

PROGRAM COSTS AND STAFFING BENCHMARKS FOR PLANNING RESIDENT SERVICES FOR FAMILIES



*A Companion Publication to
"Creating Opportunities for Families Through Resident Services: A Practitioner's Manual"*



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FOREWORD

Resident services programs in rental housing offer the means to provide an avenue out of poverty and a path for low-income families to overcome the barriers that prevent them from improving their life prospects. Anecdotal evidence has demonstrated that relatively modest investments in resident services result in dramatic improvements in outcomes for children and families as well as better property performance. Heretofore, resident services in family affordable housing have operated, with a few exceptions, on an *ad hoc* basis, with little uniformity and few best practices to follow.

Beginning in 2003, Enterprise Community Partners, with support from Freddie Mac Corporation and Foundation, partnered with several local, non-profit housing organizations to build upon their on-the-ground wisdom and demonstrate best practices in building personal and financial assets through delivering resident services to families. Enterprise has distilled these best practices, combined them with our own learning over the last decade in service delivery and housing management, and created a resident services practitioner's manual. We have compiled a series of informative guides and model documents covering the full array of relevant topics both in operations—designing and budgeting for services, evaluating existing services, developing and managing partnerships with service providers, setting targets for resident success and tracking progress and final outcomes, working with property managers, fundraising—and in partnering for and delivering key programs: employment, adult education, child care and after-school programs, community safety and financial literacy.

This report, “Program Costs and Staffing Benchmarks for Planning Resident Services for Families,” by Gore Flynn, is a companion to “Creating Opportunities for Families with Resident Services: A Practitioner’s Manual,” authored by Enterprise program staff. The practitioner’s manual is also available online as the Resident Services Support System in English and Spanish at www.enterprisecommunity.org/resources. This report is also available online at the same location.

“Program Costs and Staffing Benchmarks” is designed to aid organizations in designing and budgeting for resident services programs for families in affordable housing. It looks at the per-unit and per-participant costs of total programs as well as specific services including service referral and crises management, on-site youth and adult education and computer centers.

INTRODUCTION

To provide guidance for resident services program planning and in order to identify norms for the costs of operating resident services programs, Enterprise Community Partners conducted detailed research of the operations and budgets of seven nonprofit housing organizations with resident services programs. The organizations were affiliated with resident services initiatives of either Enterprise or NeighborWorks America. Enterprise defines property-based resident services for families as “permanent family rental housing in which social services focusing on personal asset building are available through referral and/or on site with at least one staff person to coordinate and deliver services.”

Identifying norms for program costs turned out to be very difficult because there are so many variables that affect the operations and costs of a resident services program. Few programs have similar cost profiles even though the program content might be quite similar. Following is a partial list of the variables that can affect the cost and operations of a resident services program:

- Demographics of the local, low-income community including income, educational attainment, language, customs, mobility, family size, ages etc.
- Mission of the sponsoring organization
- Mix of types of housing facilities under management
- Availability of social service organizations in the region with which to partner
- Presence of local corporations and foundations with housing-oriented interests
- Location in a high-growth area versus a low-growth area
- Location in a high cost area versus a low cost area
- Structure of the local economy in terms of job opportunities
- Interest level and service orientation of senior staff
- Central city focus versus multi-community regional focus

Another impediment to developing cost ratios among program components is that organizations aggregate financial data differently among programs. For example, one organization might combine an adult financial education program with a home-buyer program while another might combine adult financial education with a computer training program. Such program combinations make it difficult to extract common cost elements.

Not only is there a wide variety of services provided within the rubric “resident services,” there is even a wider variety of names used to describe such services. Each organization tends to name its programs based on a variety of idiosyncratic factors that reflect local needs and opportunities. In some cases names are oriented toward funding sources, local constituencies or simply the desire to use a catchy name for marketing purposes. Organizations also bundle different services within different program names. Even within the fairly common

broad program names like Financial Fitness or Computer Literacy, different types of services are aggregated into each program area such that developing a cost benchmark for each major program element is difficult. In order to try to develop benchmarks and ratios, this report consolidated the program elements in each organization's portfolio into a standard set of program content to the extent feasible and labeled it with a name that seemed to be the most descriptive of the content. These names are as follow:

- Resident services
- Information and service referral and crises management
- After school/youth education
- Teen tutoring
- Pre-school day care/school readiness
- Computer training and access
- Financial education
- Home-buyer training
- Other adult education
- Community leadership training

Despite the wide variation in cost and operating parameters that affect the costs of programs, there are nonetheless considerable lessons to be learned from the early adopters that can help in the design and costing of future programs. These lessons are summarized in this report.

