

Director's Message



September 22, 2015

To our partners –

There's never been a more important time for us to create more opportunity for Oregonians through affordable housing. What we're doing today with our public resources is helping, but it's simply not enough. Too many of our neighbors lives are in chaos because they don't have a stable place to live, and too many school children are unable to learn because they don't have a safe place to call home. Governor Brown and the Legislature recognized this reality and made a game changing \$62.5 million investment in affordable housing.

Working with our many business and community-based partners, we have an incredible opportunity to get more vulnerable Oregonians into quality housing, and to help families make meaningful progress towards stability, school achievement, and economic self-reliance.

Governor Brown has asked us to strategically focus the \$40 million LIFT program on families with children, especially:

- Families in other state systems such as the child welfare and self-sufficiency systems within Oregon's Department of Human Services towards reunification and stability as well as families receiving services through Early Learning Hubs;
- Communities of color, for whom incidence of homelessness, poverty, and housing instability are disproportionately high; and
- Small rural communities (with less than 25,000 population) left behind by the economic recovery.

The Governor has also asked us to ensure that, as we do this work, we coordinate with Early Learning Hubs which have also been tasked with focusing on supporting stable and attached families.

With this message, I want to provide the housing community with some insights into how OHCS is taking up this charge, what you can count on from our agency, and how you can be engaged. You've been reading about the processes and meetings that started this month, and I'm delighted to report that the first meetings of the two subcommittees were productive, engaging, and energizing. We've set up a [webpage](#) so that you can track our progress – you'll find meeting schedules, materials, and later this week, you'll find meeting summaries from our first meetings.

As a note, the process for the \$20 million in Lottery Bonds that the Legislature committed to build housing for people with mental health and addictions disorders is also in process. The Oregon Health Authority is convening a stakeholder group later this month to discuss priority populations and determine what type of housing is most needed and where.



Beyond process, you can count on us to:

- Continue to surround ourselves with the best minds in our business to inform a robust program design;
- Seek out best practices and take lessons learned from the past several years to heart;
- Stretch our dollars by prioritizing the most cost effective construction models;
- Ratchet up our partnership with our colleagues at DHS for shared responsibility and accountability for success;
- Work across silos in state government so low income people don't have to navigate our complicated bureaucracies;
- Expedite the housing finance and development process by assigning top-notch staff and lawyers to streamline due diligence, project approvals and closings; and
- Keep everyone who's interested in this work – especially the Legislature – well informed about our progress and the ways they can provide input.

The Governor and the Legislature have charged the agency, its policy body, and its partners to fast-track production and get more Oregonians into housing. You have my commitment – and that of all OHCS staff – to deliver on our charge. Thank you for your continued partnership.

Best regards,



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