

# Snohomish County Investing in Families Strategic Plan

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Produced by the Snohomish County Investing in  
Families Steering Committee and Pillar and System  
Work Groups

## Section I: What is the Strategic Plan?

### *What is the purpose of the Strategic Plan?*

As one of the three counties (Snohomish, King and Pierce) receiving support through the Washington Families Fund, Snohomish County has vowed to reduce family homelessness by 50 percent in the next decade. The Washington Families Fund, an unprecedented public-private partnership led by Building Changes, is engaged in a bold new approach to end homelessness among families with children. The strategies guiding this work emanate from the lessons learned in the Sound Families Initiative, a multi-year, \$40 million investment by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to triple the number of service-enriched housing units for families experiencing homelessness in Pierce, King, and Snohomish Counties in Washington State.

The work underway is presented in three reports: the Snohomish Investing in Families Landscape Assessment, Strategic Plan, and Implementation Plan. This report is the Strategic Plan.

*The first report*, the Snohomish County Investing in Families Landscape Assessment, was completed in January 2010. Members of the Snohomish County Investing in Families Steering Committee worked collaboratively over a period of eight months to develop the Landscape Assessment which provided a broad description of Snohomish County data about families experiencing homelessness, the housing stock, prevention and intervention services, gaps in local services, and funding for these programs. The Draft Landscape Assessment was approved by the Steering Committee and Snohomish County in November 2009 and final approval of this report is expected from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Building Changes in Spring 2010.

*The second report*, the Snohomish County Investing in Families Strategic Plan, describes *what* the Snohomish County Steering Committee members want to do to end homelessness. Final approval of the Strategic Plan by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Building Changes is expected in Spring 2010.

*The third report*, the Snohomish County Investing in Families Implementation Plan, will describe *how* the work will unfold. All three documents will be released for a 30 day public comment period and additional comments from the public and Snohomish County government will be added. It is anticipated that the final plan, comprised of all three reports, will be approved and posted on the Investing in Families website in May 2010.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to identify strategic priorities around the following five pillars of homelessness identified in The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation research:

- (1) **Prevention** aimed at keeping families on the edge of homelessness housed and linked with appropriate services.
- (2) **Coordinated entry** aimed at providing consistent, effective, and swift access to needed services for families.
- (3) **Rapid re-housing** aimed at helping families stabilize in permanent housing whenever possible.

- (4) **Tailored services** that provide the right services at the right level and the right time to meet families' needs.
- (5) **Economic opportunities** that help families advance toward self-sufficiency.

The Steering Committee members are confident that investments in the priorities for objectives and strategies presented in this Strategic Plan will result in the development of a high-performing system for serving families that are homeless and at risk of homelessness. The Strategic Plan includes recommendations for:

- (1) Service delivery strategic investments into developing, demonstrating, and deploying promising practices that reduce family homelessness.
- (2) Organizational strategic investments that increase collaboration and coordination among stakeholders to improve the delivery of services that reduce homelessness.
- (3) System level strategic investments into the effective collection, analysis, and evaluation of data that inform policy, resource allocation, and continuous improvement of services that reduce family homelessness.

### ***What approaches did the Steering Committee use to develop the Strategic Plan?***

Methods used to develop the strategic plan included:

- The formation of a Steering Committee and five Planning Work Groups, known as pillar groups, to develop strategic recommendations for the five pillars of the family homelessness strategy. Each of the pillar groups was chaired by a member of the Investing in Families Steering Committee and included members from social service agencies in the field of housing and homelessness, City of Everett and Snohomish County Government, Snohomish County community colleges, Workforce Development Council Snohomish County, Columbia Legal Services, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Everett Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of Snohomish County, and other stakeholders.
- The pillar work groups drew upon data gathered in the Landscape Assessment, their own expertise, and knowledge of promising practices to develop Strategic Plan goals, objectives, and strategies related to their respective pillars. Knowledge of promising practices was derived from site visits and face-to-face learning opportunities provided by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Building Changes as well as from National Alliance to End Homelessness conferences and a desk-top review of research and programs around the nation. Links to some key effective practices are provided in *Appendix A: Links to Effective Practices*. The groups met up to two times a month from June 2009 through January 2010 for up to two hours each meeting.

