



King County

Department of Community and Human Services

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SUMMARY

Program Design: Project Self-Sufficiency for Homeless Families and Singles (Veterans and Human Services Levy Plan 2.8 (b) attached)

1. Goal

The Veterans and Human Services Levy Service Improvement Plan set a goal of ending homelessness through outreach, prevention, permanent supportive housing and employment.

2. Objective: Link educational, vocational and employment opportunities to housing and supportive services.

Also known as Activity 2.8, this plan was initially reviewed by the Veterans and Human Services Levy Boards in January 2008 and \$3,800,000 was later awarded to community organizations through an RFP. At that time, \$700,000 was set aside to design a program to support other education, employment, and housing interventions that aligned with the Workforce Education Collaborative. Known as SkillUp Washington, this initiative seeks to help low income workers obtain post-secondary credentials that increase their earnings on a career path toward self-sufficiency. King County has designed Project Self-Sufficiency for Families and Singles to align this \$700,000 set aside of Veterans and Human Services funds with rapid re-housing programs and key recommendations from the report “Building a System for Homeless Families and At Risk Families to Attain Employment and Education Success”. Recommendations were developed by the Economic Opportunities Steering Committee of SkillUp Washington prepared by Business Government Community Connections. The planning process and design recommendations are integrated with the King County Plan for Homeless Families and incorporates their Five Pillars:

- Prevention
- Coordinated Entry for Services
- Rapid Re-housing
- Tailored Programs and Services
- Economic Opportunities

The purpose of Project Self-Sufficiency for Families and Singles is:

To integrate education, employment and college training programs for homeless families or formerly homeless families and singles with housing rental subsidies and housing case management in order to achieve self-sufficiency.

Key recommendations of SkillUp Washington research through the Economic Opportunities Steering Committee are incorporated into this pilot and will be expanded over time. This pilot will provide positive system and service changes by addressing the real life barriers that keep homeless families and individuals from achieving self-sufficiency. These recommendations include the integration of “on ramp and bridge” programs that prepare adults for postsecondary education. As part of the education continuum, on ramps and bridges serve as essential stepping stones to college-level training. The programs are defined below:

- On ramps provide basic or entry-level skills training that helps individuals obtain a job and/or enter community college training programs for better paying jobs. Features of an on ramp program include basic skills (adult basic education, English as Second Language, GED and computer skills). These programs may also provide industry, sector-based, entry-level skills training in a variety of fields. Other core elements include providing clients with assistance in understanding labor market and industry information, goal setting, development of career paths, and navigation of education and training options.
- Bridge Programs fall into two categories: bridge and bridge plus college. Both types of bridges provide pre-college reading, writing, math and computer skill building. However, bridge programs prepare individuals for college level courses and the “college going” experience while bridge plus college combine college preparation with college credit courses. The features for both types of bridge programs are identical: reading, writing and math skill building that leads to college level courses; computer skill building that helps navigate the college and complete assignments; college preparation that includes information on tutoring, advising, time management, and test taking support services. Bridge programs can be sector-based and include remediation that focuses preparation on a specific sector, such as manufacturing or IT.

Creating a network of on ramp and bridge programs that directly link to postsecondary education and training will play an important role in ensuring that the educational delivery system can meet the demand of its nontraditional, incoming students.

Underpinning both on ramps and bridges is the need for an education navigation role that is specifically focused on helping individuals understand the “college going” experience and provides direct assistance in helping them to access college and manage each of the steps that culminate in class registration: Admissions/College Application, Assessment, Advising, Financial Aid and Registration. The main elements of education navigation include: developing career plans, preparing students for the college experience, providing college navigation to help students access financial resources, persist in postsecondary education programs and ongoing coaching and support for persistence and completion.

3. Population to be Served

One hundred homeless families/singles ready to benefit from the integrated housing/employment services available through Project Self Sufficiency for Families and Singles will be identified through a coordinated entry and assessment process in the shelter system county wide. Specific target populations include the following:

- Forty low service need homeless families identified in shelters and assessed as able to benefit from immediate rapid re-housing for 12-18 months, integrated with intensive employment and training services and housing based case management. They may have barriers to employment, such as lack of appropriate education and training credentials and child care needs, but will be selected because they can be rapidly re-housed and are ready to participate in intensive employment and training services.
- Twenty high service need homeless families will receive longer term housing through Section 8 housing vouchers, housing based support services and intensive housing case management for up to 24 months integrated with intensive employment and training services.
- Forty low service need homeless couples or singles without children will receive rapid re-housing integrated with intensive employment and training services.
- Thirty of those served will be Veterans and/or their families.

