



PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

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

Briefing for Summit Participants

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 Partnerships Summit will provide an opportunity for communities, Federal government agencies, and national organizations to jointly identify promising program practices, emerging community practices, and common misconceptions and barriers to using Federal funding to support these practices. The Partnerships Summit will identify key activities that DOL, HUD, USICH and other Federal agencies 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 for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Following the Partnerships Summit, ideas, actions and available resources for follow up by national and local non-profits, Federal/state/local governments, and philanthropy will be disseminated.

The Partnerships Summit will be highly interactive in order to create an environment that encourages fresh thinking and creativity. The topics to be explored are organized around these themes:

- Busting through silos
- Promising practices
- Engaging the private sector and employers
- Harnessing Federal resources
- Identifying barriers



PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

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Why did the Butler Family Fund join with DOL, HUD, and USICH to host this Summit?

The Butler Family Fund, working with the US Department of Labor, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the US Interagency Council on Homelessness have joined forces to implement a summit on integrating employment and housing strategies to prevent and end homelessness. The Partnerships Summit builds upon the President's Skills Agenda that calls for better alignment across the Federal government to connect individuals to in-demand jobs. Labor Secretary Perez, who is also the current chair of USICH, is an active leader in this work. The passage and signing of the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA presents new opportunities to better meet the employment, training, and career needs of persons experiencing or at-risk of homelessness).

The Partnerships Summit will collaboratively create recommendations for DOL, HUD, USICH and other Federal agencies to increase meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness as well as improve access to mainstream programs and services to reduce people's financial vulnerability to homelessness (Objectives 5 and 6 of Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness). Recommendations will focus on adults in families and single adults, including individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. Promising practices for youth and Veterans will also be highlighted. The Partnerships Summit will also document innovative practices at the program and community levels that have shown success in providing meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

What are the goals of the Summit?

1. Learn together

- Identify promising program practices for helping people with histories of homelessness and barriers to employment enter the workforce and pursue training and career



PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

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

pathways, understand the implementation of these practices and the resolution of the key challenges, 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 misconceptions and barriers that communities experience in efforts to provide employment, training, and career pathways for people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

2. Act together

- Identify key activities that DOL, HUD, USICH and other Federal agencies can undertake in the near term, including educational, administrative, or regulatory mechanisms 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 and local non-profits, Federal/state/local governments, and philanthropy.
- Create the seeds for a network for follow up and continued communication among communities and coordination with Federal and national partners.

What are the employment, training and career development needs of persons experiencing homelessness?

Research and experience has shown that people who experience or are at-risk of homelessness are diverse with a range of work histories and varied educational backgrounds. The population as whole has characteristics that are not much different than the general population of individuals and families from low-income households. For most people, the path out of homelessness will require securing employment sufficient to cover basic housing needs. Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness may re-engage with the workforce and enter

PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

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

educational programs through the efforts of supportive employment programs. As health and well-being are stabilized, opportunities for employment and training can lead to the resources needed to maintain housing. The challenges and trauma associated with experiencing homelessness can be ameliorated with targeted interventions and access to an array of supports. Individuals who experience homelessness may face difficulty with balancing their desire and motivation to further their education and skill level with the need to have a stable income in order to maintain their housing.

The HUD analysis of Continuum of Care plans, suggest that there are significant opportunities to better connect job seekers experiencing or at-risk of homelessness with employment and training. To be successful, it will be important to craft local programs that respond to the unique and varied populations than experience homelessness.

Figure 1 depicts the diversity of assets and barriers that people experiencing homelessness possess. While some individuals have limited education, poor work histories, significant barriers such as a criminal record, and serious disabling conditions, many others have educational backgrounds and marketable skills comparable to the mainstream population with few barriers beyond experiencing homelessness.



FIGURE 1



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

Known strategies to assist adults experiencing homelessness in obtaining employment

In preparation for the Partnerships Summit, a series of interviews were conducted with key leaders in the fields of homelessness and workforce development. The following program practices were mentioned across the literature and the key informant interviews as effective at meeting employment and training needs of people experiencing homelessness and populations with multiple barriers to employment. For more background on these practices, please review the fact sheet on this topic.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| - Adult education bridge programs | - Sector based training and employment |
| - Alternative staffing organizations | - Social enterprise |
| - Contextualized instruction | - Subsidized employment |
| - Customized employment | - Supported employment |
| - Earn and learn opportunities | - Transitional jobs |
| - Navigators (direct client services or staff support/ ombudsman models) | - Work-First oriented packages |

The following themes were consistent across key informant interviews, review of materials, and community applicant responses as ways to implement program practices effectively to meet employment and training needs of people experiencing homelessness and populations with multiple barriers to employment.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

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

- co-location of workforce staff at homeless assistance programs and vice versa
- intensive supports with individualized services
- client-centered with a trauma informed care approach
- engaged and supportive employers
- holistic program
- providing flexible funds for training, transportation, rent, etc.
- integration of employment services with housing and human services
- reducing requirements for multiple visits; compression of sequencing

A range of approaches can be effective and should be available in every community in order to meet the individual needs of job seekers who experience homelessness. A key finding was that the time to competitive, unsubsidized employment will vary based on the individual job seeker's needs and desires as well as the local employment market. Figure 2 depicts the multiple entry points into a comprehensive coordinated community system (continuum) of employment and training services.



