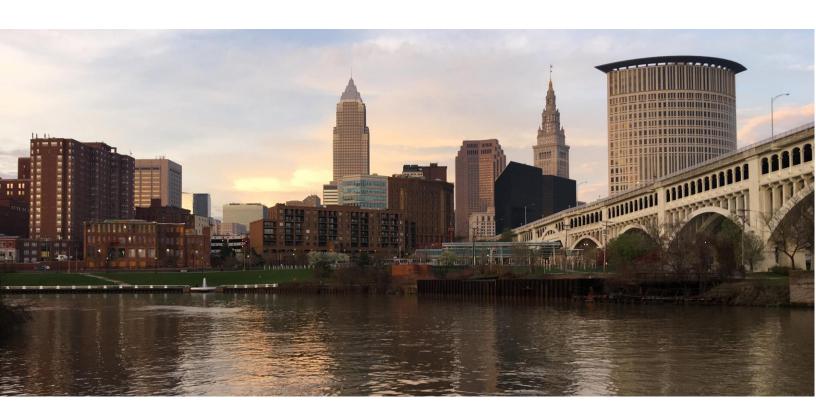**Seattle Jobs Initiative**

Final Report and Recommendations

Increasing Access to Income and Benefits for Homeless and Formerly Homeless Families in Cuyahoga County

October, 2017

Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) is providing a final report and recommendations for the *Increasing Access to Income and Benefits for Homeless and Formerly Homeless Families in Cuyahoga County* project. SJI began work on this project officially in late July and has competed a series of in-person and over the phone meetings, reviewed data and provided an initial project overview and a mid-point report at the end of August to the Ending Family Homelessness Steering Committee. SJI has had the opportunity to meet with a broad range of people representing Jobs and Family Services (JFS), Cuyahoga County's homeless housing system and workforce providers. SJI was also able to spend time talking with two women who have participated in these services and hear about their experiences. In addition, SJI has reached out to a number of national organizations, providers and experts to identify emerging approaches and best practices related to increasing income, accessing benefits and effective employment and training models.

SJI has looked closely at the areas of public benefits and employment and job training services as the primary vehicles to increase income for homeless and formerly homeless households. SJI has found challenges related to accessing and retaining important public benefits including TANF, SNAP and childcare vouchers. In addition, concerns about the impact of earned income on these programs, along with other forms of assistance including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), can impact the desire to pursue employment. SJI has provided recommendations to assist with improving access and responding to the challenges identified.

SJI also examined the process for participating in employment and job training services and mapped out the basic options available in Cuyahoga County, which are described below.

- Families on TANF/cash assistance, unless exempt, participate in Ohio Works First (OWF), which offers assessment, case management to remove employment barriers, the Work Experience Program (WEP), job readiness/job search assistance, short-term training/career pathway programs and onsite assistance at JFS at the Workforce Opportunity Resource Center (WORC)
- SNAP recipients including those with mandated work requirements may access the Work Experience Program (WEP), job readiness/job search assistance, and assistance onsite at JFS at the Workforce Opportunity Resource Center (WORC)
- Two family shelters – Westside Catholic and Family Promise – offer employment assistance as a part of housing case management services
- Residents in FrontLine Service supported housing programs are offered Supported Employment Services, which follows the Individual Placement and Support model

- Eligible youth and young adult families may access employment services via the Youth Resource Center in partnership with FrontLine Service North Point program, WIOA youth funded services and Towards Employment
- Libraries in Cuyahoga/Cleveland area offer job search assistance and access to mobile employment specialists from Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ)
- Households may self-initiate applying for services or be informally referred to workforce services offered by mainstream providers including the local Job Center, employment and training programs, GED/ABE programs and community colleges

SJI identified challenges, obstacles and areas in need of improvement related to increasing income through participation in local employment and training programs. Several recommendations have been made to address these conditions which are proposed below.

Assets and Opportunities

In addition to the identified challenges related to accessing benefits and increasing employment through employment and job training services, SJI found a number of assets and opportunities to build on in Cuyahoga County including the following:

- Community support across systems from a range of providers and local champions
- History of successfully addressing challenging homeless housing initiatives; an openness to innovation and approaching complex problems with new perspectives
- Cuyahoga County levy funds, which could potentially be realigned and/or re-purposed or used to draw down federal funds through SNAP Employment and Training
- Commitment from philanthropy to pilot innovative strategies and support system change work
- Opportunity presented by expanding the Food and Nutrition Services SNAP Employment and Training program in Cuyahoga County
- Youth Resource Center (YRC) and the partnership with Ohio Means Jobs, the North Point Program, YWCA and Towards Employment
- FrontLine Service Supported Employment services
- Involvement of Case Western Reserve and a local focus on data

Summary of Key Recommendations

As referenced above, SJI has identified a series of recommendations including the following key ideas:

♦ Develop a cross system partnership that works together to create a clear referral and service coordination process involving workforce, housing and JFS which leads to broad access to effective employment and training services across all providers for households experiencing homelessness and housing instability

♦ Increase local capacity to effectively address the employment and training needs of homeless households by developing expertise, organizational commitment and implementation of best practices. SJI suggests supporting at least one current workforce provider to commit to serving homeless households. In addition, it is recommended that housing providers currently offering employment assistance consider expanding and building out their employment services

♦ Improve the process and experience of applying for and renewing various public benefits including TANF, childcare vouchers and SNAP by considering the following: navigation, dedicated caseloads, points of contact, co-location, staff training and innovative technology solutions

