



A Safe, Affordable Home:
The Foundation of Opportunity

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND HOUSING STABILITY

Collection of Innovative Practices



a campaign of the Partnership for Strong Communities

About Partnership for Strong Communities

Partnership for Strong Communities is a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding the creation of affordable housing, and building strong communities in Connecticut. We believe that a strong community begins with a home for each of its members. A home is the foundation for strong neighborhoods, economic opportunity, healthy people, and educational success.

The Partnership seeks long-term change through advocacy, education, public policy initiatives and partnership-building. We work to mobilize resources and public will.

The Partnership advocates for solutions to prevent and end homelessness and seeks to expand opportunity by breaking down silos and connecting housing policy to other policy disciplines such as education, economic development, job training, health care, transportation and energy/environmental quality to create sustainable solutions. To accomplish this, the Partnership publishes reports, conducts educational outreach, produces an annual series of housing policy forums, staffs two statewide campaigns - Reaching Home and HOMEConnecticut - and operates the Lyceum Resource and Conference Center.

Since its founding in 1998, with a grant from the Melville Charitable Trust, the Partnership has successfully advocated for more than \$700 million in public funding in Connecticut which has helped build homes and created programs to prevent and end homelessness. We have engaged civic and elected leaders to imagine, plan and execute effective change and to create a new paradigm of thinking about housing.

We are based in Hartford, Connecticut, at the Lyceum, a center dedicated to the promotion of innovative solutions to housing policy.

Visit www.pschoosing.org to learn more.

About Reaching Home

Reaching Home is the campaign to build the political and civic will to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut. Reaching Home has created a public-private partnership to implement Opening Doors-CT, a statewide framework to prevent and end homelessness based on the federal Opening Doors plan. Opening Doors seeks to address the root causes of homelessness – with housing as the central foundation for creating change.

Visit www.pschoosing.org/reachinghome to learn more.

Last updated: June 2014

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Introduction

The reasons for homelessness are as diverse as the individuals who experience it. However, a lack of sufficient income and of affordable housing in Connecticut ensures a cycle of housing insecurity and social disengagement. Financial troubles not only initiate but perpetuate a trend of homelessness, and individuals find it difficult to navigate available services. Worse still, resources tend to be disjointed and to operate within their own spheres, rarely coordinating with other local providers. This system fails to serve those who are most vulnerable within our communities or to end the systemic obstacles they face.

Though a broad spectrum of initiatives is required to eradicate homelessness completely, aiding struggling individuals in the search of steady employment is one of the most powerful things we can do to that end. Economic security fosters housing retention through a growth in income, and ultimately a better quality of life. Like most resources, however, housing and employment services tend to function within their own realms. The purpose of this publication is to guide communities who wish to integrate these existing resources in order to better target the people who need them and to improve their efficacy.

Successful examples of combining homelessness and employment services exist both throughout the country and within the state. This publication is an examination of those initiatives, pointing out the most successful components of each so that communities in Connecticut can emulate their practices. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we believe that organizations throughout the state have much to learn from each other and much to gain from collaboration. We hope this inventory will inspire holistic, flexible, and comprehensive strategies to addressing homelessness and economic insecurity.

This publication is organized around the notion that most successful initiatives can be broken down into five core elements: a set of firm objectives, a network of partnerships, a reliable source of funding, an effective implementation strategy, and an assessment strategy. After providing a more detailed explanation of these elements, the inventory will take you through multiple examples of successful economic security programs and highlight which of these components they best demonstrate. As a result, we hope that communities can synthesize the best practices of these programs and feel confident in the creation of their own initiatives.

Core Program Elements

Goals and Objectives

All successful programs—from business ventures to social initiatives—begin with a defined set of goals and objectives. While defining such statements is more an art than a science, they have the benefit of providing context for the overall initiative and describing concrete expectations that are measurable and achievable. When a clear vision of success is established upfront, program implementation has a higher chance of overcoming barriers that may fragment the systems necessary to increase economic security and housing stability.

Actors and Partners

Integrating economic security and homelessness services is, by nature, a matter of connecting disjointed actors within the local area. Engaging all sectors of the community in the planning and implementation of the initiative ensures that the various resources of use to people experiencing homelessness will begin working in conjunction with each other. When a program encourages collaborative working relationships across relevant but diverse arenas, the initiative is more likely to build trust and forge a common purpose, and therefore be more likely to succeed over the long term.

Funding

It goes without saying that a funding source often determines the success of any project. Expenses can come from basic operational costs, creating publications, and providing stipends for participants to name a few. Securing a method to support these activities will ensure the initiative runs smoothly. Funding is available from both philanthropic and governmental sources.

Implementation Strategy

An implementation strategy is the meat of any economic security program, and therefore is most vital. Program implementation must always be sensitive not only to the unique needs and characteristics of the consumer, but also to local variability. When implementation takes into account this sort of flexibility and encourages participatory decision-making, collaborations are successfully able to break down institutional barriers and maximize accessibility and efficiency.

Assessment Strategy

While most programs can generate a few statistics about the outcome of their work, a comprehensive and reliable method of evaluation is critical to demonstrating the success of the initiative. By creating and evaluating a clearly defined model, program partners will be able to identify the extent to which the model works and why. Furthermore, the ability to defend a program's success with solid evidence can aid in the dissemination of best practices. When a workforce development or training program is coupled with a reliable evaluation methodology, the program not only increases economic security for consumers, it also has the potential to demonstrate systems-wide impact and influence public policy and future allocation of resources.

