturally-specific agencies and/or programming
 - Improved connection to capitalize on the strengths of agencies serving communities of color and mainstream services/systems
 - Commitment to forming measurable goals for improving access and outcomes for people of color

The three alignment recommendations will cumulatively provide employment and housing support for 440 households, 50% to 75% of whom are projected to be families or individuals of color. The recommendations will also directly increase capacity and linkages for a network of more than a dozen culturally-specific organizations or programs. In addition, one recommendation will promote increased private, public, and community agency alignment focusing solely on creating increased employment and career track opportunities for homeless job-seekers from communities of color.

Methodology

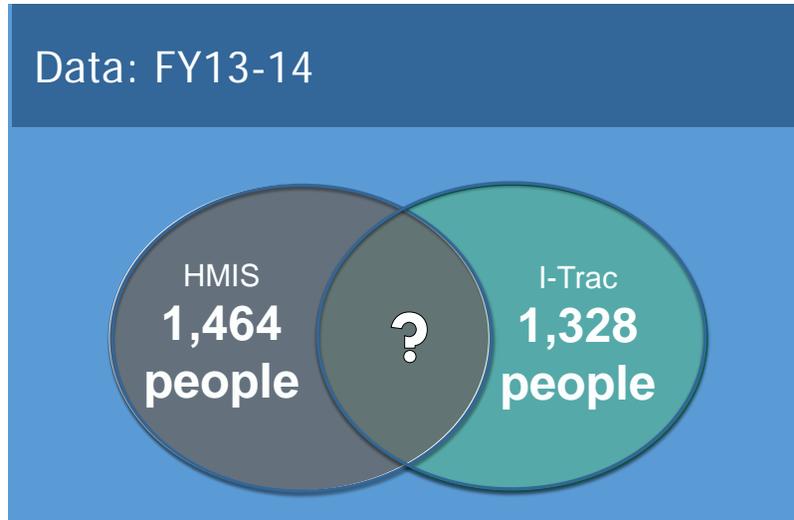
1. Data Sources and Assumptions

We used data to provide context for the scope of the need, as well as point us to where some of the opportunities exist. On a bigger-picture level, we looked at:

- Unemployment rates:
 - Despite improvements in the economy over the years, the unemployment rate in Multnomah County is 6%, which is slightly lower than the rest of the state at 6.7%
 - In comparison to whites, unemployment rates are even higher (and in some cases more than double) among African American, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander and Latino populations
- Living wage:
 - Single adult = \$15.96/hour
 - Single adult with two kids = \$30.75/hour

- Disproportionate over-representation of communities of color, particularly African American and Native American communities, in unemployment, homelessness and rates of poverty.

To determine how many people are in need of housing and employment support, we reviewed data from two systems: HMIS (Homeless Management Information System), which tracks participants seeking a wide range of homeless and housing services in our community, and I-Trac, which tracks participants engaged in public workforce services.



Estimated gap: At least 1,400 heads of households were homeless, had no reported source of income and were unemployed. These included parents or unaccompanied adults, so the total number of people in the households would be even higher.

There is likely a percentage of overlap of people engaged in both systems, which is currently unknown. Also, these numbers only show people who are engaged in one or both of these data systems. An important unknown number are families and individuals who are in need of housing and employment, but who are not connected to services in either data system. Our recommendations emphasize the need to better align data to collect information on shared participants and also obtain more data on the unmet need.

2. *Explore Opportunities in Existing Aligned Efforts*

The group began by exploring efforts in our community that currently align employment and housing. Multnomah County has several successful examples, some of which are highlighted in "Portland Community Profile" (Attachment A). Two programs we discussed in more depth were:

- **Economic Opportunity Program (EOP):** Funded by the City of Portland and Worksystems, EOP focuses on increasing the incomes of very low-income households through employment services provided by a network of eight community-based, culturally responsive agencies. EOP originally functioned independently of Worksystems, Inc. (WSI), the local publicly funded workforce system. In 2012, EOP aligned with WSI. The co-investment expanded the program's reach by leveraging relationship-based case management, housing and community-based support with workforce training and employment resources and linkages. EOP agencies collectively have expertise in serving youth and adults experiencing homelessness, culturally-specific communities, individuals with Limited English Proficiency and people with criminal backgrounds. Participants may receive services for up to three years.
- **Community Works Project (CWP):** CWP is a consortium of six community-based, culturally responsive organizations with a collective 100 years of experience providing employment and social services to help individuals and families from diverse

backgrounds achieve economic self-sufficiency. Since 2012, CWP holds a contract with Multnomah County DHS to provide Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program for TANF recipients. This program helps low-income families avoid the need for welfare.