RESIDENT SERVICES PROGRAMS COST BENCHMARKS

OVERALL RESIDENT SERVICES PROGRAMS

Resident services is the name for the umbrella program that incorporates all of the various direct services to residents into a cohesive program. It usually involves assigning a staff person on a part- or full-time basis on-site at each facility, but the function can be centralized for organizations managing a small number of facilities or for managers of scattered-site housing. For purposes of this analysis, all of the resident services programs are consolidated into this umbrella category in order to provide financial benchmarks for the entire portfolio of services.

The principal task of the resident services (RS) coordinator is to develop relationships with residents to learn about their personal goals and build trust. This is followed by developing program content to meet those goals, finding the resources to deliver the content, managing the logistical aspects of delivering the programs to residents (e.g. preparing the room, posting notices, etc.), collecting participant data and evaluating the results.

There are a few resident services that are nearly universal in all programs, and these have been allocated to the umbrella program in the cost benchmarks in this report rather than separately analyzed. Most are very inexpensive with respect to the cost of the special programs. For example, nearly all organizations with a resident services program sponsor periodic community-building or event programs for holidays, tenant socials, and general-community building activities. A number of programs solicit donations of food, favors and prizes, etc., but most also have a modest cash budget for social events. All of the organizations studied also provide either printed or online newsletters or monthly calendars.

Information and Referral (I & R) and Crisis Management are usually, but not always, core to the function of a resident services program. These include the panoply of day-to-day tasks of dealing with the specific goals of individual residents or families. The extent of services provided within this category varies dramatically with the mission, demographic profile, availability of other service providers, and the management practices of each affordable housing organization. Some organizations rely exclusively on referring residents to outside service organizations after assessing the quality and appropriateness of those services. They track progress and final outcomes for these residents. Other organizations refer residents to services with little or no evaluation or direct service. Finally, other organizations develop the capacity to provide individualized, one-on-one services to residents that range from fairly low-level mentoring services to in-depth services.

The cost differential among the levels of service is substantial among the organizations studied. This makes developing benchmarks very difficult without reference to the level of service provided. There is also the problem of cost al-

location. Although many organizations studied develop program budgets for specific programs, such as home-buyer training or financial education, they tend to lump all other non-program costs into a general residential service category that includes I & R and a host of other miscellaneous services. The seven organizations in this study ranged from those that provided no I & R or crisis management services to those that allocated a substantial amount of the overall resident services budget to these types of services. In general, however, it appears that organizations combine referring residents to I & R and crisis management services provided by other social service organizations with special programs designed to provide their residents with independent-living skills and to facilitate their development of personal and financial assets.

Because the service focus of the seven programs varied substantially, macro-level data do not provide much useful program business planning information, except to establish size parameters on an order-of-magnitude basis. This report presents a summary of macro-level data for the entire resident services programs, including one-on-one personal services, adult and youth education programs, special event programs and allocations of overhead, where available. It also provides data for each type of program or service to the extent program-specific data could be extracted from the financial information provided. “Per-unit” costs refer to the total annual cost of the program divided by the total number of residential units for which resident services are provided. In most cases, this included all of the units under management, but two organizations managed other housing which received no resident services.

- **Per-unit costs:** The per-unit costs for the entire program ranged from \$327 to \$719; however, the two extremes represented special exceptions. The lowest one was a scattered-site owner with a single, centralized community center and no youth programs, and the highest one was the owner of a small number of total units, but with an aggressive service program that resulted in substantially higher per-unit costs at this stage of the organization’s development. Although the average of seven organizations was approximately \$575 per unit, four of the larger organizations with the multi-faceted service programs typical of larger NeighborWorks participants were tightly bundled between \$600 and \$650 per unit.
- **Per-Unit, On-Site Cost of Programs with a Coordinator/Community Room:** The two organizations with specific site data without central office or overhead allocations had per-unit costs of \$426 and \$340 for an average cost of \$383. The same organizations had an average central office and overhead allocation of approximately \$192 per unit for organizations with on-site coordinators.
- **Total On-Site Costs:** The total cost of providing a full-service program at a single housing facility depends on a wide range of factors, including the number of units, level of service, etc.; however, for the organizations reporting cost data for individual sites with a full-time resident

services coordinator, the total costs for the sites without any allocation of central office costs or overhead ranged from \$49,000 to \$63,000 per facility. Per unit, on-site costs ranged from \$350 to \$650 with the larger facilities (in terms of numbers of units) having the lower per-unit costs. This cost may also be affected by the goals and barriers of residents, which were not considered in this study.