- The reconfiguration of the pillar groups, leading to the formation of four systems groups: Early Warning and Outreach, Screening and Initial Assessment, Family Plan Development and Stabilization, and Housing Supply Continuum. This change was made to ensure that the strategies were not duplicative and would result in system integration. In addition, a fifth group, the Economic Opportunity Services group was formed to address develop strategies for this vital component of the integrated service system envisioned by system group members. Many pillar and system group members also attended one full-day and three half-day working sessions where a facilitator led the group through exercises designed to promote the alignment of strategic plan goals, objectives, and strategies.
- A review of other information sources was also conducted including: (1) the Landscape Assessment data on the environment, families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness, housing stock, prevention and intervention services, and funding; (2) the fourteen key planning documents identified in *Appendix B: Key Planning Documents* including local consolidated plans, reports dedicated to ending homelessness, needs assessments, workforce, mental health and chemical dependency action plans as well as the draft Housing and Homelessness Policy Oversight Committee report and the Washington State Department of Commerce's most recent annual report on its Ten-Year Homeless Plan; and other locales; and; (4) other related local efforts underway focused on homeless prevention and intervention.
- Review and incorporation of Steering Committee, pillar, and system group meeting minutes into the strategy descriptions.
- The ongoing work of the Steering Committee, pillar, and system group members to design a system which is well-coordinated and transparent for families *as they journey from homelessness to homefulness*.

### ***What other related work is occurring to support families experiencing homelessness?***

#### **Efforts to Engage Local School Districts**

Three other related efforts to support families experiencing homelessness have been underway during the development of the Strategic Plan. The first involved Columbia Legal Services, a nonprofit law firm that protects and defends the legal and human rights of low income people in Washington State. Columbia Legal Services presented a proposal to the Investing in Families Steering Committee in October 2009 which outlined some strategies for developing a stronger partnership between the Investing in Families work and Snohomish County school districts. Though the Steering Committee included representation from Snohomish County schools, Columbia Legal Services wanted to create broader linkages to Snohomish County school districts and proposed convening a forum involving Snohomish County school district Superintendents, Homeless Liaisons, Title I Coordinators and other school personnel that work closely with homeless students and families. Columbia Legal Services believes the forum will create additional opportunities for Snohomish County school districts to be engaged in the Investing in Families process and provide a venue for the districts to generate feedback about

their role in the plan. At the writing of the Strategic Plan, representatives from Columbia Legal Services have been working with Everett Public Schools, Housing Hope, and Workforce Development Council Snohomish County to coordinate the forum. As part of this effort in early February the Gates Foundation has invited the Executive Director of the Maslow Project in Medford, Oregon to make a presentation about how the project successfully collaborates with community service providers to connect homeless students and their families to appropriate services. The information learned in this meeting will be incorporated into the forum planning efforts.

### **Efforts to Increase Advocacy for Affordable Housing and Homelessness Solutions in Snohomish County**

The second effort, the Advocacy Project, is being led by the Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County. The Housing Consortium received a grant of \$100,000 from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to implement an advocacy project in Snohomish County which will focus on recruiting, training, and supporting advocates selected from non-profit boards and residents of affordable housing. The Housing Consortium has hired a Project Coordinator for the advocacy project and set a goal to recruit, train, and support eight board members and eight community members by the end of 2010. The project is underway. To date, eight community members have participated in the first advocacy training. These individuals will share their personal stories with stakeholders and policymakers. In addition, they will support the advocacy project goals to:

- Expand advocacy activities related to the needs of families experiencing homelessness;
- Build community support by stakeholders and policy makers prior to substantial investment and strategy implementation;
- Raise public awareness around affordable housing and homelessness issues on the grassroots level in order to develop the political will to end homelessness;
- Ensure alignment of policy platforms from homelessness and housing advocates across the state; and
- Build the political will to end homelessness in Snohomish County.