3. *Formed Recommendations In Response to Alignment Opportunities & Effective Practices*

We explored several effective approaches and examined opportunities for greater alignment in these and other programs, which guided our formation of recommendations. Cost estimates were based on formula calculations of existing “like” programs and services, and confirmed through review by agency staff experts who operate existing employment and/or housing programs.

4. *Recommendations Reviewed and Refined by Workgroup Participants*

Draft recommendations were presented and reviewed with workgroup participants over two meetings. Participants provided written feedback (via email) and verbal feedback (via phone conversations and at workgroup meetings). Requests for clarification, suggestions and edits were incorporated into the final recommendations.

Making the Case for Alignment: Why It Needs to Happen Now

Systems alignment work on the surface sounds very clean and stream-lined. In reality, alignment is messy and hard. It requires creativity and tenacity to “think outside of the box” of rules and policies which are often siloed on the federal level and replicated within our local community.

Often, alignment takes way too long or doesn’t happen at all because we get mired in the limitations and challenges. Several workgroup participants emphasized the importance of remembering that as we take time to figure out the work, real peoples’ lives are at stake every day. We must be driven with urgency to figure out how to make our systems work better - now - for the people who need it the most. The urgency we feel on the local level has gained momentum in State and Federal policies that call for greater alignment of employment and housing. The State has provided guidance to localities to engage more inclusive partnerships with stakeholders in the implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). In addition, DOL Secretary Perez has emphasized shared and renewed commitment to end homelessness through better connections of community workforce, employment and housing resources to support homeless job-seekers.

How Workforce and Housing Alignment Accomplishes the Goals of *Home for Everyone*

Employment and economic opportunity is an effective and necessary part of ending and preventing homelessness. The alignment of workforce and housing offers more comprehensive approaches that support people on multiple levels:

- **Homelessness prevention**, for those who are imminently at risk of becoming homeless
- **Housing placement**, for those who are homeless, which includes those who may not meet the federal definition of “homeless” (e.g. those exiting from inpatient treatment programs)
- **Retention**, increased housing and economic stability for those who are formerly homeless and recently housed

Another way to describe this is in terms of an “In-flow/Out-flow” model:

- “In-flow”: A major problem is that there is a constant churn of zero to very-low income households who are always in danger of losing their housing or experiencing a housing crisis. Increasing employment and access to career-track opportunities **reduces the “in-flow” of people becoming homeless.**
- “Out-flow” side: Another problem is there is not enough public or subsidized housing to meet the current demand. Offering people opportunities for higher income and earning potential

increases the “out-flow” of people into non-subsidized housing, which opens up more public housing (or other subsidized housing) capacity.

The recommendations will demonstrate how strategic alignment of multiple funding and services will produce more comprehensive, sustainable housing and economic stability outcomes for families and individuals.

Recommendations and Cross-Over with Other HFE Workgroups

The Action Plan proposes four recommendations, all under the main category of “Alignment.” The total request for new funding is \$1,725,000. All recommendations can begin implementation immediately and will demonstrate outcomes within 12 months. The attached table on p. 7 outlines the recommendations in more detail, including the specific ways each recommendation aligns to the goals of the other HFE workgroups.

Continuing the Work: Additional Priorities

The workgroup identified the following high priority opportunities that require analysis and planning efforts in the months ahead. The workgroup requests the HFE Coordinating Board charge this work to the workforce workgroup, or another existing or re-constituted committee, to continue the work:

- 1. Evaluate and replicate “out of the box” employment approaches, such as social purpose enterprises, and better connect these efforts to public workforce resources.** Our community holds a wealth of innovative practices that connect people experiencing homelessness to income, job skills, housing stability and culturally-relevant services. Many of these efforts focus on supporting people who may not be interested in, or in the place to commit to, longer-term career track training. Resources are needed to assess, evaluate, innovate & scale-up effective practices and support greater linkages of these programs to mainstream employment resources.
- 2. Form a strategic plan to address policies that: a) offer opportunities for increased connection of employment and housing resources, or b) pose barriers to employment and housing alignment.** Some examples include looking into TANF rules/policies (exclusion of 2-parent wage earners, losing eligibility if enrolled in school, maintaining quality child care), and feasibility of local rent control policies.
- 3. Bridge the gap between private-sector employers and local workforce to increase access to quality employment opportunities for vulnerable populations. Explore ways to incentivize the private-sector to hire formerly homeless or recently housed individuals through the creation of an employer tax credit.** People assisted by housing service agencies may have limited knowledge of private-sector internship and apprenticeship programs, career training and pathway programs and quality employment opportunities. Similarly, private-sector employers may not know how to access local labor pool and or may be hesitant to employ vulnerable populations. This strategy could leverage public-private partnerships between social service agencies and employers to increase access to quality employment opportunities among vulnerable populations while meeting the workforce needs of employers. Outcomes will be developed to meet the workforce needs of employers while providing quality employment opportunities for vulnerable populations. If employer tax credit is explored, potential cost is the employment "half" of payroll taxes, which will vary by wage and hours. Planning can begin within three months. Responsible parties include PBA, County, City, WSI, housing providers.

