



Highlights of *The Final Report on Worksystems, Inc. Housing Works Project*

Project Overview

- **Grantee:** Worksystems, Inc.
- **Intervention Focus Area:** Case Management/ Counseling / Coaching
- **Target Population:** Public housing residents
- **Area Served:** Clackamas County, OR; Multnomah County, OR; Washington County, OR; Clark County, WA
- **Congressional District:** OR 1, OR 3, WA 3
- **Grant Round:** Round 1

Evaluation Overview

- **Evaluation Types:** Implementation Study, Outcomes Study, Quasi-Experimental Study, Cost Allocation Analysis
- **Evaluator Organization:** Public Policy Associates
- **Date of Final Report:** March 2017
- **Title:** *Final Report for Housing Work: A Regional Workforce-Housing Alliance*

Evaluation Period

- 2013-2017

This brief, one of a series highlighting findings from final Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) evaluation reports,¹ summarizes information from the study conducted by the Public Policy Associates on the Worksystems, Inc. Housing Works project.

Worksystems, Inc., a consortium of public housing authorities (PHAs) and workforce investment boards (WIBs) on the Oregon-Washington state border, used its (Type B, promising ideas) WIF grant to fund Housing Works, an initiative designed to streamline workforce services for public housing residents and to better prepare residents for in-demand careers in construction, healthcare, manufacturing, and office work. WIBs trained PHA case managers about the workforce system so that staff could assess residents' employment readiness needs and connect them to appropriate workforce opportunities. Enrolled residents participated in career mapping workshops and received an individual resource planning session with case managers and WorkSource (a division of Oregon Employment Department) liaisons. Residents also completed a career and resource plan that was updated as residents progressed through the program. Participants enrolled directly in Career Link, a 40 hour course focused on developing residents' life skills and while receiving intensive case management and also engaged in activities such as workshops, occupational coaching, skills training, internships, and on the job training.

To achieve their shared goals, all PHAs and WIBs involved in Housing Works were required to contribute funds, reassess any policies or procedures to facilitate joint services, and counties dedicated a staff member to strengthen the collaboration between WIBs and PHAs and Housing Works partners. The program exceeded its target of 210 enrollees with 308 participants who earned 536 credentials, including 309 industry certifications.

The implementation evaluation found that participants valued the services and training received, the cohort approach, and expressed most interest in health care occupational training out of all available areas. Overall, participants were satisfied with the program at program exit, but were less satisfied a year after exiting, especially if they were not employed. In particular, participants were less satisfied with their ability to obtain employment one year after enrolling in the program. While the program met its targets for participant enrollment in occupational training, it fell short for number of participants completing internships or on the job training opportunities, due in part to the challenge in finding construction and manufacturing job opportunities.

The impact study found that participants were 20 percentage points more likely to be employed in the first quarter after exit than PHA residents who did not participate in the program. Evaluators did not find statistically significant differences in the 2nd or 3rd quarters after exit. As mentioned above, these differences may be driven in part by differences in participant characteristics between the two groups. There were no statistically significant difference between the Housing Works group and the comparison group on earnings in the 2nd or 3rd quarters after program exit.

Evaluator recommendations for replication of Housing Works include using the cohort-based model, offering training that can be completed within the grant period, ensuring participant eligibility in particular industries (e.g. does a criminal record prevent employment) and having a history of cooperation among partners.

¹ Under the Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF), the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) provided 43 competitive grants to States, regions, Tribal entities and localities to design and evaluate new approaches in the public workforce system. Using a "tiered evidence" model (which builds on past research), WIF projects tested a variety of new service combinations, technological innovations, and systems changes (with a focus on program coordination and integration). ETA required grantees to procure independent third-party evaluations to document project implementation, costs, and results, all in order to inform future experimentation and to promote continuous improvement in operations and performance in the public workforce system.