### **Efforts to Increase the Effectiveness of Collecting and Using Data to Inform Better Solutions to End Homelessness**

As part of the third effort, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in collaboration with Building Changes and a national consulting firm, Westat, has been holding data summits and common data element discussions to address the need for a unified system for collecting data on families that are homeless and at risk of homelessness. During these sessions, participants from King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties as well as representatives from state agencies have been considering how the individual, family, organizational, and systems level data collected through each of the five pillars of the initiative could be best utilized to inform decision making, system design, and system improvements. They have also been articulating next steps for working with the HMIS Coordinator in each county to understand the implications of these data needs and develop follow up strategies to address barriers to designing an exemplary, timely, and informative data system.

The decisions and systems associated with this work will play an instrumental role in the Snohomish County Investing in Families service delivery system.

### **Other Learning Opportunities**

In addition, the Steering Committee is continually exploring new learning opportunities, such as the post-secondary access strategies being implemented by SkillUp Washington and the emerging research showing the strong correlation between family involvement in child protective systems and family homelessness. This type of information is continually being considered in the planning process and woven into the service-delivery system, which by design is intended to be flexible, dynamic, and informed by new information.

## **Section II: What is driving our system design efforts?**

The Steering Committee system work group Chairs developed a mission, vision, and core value statements to drive the system design efforts. They also stated from the onset that the work should be accountable, inclusive, and transparent. The Strategic Plan process ensured that there were multiple opportunities for input, discussions involving, and data-driven decision making from persons representing many different constituencies and vantage points. The resulting Snohomish County Investing in Families Initiative mission, vision and core values are presented below.

### **Vision Statement**

We envision a Snohomish County where every family has ready access to the housing, economic opportunities, and support needed to lead lives of dignity and fulfillment.

### **Mission Statement**

The Investing in Families Steering Initiative has been formed to develop a high-performing system to transform services and programs to prevent and end homelessness among families in Snohomish County.

### **Core Values**

- Planning and program development will be research and data-driven.
- Data will be used for evaluation and evaluation will be used for continuous improvement in processes and outcomes.
- Screening will be standardized across the entire system.
- The coordinated system will be family-driven and serve the entire family.
- Services will be culturally relevant and accessible to people from different cultural and language groups.
- Each family will receive services tailored to its specific needs.

- Collaboration will be strengths and results based and include the regular sharing of information to help families implement plans.
- Programs will be long term, flexible, and designed to accommodate families until they become self-sufficient.
- The system will be flexible and open to new partners and opportunities.
- The system will be seamless for families.
- The system will be guided by the voice and experiences of families and providers.
- The system will include priorities, such as serving unaccompanied youth, regardless of whether this target group is a particular funder priority, when such priorities are considered vital to ending or reducing family homelessness.

Steering Committee members frequently re-visited and referenced the vision, mission, and core values in their deliberations to develop their service delivery system design which is presented in the next section.

### **Section III: How will the proposed system work?**

With extensive stakeholder input through the process described above, the Steering Committee developed a flow chart that shows how the proposed system will work. They identified some assumptions that would guide the services, and recommended that the high-performing system they envision needs to:

- Be easy to navigate for all families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
- Be designed so that all providers engaged in the system that come into contact with families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of becoming homeless have a reliable way to assess and refer families who need help to the appropriate resource whether the family needs to be diverted from the system or referred to the system portal.
- Provide families with the support they need at the right time, right place, in the right amount, and for a long enough time, so that they can achieve optimal self-sufficiency. Optimal self-sufficiency is defined differently for different families. For example, for someone with a permanent need for supportive services, optimal self-sufficiency might include ongoing and stable system subsidies. For others, it may be defined as achieving financial independence without subsidies.
- Include structured opportunities for families experiencing homelessness and providers to assess progress and make iterative changes based on what they learn about family progress toward achieving permanent housing and optimal self-sufficiency and about the effect of changing subsidies on family plans.

- Work within the realities and shortcomings of the system while simultaneously working to address and remove these barriers. For example, if the optimal housing a given family needs is not available, the family will be supported in the attainment of their self-sufficiency goals in other life domains until the housing needed becomes available.
- Consider vital issues such as access to public transportation and availability of evening and weekend childcare when developing and implementing service plans.