Programs

BOSTON RE-ENTRY INITIATIVE

BOSTON, MA

TARGET POPULATIONS: Male Adult Ex-Offenders At-Risk for Recidivism

Summary

The [Boston Re-entry Initiative](#) (BRI) is an effort implemented by the Boston Police Department in partnership with the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department to reduce the recidivism rate of formerly violent offenders by facilitating their transition into Boston neighborhoods.^{1,2} Individuals are identified for their eligibility and then allowed to attend a panel discussion with law enforcement and social service agencies about the program. All participation is voluntary. Caseworkers and mentors (often from faith-based organizations) from the community help inmates develop individual plans of reintegration and draw upon a variety of social services to support the participant after their release.

These 'wrap-around' services address immediate issues with financial assistance, housing assistance, transportation assistance, clothing, health insurance, interim jobs (among others) as well as long term needs with job training and employment programs, substance abuse and mental health treatment, and educational assistance. Many of these services are provided by partner agencies such as OneStops, community colleges, and half-way house operators. Mentors typically stay with BRI participants for 12 to 18 months and provide progress reports. The program is funded by the Bureau of Justice Affairs [Second Chance Act](#) grant and the [Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative](#).

Outcomes: Assessments have shown a 30% lower rate of recidivism compared to other ex-offenders.¹

BRIDGES TO HOUSING

PORTLAND, OREGON

TARGET POPULATIONS: High-Need Homeless Families

Summary

Administered by [Neighborhood Partnerships](#)—a regional non-profit—[Bridges to Housing](#)³ is an effort to address family homelessness in the four-county, Portland metropolitan area (Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties in Oregon, and Clark County in Washington State). City government, housing authorities, and service providers jointly developed the program to build a regional framework for supporting families and moving them from instability to employment. Neighborhood Partnerships received about \$20 million from various philanthropic sources including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, and the Meyer Memorial Trust. The funding was funneled to the four participating counties for their implementation. The model integrates permanent affordable housing, intensive case management, and child services.

Outcomes: Between 2006 and 2011, Bridges to Housing showed an 80% decline in families moving in a 6-month period, an over 26% decline in reported domestic violence, and improved child health and education measures (including a 22% increase in extracurricular involvement, 100% of children able to access medical and dental healthcare, [among other results](#)⁴). Families made progress in management of personal finances, with half having paid off a debt and 33% having opened a checking account. Within 18 months of participation, 33% of households had a member who was employed and nearly half had obtained new job skills.⁵

Implementation

Bridges to Housing consists of two main components:

- ▶ Permanent Affordable Housing

Housing assistance is dependent on county and family eligibility, however the three types of housing supports are: public housing units and the Housing Choice Voucher Program; tax credit units; and rental assistance. So long as families continue to qualify, there is no time limit for families in public housing or tax-credit units which is vital to maintaining family stability.

- ▶ Intensive and coordinated case management

Bridges to Housing offers families intensive case management for up to three years with a 1:15 case manager to family ratio. All family members can access mental and physical health care, substance abuse treatment, and other support services. Case managers have access to funds to meet the specific needs of children, including child care, to promote their wellbeing through a challenging situation. One especially unique feature of Bridges to Housing's case management is the 'Flexible Funds', an up-to \$1,700 per family financial support that can be used for a range of expenses that could otherwise destabilize the family. These include health expenditures, past debts, employment, and education costs just to name a few.

Bridges to Housing provides several employment supports. These include employment related day care, supported transitions off Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and referrals to Workforce Investment Act (WIA) employment programs. With support from a Corporation for Supportive Housing grant, Bridges to Housing is also moving forward on improved employment

initiatives. One is a [Roadmap document](#) to indicate employment benchmarks, skills, and resources for clients that will assist case managers in helping clients reach their goals. In addition, Client Employment Plans will be a tool specific on helping individual clients list their strengths and goals.

Assessment Strategy

Conducted by Portland State University's Regional Research Institute, the evaluation for Bridges to Housing focuses on individual and family outcomes, while also paying some attention to regional system outcomes. Case managers monitor family success in the program throughout the process, thus collecting data necessary for the assessment. Data is drawn from:

- ▶ Agency reporting (submitted regularly to the Homeless Management Information System)
- ▶ Exit Reports on families who left or completed the Bridges to Housing program
- ▶ Interviews with providers and stakeholders
- ▶ Group interviews with the Provider Workgroup to interpret findings

A key feature of Bridges to Housing is uniform intake, assessment, and reporting tools across counties for all case managers. This allows for easy and reliable measurement of the program's performance and of family success. Evaluation is conducted yearly and provided for by their top funders.

CT WORKS EAST

DANIELSON, NEW LONDON, NORWICH, & WILLIMANTIC, CT

TARGET POPULATIONS: Employers

Summary

The CTWorks East career centers provide the public with information about jobs, the labor market, and employment training sessions. Acting as a One-Stop for anyone interested in its services, the centers aim to holistically aid their clients'. At intake, CTWorks assesses not only employment goals but other needs which can range from healthcare limitations, rental payments, parenting issues, to legal trouble (a full list of in-house programs can be found here or by reviewing the listings for each individual center) with the use of a Human Services Infrastructure (HSI) survey. Should a client express needs that cannot be addressed within the center, a case manager can refer them to other local resources or to one of their many partners. If a client is experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness, CTWorks can connect them with assistance programs and local shelters. Due to their relationship with Thames Valley Council for Community Action, the centers are also connected to a Rapid Re-Housing program.⁶

Actors

CTWorks centers in Eastern Connecticut are managed by the Eastern Workforce Investment Board (EWIB), joined by the CT Department of Labor and Quinebaug Valley Community College. These organizations are responsible for coordinating contracts with a variety of private and public partners to provide their comprehensive set of social programs. This structure works to ensure that the region's resources are fully utilized to the greatest benefit of CTWorks clients.