♦ Explore the option of using CHILD and other data systems to better understand those who are "at-risk" of becoming homeless and their experiences as well as understanding how the data may help predict system utilization

♦ Expand and strengthen Supported Employment Services, starting with the FrontLine Service Supported Employment program, which is a model that could meet the unique needs of many homeless households. Included in this should be developing access to the funding and services offered by the State Vocational Rehabilitation program, Ohio Office of Disabilities (OOD)

♦ Vocationalize homeless housing services resulting in staff having the skills and resources to integrate income, employment and training into each household plan to end homelessness. Ideally the homeless housing process might be "saturated" with opportunities, examples and reminders about the benefits of engaging in employment

♦ Cross-system training and education resulting in staff from each sector – JFS, workforce and housing – having a working knowledge of each system including: eligibility, application and referral process; programs, services and resources; participation requirements and expectations and points of contact

FINDINGS

Identify:

1.) Local and state policies that impact the target population's ability to successfully access benefits, job training programs, and jobs that meet their needs

SJI has identified 4 important policy areas that impact homeless and unstably housed household's ability to access benefits, job training and suitable jobs.

❖ Childcare assistance
A common issue cited in interviews with stakeholders in Cuyahoga County was that many parents were unable to qualify for childcare while searching for a job. This means that many parents who need childcare during a job interview do not have access to it. This is a common practice as only 14 states currently allow families to qualify for and begin receiving child care assistance while a parent searches for a job[1] in 2016. These states include Alaska, California, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Utah, and Vermont. This figure includes two new states in 2015 as the District of Columbia and Utah adjusted their eligibility requirements to better serve families. Between 2015 and 2016, five of these states also increased the length of time that families could receive a childcare subsidy. Currently, Ohio only allows parents to continue receiving child care assistance for up to 91 days while searching for a job when they had previously qualified.

Another concern is the limited number of providers that low-income families can access due to reimbursement rates. According to the National Women's Law Center, "in 2016, Ohio's reimbursement rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance were below the federally recommended level—the 75th percentile of current market rates, which is the level designed to give families access to 75 percent of the providers in their community". Ohio's monthly reimbursement rate for center care for a four-year-old in Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) was $570 which was $340 (37 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care. Ohio's monthly reimbursement rate for center care for a one-year-old in Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) was $713 which was $542 (43 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.

A third concern in regard to childcare in Ohio are the current income requirements which limit the number of low-income families eligible for childcare subsidies. In 2016, the income limit was $26,124 or 130% of the 2016 federal poverty level for a family of three. This compares to $27,066 or 185% of the 2001 federal poverty level for a family of three in 2001. It is important to note that $27,066 in the year 2001 is worth $36,680 in 2016, a 35.5% increase. The U.S. dollar experienced an average inflation rate of 2.05% per year between 2001 and 2016.

A fourth, and final concern, is the cost of co-payments as a percent of income. A family of three in Ohio with income at 150 percent of poverty and one child in care paid a $88 monthly fee or 5% of income in 2001. In 2016, this family pays $227 or 9% of its income. A family of three with income at 100 percent of poverty and one child in care paid a $43 monthly fee or 4% of income in 2001. In 2016, this family pays $123 or 7% of its income.

The State of Ohio sets the parameters for childcare assistance. As such, outside of lobbying the state, there is not much that can be done to address these issues at the local level. That said, the National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability (SIAC) provides technical assistance to Child Care and Development Fund programs in developing child care subsidy systems that are child-focused, family-friendly, and fair to providers. SIAC works with grantees to help them reach goals related to subsidy eligibility, integrating quality and subsidy, strengthening program integrity, payment rules, rate setting, and other policies and practices that support providing high-quality care to more children from low-income families.

[1]   National Women's Law Center (2016). Red Light Green Light: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2016

❖ Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
In 2016, the US Department of Labor (DOL) began implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which identified specific populations for priority of service. The list of priority populations focused on individuals with barriers to employment and included people experiencing homelessness as well as other conditions that contribute to housing instability; people within two years of exhausting life time TANF benefits, single parents, long term unemployed, youth aged out of the foster care system, ex-offenders, low income, limited English and people with disabilities. This mandate did not include any additional funding and States working in coordination with DOL are required to develop plans and implement the new direction of WIOA. This mandate should provide an incentive to the workforce system to consider how to work collaboratively

with the housing system as well as other key social service sectors. The housing system will benefit from clearly articulating how its services, resources and role can assist with carrying out the goals of WIOA locally. The Seattle/King County Workforce Development Board (WDC) is currently funding a number of small pilots all focused on engaging hard to serve priority populations in workforce services. In one of the pilots an employment program is working to link homeless household with employment services in coordination with a local Coordinated Entry provider. This pilot is designed to help inform the WDC about how to best meet the needs of homeless households.