Education, training and career pathway employment are fundamental to gaining and maintaining financial stability and achieving self-sufficiency. The current high unemployment rate in King County aggravates the instability that many very low-income households face as they struggle to make ends meet in lower paying, less secure jobs, often without benefits. In our region, the growth of low-skilled, low-paying service sector jobs is expected to continue. Families and singles that become homeless are often trapped in low wage employment and need longer, intensive employment and training services.

As the Economic Opportunities Steering Committee recommendations from SkillUp Washington point out, the needs of families who want to upgrade their skills and earnings through further education and training are complex. Inadequate income and unstable housing are exacerbated by additional barriers that many very low-income residents face. Many have had unpleasant experiences with education and are reluctant to enter the post-secondary system. Barriers like low basic and technology skills, medical issues, mental illness, credit problems, substance abuse, learning and physical disabilities, involvement in the criminal justice system, domestic violence, and lack of affordable child care can all create serious obstacles to further education and career employment and stable housing. The services provided under the current system often cannot provide the long range support and continuity needed to realistically enable people to escape from the revolving poverty cycle. Further, people living in poverty face a loss of significant public benefits with only slight increases in income from better paying work. These “benefit cliffs” create a real disincentive to participation in longer term training and employment activities leading to higher earnings. Survival remains the primary motivation without a strong network of longer term support.

Veterans

While employment data on Veterans in King County is not readily available, we expect these figures to be comparable to national data. Nationally, the overall employment rate among

(non-homeless) veterans in the civilian workforce is comparable to non-veterans. However, the 2006 unemployment rate among young veterans age 20-24 who left the military was nearly 11 percent, more than double that of the general civilian workforce at 4.6 percent. The U.S. Department of Labor notes that veterans 18-24 tend to rebound fairly quickly, and after approximately 10 months, have employment rates that are much closer to the general population. This suggests there is a critical period following military service during which increased access to employment for younger veterans could be especially beneficial.

Some veterans and their families face barriers to stable employment and housing, such as homelessness, substance abuse, mental health issues, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or mild TBI, physical injuries or even permanent disabilities as a result of their service.

- Approximately 11 percent of all veterans have a service-related disability.
- The 2007 One Night Count in King County found that 408 homeless individuals had served in the military.
- Homeless Veterans and some with families are in need of these intensive services.

4. Evidence-Based and Best Practices

Research by the SkillUp Washington Economic Opportunities Steering Committee and community and technical college outcome research shows that post-secondary training with completion of at least 45 credit hours and obtainment of a post-secondary credential is often needed to progress to higher paying technical careers. Best practices for employment programs targeted to this population would combine tailored, customized and integrated traditional employment services (skills assessment, job readiness training, job search and job placement, and post-employment retention services) with on ramps, bridges, navigation and coaching for post-secondary or apprenticeship training opportunities, combined with rapid re-housing and support services. This core set of employment services allows a program to address specific client immediate needs, determine appropriate on ramp services when the time is right, prepare clients for work, training and educational opportunities (such as GED, ESL, technology skills, coordinated scheduling, transportation planning and child care), and assist them in finding and keeping a better paying job. Most need to work while they are address their longer range education and career goals. Career coaching that empowers them to select and pursue their own relevant career goals is essential. The Self-Sufficiency Calculator provides an individualized benchmark and reality check for required earnings.

Specifically targeted to the homeless, the Homeless Intervention Project (HIP), administered by the Workforce Development Council, provides employment services to adults with multiple barriers. In addition to utilizing best practices, four service agencies provide short-term individualized case management, work experience, direct support and training services. The goal is to prepare clients for employment, quickly increase their housing stability and assist with the transition from homelessness. Client assessments identify barriers and needs, and link clients to other needed services.

