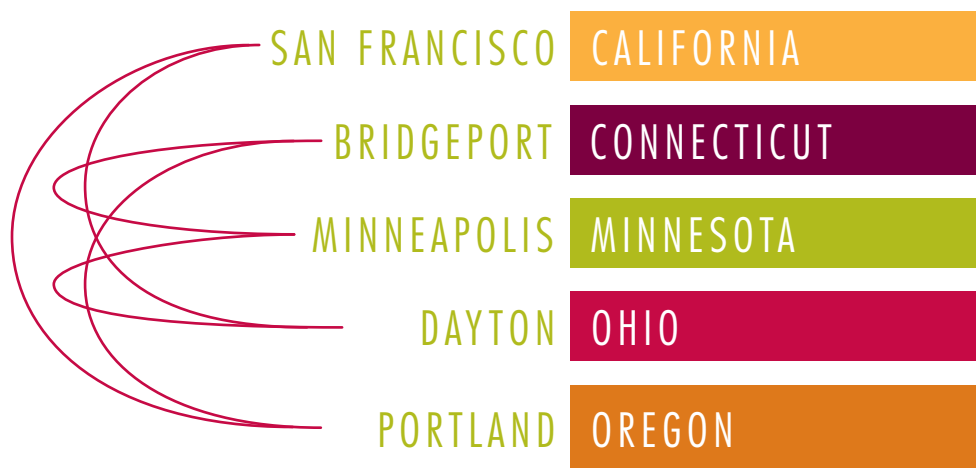




ALLIES FOR EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE



SUMMARY REPORT

AUGUST 2009

Corporation for Supportive Housing



The Allies for Employment Initiative was made possible by the generous support of the MetLife Foundation.

For more information, please visit www.csh.org or contact info@csh.org.

ABOUT THE CORPORATION FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) is a national nonprofit organization and community development financial institution that helps communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness. Founded in 1991, CSH advances its mission by providing advocacy, expertise, leadership, and financial resources to make it easier to create and operate supportive housing. CSH seeks to help create an expanded supply of supportive housing for people, including single adults, families with children, and young adults, who have extremely low-incomes, who have disabling conditions, and/or face other significant challenges that place them at on-going risk of homelessness. For information regarding CSH's current office locations, please see www.csh.org/contactus. For more information about CSH's consulting and training services, please see www.csh.org/CSHConsultingGroup or contact the CSH Consulting Group at consulting@csh.org.

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CSH would like to thank the MetLife Foundation for its generous support of the *Allies for Employment Initiative*. We would also like to thank all of the recipients of the *Allies for Employment Planning Grants*, and their *Allies for Employment Partners*, identified within this *Summary Report*, for their efforts and for their commitment to sharing information regarding their achievements and the lessons that other communities can learn from their experiences.

INQUIRIES

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OVERVIEW OF THE ALLIES FOR EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

In January 2008, the MetLife Foundation awarded the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) a grant to implement the *Allies for Employment Initiative*, a re-granting and technical assistance program that established and enhanced partnerships between the supportive housing industry, private employers, and mainstream workforce systems funded through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Direct service workforce programs, known as One-Stop Career Centers (or “One-Stops”), exist in nearly every community and are charged with providing “universal access” in order to make services and resources available to everyone. Many WIA-funded workforce agencies, however, are not prepared to work effectively with individuals who have multiple barriers to employment, and WIA’s internal performance standards often create a disincentive for working with clients with multiple and complex service and training needs. Unfortunately, for persons faced with the most significant barriers, including the impact of homelessness, mental health issues, challenges with substance abuse, and/or childcare needs, the concept of “universal access” has resulted in, at best, limited and ineffective access. Often, it has resulted in no access at all.

Allies for Employment Initiative funds were dedicated to local planning activities that designed strategies for providing improved access to the mainstream workforce system for tenants of supportive housing, that featured new or enhanced collaborations and cross-agency coordination, and that will, ultimately, be more effective in helping tenants secure and retain mainstream jobs in appropriate employment settings, including the competitive marketplace. CSH developed and issued a Request for Proposals for *Allies for Employment* Planning Grants available to supportive housing providers or coalitions seeking to launch or enhance partnerships with local mainstream workforce agencies and private employers. CSH selected Planning Grant recipients in five diverse communities across the country:

1. Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative, led by Community Housing Partnership (San Francisco, CA)
2. Property Management Career Pathway Program, led by the Property Management Career Pathway Advisory Board (Bridgeport, CT)
3. Minneapolis Housing and Workforce Initiative, led by Project for Pride in Living (Minneapolis, MN)
4. Specialized Employment Center, led by Miami Valley Housing Opportunities (Dayton, OH)
5. Bridges to Housing, led by Neighborhood Partnerships (Portland, OR)

Grant Agreements were executed with the lead agencies for each of the five collaborative projects, each effective July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009. To help ensure the successful achievement of outcomes, CSH provided technical assistance to the grantee organizations and their partners throughout the Planning Grant period, often utilizing resources included in CSH’s *Toolkit for Connecting Employers and Tenants of Supportive Housing*, a web-based resource made possible through previous funding from the MetLife Foundation and available at www.csh.org/EmploymentToolkit. In addition, on March 4 and 5, 2009, CSH convened a meeting of the *Allies for Employment* grantees in Chicago, Illinois, featuring the participation of representatives from each of the collaborative projects.

This Summary Report documents the remarkable progress and planned next steps for each of the collaborative projects that received an *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant, and also highlights important lessons that organizations and communities across the country can learn from the grantees’ partnerships, activities and plans. Profiles of each of the *Allies for Employment* projects are provided, including descriptions of the innovative strategies that the *Allies for Employment* grantees pursued and continue to implement - strategies that will provide tenants of supportive housing with more effective employment services and with expanded employment opportunities.

OVERVIEW OF ALLIES FOR EMPLOYMENT PLANNING GRANTS

All of the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant recipients made significant progress during the terms of the Planning Grants. Additional information about each of the five projects, briefly described below, can be found within the more detailed project profiles (beginning on page 6) of this Summary Report.

- **Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative (San Francisco, CA):** Led by Community Housing Partnership, the Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative (SHEC) was successful in using the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant to reinvigorate their existing Collaborative, to secure renewed and strengthened commitments from their partners, and to convene a new Employer Advisory Council to help guide an expanded array of employment strategies and to strengthen the SHEC's collaborative hiring practices. Despite the impacts of significant budget cuts from the City of San Francisco, the SHEC partners have already been able to document significantly increased employment placement rates for tenants resulting from the new strategies that the Planning Grant enabled them to implement.
- **Property Management Career Pathway Program (Bridgeport, CT):** Led by the Property Management Career Pathway Advisory Board, the *Allies for Employment* Partners were successful in developing the curriculum plans for both a non-credit course and a for-credit certificate program to be offered at Housatonic Community College. The curricula are designed to prepare supportive housing tenants for careers in the property management field. The non-credit, three-week intensive course has now been offered once, with seventeen (17) supportive housing tenants participating. The curriculum for the for-credit course has been submitted to the Connecticut Community College Board for review and final approval, with an expectation that it will be offered to students during the 2010 school year.
- **Minneapolis Housing and Workforce Initiative (Minneapolis, MN):** Led by Project for Pride in Living, the Partners within this Initiative completed a gaps analysis regarding the existing employment services for supportive housing tenants and identified program innovations to address those gaps. The Partners are now actively pursuing efforts to implement two such innovations: jointly hiring new vocational specialists to serve the Partners' collective tenants; and providing joint training for case managers to create an increased focus on vocational and employment services within the Partners' existing case management services. In addition, the Partners are considering the possible creation of a Transitional Jobs Program, another innovation identified as a goal through the Planning Grant.
- **Specialized Employment Center (Dayton, OH):** Led by Miami Valley Housing Opportunities, the Partners involved in the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant Steering Committee developed a final operations plan for a Specialized Employment Center, designed to serve persons who have experienced homelessness and/or incarceration. The *Allies* Partners have published a comprehensive set of materials which will guide their implementation of the Specialized Employment Center, including: a *Specialized Employment Center Guide*; a *Point of Entry Handbook*; an *Assessment Handbook*; an *Organizational Handbook*; a *Program Handbook*; and a *Funding Handbook*. Following completion of the Planning Grant period, the *Allies* Partners have been successful in obtaining several grants and funding awards that will enable them to begin implementing their plans.
- **Bridges to Housing Employment Collaborative (Portland, OR):** Led by Neighborhood Partnerships, the Partners completed the planning of a "future state" system which will feature streamlined assessment processes for clients, expanded training for staff regarding mainstream employment programs, and improved services planning tools to assist clients to navigate toward self-sufficiency. The infrastructure necessary for this future state system will be implemented by the same Partners who were involved in the Collaborative that was supported through the Planning Grant.

LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH THE PLANNING GRANTS

Each of the *Allies for Employment* projects was distinct, including substantial differences in the planned project outcomes, the local funding and political environment, and the specific mix of partners at the table. Each *Allies for Employment* project, however, faced many similar challenges and concerns and all of the project partners were committed to documenting – and sharing – the lessons they learned through their collaborative planning activities. Specific lessons learned through each *Allies* project are included in the more detailed project profiles (beginning on page 6) of this Summary Report, but common lessons of relevance to communities across the country include:

- **Take a Multi-Faceted Approach to Accessibility:** While the specific barriers to accessing workforce services vary from community to community, *Allies* grantees developed multi-faceted strategies for achieving meaningful changes to improve access to workforce services for tenants of supportive housing. Some of the promising changes planned and implemented include: agreeing to use the same assessment tool across systems; creating “welcome teams” to facilitate access to services; streamlining enrollment processes for WIA certification; creating new services tools to help tenants make clear requests for services; and offering a “mentor” to help tenants navigate services at One-Stops.
- **Develop Career Pathways, Not Just Jobs:** The *Allies for Employment* Partners in several states found that it is important to take a long-term perspective with regards to developing employment programs. A concern of *Allies* Partners in Oregon was that families in supportive housing who simply obtain a minimum wage job cannot achieve self-sufficiency. A longer term plan for training and then obtaining a decent job that pays a living wage is needed. Similarly, the curriculum developed by *Allies* Partners in Connecticut was designed to assist tenants of supportive housing to obtain entry level jobs in the property management field – with the clear understanding that those jobs are the first step towards a career in the property management field. In Ohio, the *Allies* Partners deliberately designed their programming to help tenants become “as employable as possible” rather than just “employed”.
- **Foster Relationships with Private Employers:** Whether serving on advisory boards, providing immediate jobs, or giving simply input about workforce needs, private employers are an essential resource for information about the state of local industries, their workforce needs and how to best design employment programs to result in viable employees. The *Allies* Partners found that while employers may need education and support to better understand how to successfully employ persons with significant barriers to employment, supportive housing providers will also benefit from seeking to understand employers’ interests, needs, and concerns.
- **Understand Workforce Partners’ Environment:** To facilitate cross-system collaboration, *Allies* Partners found it was necessary to both “speak the language” and understand the constraints placed on their workforce partners. Over and over, the *Allies* Partners emphasized the importance of supportive housing providers understanding the terms used by different systems to describe their populations, recognizing that an individual might be accurately described as a person who is “formerly homeless”, an “ex-offender”, a “dislocated worker” or “disabled.” The *Allies* Partners felt that helping systems recognize that they are often serving the same people may facilitate collaboration and free up funding resources that are targeted towards specific populations. Further, the *Allies* Partners found that they needed to understand the performance measures that are used to evaluate One-Stops, and also understand what options WIA-funded programs do and do not have for establishing performance measures.