❖ Workforce services for TANF families on cash assistance and SNAP recipients
Current workforce services for TANF families on cash assistance and for SNAP recipients in Cuyahoga County include Work Experience programs (WEP), barrier removal assistance, job readiness and job search assistance and enrollment in local training programs. Services are offered by community partners and Jobs and Family Services (JFS) including through the Workforce Opportunity Resource Center (WORC) located on site at the JFS Virgil Brown building. Based on SJI's observations and experiences within similar communities, JFS should review outcomes data and closely consider whether these services adequately meet with needs of TANF and SNAP recipients with more complex barriers including homelessness and housing instability, behavioral health conditions, limited English and households that frequently cycle on and off of cash assistance due to these conditions. JFS may consider offering evidence based supported employment, also known as Individual Placement and Support (IPS), to TANF and SNAP recipients with complex barriers. The State of Washington is piloting the option of offering Evidence Based supported employment to higher-barriered TANF families including families with behavioral health conditions and housing instability. The initial results are very positive with a group that has traditionally not done well with traditional mainstream employment services. Washington modeled this approach on a similar project in California. In addition, Heartland Alliance in Chicago provides IPS services to refugees in coordination with the state vocational rehabilitation agency and Resettlement services to assist refugees that experience behavioral health conditions including PTSD.

❖ SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) Third-Party Partnership model

The SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) program is a skills and job training program for SNAP participants administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). It is a key resource for States, Counties and their partners to assist SNAP participants meet their

need to increase job skills and access quality employment. SNAP E&T offers funding to States to provide a package of employment and training services to SNAP participants and offers a "third-party reimbursement" model that allows community based organizations and community and technical colleges to expand employment and training services by drawing down funds based on their investments of non-federal funds. The program has been underutilized in most areas of the country although Washington State has successfully leveraged this resource to bring in over $40 million dollars annually.

JFS is currently working on developing a process to add third-party partners in Cuyahoga County beginning in 2018 and there are a number of local CBOs that appear to be well suited for this. There is a newly implemented State of Ohio SNAP E&T pilot with Center of Employment Opportunities (CEO) focused on the re-entry population in process. SNAP E&T provides an important funding vehicle to build out and expand services for homeless job seekers.

2.) Local and state partners to join the coalition

SJI recommends the formation of a cross system work group to develop and implement a housing and employment partnership with the suggested membership.

- Office of Homeless Services
- Ending Family Homelessness Steering Committee
- Ohio Means Jobs
- Ohio Works First
- JFS – Childcare, SNAP, Cash Assistance/TANF
- Local homeless housing providers
- Local workforce providers
- Philanthropy

3.) Best practices in income supports, benefits, workforce development, and job training programs for the target population from across the country and programs that can be replicated locally

Best Practices - Income Supports and Benefits

The process of applying for and renewing various public benefits including TANF (cash assistance), childcare vouchers, SNAP and other forms of assistance is time consuming, confusing and stressful in particular for households experiencing a housing crisis. According to two formerly homeless women who have been JFS

clients as well as housing staff who have assisted households with pursuing public benefits, treatment by a number of JFS staff often feels rushed, impersonal and lacking clarity. For homeless households and the staff assisting them there is general confusion about when to apply/re-apply, what documents to submit and when, and what benefits are actually available. Both families and housing staff are unsure how to best communicate, get information and navigate the system.

❖ Navigation

To resolve these issues communities in other regions of the country have implemented navigator positions which act as a bridge across systems to assist individuals to understand, access and retain public benefits. These navigators develop an expertise in multiple systems, typically form key points of contact across systems, and are strong advocates for those seeking services.

Navigators may work specifically within one particular system. For example, college navigators assist participants understand and access community and technical colleges and disability employment navigators assist job seekers with disabilities access services with American Job Centers. A navigator focused on benefit access and renewal could be helpful in alleviating the current confusion.

❖ Dedicated Caseloads, Points of Contact and Co-location

Two somewhat related approaches are to establish dedicated TANF or SNAP caseloads within JFS focused on clients with similar needs and conditions or to develop points of contact within key organizations. These strategies can facilitate stronger and clearer pathways of communication and service coordination with participants and service providers. Navigators, staff with dedicated caseloads and points of contact can be co-located or have the ability to go to where clients typically congregate including shelters, libraries or foodbanks, for example. The Housing and Employment Navigator model from Washington State uses a cross system team approach which includes a point of contact from each system; TANF, workforce and housing as well as an employment navigator. This team meets on a regular basis to consult about mutual clients, referrals and opportunities to share resources.

❖ Staff Training

Staff training is an additional important component and would benefit Cuyahoga County significantly. There is a need for cross system training for management and direct service staff from both the housing and JFS systems to increase each group's knowledge and understanding of the other system. Both systems can be complex and require time to understand and utilize but

serve many of the same households. By increasing cross system knowledge and understanding staff will be in a better position to effectively serve their mutual clients.

❖ Technology
Another area of opportunity being piloted in different parts of the country involves using technology to improve access and communication. The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) has developed a mobile app that can be accessed from a smartphone or tablet and allows clients to get a benefit summary (case status, monthly benefit amount, next benefit issue date, due dates and EBT balance), receive alerts such as upcoming appointments and recertification dates, view notices that have been sent via mail as well as wireless printing, see if their submitted documents have been processed yet, update basic contact information, request income verification (for housing or childcare subsidies) and, most importantly, take pictures of their documents and upload them to their case directly so that they don't have to worry about mailing them or finding a fax machine. This is especially helpful for clients living in remote areas or without access to transportation. The mobile app is free to download from the app store. The notifications are also particularly helpful because most of the time, if a client's case is closed, it is because he or she did not submit an interim report or recertification, so the alerts are helpful in ensuring that clients are aware of the dates by which documents are required. The upload is also very fast, so if a worker is on the phone with a client, he or she can ask the client to take a picture of the document and it shows up within about 15 minutes and can be processed right away. It also helps keep the wait time in local offices and call system down because clients can find the answers to their questions right in the app. DTA will also be adding a feature so that outreach and SNAP E&T providers can login for a client on their smartphone or tablet to get this information if the client does not have a device themselves. Here is a link to further define: http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dta/dta-connect.html

