
PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

A summit on integrating employment and housing strategies to prevent and end homelessness

Overview

Summary

On October 16 2014, a national summit on integrating employment and housing strategies to prevent and end homelessness — Partnerships for Opening Doors — will be sponsored by the Butler Family Fund, the US Department of Labor (DOL), the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). The Summit will provide an opportunity for communities, federal government agencies, and national organizations to learn together to identify promising program practices, emerging community practices, and common misperceptions and barriers to using federal funding to support these practices. The Summit will identify key activities that Department of Labor can undertake in the near term that could improve access to quality jobs, skills training, and supportive services in the context of employment, training and career pathways. Following the Summit, ideas, actions and available resources for follow up by national non-profits, federal/state/local governments, and philanthropy will be disseminated.

Background

Vice President Biden is leading the President's Skills Agenda across the federal government and Labor Secretary Perez is an active leader in this work and is also serving as the current chair of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). The passage and signing of the 2014 WIOA (the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, aka reauthorization of WIA) will present new opportunities to better meet the employment, training, and career needs of persons experiencing homelessness.

The Butler Family Fund, working with the US Department of Labor (DOL), the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) have joined forces to create a Project Planning Team to implement a summit on integrating employment and housing strategies to prevent and end homeless. The Butler Family Fund has contracted with Barbara Poppe and associates (BPA) to implement a process to collaboratively create recommendations for the Department of Labor and Federal partners to consider that would “increase meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or most a risk of homelessness” (Opening Doors’ Objective 5). Recommendations will focus on the sub-populations of families (adult members) and single adults, including chronically homeless individuals. Promising practices for youth and Veterans will also be highlighted. The summit will also document innovative practices at program and community level that are successful at providing meaningful and sustainable employment with career pathways for people experiencing or most a risk of homelessness.

Problem statement

- 1) People who are homeless/at risk of homelessness need meaningful and sustainable employment, training and career pathways to end/prevent homelessness.
- 2) Communities are often not organized/resourced to address these needs well.
- 3) The most successful approaches (program/community):
 - are not widely known and understood.
 - require implementing coordinating services and leveraging multiple resources and complex systems.

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- 4) Often resources and currently promising practices are not understood.
- 5) There is lack of understanding about how existing federal resources can be used to pay for and/or be accessed for successful approaches which is compounded by an overall shortage of resources for all low income populations.
- 6) There is lack of understanding about barriers and how to overcome barriers to using federal resources for successful approaches despite federal agency desire/intent for federal resources to be used for successful approaches.
- 7) Despite these challenges, there is a big appetite to know what works and how federal funds and “tools in the toolbox” could be better deployed to address this problem.
- 8) Philanthropy is interested in supporting what works.

Goals

1. Learn together

- Identify promising program practices on helping people with histories of homelessness and barriers to employment enter the workforce and pursue training and career pathways, understand how these practices have been implemented and what key challenges they had to overcome, and explore potential benefits of replication or expansion.
- Identify emerging practices that communities can undertake to improve coordination and integration of employment programs with homeless assistance programs and other community services and benefits programs, including specific opportunities or approaches that have yielded sustained engagement and coordination across systems.
- Identify common misperceptions and barriers that communities experience in efforts to provide employment, training, and career pathways or people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness.

2. Act together

- Identify key activities that Department of Labor can undertake in the near term (2014-2016), including educational, administrative, or regulatory mechanisms that could be used to improve access to quality jobs, skills training, and supportive services (in the context of employment, training and career pathways).
- Disseminate ideas, actions and available resources for follow up by national non-profits, federal/state/local governments, and philanthropy.
- Create the seeds for a network for follow up among communities and with federal and national partners.

Approach

The Planning Team will convene Federal agency staff with key national organizations and leaders from the employment, housing, human services, and homeless response systems from communities that are advancing practices to increase employment, training, and career pathways for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness to explore and understand innovative program practices and emerging community practices.

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Additionally the Summit will explore what's not working and possible options to mitigate these challenges. These practices (program and community) will be discussed across the planning process. The Summit will develop a set of prioritized actions for the Department of Labor and other member agencies of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness to consider for implementation. The Summit will occur on October 16, 2014.

Federal agencies: DOL, HUD, USICH, US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), US Department of Education, US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Social Security Administration, White House Domestic Policy Council, and US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

National organizations: Butler Family Fund, Advocates for Human Potential, CLASP, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Funders Together to End Homelessness, Melville Charitable Trust, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), National Governors Association's National Association of State Liaisons for Workforce Development Partnerships, National Skills Coalition, National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN), National Youth Employment Council (NYEC), REDF, and Workforce Matters.

Community leaders: Up to 12 communities have been invited to participate. For each community, teams of put to four (4) participants must include Workforce system representative and CoC representative. Up to two additional participants may be included such as State Workforce Agency/Board, employment service provider, homeless service provider, public housing agency, TANF workforce representative, philanthropy, City/County staff, etc. Butler Family Fund will provide a small grant award to participating communities to offset a portion of the travel costs.

Project Outline

Each phase of the process is contributing to an increased body of information available on this topic as well as building toward a consensus on suggestions for a prioritized set of actions to be considered by the Department of Labor for implementation. The work will be framed to align with the 2014 Presidential Memorandum -- Job-Driven Training for Workers as feasible. The recommendations will organized by "can", "should", and "how" types (i.e. educational, administrative, or regulatory mechanisms that could be used to improve access to work support).

Setting the stage: Develop preliminary design for Summit; determine federal agencies and national organizations to be invited to participate; interview up to 10 key informants from Federal agencies, national organizations, and communities; identify criteria and process for selection of community participants; establish methods for collection and dissemination of best program practices and emerging community practices; confirm date and location for convening.

Engaging community participants: Select participating communities; confirm participation by up to 12 communities, collect community profiles, including best program practices being implemented and emerging community practices from each participating community.

The Summit: October 16, 2014 at the US Department of Labor, 200 Constitution NW, Washington, DC. 8AM-5PM.

Post-Summit: Prepare summary report. Follow up with community participants to obtain final community profile. Project Planning Team debrief on the convening and establish next steps.

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If you have any questions, please contact [Barbara Poppe](#).