The next page presents the client flow chart which illustrates how the proposed system will work and presents a likely scenario for client flow, recognizing that a provider in any part of the system may have the tools and partnership agreements in place to refer a vulnerable family within their provider arena to coordinated entry. This expectation underscores the system value that a family considered potentially at risk of becoming homeless or experiencing homelessness will be readily identified and have an opportunity to access needed services, regardless of where that family is served.

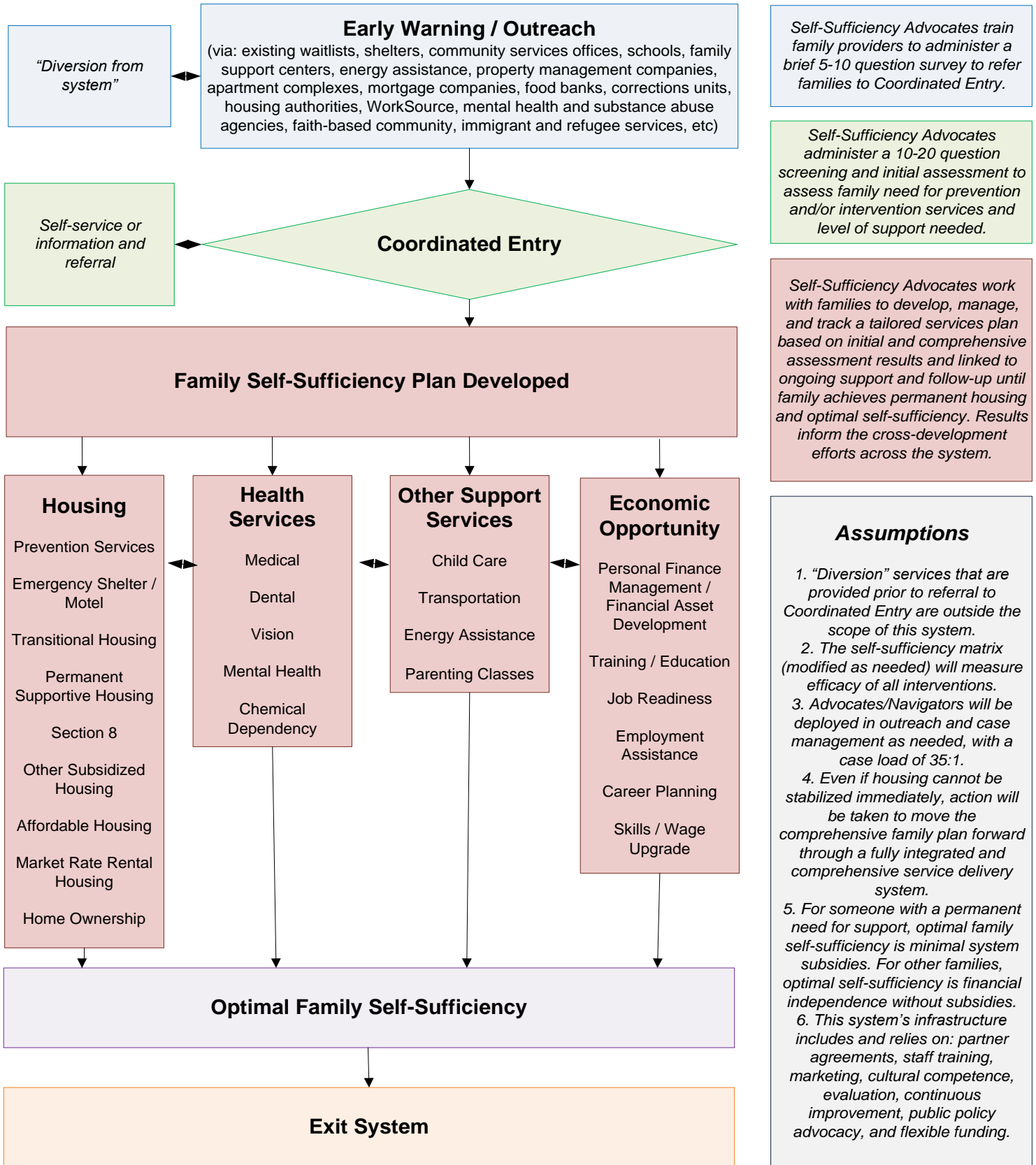
There are several major steps for engaging and serving families in this system.

