

Snohomish County Investing in Futures Plan Refinement and Update

January 2014

Overview

In January, 2009, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced its support for a tri-county initiative in Pierce, King, and Snohomish to end family homelessness. Workforce Snohomish (WS) was designated with the role of project management with the support of the Snohomish County Government, the Foundation, and Building Changes. In July, 2011, with community input and recommendation, the two year Investing in Families (IIF) Pilot Project actively launched. The intent was to test a new program and system design based on the Foundation's Theory of Action for ending family homelessness. The goal of the Pilot Project was to test the design by serving between 75 and 150 families. IIF is in the midst of progression from a small, targeted pilot to full implementation throughout Snohomish County. The community and partners involved with this work are thankful for the continued support of the Foundation and Building Changes to move this critical, innovative, and system directed work forward.

Landscape Update

What Has Changed in the Labor Market?

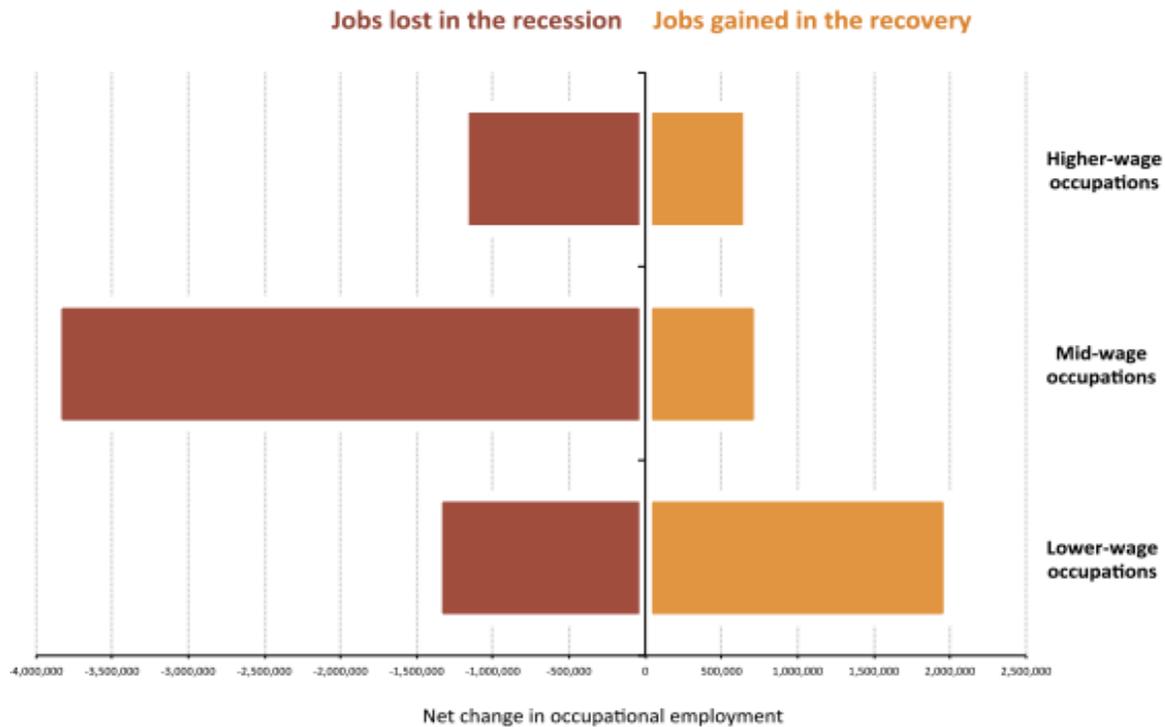
In 2011, as the IIF pilot project started, Snohomish County had just begun the recovery from the recession. The average unemployment rate for the first quarter of 2008 was a low 4.8%. By the first quarter of 2011, we had an average monthly unemployment rate of 10.3%, a dramatic increase. We have seen a gradual decline over the last three years to, from January through November of 2013, an average monthly rate of 5.8%¹. While we are not yet back to pre-recession levels, we have seen a significant decrease in our unemployment rate. However, for the majority of the time our families have been participating in IIF, they have been facing a situation where the number of workers looking for work continues to far outpace the number of job openings.

Although unemployment levels have decreased, the jobs that our economy is adding tend to be lower paid employment opportunities. The National Employment Law Project found that, across the county, low wage opportunities made up 21% of job loss during the recession but constituted 58% of growth during the recovery². Our families that are trying to earn a living wage will continue to struggle as those jobs are fewer and further between. The chart below illustrates the national net change in employment documented by the National Employment Law Project.³

¹ *Employment Security Department*, 18 Nov. 2014. <<https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/regional-reports/numbers-and-trends>>

² "The Low Wage Recovery and Growing Inequality." *National Employment Law Project*, August 2012. Web. 18 Nov. 2014. <http://www.nelp.org/page/-/Job_Creation/LowWageRecovery2012.pdf?nocdn=1>

³ *Ibid.*



The minimum wage in Snohomish County is currently \$9.32 an hour. However, the living wage in the County is much higher. For a three family unit comprised of one adult and two children, the living wage is estimated to be \$24.76, a drastic difference.⁴ The lack of middle and high paying employment opportunities simply keeps working families in a situation where they are barely able to scrape by and limits their upward mobility.

In addition to employment challenges, there has been a shrinking of the middle class and decreases in median wealth in the lower income tiers. A Pew Research Center Study found the country has seen a decrease in the middle class from 67% in 1971 to 51% in 2011. What is particularly impactful to our families in IIF is the decrease in the median wealth of both middle and lower income families. While the median wealth of the upper-income tier has remained essentially unchanged, the middle-income tier has dropped 28% and the lower- income tier has dropped a dramatic 45%.⁵ Thus, not only are the living wage jobs our families need hard to come by, families have been losing the financial assets they had to fall back on in difficult situations. This leaves them in even more precarious situations.

In the assessment provided by Westat, we also saw that our families are struggling with high levels of debt. They found that 87% of families have some form of debt in amounts ranging from \$0 through \$332,300. The average amount of debt was \$3,299.⁶ With families making a mean income of only \$569 in the last thirty days, we see our families struggling to make ends meet. Families are in debt over basic

⁴ Glassmire, Amy. Poverty in America: Living Wage Calculator, 18 Nov. 2013. <<http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/53061>>

⁵ "The Lost Decade of the Middle Class: Fewer, Poorer, Gloomier." *Pew Research Social and Demographic Trends*, 22 Aug. 2012. Web. 18 Nov. 2013. <<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/08/22/the-lost-decade-of-the-middle-class/>>

⁶ Rog, Debra, et al. Westat. Baseline Data on Homeless Families- Cohort 1, October 2012.

day to day expenses including phone or cable bills (48%), utilities (34%), medical bills (42%), and rental debt (26%).⁷

What Has Changed in the Availability of Affordable Housing?

As the recovery from the recession continues, the housing market in Snohomish County has become continuously tighter. In March, 2009, the market vacancy rate in Snohomish County was 6.8%. Four years later, in March, 2013 the rate was down to 3.8%.⁸ During this time frame, Snohomish County landlords also stopped offering incentives to their renters, 17% down from 58%.⁹ With fewer units on the market, landlords are able to be more selective with whom they chose to rent and those with challenging rental histories find it increasingly difficult to find units accessible to them.