- **Stay Focused on Mutual Goals:** *Allies* Partners found that One-Stops vary widely in both their willingness and ability to serve people with multiple barriers to employment. In the experience of one *Allies* grantee, a local One-Stop clearly stated “We don’t serve people with barriers to employment”, while another nearby One-Stop offered cross-training opportunities, held focus groups to learn more about supportive housing tenants’ needs, and actively engaged in the *Allies for Employment* process. The *Allies* grantees in several states found that keeping conversations focused on mutual goals was the most effective way to engage workforce partners who did not immediately see the benefit of working collaboratively. Some *Allies* Partners also chose to focus their efforts on working with their Workforce Investment Boards at the regional level, hoping that their efforts will transfer to the local level.
- **Cross-Training is Key:** *Allies* Partners across most states also found that there is a significant need for cross-training across systems, to help staff in each system understand the needs and resources within other systems. *Allies* Partners often found that their workforce partners were very open to both offering and participating in such cross-trainings. Further, the *Allies* Partners found that there was significant need for training among supportive housing staff, regarding the need for employment among supportive housing tenants, the employment goals of tenants, and the employment services and resources available.
- **Create Outcomes Measures that Reflect Achievements:** The *Allies* Partners believe it would be helpful to re-think the measures used to evaluate the success of employment services, and identify measures of success in addition to traditional outcomes measures pertaining to placement, retention and wages. For example, while it may be a success for an individual who has never been employed to hold a job for 2 months, this achievement would not be recognized - or paid for - by most employment services performance measurement systems. Since work is an essential part of the recovery process for many people, the *Allies* Partners advocate that there is a legitimate need to fund services that move people closer to obtaining and maintaining employment, even if they are not initially “successful” in the usual sense. Further, the *Allies* Partners recognize that peoples’ needs change over time and that providing skill-building and pre-employment services may very well be the foundation for future employment success.
- **The Economy Matters, But Entrepreneurship Can Help Create Opportunities:** *Allies* Partners in Minnesota stated, “It may seem obvious, but the economic environment matters. Seeing how overwhelmed our partners are in the publicly-funded Workforce Centers and CBO vendor system, we are aware that in a tight labor market, supportive housing tenants face a steeper climb toward successful employment. We look forward to a shift in the economy that will help our clients to be on more even footing with other jobseekers.” As the country awaits the shift in the economy that will provide more meaningful job opportunities for tenants of supportive housing, the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grantees continue to give significant attention to actively creating tailored job opportunities for tenants of supportive housing. *Allies* Partners also operate a variety of social enterprises including a landscaping business, a catering business, a property management business, and an event clean-up and recycling program, in order to provide employment opportunities to tenants. The *Allies* Partners believe that “Green Jobs” are particularly promising for future employment programs, as federal funds become available to encourage job development in the green sector, and as more organizations embrace green technologies throughout various industries.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Each of the *Allies for Employment* projects was successful at convening and engaging diverse partners. Each project has leveraged the power of their collaborations to effectively monitor changes in the local, state and federal workforce environment, to identify new funding sources and re-examine previously overlooked funding sources, to advocate more successfully on behalf of their tenants, and to create more streamlined and effective pathways between parallel services systems. By examining workforce systems and employment services from a “big picture” perspective encompassing many partners, rather than from the more limited perspective of single housing, supportive services, or workforce organizations, the *Allies for Employment* projects have been able to substantially impact the design, delivery, and coordination of employment services across multiple systems.

The *Allies for Employment* grantees wish to specifically encourage organizations involved in the supportive housing industry to:

- Provide leadership by sharing research on employment outcomes for tenants of supportive housing, and helping partners across systems understand that employment is not only possible for tenants of supportive housing but is a key component of many tenants’ paths to recovery and independence.
- Advocate for changes in workforce system programs that result in more accessible services, such as “welcome teams”, non-duplicative assessment processes, streamlined referral processes and more flexibility in customizing a package of services to meet individual needs, rather than sequential, “one size fits all” services packages.
- Advocate for more funds for training and employment services, specifically for people with multiple barriers for employment, to ensure that during our nation’s economic crisis, tenants have the supports they need to successfully compete for scarce jobs.
- Provide cross-training for staff in different systems, including: training for workforce staff regarding the needs of formerly homeless persons who have multiple barriers to employment and regarding the supports offered by case managers; and training for case managers regarding the importance of employment for supportive housing tenants and how to best assist tenants to access employment services and resources.

CSH echoes these recommendations. Further, CSH hopes that the progress, plans, and future achievements of the *Allies for Employment* projects can serve as powerful examples and models for other organizations seeking to enhance employment services, to create new economic opportunities, and to improve self-sufficiency outcomes for tenants of supportive housing – and for other vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our communities - across the United States.

PROFILE #1:

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING EMPLOYMENT COLLABORATIVE

Led by Community Housing Partnership San Francisco, California

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Led by Community Housing Partnership (CHP), the Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative (SHEC) used the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant to reinvigorate their existing Collaborative, to secure renewed and strengthened commitments from their partners, to convene a new Employment Advisory Committee, to strengthen the SHEC's collaborative hiring practices and trainings for staff, and to provide advice to City and Workforce partners regarding the development of more effective employment services for tenants of supportive housing.

INTRODUCTION TO LEAD GRANTEE

Founded in 1990, Community Housing Partnership (CHP) creates, implements, and demonstrates solutions to homelessness by working in partnership with people who would otherwise be without a home. CHP develops and operates high quality permanent affordable housing, integrating optional support services, job training and community organizing. CHP currently owns, operates, or provides services within 11 buildings with 774 units, reaching over 1,400 tenants a year. In addition, CHP invests in employment and training programs with the goal that 75 percent of tenants seeking employment will find work. To this end, CHP has a staff of 13 members dedicated to providing employment and training services to tenants of supportive housing.

CHP serves as the lead agency of a group of seven supportive housing organizations in the *Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative (SHEC)*, originally established more than a decade ago. As described on the CHP website (www.chp-sf.org), "The SHEC provides outreach, assessment, counseling, job placement, and job retention services to formerly homeless tenants who live in affordable housing. SHEC provides a network of referrals to the training and education programs offered by the member agencies, including adult basic education and GED preparation, life skills and job readiness training, computer skills training, and on-the-job training programs. SHEC also offers volunteer opportunities, internships, and referrals to short-term job opportunities for those who need to build job readiness skills or are unable to maintain regular employment, but benefit from occasional participation in the workforce."

SHEC organizations work together to share resources and to coordinate their fundraising and advocacy efforts. The SHEC holds regular monthly meetings of the line staff of member agencies, with a focus on cross training each other regarding available resources, and also holds quarterly meetings of the Steering Committee, comprised of Employment Program Directors, and holds tri-annual meetings of the SHEC Executive Directors. In addition to the Community Housing Partnership, the SHEC member organizations include: Chinatown Community Development Center; Conard House; Episcopal Community Services; Hamilton Family Center; Mercy Housing; and Swords to Plowshares.

GRANT PARTNERS

The seven SHEC member organizations were the primary partners in the implementation of the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant activities; however, the *Allies* Partners also used the opportunity created by the Planning Grant to reach out to the larger community. Additional Partners included:

- **Tenderloin Health** offers Community at Work (CAW), an employment program designed specifically to prepare Tenderloin residents for employment in community health and social service programs. Graduates are prepared for employment in shelters, residence hotels, drop-in centers, and health centers.
- **St. Anthony Foundation** The Employment Program/Learning Center (EPLC) helps homeless and low-income individuals acquire life and work skills, further their education, and find employment. Since 1951, the EPLC has equipped guests with tools to find and keep work and better their lives. In the last decade, the EPLC has provided technological resources to help bridge the digital divide for this underserved community.
- **The San Francisco Human Services Agency (HSA) Workforce Development Division** has collaborated with SHEC members and multiple other agencies in its ongoing efforts to improve services for the homeless and tenants of supportive housing.
- **Goodwill One Stop Career Link Center** provides professional job search assistance and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) certification.

PROJECT DESIGN AND GOALS

The *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant funds provided the opportunity for the SHEC to revitalize their aging collaborative, with a focus on renewing the agreements between Partners, strengthening the employment services system for tenants of supportive housing in San Francisco, and on maximizing the use of limited employment services resources. To achieve these goals, the SHEC convened a ten (10) member *Allies for Employment* Planning Committee that consisted of housing and employment service providers, local workforce representatives, supportive housing tenants, and private employers. Another less formal goal of the *Allies for Employment* Planning Committee was to share information regarding systems changes taking place within the local Workforce Development arena. To this end, the Planning Committee members agreed to attend public meetings of the local workforce development office to collect any pertinent information to share with member agencies.

SHEC members convened a series of conversations and meetings, and gathered information from a variety of resources in order to achieve the following goals:

- Renew Memoranda of Understanding among the members of the SHEC, with an emphasis on securing recommitments (from Executive Directors, Human Resources Managers, and vocational and case managers) to employing supportive housing tenants within their organizations;
- Define and execute at least two (2) Memoranda of Understanding for Affiliate Membership in the SHEC with agencies offering additional training opportunities to supportive housing tenants;
- Convene an Employer Advisory Committee no less than three (3) times during the year, with participation of at least three (3) representatives of private sector employers;
- Meet with key members of the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development, the One Stop System Operator, and individual One Stop Center Managers to review current employment outcomes and to offer the SHEC's expertise to help improve employment services for supportive housing tenants;
- Conduct a minimum of two (2) trainings regarding best practices and strategies for employment services for tenant services counselors who have limited experience with vocational services for supportive housing tenants; and
- Convene staff of the One-Stops and SHEC to participate in two (2) cross-training sessions to strategically streamline services.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PLANNING GRANT

The SHEC partners made considerable progress toward achieving all of their goals, despite the impacts of significant budget cuts from the City of San Francisco on several SHEC organizations and initiatives.

Updated Memorandum of Understanding

A primary task of the Planning Committee was the review and updating of the existing Memorandum of Understanding among SHEC organizations.¹ A key reason for updating the MOU was its age – originally executed in 2001, many organizations no longer employed the Directors who had originally signed the MOUs and the agreements had become outdated and sometimes forgotten. The new Committee agreed to work with their respective Executive Directors and other organizational leaders to reaffirm an understanding of their organizations' roles and commitments to the SHEC and to improved employment outcomes for tenants within supportive housing operated by SHEC organizations. The SHEC Manager, employed by CHP, also met individually with several of the SHEC Member Directors to highlight and reinforce commitments within the existing MOU, especially the commitment to hire tenants within their organizations.

Initial discussions focused on defining who should have access to SHEC services and what the cost-per-participant is for each of the different SHEC training programs. There were also substantive discussions regarding MOU language pertaining to fundraising efforts and what members could be expected to contribute during tough economic times.

As the group updated their own agreements, they also entered into conversation and negotiation with two potential new SHEC Affiliate members. The first potential partnership was with Tenderloin Health, and the process of formalizing the relationship was begun. This was a promising partnership, which was unfortunately made impossible when Tenderloin Health lost essential funding as a result of City budget cuts. The SHEC members did enter into an agreement with another organization, St. Anthony's Foundation. As a new SHEC Affiliate, St. Anthony's will provide basic computer skills training to SHEC tenants, including Windows, Internet and e-mail, MS Word and Excel.

New Employer Advisory Committee

A second focus for the *Allies for Employment* Planning Committee was to recruit and convene an *Employer Advisory Committee*, comprised of Human Resources staff from the seven (7) SHEC member organizations, as well as from for-profit employers, including John Stewart Property Management Company, McCormack Baron Ragan Management Services, Inc., and the Hyatt Hotel. The goal of this Advisory Committee was to advise the SHEC regarding how to offer more effective employment services and opportunities to supportive housing tenants.

The Advisory Committee first worked to establish a collective hiring system that offers a competitive edge to SHEC tenants who are seeking employment within SHEC organizations. The Advisory Committee identified the specific hiring requirements of each organization, their particular application requirements and candidate referral preferences, and information regarding who to contact with candidate referrals. The Advisory Committee also reviewed the expectations of each employer regarding job candidates' qualifications. Ultimately, a chart was created that outlined each of the employers' hiring practices and all acceptable forms of communications between their hiring supervisors and the SHEC's Employment staff. Employment staff can now reference the chart when they wish to refer a tenant for a qualified job and be confident that they are contacting the appropriate person with the necessary information to facilitate a job

¹ For a copy of the SHEC Memorandum of Understanding (Updated August 2009), please see: <http://documents.csh.org/documents/doclib/SHECMemberMOUAugust2009.pdf>.

connection.

The Employer Advisory Committee also hosted a meeting between Employment Staff and employers on the Committee during which Employment staff explained the SHEC's training programs and graduation requirements. This meeting allowed the Employers' hiring staff to inquire about the qualifications of the referred SHEC Training Program graduates, to put a face to the names of SHEC staff charged with the task of forwarding the tenant referrals, and to better understand the level of support each SHEC tenant receives, both pre and post employment.

The Employer Advisory Committee also worked with two member organizations to host a Job Fair at which hiring Managers from two of the SHEC member organizations presented entry level job opportunities to a select group of graduates from CHP's Desk Clerk and Maintenance Training Program. Potential employees introduced themselves to the hiring managers, picked up applications, and turned in resumes. In addition, SHEC Employment Counselors presented information regarding resume and cover letter writing and regarding job interview skills. This Job Fair resulted in eight (8) tenants pursuing employment and set the precedent for future job fairs hosted by other SHEC member organizations.

Meetings with Workforce and Employment Services Partners

Throughout the Planning Grant period, *Allies for Employment* Planning Committee members attended numerous public meetings related to local workforce development activities. The Committee also created a robust schedule of private meetings with key members of the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development, the One Stop System Operator (San Francisco Human Services Agency (HSA) Workforce Development Division), and individual One Stop Center Managers. The purpose of these meetings was to learn about current developments in the local workforce development system, and to provide input regarding how to best provide employment services for tenants of supportive housing. One of the key activities of the *Allies for Employment* Planning Committee was the process of reporting back to the larger committee with the results of these meetings, so that members could learn from each other and work together to develop and implement responsive policies, strategies, and services.