These partners include:

Access Agency
Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)
Eastconn
Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium
Employment & Training Institute (ETI)
Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut
CT Department of Education
CT Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD)
CT Department of Social Services (DSS)
CT Rides

NU Ride Tutorial
Easter Seals
Eastern AHEC
New London Adult Education
New London Youth Affairs
Norwich Adult Education
Norwich Community Development Corporation (NCDC)
Norwich Youth & Family Services
OIC
SEAT
Small Business Development Center
Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA)
Three Rivers Community College
United Community & Family Services
WRCC
Windham Region Transit District

Of these partners, TVCCA is particularly notable. A comprehensive service provider in and of itself, TVCCA is one of Connecticut's five Rapid Re-Housing providers (RRH). RRH is designed to quickly assist local residents to either stay in their current housing or quickly re-house them.

Funding

CTWorks is primarily financed by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), a federal fund distributed by the CT Department of Labor. It is divided up between Connecticut's five Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) who use it to implement programs on the ground. WIA money is intended to provide employment and educational opportunities to struggling job seekers. CTWorks East is administered by the Eastern WIB, and therefore is primarily funded by WIA (though it receives outside money as well from various sources). Most providers at CTWorks sites are specially approved by the Eastern WIB and are therefore funded through WIA. While this money cannot be used to fund any housing services directly, CTWorks is able to provide them by focusing on its labor programs and partnering with other organizations that do have homelessness supports. Effectively allocating and utilizing existing resources in this manner, rather than only focusing on finding new funding sources, is a successful strategy for implementing an initiative.

HOMELESS VETERAN SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

VHA HOMELESS PROGRAM OFFICE

TARGET POPULATIONS: Veterans

Summary

The Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Program (HVSEP) is a collaborative effort within the Veterans Affairs (VA) that provides vocational assistance, individualized job development and placement, and ongoing employment supports to Veterans who are homeless, and part of the VA's mission to end homelessness among Veterans by 2015.⁷

The program designed to meet Veterans “where they are at” and assisting them with rapid placement in permanent employment that pays a living wage or greater. It is available to Veterans who are currently enrolled in one of the following one of the VA Homeless Programs:

- ▶ HCHV – Health Care for Homeless Veterans
- ▶ VHPP - Veterans Homeless Prevention Pilot
- ▶ G&PD – Grant and Per Diem
- ▶ HUD/VASH - Housing and Urban Development / Veterans Affairs Supported Housing
- ▶ MHR RTP – Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (Domiciliary and CWT/TR)
- ▶ HCRV – Health Care for Re-entry Veterans
- ▶ VJO – Veterans Justice Outreach

Goals

During federal fiscal year (FFY) 2012, HVSEP has provided employment services to 12,815 Veterans experiencing homelessness. Of the 3,018 Veterans discharged from HVSEP in FFY 12, 37.3% were competitively employed.⁸ The program aims to build on these outcomes in FFY 13 and FFY 14:

- ▶ FFY 13: Provide employment services to 20,000 Veterans experiencing homelessness
- ▶ FFY 14: Provide employment services to 25,000 Veterans experiencing homelessness

Implementation

All HVSEP staff are Veterans who were formerly homeless or at-risk of homelessness. These Veterans receive ongoing training as Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists (VRSs) to provide employment services to other homeless Veterans. The VRS is to provide employment services designed around each Veteran's unique employment plan, which is based upon the Veteran's interests, strengths, likes, and preferences. The employment plan determines actions taken to secure employment rather than what jobs are immediately available.

In addition to performing all phases of employment services for each Veteran (engagement; ongoing assessment of strengths and interests; job development and cultivation with employers in the local community; on-the-job job coaching, where permissible; follow-along supports once employment has been secured), the VRS is also responsible for integration with the homeless treatment team, collaboration with community partners, and benefits counseling.

HVSEP is unique in that it embraces a principle of zero exclusion so that all Veterans interested in securing competitive employment are able to do so without meeting any readiness criteria or previous participation in other vocational programs.

The state of Connecticut has three VRS. For more information, providers and Veterans are encouraged to call 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838).

HomeWORK

EASTERN CONNECTICUT

TARGET POPULATIONS: Supportive Housing Tenants

Summary

HomeWORK is a partnership between the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and the Department of Social Services (DSS) Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) that provides services to supportive housing providers. HomeWORK staff and partner agencies assist providers in connecting to local workforce agencies, thus putting existing resources to better use. Their goals are to educate supportive housing systems about employment services, help tenants find employment, and encourage self-sufficiency.¹⁰

Outcomes: Because HomeWORK works more directly with agencies than it does supportive housing tenants themselves, their results focus on the providers more than their clients. The following numbers are an important few of many outcomes reported by HomeWORK. As of 2011, 79% of partner supportive housing agencies now providing employment services for their tenants and 36% increased employment specific funding (largely for creating specialized employment programs). Nearly half of supportive housing agencies are now collaborating with local employers to assist their tenants.¹¹ Overall, employment is across the board a greater focus for shelters, case managers, and supportive housing agencies.

Implementation

HomeWORK is responsible for providing supportive housing agencies with targeted trainings, technical assistance, and any other operational services. Staff—consisting of a Project Coordinator, a Benefits Coordinator, and two Employment Facilitators, works with housing case managers, program managers, and coordinators in supportive housing. In doing so, they improve their capacity to provide quality case management and employment opportunities for their tenants.

Through staff training, HomeWORK helps the providers to create Agency Service Plans that define goals for tenant employment, retention, and professional advancement. They also have organized cross-sector case conferences to bridge the gap between workforce services and supportive housing services. Case managers are now regularly connecting tenants to CT One-Stops (some of which now have specialized work stations for their supportive housing clients), Department of Labor programs, and other professional/educational services. Finally, HomeWORK connects with tenants by developing a peer engagement system, when tenants who have experienced success share their stories to motivate each other.