For those able to find a unit to rent, housing affordability remains a serious issue. The National Low Income Housing Coalition's research finds that the housing wage in Snohomish County for a two bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent is \$21.12 per hour, or \$43,920 a year.¹⁰ A household making minimum wage must work the equivalent of 2.3 full time jobs in order to afford that two bedroom apartment. That means that a family with two adults working full time at minimum wage would be unable to afford a two bedroom apartment. Snohomish County's report on Affordable Housing Production Plan estimates that, if the current trend continues, 74,400 households in the county will be housing cost burdened by 2017.¹¹

Faced with the challenging housing environment, families are forced to make hard decisions. They double up and live with other family members or friends or they relocate in an attempt to find cheaper rent. The Snohomish County Low Income Needs Assessment found both situations increased dramatically in those surveyed between 2006 and 2010. In 2006, 22% of respondents shared housing due to cost and 17% moved due to cost. In 2010, those numbers increased to 42% and 29% respectively.¹² In addition, 12% had experienced an eviction which contributed to their precarious housing situation.¹³

These housing instability issues are also highlighted in the Westat report which found that families moved an average of 3.8 in the 12 months prior to the assessment, with a high of 11 moves. It also

⁷ Rog, Debra, et al. Westat. Baseline Data on Homeless Families- Cohort 1, October 2012.

⁸ "The Apartment Vacancy Report." Dupree and Scott, Vol. 31, No. 1. March, 2013.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ "Out of Reach 2012." *National Low Income Housing Coalition*. Web. 18 Nov.2013.

<<http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/2012-OOR-WA.pdf>>.

¹¹ "Affordable Housing Production Plan." *Snohomish County Human Services*. Web. 18 Nov. 2013.

<www.co.snohomish.wa.us/documents/Departments/Human_Services/OHHCD/AHPP2007-2017-rev.pdf>.

¹² "2010 Snohomish County Low Income Needs Assessment." *Snohomish County Human Services*. Web. 18 Nov. 2013.

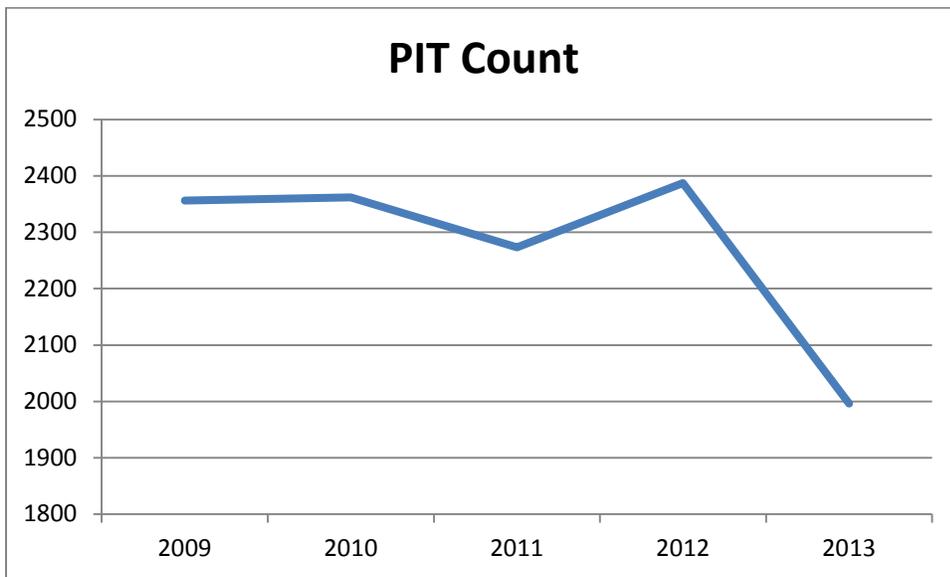
<http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us/documents/Departments/Human_Services/Community/2010_Snohomish_County_Low-Income_Needs_Assessment_Report-Final.pdf>.

¹³ Ibid

found that, prior to entering shelter, 32% of families had lived doubled up, 18% with their parents, and 7% had been homeless; this leaves only 19% that had lived in their own space.¹⁴

How Has the Face of Homelessness Changed?

In January, 2013, Snohomish County had 1,996 people counted as homeless during the Point in Time (PIT) Count. The top three reasons reported as the cause of homelessness were job loss or unemployment (43%), inability to pay rent or mortgage (31%), and drug or alcohol use (25%). In 2012, the top three reasons were exactly the same with the percentage of respondents being 53%, 30%, and 26% respectively.¹⁵ Almost one-third of those surveyed in the PIT had been homeless for more than three years, the highest percentage in any single category.¹⁶ Of the total individuals counted, 1,252 of those individuals were in households that included children. The PIT has seen a true decrease for the first time in Snohomish County; for the previous four counts, it had hovered around 2,300 people.



Last school year, 26,000 students were homeless in Washington State, documented by The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.¹⁷ That is a 19% increase from the previous year. The Snohomish

¹⁴ Rog, Debra, et al. Westat. Baseline Data on Homeless Families- Cohort 1, October 2012.

¹⁵ "2013 Point in Time Count of Homeless Persons Summary Report." *Snohomish County*. Web. 18 Nov. 2013. <http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us/documents/Departments/Human_Services/OHHCD/HMIS/2013PITSummary.pdf>

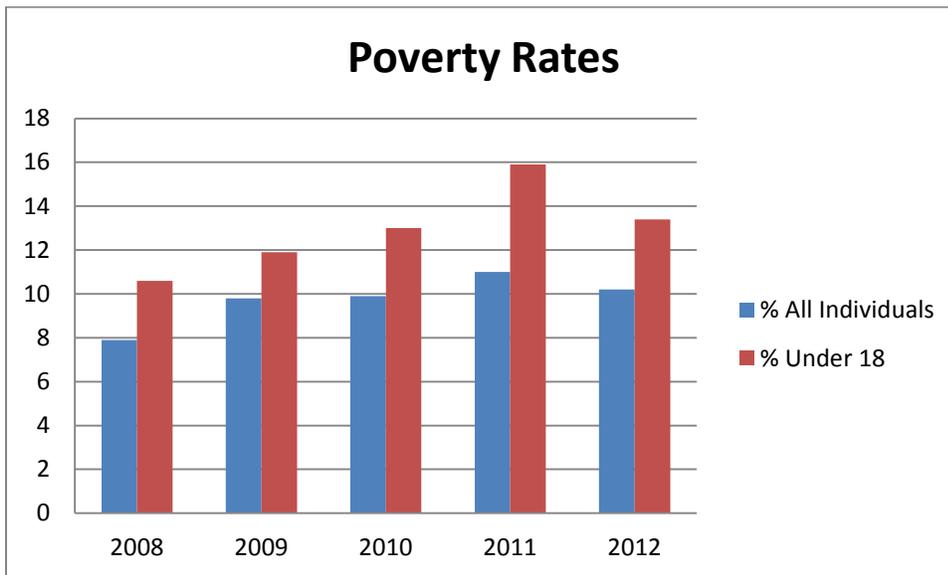
¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "SchoolHouse Washington: Information Support for Homeless Students." *SchoolHouse Washington: Information Support for Homeless Students*. Web. 18 Nov. 2013. <<http://schoolhousewa.org/>>.