*First*, families will be identified and referred by a variety of sources including current housing providers and a host of partners including but not limited to community services offices, schools, family support centers, energy assistance, property management companies, apartment complexes, mortgage companies, food banks, corrections units, housing authorities, WorkSource, mental health and substance abuse agencies, the faith-based community, and immigrant and refugee service providers. The families identified will either be provided the services needed to divert them from entry into the system or referred to the system's coordinated entry portal where they will be further assessed. These early warning/outreach/diversion partners will be trained by Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates to use a brief 5 to 10 question survey instrument to determine if a family can be diverted from the system because they have needs that are minimal or could be better addressed elsewhere. Families assessed as needing and wanting more support will be referred to the system's Coordinated Entry portal.

*Second*, at Coordinated Entry, families will answer a more detailed 10 to 20 question screening and initial assessment tool to determine their level of need for prevention and/or intervention services and follow-up support. At this point families with a low level of need may be provided with instructions for self-service using on-line and community resources. Those with a medium level of need will be referred for additional information and referral services. Those assessed as having a high level of need will be referred for more extensive family plan development support. For example, a family that needs energy assistance but has no imminent risk of homelessness may be determined to only need information and referral services. A family that needs energy assistance as well as tenant advocacy support and family counseling may be determined to need more intensive help to address all these issues.



# Snohomish County Investing in Families Service Delivery System



*Third*, each family determined to be high need through this Coordinated Entry screening and initial assessment process will be assigned to a Family Self-Sufficiency Advocate who will work with the family over time to develop and implement a Family Self-Sufficiency Plan tailored to meet their particular needs. This plan will usually include the engagement of families in more than one provider system including housing, health, other support, and/or economic opportunity. The family will receive support from the Advocate to access and negotiate the services outlined in its plan with ongoing progress being carefully tracked and supported using a multi-domain tool completed by families and providers.

*Fourth*, the Family Self-Sufficiency Advocate will continually monitor and track the progress of the family and will work with the family to adjust the plan to reflect the changing assets and needs. The Advocate will support the family until the family achieves permanent housing and optimal self-sufficiency. The goal is that by the time the family exits the system, it will have the social networks, self-advocacy skills, and provider relationships in place to prevent recurring homelessness.

The collective efforts of the Steering Committee and pillar and systems work group members culminated in the development of a set of goals, objectives, and strategies necessary to support the creation of this service delivery system. The next section describes the goals, objectives, and strategies that must be implemented to transform current practices into this high-performing system.

#### **Section IV: What goals, objectives and strategies will we pursue?**

Snohomish County’s Investing in Families Strategy Chart is presented below. The Steering Committee and pillar and systems work groups deliberated extensively over a period of eight months to develop the following system goals, objectives, and strategies. A first-time visitor to their work group meetings would be impressed by the significant subject matter expertise, diversity of viewpoints, persuasive case making, and candid discussions that defined these meetings. The participants worked diligently to develop a strategy chart that incorporated and capitalized on their extensive experience, critical thinking and passion, and resulted in the prioritization and development of aligned strategies. First-time visitors would also likely be struck by the willingness of participants to think collaboratively and to be flexible, modeling values that they described as essential in a high-performing homeless and at risk of homelessness family service delivery system.

#### **Snohomish County Investing in Families Strategy Chart**

<b>Goal 1: Develop an Early Warning, Outreach, and Diversion System</b>
<b>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 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, 75% of whom will have positive housing status 90 days after contact.</b>
Strategy 1.1.1: Utilize research-based indicators to develop a 5-10 question early warning screening tool.
Strategy 1.1.2: Identify, engage, and train partners in the early warning system, including use of the screening tool and referral process.
Strategy 1.1.3: Develop protocols for collecting and sharing early warning and referral data.
Strategy 1.1.4: Coordinate with partners to ensure follow-up with and collection of outcome data for families.

