

Meeting Summary
LIFT Policy Subcommittee Meeting
September 16, 2015

Information on current parameters and expectations of the Legislature and the Governor

Margaret Van Vliet started off the meeting with a welcome as well as information on the current parameters and expectations of the Legislature and the Governor. Her initial goal was to focus the subcommittee with the intentions of the Legislature and the Governor, and to give the subcommittee enough context and sideboards to move them closer to program development. These subcommittees help to augment the capacity, expertise, and perspective of the Housing Council, and will also provide recommendations to the Council in early February, 2016. We hope the subcommittees will test current assumptions, provide some alternative points of view, and debate tradeoffs.

Margaret noted that during the 2015 Legislative session, the need for housing very clear. Legislators saw the need in a range of ways and personal experiences. Legislators also had diverse opinions about the funding, and options for buildings including small homeownership options to large multifamily buildings with extensive service partnerships. Some wanted to push the envelope on innovative design and build in the best neighborhoods; some wanted simple, basic design and construction (“a pattern book.”) Margaret identified the following points of consensus: serving families with kids; keeping it simple by not complicating it with tax credits and federal money; building quickly; geographic diversity; and keeping construction and development costs low.

Margaret noted one critical sideboard with these funds – the use of general obligation, Article XI-Q bonds has important implications in that the state must take an ownership role. She discussed, HB 2198 (2015) which provided some guidance about possible ownership structures to consider. HB 2198 (2015) did not end up passing, but the Department expects a version of the bill will be reconsidered in 2016.

Margaret also identified some of her key priorities:

- Housing more Oregonians;
- Having the potential for this to be a “game changer”;
- Keeping the good work the agency is doing to improve the NOFA process on track, and don’t assume we need to use that process here or that we need to overlay those guidelines;
- Taking some measured risks;
- Driving alignment and innovation;
- Surrounding ourselves with the best minds in housing and poverty alleviation;
- Taking an honest look at where – in spite of great work of housing developers and providers – there are people who aren’t being served by our resources, and who are consistently left behind; and
- Paying for services outside the real estate.

She discussed with the subcommittee the Governor’s priorities:

- Families within the DHS child welfare and self sufficiency programs;
- Communities of color, for whom incidence of homelessness, poverty, and housing instability are disproportionately high, when compared with white families;
- Rural communities, still not back economically from the recession, where the private sector isn’t coming forward to build supply at any level, least of all affordable.

The subcommittee was given a chance to ask questions and discuss what other points they were curious about. There were questions about engagement with the private sector, process, alignment with other state agencies, leveraging other resources, and lastly, questions about how subcommittee members would be expected to convey information back to their various communities. Some of these questions were flagged for later discussion, and others would be addressed in future meetings.

Review of Background Materials

There was a review of background materials (<http://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/DO/lift/meetings/09-16-2015-agenda-LIFT-PS-session-1.pdf>) provided to the subcommittee. These included materials provided to the Legislature with initial program criteria, as well as a copy of HB 2198 (2015), which drafted initial income and ownership guidelines. In addition, the committee reviewed a handout regarding Legislative intent and the Governor's priorities: <http://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/DO/lift/docs/09-15-15-Policy-Subcommittee-Background-Information.pdf>.

Review of Charter

The subcommittee reviewed their charter (<http://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/DO/messages/2015/LIFT-Policy-Subcommittee-Charter.pdf>), which includes key deliverables for the subcommittee.

Need

Staff from Oregon Housing and Community Services presented some high level information about the need for affordable housing across the state. A few summary slides can be found here: <http://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/DO/lift/docs/policy-subcommittee-housing-needs.pdf>. In particular, the presentation focused on the disproportionate housing need faced by communities of color, and housing needs unique to rural Oregon.

Jason Walling from the Department of Human Services presented information about the child welfare system. He noted that often, child welfare involvement disrupts housing – it may disrupt a family's eligibility for a housing unit or rent assistance, or other financial assistance that allows them to maintain housing. Child welfare can often times make payments to help families stay housed and maintain housing. Unfortunately child welfare payments are of limited duration when many families actually need ongoing assistance. Jason also noted a Strengthening, Preserving, Reunifying Families (SPRF) program that provides housing assistance to ensure families can either remain together or can reunify. He also noted housing is a huge barrier for kids aging out of the foster care system.

Jason Walling's presentation can be found here: <http://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/DO/lift/docs/09-16-2015-DHS-Presentation.pdf>.

There was a question from the subcommittee about disproportional representation of communities of color in foster care and the child welfare system, as well as rural families in child welfare. Jason noted that families of color disproportionately receive more referrals to child welfare, enter into foster care, and stay in foster care longer than white families. For rural Oregon families, he noted it was more difficult to maintain safety for kids because of the distances and barriers to getting services and transportation.

Discussion

The subcommittee discussed their reaction to the Governor's priorities and to the information presented.

There was significant discussion about the role of data in prioritizing communities and selecting geographies. The subcommittee discussed whether aligning data between DHS and OHCS would be possible, in the short or long term.

There was discussion about possible data points, including:

- Concentrations of families served by DHS and child welfare;
- Communities that are rapidly gentrifying;
- Rural communities where incomes have remained flat;
- Concentrations of communities of color;
- Existing data on homeless school children, and students attending multiple schools in a given period; and
- Childhood poverty data, particularly for communities of color (it was noted that the Early Learning Hubs have compiled some of this information).

There was discussion about how much data would be useful and a caution that OHCS should not spend too much time digging into data when likely it might reflect what we already know based on discussions with partners and communities across the state. Some members felt the subcommittee should have a bias towards action.

The subcommittee discussed trying to set or establish goals for outcome measures with staff developing the methodology for gathering the data needed for the measurement.

Discussion Questions

The subcommittee was posed three questions to begin discussing:

- 1) Thinking about project selection processes, knowing that we don't need to do a competition or an RFP, what would you think about selecting communities and asking for applicants or proposed projects? How open does the project selection process need to be?
- 2) We know about resident services and on site service delivery – how can we translate the services that DHS provides to work on site?
- 3) Knowing what the Governor is prioritizing in terms of communities of color, and knowing the current barriers that communities of color face in receiving funds from OHCS or being aware of housing units opening in their communities, how do we work towards intentional inclusion?

The subcommittee brainstormed a list of possibilities:

- a. Set goals and parameters that will help identify target populations;
- b. Thinking about expected and intended outcomes will help focus the work;
- c. Some communities are doing work on generational poverty issues, knowing there is some overlap with families in the child welfare system. Using Adverse Childhood Events (ACE) studies and benchmarks might help us identify how to move the dial for some families and how to measure outcomes;
- d. We should consider not having a competition, and instead consider whether an allocation formula might account for the three priorities, across the state or in targeted areas. Investment could be used as a catalyst to drive strategic partnership, planning,

- drive a longer term agenda on intersectionality;
- e. Communities should be targeted – we know where the need is. An RFP shouldn't be left wide open;
- f. If we chose not to have an RFP, how can we encourage innovation? An allocation formula doesn't necessarily encourage innovation and collaboration – want people to put the best ideas on the table;
- g. Like the idea of a pattern book, standardized building design to speed up construction, architecture;
- h. How do we encourage a blending of investment in high opportunity areas and preventing concentrating poverty;
- i. What if the subcommittee were to create a rank order of communities in the state based on several factors – to create a “next dollar serves this community” type of process, we could add narrative and data to why communities were selected and build the case that this should be a long term investment;
- j. We could consider a combination of some selection plus some competition to force innovation and proof that collaboration is there; and
- k. Would we want local communities to act as a gate keeper to select one proposal from an area?