Best practices workforce development/job training

Below are examples of best practices in workforce and job training approaches which address the needs of homeless/unstably housed households (youth and young adult; single adults and families). The first two examples, Secure Jobs in Massachusetts and Connecticut and the Housing and Employment Navigator in Washington State, are cross system efforts which combine mainstream workforce services and homeless housing programs to address the dual issues of homelessness and unemployment/underemployment. Additional best practices

include Supported Employment or Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model and housing programs which have expanded their mission and services and created full scale employment programs often using a social enterprise approach.

❖ <u>Cross system efforts combining workforce services and homeless housing programs</u>
Both the Secure Jobs and the Housing and Employment Navigator Models have been piloted initially with combined public and private funding. The Secure Jobs model was funded by the Fireman's Fund in Massachusetts and the Housing and Employment Navigator Models by the Building Changes' Washington Youth and Families fund. These private funds have both been used in a similar fashion. The Secure Jobs model funded a staff position to work in the local American Job Center (AJC) to specifically serve homeless families participating in the Secure Jobs pilot which included housing and case management assistance. The Housing and Employment Navigator Model used grant funds to support Employment Navigators that worked for community based employment and training organizations. The employment navigators were assigned to specific homeless housing programs to work with families that were moving from homeless to housed.

The benefit to these approaches has been to establish partnerships across key systems and develop the capacity and commitments within workforce organizations to effectively serve homeless households. In addition, both approaches were developed through a planning process which included funders, workforce, housing and income support systems and implemented in phases in order to pilot best practices and strategies.

❖ <u>Combined Housing and Employment Providers</u>
In addition to these two cross system efforts, there are examples of agencies that began primarily as housing providers and have expanded their mission to create full scale employment programs in response to the needs of the people they serve. These organizations have made a strategic commitment to developing high quality employment services and used a variety of funds to develop these services including philanthropy, governmental and social enterprise revenues.

Below is a list of three large scale supportive housing providers which serve homeless youth, individuals and families which have opted to develop social enterprise models as well as Supported Employment services. The social enterprise and Supported Employment models are two common approaches

used by housing providers along with traditional job search and assistance to meet the unique needs of people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. It's also important to note that each of the programs listed are SNAP E&T providers and do not rely specifically on traditional workforce funding.

- Central City Concerns – Portland, Oregon
  http://www.centralcityconcern.org
- Community Housing Partnerships –
  San Francisco, CA.
  https://www.chp-sf.org
- Housing Hope – Everett, Washington
  http://www.housinghope.org

There are two notable shelter programs that have added employment and training services also using a social enterprise approach.

- UMom – Phoenix Arizona
  https://www.umom.org
- St Johns – Sacramento
  http://saintjohnsprogram.org

4.) Strategies to detect and more quickly address the needs of housing insecure families to prevent homelessness

In an ideal world, individuals and families would be identified and supported before they experience homelessness. The first step in this process is to understand the variables that predict homelessness among the local population. These variables often differ based on demographics (gender, race/ethnicity, nativity, change in marital status, number of children, etc.) and could be driven by patterns in personal circumstances (job loss, unexpected pregnancy, high conflict among family members, drug use, etc). Research often provides general

Social Enterprise Model

Social Enterprise model - Mission driven and employment focused business designed to hire and assist people who face barriers to work by offering training, supported work experience and employment within an operating business. Social Enterprises offer low barrier access to structured and instructive employment and training opportunities in order to increase skills, build work experience and instill confidence. Local examples include: Goodwill, Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) and Bloom Bakery/ Towards Employment.

Supported Employment/ Individual Placement and Support (IPS) – Evidence based model designed to assist individuals with on-going barrier to employment that is based in the following components: zero exclusion criteria, participant preferences, work incentives planning offered, job development and ongoing support services from Employment Specialists, integration with behavioral health services, rapid job search and assumption of readiness for competitive employment

information on predictor variables such as drug use, domestic violence, as well as poor mental and physical health. However, each community has unique local conditions which are often not taken into account in published research. As such, it is recommended that local data be analyzed to determine the predictor variables by demographic group as well as an analysis of patterns in circumstances. It is likely that much of this analysis can be performed using data in the Childhood Integrated Longitudinal Data System (CHILD) where appropriate sample sizes exist.

Once the predictors are identified, the data can be explored to determine how many people in the demographic groups "fit the profile". This can help provide information on the number of residents who may be at-risk of experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, this information can also help the system predict future patterns in utilization. As such, better decisions can be made around resource levels such as staffing, funding, as well as changes in the types of services necessary to meet the needs of the target population.

It is important to collect qualitative data to supplement or add to these findings. Findings from quantitative data are not representative of the universe of available information. Important details may go missing if decisions are based solely on quantitative data. Qualitative data should be collected from all subgroups represented in the target population. This will allow for an identification of unique themes within groups as well as themes are present across groups. Qualitative questions could include (but are not limited to):

- What was happening in their life (home, work, etc.) prior to experiencing homelessness?
- What specific barriers to income and benefits did they face prior to experiencing homelessness?
- In what ways were their basic needs being met? Were all of their basic needs being met?
- What was their capacity for work?
- What contributed to their participation (or non-participation) in the local labor force?
- How would they describe their experience with the homeless system?
- If they could design a system that helps homeless individuals what would it look like?