- Cost per Individual Participant:** Five organizations reported total participant data. For those five organizations, the average cost per participant, not including multiple contacts of the same participant, was approximately \$350 for the year. Excluding the two outliers, the average was a bit lower, \$350, but not too far from the total average. Only two organizations reported the total number of individual residents, including adults, children and others in their facilities, and the average cost for those two was about \$140 per resident. This number is possibly a bit low, since it results in an average occupancy of four residents per apartment. Only one organization was able to report the total number of incidences of participant services being provided in a year, including multiple service events to the same resident. The cost of service was \$77 for each incidence of service. Incidences include a substantive service contact with a resident that results in an action, such as a request and referral to a social service organization, attendance at a social event or participation in a training program. The number of incidences of service varies widely among the residents, with many residents receiving few incidences of service and a few residents receiving many.
- Cost Breakdown by Expense Type:** As might be expected, a large allocation of the costs of resident services programs goes to personnel services. Contractors providing professional services, such as teachers or training professionals, were included in the operating expense category.

	Average	Range
Salaries and Wages	73.7%	60.7% - 88.2%
Operating Expenses, including contractors	26.3%	11.8% - 39.3%
Contracted Services (included in operating expenses above)	8.8%	3.4% - 13.8%

The organizations with the largest allocations to operating expenses tended to be those that contracted out some of the instructional services for adults and youth programs. The actual amount of expense for typical operating expenses, such as telephone, travel, mileage, supplies and related expenses, was quite small. In many cases, direct expenses for refreshments, instructional supplies, party favors, prizes, etc. were donated.

Space Allocation: All of the organizations had community-facility space available in nearly all of the residential facilities in which they provided resident

services; however, in many of the older facilities, space was a serious issue. Most of the community facilities had a minimum of approximately 1,000 square feet dedicated to community space. Managers thought that 1,000 square feet was a good minimum for the meeting space and could easily accommodate programs for 30-40 residents at a time. Managers also reported that a resident coordinator program needed at least one private office for the coordinator to meet with tenants, and that the community space should have a separate computer room if feasible. Many facilities operated with a computer area located in a corner of the community room, but this led to conflicts. The resident services directors reported that their organizations were designing new facilities to contain at least one private office, larger community rooms and a separate computer room for the resident services program. They also reported that they were frequently able to squeeze out a little more space in older facilities including, in a couple of cases, converting former residential space into community space or offices.

RESIDENT SERVICES STAFFING-TO-HOUSING-UNITS RATIOS

Among the seven organizations studied, the ratio of resident services staff to the number of housing units varied from 1:55 to 1:165, but the lower ratio represented a growing organization with a small number of units currently under management, such that it should be considered an outlier. Among the balance of the organizations, there were two clusters of staffing ratios. One cluster averaged a ratio of about 1:85 and the other cluster averaged about 1:160. Not surprisingly, the 1:85 cluster represented the organizations that relied more heavily on staff to deliver core programs, whereas the organizations with the lower ratio of 1:160 relied more on partners and volunteers. Despite this clustering, it is not feasible to develop benchmark staffing ratios because there is such a wide diversity of programs and operating methodologies. The only staffing ratio that appeared to be somewhat consistent for the few situations in which there was good staffing data was the teacher-to-student ratio in both the adult and youth education programs, where ratios varied from 15 to 35 students per teacher with a concentration around a ratio of 1 teacher per 25 students.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

This is frequently a core program that gets to the essence of providing a supportive environment for family housing. Most of the organizations studied had some form of after-school program, and most tried to sponsor them at every major family facility under management. There were, however, significant differences in how the programs were delivered with some operating them as “drop-in” programs and others providing various enrichment courses in addition to homework/tutoring type programs. There was a mix of management options ranging from one program that hires certified teachers to conduct classes to others that rely either on partners or volunteers to deliver the program content. There was considerable use of national youth programs, such as Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts and Big Brothers and Sisters and local equivalents, where the organization primarily provides space, youth and logistical support.

Most programs operated on a fixed schedule, from approximately 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the community room for the facility. Management models varied considerably, but many relied on the resident services coordinator to monitor the partners, volunteers and tutors. In addition to having a strong education and enrichment content, the programs also included softer activities, such as games, music and an occasional field trip.