Funding

HomeWORK is funded by the CT Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. This grant is designed to support the employment of people with disabilities in the state. It was awarded to the Connect to Work Center at the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services in order to facilitate enhancements to promote connections between Medicaid and other employment services.¹² The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, as an organizer of the HomeWORK, was able to fund the program through the grant especially given the prevalence of special needs among supportive housing clients.

HOUSING & EMPLOYMENT NAVIGATORS

WASHINGTON STATE

TARGET POPULATIONS: Families

Summary

The Housing and Employment Navigator model¹³ is a strategy that combines housing and employment services for homeless families in Washington. Initially, the program was implemented in two counties and provided one-on-one consultation with families. In one of these cases transitional housing programs made referrals to the Navigator based within the workforce system, and the team included a designated TANF worker in addition to the Navigator and housing case manager. *Building Changes*—an outside nonprofit organization—oversaw the effort and provided technical assistance and training.

Building on this success, WorkForce Central secured a \$6 million federal Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund grant to expand, replicate, and evaluate the Navigator program. The forthcoming model includes Building Changes, the Regional Workforce Consortium, the Department of Social and Health Services, housing providers, TANF workers, and Navigators based in one-stops as partners in the initiative. They will offer a consistent cross-system approach to assist families who are homeless in accessing employment resources and to obtain permanent housing.

Outcomes: The results from the program's expansion have yet to be assessed, however there are recorded outcomes of the early model. In King County, 45% of participants exited the program with jobs after 33 months with an hourly wage somewhere between \$8.67 and \$15 per hour. Similarly, in Pierce County 40% of participants were placed in a job after 24 months and attained wages between \$9.45 and \$19.98 per hour.

Goals

From the outset, the Housing and Employment Navigators program set forth several goals to be completed over a span of 36 months in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach. They are as follows:

- ▶ “To assist families in obtaining the employment, education, and job training needed to establish a career path toward economic stability while preventing a return to homelessness;
- ▶ To demonstrate the impact of pairing effective housing interventions with proven workforce development strategies to improve service access and employment outcomes for families experiencing homelessness;
- ▶ To develop evidence-based practices in workforce development that can be effectively replicated across Washington State.”
- ▶ To complement these broad objectives, other more specific goals were outlined as well:

For the Navigator:

- ▶ “Reduce system complexities and improve access for clients;
- ▶ Increase Cooperation between multiple agencies serving homeless adults;
- ▶ Leverage external partnerships and private funding.”

For the Families:

- ▶ “Earn GED or gain ABE, I-Best skills;
- ▶ Earn employer recognized credential;
- ▶ Gain permanent employment, or employment advancement;
- ▶ Retain employment for at least six months;
- ▶ Obtain stable permanent housing;
- ▶ Reduce reliance on public assistance such as TANF, SNAP, and housing subsidies;
- ▶ Increase self-efficacy and belief in personal future success;
- ▶ Increase self-navigation abilities;
- ▶ Increase awareness, access, and utilization of available services.”

These goals exemplify a helpful starting point for two main reasons. First, they represent a broad range of improvements. The vision of success not only includes providing support for families, but also the ability to demonstrate and replicate effective practices. Recognizing that both the issue of homelessness and the process of addressing it are complex, narrow measures of success would not encompass all the needs of the program’s participants.

Second, these objectives are specific. By outlining explicitly the program’s outcomes, the Employment Navigators have pinpointed areas of focus. This ensures that the need for inter-agency coordination, for example, will influence decisions about the structure of the program rather than serve as an afterthought. Specific goals are also a precursor to effective assessment strategies by informing what kinds of data should be gathered and analyzed.

Implementation

The basic component of the program is the ‘Housing and Employment Navigators’, who have a broad knowledge of social resources and benefits (these include educational and job training programs, employment resources, public benefits, career planning, homeless housing resources, and mental health services, among others). The Navigator heads a team that provides a cross-systems approach to a family’s situation, which can vary dramatically. The team provides joint planning, service coordination, resource sharing, and communication. This setup is vital to addressing the complex needs of a family, which can be at multiple stages of employability and must accommodate the diverse needs of its members.

The model itself runs largely with the support of Building Changes, a nonprofit that provides training and technical assistance to the housing partners, Department of Social and Health Services/TANF case managers, and the community service providers. It integrates the housing system with the model and monitors the program for consistent delivery across various locations. By having a backbone organization coordinate the program, administration is efficient and removed from the strains of its execution. The model is an overall excellent example of successful coordination and integration.

Assessment Strategy

The evaluation of this program, conducted by an outside consulting firm, will utilize a common methodology across all three regions where the program was implemented to monitor its application and effectiveness. The assessment will engage 720 families randomly assigned to the Navigator and to a control group (which will continue to work with the housing and/or DSHS and employment services they normally receive). Random assignment ensures accurate measurements of the program’s outcomes removed from any outside influences. The evaluation will assess:

- ▶ Employment rates
- ▶ Permanent housing rates
- ▶ Reliance on public benefits
- ▶ Use of different programs and services
- ▶ Delivery of the model to target populations
- ▶ How the navigator is affecting other support systems

The Navigator's assessment methodology represents a statistically sound example for other programs. Though it relies on an outside source for the analysis, it will likely yield hard evidence of the program's successes and weaknesses.