This information, in aggregate, can help inform ways the system can identify and perform outreach to vulnerable populations prior to their experiencing homelessness. For example, predictors for a single mother may include number of children, form of transportation, and distance from areas with high density of entry-level jobs. This information can be used to train service providers what to look for among single

mothers and, if they run across a single mother with these predictors, they can be more intentional in the type of support provided.

Furthermore, this information can help the system better understand its target population. This is a precursor to human-centered design. Human-centered design (HCD) "is a design and management framework that develops solutions to problems by involving the human perspective in all steps of the problem-solving process. Human involvement typically takes place in observing the problem within context, brainstorming, conceptualizing, developing, and implementing the solution."[1] Engaging in a human-centered design (HCD) process allows the system to dive below the surface of mainstream understanding of its target population and into a space where their unique experiences and needs are better understood. Through this approach, a system often learns that a one-size-fits-all approach will not suffice for disparate demographic groups (e.g., single mothers, recent immigrants, etc). By learning about the necessary conditions for multiple demographic groups to thrive, and designing a system that takes this information into account, it is expected that system outcomes will be stronger and the target population will have a better experience.

HCD involves collecting detailed information from current and former members of the target population, using this information to generate ideas, and then testing implementation plans. Three key phases to this approach are:

- Inspiration Phase – immerse yourself in the lives of the target population and come to deeply understand their needs. This can be done by interviewing a diverse sample of the target population to help identify the key needs and issues that they face in gaining access to as well as maintaining income and benefits. This data can be presented in the form of empathy maps. In the best of circumstances, immersion will also occur by shadowing the target population or re-creating the experience of the target population.
- Ideation Phase – use innovative HCD tools to analyze data collected from participants to identify themes and trends (make sense of what was learned during the inspiration phase), identify opportunities for system design solutions, and prototype possible solutions.
- Implementation Phase – bring your design to life by creating the ideal system based on Ideation analysis, put the design through rapid prototyping collecting qualitative and quantitative data from the target population and other stakeholders, and adjust the design as needed.

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[1] Human-centered design: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human-centered_design

Seattle Jobs Initiative recently undertook a human-centered design process for one of its employment programs. In performing interviews with the target population, transportation challenges was a theme that appeared across all demographic groups.

The initial assumption was that the transportation system was costly for the target population and the 70% on-time rate contributed to their frustration. However, through recreating their experience, and upon further discussions, it was found that it was less about the cost of transportation (many participants received transportation passes) and the on-time rate (this rarely came up through interviews). The problem had more to do with scarcity of time especially for members of the target population with children.

Individuals with children would have to (1) get up early (2) use public transportation to get their children to childcare (3) proceed to the training facility using public transportation (4) leave the training and use public transportation to pick up their children at childcare and (5) take public transportation home with children. In some cases, these individuals would be spending nearly as much time traveling to the training as they would spend in the training itself. The issue was compounded when adding the need to buy groceries, walking to the bus stop in bad weather, and safety on the bus in the evenings. In general, if participants with children were assessing cost/benefits of the training, they may find the costs to be too high. These issues also arose for members of the target population without children who lived a distance from the training center.

Using this information, the ideation phase shifted from prototyping ways to offset the cost of transportation and improving on-time rates. The ideation phase resulted in possible solutions such as partnering with King County Metro to help participants in understanding and using its van pool option, working with participants to identify the best route to the training if using public transportation, working with childcare partners to help participants identify childcare centers near the training center or their home, and exploring the option of partnering with grocery delivery services (QFC home delivery, Amazon Fresh, etc.) to provide discounts.

In summary, using quantitative and qualitative data to drive evidence-based policy and system design could improve outcomes. Information should be collected from members of the target population as well as various stakeholders that makeup the system. This information can be used to prototype, test and implement solutions. While this may seem like a complex process, the complexities tend to be centered around finding the motivation, time and funding.

5.) Process to facilitate using TANF funded housing stabilization resources for homeless families.

As a block grant program, TANF gives wide latitude for state and local innovation in serving eligible populations, including homeless families. A number of states use TANF funds to provide one-time, short term assistance to resolve an emergency or meet a crucial need for eligible families. It is common to use TANF funds in this way to resolve or prevent a housing crisis, including funds for rent or utilities. In Cuyahoga County the Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) program is an example of this type of service. In Washington State TANF funds are used in a similar fashion through the Additional Requirements for Emergent Need (AREN) program which allows for emergency assistance to be accessed one time per year. This resource should be a core strategy for coordinated intake providers, housing programs and other key social services to assist with preventing and resolving housing emergencies for eligible families.

TANF funds can also be used for any or all components of Rapid Rehousing (RRH) including the housing search component, case management and rental assistance. If more than four months of rental assistance are provided, TANF reporting requirements come into play. To avoid this, communities will limit using TANF funds to four months and use other eligible rental assistance funds for additional months when needed.

Beyond paying for RRH, TANF can also pay for the augmented services that would help families being rapidly re-housed succeed. Some states prioritize families who are being rapidly re-housed for child care slots under TANF - they outstation TANF funded employment services at shelters and even use TANF funds to pay for basic housing needs such as furniture.