Costs of After-School Programs: Although four organizations operated some sort of after-school youth program, they were all so different that it was not possible to find common operating data that made benchmarking feasible. Several programs operated with partners or volunteers that resulted in very low-cost programs. The two programs that provided sufficient data to calculate a per-unit cost varied from \$190 per unit to \$719. These numbers probably represent the two extremes. The first was a very large organization with six after-school sites serving very large facilities. The higher cost program served only a very small number of units in comparison and used a sizeable number of contract teachers to provide instructional services.

The cost per eligible youth varied from \$414 to \$761, but these numbers apply to the total number of eligible youth living in the residences rather than participants. Cost-per-participant data can only be extrapolated from the one program reporting per-site costs. The cost of this program was approximately \$750-\$850 per participant slot for the school year.

Based on the one multi-site program with site-specific data, the cost of operating each site was approximately \$25,000 per school year. Even for the sites reporting participation data, the information was not very useful for benchmarking, because the organizations tended to report the total number of youth participating over the course of the school year rather than in discrete classes or sessions. For example, one organization reported a total 600 students receiving some level of after-school care at six sites, but most of this total represented only occasional attendance as it would be impossible for the program to serve 120 students each day in a 1,000 square-foot community center. The one program that reported daily attendance data reported an average attendance of 31 youth. Based on anecdotal data from one other source, it appears that a program can serve 25-35 students per site, which is just a little higher than the standard for a public school classroom.

For the two programs that operated with contract teachers rather than resident services staff or volunteers, the average direct cost of the teachers ranged from \$12,000-\$15,000 for the school year. Most programs operated for three hours per day, and the teachers were provided one planning hour per day for a 20-hour work week.

Focus of Teen Tutoring: Although closely related to the after-school program, this is identified as a separate program, because the services differ in context from those provided to younger residents. These programs rely heavily on community volunteers to provide a combination of tutoring and mentoring to high-

school age youth to help the teens achieve success in school and not get too distracted by jobs and other conflicts for time. Although organizations struggle a bit to get teens to participate, for those that participate, the results can be marked. Some programs tracked significant grade improvement among teen participants.

Regular after-school programs are oriented toward youth up through the eighth grade or sometimes a year or two older. For high-school age residents, programs tend to focus more on tutoring programs that provide one-on-one assistance with homework or meeting special program content tutoring needs.

Costs of Teen Tutoring: Tutoring programs operate principally with volunteers from the community, but a few organizations also developed special education programs for teens, such as financial education, career planning or building aspiration for higher education. Several programs operated one evening per week for approximately two hours. One organization developed a special eight-week program to teach “Life Skills” that proved highly popular with both youth and parents. For the one organization with detailed cost data for its teen tutoring program, the cost per residential unit was \$131 and the cost per teen participant over the course of a year was \$791.

Unique Youth Savings Program: One organization focused its youth education program on a youth savings program that involves matching funds for youth savings accounts. The organization operates a similar program citywide under contract to the local housing authority and has developed a program guide for other housing organizations. The program has grown steadily to involve a total of approximately 75 youth in 2005. A local trust matches youth savings at a ratio of 2:1 for up to \$600 for each participant. The cost of the program is \$822 per youth per year, not including any matching savings contributions.

Summer Camp Types: Five of the seven organizations provide some form of summer youth program, but two of them provide camp through partners at no cost to the affordable housing sponsor. One of those provides free space to the partner at each of its 11 facilities, and the partner handles all other aspects of the program. The other one, an organization that formerly ran its own summer program, now helps place individual youth in programs operated by other organizations in the community, because they found that there were plenty of slots available and that the partners had well-developed programs. One organization provides a summer youth program but does not separately account for it.

Summer Camp Costs: One summer program with cost data is not a full-time, day-long summer-camp type program but rather consists of a nearly continuous series of 3-4 hour skill-building programs each day in music, art, computers and other subjects. Youth only participate in selected programs and must find other activities when they are not attending a session. This has been developed more as an enrichment program than a summer camp program. The cost for the program, which hires instructors at an average fee of \$20 per hour, is approximately \$24,000 for a total of 104 eligible youth or \$238 per youth.