As the SHEC members began to meet with various stakeholder and policy makers, major budget cuts were announced throughout the city of San Francisco. A major challenge the SHEC organizations faced was learning that the SHEC's City funds, which come through the Human Services Agency's General Fund, would be cut from \$147,000 to \$33,000. These cuts directly resulted in the loss of vocational services among SHEC organizations. Further, it was announced that as a result of the City's budget cuts, one of the SHEC's leading partner agencies, Episcopal Community Services, lost its contract to provide services in a newly opened Workforce One Stop Center. This was especially disappointing since SHEC members fear that the new One Stop Center will no longer be able meet the special needs of the local supportive housing population, as they may no longer have expertise in serving formerly homeless persons and the needs of such persons may be unmet among the needs of an increased number of job seekers resulting from the economic downturn.

Despite the drastically altered fiscal environment, SHEC members felt they were able to accomplish several key outcomes as a group this year. First, by being at the table with city officials and local service providers, SHEC members felt they had the opportunity to help to address how the budget cuts will impact the employment services community and how partners can work together to meet contractual goals at a time when employment opportunities are exceedingly difficult to tap into. They found that these meetings provided essential opportunities to strategize regarding how to provide the same level of services with fewer staff and resources. They also found that by ensuring that as many partners were at the table as possible, that the tendency for organizations to group themselves into different "camps" in order to battle for scarce resources was minimized. Instead, a more truly collaborative effort to advocate for, and use scarce

resources as effectively as possible, began to coalesce. The SHEC partners were able to collectively appeal to the Board of Supervisors regarding the lost City funds, and were successful in getting their funding restored, shortly after the end of the Planning Grant period. SHEC partners also did their best to educate the City and other key partners about the outcomes of the SHEC and other employment programs who have successfully served tenants of supportive housing, in hopes of encouraging One-Stops to do the same.

Second, by meeting regularly with the San Francisco Office of Workforce and Economic Development, CHP was able to become an approved provider of training services for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services office, and was invited to participate in a "Training Provider Fair" at City Hall. This designation will allow CHP to maximize revenue from the Vocational Rehabilitation system, revenue that can help them to continue to provide their training services to supportive housing tenants.

Further, notable progress was made in building up the SHEC's relationship with the new Goodwill One-Stop Center. This new relationship will help SHEC Training Program participants to become WIA Certified through a new streamlined WIA certification process, which can take up to four to six weeks, but as a result of the new partnership can now be completed in three days. Partners have agreed to a new process wherein all Training Program applicants will participate in an intake with a SHEC Employment Counselor. Upon completion of the intake process, qualified applicants will be accompanied as a group by the SHEC staff to initiate WIA certification and complete the process with One Stop staff. Once the individuals are certified, they will be eligible for Individual Training Accounts, with training dollars attached to them. These funds can then be applied to the cost of training programs, alleviating some of the need caused by decreased funding in other realms. In addition, each WIA certified trainee has a broader support network that they can call upon to help them complete the training and successfully secure employment. In the beginning of June 2009, SHEC staff led their first group of trainees to become WIA certified through this new process.

Finally, during the grant year, the San Francisco Workforce Investment Board was reconstituted, and SHEC organizations were gratified that an *Allies for Employment* Planning Committee member was appointed to serve on the Board.

Enhanced Training Opportunities

During the grant period, staff of Episcopal Community Services, one of the SHEC's leading agencies, conducted two trainings on best practices for employment services with tenant services counselors who had limited experience with vocational services for supportive housing tenants. These trainings helped the SHEC services staff to better determine which tenants can appropriately be referred to the SHEC employment services staff, and what steps they can take to prepare a tenant for employment services by focusing on pre-employment activities, such as ensuring that tenants have permission to work in the United States. The trainings also focused on employability assessment.

Cross trainings were also held between the local Goodwill One Stop Center and SHEC employees. The Director of the Goodwill One Stop met SHEC employees to discuss the kinds of services offered by the One Stop and how to refer tenants. In return, SHEC Employment staff participated in focus groups held by the One Stop Employment Center.

Increased Job Placement Rates

Despite the threat of significant cuts in their budgets during the Planning Grant period, the SHEC organizations were successful in increasing the number of inter-collaborative jobs available to tenants. A comparison of SHEC placement rates found that in FY 2007-2008, there were 46 placements, while in FY 2008-2009, there were 58 employment placements, a 26% increase. This increase in the employment

placement rate is attributed to three factors:

- The recommitment of SHEC partners (within their updated MOUs) to hiring qualified SHEC applicants for vacant positions within their agencies paved the way for an increase in current and future job opportunities for SHEC tenants - both through the new hiring system established by the Employer Advisory Committee, as well as through agency-specific job fairs for SHEC tenants.
- Better coordination between SHEC Training Programs (specifically, the Desk Clerk and Maintenance Training Programs) and CHP Enterprises, resulted in training tenants in specific skills needed to become viable candidates for jobs within the CHP Enterprises Property Management division.
- The expansion of the SHEC's Recycling Internship Program into a Green Jobs Initiative, which assists graduates in finding employment in the emerging green-collar industry, has created job opportunities for supportive housing tenants.

By taking a multi-faceted approach to job creation for tenants, the SHEC has substantially improved the employment rate of the tenants they serve.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Focus on Building Relationships:** A recurring theme that emerged from the multiple meetings attended by SHEC members was the focus on "relationship building." SHEC staff emphasizes staying focused on common goals and on what's working and not working, even when partners disagree. Persistence and communication seem to be an essential parts of the SHEC's success in building new partnerships, and in strengthening old ones, even during challenging times.
- **Create Enough Structure for a Successful Collaborative:** The SHEC Manager recommends having well-planned meeting agendas, a clear vision for where the group is headed, clear written documentation of everything (e.g., meeting minutes), and performing a great deal of follow up with individual partners. The SHEC members find that the written MOU outlining partners' commitments is a key tool and since it can be reviewed periodically, provides a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of their collaborative efforts.
- **Talk to Employers to Accurately Identify Their Needs:** Through the process of convening the Employer Advisory Committee, SHEC members found that employers are often open to tailored referrals and interested in training programs to meet their needs. An unexpected learning was that Employers on the Advisory Committee felt they could train employees on skills, but not attitude; therefore, they were focused on looking for people who were open and willing to learn. As a result, SHEC staff learned to focus more on building "soft" skills with potential job applicants, rather than on specific "hard" skills.

SHEC staff recommend convening a Employer Advisory Committee 3 or 4 times a year, and using the meetings to not only explain the general characteristics and challenges of the tenant population, but to explain the services that are offered to support the tenants' achievement of their employment goals. SHEC staff found it an opportunity to both "make the case" for employing tenants and to address employers' needs. It was also a chance to become educated about what employers are really looking for and what their minimum requirements are (e.g., regarding criminal backgrounds, drug tests, or other requirements).

- **Clearly Define the Roles of Case Managers and Employment Staff:** SHEC members report that it is essential that "who does what" is understood so that each staff person can focus on fulfilling his or her specific responsibilities, especially when coordinating employment activities across multiple agencies.

In the case of the SHEC organizations, Case Managers are expected to do “pre-employment” work, such as ensuring that a tenant has a valid ID, can legally work in the United States, and has taken advantage of programs that help address felony backgrounds (such as bonding), before referring tenants to employment programs. Case Managers are also expected to actively encourage tenants to meet employment staff who visit supportive housing sites, by personally inviting individual tenants to meet with employment staff and creating incentives such as donuts and coffee in the lobby.

- **Actively Create Jobs for Tenants:** A primary focus of the SHEC’s MOU process was emphasizing a commitment to hiring tenants within partner organizations. CHP also has created several social enterprises, specifically intended to provide accessible jobs for tenants of supportive housing. Their Property Management Company provides unit turnover services and front desk staffing. They are developing plans to offer additional services in the future, including bed-bug remediation services, and “green” cleaning services. In addition, CHP coordinates a short-term jobs program which helps tenants obtain temporary employment at citywide special events and fairs, where they sort recyclable and compostable materials.

PLANNED NEXT STEPS

The Planning Committee and the Employer Advisory Committee convened for the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant have both expressed interest in participating in an ongoing dialogue. Meetings among SHEC organizations will certainly continue, at which the members plan to keep each other informed of changes in the local environment and to continue their collaborative efforts to seek new funding and advocate for the continuation of existing funds for the SHEC’s employment services. The SHEC partners attribute their success in advocating for the restoration of City funds for their services directly to their involvement in the *Allies for Employment* project, which they say allowed them to organize and strengthen their partnership at a time when collaboration between partners was of critical importance. They intend to continue to advocate together, going forward.

The SHEC also plans to continue working with the local One Stop Centers to create more streamlined and effective processes for referring clients in SHEC training programs to the One-Stops. Their goal is to build on the collaborative efforts created during the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant period to create an effective referral system that will help the One-Stops, SHEC organizations, and job seekers to all meet their objectives.

With many providers suffering severe budget cuts, and the local One Stop system still struggling to meet the employment and training needs of the homeless and formerly homeless population, it appears that the services provided by the SHEC organizations will continue to be essential for ensuring that tenants in supportive housing have access to employment opportunities. The *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant allowed the SHEC reach out to their collaborative partners and local allies to review and improve current processes, cross-train and share information, implement (or recommit to) formal partnerships with clear objectives, and to work with the City of San Francisco to provide the most comprehensive employment services and opportunities possible.

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PROFILE #2:

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAM

Led by Property Management Career Pathway Advisory Board
Bridgeport, Connecticut

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant focused on the development of a curriculum at Housatonic Community College, for tenants of supportive housing, designed to support students in obtaining the education and skills they need to obtain entry level careers in the growing field of supportive and affordable housing property management.

INTRODUCTION TO GRANTEE

Career Resources is a nonprofit workforce development organization that has prepares youth and adults in Southwestern Connecticut to gain employment and progress in their careers. Career Resources provides people with skills, resources, and support necessary for personal development, economic self-sufficiency, and career advancement, and also provides planning and staffing resources to the business community in support of workforce development. Career Resources operates four CTWorks Centers (or One-Stop Employment Centers) in Southwestern Connecticut that are responsible for providing services to approximately 15,000 clients annually. Services include skills testing, career counseling, case management, job matching, and development training contracts. In addition, Career Resource's *Passport to Success* program provides employment development services to individuals who are living in supportive housing and struggling with multiple barriers to economic self-sufficiency. The goal of this pilot project is to meet people at their level of need and provide them with an array of traditional and non-traditional services that will help them progress toward unsubsidized employment.

GRANT PARTNERS

Career Resources served as the fiscal agent for the Property Management Career Pathway Advisory Board, a group comprised of fifteen (15) agencies, representing workforce development, housing, higher education, state government, private sector employers, and social services providers. This Advisory Board assumed responsibility for planning the Property Management Career Pathway curriculum. The member agencies of the Property Management Career Path Advisory Board represented the following sectors:

- **Public Sector Workforce Development** partners included Career Resources, the Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and the Connecticut Department of Labor - Office for Workforce Competitiveness. These organizations and departments committed to securing ITA funds to pay for student tuition expenses; assisting with developing and implementing student internships, and securing resources to cover students' incidental expenses.
- **Higher Education** was represented by Housatonic Community College. The College committed to providing ongoing faculty and staff assistance with developing the non-credit and credit curriculum. The College also provides classroom space and access to all College-based student support resources for enrolled students.
- **Property Management Organizations and Employers** included the Corporation for Independent Living, Konover Residential Corporation, Mutual Housing of Southwest Connecticut, NeighborWorks, and New Horizons. These employers committed staff to serve on the Advisory Board and to providing

internship opportunities for students.

- **Social Services Providers** included Alpha Community Services, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County (Lead Agency), Columbus House, and Leeway. The services providers helped to identify potential students, conduct outreach for prospective students, and to develop the marketing program.

In addition, the Connecticut Housing Coalition and CSH's Connecticut Program provided technical assistance to the project.

PROJECT DESIGN AND GOALS

The primary goal of this project was to develop a curriculum at Housatonic Community College for tenants of supportive housing, designed to support the students in obtaining the education and skills they need to obtain entry level careers in the field of supportive and affordable housing property management. Many of these skills would also be transferable to other employment sectors. The objective of this curriculum is to prepare students for competitive employment in a growing industry that not only pays a living wage, but also provides access to future career opportunities into which they can grow. In addition, by tailoring the curriculum to the needs of tenants of supportive housing, it was hoped that tenants could more easily access mainstream employment resources, such as those available through the Workforce Investment and Vocational Rehabilitation systems. At the same time, the development of the curriculum was intended to provide employers in the supportive and affordable housing property management industry with well-trained and qualified applicants for available jobs. Property management companies often express a need for qualified staff for entry level positions. Development of this community college curriculum will therefore meet the needs of both potential students and employers.