County Low Income Needs Assessment found that 41% of respondents had experienced homelessness at some point in their lifetime and 7% were homeless at the time of the assessment.

How Has the Face of Poverty Changed?

In 2012, one out of every ten Snohomish County residents lived under the poverty line.¹⁸ While this is slightly down from the highest number, 11% in 2011, it is still higher than the pre-recession number of about 8%. That 10% represents more than 70,000 residents living below the poverty threshold in the County. The percentage of children under the age of 18 living below the poverty line is even higher: over 13% in 2012, down from almost 16% in 2011.¹⁹ The graph below illustrates the poverty rates in the County over the last five years.



Taken together, this data tells us that, post-recession, while the poverty rate is going down, it is families with children that are struggling the most to move past that poverty threshold.

How Have Other Community Conditions Changed?

As is the case in many communities in Washington State, Snohomish County has had to dramatically decrease transportation services offered due to budget cuts. This has left a pressing gap in services which is clearly expressed in the Low Income Needs Assessment. Forty percent of respondents stated they had difficulty getting to work due to transportation issues and 29% had trouble accessing services

¹⁸ "American Community Survey 2012." *American FactFinder*. Web. 18 Nov. 2013. <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

due to a lack of public transportation.²⁰ In 2012, Community Transit cut 20% of their services in the County which continues to widen the gap between those who need public transportation options and those that are able to utilize it. They expect this gap to continue to widen as, with population and employment growing in the County, and Community Transits cutting services, there will be a need for an additional 500,000 annual hours of service.²¹

Families in our County continue to struggle to find good, safe, and affordable childcare. The Center for American Progress found that, nationally, the annual cost of having an infant in a childcare center outpaces tuition at public colleges in most states.²² For a family with children under the age of five, the average weekly cost for their childcare was \$171, approximately 10% of their budget.²³ The subsidies offered do not sufficiently help the families that need assistance. Only 30% of low income families utilizing center-based care and 16% using home based care are receiving childcare subsidies.²⁴ In Snohomish County, we currently have only one licensed child care slot available for every three children that live in the County.²⁵

In addition to childcare, other child specific issues were raised through an ethnographic study of 55 IIF families conducted by Business Government Community Connections (BGCC). We see a significant information gap for the families in IIF around health related issues. For example, only 25% of the families interviewed were up to date on their children's immunizations. Dramatically, post- IIF interview that number increase to 70%.²⁶ Additionally, 45% of families used the emergency room as primary care pre- IIF interview and that number decreased to 25% post interview.²⁷ These numbers illustrate the impact a conversation can have in bridging an information gap. BGCC found that the families involved in IIF lack access to clear information about their children's health and education. This affected their knowledge about what care to provide at what age and where to turn to access help, support, and information.

²⁰ "2010 Snohomish County Low Income Needs Assessment." *Snohomish County Human Services*. Web. 18 Nov. 2013.

<http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us/documents/Departments/Human_Services/Community/2010_Snohomish_County_Low-Income_Needs_Assessment_Report-Final.pdf>.

²¹ "2012-2017 Transit Development Plan: Building a Stable Platform for Future Growth." *Community Transit*, 15 Nov. 2011. Web. 18 Nov. 2013. <http://www.commtrans.org/Projects/Documents/TDP%202012-2017_111511.pdf>

²² Glynn, Sarah. "Child Care: Families Need More Help to Care for their Children." *Center for American Progress*, 16 Aug. 2012. Web. 18 Nov. 2013. <<http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ChildCareFactsheet.pdf>>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "State of Children and Families 2013." Northwest Early Learning.

²⁶ Armstrong, Annie Laurie. BGCC. Education and Health Report, December 2012.

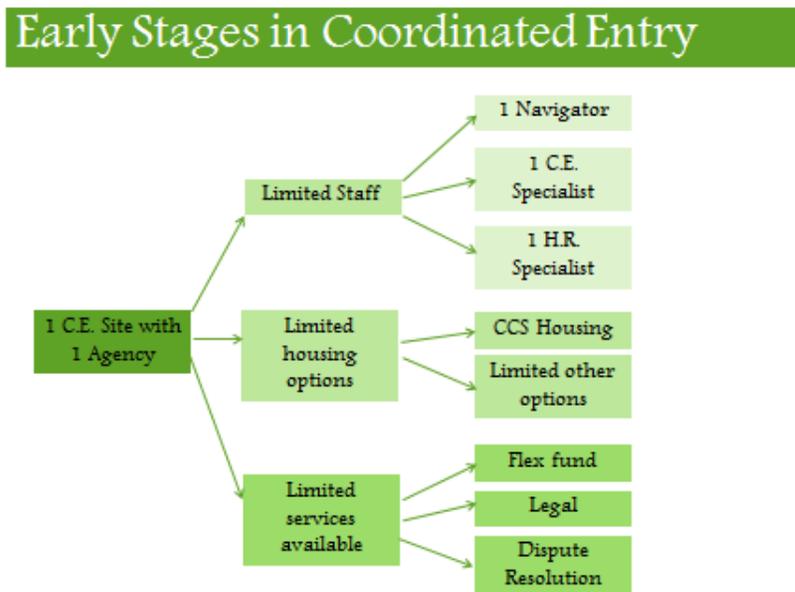
²⁷ Ibid.

What Are the Investing in Futures (IIF) Before and After Snapshots?

Coordinated Entry

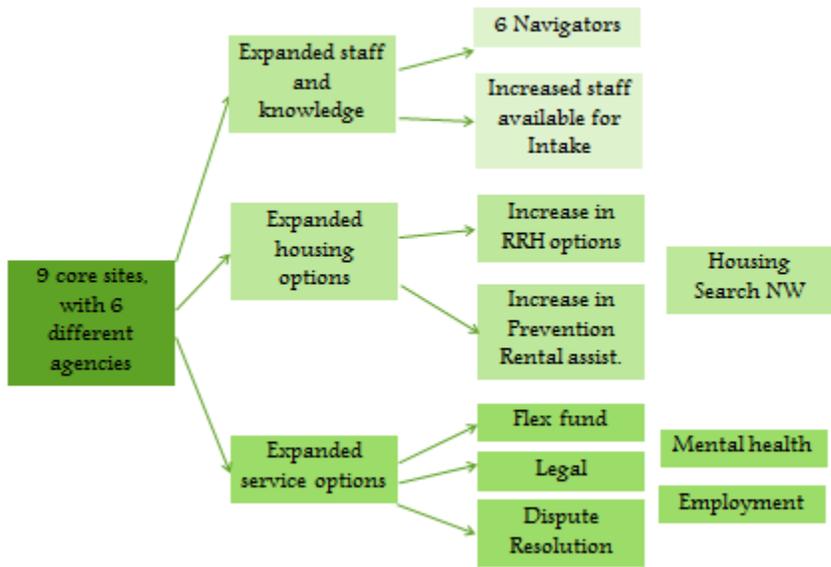
The community conditions in Snohomish County help set the stage and direct the work of IIF. We continue to see a community with increasing number of families accessing services who have multiple, complicated situations with issues that need to be addressed concurrently. The goal of the coordinated entry system, implemented during the pilot phase of IIF, is to be able to effectively address the needs of families with a ‘no-wrong door’ and ‘right fit’ approach. This means that the needs of the families are addressed as a unique unit, plans and goals are developed for that family specifically, and interventions are targeted to best serve each family. The upcoming deadline for the implementation of a Countywide Coordinated Entry system, due to the HEARTH Act, has also greatly influenced the work of IIF and its connection to the Continuum of Care work.