Strategy 1.1.5: Disseminate information to connect with at risk families and make appropriate referrals.
<b>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.</b>
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.
Strategy 1.2.2: Identify, engage, and train partners in the early warning system, including use of screening tool and referral process.
Strategy 1.2.3: Develop protocols for collecting and sharing early warning and referral data.
Strategy 1.2.4: Coordinate with partners to ensure follow-up with and collection of outcome data for families.
Strategy 1.2.5: Disseminate information to connect parents/caretakers of youth at risk of becoming an unaccompanied homeless individual and make appropriate referrals.
<b>Objective 1.3: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a menu of comprehensive diversion/prevention services, including housing assistance and support services, to prevent homelessness for families and youth at risk of homelessness.</b>
Strategy 1.3.1: Use best practices research to develop a menu of services needed to retain/maintain housing.
Strategy 1.3.2: Use best practices research to develop a menu of diversion/prevention services to include but not be limited to mediation, information, referral, coaching, family strengthening, and access to financial assistance and supportive services.

<b>Goal 2: Develop a Screening/Initial Assessment System</b>
<b>Objective 2.1: By December 31, 2016, develop and fully implement an intake tool that collects common key data elements and unique identifiers for families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness to be administered to __ families, increasing the efficiency of intake by receiving partner agencies as documented in surveys of agency staff.</b>
Strategy 2.1.1: Develop a process for identifying common key data elements and unique identifiers for the system.
Strategy 2.1.2: Develop and Beta-test tool for screening/initial assessment.
Strategy 2.1.3: Beta-test tool and process, refine, and take to scale.
<b>Objective 2.2: By December 31, 2016, develop and fully implement a universal screening/initial assessment tool and process to ensure appropriate level of support for __ families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness, 75% of whom agree that the service(s) provided were value-added.</b>
Strategy 2.2.1: Develop a process for identifying programs and screening/initial assessment criteria for the system.
Strategy 2.2.2: Develop a screening tool that identifies complexity and urgency of needs to triage families as low, moderate, or high need for staff-assisted services (low = self-service, medium = information and referral, high = Advocate assisted services).
Strategy 2.2.3: Build on the existing Community Case Management platform to launch a pilot program.
Strategy 2.2.4: Beta-test tool and process, refine, and take to scale.
<b>Objective 2.3: By June 30, 2010, for families assessed as high need, develop a universal screening/initial assessment tool and process for making a referral to an appropriate generalist or specialist Advocate based on the family's primary presenting issues.</b>
Strategy 2.3.1: Identify presenting issues requiring specialist support, 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

Advocates/Navigators needed and where they would be sited.
Strategy 2.3.3: Identify where the Advocates are to be located (e.g., with screening/initial assessment staff or at other agencies).
<b>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.</b>
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 Plan Development and Stabilization Services**

<b>Objective 3.1: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a continuum of housing assistance and support services to assist families at imminent risk of homelessness and families experiencing homelessness to prevent homelessness and/or secure and maintain housing responsive to __% of needs identified by families at intake.</b>
Strategy 3.1.1: Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist families experiencing homelessness to secure housing.
Strategy 3.1.2: Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist homeless and at imminent risk of families experiencing homelessness to retain housing.
Strategy 3.1.3: Ensure that other tailored services identified in the plan are available to each family within 30 days of identification.
Strategy 3.1.4: Create a flexible fund in the amount of \$__ to support the implementation of and access to the broad array of integrated services.
<b>Objective 3.2: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a continuum of housing assistance and support services to assist youth at imminent risk of homelessness and youth experiencing homelessness to prevent homelessness and/or secure and maintain housing responsive to __% of needs identified by youth at intake.</b>
Strategy 3.2.1: Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist youth experiencing homelessness to secure housing and/or reunite with their family.
Strategy 3.2.2: Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist homeless and at risk of youth experiencing homelessness to retain housing independently or with their family.
Strategy 3.2.3: Create a flexible fund in the amount of \$__ to support the implementation of and access to the broad array of integrated services.