Supported by the investment of the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant, the Property Management Curriculum Advisory Board established the following goals:

- Review available property management curriculum models and existing curricula from Wilbur Wright Community College in Chicago, Illinois;
- Identify core courses to be developed and offered on a both non-credit and for-credit basis;
- Identify components of a student support program;
- Identify a staff person to assume primary responsibility for coordinating student support resources;
- Identify and secure financial resources for program implementation;
- Develop marketing materials to be used in recruiting potential student-participants;
- Work to develop course outlines and refine a non-credit pilot course;
- Develop the full curriculum, with the assistance of designated staff from Housatonic Community College and the services of a Curriculum Consultant; and
- Conduct a pilot to test out one (1) course to prospective students in a one-week intensive format.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PLANNING GRANT

Having initially convened in 2007, the Advisory Board met each month throughout the Planning Grant period. The Board's first efforts focused on reviewing existing property management curriculum models and, in particular, reviewing the property management curriculum offered by Wilbur Wright Community College. This property management curriculum had been developed for supportive housing tenants in Chicago, Illinois. CSH was able to facilitate a connection between the two colleges, arranging for the College staff to first meet via conference call and then to meet in person at a Peer-to-Peer meeting in October of 2008.

Wilbur Wright Community College generously shared their curriculum materials, which greatly facilitated the development of the curriculum at Housatonic Community College. According to Career Resources, Wilbur Wright's willingness to share their curriculum and their actual classroom experiences resulted in the cost of curriculum development being lower than anticipated. Staff at Wilbur Wright also helped the *Allies* Partners make a decision to lengthen the pilot course from one (1) to three (3) weeks.

In addition to reviewing existing curricula, the Advisory Board invested time into meetings with local Property Management companies to identify their workforce needs. Throughout the development of the curriculum there was a strong emphasis on identifying employers' workforce needs and designing the curriculum so that program graduates would be well qualified for jobs in the affordable and supportive housing industry. The Advisory Board also spent time surveying the needs of supportive housing tenants in order to identify their particular barriers to employment and success in academic programs, as well as to ensure that there was sufficient tenant interest in the program to make it a viable program at the College. Tenants were also invited to participate on the Advisory Board to provide ongoing input.

After gathering this initial information, the focus of the Advisory Board turned to curriculum development. As a result of the connection between the two colleges, Housatonic Community College was able to retain a professor from Wilbur Wright Community College as a curriculum development consultant. Her efforts first focused on completing an outline of the non-credit pilot course, with input from the Advisory Board and Property Managers. Next, the consultant and Advisory Board developed a curriculum for the non-credit pilot course, titled, *Introduction to Property Management in Supportive Housing and Affordable Housing*. This pilot course was designed as a three-week intensive summer course, and was offered in order to inform the development of a "for credit" Leasing Specialist certificate program. The pilot course was offered in June 2009 and seventeen (17) tenants of supportive housing completed the program.

Following completion of the pilot program, three students attended the Advisory Board and enthusiastically described their participation in the program. They spoke highly of the course instructor, who used highly interactive teaching methods that they found very engaging, such as case studies, field trips, and a great deal of group work that emulated desk clerk interactions. The instructor focused on real-life scenarios (such as a leak being discovered in the building) and the need to work effectively with other people. The students expressed strong interest in going on to complete the credited certificate program, when offered. One student also shared about her initial reluctance to participate in the pilot because she felt that she was "not smart enough," but she was truly surprised by her own ability to be successful in her first course – especially when she aced a test - and subsequently was very encouraged and excited about the possibility of completing a college program that could lead to new employment opportunities.

A completion celebration for the students was held following the program, at which students were encouraged to participate in career counseling services and provided with information about the next steps to take to prepare themselves for successful participation in the certificate program (such as completing remedial courses, if needed). In addition, students were provided with information to help them access various College resources and continue learning about the Community College system.

The development and implementation of the pilot course informed the development of the "for credit" Leasing Specialist certificate program. The consultant and Advisory Board have now developed the four-course program, which will include:

1. Introduction to Property Management of Supportive and Affordable Housing
2. Tenant Services and Communications
3. Desk Clerk Operations
4. Property Management Clerk Internship

These courses can be used towards achievement of an Associates degree in Business from Housatonic Community College. Pre-requisite for participation in the program will be completion of English 101, which may require some students to complete one or more remedial courses before participating in the program. Any remedial courses, and the completion of the certificate program courses, will be eligible for WIA funding and Financial Aid, so that costs to students will be minimal. Individual Training Accounts will be available for participating students in the Leasing Specialist program. The curriculum for the Leasing Specialist certificate program has been submitted through the Connecticut Community College course approval process and is on target to be approved in the near future.

Throughout the process of developing the curriculum, College staff and the Advisory Board were also busy completing other related work. College staff had to complete a number of administrative tasks, including: developing position descriptions for a Course Consultant and a Part-Time Lecturer; submitting a College Service Agreement (between Housatonic Community College and Career Resources) through the necessary administrative channels and ultimately to the State Attorney General's office; and submitting budget revisions to the Housatonic Community College to support the pilot course.

The Advisory Board worked on identifying financial resources for student tuition and other costs. The Advisory Board also spent a substantial amount of time developing a plan to provide wraparound supports to student-participants. Ultimately, a student support grid was developed that outlines the various project partners and the particular supports that they can offer students. The Board had much discussion about the level of support that would be provided to student-participants, with some social service providers expecting that there would be level of support that went beyond what is typical in educational settings. However, the Advisory Board eventually focused primarily on providing access to existing services for non-traditional students.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Understand that Educational Institutions Have Unique Timeframes and Ways of Doing Business:** Administrative processes can be complex and lengthy and timelines may be longer than anticipated by persons unfamiliar with the community college system. It can take from six months to a year for a for-credit course to be approved once it has been submitted for review; this does not include the time it takes to prepare the curriculum for review, which can easily a year or more. Budget approval and revision processes and contract approvals can also take time to implement. In the example of Housatonic Community College, these processes were greatly facilitated by having direct involvement of the Academic Dean of the College on the Advisory Board. The development of the curriculum was also able to happen much more quickly than would be usual because Wright Community College shared their curriculum and, therefore, a full curriculum did not need to be newly created but rather could be adapted from existing materials.
- **Involve Employers in the Design and Implementation of a Curriculum:** Employers provided initial input about the need for the curriculum and specific qualifications that they look for in potential employees, provided ongoing input regarding curriculum content and provided information regarding the state of the workforce and available jobs. Moving forward, these employers will be a potential source of qualified instructors for the program, provide internships for students and ideally, offer employment opportunities for program graduates.
- **Begin Marketing the Program to Students Early:** Marketing materials were developed during the course of this project, but were not found to be very effective. The Advisory Board needed to actively recruit program participants just prior to the beginning of the pilot course. While they were successful in recruiting 23 applicants, and 17 actual program participants, they discovered that it is necessary to

recruit students through direct conversations rather than via email or with written brochures.

- **Ensure that Potential Stakeholders Understand the Terms “Supportive Housing” and “Affordable Housing”:** In marketing the program and developing support for the curriculum, the Advisory Board found that it was necessary to describe Supportive Housing and Affordable Housing to stakeholders (especially within the colleges) as some were not familiar enough to be able to understand the need for a focused curriculum. Involving people from a variety of sectors meant that it was important for the *Allies* Partners to define terms and to speak in ways that all stakeholders would understand.
- **Understand That It Takes Time to Build Relationships Across Systems:** This project brought individuals together from different systems that do not have a long history of working together, including representatives from the Workforce Development system, Community Colleges, supportive housing providers, property managers, and the Connecticut Housing Coalition. The Advisory Board has expressed strong appreciation for the number of personal relationships and networks that have been built as a result of participating on the Board with people from multiple sectors, but they also note that by the end of the Planning Grant period, they have been working together for two years. The Dean of Housatonic Community College noted she finds the new relationships especially exciting because, “It’s personal relationships that cause systems change.” She also notes that the relationship between the Community College and the One-Stop System was particularly strengthened as a result of this project.

PLANNED NEXT STEPS

The approval process for credit courses with the Connecticut Community College system takes a number of months for completion and final approval. The Advisory Board anticipates that the Leasing Specialist certificate program will be available for enrollment in the Spring or Fall semester of 2010. The pilot non-credit continuing education course *Introduction to Property Management in Supportive and Affordable Housing* is tentatively scheduled to be offered again in January of 2010. The Advisory Board anticipates that students from the June 2009 and the January 2010 pilot classes will be prepared to enroll in the credit courses as soon as these courses are offered.

The Advisory Board has committed to continuing to meet on a regular basis until the curriculum has been credentialed as a “for-credit” certificate program. Housatonic Community College will look to this Board as a resource for developing internships within the housing community. The Advisory Board will continue to look for additional funding to support the program with adequate staffing. In the meantime, a WIA-funded Senior Aide program offered by Career Resources will provide a part-time Aide to provide administrative support for the program. The Aide will be in contact with the students and assist them in furthering their plans to enter the workforce, whether that means taking remedial classes in preparation for participation in the for-credit certificate program, or navigating support services at the Community College, or taking some other steps to develop their skills.

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PROFILE #3:

MINNEAPOLIS HOUSING AND WORKFORCE INITIATIVE

Led by Project for Pride in Living
Minneapolis, Minnesota

PROJECT SUMMARY

The *Allies for Employment* Partners in Minneapolis used their Planning Grant to develop a comprehensive plan to improve employment services for tenants of supportive housing in the region, by mapping existing resources and service strategies, developing revised strategies, and creating an implementation plan.

INTRODUCTION TO GRANTEE

Founded in 1972, Project for Pride in Living (PPL)'s mission is to work with lower-income individuals and families to achieve greater self-sufficiency through housing, employment training, and support services. PPL has brought nearly 1,500 affordable rental and for-sale housing units to the market, and serves more than 12,000 people annually. The agency offers job training programs, two businesses providing on-the-job training for the hardest to employ, education options (ABE through post-secondary education), and employment resources and instruction that use technology to help low-income individuals enter and compete in today's work force.

PPL is funded by State, City, and County work force entities. The organization attends, participates in and hosts meetings of the local network of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funded programs, and works in partnership with WIA agencies to coordinate local job training options, to recruit candidates for job training programs, and to strategize on trends and needs in the local community.

GRANT PARTNERS

Collectively, the five *Allies for Employment* Partner organizations represent nearly 900 units of supportive housing and include:

- **Emerge Community Development (Emerge):** The mission of EmERGE is to enhance the social and economic status of disenfranchised people. Key organizational goals include eliminating chronic homelessness via innovative transitional and supportive housing initiatives; promoting self-sufficiency through a myriad employment and training programs; and creating jobs and wealth through social enterprise and community development activities. EmERGE serves 4,500 mostly inner-city Minneapolis tenants annually via 20 programs and enterprises. A leading WIA-funded agency in Minneapolis, EmERGE facilitated 1,790 job placements in 2007, with 547 of these placements paying \$10/hour or more. EmERGE Villages serves over 140 chronically homeless families annually via two permanent supportive housing facilities and two transitional housing programs. Village programming integrates relationship-based case management services with youth development, employment, wellness and community building services to promote greater self-reliance.

Over two decades, EmERGE programs have expanded to include a variety of job placement programs; motivational soft skills training; career training partnerships in property maintenance, precision manufacturing and clerical/administrative skills; retention initiatives; and special employment programs for refugees, ex-offenders, youth, welfare recipients and homeless adults. EmERGE also operates two job creation enterprises (EmERGE Staffing and StreetWerks) that employ more than 550 adults annually. For the past three years, EmERGE has actively worked to integrate its existing employment and training

resources with adult tenants in Emerge Villages supportive housing programs, through a project called *Nexus*.

- **RS Eden:** The mission of RS Eden is to provide recovery, accountability and support services to facilitate individual, family and community movement from non-productive behavior to responsible, self-sufficient lifestyles. RS Eden provides a continuum of programs across the Twin Cities, including substance abuse treatment and family support programs; community corrections programs (halfway houses, a supervised work/service program, electronic monitoring, and drug testing); and supportive housing services. Since 1997, RS Eden has developed or participated in the development of 300 units of supportive housing for youth, single people, and families with children. All programs offer services tailored to meet the needs of the unique populations they house, while emphasizing the common goals of facilitating the sobriety, productivity, self-determination, and residential stability of tenants.

RS Eden is one of four agencies who are partnering to develop a collaborative employment training program with construction contractors and the City of Minneapolis. The goal of the collaboration is to create and engage clients in a training program based on the needs of the construction industry, and work closely with both contractors, and the Minneapolis Human Rights Commission in order to gain entrance for their clients in the construction industries employment sector.