Prior to IIF, a process was in place through which families and individuals could be placed on a single waiting list for emergency shelter and transitional housing. This system was dismantled in favor of the creation of a streamlined system to triage and refer families to housing and other needed services through the IIF pilot. In the early stages of the pilot, the system was launched, by design, with one sole coordinated entry site and limited staff. The chart below illustrates that design.



During the pilot project, 75 families were originally targeted. This grew dramatically, however, based upon the need. Since 2011, 1,585 families, comprised of 3907 individuals, have gone through the Coordinated Entry System. As the need became clear, expansion happened much more quickly than was originally anticipated. The chart below illustrates the current structure.

Coordinated Entry Now



While core sites are listed as nine, a few new smaller sites are joining the process in a limited way. Additionally, over 12 sites have expressed interest in the network. The details of the fully operational and HEARTH compliant Coordinated Entry system are currently being finalized and, once complete, will be rolled out to the additional sites. The details include a ‘light’ coordinated entry assessment for sites that will not be as fully engaged in the process, a Coordinated Entry training guide, and clearly defined referral networks for those that are in the system.

The Role of the Navigator

The growth of the system has meant that changes were made along the way in response to the need of the community. Originally, there was one Coordinated Entry Specialist, one Housing Resource Specialist, and one Navigator. Through the pilot, it became apparent that all Navigators in the County needed to be filling all those roles. Thus, the Navigators currently in place perform Coordinated Entry Assessments, determine the path of the family, and refer or work as appropriate with them.

There are three distinct paths that a family can be assigned to following the coordinated entry assessment. A family is Path A if the household is currently enrolled in a service enriched program that provides case management in more than one life domain, including housing, regardless of housing status. A family is Path B if the household is not currently enrolled in a service enriched program with case management, is currently homeless or unstably housed and at risk of becoming homeless within the next six months without a change in circumstances. It is the Path B households that work directly with the Navigators. Finally, Path C families are households that do not meet the criteria of Path A or Path B. They are provided with appropriate referrals and information and asked to follow up should anything in their situation change in the future.

The Flex Fund

The Navigators each have access to a Flex Fund, funded through a Systems Innovation Grant with Building Changes. The fund has proved to be an immense support for the families in the County. Each Navigator was given a specific pot of funds to be able to assist the families with whom they work. The flexible nature of the fund has meant that the Navigators are able to fill gaps for the families where they may not have any other resources to do so. For example, Navigators have used funds to purchase bus passes, gas vouchers, pay for storage units so that families do not lose all their belongings when they have lost housing, pay for clothing, and emergency housing. This has both helped keep families off the streets and allow them to connect to much needed additional resources in the community.

This fund has been invaluable to our families. Navigators have provided over \$177,000 worth of services which represents over 1,000 unique transactions. This has allowed our families to be housed, provided with necessary transportation, enhanced access to on the job training, and the ability to purchase needed supplies, including medical prescriptions and clothing. Due to the success of this fund, a number of new SIGS have included smaller pots of flexible funds for targeted groups that are not able to access the general Flex Fund. While the funds will be operated in other sites and by individuals who are not Navigators, all Flex Funds usage will follow the current policies currently in place. This provision allows other families to have access to critical supportive services.

Referral System

IFF has brokered a movement from a traditional case management perspective to a navigator referral system. This has involved a shift in the way that resources are leveraged and provided to our families. The role of Navigators is to triage the family upon intake during the Coordinated Entry Assessment and then refer out as appropriate. This means that rather than having a one person case management approach, we are looking at a systems level approach. Similarly, we have seen an increase in partnerships across agencies. This transition involves reaching beyond specific programs, and program level work, to a system focus and using the system as a safety net. An important piece of a systems level approach is consistency among agencies providing services. To address this, staff has been working on developing guides for agencies on Coordinated Entry and Navigators. These guides will help increase consistent application across programs and agencies and strengthen the system at large.

As IIF has grown, we have strengthened existing partnerships and brought in new partners. Our families can access mediation and family planning through the Dispute Resolution Center at Volunteers of America, mental health counseling services through the Family Counseling Program at the YWCA of Seattle | King | Snohomish Counties, affordable housing search assistance through Housing Search NW, employment services through WorkSource and targeted assistance through Workforce Snohomish Building Bridges Program, legal aid through Snohomish County Legal Services, and increased prevention and rapid rehousing resources through Catholic Community Services Western Washington and Volunteers of American Western Washington. Additional partners now include the Interfaith Association of Northwest Washington family shelter as well as the new Domestic Violence Services of Snohomish County secure shelter. Both Everett Housing Authority and the Housing Authority of

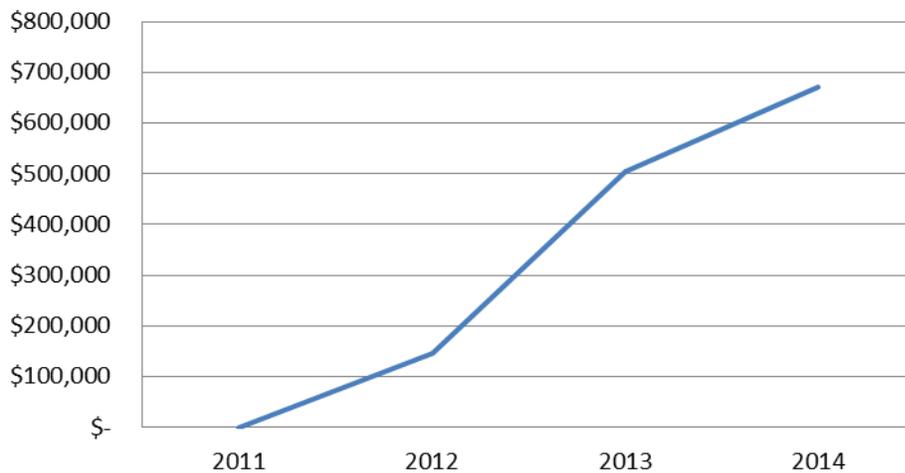
Snohomish County have designed and are launching programs that provide services supporting optimal self-sufficiency to current Section 8 voucher holders as well as providing rapid rehousing support to families on waiting lists for Section 8 vouchers. Everett Public Schools is also poised to have four schools serve as access points to the IIF system.

Prevention and Rapid Rehousing

Preventive housing services have been streamlined and coordinated to better serve Snohomish County families. Prior to 2011, prevention services had been scattered around the County with extremely limited coordination among agencies. Families found it difficult to access these services and priority was not being given to urgent needs. Beginning in 2012, prevention services were consolidated and one agency became responsible for them. This increased coordination, including creating formal referral processes between services, and it created an ability to focus on urgent needs and those who were at highest risk. Snohomish County has allocated nearly two million dollars to prevention funding which has included rental assistance for people losing their housing; youth homeless prevention; and shelter diversion, dispute resolution, and legal services.