Another program with detailed accounting serves approximately 120 youth at five sites covering six properties for a total cost of \$146 per youth for a seven-week program, not including a small amount of central-office overhead and direct supplies. Each site operates 35 hours per week and serves approximately 24 youth. The cost for each counselor, usually college students studying youth education, is \$3,500 for the summer or approximately \$12.50 hour. The total cost per youth is \$146.

The latter program is more typical of the costs, class size, and operating parameters of a more traditional summer day-camp program and could serve as a reasonable benchmark for similar programs. The enrichment program, however, offers a potential adjunct program, if the sponsors are interested in enrichment classes within the program.

Pre-School Age Day Care Is Not Usually a Budget Item: Although several organizations studied include pre-school day care in their programs, it is most commonly delivered by a professional external service provider. In a few cases, the organization provides space, but even that was not common in the organizations studied. One organization provided a “play group” program for mothers and pre-school children a couple of days a week, but this was not intended to be a substitute for family day care. One interesting idea was to develop a few residential units in the facilities that met the state licensing requirements for a family day-care business to enable a few residents to provide licensed family day-care services.

None of the organizations analyzed operated their own pre-school program, but five of them sponsored pre-school programs through one or more partner organizations. Two of the organizations donated space to the pre-school partner, but the partner provided the space to the others. All of the organizations were satisfied with the partnering arrangement and most of the day care slots were made available to residents at low or no cost.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Several adult education programs were aggregated into an overall adult education category for purposes of developing a general benchmark for adult education. The purpose of this aggregation was to establish a benchmark that might apply to a wide variety of adult education programs in addition to those provided by the seven organizations. This was followed by an analysis of the four principal categories of adult education provided by the organizations in this study:

1. Computer Training
2. Financial Fitness
3. Home-Buyer Education
4. Community Leadership Development

These were specialized programs designed to accomplish the wider social missions of the organizations and to augment the residents’ general education content normally provided by the public education system.

Other Adult Education Programs: Most of the organizations studied acknowledge the importance of other adult education programs—such as ESL and GED programs, employment readiness training and job search assistance—but rely on extensive networks of local partner organizations to deliver these programs. In a couple of cases the affordable housing organization provided space for these other types of programs and provided limited counseling to residents in support of these programs. In a few cases, the affordable housing organizations augment the services of the partners in order to help residents obtain extra value from the partners, but this tends to be covered under the I & R functions or other adult education programs. It is somewhat common, for example, to have adults work on job searches or employment preparation in the computer facilities.

Overall Unit-Cost of Adult Education: For the four organizations with general adult education data, the average cost was \$157 per housing unit and the range was from \$83 per unit to \$234 per unit. Because of a lack of detailed participant data, it is difficult to estimate the cost of each student in an adult education program, but based on data from three of the programs with student-specific data, the average was \$351 per participant, but the costs ranged from \$161 per participant to \$563 per participant. Because the midpoint figure of \$329 was based on a program with very detailed cost and participation data and was based on keeping enrollments to 15–25 students for classes of 8–10 sessions, it is likely that a cost of \$300–\$350 per student is a reasonable assumption for programs that target a similar class size.

- **Computer Training and Access:** This is a core program at all of the organizations studied, although some apply substantially more resources to it than others. The first priority is to ensure that all residents have access to a computer at a central facility, usually a part of the community room, but building dedicated computer labs into new facilities is becoming a standard option. Beyond providing access to computers, organizations provide training services in a variety of ways from simply having the resident services coordinator provide *ad hoc* assistance, to scheduling formal syllabus-based courses, to having volunteers provide technical assistance on a regular schedule. A couple of organizations have developed or are developing programs to facilitate their residents obtaining their own computers in addition to providing access at a central facility. These organizations believe that having computer skills is critical for residents becoming self-sufficient, improving their employability and developing community leadership skills.
- **Computer Education and Utilization Costs:** Although most organizations provided access to computers and several provided training in the use of computers, only one segregated the costs of the computer-training program from the other education programs. That one program allocated 19 percent of its overall resident services budget to computer access and training at an average cost of \$119 per residential unit. Of this budget, \$61 per unit was contracted to an outside service

provider with the balance of \$58 per unit being allocated to staff support and overhead.

- **Financial Literacy Education:** This describes a large category of programs that are designed to improve the personal financial management skills of residents. Commonly used terms include “financial fitness” or “financial literacy.” These are usually classroom-based programs of several weeks duration (6-10 weeks total) that meet regularly (once per week is common) and involve some sort of graduation. Although the content varies widely, all are generally aimed at helping residents make better financial decisions and use their money wisely. A few involve savings programs, where personal savings are augmented with matching contributions, and those that don’t seem to have them under evaluation (as savings programs have become an important indicator of readiness for homeownership and are the first step in avoiding predatory services, like check cashing and money order drafting).

