

Group Discussion Paper: Federal Services Funding and Partnerships for Family Resident Services

While there are no funding programs at the federal level designed specifically for housing-based resident services for families in LIHTC¹-financed properties, there are a number of programs that nonprofit housing organizations have tapped to help support resident services. This discussion paper summarizes the federal funding most used for family services, how to partner with the workforce development system to provide access to residents to adult education and employment services, as well as examples of two state funding programs in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Community Development Block Grants

These funds are distributed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by formula to large entitlement cities and urban counties and to state governments for distribution to smaller towns and rural counties. Up to 15 percent of CDBG funds may be used for “public services” if determined appropriate by the state or local governments who have allocations of funds. Services may be related to health, senior citizens, child care and employment. Some nonprofit housing organizations have been successful in obtaining CDBG funds for services and service coordination in low-income family affordable housing. For more information, contact local and state housing and community development agencies.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

The U.S. Department of Education provides funding for community learning centers that provide (before school, after-school and/or summer recess) academic enrichment opportunities for children; particularly students who attend high-poverty, and low performing schools. Formula grants are awarded to state educational agencies, which in turn manage statewide competitions and award grants to eligible entities (local educational agencies, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, a public or private entity or a consortium of two or more such agencies). States must give priority to applications that are jointly submitted by a local educational agency and a community-based organization or other public or private entity. National funding for this program in 2007 was \$981 million. For more information: 21stCCLC@ed.gov

AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service. It provides people to help not-for-profit organizations meet their educational, health & human, environmental, public safety and homeland security needs. Some housing organizations are utilizing this resource to provide or enhance their resident services programs. AmeriCorps members can do such things as: tutor and mentor youth, teach computer skills, run after-school programs, help improve access to health services, fight illiteracy and help recruit and manage traditional volunteers.

¹ Low Income Housing Tax Credit

AmeriCorps is open to U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents age 17 and older. Members serve full or part-time over a 10 to 12 month period. Upon successful completion of their service, members receive an education award of \$4,725 to pay for college. During service members receive health insurance, training and student loan deferment. About half of the members also receive an annual living allowance of about \$9,300. Nonprofit organizations can apply for grant awards that meet most but not all of the costs entailed in supporting a Member, a cash match is required by the grantee organization as well as the responsibility for supervising members in appropriate programming. National funding in 2007 was \$884 million. For more information: www.americorps.org

Assets for Independence (AFI)

AFI is a federal grant program (Health & Human Services, Administration for Families & Children, Office of Community Services) that provides five-year grants to community-based nonprofits to implement and demonstrate an asset-based approach in helping low-income families move up and out of poverty. Grantees provide financial literacy training to participants and help them save earned income through establishing IDA's. Every dollar in savings deposited is matched from \$1 to \$8 by the program. IDA participants can use their savings to acquire any of the following assets:

- A first home
- Capitalization of a small business
- Post-secondary education or training

Grants are for up to 1 million dollars for five-year awards, the average grant is for \$350,000 for a five-year period. Applicants must secure non-federal funds in an amount equal to or greater than their AFI project grant request. Funding available for this program in 2007 was \$25 million. For more information:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/assetbuilding/applying.html>

Homeless Funds

Rural Opportunities Inc, in Rochester, N.Y., utilizes state homeless program funds to provide support to families living in transitional housing. Approximately 10% of the housing units are dedicated to transitional housing and as such these residents are offered the opportunity to receive case management services if they agree to: stabilize their housing situation; find and maintain employment; and set and fulfill personal goals, such as complete their GED or a financial literacy training course. Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation in San Francisco has also has a set-aside of unites supported through the federal Shelter Plus Care program allocated through the local homeless funding system, accompanied by services. The other tenants in the building are served by a resident services coordinator.

Partnering with One-Stop Career Centers

In seeking to help low-income individuals increase their personal and financial assets, housing organizations commonly refer residents to One-Stop Career Centers, which are federally funded through WIA, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. At the One- Stop, residents can access information and services funded from the various federal agencies that help people to prepare for employment, obtain employment and advance in the labor market. Each 1-Stop also includes vocational services specifically designed for youth.

One-Stop Career Center Services are divided into three service delivery tiers: Core, Intensive and Training.

- Core Services are available to all job-seekers and include job listings, information on the local labor market and limited job search assistance. Core services are basically on a self-serve basis.
- Intensive Services can only be accessed after core service efforts are exhausted, and include a comprehensive assessment of skills, case management and the development of an individual employment plan.

- Training Services can only be accessed by individuals who failed to obtain or retain employment through core and intensive services and include case management, occupational skills training, On the Job Training, workplace training, skills upgrading and retraining, entrepreneurial training, and adult education and literacy activities.

Although the One-Stop Career Center model has been somewhat effective in assisting the general population achieve their career objectives, numerous affordable housing organizations report that the majority of their constituents have had minimal success in utilizing the services of the 1-Stop as they are designed. They state that many of the residents referred to the 1-Stop, often return confused or frustrated by a service tier delivery system that requires several failures before gaining access to the intensive or training services that they want and need.

As such, it is critical that housing organizations seek out members of their local Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and inform them on how the service system, as designed, often fails to positively assist people of low-income. Also, affordable housing entities and/or residents can seek to be appointed to their local WIB, which shapes service delivery and allocates funding.

Finally, those housing organizations that consistently speak positively of their local 1-Stop outcomes generally indicate that they have spent considerable time and effort in building pro-active relationships and partnerships with their local 1-Stop that respond to their constituents' vocational interests and aspirations.

Examples of State Funding

States can use general revenues, trust funds or housing finance agency funds to provide funds for housing based services.

Youth RAP, Rhode Island Housing

Initiated in 1990, Youth RAP funds program activities to assist youth with job readiness skills and/or employment opportunities, youth leadership development, self-esteem awareness programming and academic achievement. The program also strives to: improve relationships between residents and management; strengthen the relationships between resident youth and the community; and improve the quality of community life within the housing development.

All family development properties financed through RI Housing are eligible for funding. The development property is requested to provide a 25% cash match, though this match may be waived if adequate funds are not available. For more information:

<http://www.rihousing.com/sp.cfm?pageid=1936>

Family Resource Center Initiative

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency introduced the Family Resource Center Initiative (FRCI) in 1998 to provide on-site family supportive services to eligible Agency-financed properties in Philadelphia. Since that time PHFA has set aside more than \$2.4 million dollars to link residents with supportive services and resource networks

to improve their quality of life, and to preserve the Agency's stock of affordable rental housing. During the 2004-2005 program year, more than \$191,000 of Agency funds were invested to reach approximately 600 families living in 14 developments.

FRCI funds are used to support efforts that enhance a resident's quality of life, build healthy communities and stabilize families in need. Through service coordination, services may include after school and summer lunch programs and assistance with job search, interview preparation and other employment services as well as basic life skills. Other uses of the funds could be case management, translation services, emergency food assistance, domestic relationship counseling, and transportation assistance.

This group discussion paper was developed by Rich Petersen and Diana Meyer of Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.