HFE Workforce & Economic Opportunity Workgroup – Action Plan

Problem	<i>Families qualifying for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) are stuck in a cycle of poverty and housing instability that can lead to homelessness. TANF is short-term with a focus on entry level employment, and has limited opportunities for long term “career track” employment to support families in achieving housing and economic stability.</i>	<i>People are currently engaged in career-track employment (through EOP) are homeless sleeping in their cars or on the streets with no access to housing support.</i>	<i>People assisted by housing service agencies do not have direct access to public employment and career-track resources due to a myriad of barriers.</i>
Action/ Solution	1. Test an alignment strategy that connects DHS (the Community Works arm of the TANF-JOBS program), career track employment services, housing resources and community-based support. Families will gain a strong web of support, including enhanced case management for housing stability, job retention and career advancement.	2. “Bring Housing to Workforce”: Directly align housing resources with the Economic Opportunity Program (EOP). Households will achieve housing stability and positive outcomes for career-track training & employment placement.	3. “Bring Workforce to Housing”: Broaden access to public workforce resources through EOP for people currently served by housing and homeless service agencies. Effective practices will be used and households will achieve greater employment success and housing stability.
Population(s) Served	Families with children who are receiving TANF and are currently homeless or in the midst of a housing crisis.	Youth, families and single adults experiencing homelessness or in the midst of a housing crisis. Of the homeless adults served, 68% are ex-offenders and 25% have disabilities.	People who are formerly homeless or recently housed, with multiple barriers to employment. Potential priority for adults with disabilities (in supportive or subsidized housing), Veterans; African American families and individuals, Native American families and individuals, re-entry population
Impact on Racial Equity	Positive impact in advancing equitable access and outcomes for communities of color, through funding of Community Works, a consortium of six culturally-specific agencies. The existing program serves more than 50% families of color.	Advances equitable access and outcomes for communities of color, through funding and partnership with culturally-specific providers and programs. The EOP network of 8 providers all operate culturally and/or population-specific employment programs and annually serve more than 55% adults of color and 75% youth of color.	Positive impact in advancing equitable access and outcomes for communities of color. Proposed prioritization for goals and supporting agencies demonstrating effectiveness in serving communities of color, in particular African American and Native American communities.
Proposed Outcomes	60 families will secure housing and engage in employment and training services. After proof of concept, project has potential to leverage ongoing funding via new resources from SNAP E&T program. The model can be used to guide systemic alignment of workforce programs with DHS.	150 households (50 youth, 50 single adults, 50 families) secure housing and receive career track training and employment services. Longer-term employment and income outcomes measured over 3-years.	230 households secure housing and receive career track training and employment services. Longer-term employment and income outcomes measured over 3-years.
Cost	\$500,000 Total (\$300,000 rent assistance; \$130,000 career coaching; \$70,000 workforce services & program management)	\$375,000 Total (all rent assistance)	\$850,000 Total (\$575,000 career coaching and employment services; \$175,000 workforce services; \$100,000 program management)

Timeline/ Parties Responsible	Implementation can begin within three months. Responsible parties include DHS, WSI, Community Works providers	Implementation can begin within three months. Responsible parties include WSI, housing (PHB, Home Forward), EOP providers	Implementation can begin within three months. Responsible parties include WSI, PHB, EOP, housing/homeless providers
Leveraged Resources	Total leverage: \$445,000 DHS: \$50,000 case management; \$270,000 in support services for 60 families (childcare, transportation, etc). WSI: \$45,000 Worksource services (preparatory services, occupational training, internships, liaison support); \$80,000 existing in targeted Worksource services	Total leverage: \$795,000 City: \$225,000 for workforce development services. HUD: \$300,000 for workforce development services. WSI: \$270,000 for Worksource services and “hub” coordination costs	Total leverage: \$750,000 WSI: \$175,000 in Worksystems services. Rent assistance: \$575,000 (approx. \$2,500 x 230 households). Leverage cross-training opportunities between employment and housing providers, to promote effective practices in serving employment and housing needs of people with multiple barriers.
Connection to other HFE Workgroups	Households served will contribute to increasing the housing placement goal and the goal to reduce recidivism (return to homelessness) of the Housing Workgroup.	Households served will contribute to the housing placement goals of the Housing Workgroup.	Households served will gain increased access to employment/workforce services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential prioritization of veterans to support Operation 424, or other groups prioritized by the other HFE workgroups (Safety Off the Streets, Housing). • Outcomes will contribute to the Housing Workgroup’s goal to reduce recidivism (return to homelessness).

Revised 2/27/15