Most programs are oriented toward adults, but some organizations have separate programs for youth. One of the organizations has been so successful with its youth savings program that it has published a guidebook for distribution and contracted to provide the service to another housing organization. The training is provided by either program managers, resident services coordinators, special financial training staff, external professionals (such as contractors or volunteers) or, most commonly, a combination of all of these.

Although there are national templates, most organizations customize their programs to a certain extent to highlight the focus of their broader missions. For example, an organization focusing on building homeownership opportunities for its residents would build in an emphasis to prepare for a home loan. Others focusing on employment might highlight record-keeping skills and computer training. Following is a sample list of the major topics in an amalgam of financial education programs:

- Establishing financial goals
- Creating a work plan
- Creating a budget
- Factoring in savings
- Sound cash management
- Ordering and reviewing credit reports and improving your credit score
- Using sample letters to correct or add information to credit reports
- Spotting predatory lending
- Understanding the cost of using credit
- Reducing debt
- Tax savings from the Earned Income Credit

- Financial Education Costs:** Again, several organizations provided one or more classes in adult financial education, but only one segregated the cost accounting in a way that allowed for a detailed analysis. Several programs included some form of financial education as part of their home-buyer programs. In a couple of instances, the financial education program was a precursor to the home-buyer program. The program for the one organization with segregated data consisted of four consecutive weekly sessions of approximately two hours each. Other programs ran up to six or eight weeks. The cost per residential unit was \$83 and the cost per adult participant in the training over the course of a year was \$563.
- Home-Buyer Training Focus:** For most of the organizations studied, this is either a primary or secondary core program because of the organization's central mission of getting residents into their own homes. Regardless of missions, however, a great many affordable housing organizations have a homeownership-education program. These are commonly classroom-based programs with a syllabus and fixed schedule, but several organizations also include one-on-one advisory counseling in the package. A few include access to small amounts of capital for a down payment and a graduation certificate that qualifies the resident for special financing through agreements with bank partners. A few of the organizations rely on a HUD-developed videotape training program augmented with local content, but most have developed their own programs from templates developed by a wide variety of home-buyer programs available nationally. A couple of the programs also included landlord training modules for residents who are likely to purchase buildings with 2-4 apartments. This latter is more prevalent in urban areas without a large stock of single-family homes.
- Homeownership Training Costs:** Most of the home-buyer programs were taught by staff, but with several adjunct teachers from the business community to handle special sessions. The latter were usually volunteers, such as appraisers, mortgage brokers, bankers, home inspectors and other real estate professionals. The cost per residential unit was \$133, and the cost per adult participant in the training over the course of a year was \$469.
- Community Leadership Training Focus:** This category includes a wide variety of program content designed to help create a sense of community among the residents as well as provide specific training in becoming a community leader or simply a good citizen. This has become a major focus of the more developed programs. These programs focus on the following skill sets:

 - Resident leadership development
 - Resident board/committee development
 - Community building among the residents of the facilities

- Civic leadership in the broader community
- Community advocacy

It is common for Community Leadership Training to be bundled together with programs in computer training, financial fitness and home-buyer education.

- **Community Leadership Development Costs:** Several organizations sponsored some form of leadership training for adult residents, but did not account for the costs separately. One organization, however, that is making a concentrated effort to build a wide variety of citizenship skills among residents, including extensive programs to provide residents with leadership opportunities within the organization, does allocate its costs separately. The cost per residential unit was \$143 and the cost per adult participant in the training over the course of a year was \$755.

ADDITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESIDENT SERVICES PROGRAMS REVIEWED

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The seven programs were structured organizationally much the same, with the resident services program being managed by a director of resident services who reported directly to the CEO of the organization. In one instance, the director of resident services was the organization's assistant executive director, whose primary focus was on resident services. In another instance, there were two major resident service programs, each with a separate director; however, one of the programs was more focused on non-resident participants.

For organizations with larger programs and a large number of facilities, the next layer of management consisted of either one or more program managers of specific programs, such as financial fitness program manager, computer center manager or youth program manager. This was followed by residential services coordinators who were responsible for one or more residential complexes. The residential services coordinator and program managers all reported to the director of resident services. For smaller organizations, there was no program manager level, and all of the program management functions were shared by the director and coordinators.