**Goal 4: Develop a System for Accessing Economic Opportunity Services**

<b>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 experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness as documented by the increase in education and wages in HMIS and CCM databases.</b>
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 Advocates at WorkSource and community colleges.
Strategy 4.1.4: Create a unified job 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 to secure living wage jobs.

<b>Goal 5: Develop a Housing Supply Continuum</b>
<b>Objective 5.1: By December 31, 2010, develop and implement a program that has engaged and incentivized private sector landlords in the provision of housing to assist 100 families at low to moderate risk of homelessness per year.</b>
Strategy 5.1.1: Develop the statement of purpose and program parameters for a private sector landlord program.
Strategy 5.1.2: Create management and delivery capacity and select providers to operate the program.
Strategy 5.1.3: Adopt a housing assessment instrument to document barriers for establishing level of risk to housing success.
Strategy 5.1.4: Assemble a pool of shallow subsidy resources sufficient to serve 100 families per year.
Strategy 5.1.5: Provide tenant training to families for accessing and retaining housing.
Strategy 5.1.6: Provide support to landlords for placement and retention of tenants.
<b>Objective 5.2: By December 31, 2016, create a plan to generate __ affordable housing units for families experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth.</b>
Strategy 5.2.1: Engage a consultant to lead a community planning process.
Strategy 5.2.2: Advocate for an allocation of federal housing vouchers.
Strategy 5.2.3: Identify and implement opportunities for our community to be more competitive for federal, state, and private housing funds.
<b>Objective 5.3: By September 30, 2010, create an emergency shelter model for serving families experiencing homelessness in Snohomish County.</b>
Strategy 5.3.1: Engage the Homeless Policy Task Force and shelter providers in drafting a scope of work for a consultant to assess the capacity of the existing emergency shelter system in Snohomish County.
Strategy 5.3.2: Engage a consultant to complete an evaluation of the current emergency shelter system and recommend models for Snohomish County.
Strategy 5.3.3: Secure funder and provider support for adoption of a best practices emergency shelter system in Snohomish County.

Each of the goals, objectives, and strategies presented in the above chart is described in more detail below. This description includes an explanation of how each goal supports a high-performing system. A brief explanation is provided describing the relationship between each objective and the Landscape Assessment as well as the other community plans identified in Appendix B as summarized in *Appendix C: Summary of Plan Recommendations for Reducing/Preventing Family Homelessness*. Finally, a brief narrative is included to describe what each strategy entails.

### **Goal 1: Develop an Early Warning, Outreach, and Diversion System**

**How does this goal support a high-performing system?** Any high-performing system for families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness needs to have strong early warning, outreach, and diversion strategies in place to ensure that the needs of these families are readily and systematically identified. The existence of this system will ensure that fewer families become homeless and that those who are already homeless begin to receive supports in a timelier manner. The use of a common screening survey will also help ensure that families who need diversion services (those which are outside the scope of the service delivery system) are assessed and referred similarly and rapidly, allowing for the more effective focusing of system resources on those families who most need them. In the absence of such a system, the early warning

and outreach providers will not be as well-connected to needed homeless prevention and intervention services which can lessen the value of their own investments in families as well as hamper the achievement of desired outcomes.

**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 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, 75% of whom will have positive housing status 90 days after contact.**

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

The Landscape Assessment findings provide a strong foundation for arguing for an effective early warning system, noting that there are very few resources available to identify families who are in need of prevention services. For example, the report noted that the K-12 system and public utility companies are currently underutilized as the first line of defense against homelessness for vulnerable families. Additionally, the Landscape Assessment data point to the need to better design processes for families being discharged from treatment and institutions, something an early warning system could do were the referral relationships in place. The Landscape Assessment also pointed to the need for outreach to families that do not access mainstream systems including families living in the woods in rural Snohomish County. The systems work group members used Landscape Assessment data, such as the data on the number of families on the Community Case Management wait list, to determine that they would need to reach out to 2,000 families in order to reach the overarching goal of reducing homelessness by half in six years.