Across the country there are examples of TANF funds and services being used in coordination with local homeless housing systems. In Mercer County, New Jersey there is a RRH unit within the TANF department and in Salt Lake City, Utah the homeless service system uses TANF money to supplement their RRH interventions in alignment with their McKinney Vento services. California has recently awarded $47 million to TANF agencies for rapid re-housing and Atlanta, Georgia is in the process of implementing a large homelessness initiative which integrates TANF funds, private dollars and traditional homeless housing funding streams. The Washington, DC area is developing a multi-system approach to streamline services for families on TANF who experience behavioral health and homelessness.

Washington State considered using TANF funds to support RRH several years ago but instead elected to allocate other state homeless funds for RRH services for families on TANF. This initiative was called the Ending Family Homelessness program and allowed

TANF eligibility workers to refer TANF families to designated RRH services through the local coordinated entry provider. This project resulted in a cross-system partnership and coordinated service effort that benefited families in a variety of ways.

These examples point to the potential benefits of using TANF funds for RRH and strategic partnerships between TANF and homeless housing services. Benefits include:

- Introducing and aligning TANF funds as new and flexible resource to support housing interventions including RRH
- Facilitating partnerships, coordination and strategic usage of resources between systems
- Developing a clear process to mutually serve TANF families experiencing homelessness and housing instability

The process to facilitate using TANF funds for RRH in Cuyahoga County should include peer to peer meetings with some of the communities listed here. These conversations should involve representation from a combination of key systems; JFS, Ohio Works First (OWF) and the Ending Family Homelessness Steering Committee. This process should also be a part of the recommended effort to develop a cross system partnership that results in a clear referral and service coordination process involving workforce, housing and JFS which creates access to effective employment and training services across all providers for households experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

Recommendations

1.) Improvements to the local JFS and Work Force Development systems to increase their understanding of, and sensitivity to, homelessness issues to increase the target population's access to benefits, job training, workforce development and employment;

Housing and workforce services operate separately within Cuyahoga County with the exception of a few partnerships and projects that serve specific client groups. There is a need for an integrated approach that coordinates the two systems and is non-burdensome to households that need this assistance the most. There are a variety of workforce providers and options in Cuyahoga County but there is not a reliable community process to ensure access and success. In addition, there is not a specific workforce organization that has developed an expertise, commitment and effective programming to address the needs of homeless job seekers.

SJI recommends the following:

➢ *Develop a cross system partnership that works together to create a clear referral and service coordination process involving workforce, housing and JFS which leads to broad access to effective employment and training services across all providers for households experiencing homelessness and housing instability.*

This partnership needs the involvement and commitment of leadership from each system as well as a direct service level design that incorporates each system. To effectively develop this partnership SJI recommends the creation of a workgroup with the suggested core membership:

▪ Office of Homeless services/CoC	▪ JFS – Childcare, SNAP, Cash Assistance/TANF
▪ Ending Family Homelessness steering committee representation	▪ Local homeless housing providers
▪ Ohio Means Jobs	▪ Local workforce providers
▪ Ohio Works First	▪ Philanthropy

This workgroup will benefit from clear milestones and project goals, a timeline and clarity regarding roles and level of authority across the three systems. An initial focus for this group should be to identify, translate and align the independent goals and services of each system. SJI would encourage each system to define their roles and areas of expertise and consider opportunities to broaden their roles and approach their work differently. This core group should operate with the intention of engaging stakeholders with needed subject matter expertise or who represent systems or partners essential to implementing recommended changes.

Starting points –

♦ Cross system education; common understanding of each sector (housing, workforce and income supports).
♦ Identify what each sector contributes in the form of services, resources and expertise to meeting the needs of households experiencing homelessness and housing instability.
♦ Consider shared data system and options for tracking increases in income, both earned and unearned, in order to facilitate data driven decisions and program development.
♦ Identify what's working locally to build on. For example -
  o North Point/Youth Resource Center relationship
  o FrontLine Service Supported Employment
  o OMJ Mobile Employment Specialists at local libraries
  o Others
♦ Review of best practices; cross system models used in other communities identified in best practices section.

➢ *Increase local capacity to effectively address the employment and training needs of homeless households by developing expertise, organizational commitment and implementation of best practices.*

Based on our findings there is a need to increase local capacity and offer more robust programming with broad access that effectively addresses the employment and training needs for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability. SJI suggests the following options for expansion.

- First, there should be at least one current workforce provider which is fully committed to serving homeless households - similar to the way Towards Employment focuses on the re-entry population in Cuyahoga County. This doesn't exist currently as far as SJI could determine but the region would be well served to develop a program with a similar focus but in serving homeless job seekers. Ideally, this provider should offer access to short term training and career pathway programs suitable to households who have experienced homelessness and many of the accompanying conditions

- Current housing providers, in particular those that currently offer employment assistance should consider expanding and building out their employment services based on the example programs listed under the best practices. Ideally these programs could expand and offer services that are naturally integrated with housing and other needed services. In addition to job readiness and job search these programs should consider the social enterprise and/or supported employment options. The implementation of SNAP E&T and third-party partnerships is an opportunity to partially support these efforts and recommendations.