There has also been a shift of funding toward more rapid rehousing focused services. As the graph below illustrates, by 2014 over \$650,000 in Snohomish County Human Services Department resources will be targeted specifically to rapid rehousing.

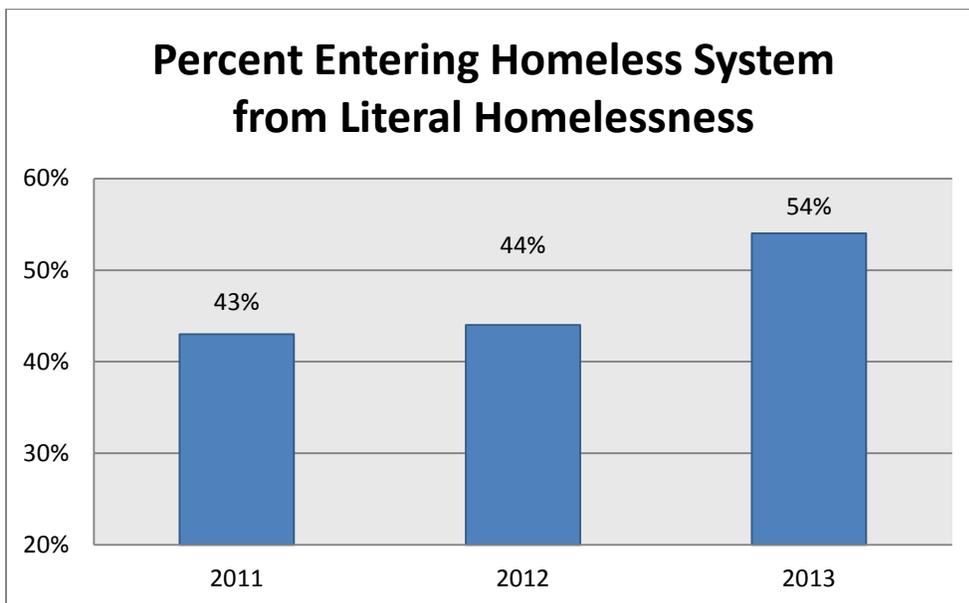
Increased Resources



Since 2011, as the funds have increased for this service, the target populations have diversified. These populations include veterans, families receiving TANF benefits, households without children, households accessing chemical dependency services, and households exiting institutions. Additionally, a variety of rapid rehousing models are being utilized including graduated subsidies, flat rate subsidies, employment focused and bridge programs, varied time frames of service provision, and achievement of family milestones affecting subsidies. Throughout these models and populations, however, the foundation of the rapid rehousing programs remains focused on tailored solutions based on the housing needs of specific households.

Thus far, rapid rehousing is showing promising results. In the Catholic Community Services Emergency Solutions Grant, 68% of households secured permanent housing within 30 days of the initial assessment. In other projects, the Catholic Community Services pilot serving TANF families and other rapid rehousing programs, 85% of households have exited to permanent housing.

As noted in the community conditions segment, the PIT count in 2013 decreased noticeably for the first time. Two of the possible explanations for that decrease include the increase of rapid rehousing resources in the County and a focus on serving those that are literally homeless. With Coordinated Entry, the County has moved away from a first-come, first-served philosophy. Rather, after the initial assessment, each family is placed on a specific path to prioritize services for those most in need. With this shift in service prioritization, we have seen an increase from 43% of those entering the homeless system from literal homelessness to 54% in 2013.



Coordination

In addition to the systems change occurring at the local level, national regulations have a dramatic impact on this work. By August, 2014, we must have fully implemented a Coordinated Entry System to comply with the HEARTH Act. As a part of this implementation, agencies will be required to participate in the Coordinated Entry System that is in development. Recognizing this shift in the community, and its natural alignment with the goals of the IIF work, our community stakeholders and leaders made the decision to combine the governing bodies of the Homeless Policy Task Force (Everett/Snohomish County Continuum of Care) and the Strategic Advisory Coordinating Committee (Investing in Futures) into a single Partnership to End Homelessness that serves as our community's Continuum of Care, 10 Year Plan development body, and strategic advisory body for the alignment of affordable housing with the

resources of other mainstream systems. This realignment will greatly improve the coordination of the CoC and the pilot work of the IIF initiative as well as ensure that efforts are in sync and aligned throughout the entire County.

What Are Some Updates on Ongoing Pieces of IIF Work?

Targeted Work Groups

Our Operations Group with Investing in Futures, the group that works on the implementation piece of the Initiative, has called out three topic areas that need deeper work and targeted interventions. The three areas are transportation barriers, child care access, and targeted services for domestic violence survivors. We understand that to be able to adequately address these areas we will need to focus on collaboration and connections between service providers. Thus, three cross agency work groups have been formed to work on these specific areas of need in our community to best serve our families. We are excited to focus on these topics and find new and innovative ways to better connect resources in our community to those that need them and engaging with our new partners that address these issues.

We have also brought together a work group to focus specifically on employment related IIF work. The group consists of the Bridges to Employment staff, BGCC consultant, IIF Navigators, Building Changes staff, and partners involved in employment services in our community. In prior research, BGCC found a significant number of people needed customized employment supports but were unable to access them. This goal of this group is to look at the current programs available to families in need of employment services, analyze the referral processes and resources in place, develop a typology and cross walk for use in the community, and make suggestions to improve the employment system at large.

Employment Readiness Scale™

The Employment Readiness Scale™ (ERS) is an online assessment tool that helps clients identify their strengths and challenges in becoming employment ready, measures their changes over time, and provides Workforce Snohomish and its partners with roll-up reports across clients for use in program planning and evaluation. The ERS website has been modified to support WS and its partners in working with “shared” clients in support of a “no wrong door” approach. Using the ERS is providing WS and its partners with a number of benefits including a quick, reliable assessment of clients’ employment-related needs using an internationally-validated tool. It also offers an objective and valid measure of client progress (due to the ability of clients to retake the ERS up to six times) and the real-time ability to identify the needs of particular client groups and determine strategies for working with them. Finally, it is an evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions and identification of best practices in assisting clients towards success in their work life.

Since its implementation in 2012, Workforce Snohomish has partnered with several agencies including Catholic Community Services, ResCare, Housing Hope, WorkSource Snohomish County, Edmonds Community College, Volunteers of America and Interfaith to implement the ERS. We have seen

challenges in the process of sharing information among agencies, which was resolved by coming up with a mutually agreed upon release of information. Now agencies that often work with the same clients can work in partnership to help clients build self-efficacy.

As of January, 2014, over 600 clients in our county have taken the ERS. Thanks to the data being collected, partner agencies are able to focus on what supports are truly needed by the population specific to our area. As we gather more information, agencies can work together to look at best practices in dealing with clients to determine how to give them the most training and support.