FIGURE 2



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

How can Partnerships Summit participants prepare for the discussions and decisions at the Summit?

The sponsors of the Partnerships Summit have developed a number of resources for use in preparation for and during the Summit. All participants are encouraged to become familiar with these resources:

- Profiles of each community participating in the Partnerships Summit
- DOL and HUD program descriptions
- Federal resources that can be used to improve access to quality jobs, skills training, and supportive services in the context of employment, training and career pathways for those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness
- Overview of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014
- Analysis of how HUD-funded Continuums of Care address the employment needs of people experiencing homelessness

How could HUD and DOL encourage the coordination of employment services with rapid re-housing?

Rapid re-housing is a time-limited intervention designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid re-housing assistance utilizes a Housing First approach, where services are offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety), the resources and services provided are typically tailored to the unique needs of the household, and are provided over a period of time from a few months up to eighteen months. Critical to the success of rapid re-housing for many households will be the ability to attain and sustain employment at wages sufficient to cover ongoing housing costs. **Summit participants are encouraged to recommend ideas to support rapid re-housing programs with strong employment components.**



PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

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

The core components of a rapid re-housing program include housing identification, financial assistance with rent with rent and move-in costs, and rapid rehousing case management and services. Some characteristics of case management and services are:

- Helping identify and select among various permanent housing options based on program participants' unique needs, preferences, and financial resources;
- Addressing issues that may impede access to housing (such as poor credit history, utility arrears, and legal issues);
- Monitoring housing stability and resolving crises; and
- Providing connections to resources that promote safety and well-being and achieve participants' long-term goals. This component includes providing access to benefits, employment, and community-based services so that program participants can sustain rent payments independently after rental assistance ends.

How could the 15% state set aside permitted under WIOA be leveraged to improve access to quality jobs and skills training for those experiencing homelessness?

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA), (and WIOA, after taking effect), allows governors to reserve, or set aside, 15 percent of formula funding under Title I to carry out statewide employment and training activities for youth, adults, and dislocated workers. Many states have used these "set-aside" funds to innovate and advance systemic workforce development initiatives. These funds could be used by governors to create innovative and targeted strategies to address the needs of jobseekers experiencing homelessness. **Summit participants are encouraged to bring forth ideas on how to leverage this flexibility.**

PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

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

How can a career pathways approach that is focused on adult learners work for people with histories of homelessness? What are the barriers to making career pathways effective? Are modifications necessary? If so, what kind?

Career pathway initiatives allow youth and adults with limited work experience to combine work and education while obtaining in-demand postsecondary credentials. State policies that support career pathway strategies make it easier to align adult basic education, job training, post-secondary education, and support services. For example, these policies can make it easier to