- **Cabrini Partnership:** Since the mid-1980s Cabrini Partnership has been dedicated to helping individuals break the cycle of homelessness by addressing the complex issues that are at the root of broken lives and broken spirits. The mission of Cabrini Partnership is to provide housing and services to support homeless adults with mental illness and chemical dependency to strengthen their lives, families and community. Cabrini Partnership provides housing and supportive services in two key programs. Their transitional housing program stabilizes dually diagnosed adults in a community setting, and their permanent supportive housing makes available affordable, one-bedroom apartments to people with a history of chronic mental illness and chemical dependency who have experienced long-term homelessness.
- **Perspectives:** A multi-program human service agency, Perspectives provides comprehensive services to hundreds of homeless and disadvantaged families. Perspectives Supportive Housing Program is the largest supportive housing program in the state of Minnesota. The organization's target population is homeless and recovering women and children, although the program will also accept men who meet recovery and homeless criteria. A central theme at Perspectives is working with the "total family." Perspectives takes pride in their expertise in providing services to children and families of different cultures.
- **Workforce Agency Partners:** The *Allies for Employment* Partners have established relationships with a wide range of public workforce agencies, including: Twin Cities Rise; HIRED; AccessAbility; Lifetrack Resources; 180 Degrees Women Venture; Women in Transition; Women Achieving New Directions; Kaposia; Aeon Homes; Lifeworks; RISE; Goodwill Industries/Easter Seals; Employment Action Center; Minnesota Workforce Center; and Vocational Rehabilitation Services; and others.
- **Employer Partners:** The *Allies for Employment* Partners have active partnerships with a number of area employers, including: Target; Sears; Mall of America; Macy's North; Construction Careers Training Program; Minneapolis Hilton; Holiday Inn of Minneapolis; Mystic Lakes Casino; Walker Methodist Care Center University of St. Thomas; University of Minnesota; V.A. Hospitals; Cub Foods; Radisson Hotels; IKEA; Mortenson Construction; Comcast; City of Minneapolis; and others.

PROJECT DESIGN AND GOALS

The *Allies for Employment Partners'* ultimate goal was to collaboratively develop revised or new program strategies that more effectively support supportive housing tenants' employment achievements using existing private and public service providers. Their working assumptions were that supportive housing tenants:

- Do not have adequate access to existing employment service providers;
- Likely need deeper levels of existing services and supports than are readily available among existing employment service providers; and,
- May need different types of services and supports than are currently provided.

Partners planned to identify and put in place employment services that are:

- Easily and quickly accessible to their client base;
- Collaborative with housing case management staff to more holistically address client needs;
- Flexibly structured to meet needs of clientele with varying challenges;
- Substantive and based upon real-world training experiences.

Informed by these assumptions, the Partners determined the following steps for their planning process:

- **Step #1: Scan the Landscape:** This first step involved mapping the employment services landscape through phone interviews and meetings with private and public service providers, and through review of existing surveys and information. This extensive information gathering stage was planned to include as many as thirty individual interviews and attendance at up to four meetings with relevant stakeholders.
- **Step #2: Conduct Analysis:** This next step was to analyze the information collected in step one and provide an opportunity for various stakeholders to review, revise, and confirm the information. The important outcome here was that all stakeholders affirmed the analysis and had confidence that their programmatic approaches had been fairly represented.
- **Step #3: Discuss, Create, and Refine New Approaches:** With the environmental scan and analysis in place, the Partners planned to hold a series of stakeholder meetings, where the analysis could be presented and variations to programmatic approaches discussed. The goal here was to identify several program innovations that could be collaboratively pursued.
- **Step #4: Validate and Develop an Implementation Plan:** With recommendations in hand, the *Allies Partners* planned to present the most promising innovations to groups of clients/consumers, policymakers, funders, and others to validate and/or refine the recommendations. With that input, an implementation and sustainability plan would be developed and pursued by the convening Partners.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PLANNING GRANT

In order to accomplish their goals, the Partners convened an Advisory Committee which met quarterly. The Committee included: the *Allies for Employment Partner* agencies; City of Minneapolis Workforce Investment Board; Hennepin County representatives; Hennepin County Workforce Investment Board; Heading Home representatives (a State initiative); Greater Twin Cities United Way representatives; Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers; Minnesota Housing Finance Agency; Neighborhood Employment Network; and Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board. The *Allies for Employment Partners* also held separate meetings as a small group on a more frequent basis throughout the Planning Grant period.

The *Allies for Employment* Partners began the grant period by conducting a comprehensive scan of the partner agencies and the surrounding environment to determine the populations being served, program approaches, common barriers to success, public policy barriers and disincentives, and to identify practices that demonstrate measurable effectiveness in moving homeless tenants of supportive housing into the workforce. A consulting team was retained upon receipt of the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant, and this team conducted an initial survey of employment services in the region, and then conducted in-depth interviews with each of the five partner organizations. Through this process, each agency iterated its overarching mission, described its client population and current employment services, and conveyed its particular goals for the grant. From these meetings, the consultants produced an Employment Services Matrix that matched three general client populations with a broad set of employment goals and suggested the service delivery approaches best suited to meet those goals. This process helped the Partners more clearly identify the services gaps in the regional services system. The consultants and Partners spent several months completing this environmental scan, refining the matrix through in-depth interviews with additional agencies and stakeholders, confirming that the information gathered was accurate, and analyzing the data collected to identify common services gaps and larger system issues.

Based on this work, the partner agencies next focused on identifying strategies to improve the effectiveness of employment services for tenants of supportive housing. The key objective for this process was to identify how partner agencies could pool their existing resources and share their expertise to expand services and fill service gaps. At this stage of their work, the *Allies* Partners found that the biggest challenge was building consensus around targeting particular segments of the supportive housing population for specific employment services. Partners recognized that the populations that they serve are diverse and comprised of a broad spectrum of people – ranging from people who are "work ready" to those who may never be able to work independently in the labor market. In addition to being diverse, the population is fluid - people move throughout this spectrum of "work readiness" over time, and that their service needs therefore change over time, as well. Partners found that the diversity and fluidity of the populations they serve make it difficult to create narrow strategies for a specific client group or set of employment services.

Despite the complexity of the population served, *Allies* Partners were able to confidently identify several common service delivery gaps, among partner agencies. The largest gaps that were identified were:

- Lack of employment orientation among case managers;
- Lack of employment services expertise among staff; and
- Lack of supported work opportunities for those not ready/able to participate in labor market independently.

The Partners found that they need to produce a "culture shift" among case workers, to focus their efforts more on supporting employment for tenants, as case managers paid little attention to tenants need or desire for employment. At the same time, Partners recognized that case managers have full-time jobs that keep them busy, and that adding employment services to their existing duties would be neither feasible nor effective. Further, the case managers simply did not know enough about existing employment services or how to connect tenants to them.

The Partners had also found that because there is such a broad spectrum of tenants with regards to "work readiness", that some tenants may not be appropriate for services focused on obtaining permanent, competitive employment. Instead, increased "productivity" (such as volunteering, attending support groups, or participating in supported work opportunities) may be the initial goal for some tenants. For such tenants, the lack of supported work opportunities greatly limits their ability to generate income or engage in activity

that they can call “work”.

Through a series of stakeholder meetings, the *Allies* Partners moved from identifying these service delivery gaps to formulating three mutually agreed upon “program innovations” to help to address these gaps. The three promising strategies agreed upon, were:

1. Jointly hiring one or more vocational specialists;
2. Facilitating joint case manager training to both “vocalionalize” case management services and ensure that case managers are aware of full range of public assistance opportunities and employment services for which their clients may be eligible;
3. Creating a Transitional Jobs Program to provide supported work opportunities.

In addition to identifying the program innovations, the Partners and Advisory Committee also drafted a “mock grant proposal” seeking funding to support the implementation of these strategies. This document allowed the Partners to view on paper the rationale for their ideas, to scope out their costs, and to contemplate some different scenarios for implementing and funding the work.

After discussing their options, the Partners jointly decided to move forward with implementing the first two strategies. The Partners decided not to directly pursue their third program innovation – expanding supported work or transitional jobs – primarily because of the significant expense associated with this approach, but continue to be cognizant of opportunities that may become available and are in ‘scouting’ mode for funding or business ventures that would be complementary to a transitional jobs program.

The option of hiring new vocational specialists to be shared among all agencies was explored at several partner meetings. The Partners had some hesitation in implementing this strategy because: there was concern that they would need to raise significant funds (up to \$200K) up-front to pay for two or three staff positions; and, they still needed to resolve “ownership” concerns regarding who new staff would serve and to whom they would be accountable. The Partners ultimately agreed to pursue a modified approach with two key strategies:

- Identifying the services that each partner already provides and the costs of those services, creating agreements to provide services to each other’s clients – and collaboratively seeking funding to pay for these “shared” services.
- Exploring a contractual relationship with an outside agency / organization to provide placement services specifically for *Allies* Partners’ clients.

As the Partners and Advisory committee continued to work to identify services gaps and strategies for filling them, the group was simultaneously meeting with public workforce development official in Minneapolis, to identifying barriers to, and opportunities for, partnering to serve supportive housing tenants. These discussions were fruitful and opened up the possibility of sharing resources and creating future collaborations. The Minneapolis Workforce Investment Board, for example, offered to extend its employment services training to the *Allies for Employment* Partners’ case managers, free of charge, helping to implement one of the Partners key strategies for improvement of their employment services. The Minnesota Department of Vocational Rehabilitation also encouraged the *Allies* Partners to pursue funding through the Ticket-to-Work program, and offered assistance should they decide to become an Employment Network. The Partners explored this possibility but found that too few of their tenants would hold Ticket to Work vouchers to justify becoming an Employment Network. Most promising, as a result of these conversations, the *Allies for Employment* Partners are now engaged with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) regarding supporting their work with funds from the Food Stamp Employment and Training program (FSET).

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Define Outcomes Measures Carefully:** The recognition that every individual's path toward meaningful work is unique – comprised of different goals and timelines - was recognized early on by the *Allies* Partners. Among the five partner agencies, each has tenants with a wide variety of services needs who will move on dramatically different timetables toward meaningful work. While some of the services needed by the tenants belong in common “buckets” and may be delivered jointly or in shared settings, the Partners were reminded that success comes only through each individual tenant reaching his or her own goals. Substantive discussion focused on identifying appropriate services outcomes for different target populations within the supportive housing tenancy, including appropriate outcomes for tenants who are not currently ready for competitive employment. Partners concluded that traditional measures such as the rate of persons achieving full-time employment may be appropriate for some, but not all, tenants of supportive housing. Taking the time to create a range of outcomes related to employment will help determine if, and where, tenants “fit” within the system.
- **Understand Workforce Partners Needs and Constraints:** While clearly recognizing that the needs of the supportive housing tenants are complex and that services must be flexible to meet individual needs, the Partners also recognize that different systems – most notably the workforce system – are evaluated with specific performance measures. The Partners recommend that supportive housing providers seeking to partner with workforce agencies do their homework to understand what measures workforce agencies are obligated to achieve. They further suggest that focusing discussions with workforce partners on developing shared outcomes measures – across systems – is both a necessary and a fruitful place to engage in conversation with potential partners. Without this discussion, partners may be frustrated by the inability of their joint efforts to help them meet their own outcomes goals. In addition, it is important to recognize that the performance measures that are used to evaluate workforce systems may dis-incentivize the provision of services to clients with significant barriers to work, especially as workforce centers swell with larger numbers of people who are recently unemployed and “work ready.” The *Allies* Partners recommend approaching over-extended and stressed workforce partners by asking, “How can we help you achieve *your* goals?” The Partners also suggest that supportive housing providers intentionally communicate to their workforce partners the kinds of supports that they provide to tenants, emphasizing the long-term, intensive supports to tenants provided in supportive housing settings that workforce systems are unable to provide, but are likely to recognize as necessary to tenants' success.
- **Be “Linguistically Nimble”:** Recognizing that supportive housing providers and workforce agencies often use different language to describe the same (or overlapping) populations, the Partners suggest that there is a need to be conscious of these differences in use of language, especially when identifying potential funding sources. For example, tenants served by supportive housing providers might be accurately referred to as “chronically homeless”, “formerly homeless”, “dislocated workers”, “ex-offenders”, or by other terminology. Understanding that different systems use language differently can not only facilitate ongoing communication with partners, but potentially assist in identifying previously overlooked funding sources that can be legitimately used for employment services for tenants of supportive housing.
- **Relationships Are the Key to Working with Private Employers:** Many *Allies* Partner organizations that provide supportive housing have successful relationships with a number of local employers. They report that their success depends both on the employers' level of understanding of tenants' barriers and the amount and quality of communication with supportive housing staff. Connections to private

employer are often idiosyncratic and personal; as such, they may not be transferable to other staff when there is staff turnover. Further, relationships can be easily damaged. When making referrals, employment services staff must be simultaneously cognizant of the employer's needs and the tenants' needs. Sometimes there is a conflict between wanting to maintain a relationship by sending only the most qualified tenants to an employer and wanting to provide opportunities for less qualified tenants, who might be more likely to strain the relationship with the employer, but who could benefit from the learning experience.

- **Be Your Own Employer:** *Allies* Partners recognized that some of the tenants in their supportive housing are not currently ready for competitive employment – and some may never be ready. The need for supported employment opportunities has been addressed by one *Allies* Partner, RS Eden, by creating a neighborhood café called Fresh Grounds that provides immediate employment opportunities for tenants of RS Eden supportive Housing. Another *Allies* Partner, Emerge, operates two job creation programs, Emerge Staffing and StreetWerks. However, the Partners recognize that among their 900 supportive housing tenants, there remains additional unmet need for more supported employment opportunities.