HOUSING NOW/ FAMILY HOUSING INITIATIVE

MERCER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

TARGET POPULATIONS: Families in Rapid Re-Housing Programs

Summary

The Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS) and Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness implemented a rapid re-housing program for families who were homeless in the area. Initially called *Housing Now* then renamed the *Family Housing Initiative* after the program's expansion, it provides a single point of access to families who need housing assistance and up to 24 months of emergency rental assistance. At entry, families are evaluated with a universal screening tool to determine their level of need. Case managers are then assigned to families with the aim to help them become self sufficient so that they can maintain housing once cash assistance ends. They are offered a broad scope of services to either help them avoid homelessness or address barriers to employment that threaten housing stability after being rapidly rehoused.¹⁴

Outcomes: The most recent data on the program shows that of those enrolled between April 2012 and April 2013, 47% remained in permanent housing after assistance ended and 12% exited the program due to increased income from sources such as SSI/SSDI and child support. In February 2013, Mercer County families involved in FHI had an average monthly income of \$835 as compared to \$558 for families exiting the area's transitional housing program. The rapidly rehousing program was also much more cost effective than other forms of housing interventions.¹⁵

Objectives

Mercer County's approach rests upon several priorities for the rapid re-housing program:

- ▶ Provide one point of entry for homeless families
- ▶ Develop and implement a uniform tool for assessing housing and employment barriers
- ▶ Aid families in finding appropriate housing
- ▶ Provide wrap-around services for clients to address barriers to employment/housing retention

These initial objectives provide the skeleton for the initiative and clearly establish a strategic plan. From the beginning, it is clear that program should promote efficiency and depth of care. The Family Housing Initiative follows these guidelines as key steps in implementing the program.

Funding

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act initially created federal funds for these kinds of rapid rehousing programs throughout the country. Normally in charge of dispersing Workforce Investment Act and TANF funds, MCBOSS was selected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to implement rapid re-housing in Mercer County. Previously, MCBOSS acted as a fiscal agent that reimbursed shelters and transitional housing programs. With permission from the state, it was able to allocate TANF-funded, time-limited rent subsidies that were normally only available to working families to the rapid re-housing program.

INSPIRICA

STAMFORD, CT

TARGET POPULATIONS: Families and Individuals

Summary

Inspirica is one of the largest homeless providers in Connecticut, aiding approximately 700 people per year.¹⁶ It offers a diverse range of services to a diverse range of people in an effort to holistically address the issue of homelessness. In addition to providing a broad scope of housing options to its clients, Inspirica provides health, educational, child, and employment services. This comprehensive approach derives from the recognition that homelessness is the product of complex circumstances and sustainable solutions require multiple interventions. Inspirica runs itself with a results driven approach, meaning it carefully tracks the status of its clients on an ongoing basis.

Outcomes: In 2012, Inspirica's programs resulted in 156 job placements with an average starting wage 27% above minimum wage. Likewise, it achieved 135 housing placements.¹⁶

Implementation

A major component of Inspirica's work is providing housing. Most organizations focus on only one type of housing, for example shelters or transitional housing. Inspirica is unique in the scope of options it provides¹⁷, including:

- ▶ Emergency Housing
- ▶ Transitional Housing
- ▶ Permanent Supportive Housing
- ▶ Rapid Rehousing (as a subcontractor for Supportive Housing Works, the main rapid rehousing provider in the region)

Inspirica also offers multiple support services to help their clients achieve a greater level of self sufficiency. Their primary programs are:

- ▶ Children's Services Program¹⁸— Inspirica's service to children consists of four components :
 - ▶ Foundational Support: coordination of a child's basic needs (which can include enrolling them in school, ensuring proper medical treatments, organizing outings and parties, etc.)
 - ▶ Educational and Developmental Support: provision of fundamental pre-school educational services through a partnership with Childcare Learning Centers
 - ▶ Psychological and Developmental Support: provision of mental healthcare through a partnership with Child Guidance Center
 - ▶ After-School Support: a center that provides supervision and activities for children after school hours such as homework help, snacks, physical activity, and more.
- ▶ Jumpstart Career Program—Inspirica's employment services consist of three components:¹⁹
 - ▶ Jumpstart Education: a 13-week workplace readiness program that trains participants in self-sufficiency and other soft skills
 - ▶ JumpsTArt Employment Agency: a job placement program with career counseling, a computer lab, and identification of job opportunities

- ▶ Jumpstart Vocational Training: an eight-week program that includes soft skills, workforce, and food service training through a dual classroom and on-the-job experience at the in-house Jumpstart Café
- ▶ The Clinic @ Woodland—Inspirica partners with Optimus Health Care to provide mental health, psychiatric, and bio-medical care to its clients.

Finally, Inspirica utilizes a team case management approach to addressing the client's needs. Medical, psychiatric, employment, and housing specialists all come to the table to discuss plans and services so as to prevent gaps in care.

Funding

Inspirica is funded by a variety of sources:

- ▶ 52% Government Agencies
- ▶ 32% Private Philanthropy
- ▶ 10% Program Fees and Rents
- ▶ 5% In-Kind
- ▶ 1% Investment Return

Nearly all funding provided from the government is in the form of federal, state, and local grants. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides a direct grant to Inspirica. In other cases, grant money that originates from the federal government is first funneled through state agencies (such as the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Department of Social Services) who then allocate it to the organization. Inspirica has also utilized RFPs to access direct funding from the State and local government.

It is important to note that government agencies only fund Inspirica's housing services. All other programs, including their employment services, are entirely funded through private channels.

OPPORTUNITY CHICAGO

CHICAGO, IL

TARGET POPULATIONS: Public Housing Residents

Summary

Opportunity Chicago²⁰ was a collaborative effort between nonprofits, government agencies, foundations, and employers to connect 5,000 public housing residents to jobs. Led and organized by the Chicago Jobs Council, the effort provided residents with an array of services including transitional job programs, job-readiness training, contextualized literacy programs, and special skills training. These educational efforts targeted five high-demand sectors: energy efficiency, healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing, and technology. The program relied on the cooperation of multiple partners and the Strategic Advisers Group to develop plans, policy, and strategies for the initiative.

Outcomes: Opportunity Chicago employed 5,185 residents—more than the original target—54% of which retained a job for over two years. 926 residents completed certificate and degree programs, and 80% of the 1,260 that participated in a transitional job moved into unsubsidized employment.