The SkillUp Economic Opportunities Steering Committee report entitled “Building A System for Homeless Families and At Risk Families to Attain Employment and Education Success”

incorporates the recommendations from the Peer Learning Group led by the Seattle Jobs Initiative that examined strategies for building effective on ramps and bridges to post-secondary education for low income adults. These recommendations emphasized a need for simplifying and standardizing the enrollment and navigation processes across King County colleges. In addition, the recommendations called for education navigators that would work with clients in developing educational plans, enrollment, financial aid and fund sources, and access to other services. To help facilitate these recommendations, a navigator work group which includes King County Work Training has been convened by Seattle Jobs Initiative to begin identifying best practices that can be shared across the network of navigators that has been steadily developing as the demand for postsecondary training grows.

Many of the recommendations adapted for homeless families and singles are incorporated into Project Self-Sufficiency both in the areas of systems change and improvements and service delivery integration through seamless wraparound services for housing, education and employment. The complex needs of homeless families necessitates that basic housing and employment needs are addressed immediately in an integrated plan as the longer term career development plan is developed and implemented. Families often have multiple case managers from the multiple systems they must navigate to survive. Integrating and streamlining their case management demands frees up time and energy for pursuing education and career goals.

Some of the key elements from the Economic opportunities Committee findings that are integrated into this program design include:

System Changes

- Practical system integration improvements across 15 WorkSource Renton partners from multiple systems, including DSHS/TANF, Employment Security/WorkFirst, Renton Technical College, King County Veterans Program, and WIA partners, providing cross system training to better align resources and services and obtain training waivers where required.
- Integrate rapid re-housing with intensive employment services linked to post-secondary credentials attainment.
- Arranging for college credit bridge courses on site at WorkSource Renton through college partners, including Renton Technical College and Bellevue College.
- Launching a membership model that creates a supportive environment with computer technology resources in WorkSource Renton and other sites in Seattle-King County where families/clients can get ongoing support and access to resources over time as they build their own personal path to self-sufficiency.
- An integrated Career Plan for Self-Sufficiency housing/employment plan with one lead case manager from the rapid re-housing program that will facilitate, streamline, and integrate a unified case management plan across multiple systems, including housing, TANF, education, employment and training.
- Conducting whole family assessment that includes careful analysis and long term strategies to negotiate benefit cliffs over time and build successes and momentum for the Career Plan for Self-Sufficiency.

Employment Services and Education

- Basic skills instruction, including computer technology, on site at WorkSource Renton through Renton Technical College, Microsoft Unlimited Potential, and customized instruction and computer lab support and facilitated access to these services at other sites through out Seattle-King County.
- Career and job coaching to assure long term success and build empowerment skills and personal confidence through a Career Coaching Pilot Project with BuRSST for Prosperity and DSHS to enhance the work of frontline staff across systems and strengthening their understanding of the basic principles of encouragement and empowerment.
- Enhancing intensive employment services for homeless families and individuals in the WorkSource one stop employment system, so that one stop partner services like WIA ARRA stimulus training funds become accessible to homeless families and individuals as part of an in depth on ramp to employment, post secondary education and/or apprenticeships
- College Navigator assistance to facilitate easier access to accurate information, relevant coursework and credentials in better paying fields and the financial resources to make an integrated career plan practical.
- Access to internships and jobs through WorkSource partners, utilizing the integrated Business Services Team at WorkSource Renton, in partnership with the Employment Security Department and the Workforce Development Council and Operators.
- Integrating asset building into family self-sufficiency planning in partnership with the Asset Building Coalition.
- Taking flexible tailored services to customers throughout Seattle-King County as needed to meet the needs of homeless customers and building customized on ramps that support their Career Plan for Self-Sufficiency.
- Coaching and assistance in accessing functional computer technology and high speed internet access for successful distance learning.
- Delivering customized employment, coaching and on ramp services throughout Seattle-King County in homes, neighborhoods, libraries, WorkSource sites and colleges in ways that make it practical self-sufficiency progress.
- Providing long term employment retention and wage progression support, including support services, to assure momentum and ongoing problem solving assistance.