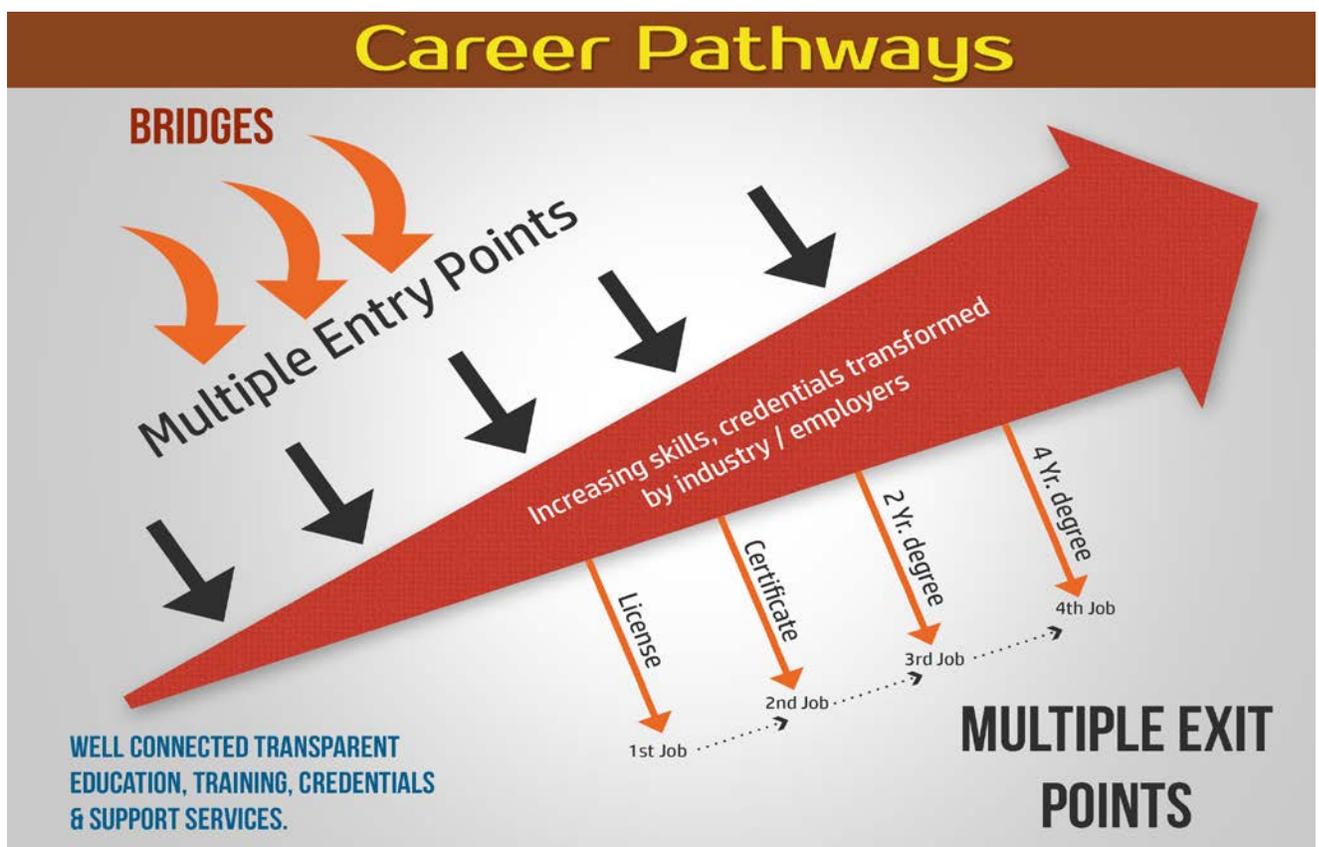


FIGURE 3



PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

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

provide basic skills education in the context of occupational training, to move educationally underprepared students more successfully to certificate or degree completion. Or these policies can provide tuition assistance to working students enrolled in part-time or in non-credit occupationally focused programs. **Summit participants are encouraged to bring forth ideas on how to adapt and implement a career pathways model that meets the needs of people who experience or are at-risk of homelessness.**

What other questions will be explored at the Partnerships Summit?

The Partnerships Summit will be highly interactive to create an environment that encourages fresh thinking and creativity. In addition to the above questions about rapid rehousing, career pathways and the 15% set-aside, the following questions will be explored.

- What are common perceptions about barriers to using Federal funding to support employment, training, and career pathways for those experiencing homelessness?
- What guidance could HUD, DOL, HHS and other Federal agencies provide to the homeless assistance system and workforce system that would result in both systems working better together to solve homelessness and joblessness?
- How can DOL and HUD educate the workforce system about the strengths and needs of job seekers experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and how homeless services are organized?
- How can the process of developing the WIOA state plan be used to leverage greater understanding of the needs and opportunities to serve job seekers experiencing or at-risk of homelessness?
- Promising program practices can help people with histories of homelessness and barriers to employment enter the workforce and pursue training and career pathways. In what ways do communities need to be equipped to implement these promising practices? What type of “how to” resources are needed?



PARTNERSHIPS FOR OPENING DOORS

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

- How can American Job Centers (One Stops) be more accommodating to people with histories of homelessness?
- What characteristics of job seekers experiencing or at-risk of homelessness should be considered as states negotiate performance measures under WIOA? What is the opportunity to encourage the local WIB/WDC to set a priority to addressing the needs of people experiencing or most at-risk of homelessness and adopt promising practices?
- What information is needed to enable communities to better utilize Federal resources to serve job seekers experiencing or at risk of homelessness?
- How could we create a Federal demonstration program that braids federal funds and requires state/local fund leverage/commitment? What other ways are there to encourage and learn from local pilots or demonstrations that braid/combine Federal/state/local funds?
- What strategies foster supportive work environments and engaged employers? How can this be replicated?
- What role could AbilityOne and other public sector contracts for services play in providing employment opportunities for people with histories of homelessness?
- What private sector incentives and social service supports could be deployed to increase access to unsubsidized employment for people who experience homelessness?