Self-Sufficiency Matrix and Implementation

In November of 2012, Robin Fenn and Jess Jorstad from Snohomish County Human Services began work on developing a new, objective self-sufficiency matrix to be used in Snohomish County. The need for a new tool was apparent due to feedback from the community, the need for increased objectivity, and a need for uniformity derived from experience working with the legacy tool for more than a decade. Thus, the goals of the new matrix include being user friendly without requiring clinical expertise, encompassing all populations, being reliable and consistent, as well as being client focused and objective.

From February through June of 2014, Fenn and Jorstad researched existing tools, solicited multiple rounds of community feedback, and developed the Fenn-Jorstad Self Sufficiency Matrix. The new matrix was distributed to agency supervisors and pilot tested by agency staff. All levels of the feedback have been integrated into the matrix and the IIF Navigators are now utilizing the tool as a part of Coordinated Entry. The matrix has, additionally, been programmed into HMIS and Navigators are able to input their responses into the system to streamline data collection and management.

Projects and organizations outside of the current Coordinated Entry System have begun using the tool and there is a county wide expansion in process to align with the implementation of the growth of Coordinated Entry. Utilizing this tool at a system level will ensure a systems analysis level view, a communication tool between Coordinated Entry points of contact, and that staff and clients have a communication tool to develop individual plans, including referrals to other programs.

Housing Search NW

In November, 2012, the Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County began working on the design, development and launch of Snohomish County specific pages to be added to what was initially a King County only website, HousingSearchNW.org. This work was being done in cooperation and coordination with the City of Seattle's Office of Housing and SocialServe.com, the webmaster and non-profit owner of HousingSearchNW.org. In February, 2013, SocialServe.com began holding conversations with the WA State Department of Commerce and in April, 2014 the website was launched state wide rather than taking a county by county approach.

The Housing Consortium remains the lead agency in developing the Snohomish County pages of the website and, beginning in April, focused on populating the pages with affordable housing listings. This

involved multiple outreach meetings with non-profit housing providers including Consortium members, property management companies, landlord and tenant organizations and others. As a result of this work and the ongoing effort of SocialServe.com staff, there are 123 landlords, 326 listed properties, and over 7,500 listed units of affordable housing in Snohomish County. This is the second highest total in the State after King County.

The focus subsequently turned to driving traffic to the site, primarily through the distribution of rack cards and increasing outreach to housing assistance providers. Over 8,000 rack cards have been distributed to date. In the past 12 months there have been over 32,000 searches performed on the Snohomish County web pages by slightly more than 11,000 unique users.

There are three specific pieces of ongoing work. First, there is continued outreach to housing providers to list their units on the website. Second, there is a focus on outreach and encouragement of housing providers, social service agencies, schools, libraries, other community organizations to put links on their web pages to HousingSearchNW.com to educate their staff about the existence of the site and provide space for rack cards in their facilities and in other ways publicize the site to potential users. Third, is to re-supply agencies with rack cards and provide other assistance as needed. New work, which will be completed by June, 2014 includes developing a resource page of the website, outreach to faith communities and churches, and develop a plan for continued work on the Snohomish County pages after the current contract with Workforce Snohomish ends.

Data Solutions and Family Dashboard Work

Nathan Marti, with Snohomish County, has been leading the work with the Data Solutions Workgroup and the Family Dashboard. The Data Solutions Workgroup is a collaborative effort that brings together the three counties with representatives from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes, and others to ensure the coordination of data assessment and measurement across the counties. It also works to align assessments with the HEARTH measures. The Family Dashboard provides a clear visual representation of the work of IIF in the County. This representation is particularly helpful in seeing variations across time. Marti continues to work with the Data Solutions Workgroup and expand the Family Dashboard with the intent of county wide implementation.

Housing Conversion

The focus on converting transitional housing units to other uses prompted Snohomish County to broker a subcontract with the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) funded by the Foundation's Infrastructure Grant. Under this contract, CSH provided a thorough analysis of two agencies in Snohomish County that own their transitional housing units. Their report looked at 17 transitional housing developments from the two agencies to assess their readiness to transition based on the following factors: organizational commitment, program orientation, population served, structure, funding, and performance measures. CSH found that 15 were suitable to convert. Of the 209 units at the 17 sites, the analysis found that 47 units were suitable to convert to Permanent Supportive Housing,

146 could convert to permanent housing where families could be rapidly rehoused, and 16 units could remain as transitional housing.

There is an understanding of the need to rebalance the housing stock in the County and to better align resources with need. Transitional housing is extremely expensive, especially in Snohomish County. CSH found that it costs \$36,900 to exit Transitional Housing to a permanent placement; a rate that is 66% higher than the national average. CSH performed three levels of analysis, with varying levels of intervention. In Scenario 1, they found that by reducing the length of stay in Transitional Housing by 90 days would increase exits into permanent housing by 10% and reduce cost per family by 6%. Scenario 2 involved moving 25% of funds from Transitional Housing to Rapid Rehousing. This is estimated to increase exits to permanent housing by 139%. Finally, in Scenario 3, the most aggressive intervention, if all resources were shifted from Transitional Housing to Shelter and Rapid Rehousing there is potential to rehouse 400 additional families in the first year. This analysis and underlying assumptions will have to be extrapolated over the course of many years to obtain a comprehensive picture of the number of new families that could be served each year going forward.

Moving this work forward will have its challenges. Agencies providing these services will need to determine their level of 'buy in' to the process. Conversion requires a serious paradigm shift which may or may not align with agencies' business plans. For those units that convert, policies, procedures, and regulations will all need to be addressed at both program and funder level. Agencies that embark on this process will need support, both technical and financial, to make the conversion a success. More broadly, Snohomish County's housing market is extremely tight, as described previously. Conversion may add an additional layer of challenges in trying to house families in an expensive and competitive market.

IIF Academy

IIF Academy (IIFA), formerly known as IIF University, has taken on new momentum. Originally contracted out to a local non-profit, Workforce Snohomish made the decision to implement this piece of the Initiative directly. We are in the process of recruiting new experts to sit on the advisory committee and are exploring the topic areas on which IIFA will focus. This is happening under the umbrella of a three tiered approach. First, IIFA will provide general information and training around resources in the community and a systems change approach. There are currently three modules of resources that have been developed that are available on our website. In addition, the webinars that t3 produced for King County are available online which offer a strong general starting place for our partners to learn about systems work and housing issues.

Second, IIFA will offer specialized trainings for both front line providers and agency leadership to strengthen service provision across all levels. There are a number of topics that are in discussion for this area. We will convene the IIFA Advisory Committee as well as community stakeholders to help make the decision of the first areas to focus on. A few options include motivational interviewing, trauma informed care, recovery assistance, conflict mediation and de-escalation, and progressive engagement training.

Third, we will develop and run peer learning circles as an opportunity to both connect with other providers and to practice skills developed in the trainings. We will build these learning circles into the

trainings themselves by ensuring attendees have practice time at the end of each training as well as setting a consistent meeting time for providers with skilled facilitators on an ongoing basis.

What Are Some of the Key Challenges to Full Implementation of a High Performing System?