Current homeless employment programs place clients in jobs averaging \$9.81 an hour and are often part time and without benefits. Project Self-Sufficiency proposes a new intensive, longer, coordinated strategy to significantly improve these earnings over time and incorporates SkillUp Washington research showing that post-secondary students that complete at least 45 credit hours in a community or technical college, and achieve a credential or diploma, earn significantly more. Housing and a job are the first priority and will be addressed immediately as work is begun on the longer range Career Plan for Self-Sufficiency. The research also shows those clients can progress over time on a clear career pathway that increases earnings. Rapid re-housing agencies will provide comprehensive integrated case management services that support families and singles as they pursue their goals.

5. Funds Available

\$700,000 is allocated for employment services from Veterans and Human Services Levy: 70 percent (\$490,000) is Human Services Levy and 30 percent (\$210,000) is Veterans Levy.

Additional Leveraged Funds from Rapid Rehousing

Housing Rental Assistance/Case Management for 40 low service need families provided by Solid Ground and Wellspring Family Services:

- \$300,000 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for rapid re-housing
- \$87,840 homeless housing support fund for rental assistance.
- \$72,000 for client assistance (e.g. move in costs at \$1800 per family).

Rental Assistance/Case Management for 20 High Service Need Families through King County Housing Authority Section 8 Vouchers:

- \$240,000 in housing based case management and support services
- Washington Families Fund and Homeless Housing Services

Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing/Case Management through federal ARRA stimulus funds for 40 singles and couples without children per year for 3 years

- \$1.3 million in federal stimulus funds for housing and case management through the Multi-Service Center.

An additional \$70,000 in Support Services is requested from SkillUp for on-going support for childcare and tuition for these homeless families and singles.

Program Description

Levy funds will be used to provide intensive employment and training services integrated with rapid re-housing in Seattle-King County to homeless families and singles. Strategies will focus on addressing the unique education and employment needs of homeless families, singles, and couples without children, 30 of who will be veterans. They will receive intensive employment and education services while they are also being provided with medium term or long term stable housing assistance so they can focus on employment training and education. Project Self-Sufficiency will expand and enhance the current system of services through three intensive employment and training services specialists that will each serve 33 homeless clients selected at shelters through a coordinated entry assessment process for rapid re-housing or Section 8 vouchers and identified as ready to benefit from intensive employment and training services. King County Work Training (WTP) will partner with King County and Seattle-funded housing case managers from Solid Ground, Multi-Service Center, and Wellspring Family Services to serve 40 low service need families, to provide wrap around integrated housing and intensive employment and training services. The services will include both housing and employment and preparation for, navigation through, and completion support for post-secondary education credentials leading to self-sufficiency. Employment staff will have offices at WorkSource Renton but be mobile and able to bring services to customers throughout Seattle-King County.

Memorandums of Agreement will spell out the specific roles and responsibilities of each partner organization so that there is clarity and accountability for integration of services. Housing partners will lead the integrated case management services to simplify and streamline demands on client time and assure that all partners understand how the overall wraparound services fit together to help achieve the goal of long term self-sufficiency. Sources for supportive services will include housing related support from rapid re-housing partners, DSHS, Basic Food Employment and Training, SkillUp Washington, King County Veterans Program, WorkSource WIA partners, and others. Supportive services will include things that support the self-sufficiency goals such as college tuition, child care, transportation, mental health, substance abuse and chemical dependency treatment, as well as other services. Services will address client barriers to successful education completion and employment, and improve clients' housing stability through increased earnings. On-ramp services to prepare for college success will be provided utilizing the resources of the WorkSource Renton one stop employment center and other WorkSource, college and community sites. Worksource Renton integrates employment and training resources from many different partner agencies, including Renton Technical College, TANF/WorkFirst through DSHS/Employment Security, King County Veterans Program, and several WIA service providers through the Workforce Development Council. The program offers retention services for two years following job placement to assure earnings are sufficient for families and singles to afford permanent housing.

Wrap around services will be “customized” to individual client needs and goals and flexibly adapt to the changing needs of clients over time, as they progress on their career plan. Employment and support services may be provided at WorkSource sites, housing sites, colleges, or other locations as needed to be responsive to client needs. Families and singles will be engaged and supported in this approach so that all adults and children in a family are part of the plan and support it. Special attention will be paid to child care, a critical support service for families and singles, to make sure that parents can concentrate on their education and work responsibilities.

