

United Way of the Columbia-Willamette

Community Strengthening - LIFT Findings January, 2016

The Community Strengthening Cohort is a strong network of the most effective organizations in the Portland Metro region who are leading the way in improving the lives of children and families living in poverty and low income households, while prioritizing and addressing prevalent racial and ethnic disparities in poverty outcomes.

Vision: To strengthen organizational and collective capacity by creating culturally responsive systems so communities have equitable access to resources needed to thrive and contribute to social change.

Theory of change: We aim to break the cycle of childhood poverty by creating an environment where organizations are continuously improving ways to move kids and families out of poverty so that we can build knowledge around solutions. Because of this, we will focus on the following 3 areas

Student Success: Every child thrives in school, meets benchmarks and graduates high school ready for college or career.

Family Stability: Families have basic needs met, have stable housing, income and equitable access to resources.

Connected Communities: Communities in the region have deepened engagement and strengthened fabrics of support.

Our long term outcomes are centered on the notion that by working together we will see the following changes:

- 1) Improved effectiveness of services provided so children and families are able to break out of the cycle of poverty
- 2) Shift in organizational decision making structures and organizational processes that will increase members of communities of color breaking the cycle of childhood poverty
- 3) Affect policy change to eliminate barriers and improve systems at different levels for individuals and families living in poverty

UWCW and OHCS – LIFT Collaboration

Given the scope of work of UW's Community Strengthening cohort and the focus on Family Stability, we collaborated with OHCS as part of the LIFT Committee to design a set of questions that can help provide direct feedback in regards to:

- Development of an equity lens
- Creation of meaningful service partnership models between community-based, culturally specific service providers and traditional housing developers that would help at-risk families access new homes and be successful renters
- Chart methods and approaches to deepening engagement between housing providers and early learning hubs

The co-designed survey was distributed among the CS cohort in December or 2015. Of the total number of organizations that are represented in this effort, 20 agencies responded, over 1/4 involved with Housing Development; 1/3 have successful partnerships with housing developers or property managers.

The information presented in this document is a preliminary assessment of the data collected. We will bring back the information to the cohort for final review and insight before submitting it formally to the LIFT Committee and OHCS.

Participating Organizations

Virginia Garcia Memorial Foundation
Human Solutions
Innovative Changes
Adelante Mujeres
Council for the Homeless
Reading Results
IRCO
Bienestar
"I Have a Dream" Foundation-Oregon
Self Enhancement, Inc.

Friends of the Children
Community Action
YWCA Clark County
Centro Cultural of Washington County
Bridge Meadows
Clackamas Women's Services
LifeWorks NW
Urban League of Portland
PCRl
Children First for Oregon

Organizational Data Collection Report

Key Points:

- A. Build more affordable housing closer to critical community functions
 - ✓ Enabling people to stay in their neighborhood catchment area if they have to move
- B. Linked to supportive services
 - ✓ Including resident retention services
- C. Ensure culturally responsive programs and/or practices
 - ✓ Racial Equity Training
 - ✓ Leadership Training
 - ✓ Employment Services

What's Working

- Resident Services
 - Community Building-Relationship Building
- Assertive Engagement-Based Rental Assistance
- Good relationships with property managers
 - Tenant Referrals
- Risk Reduction funds
- Rent well classes

What isn't Working

- Funding Resident Services
 - Rural Development projects do not allow funding for services
- Assertive Engagement-Based Rental Assistance funding is too limited
- Not enough housing units
- Developing new housing is difficult
 - Lack of Affordable Land
 - Onerous application processes at all funding stages

Most difficult barriers to access housing for communities of color and low income families:

- Lack of credit/poor credit history
- Lack of rental history/poor rental history
 - Evictions
- Lack of stable income; and lack of funds for deposits
- Housing discrimination
- Finding vacancies, and filling out paperwork
- Lack of multiple bedroom units for larger families
- Language barriers

Most difficult barriers to maintain housing for communities of color and low income families:

- Lack of stable income
- Rising Housing Costs
- Lack of case management
- Work related issues – transportation, daycare, health care costs
- Habitability issues
- Multigeneration & potential overcrowding, lease violations