Objectives

Opportunity Chicago laid out their plan with both a set of strategic priorities and of goals. The strategic priorities were as follows:

- ▶ Expand and/or enhance the existing workforce service delivery system to maximize employment opportunities for CHA residents.
- ▶ Promote the development and expansion of innovative and intensive employment skills and training programs.
- ▶ Implement an employer engagement strategy that involves employers in the design and execution of sector or industry-based partnerships.
- ▶ Engage in public policy advocacy to achieve long-term sustainability.
- ▶ Evaluate the initiative's effectiveness and determine the relevance of its model for other low-income communities and populations.

These represent broad visions of change and long term sustainability. They inform the direction of the initiative and suggest several distinct actions that are necessary for improvement to the system as a whole. Complementing the Strategic Priorities are the goals:

- ▶ Place 5,000 residents into jobs
- ▶ Offer a range of employment services
- ▶ Work in key industry sectors
- ▶ Focus on reaching self-sufficiency through employment
- ▶ Streamline services
- ▶ Engage employers in new ways
- ▶ Address gaps in services
- ▶ Provide a more efficient model
- ▶ Document the model and lessons learned

These objectives represent more specific actions in regard to how the program itself will run. Acting as an extension of Opportunity Chicago's larger priorities, these goals outline how the program should affect the residents themselves.

Implementation

Recognizing that public housing residents often face large barriers to employment, all Opportunity Chicago programs emphasized career advancement over job placement. Residents primarily accessed Opportunity Chicago programs through a case worker affiliated with FamilyWorks (a partner case management program). Services targeted key sectors—energy efficiency, healthcare, hospitality, and manufacturing and technology—with a demand for entry-level workers. Working with employers, higher education institutions, and public agencies, they developed programs that address needs of both the residents and employers:

- ▶ **Basic Employment Services:** Opportunity Chicago helped residents prepare resumes and employment plans. This was done with the goal of quickly attaining opportunities such as full/part-time jobs and internships.
- ▶ **Intensive Employment Services:** Opportunity Chicago provided residents with access to transitional jobs programs, contextualized literacy and adult education programs, and specialized skills training.
 - ▶ **Transitional Jobs:** those with limited work history gain opportunities necessary to get into the labor market.
 - ▶ **Contextualized literacy:** rather than focusing on isolated educational programs, a literacy program was combined with transitional jobs.
 - ▶ **Sector-based training:** job seekers at all levels had access to training focused on high demand occupations.
- ▶ **Technical Training Programs:** Opportunity Chicago provided career paths through the City Colleges of Chicago certification/degree programs which would lead directly to employment in their chosen field.

Assessment Strategy

Opportunity Chicago contracted the Center for Urban Economic Development at the University of Illinois and its partner Abt Associates to conduct an evaluation of the program. With the goals of continually improving its practices, identifying key lessons, and documenting its strategies to aid the formation of other workforce systems, the evaluation tracked five key areas:

- ▶ Development and management of the program
- ▶ Source and use of program resources
- ▶ Impact on integration of public housing and workforce development systems
- ▶ Employer engagement
- ▶ Improvement of employment outcomes for public housing residents (both during and after participation in Opportunity Chicago)

The assessment utilized information gathered from multiple parties—including its partners, residents, and employers—in order to gain an accurate and holistic impression of the program's impact. A range of different evaluation methods were used as well depending on the source of their data. Due to the complexity of the actual process, more information can be found [here](#).

PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE

NEW HAVEN, CT

TARGET POPULATIONS: Adults with a Mental Illness, Disability, and/or a Substance Abuse Disorder

Summary

Pathways to Independence is a program designed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to facilitate access to disability income and Social Security benefit programs for adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with a mental illness and/or a substance abuse disorder. Its goals are to ensure the availability of permanent housing, financial stability, healthcare, recovery services, and benefits for its clients.

Pathways houses an array of different services within its facility, effectively acting as a one-stop case management center. This is important for assisting clients with complex needs because it reduces inefficiencies in the system and allows staff to build trusting relationships. Services available at Pathways include general case management, housing, supportive employment and enrichment, and peer recovery among others. Notably, their Employment and Enrichment Center offers a 60-hour job readiness and recovery program mostly taught by peer specialists.²²

Outcomes: During the first two years of operation, the PTI pilot in New Haven assisted 107 individuals to obtain \$1,328,724 in combined Social Security benefits and employment income (generating \$711,635 in earned income), in addition to decreased emergency room, in-patient care, and incarceration rates among its clients. 101 individuals were housed, 85 in subsidized housing and 16 in non-subsidized housing.

Actors

Pathways to Independence leverages multiple outside partners as well as internal specialists to fuel the success of the program. External partners include:

- ▶ [Connect to Work](#): The Connect to Work Center is a service provided through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to provide individualized benefits counseling for those who are working or plan to work.
- ▶ [New Haven One Stop](#): In partnership with the Connecticut Department of Labor, CT Works runs a number of One-Stop career centers around the state to provide career guidance, job placement, and business services.
- ▶ STRIVE: The STRIVE program is a community-based transition program to provide services to disabled young adults. It focuses especially on fostering employment skills and independence.
- ▶ Veteran's Affairs
- ▶ Bureau of Rehabilitation provides vocational rehabilitation/employment specialists - benefits counseling, tailored employment supports
- ▶ Social Security Administration and the Department of Developmental Services - Expedite Social Security decisions
- ▶ Healthcare organizations - health/clinical assessments; primary and behavioral health services

Internally, the diversity of the Pathways to Independence team indicates a wide range of support for traditionally hard-to-serve clients. The PTI Team is responsible for “busting silos,” and building partnerships and better outcomes. It consists of:

- ▶ Homeless/housing providers - Ensures team coordination, identifies and engages homeless individuals, housing specialists provide support with housing applications
- ▶ Pathways to Independence Manager
- ▶ Employment Specialist
- ▶ Recovery Specialist
- ▶ Representative Payee
- ▶ A Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Intake and Services Coordinator
- ▶ A SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) case manager

The SOAR component of Pathways is one of the more notable components of the program. The case manager can fast track disability applications on behalf of their clients. Many have been approved for SSI/SSDI benefits, which in some cases entitles them to Medicaid/Medicare. With this extra layer of support, clients are less likely to cycle through shelter and hospital systems.