PLANNED NEXT STEPS

Partners have agreed to continue working together for a “development period” through October 2009 during which time they will continue to explore implementing the innovations described above, using existing resources and seeking new resources as a group. Notably, *Allies* Partners have tentatively committed to putting some of their own funds on the table in order to continue to pay for their consultants' support, to advance their shared goals. The Partners are in the process of finalizing and executing a Memorandum of Understanding among themselves, to formalize their plans to more collaboratively provide employment services and to jointly contract with an outside organization for additional vocational and employment services for the tenants within their housing programs. Their work at this time is focused on the details of implementing their new agreement, and securing funding to accomplish their shared goals.

Partners will also continue to engage in discussions with the public workforce development system. However, at the time of this report, the Partners report that the public system is still overwhelmed with the increase of dislocated workers resulting from the recession. Therefore, Partners have found that *Allies'* tenants will not be able to successfully ‘compete’ for placement attention when the publicly-funded Workforce Centers are overrun with many more highly-skilled individuals seeking employment. Rather than relying upon the over-stressed Workforce System for placement services, the *Allies* Partners will explore collectively hiring a job developer who can focus on job development and placement tasks for supportive housing tenants.

Partners are also pursuing a program of training and support for supportive housing case managers that will help to ‘vocalize’ the supportive housing environment and create a stronger programmatic emphasis on employment. *Allies* Partners expect to work with WIA and TANF-funded public agencies where some of this training is already provided – in hopes of leveraging existing resources.

The Partners are working closely with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to test implementation of innovations using Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) program funds and consider it a strong possibility that they will develop a pilot project with the MN FSET program to which could fund up to 50% of their new vocational services. The Partners are still researching the number of tenants who would be eligible for FSET funds under new rules, and determining how to best serve tenants who are not eligible for these funds. Partners have also engaged a local philanthropy with interest in their *Allies for Employment* work.

Moving forward, the Partners intend to create a kind of resource guide that will document the work of the *Allies* Partners and serve as a tool for other supportive housing and/or employment providers the region. They also plan to develop an evaluation tool to assess their success as they implement their new program strategies. The *Allies for Employment* Partners report that they are delighted with the progress that has been made in forwarding their shared goals and gratified by the openness and trust that is being built among the five Partners. The Partners are also mindful that the sum of the collaborative effort must be greater than the cost of each individual agency's contributions in order for this work to be sustainable. They recognize that the work of providing effective, efficient employment services to tenants of supportive housing is complex and that "there is no silver bullet" and therefore appreciate having been given the opportunity to thoughtfully examine existing employment services in the Minneapolis region, in order to move forward a planful way.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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PROFILE #4: SPECIALIZED EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Led by Miami Valley Housing Opportunities
Dayton, Ohio

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The *Allies for Employment* Partners in Dayton, OH developed an operations plan for a new Specialized Employment Center specifically designed to serve persons with substantial barriers to employment, with a focus on serving persons who are homeless or formerly homeless, and persons who have histories of criminal justice system involvement.

INTRODUCTION TO GRANTEE

Miami Valley Housing Opportunities (MVHO) is a private nonprofit organization that has been providing supportive housing since 1981. MVHO owns and manages 310 supportive housing units and operates HUD Shelter Plus Care rent subsidies for approximately 365 formerly homeless persons. MVHO also operates the local PATH outreach program. MVHO is a member of the Employment Services Working Group, which was convened in 2006 as part of Montgomery County's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.

GRANT PARTNERS

Key partners involved in the creation of the Specialized Employment Center included:

- **Montgomery County Department of Jobs and Family Services (JFS):** The JFS Job Bank provides One-Stop employment services including on-line job search, resume preparation, and career planning. The Job Bank is the centerpiece of the Montgomery County, Ohio Job Center, the largest one-stop employment and training center in the United States. The Job Bank is a public/private partnership comprised of 47 partners providing an array of on-site assessments, education, job training, job placement, access to public benefits and supportive services in an 8 and 1/2 acre facility.
- **Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley:** Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley's Employment Program provides intake, assessment, job placement, and retention services. Goodwill has skilled job coaches and strong ties to area employers who have a history of hiring persons with barriers to employment. Goodwill also serves as a private community employer and is the employment service provider at the model River Commons housing program. This Jobs First program has helped 54 persons obtain employment within six months of housing entry, representing a 69% employment rate.
- **Homeless Solutions Policy Board:** The Homeless Solutions Policy Board was created in 2006 to provide the leadership and strong governance needed to implement the 10-Year Homeless Solutions Plan. The Policy Board is made up of key community leaders and has created a separate Funders' Collaborative to make decisions about the funding of homeless services in Montgomery County. The Homeless Solutions Policy Board is staffed by experienced employees who serve as boundary spanners for the many systems that serve homeless persons and who bring together leaders to make change possible.

PROJECT DESIGN AND GOALS

In 2006, an Employment Services Working Group was convened as part of Montgomery County's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. The Employment Services Working Group included members from the

workforce system, employment services, private employers, consumers, and local government. All of the *Allies for Employment* Partners participated in the Employment Services Working group. This working group recommended the creation of a Specialized Employment Center to provide intensive services to persons who are homeless or formerly homeless, in order to address the particular barriers to employment often faced by this population. A draft model of a Specialized Employment Center was completed by the working group in 2008. The *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant funds were used to lead the working group in the creation of an implementation and operations plan for the Specialized Employment Center (SEC). Key goals for the *Allies for Employment* Partners, included:

- Identifying the specific needs and concerns of homeless and formerly homeless persons, regarding the Specialized Employment Center;
- Identifying employers' concerns regarding hiring homeless and formerly homeless people and developing a process to ensure regular employer input into the Specialized One-Stop;
- Developing a staff training plan regarding the unique employment challenges homeless and formerly homeless people face and techniques to identify appropriate employers and full-time and part-time jobs in a variety of sectors for successful placement;
- Developing community partnerships to provide support services for the clients at the Specialized Employment Center, such as skills training, education, alcohol and other drug services;
- Selecting the most appropriate employment skills assessment tool;
- Working with the community's supportive housing providers to develop expectations regarding tenant employment, referral processes and coordination with the SEC staff, and to train case managers at housing projects regarding the impact of employment on eligibility for public assistance benefits;
- Finalizing an Operations Plan, including a timeline for hiring and training staff; and
- Creating a fundraising strategy and applying for available funding for the SEC.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PLANNING GRANT

Supported by the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant, MVHO issued a Request for Qualifications for a consultant to forward the development of the implementation and operations plans. MVHO and their *Allies for Employment* partners selected consulting firm Community Development Professionals to provide project management, to convene and facilitate a Steering Committee, and to guide their efforts to develop implementation and operations plans.

The consultant convened a Specialized Employment Center Steering Committee in October of 2008, comprised of the Partners described above, which met monthly throughout the Planning Grant period. The Steering Committee began this phase of their work together by drafting and executing a new Memorandum of Understanding and identifying desired outcomes for their work, including defining what success would look like. The Steering Committee then focused on reviewing the draft model for the SEC that had been completed by the earlier Employment Working Group.

During this initial stage, the consultant spent considerable time reviewing background information to understand the history of the project. A special meeting was convened to bring the consultant and other new members of the Steering Committee up to date, including representatives from Salvation Army, Booth House, Powernet and MVHO. To inform the planning process, the consultant reviewed the results of focus groups with homeless and formerly homeless persons, met with homeless and formerly homeless persons to better understand their needs, and conducted interviews with key community partners. The consultant then conducted a survey of a group of employers and met individually with several employers to identify

their concerns regarding hiring formerly homeless persons. The consultant also met individually with supportive housing providers to gather their list of needs and concerns.

All of the information collected by the consultant was shared with the Steering Committee in order to inform their work to finalize a program model for the Specialized Employment Center. The program model was developed to describe a client's path into - and through - services at the Specialized Employment Center. The Steering Committee created a program model divided into 4 broad stages:

1. **Point of Entry:** In this first stage, potential clients are identified by staff at community organizations (Points of Entry) through which they are already receiving services. An initial eligibility screening is conducted and persons who are interested in SEC services attend an orientation session, to learn more about what the SEC offers.
2. **Assessment:** In this stage, persons who are interested in services at the SEC participate in a thorough assessment conducted by an Employability Case Manager.
3. **Program Entry / Participation:** In this stage, clients create an Individual Employment Plan and participate in a variety of employability and/or employment services, as appropriate given their personal needs and goals.
4. **Program Cessation.** In this stage, a client completes his or her participation in SEC services.

During evaluation of the Program Entry/Participation stage, the Steering Committee spent a considerable amount of time discussing the staffing plan of the Specialized Employment Center. A core belief of the committee members was that their goal was to support people in "becoming as employable as they can". The Steering Committee was not satisfied with assisting someone to improve their employability only to the point where they could obtain and maintain a minimum wage job. Rather, they viewed employability as an area of life where many people can benefit from ongoing support, in order to not only address issues that come up during employment (sometimes referred to as "retention issues") but to prepare people to achieve "next steps" in their careers. Next steps might include obtaining new skills to obtain better jobs, finding jobs that are more suited to individual people's specific interests and needs, or obtaining jobs that provide better wages and benefits. Therefore, the Steering Committee felt that it was important to provide both strong employability and employment services at the Specialized Employment Center.

Ultimately, the Committee created a staffing plan to provide both kinds of services, comprised of the following positions:

- **Employability Case Manager:** Assists clients to overcome barriers to employment, related to: disabilities; housing status; transportation issues; need for appropriate clothing; history of criminal justice system involvement; lack of language skills, life skills or anger management skills; literacy or educational needs (GED).
- **Employability Mentor:** This unpaid, volunteer team member is available *if requested by the client*, to provide additional support to the client with regards to achieving his or her goals. Ideally, this person is identified at the same Point of Entry where the client initially enters the SEC services system, and can provide assistance navigating services as well as emotional support, throughout a client's entire participation at the SEC.
- **Employment Specialist:** Assists clients with preparing resumes, conducting job searches, connecting to employers and accessing opportunities for skill-building.

In addition to creating a staffing plan that reflects their commitment to supporting people in becoming as employable as possible, the Steering Committee created an outcomes measurement plan to simultaneously track client milestones with regards to both employability (including pre-employment and

post-employment milestones), as well as employment-related milestones.

Next, facing a large amount of detailed work to plan the program at each stage of a client's path through the SEC, the Steering Committee divided into four sub-committees to address specific aspects of the Specialized Employment Center plan:

- **The Employer Recruitment Subcommittee:** Focused on identifying the needs and concerns of employers, with regard to hiring the target population and identifying ways to engage employers in the SEC, specifically as members of the Employer Advisory Board.
- **The Point of Entry Subcommittee:** Focused on developing a plan for identifying appropriate community sites (Points of Entry) where clients will be assessed for the SEC program, creating requirements and a process for becoming a Point of Entry site, and determining strategies for educating housing providers regarding the importance of employment and how to access SEC services.
- **The Process Subcommittee:** Used several meetings to review a number of assessment tools, and received a formal presentation by Goodwill Easter Seals on the use of their assessment tools. Discussion topics included a review of tools being used successfully in other programs, the associated costs of each tool, ease of use and access to the tool(s).
- **The Outcomes and Evaluation Subcommittee:** Focused on determining measurable and reportable outcomes for the SEC, including how many people would be served, and how outcomes would be measured and evaluated.

In the final quarter of the Planning Grant period, the recommendations from the four sub-committees were presented to the full Steering Committee and incorporated into a final plan. A package of materials containing complete plans for the implementation and operation of the Specialized Employment Center was compiled and published at the end of the Planning Grant period, including:

- **Specialized Employment Center Guide:** This comprehensive Guide contains complete information about the history of the SEC initiative, the development process, and implementation plans for the launch of the SEC. This guide also includes all forms and tools created as part of the implementation and operations planning process.
- **Point of Entry Handbook:** This Handbook is intended to guide community organizations through the process of becoming qualified as a Point of Entry site. The handbook describes the expectations and responsibilities of Point of Entry sites, the Memorandum of Agreement, the intake and initial assessment tools needed, and also includes a comprehensive referral book for participants needing additional supports.
- **Assessment Handbook:** This Handbook contains all of the assessments that will be completed by participants of the Specialized Employment Center.
- **Organizational Handbook:** This Handbook describes the organizational structure of the Specialized Employment Center including staffing requirements, job descriptions, an Employer Advisory Board recruitment plan and a Request for Qualifications that can be used to select an organization to implement the SEC plans.
- **Program Handbook:** This Handbook provides a step-by-step process for walking a participant through services at the SEC. Topics include: a description of the SEC Team (Employability Case Manager, Employability Mentor, and Employment Specialist); development of Specialized Employment Plans; establishing milestones for employability and employment; and planning for program cessation.