A few specific challenges stand out in the work of IIF to date. First, implementing a new security model within HMIS to allow for more sharing took longer than anticipated. The technical aspect of making the necessary changes was far easier than getting the data sharing agreements in place. We hoped a master data sharing agreement could be used and approved by all agencies. However, what we found is that there is no simple process for sharing client data that works for all agencies' legal departments and privacy requirements. Although a common platform is now in place for most of the partners, agencies continue to use supplemental forms to cover any additional legal needs (HIPAA, 42 CFR Part 2) their agency has approved. Some agencies involved in IIF are still not able to share their information because of other privacy laws. Domestic Violence Services of Snohomish County is prohibited by the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) to enter into HMIS. Also, Snohomish County Legal Services is restricted by sharing client level detail because of client-attorney privileges. Not having all of the data sharing protocols and agreements in place necessitated creating thinking and work around strategies while solutions were being developed.

Once the documents had been approved, challenges arose in implementation across agencies. Some agencies struggled standardizing their privacy protocols with others. For example, some agencies are able to use client names in email, whereas others are not. This meant learning the protocols of the partner agencies to insure no rules were inadvertently being broken.

A second challenge has been the development of the Flex Fund protocol. As mentioned previously, the Flex Fund has proved to be immensely helpful in filling the gaps of our families. However, as an innovative program, the rules and protocols surrounding it had to be developed as we went. While the Flex Fund was operational, it took time to create the policy around scaling and decentralizing the fund for all Navigators to have access to it. Rather than having CCS hold the bulk of the funds and pay out to Navigators, each Navigator now holds their own pool of dollars to distribute. We have extended the spend down date of the Flex Fund with Building Changes so that the Navigators are able to use the funds effectively with the goal of making the fund last as long as they are able to best serve their families. A significant challenge moving forward will be how to keep the fund active with new dollars being added to sustain it. This will be taken on by the Partnership to End Homelessness as their work goes forward.

An additional challenge has been simple growing pains. As this initiative has grown, it has taken purposeful intent to ensure that those involved are all on the same page with the work. Even with best intentions, that has proved to be challenging. IIF started as a small and purposefully limited initiative. As it has begun to be rolled out to the county writ large, it has been a challenge to make sure everyone understands the role of IIF, how it fits into the bigger picture, and how to integrate protocols between

mainstream systems that each have their own constructs, parameters, and constraints. This becomes increasingly important as Coordinated Entry will soon be mandated and the pilot work of IIF will become the norm of the County. We continue to work to increase communication and provide relevant and time sensitive updates to the various partners and groups dedicated to this work.

Another significant challenge has been in the implementation of this system is encouraging people to think and work as a system, at a systems level, rather than as individual and competing programs. This is connected to the work of shifting the system from a case management model to a navigation/broker model. As referrals are being made, we need to continue to work to make sure that families do not fall through the cracks. There is anecdotal evidence, which we are in process of exploring further, that in some situations referrals are being made but not being picked up. In these cases, the family returns to the Navigator. This challenge is connected to the need to strengthen the knowledge of what other service providers offer, where referrals are being made, and training needed around capacity in the system.

Finally, a concern that consistently arises is the challenge around sustainable funding and continued work once the current streams of funding are no longer available. We see this in the Housing Search NW and the updating of the website, in the funding for all Navigators currently in the county, and the funding for IIF Academy, to name a few. There has been significant investment on the part of the Foundation and Building Changes in the work with the understanding that local resources will be leveraged to continue the work once the grants dollars expire. In a time of few resources, stretched budgets, and competing grants we will need to be resourceful and committed to finding new funding streams to continue to implement these important strategies.

Updated Strategy Matrix

On the following pages is the updated Strategy Matrix for 2014-2016. These strategies have been thoroughly reviewed and vetted by stakeholders in the process. The Matrix was first brought to the IIF Operations Committee for their feedback and review. Although this group is not a decision making body, they are the people working on the ground and have an important perspective to add. They reviewed the work, made suggestions, and ensured there were no missing pieces. After their review, the Matrix was brought to the Strategic Advisory Coordinating Committee. This body was the decision making body of IIF. They incorporated the suggestions from the Operations Committee and, after careful review, voted to accept the Matrix. In general, it is a continuation of the work to date. Snohomish County will continue to 'stay the course,' to use Building Changes' terminology. There have been no major changes in strategy, rather, it has been adding new work while incorporating the lessons we learn along the way. We continue to move the work forward and create thoughtful systems developed specifically for our needs and to fill the gaps of Snohomish County. Two major additions to this Matrix are goals 6, to develop the IIF Academy, and 7, to develop a sustainable infrastructure in the County. Goal 7 specifically refers to the HEARTH Act regulations and the operationalization of the structure of Coordinated Entry.

Snohomish County Investing in Futures 2014-2016 Strategy Matrix

Goal 1: Develop an Early Warning, Outreach, and Diversion System
<p>Objective 1.1: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement an effective early warning system that has identified and reached out to 2,000 families or individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, 75% of whom will have positive housing status 90 days after contact.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.1.1: Utilize research-based indicators to develop a 5-10 question early warning screening tool that focuses on prevention of homelessness.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.1.2: Identify, engage, and train partners in the early warning system, including use of the screening tool and referral process.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.1.3: Develop protocols for collecting and sharing early warning and referral data.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.1.4: Coordinate with partners to ensure follow-up with and collection of outcome data for families.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.1.5: Disseminate information to connect with at risk families and individuals and make appropriate referrals.</p>
<p>Objective 1.2: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement an effective early warning system that has identified and reached out to 1,500 families where the youth are at risk of becoming an unaccompanied homeless individual with 80% of these youth remaining safely and stably housed at 90 days after contact.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.2.1: Utilize research-based indicators to develop a 5-10 question screening tool with metrics around family preservation/functionality and indicators of strength.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.2.2: Identify, engage, and train partners in the early warning system, including use of screening tool and referral process.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.2.3: Develop protocols for collecting and sharing early warning and referral data.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.2.4: Coordinate with partners to ensure follow-up with and collection of outcome data for families.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.2.5: Disseminate information to connect parents/caretakers of youth at risk of becoming an unaccompanied homeless individual and make appropriate referrals.</p>
<p>Objective 1.3: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a menu of comprehensive diversion and prevention services, including housing assistance and support services, to prevent homelessness for families and individuals at risk of homelessness and reduce the number of families needing to access long-term system supports.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.3.1: Use best practices research to develop a menu of prevention services to retain/maintain housing to include but not be limited to mediation, information, referral, coaching, family strengthening, and access to financial assistance and supportive services. (7/1/13-12/31/13 priority) New strategies are currently being tested.</p>
<p>Strategy 1.3.2: Use best practices research to develop a menu of diversion services to prevent families from needing to access long-term system supports. (7/1/13-12/31/13 priority) New services being are currently being tested.</p>

Goal 2: Develop a Screening/Initial Assessment System

Objective 2.1: By December 31, 2016, develop and fully implement a three stage intake/assessment tool and process (triage, comprehensive assessment, and eligibility/referral) that is fully compliant with HEART Act common assessment requirements and collects common key data elements and unique identifiers for families and individuals experiencing homelessness and families and individuals at risk of homelessness. Administer the full common assessment tool to __ families and individuals increasing the efficiency of intake by receiving partner agencies as documented in surveys of agency staff.