- Expand and strengthen Supported Employment services beginning with the FrontLine Service Supported Employment program. FrontLine Service offers evidenced based Supported Employment Services which currently includes a staff of 6 – 8 FTEs and is funded and designed to serve primarily FrontLine Service supported housing residents. They are not currently funded by the State Vocational Rehabilitation program Ohio Office of Disabilities (OOD) and in practice are accessible to a limited referral base. Supported Employment is a model that could meet the unique service needs of many homeless households in Cuyahoga county and presents a viable option for expansion. In addition, there should be efforts to look at expanding services by engaging other providers including those within the behavioral health system.

➤ *Cross-system training and education*

Imbedded in the recommendations above is the need to provide cross system training and education that results in a common understanding of each sector by staff working in the housing, workforce and JFS. This training should include what each sector contributes in the form of services, resources and expertise to meeting the needs of households experiencing lack of income, homelessness and housing instability.

2.) National programs utilizing best practices to develop peer to peer relationship, including potentially site visits;

SJI has identified the following approaches and best practices that could be informative and helpful. SJI can assist with introductions and facilitating peer outreach when needed.

Secure Jobs Model – Massachusetts/Connecticut

The Secure Jobs model was developed in Massachusetts initially in 2013 with support and guidance from the Fireman's Foundation in response to a need to increase income for families experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The model was informed by a planning process which included seven of the state's Interagency Council on Homelessness and Housing (ICHH) Regional Networks to End Homelessness. The work of this group developed an alternative service model for homeless families that offers integrated housing and employment services and included, among other components, integrated and personalized employment services to support both entry into and retention in full-time employment in jobs with family-sustaining wages and career ladders.

The program offered a combination of service options for families which included:
- Job Readiness Training (focus on soft skills & restoring self-confidence)
- Skills Training (medical, technical and services, with regard to CORI status)
- Job Search/Placement (working one on one with an Employment Specialist)

These services were integrated with housing case management and the combined outcomes of stable housing supported by sustained employment.

http://iasp.brandeis.edu/research/housing/securejobs.html

Housing and Employment Navigator - Washington State

This approach aligns key systems (workforce, housing and key social services) to support homeless households obtain employment and stable housing utilizing a navigator to coordinate a client centered team approach. The Employment Navigator is employed by the workforce system to work one-on-one with the homeless households and convene a team that lines up employment, housing and social services to develop a tailored action plan for securing steady employment and stable housing. The model is supported at an administrative level by leadership from key systems and built on intentional partnerships with clear roles and responsibilities.

Examples include intentionally pairing employment services with homeless housing services in particular Rapid Re-Housing Services to concurrently address both housing and employment needs through collaboration and shared expertise and resources.

http://buildingchanges.org/library-type/best-practice-reports/item/956-coordinating-employment-and-housing-services-a-strategy-to-impact-family-homelessness

TANF SEP – Washington State

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model is a supported employment approach designed to assist individuals with complex employment barriers including disabling conditions obtain competitive employment by offering intensive supports. Services can be delivered by both employment as well as clinical staff to address a range of employment challenges. Washington State is currently piloting the Foundational Community Supports project which offers IPS to TANF families with behavioral health and housing stability conditions. This project is showing positive results for specific TANF families that have been challenged to become employed with traditional workforce models.

TANF SEP
Presentation Materi

There are supplemental materials which provide additional information each of these approaches attached to this report.

Additional programs which combine housing and employment services and include either the social enterprise model and/or Supported Employment:

- Central City Concerns – Portland, Oregon
  http://www.centralcityconcern.org
- Community Housing Partnerships – San Francisco, CA.
  https://www.chp-sf.org
- Housing Hope – Everett, Washington
  http://www.housinghope.org
- UMom – Phoenix Arizona
  https://www.umom.org
- St Johns – Sacramento
  http://saintjohnsprogram.org

3.) Capacity needed for workforce development providers working with homeless populations;

As stated above, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) identified homeless youth, individuals and families as among the specific populations listed for priority of service. This new direction did not include any new funding or specific programming and presents a challenge to the traditional workforce system in particular in serving homeless households. At the same time, it's important to note that people experiencing homelessness and housing instability experience a broad range of needs in particular when considering employment and training services. Among the homeless there are people that are currently or very recently employed as well as those with limited skills, minimal work histories and little attachment to work. This suggests that an increased capacity and a full range of workforce service options are needed to effectively meet WIOA's new direction.

Workforce staff will benefit by increasing their understanding of the common needs and effective service approaches when working with homeless populations. In general people experiencing homelessness and housing instability may need the following when participating in workforce services:

- Higher levels of support and service intensity
- Increased time to complete services and programs as progress may be slower and disrupted
- Need for navigation assistance within and across key systems/sectors
- Collaboration between workforce programs and needed mainstream social services including housing programs
- Workforce programs which offer a structured and supportive environment
- Broader consideration of work readiness and ideally a zero-exclusion approach

- Need for a range of supportive services and work supports (for example, transportation, work clothes/supplies, identification)

Traditional workforce programs often measure work readiness and motivation primarily on a person's attendance and self-directed follow through. People experiencing homelessness may struggle with attendance and follow through due to the complexities of being in a homeless situation and these behaviors may not reflect their motivation or need for a job. A resulting practice implication for workforce providers is to understand and address the support and service needs for people struggling with housing instability and to coordinate services with housing partners.

A common observation of the traditional workforce system is that in order to serve high numbers of job seekers with limited WIOA resources, services need to be delivered with a high volume, light touch approach. Workforce providers have also been subject to high performance standards which means that job seekers who are job ready and skilled may likely be prioritized for services. Workforce providers also see local employers as a primary customer and want to assist them with meeting their labor needs.