- **Funding Handbook:** This guide contains a skeleton grant proposal for funding the Specialized Employment Center, results of research regarding private and public funding opportunities, and a draft budget to be used in funding proposals.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Choosing Language Carefully is Essential:** As Partners serving different populations met, it became apparent that various stakeholders were using different language to refer to the same people. For example, the Re-Entry services providers referred to individuals as “ex-offenders” and supportive housing providers referred to individuals as “homeless” regardless of the fact that many of the individuals have been both homeless and incarcerated. Discussion of the appropriateness of the term “homeless” also centered on the fact that most of the target population are in fact, housed in supportive housing. It became quickly clear that it was most useful to focus conversations on the shared barriers faced by the people participating in partner organizations’ services, rather than on the specific terms used to describe those persons. In these instances, *Allies* Partners found that it was important that differing points of view be recognized and discussed so that ultimately the program could be designed to meet the needs of all Partners. It was also noted that use of specific terms sometimes has implications for funding availability, and therefore, the Steering Committee made the decision to call the “Specialized One-Stop Employment Center”, simply a “Specialized Employment Center”.
- **Sub-Committees Can Expedite Completion of Detailed Work Items:** To address the many details required for creation of the implementation and operations plans, the full Steering Committee would have had to meet many more times, and some members’ time would not have been well-used. By creating sub-committees, smaller groups comprised of members with specific areas of expertise were able to focus on detailed tasks, such as selecting an assessment tool or writing job descriptions. Partners found that the development and utilization of sub-committees fostered collaboration and allowed for difficult and tedious tasks to be accomplished.
- **Bringing the Right Partners to the Table is Key:** *Allies* Partners reported that it was imperative that the right partners be engaged in the planning process, in order to make sure that all stakeholders are well-represented, that planning partners had adequate understanding of the population served and of the employment services field, and to move key decision making processes forward. Partners particularly focused on ensuring that decision makers from both government and nonprofit organizations were involved in the planning process.

PLANNED NEXT STEPS

Throughout the Planning Grant period, the consultant conducted extensive research on possible funders of the SEC, while Steering Committee members worked to determine which SEC services could be paid for with existing resources and which would require new funding. Understanding that funding for the SEC was likely to be a “patchwork” of both new and re-allocated funds, *Allies* Partners actively sought funding for the Specialized Employment Center, exploring a variety of options, including Second Chance Act funding, a Human Services levy, Recovery Act funds, WIA funds, and other private and public funders identified in the Funding Handbook.

Shortly after the completion of the Planning Grant period, the *Allies* Partners were notified that they had been successful in obtaining several grants and funding awards. The Montgomery County Commissioners were able to secure funds through the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services, from the ARRA Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program. Two awards of Stimulus Funds were received through the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission, which are designated for providing services for Ex-Offenders and

Homeless with Disabilities, and for Disabled Veterans, with a focus on those who are ex-offenders and/or homeless. An Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant was also received. In total, over \$1.2 million in funding from four funding awards/ grants was received to fund the Specialized Employment Center, through the end of 2010.

The Montgomery County Employment Services Workgroup reconvened to review the Steering Committee's plans for the Specialized Employment Center, and local partners have expressed excitement about the plans. The *Allies* Partners report that the greatest benefit of the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant, thus far, has been the way in which the partnerships among involved agencies have been strengthened. The *Allies* Partners are confident that these collaborative relationships will continue to be relevant during implementation of the SEC and valuable for other collaborative initiatives. The Montgomery County Employment Services Workgroup and *Allies for Employment* Steering Committee are looking forward to making their plans for the Specialized Employment Center a reality during the Fall of 2009.

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PROFILE #5: BRIDGES TO HOUSING

Led by Neighborhood Partnerships
Portland, Oregon

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The *Allies for Employment* Partners in Portland, Oregon undertook a comprehensive assessment and planning process to realign services and systems to more effectively serve homeless families with the services they need to move towards self-sufficiency. The “future state” created by the Partners will feature improved assessment processes for clients, expanded training for staff regarding mainstream employment programs, and improved services planning tools to assist clients to navigate toward self-sufficiency.

INTRODUCTION TO GRANTEE

Founded in early 2007, Bridges to Housing is an innovative and collaborative program model that brings together a variety of partners (including housing developers, service providers, county and city governments, and housing authorities) to serve high resource-using and high-need families at immediate risk of homelessness, in the four-county Portland metropolitan region. Bridges to Housing provides permanently affordable housing, plus two years of intensive case management and services, and services for children.

The Bridges to Housing model includes teams that serve each of the four counties in the region, coordinated by a Regional Steering Committee whose members include state legislators and state agency representatives. During 2008 – 2009, Bridges to Housing will serve over 200 families in supportive housing, with over 300 projected to be served by 2011.

Bridges to Housing is administered by Neighborhood Partnerships (NP). NP coordinates all aspects of program implementation, including: managing privately raised funds; tracking and reporting on the expenditure of public funds; contracting with an independent program evaluator; and managing internal and external communications.

GRANT PARTNERS

- **WorkSystems, Inc (WSI):** WorkSystems, Inc. serves as the umbrella organization for WorkSource centers in Multnomah and Washington counties, providing funding and policy direction to local One-Stop Employment Centers. WSI participates in many efforts to end homelessness in the Portland metropolitan area, including participating in the Ten Year Planning process and on the Coordinating Committee to End Homelessness.
- **City of Portland, Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD):** The goal of the Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) is to make Portland a more livable city for all by bringing low-income people and community resources together. BHCD operates a variety of programs, including the Economic Opportunity program, with 27 different workforce development projects, and has participated in the Bridges to Housing collaboration. BHCD brings significant experience working with WSI and other workforce development systems. BHCD has also served as the lead on the City of Portland’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.

- **The Regional Research Institute at Portland State University:** The Bridges to Housing program includes a strong emphasis on evaluation, with both a longitudinal outcomes study and a process study regarding the experiences of the families served currently underway. During the *Allies for Employment* Planning Grant period, evaluators from Portland State University provided guidance on systems level questions, and helped to gather data regarding employment services. Evaluators also conducted interviews with families and case managers on current employment experiences.
- **Bridges to Housing Partner agencies** serve a variety of needs and populations within the region. They represent both the housing and service providers within Bridges to Housing, all of whom work to provide families with the supports they need to move towards self-sufficiency. The specific agencies involved in this Planning Grant included:
 - * **Human Solutions, Inc.**, a services and housing provider in Multnomah County, offers a variety of programs that include remedial reading, math skills, and soft employment skills. The program also includes assessment, pre-employment training, job placement, and job coaching services. Human Solutions operates a program for clients who are participating in the JOBS program through TANF, as well as a program for clients who need to develop their English language skills.
 - * **Central City Concern (CCC)**, a services and housing provider in Multnomah County, operates housing for both families and individuals. They operate a supported employment program primarily for unaccompanied homeless adults. CCC supports clients as they enter the TANF mandated JOBS program, and through other options such as vocational rehabilitation, attending school and searching for employment.
 - * **Impact Northwest** has an existing partnership with a local One-Stop Center, which is complemented by an employment specialist position to facilitate linkages to mainstream workforce development services. Impact Northwest's partnership with a local One-Stop center allows clients to receive one-on-one services, including vocational training. The partnership also includes joint case-review and service plan design.
 - * **Share**, a service provider in Clark County, Washington has been a Bridges to Housing service provider since 2006. Share is one of Clark County's largest homeless services providers, and has developed a coalition of community agencies that work together to address the unique needs of homeless people. This coalition provides a variety of services, and ensures clients receive the hands on support they need in accessing services.

PROJECT DESIGN AND GOALS

The primary goal of the *Allies for Employment Partners* was to realign services and systems to more effectively serve homeless families with the services they need to move towards self-sufficiency. *Allies Partners* specifically hoped to expand their partnerships to include WorkSystems, Inc., a local nonprofit organization which serves as the umbrella organization for WorkSource Centers (One-Stop Centers) in the Portland metropolitan area.

The *Allies Partners* hired a consultant to lead a facilitated series of meetings attended by housing providers, service providers, and WorkSystems staff in order to learn more about each other's systems. As a result of these meetings, the Partners aimed to:

- Review possible models and best practices, both within Portland and nationally;
- Meet with staff of WorkSystems, Inc. to learn more about WSI's Seven Industry consortiums - comprised of private employers who help identify the workforce needs of their industries;

- Identify strategies for more effective collaboration between Partners;
- Draft and execute a formal Memorandum of Understanding among Partners;
- Design a pilot project to be undertaken by the newly committed partners;
- Develop a fundraising plan for the Pilot Program; and
- Adopt interim strategies to increase access for high-need homeless families to the workforce system.

Throughout this planning process, Bridges to Housing staff were committed to working with their evaluation team to ensure that they were able to incorporate this project into the ongoing Bridges to Housing evaluation.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PLANNING GRANT

NPF convened an initial meeting of the *Allies* Partners, including Bridges to Housing’s services providers, representatives from the City of Portland’s Bureau of Housing and Community Development, and representatives from WorkSystems, Inc. After establishing their joint vision for the project, the *Allies* Partners issued a Request for Proposals to identify a qualified consultant to facilitate their efforts.

After much deliberation, the *Allies* Partners selected a consultant, Chris Scherer. Mr. Scherer was already working with WSI and a similar organization in Clark County, Washington, and the *Allies* Partners hoped that he could help them facilitate a better relationship with those entities. The consultant’s practice centers on principles of “Lean Thinking,” which was developed by Toyota for manufacturing purposes but has since been revised for use by nonprofit organizations. The Partners were aware that the Department of Human Services in both Oregon and Washington are implementing a similar process in their agencies, so the opportunity to participate in a Lean Thinking process seemed timely.

The consultant’s proposal included two afternoons of initial training on the principles of Lean Thinking, followed by eight weeks of weekly workgroup meetings. The *Allies* Partners decided that participants should expand to include Department of Human Services staff, since the majority of the families served by Bridges to Housing currently participate in the DHS JOBS-plus program, a mandatory employment search program for TANF recipients. Thus, the Partners participating in the training and workgroup meetings included: staff from Neighborhood Partnerships; four case managers from Bridges to Housing project sites; staff from WorkSystems, Inc.; staff from the Department of Human Services (TANF); and the Bridges to Housing evaluators.

The first four meetings that were facilitated by the consultant focused on investigating and describing the current system for moving families from homelessness to self-sufficiency and, in particular, becoming aware of areas in which there is duplication and inefficiency. The NP staff and *Allies* Partners also reviewed a substantial number of program models and evaluations, and then held a series of meetings to learn more about employment services in the Portland-Vancouver area. They held a series of site visits with each of the Bridges to Housing service providers. During these site visits, staff asked for information about the current level of employment among families, about their employment and education/training history, about their goals for employment, and any steps they were taking to achieve those goals, as well as perceived or actual barriers clients or case managers were facing in achieving progress towards these goals. NP project staff also held meetings which brought the four-county partnership together to discuss Bridges to Housing activities more generally. During these meetings, staff gathered information about employment efforts in each of the four counties, including several pilot project efforts, information that was then provided to the workgroup.

As the workgroup began to review the substantial amount of information they had collected, they began to identify some key challenges, including:

- **Duplication of Efforts:** The Partners found that each of the three systems (supportive housing, workforce, and DHS) conducts its own assessment of clients, and that the systems provide services that are sometimes duplicative. The systems operate parallel to each other, but do not coordinate with each other. It is very challenging to coordinate “who does what”, especially with regards to providing direct supports to clients, such as job coaching and case management services.
- **Lack of Clarity Regarding Clients’ Paths:** The Partners found that it is often unclear and un-systematic how a client will move from one point to the next within a system. The lack of a clear pathway through services and systems was confusing for both case managers and clients. Also, it seemed that individual case workers sometimes made subjective decisions regarding whether a client could access specific services.
- **Accessing Services Requires Self-Navigation:** The Partners found that services provided by the Department of Human Services can be difficult to access; clients must specifically know what to request to access the services and be able to self-navigate, in order to participate in services and training opportunities.
- **Reduced Staff, Services, and Training Resources:** The current economic climate had resulted in DHS having to cut staff while experiencing record demand for services. This situation has resulted in only the most motivated clients receiving job search assistance and, subsequently, the child care benefits that accompany job search assistance. There is also a significant new demand for WSI services, especially for training programs.

As the workgroup continued to move through their facilitated process, major changes were taking place in the regional services systems, many resulting from the national economic crisis. First, significant changes to City departments and budget priorities resulted in staff from the BHCD Economic Opportunity program limiting their participation in the *Allies for Employment* initiative. NP and their *Allies* Partners had been monitoring the Economic Opportunity program, operated by BHCD, as one model from which they could learn and perhaps improve upon. They had also been meeting regularly with BHCD staff in order to keep them apprised of their employment-related work. It became clear that the *Allies* Partners should focus their time and attention on developing new partnerships with WorkSystems, Inc. and the Department of Human Services, rather than expanding upon the City of Portland effort. Second, budget cuts at the state level, occurring simultaneously with record levels of demand, had forced the Department of Human Services (DHS) to shift resources away from case management services and into assessment of eligibility for benefits.