Implementation

Pathways to Independence uses a coordinated and multidisciplinary team to increase income and economic mobility for homeless adults with disabilities as part of a ‘rapid exit from shelter’ strategy:

Step 1. Increase income through mainstream sources

- ▶ Social Security Benefits: Expedite access using proven SOAR practices
- ▶ Employment: Tailored job placement and retention supports
- ▶ Benefits Counseling: To inform ‘benefits and/or employment’ decisions; to keep focus on income sustainability

Step 2. Expand economic mobility - link to housing, healthcare, and skills for success

- ▶ Prioritize access to subsidized housing (supportive and affordable)
- ▶ Expand access to non-subsidized rental market by negotiating rent affordability with landlord networks
- ▶ Use patient navigators to link with behavioral health and primary health
- ▶ Build skills with financial literacy classes, peer coaching/mentors

ROBERTS ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT FUND

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

TARGET POPULATIONS: Employers

Summary

The [Roberts Enterprise Development Fund \(REDF\)](#) is a venture philanthropy organization with a dual mission: first, to generate job opportunities for people with significant barriers to employment and second, to generate profit to support other social undertakings. It provides grants and assistance to nonprofit-operated businesses to engage in social enterprises and employ people who normally have difficulty finding jobs. While it does not exclusively promote aiding individuals who are homeless, businesses in REDF's portfolio target this population. This system benefits both the hardest to serve and their partner nonprofits. Employees receive training and job experience, as well as a much needed source of income. In turn, businesses receive capacity building assistance and facilitate greater social enterprise investment. A large proportion of businesses in REDF's portfolio follow a transitional jobs model, when employees are encouraged to graduate to the general employment market.

Outcomes: So far, 6,500 people have been employed and 77% of those clients retained jobs for over two years. REDF employees also experience a dramatically reduced rate of homelessness. 18 months after hire, participants worked an average of 27 hours per week at an hourly wage of about \$11.19 (up from \$8.51 before entering the program).

REDF works with a variety of organizations in its portfolio. Eligibility for REDF's support is determined through a 'Request for Qualifications' (RFQ), a process which allows organizations to receive Social Innovation Fund subgrants in addition to business assistance and access to networks.²³ Current members of REDF's portfolio are:

- ▶ [The Center for Employment Opportunities](#)
- ▶ [Chrysalis](#)
- ▶ [The Coalition for Responsible Community Development](#)
- ▶ [Community Housing Partnership](#)
- ▶ [Community Resource Center](#)
- ▶ [Goodwill of Silicon Valley](#)
- ▶ [Taller San Jose](#)
- ▶ [The Weingart Center Association](#)

Note: REDF includes a number of tools and publications on its website to aid other social enterprise initiatives. They can be viewed [here](#).

SECURE JOBS INITIATIVE

MASSACHUSETTS

TARGET POPULATIONS: Families in a Short-term Rapid Re-Housing and Rental Voucher Program

Summary ²⁴

The Paul and Phyllis Fireman Foundation (PPFF), a Massachusetts philanthropy dedicated to ending family homelessness, launched the public-private [Secure Jobs](#) initiative in 2012 to test and demonstrate the effectiveness of a model that quickly moved families out of homelessness and into stable housing, while also connecting them with opportunities to obtain work and achieve economic security.

The first phase of work engaged regional partnerships that built bridges between the system of homeless services and the workforce development system, with access to childcare for those entering the workforce. Seeing promise in the partnerships that developed, the Foundation in 2013 issued an RFP for one year grants to place “ready, willing, and able” heads of homeless households in jobs within a year, maintaining an 80% job retention rate. The Foundation’s intention was to “buy the outcome,” to allow creative design to evolve at the local level, and to provide the flexibility of funding that would allow providers to directly respond to the unique situations of participating families.

The target population was comprised of families who participated in the [HomeBASE](#) rapid re-housing program. Participants work in:

- ▶ Health care and skilled nursing facilities
- ▶ Manufacturing and construction
- ▶ Retail
- ▶ Social services
- ▶ Hotels and hospitality
- ▶ Security
- ▶ Property management
- ▶ Staffing agencies
- ▶ Financial services

Outcomes: By the end of March 2014, although not all programs had been operational for a year, 300 jobs had been attained. One agency had reallocated internal resources to secure an additional 120 jobs. Additionally, early in 2014, each region showcased its efforts to their legislative delegations, which resulted in continuation of funding from the Commonwealth’s Housing Trust Fund for the five regional *Secure Jobs* partnerships and an expansion of the target population to include homeless individuals, families in shelters, and families in public housing.

Actors

In order to enhance coordination between the workforce and housing systems, and to increase access to targeted education and training services for the homeless, PPFF engaged not only service providers at the local and regional level, but also public agencies that could influence system change at the state level. State agency partners included the Department of Housing and Community Development,

Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Transitional Assistance, and Early Care and Education—with the latter two addressing childcare issues.

State agency partners initially played an advisory role—reviewing draft RFPs, reviewing proposals and report, and selecting grantees. After five *Secure Jobs* grantees were selected, state agency partners remained at the table, both as advisors and as troubleshooters.