Strategy 2.1.1: Refine tool and process and take to scale. (7/1/13-6/30/14 priority) Expansion is currently underway.

Strategy 2.1.2: Develop a process for regular review and update of tool and process.

Strategy 2.1.3: Develop a training package for screening and initial assessment. (7/1/13-12/31/13 priority) Materials have been developed and training is being provided.

Objective 2.2: By December 31, 2016, fully implement intake/assessment tool and process to ensure appropriate level of support for __ families and individuals experiencing homelessness and families and individuals at risk of homelessness, 75% of whom agree that the service(s) provided were value-added.

Strategy 2.2.1: Develop family survey tool.

Strategy 2.2.2: Implement tool.

Strategy 2.2.3: Review results and make related system improvements.

Objective 2.3: By December 31, 2016, for families and individuals assessed as high need, make __ referrals annually to an appropriate service-enriched program or a generalist or specialist Navigator based on each family's primary presenting issues.

Strategy 2.3.1: Identify presenting issues requiring specialist support not available through a service-enriched program in a timely fashion, e.g., domestic violence, chemical dependency, mental health issues, family preservation/strengthening needs, prevention support, intervention support, specialized youth support.

Strategy 2.3.2: Develop the framework to identify the anticipated number of generalist and specialist Navigators needed and where they would be sited.

Strategy 2.3.3: Develop a process for reviewing the number of Navigators needed and where they should be located.

Objective 2.4: By December 31, 2016, ensure intake and screening/initial assessment process works effectively for families where the youth are at risk of becoming an unaccompanied individual or entering the child welfare system, __% of these youth will receive an appropriate referral within __ days.

Strategy 2.4.1: Ensure youth experts are involved in all aspects of intake and screening/initial assessment tool and process development.

Goal 3: Develop a System for Accessing Family and Individual Plan Development and Stabilization Services

Objective 3.1: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a continuum of housing assistance and support services to assist families and individuals at imminent risk of homelessness and families and individuals experiencing homelessness to prevent homelessness and/or secure and maintain housing responsive to ___% of needs identified by families and individuals at intake.

Strategy 3.1.1: Assess, adjust, expand, and sustain the array of integrated services to assist families and individual experiencing homelessness to secure housing.

Strategy 3.1.2: Assess, adjust, expand, and sustain the array of integrated services to assist homeless and at imminent risk of families and individuals experiencing homelessness to retain housing.

Strategy 3.1.3: Continuously analyze processes that reduce wait time for services. (7/1/13-12/31/13 priority)

Strategy 3.1.4: Develop an approach for continuing the flexible fund

Strategy 3.1.5: Consider as part of all conversations to be inclusive of and develop approaches for existing and emerging populations including chronically homeless families and individuals, youth, veterans, people with disabilities, immigrant and refugees, and others.

Goal 4: Develop a System for Accessing Economic Opportunity Services

Objective 4.1: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a unified, outcomes-based system for employment and education that is knowledgeable in and responsive to the obstacles and needs of families and individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness as documented by the increase in education and wages in HMIS databases.

Strategy 4.1.1: Develop and pilot opportunities to provide the ability to build soft and hard employment skills.

Strategy 4.1.2: Provide cross-systems resource sharing and training for service delivery staff of community-based agencies, WorkSource, and community colleges.

Strategy 4.1.3: Locate Navigators at WorkSource and community colleges.

Strategy 4.1.4: Create a unified job and career development team.

Strategy 4.1.5: Advocate on the federal, state, and local levels to remove policy and funding barriers associated with post-secondary education and employment to enable families and individuals to secure living wage jobs.

Goal 5: Develop a Housing Supply Continuum

Objective 5.1: By June 30, 2013, expand approach for engaging private sector landlords in the provision of low-cost unsubsidized housing and housing with short and medium-term subsidies to assist ___ families and individuals experiencing and at risk of homelessness per year.

Strategy 5.1.1: Conduct research and determine a realistic target number of families and individuals to assist per year.

Strategy 5.1.2: Assemble a pool of subsidy resources sufficient to serve the quantity of families and individuals identified.

Strategy 5.1.3: Provide tenant training to families and individuals for accessing and retaining housing.

Strategy 5.1.4: Provide support to landlords for placement and retention of tenants.

Objective 5.2: By December 31, 2016, revise the current emergency shelter model for serving families and individuals experiencing homelessness in Snohomish County to optimize funding and appropriate utilization in the full array of services available.

Strategy 5.2.1: Engage the Homeless Policy Task Force Coordinating Committee and shelter providers in redesigning the array of services provided by shelters within the context of legislative and regulatory changes and community need. (7/1/13-12/31/13 priority) This has been completed.

Strategy 5.2.2: Evaluate the revised strategy on a regular basis to ensure it conforms with federal and state requirements and meets the broader community need.

Strategy 5.2.3: Secure continued support for the emergency shelter system in Snohomish County.

Objective 5.3: Advocate for affordable housing units for families and individuals experiencing homelessness.

Strategy 5.3.1: Advocate for an allocation of federal housing vouchers.

Strategy 5.3.2: Identify and implement opportunities for our community to be more competitive for federal, state, and private housing funds.

Goal 6: Develop a System for Building the Capacity of Service Providers

Objective 6.1: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a University that enhances community capacity and effectiveness by developing the expertise of helping professionals in an evidence-based, comprehensive systems approach to addressing the complex needs of vulnerable families and individuals.

Strategy 6.1.1: Develop the University mission, vision, guiding principles, outcomes, advisory structure, curriculum, and business plan for sustainability. (7/1/13-12/31/13 priority) This is currently in process.

Strategy 6.1.2: Offer curriculum with courses in three strands: theory/practice, systems/resources, and evaluation.

Strategy 6.1.3: Evaluate University outcomes and implement continuous improvement actions as needed.

Strategy 6.1.4: Integrate the University into a department of an institution of higher education so course offerings lead to a certification and/or degree in serving vulnerable families.

Goal 7: Develop a Sustainable Infrastructure within County Systems
Objective 7.1: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a governance structure that contributes to and advises Snohomish County on the Continuum of Care, the 10 Year Plan to end homelessness, and IIF systems changes.
Strategy 7.1.1: Create an oversight body and governance structure that aligns with HUD requirements and meetings local needs (including charter, subcommittees, etc.). (7/1/13-12/31/13 priority)This is completed. It is now the Partnership to End Homelessness.
Strategy 7.1.2: Operationalize all aspects of governance structure support and communications across Snohomish County’s human services systems.
Objective 7.2: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a data collection, management, compilation, review, and continuous improvement process to monitor and enhance progress toward goals at the systems level and provide critical, cross-systems information to front line staff for the effective delivery of services.
Strategy 7.2.1: Develop the ClientTrack software and the IIF/HMIS database to collect and compile data to monitor progress.
Strategy 7.2.2: Develop a process by which the governance body can review data and provide guidance on continuous improvements to Snohomish County’s systems for addressing housing instability, homelessness, and poverty.
Strategy 7.2.3: Ensure utilization of the database developed by front line staff in the full range of human services systems to guide the delivery of effectively coordinated tailored housing and tailored services to Snohomish County families and individuals in need.