While it is important for workforce providers to improve their capacity to serve job seekers experiencing housing instability, the housing system will benefit from clearly articulating their role and services and how they can be a valuable partner to workforce in meeting their range of responsibilities.

Based on SJI's interviews in Cuyahoga County there is general recognition that obtaining an entry-level job in the greater Cleveland area is feasible as households move from homelessness to housed. However, sustaining employment, attaining wage progression and accessing the training and education needed to establish a career is very challenging. This is particularly so for households participating in Rapid Rehousing (RRH) who experience a need to become employed quickly as well as for those without a high school degree.

The workforce system including community and vocational technical colleges offer access to the programs needed to enter a career pathway. The partnership between workforce and housing needs to go beyond getting a job and offer clear access and support to households that need post-secondary education and certificate programs. As a part of the recommendation to create a cross system partnership involving JFS, workforce and housing it is essential to identify workforce providers that can provide access to career pathway programs that are suitable to households who have experienced homelessness and housing instability. For example, the Secure Jobs model in Massachusetts offers access to short term training programs as a part of its partnership with local workforce programs.

4.) Training needs for workforce development, JFS, and homeless provider staff.

> *Vocationalize homeless housing services beginning at Coordinated Intake and across all programs and services*

Vocationalizing homeless services involves expanding the role of housing staff to incorporate a focus on increasing income as a key part of resolving homelessness and retaining stable housing. Based on SJI's interviews many staff clearly incorporate this perceptive already but there are opportunities to better equip staff in this area through training and developing partnership with local workforce and JFS programs. Ideally the homeless housing process might be "saturated" with opportunities, examples and reminders about the benefits of engaging in employment. Encouraging peer to peer support in this area when feasible is helpful with integrating an employment focus within services.

Vocationalizing doesn't require that housing staff become employment staff or career counselors but instead can engage households in the line of questions listed below and have a basic understanding of workforce services and benefits along with clear referral options and partners to work with.

Vocationalizied housing staff are able to integrate income, employment and training into each household's plan to end homelessness. Staff working across the entire continuum of homeless housing services should be able to engage households in a conversation about increasing income (despite perceived job readiness). The conversation can proceed as follows:

Would you like to explore a plan to increase your income?	Would you like help finding employment or training or do you already have a plan?	Would you like me to help you connect with employment or training services?
What type of work would you like to do and what do you think would be most helpful?	Would you like information on accessing benefits; cash assistance, SNAP, SSI?	Would you like me to help you connect with assistance to apply for benefits?

Vocationalized staff are prepared with a viable answer/response for each of the questions above including referral options to employment and training services and resources which meet a range of needs.

Benefit Planning
A key component of *Vocationalizing* is the ability to accurately address questions related to the impact of earned income on benefits and refer households for benefit planning as needed. Staff should have a basic knowledge on how earned income impacts benefits including cash assistance, SNAP, childcare, housing subsidies, SSI/SSDI, Medicaid. Staff should also have a resource to refer people to answer specific of more complicated questions related to benefits. Ohio's Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation should offer this resource for people with disabilities. There may be a need to consult with the Housing Authority, Cuyahoga County and Cleveland to understand the impact of earned income on rent subsidies and the Earned Income Disregard benefit. Another important work incentive is the Earned Income Tax Credit and there are local resources to assist with this work incentive.

➢ *Cross system training and education*

Staff from each sector will benefit from cross system training and education that results in a common understanding of each system by staff working in the housing, workforce and JFS. This training should include the following for JSF, workforce and housing:

- Overall mission and goals of each sector
- Eligibility, application and referral process
- Programs, services and resources
- Participation requirements and expectations
- Providers and capacity
- Outcomes
- Communication, points of contact

Conclusion and Next Steps

Cuyahoga County is well positioned to make significant progress towards improving access to benefits and participation in effective employment and job training services for households experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

An important next step is to develop a cross system partnership, most likely in the form of a small work group, to strategize, plan and begin implementation of the identified recommendations. This partnership should be made up of leaders from key sectors including the JFS Office of Homeless Services, the Ending Family Homelessness Steering Committee, JFS TANF/SNAP services, Ohio Works First, Ohio Mean Jobs, local providers from both workforce and housing and local philanthropy. SJI suggests that this core group remain somewhat small in membership and operate with the intention of engaging key stakeholders with

subject matter expertise and/or who represent important systems and partners essential to implementing change. This work group should also take the lead on reaching out to peers from across the country to learn about successful initiatives and best practices to inform next steps.

In reviewing the report, it suggests that the findings and recommendations fall into general categories that either focus primarily on the relationship between homeless housing services and public benefits or homeless housing and employment and job training services. At the same time there is a clear interdependency, in particular from the consumer perspective, among the three key areas. An important task for the group moving forward will be to determine how to best address these key areas concurrently and strategically.

The effort to connect the distinct systems of homeless housing, workforce and income supports/public benefits is an essential and ambitious goal. SJI has identified and referenced a number of emerging strategies and best practices but recognizes that there are few communities that have been highly effective in this type of cross system effort. Cuyahoga County is fortunate to have a strong local commitment and sound opportunities to build on including local champions, an openness to innovation and recent accomplishments addressing challenging housing and homelessness issues. SJI is pleased to be able to assist and contribute in this effort and we look forward to your success.