Additionally, *Secure Jobs* emphasized strong collaboration between workforce-training organizations that had deep relationships with employers, and shelter and housing providers. These partnerships enabled innovative cross-system problem solving, such as:

- ▶ Transportation problems: assistance with licenses, cars, and public transportation
- ▶ Child care problems: leverage of TANF and EEC resources
- ▶ Criminal offense record history: job targeting and mitigation
- ▶ Gaps in work history: provide volunteerism and internships
- ▶ Cash poor: provide small grants; loan fund
- ▶ Limited training availability: development of cohort models

Assessment Strategy

The Paul and Phyllis Fireman Foundation contracted with Brandeis University to work closely with grantees on data and reporting, and to produce both a [process evaluation](#) and an outcome evaluation. The Foundation hired the evaluator up-front to manage data and issue monthly reports to stimulate motivation, and implemented learning labs for regular cross-fertilization and data-driven decision-making.

For more information, contact:

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30-2-2

MICHIGAN

TARGET POPULATIONS: Adult Ex-Offenders

Summary

[30-2-2](#) is an initiative to aid ex-offenders in finding employment.^{25,26} Its goal is to enlist 30 area companies to hire two people and track their performance for two years. A criminal background is often an almost insurmountable obstacle to obtaining a job, and reinforces a cycle of poverty and recidivism. 30-2-2 hopes to build the case that removing prior convictions as a bar to employment can be beneficial both to companies and the community. The initiative works in three phases:

- ▶ Institutional Phase: potential employees learn workplace and soft skills to prepare for a job prior to their release.
- ▶ Structured reentry or transitional phase: after release, partner service providers continue soft skills training and employees are placed in a job-like setting with supervision for up to a year.
- ▶ Community reintegration phase: trained individuals are placed into the community or local workforce.

30-2-2 is organized by [Cascade Engineering](#) and Butterball Farmers, and collaborates with partner businesses and organizations including:

- ▶ Goodwill Industries of Greater Grand Rapids
- ▶ Grand Rapids Community College
- ▶ Hope Network
- ▶ Women's Resource Center
- ▶ THE SOURCE

Outcomes: As of January 2013, 17 employers have signed on. Butterball, in particular, noted that during company downsizing when employees were laid off on the basis of job performance, none of the ex-offenders had lost their job. This indicates that the program helps its participants become competitive employees.

Resources

National

- ▶ [Compensated Work Therapy](#): A Department of Veterans Affairs vocational rehabilitation program that supports work-ready veterans in competitive jobs and consults with companies to accommodate their employee's needs. Services are available at the VA Medical Centers in [Newington](#) and [West Haven](#), CT
- ▶ [FDIC Money Smart](#): A free financial literacy course, interested parties may order materials.
- ▶ [Key Train](#): an interactive training system for building career and workplace skills. Products must be purchased, but are widely popular around the country.
- ▶ [Ticket to Work](#): a program funded by the Social Security Administration that seeks to aid people with disabilities with employment. Participants receive a 'Ticket' to obtain either vocational rehabilitation, employment, or other support services from approved organizations (known as Employment Networks).
- ▶ [Veterans Job Bank](#): A tool to search for job postings by companies looking to hire veterans. Searches can be made on the basis of location and field.

State

- ▶ [BRS Vocational Rehabilitation](#): a service through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services that counsels people with disabilities on employment opportunities.
- ▶ [Connect-Ability/EPIC](#): an online service through the Department of Rehabilitation Services that provides information, tools, and technical assistance to employers and job seekers. It offers a range of courses free of charge that teach the participant workplace and soft skills.
- ▶ [MED-Connect](#): Medicaid for Employees with Disabilities provides medical assistance to employed individuals with disabilities. Total income from work and other benefits must be below \$75,000 per year. Generally, an eligible person with a disability, who is employed or becomes employed, can qualify for MED-Connect without the use of spenddown while earning more income than is allowed under other Medicaid coverage groups.
- ▶ [Step UP](#): a Connecticut Department of Labor hiring incentive program for employers.
- ▶ [Workforce Investment Act Administration](#): the Connecticut Department of Labor's website with information on Workforce Investment Boards.
- ▶ [WorkPath Fund](#): a public-private partnership which distributes small, one-time grants to help parents with dependent children defray costs that stand as barriers to employment (costs of uniforms, transportation, child care, licensing fees, etc).

Local

- ▶ 2-1-1: Connecticut’s free referral and information service designed for people in need of social services or seeking help in a crisis. (Note: service providers around Connecticut are strongly urged to update their information on 2-1-1 on a regular basis.)
- ▶ [CL&P “Programs That Help People”](#): a directory of a broad scope of federal, state, and local agencies around Connecticut.
- ▶ [Jobs Funnels](#):
 - ▶ North Central: [Capital Workforce Partners](#)
860.899.3448
 - ▶ South Central: [City of New Haven, Commission on Equal Opportunities](#)
203.946.8165
 - ▶ Northwest: [Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board](#)
203.574.6971 ext. 426
 - ▶ Eastern: Eastern [CT Workforce Investment Board](#)
860.859.4100 ext. 22
 - ▶ Southwest: [The Workplace Inc.](#)
203.610.8588
 - ▶ Statewide: [Office of Workforce Competitiveness](#)
860.263.6497

Other

- ▶ [Creating Community Employment Pathways](#): A HUD guidebook for strategically planning employment services for people experiencing homelessness
- ▶ [REDF Social Enterprise Resources](#): A variety of publications with information on venture philanthropy, social enterprise, and other related efforts
- ▶ [Service Delivery Principles and Techniques](#): A National Transitional Jobs Network publication on strategies for designing programs that help people who are homeless successfully find employment (particularly through transitional jobs)
- ▶ [The Solutions Database](#): The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness provides a searchable, up-to-date database of programs around the country addressing homelessness

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