Through collaboration with DSHS, Employment Security, BuRSST For Prosperity and other partner agencies, staff will help families and singles systematically analyze the impact of their employment on public benefits (SSI, TANF, Basic Food, Medicaid, childcare subsidy, etc.) clients are receiving. Staff will work to plan loss of benefits does not serve as a disincentive to work as clients progress toward a self-sufficiency level. Agencies will consult with organizations such as Positive Solutions, which offers workshops and can provide assistance on public benefits. Services to Veterans and their families will be coordinated with the King County Veterans Program to assure that all benefits are incorporated into the client's employment plan. Thirty veterans and families will be specifically recruited, in collaboration with the KCVP, to assure that Veterans Levy Funds provide services to veterans.

6. Coordination/Partnerships and Alignment Within and Across Systems

Planning for this program was carried out by King County Work Training Program, Housing and Community Development, Veteran's Program, DSHS/BuRSST for Prosperity,

WorkSource Renton partners, and SkillUp Washington. Wellspring Family Services, Multi-Service Center and Solid Ground, and YWCA will be the Rapid Re-Housing partners for the 40 low service need families and the singles and couples without children and will partner with the YWCA Landlord Liaison Project to secure housing.

This strategy, with its emphasis on homelessness prevention through increased employment outcomes, is aligned with King County Committee to End Homelessness (CEH) Ten Year Plan. The CEH has recently increased this focus by adding a member from the employment/workforce development system to its Inter-Agency Council. This strategy is aligned with the Gates Family Homeless Plan as part of the Economic Opportunities Pillar.

Timeline: October 1, 2009 - December 31, 2011

7. Provider Selection

The Levy Procurement Plan for 2.8 included an RFP that awarded \$3,800,000 for homeless and Veterans employment services to Friends of Youth, Hopelink, Neighborhood House, Seattle Jobs Initiative, YouthCare, YWCA, Valley Cities Counseling and Consultation, TRAC, and Washington Department of Veterans Affairs. King County decided that the King County Work Training Program would directly provide the employment services for Project Self-Sufficiency because of its experience with integrating services through the WorkSource system for other multiple barrier populations.

8. Geographic Coverage

WTP will work closely with our rapid re-housing and Section 8 partners to serve families and singles housed throughout Seattle-King County. Staff will be based at WorkSource Renton but travel to customers, colleges and other community sites to deliver services as needed.

9. Resource Leverage

WTP partners bring multiple leveraged resources to this project, including housing, case management, WorkSource services, and community and technical college resources.

The design of this program encourages the leveraging of additional resources:

- For veterans, Work Training will coordinate with the King County Veterans Program, the US Department of Veterans Affairs and other organizations serving veterans. Work Training will ensure that services to which veterans are entitled become part of the service package needed to achieve employment and education goals.
- Funds for dental, childcare and other employment work supports will be used only after other funding options are exhausted, or to complement other available funds (e.g., the program may help a client enroll for child care services with the state, and pay their co-payment for a limited period of time as the individual becomes stable in employment).
- WTP understands the impact of employment on public benefits and will partner with DSHS to leverage these resources and maintain greater stability.

10. Improvement in Access to Services

By integrating intensive employment and rapid re-housing services through WorkSource, access to education and employment services will be simple and direct. Homeless families and singles ready to benefit will be identified in the shelter system.

11. Outcomes and Evaluation

WTP will report service levels and outcomes for 100 families and singles served annually. Outcomes for this program include:

- Increase in household economic self-sufficiency progress over time, benchmarked to the Self-Sufficiency Calculator.
 - Goal: 80 percent
- Increase in housing stability measured by ability to stay in housing after rapid re-housing assistance ends.
 - Goal: 75 percent
- Job placement that represents an incremental improvement over previous employment wages.
 - Goal: 80 percent
- Educational progress measured by obtainment of GED and post-secondary credentials.
 - Goal: 65 percent
- Employment retention and earnings increases tracked over 24 months.
 - Goal: 65 percent
- Positive system changes in policies and procedures identified by customers and partners.
 - Goal: 10 identified changes

The investment strategy to link educational, college and employment opportunities to housing and supportive services will be evaluated on both process and outcomes by evaluators in the Community Services Division.