While changes due to the economic crisis were impacting BHCD and DHS, WorkSource, Inc. was experiencing changes in their programs as a result of their engagement in a Lean Thinking process. Many of these changes have been found to be very positive by the *Allies* Partners. For example, WSI has increased their focus on their customers and offering appropriate “products,” such as classes and workshops, to better serve their customers. The WorkSource Centers have also created a system wherein clients are officially “welcomed” to the center upon arrival and undergo initial assessments. The program has been revised to remove judgment about whether a client is “ready” for services and to reduce the need for clients to be self-directed.

Since their environment was changing so rapidly, the *Allies* Partners decided to shift focus away from some of their original objectives - such as understanding the Seven Industry Consortia – in order to better understand the current workforce environment in their region. They continued to move through their

facilitated process, using the second part of their meeting series to focus on determining what the ideal system would be for moving families towards self-sufficiency, identifying the factors that prevent systems from functioning ideally, and examining how the Partners could construct their ideal system using existing resources.

As a result of this process, the *Allies* Partners designed a “future state,” or an improved system for moving Bridges to Housing families towards self-sufficiency.² These plans for the “future state” became the basis for new agreements between Bridges to Housing, DHS, and WSI staff. Key components of these new agreements include:

- **Shared Assessment Processes:** To reduce duplication of assessment processes, Bridges to Housing will begin utilizing the DHS assessment tool, called *My Self Assessment*. This assessment will be supplemented as necessary with additional questions needed by Bridges to Housing staff, primarily regarding housing and family status. The *Allies* Partners hope that this new agreement with DHS will reduce the number of times clients are asked the same questions and allow case managers to focus on setting and reaching goals with families.
- **Joint Training:** Partners will conduct training for front line staff about programs and services available. These trainings for Bridges to Housing staff, DHS staff, and WSI staff will help all involved staff better understand the three systems, their needs and limitations, and the resources made available by each. The goal for these trainings is to create clear understanding of one another’s roles and establish realistic expectations regarding their interactions.
- **A New “Road Map”:** Partners will develop a “Road Map” document which will include clear benchmarks, indicators of employment skills, and steps that clients would take to move along a career pathway. The Road Map document will also list resources available to assist clients, in moving through their career path. It is hoped that this document will assist case managers to help their clients access those resources. The Road Map will show how each program (Bridges to Housing, DHS, and WorkSource, Inc.) fits into the path towards self-sufficiency and the points at which clients are ready to take full advantage of their various services. The Partners have agreed that Bridges to Housing staff will take the lead in moving tenants through the newly defined Road Map or career pathway, first helping clients to become stabilized, then assisting them to access DHS and TANF resources, and then moving on to participate in Workforce, Inc. services.
- **A New “Client Employment Plan”:** Partners will develop a new tool which will be filled out in conjunction with the Bridges to Housing case manager and will list the clients’ strengths, previous employment history, and their goals. This tool will be designed to be reviewed when clients meet with DHS and WorkSource, Inc. staff and will help those staff to make recommendations for next steps for the client and to identify available resources to support the client. By creating this plan collaboratively with tenants, Bridges to Housing staff hope to engage in a more deliberate process with tenants for achieving the employment goals. In the past, some Bridges to Housing tenants had signed agreements with vocational schools and taken on debt associated with those programs, but had not been able to find work as a result of the programs. Bridges to Housing staff hope this new tool will help them assist tenants to do better planning and, ultimately, help move tenants into fields where there are viable jobs, and increase access to mainstream resources to help them pay for their training or tuition costs.

² For a copy of the Future State Diagram, please see <http://documents.csh.org/documents/doclib/FinalFutureState-BridgestoHousing.pdf>.

The final meetings of the workgroup were used to help identify the items that would be most important to include in a Memorandum of Understanding with partners. At the end of the Planning Grant period, the *Allies* Partners had conducted meetings with both DHS staff and WorkSystems, Inc. staff regarding the development and signing of Memoranda of Understanding to implement the strategies described above.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Understand the Historical Relationships Between Systems:** The previous history between the workforce systems and housing services providers in Portland had a significant impact on their working relationships and limited possibilities for future collaboration. In part, the *Allies* Partners addressed this challenge by selecting a consultant who had no previous history working with housing groups and had an “outside the box” approach. The Partners also addressed this by spending a significant amount of time during the workgroup process striving to understand each others’ systems. The Partners feel that they have come to terms with the limitations of each others’ systems and have achieved more openness in their cross-system relationships, although communication across systems continues to be an issue, as the systems define their goals and priorities differently.
- **Develop Client Skills and Reduce the Need for Coordination:** NPF staff and their *Allies* Partners saw that staff turnover and the difficulty of navigating parallel service systems often meant that coordination of services by workforce case managers and housing case managers was not reliable. In order to circumvent this issue, the *Allies* Partners decided to focus more on empowering their clients to better understand and more clearly communicate the kinds of services they need and want, no matter who they are interacting with. By educating and coaching the clients to make clear requests regarding their services plans, the *Allies* Partners hope to reduce client dependence upon staff to coordinate their services for them. Similarly, during the course of this Planning Grant, the *Allies* Partners tried to avoid solutions which depended upon relationships between individual workers, such as when one worker was made responsible for employment services to Bridges to Housing clients. Their fear was that if the designated individuals changed jobs or left the organization, Bridges to Housing clients might not receive the services they need. Instead, *Allies* Partners tried to focus on creating system-wide solutions that were not dependent upon individual persons for their success.
- **Monitor the Environment on an Ongoing Basis:** There continue to be a variety of pilot programs moving forward within the region that have similar goals and overlapping participants but that are not communicating with each other. NP and their partners find it necessary to survey these efforts on an ongoing basis and identify linkages between these efforts. Similarly, changing eligibility rules in different systems are resulting in differences from month to month regarding what resources people might access or be entitled to receive. Bridges to Housing case managers must do what they can to stay abreast of changing rules and regulations that impact services and resource availability for their clients.

PLANNED NEXT STEPS

At the end of the Planning Grant period, the *Allies* Partners committed to continuing to meet over the next three to six months in order to develop their new tools and trainings and finalize the details of the “future state” system. During this time period, the *Allies* Partners also committed to finalize MOUs with WSI and DHS agencies in the four county region. At the end of the Planning Grant period, the *Allies* Partners had already reached verbal agreements with two county TANF agencies regarding their new partnership, including commitments of staff time and resources, and were hoping to soon reach a similar agreement with a third county TANF agency.

Throughout the workgroup process, a member of the evaluation team worked with Bridges to Housing case managers to identify families who are currently accessing the workforce system, and conducted a focus group with those families to record their experiences of the employment services they received. The evaluators also conducted two focus groups with case managers regarding the employment services system. In August 2009, the evaluation team will release their semi-annual report, which will include the results of this new focus on employment services.

The Partners recently submitted a concept paper in response to a “Request for Ideas” from WorkSystems, Inc. for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. The proposal requested \$500,000 in training dollars to allow Bridges to Housing families to access training. The *Allies* Partners anticipate hearing more about this proposal and possible partnerships with WorkSystems, Inc. in July 2009.

NP and their *Allies* Partners are pleased to have created a core group of people who have a common vision for the “future state” of the employment services system. The *Allies* Partners are looking forward to the creation of formal agreements among the supportive housing, workforce, and TANF systems and feel that their new partners are open to innovative ideas that will better serve their shared clientele. The *Allies* Partners are also hopeful that the focus on job creation within local, state, and federal government and positive changes in the regional workforce system will provide the Bridges to Housing families with greater access to workforce system services and real job opportunities in the near future.

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ADDITIONAL CSH RESOURCES OF INTEREST

CSH's website, www.csh.org, provides organizations with access to a diverse array of tools, informational materials, publications, manuals, and sample documents to help communities create permanent housing with services to prevent and end homelessness. If you have questions or comments regarding any of these resources, please contact CSH at info@csh.org.

RECENT RESOURCES FOCUSED ON EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND SYSTEMS

[Toolkit for Connecting Supportive Housing Tenants to Employment](#)

Made possible through the generous support of the MetLife Foundation, and available at www.csh.org/EmploymentToolkit, this *Toolkit* provides access to resources - many that were developed by CSH and also materials drawn from a variety of other sources - to help supportive housing organizations, workforce partners, and employers address key challenges in the planning, implementation, and on-going provision of employment-related services and programs. The contents of the *Toolkit* are organized into six sections: *Building Your Team*; *Tenant Outreach and Engagement*; *Partnership with Employers*; *Workforce Resources and Community Partners*; *Tenant Vocational Assessment and Career Planning*; and *Finding Jobs and Advancing Careers*.

[Chronic Homelessness Employment Technical Assistance \(CHETA\) Center](#)

Under a U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (USDOL-ODEP) cooperative agreement, CSH and Advocates for Human Potential (AHP) collaborated to form the Chronic Homelessness Employment Technical Assistance (CHETA) Center. The Center offered technical assistance and training to providers and policy recommendations to USDOL-ODEP regarding serving people who are chronically homeless in employment programs. A wide variety of tools and resources created through the CHETA Center are available at www.csh.org/CHETA.

OTHER WEB-BASED RESOURCES AND TOOLKITS

[The Seven Dimension of Quality for Supportive Housing Publications](#)

CSH developed *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing* through dialogue with supportive housing tenants, providers, funders, and other stakeholders – and through involvement in successful supportive housing initiatives around the country. The *Seven Dimensions of Quality* are intended to provide a common framework for the supportive housing industry and to allow developers, property managers, service providers, and funders to assess the quality of supportive housing units and to make sound investments in high-quality supportive housing. CSH made available a set of three publications – all available at www.csh.org/DimensionsofQuality - to assist organizations to understand and implement *The Seven Dimensions of Quality for Supportive Housing*.

[Toolkit for Developing and Operating Supportive Housing](#)

Made possible through the generous support of the MetLife Foundation, and available at www.csh.org/Toolkit2, this *Toolkit* currently contains more than 150 informational pieces, tools, and sample documents that can help organizations address key challenges in the planning, development, and on-going operation of permanent supportive housing projects. This *Toolkit* is organized by the following topic sections: *Understanding Permanent Supportive Housing*; *Development and Finance*; *Housing Operations*; and *Supportive Services*.

Toolkit for Advancing Systems Change

CSH's newest web-based *Toolkit*, available at www.csh.org/SystemsChangeToolkit, documents approaches to - and successes at - influencing and changing systems by linking *Toolkit* users to more than 175 discrete informational pieces, tools, sample documents, and relevant websites. These resources include materials developed by CSH, as well as examples drawn from public, private, and non-profit partners around the country. The contents of this *Toolkit* have been organized beginning with an *Overview of Systems Change*, and then by the six Building Blocks of Systems Change: *Leadership*; *Collaborative Planning*; *Financial Leverage*; *Provider Infrastructure*; *Credible Data*; and *Network of Allies*.

Toolkit for Ending Long-Term Homelessness

Made possible through the generous support of the MetLife Foundation, and available at www.csh.org/Toolkit, this *Toolkit* is an interactive resource that highlights the most promising practices for serving people who have experienced long-term homelessness. The *Toolkit's* contents include profiles of supportive housing programs and projects from across the country that are successfully housing people who have been homeless for the long term; interactive photo tours of eight of these projects, showcasing good design and service programs; sample documents from each of the programs profiled, such as leases and memorandums of understanding; and a full list of additional resources.

Publications Web Page

CSH's Publications web page, available at www.csh.org/Publications, provides access to reports, studies, and manuals aimed at helping nonprofits and government develop new and better ways to meet the health, housing and employment needs of those at the fringes of society. There are currently more than 60 publications and manuals available, covering topics ranging from development to research and evaluation to strategies for creating systems change, almost all available for download in PDF form for free.

Supportive Housing Training Curricula

Available at www.csh.org/Training, CSH's website provides access to training curricula that address a wide array of issues - from housing financing to property management to supportive services program development to tenant/staff relationships to successfully housing persons with substance use issues. The Supportive Housing Training Series currently includes eleven curricula that were developed through collaboration among the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Center for Urban Community Services, and CSH. These curricula explore best practices and provide guidance regarding supportive housing development, operations, and services, and can also be accessed via HUD's Homelessness Resource Exchange at <http://www.hudhre.info/>.

Supportive Housing Financing Guide

Available at www.csh.org/Financing, the Financing Guide provides details on all major federal supportive housing financing sources, providing program descriptions and links to regulations; resources on everything from how to use Medicaid in supportive housing to understanding Low Income Housing Tax Credits; and links to current funding opportunities, including HUD's current Continuum of Care Notice of Funding Availability. Created especially for housing developers, service providers, and supportive housing advocates, the Guide includes sections regarding *Capital Financing Sources*, *Operating Financing Sources*, and *Services Financing Sources*.

Policy and Advocacy Web Pages

Available at www.csh.org/Policy, these web pages provide regular updates on supportive housing policy and advocacy issues, including information regarding national supportive housing policy priorities, regular updates regarding the status of policy and advocacy efforts, and other tools and resources for advocates.

