

Abstract**2012 Workforce Innovation Fund Application****Applicant Name:** WorkForce Central**Applicant Category:** Consortium of WIBs**Lead Applicant City/State:** Tacoma, WA**Areas Served:** Island, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Whatcom, and Yakima Counties**Project Name:** Housing and Employment Navigator Model (Navigator)**Funding Level Requested:** \$5,150,000 technical costs\$850,00 evaluation costs**Project Type:** (B)**Description of Proposed Project:**

Somewhat overshadowed among the discouraging employment statistics of the past few years, homelessness has seen an alarming rise over the course of the nation's recession and gradual recovery. In spite of federal interventions (McKinney–Vento), over a quarter of homeless persons in 2010 requesting assistance were unsupported. The link to the workforce investment system in addressing this issue is evident in the fact that the leading cause of homelessness is unemployment.

Wide scale, longitudinal studies of a collaboration between multiple federal agencies (HRSA, HUD, VA, and HHS) known as the Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness (CICH), conducted by the Northeast Program Evaluation Center (NEPEC) have shown that coordinated interventions, targeted services and improved client delivery led to decreased homelessness rates, increased access to services and, critically, decreased administration costs.

Initial findings produced by the CICH report are further supported at the local level. In Washington State, a public private partnership involving the King County Workforce Development Council, supported by both state and foundation funding, and administered by a nongovernmental organization, addressed the connection between homelessness and employment through a Housing and Employment Navigator model. Nearly 60% of homeless job seekers working with a Navigator accessed employment resources and participants who worked with a Navigator completed job training at a rate 50 points higher than control group members. The model has increased efficiencies within the workforce and economic development system, leveraged significant private resources and led to improvements for clients in a dozen outcome areas, including training completion, entered employment, entered employment related to training and employment retention after 12 months.

Project Work Plan

Beginning in Fall 2012, a consortium of three workforce investment boards will implement this Housing and Employment Navigator over a 40-month period in Washington State. During the implementation, each of the three consortium members, partnering with local colleges, nonprofits and employers, will serve between 40-45 participants per year. The total number of adults impacted by homelessness served by the Workforce Innovation Fund is 400. Though the three areas serve clients with unique geographic, demographic and economic characteristics (veterans, ESL, single families, etc.) the components of the Navigator model will remain consistent.

Navigator Description

The Housing and Employment Navigator model is a specialized case management approach that offers individualized and flexible supports to link homeless families served by partnering housing programs to mainstream workforce services including sector training, educational programs and job placement services. The model first implemented by Building Changes in 2010 and was the result of a collaborative effort among housing and workforce leaders in the Puget Sound region of Washington State to pair effective housing interventions with proven workforce development strategies to serve families experiencing homelessness. The goal of the navigator service is to assist families obtain the employment, education and job training needed to establish a career path to family self-sufficiency and prevent a return to housing instability or homelessness.

Key workforce and housing partners participate in integrated service planning, interagency communication and cross training among services partners who are committed to achieving the cross systems outcomes of stable housing, full employment and reduced reliance on public benefits.

Navigators have expertise and skill sets combining housing, social service and workforce systems:

- Knowledge of educational, sector and job training programs including financial aid options, enrollment procedures and connected career opportunities
- Knowledge of employment resources and vocational services including vocational assessment and career planning; job readiness assistance and job search, placement and retention services
- Knowledge of homeless housing resources and social services including mental health, domestic violence and drug and alcohol treatment
- Knowledge of public benefits (TANF, Food, childcare, Social Security and subsidized housing) and the impact of earned income

Alignment with DOL Intent

The Department of Labor's Workforce Innovation Fund supports innovative approaches to the design and delivery of employment and training services that generate long-term improvements in the performance of the public workforce system, both in terms of outcomes for job seeker and

employer customers and cost-effectiveness. The Navigator initiative will be measured according to how well it accomplishes the following outcomes:

- 1. Reduce system complexities and improve access for clients.** Dedicated Navigators provide intensive case management services targeted at meeting the needs of homeless families with the goal of job placement, retention and transition to permanent housing. Navigators help to establish a culture of ability and high expectations for families, while offering the flexible, individual support they need to succeed. Backed by cross-system partnerships, navigators have the ability to engage and coordinate multiple systems and organizations to participate in an integrated services model to meet the diverse needs of homeless families.
- 2. Increase cooperation between multiple agencies serving homeless adults.** Navigators will be co-located and deliver services onsite at housing programs, one-stop centers, job training programs and local businesses. Navigators can be most effective if they work side-by-side with partners. This allows them to build pathways between systems and programs while also building knowledge and facilitating connections among workers in homeless assistance, housing, workforce, and education and training programs.
- 3. Leverage external partnerships and private funding.** Navigators and partners will access existing and potential resources, such as the Washington Families Fund, and redefine the role of homeless service providers within the workforce investment system.

Description of Proposed Evaluation Strategy:

One of DOL's goals is the development of evidence-based practices in workforce development. Significant resources are dedicated in this initiative to a thorough evaluation of project outcomes conducted by an external evaluator with experience assessing workforce interventions for homeless clients. For this project, the Northeast Program Evaluation Center (NEPEC) will conduct a project evaluation of Navigator collaboration and client outcomes to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the initiative by using a common evaluation methodology across all three regions. The goals of the client outcomes component of the evaluation will be to provide a site-by-site description of program implementation, as well as descriptive information on clients served; services received; longitudinal housing quality, stability, and satisfaction; and, client outcomes employment. Outcome data from the evaluation will be provided to the sites throughout the implementation of the initiative in order to guide development, and will be provided on a quarterly basis to the sites to allow ongoing monitoring of service delivery and outcomes. Monthly site-level statistics will be provided to housing partners on the implementation of evaluation procedures as well as to DOL.

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