In the larger organizations with specific program managers responsible for developing and delivering program content, the resident services coordinators tended to be more involved in I & R and crisis management services and provided principally logistical support, such as marketing and event management services for programs delivered at the community center. In organizations without content program managers, the resident services coordinators relied on a combination of internal and volunteer or partner resources for program delivery. In some organizations, however, the organizational structure was driven more by the mission with those focusing on moving their residents to privately-owned housing tending to rely less on resident services coordinators and more on content-oriented program managers to deliver programs at the facility level.

The presence of a resident services coordinator with specific office hours at each facility on at least a part-time basis seems to be a pre-requisite for a successful program. The resident services delivery professionals have learned that it is first necessary to generate the trust of the residents, and the best way to understand their needs and earn trust is to be available to listen. That allows the organization to deliver interesting and valuable program content that addresses the needs of residents. Fixed hours of operations are helpful by offering predictability. It is more important for the resident services coordinators to be available for a few hours on a fixed schedule than more hours on no schedule.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR RESIDENT SERVICES

An analysis of revenues was not a part of this study; however, all of the seven organizations provided either detailed or summary revenue budgets. Additional information on sources of funding for resident services programs is available at www.residentservices.org. Funding came from a wide variety of sources including, but not limited to:

- Local foundations, including community foundations
- National foundations
- Federal supportive housing programs
- State, county and local government contributions, grants and fees
- State housing trust funds
- Small grants
- Individual contributions from fund raising
- Local business contributions, particularly banks
- Allocations of rental fee income

Many programs charge a nominal fee, frequently \$5 or so, for an entire series of seminars. This is designed more to provide residents with a sense of value to the training rather than to raise funds because the nominal fees are a very minor amount of the actual cost.

Although not necessarily representative of the field as a whole, for the seven organizations studied, most larger programs had a dozen or more sources of funding and generally relied on no more than 10 to 15 percent of the total resident services budget for any one source, with the exception of property-related revenues, which in a few cases provided as much as 50 percent of the total funding of the resident services program. In many cases the sources of revenue changed over time and with changes in service priorities. The home-buyer and financial-fitness programs appeared to generate considerable interest for grants and related support from the business community.

EVALUATION

All of the organizations have mechanisms in place to do both needs assessments of their residents and formal performance evaluations of their programs. Most of the organizations do both the needs assessment and evaluations in-house, but a few organizations have begun contracting for some program evaluation services, and others reported plans to do more contracting for evaluation services in the future. Those that are planning to contract with an independent third party for evaluation services are looking to work with local universities. Those that currently contract for evaluation work have very modest budgets of around \$5,000.

COMMODITY DISTRIBUTION AND EMERGENCY RESIDENT FINANCE PROGRAMS

Many of the organizations had one or more programs to distribute either products or short-term financing to residents. A couple of organizations distribute emergency rent or utility funds under contract to government agencies or foun-

dations. Others had local loan pools for emergency, short-term rent or utility loans. A resident committee ran one of these loan programs. One organization had a major program to distribute food and furnishings, but this was not common. The rent and utility grant programs are usually opportunistic and depend on a government entity contracting for the service. The emergency loan programs are quite small but are designed to minimize resorting to payday loans and other costly personal financing programs. The value of funding for emergency rent supplements and other distributions to residents was excluded in the calculation of ratios for resident services.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH RESIDENTS THROUGH NEWSLETTERS/CALENDARS

All of the organizations had some form of resident newsletter and calendar of events. The newsletters were usually quarterly and the calendars were usually monthly. The newsletters were used to provide information about external social service and educational programs as well as information about the internal workings of the organization and community. The calendars generally included a comprehensive listing of resident service programs being delivered the following month as well as a schedule of external events that might be of interest to the residents.

PARTICIPATION IN SERVICES BY NON-RESIDENTS

Several of the organizations offer some services, particularly adult education programs and youth training programs, to participants who are not tenants in the organization's housing. Often this was in response to the requirements of funders, but it was frequently in response to seeking to better integrate facility residents into the surrounding community or to fulfill a broader organizational mission. Priority was usually provided to residents. Although this generally appears to be minor in terms of additional costs, it can nonetheless be a factor. One of the organizations provided its home-buyer and financial-fitness programs primarily to non-resident participants because it was a central part of its mission and it managed only a modest number of rental units.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY PARTNERS

Nearly all of the organizations relied on partners to provide one or more of the traditional resident services tasks, and nearly every major program under the resident services umbrella was being provided in at least one organization by one or more partners. This is part of what makes benchmarking the industry so difficult. Analyzing the reasons why various organizations relied on partners to deliver certain programs was beyond the scope of this study, but anecdotal evidence indicates that the availability of partners is somewhat opportunistic and likely varies among the states depending on the availability of funding.

The types of partners varied considerably, but there was a lot of partnering with well-known organizations like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Junior Achievement, Big Brothers and Sisters and similar organizations. Overall, it appeared that

there are many opportunities for affordable housing organizations to find a no-cost or low-cost partner to provide many of the resident services.

One of the organizations new to resident services was somewhat instructive regarding the opportunities for outsourcing to partners. Due to the inability to marshal a lot of funding quickly for an internally-directed program, the resident services director made an intensive effort to identify and develop formal relationships with forty-two different service providers to provide the direct service component of a number of programs. In this case, the resident service coordinators are able to focus more on direct individual services to residents despite higher unit ratios. Much more study would be required to understand the dynamics of that region to determine the degree that this is replicable. In essence, the resident services director in that situation concluded that if the organization could deliver the clientele, space and logistical support, there were several potential partner organizations that had the program delivery capacity and the need for productivity such that it was a win-win for both organizations.

Certain program areas were riper for partnering than others. Nearly all of the organizations reported having partners deliver pre-school day care services. Generally, there was a trade of space for a program, although a couple of organizations charged the partners a small amount of rent. Summer youth programs were program areas with widespread partnering, again with the occasional provision of free space. Most programs also relied on partners to provide traditional educational services, such as ESL and GED, and also employment assistance. In many cases the latter providers were local or state government agencies or contractors. In a few cases, the affordable housing organization augmented some of these services, in particular the employment services.

USE OF VOLUNTEERS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

Most of the resident services programs are highly amenable to the use of volunteers to deliver the direct services. However, when many volunteers are utilized, a large part of the job of many resident services coordinators is organizing and supervising the delivery of services by volunteers. Although volunteers occasionally serve as trainers for financial fitness and computer programs, volunteers are most commonly used in youth programs, where they serve as homework club mentors, teen tutors and event chaperones. Nonetheless, volunteers in some markets are relied on for tax return assistance, personal financial management assistance, computer training and other tasks. In the latter case the volunteers are usually professionals from within the community, such as bankers, computer technicians, or bookkeepers. It appears that a good volunteer program with clearly defined tasks can save the organization considerable money.

PROGRAM DIVERSITY

This is a very dynamic period in the development of resident services for affordable family housing communities. There is a lot of experimentation to determine the type of program delivery that generates the best results and to discover the types of programs that generate the most high-quality involvement.

Following is a list of some of the individual program elements provided in one or more of the communities studied.

- Crime/neighborhood watch
- Neighborhood garden
- Arts and crafts sessions
- Toddler time
- Cooking classes
- Bingo and game nights
- Pot luck dinners
- Field trips
- Designing some apartments for family day care licensing
- Income tax preparation
- Immunization clinics
- Micro-enterprise training programs
- Parenting classes and clubs
- Play groups
- Volunteer clean-ups by residents
- Financing resident computers
- Building playgrounds
- “Adopt-a-family” holiday programs
- Community website “virtual community”
- Teen tutoring
- Family violence/domestic intervention training
- Life skills for youth
- Back to school backpack/supply kits
- Youth savings programs
- Community management/spending committees
- Matching savings program for adults and youth

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Enterprise Community Partners engaged Enterprise Resources Corporation (no connection to Enterprise Community Partners) to conduct a detailed financial analysis of the resident services programs of seven affordable family housing organizations around the country that had a considerable history of providing various types of resident services to their communities. It was believed that some of the longer-standing programs had matured to the point that it would be feasible to identify a series of financial and performance ratios that could serve as benchmarks for use by other affordable housing organizations as assumptions in preparing business plans for new or expanded resident services programs. Both Enterprise Community Partners and NeighborWorks America identified the seven nonprofit affordable family housing organizations that have been leaders in developing resident services programs.

It was decided to work with a small number of organizations in order to delve more deeply into the budgets rather than do a broad industry survey of a few performance indices. This study included a range of organizations. Some had been providing formal resident services programs for more than a dozen years, while others had only been providing such services for a couple of years. This helped provide insights into how programs evolve over time.

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