This objective aligns with recommendations from other Snohomish County plans including the City of Everett Consolidated Plan recommendation to provide assistance to low-income homeowners to help them maintain, and be able to continue living in, their homes and the Snohomish County Affordable Housing Production Plan recommendation to promote and preserve home ownership for 2,100 homes as well as the Snohomish County Continuum of Care recommendations that there be: (1) prevention planning and coordination of prevention activities based on researched best practices and (2) actions undertaken to decrease the number of homeless households with children.

**Strategy 1.1.1: Utilize research-based indicators to develop a 5-10 question early warning screening tool.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** The development of the early-warning screening tool will include reviewing effective practices research to ensure that the questions are based on this research, culturally competent, and robust enough to make informed and accurate decisions about whether to refer a given family to Coordinated Entry or to divert it from the system. This process may include convening focus groups of early warning/outreach providers and families who may be consumers to identify screening tool questions that may be insensitive, confusing, or missing.

**Strategy 1.1.2: Identify, engage, and train partners in the early warning system, including use of the screening tool and referral process.**



***What will this strategy entail?*** As part of this strategy, Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates will train a wide range of family service providers including such diverse entities as schools, family support centers, mental health providers, chemical dependency treatment facilities, and public utility companies to administer a brief 5 to 10 question survey to determine whether they need to be referred to Coordinated Entry. These questions may help gauge for example, whether a family is currently homeless, has a foreclosure or eviction notice, is at imminent risk of losing housing, living in an unsafe situation, or faces less dire circumstances and could perhaps avoid homelessness by accessing one-time rent assistance.

This strategy will also entail establishing concise training tools and approaches and timelines, and in engaging early warning/outreach partner sites in information about the whole delivery system as they will likely be more active recruiters and partners in this system when they know that they will later receive progress reports about how the system is working for the families they refer.

Additional elements of this strategy include developing a process to assure sustainability recognizing that staff turnover is inevitable and developing incentives for partner engagement.

**Strategy 1.1.3: Develop protocols for collecting and sharing early warning and referral data.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will entail establishing clear protocols and timelines for collecting, storing, using, and sharing participant level data with partners and will require the development of participant consent forms, and partnership agreements, and timelines for sending, responding to, and tracking the outcomes of referrals.

**Strategy 1.1.4: Coordinate with partners to ensure follow-up with and collection of outcome data for families.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** A key component of this strategy is developing criteria and a tool for capturing outcome data with a clear, operational definition of “positive outcome.” The early warning screening tool will be piloted with a sufficient number of providers and families to see if the providers feel that the tool works equally well, for example, with persons from different educational backgrounds, and with English Language Learners. In addition, this pilot process will include assessing if there are any conditions that appear to be influencing the successful administration of the screening tool and may include observations by the Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates of survey administration issues if such concerns are warranted.

**Strategy 1.5: Disseminate information to connect with families at risk of homelessness and make appropriate referrals.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This process will include the dissemination of culturally sensitive information to families at risk of homelessness so that they can make informed choices about whether to develop a Family Self-Sufficiency Plan or pursue next steps services. There will be a multi-media public education campaign that includes posters, radio public service announcements, and face-to-face contact. Materials disseminated to families by outreach staff will describe the next steps in the process and explain why the family is either being

diverted from the system or referred to Coordinated Entry. A tracking and referral mechanism will be set in place to monitor the next step actions of the families and to assess, as possible, the efficacy of the referral choice.

**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 is at risk of becoming an unaccompanied homeless individual with 80% of these youth remaining safely and stably housed at 90 days after contact.**

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

The Landscape Assessment report data showed that there are more than 300 homeless and disconnected youth on the streets at any time, far more than the County's 14 emergency shelter beds provided by Cocoon House can adequately serve. This data, and data about the high numbers of foster youth who become homeless prompted some of the Steering Committee members to ask, "How can we strengthen families so that youth can remain in the family/caretaker home, and so that they are better equipped to enter adulthood and less likely to become homeless?" Strategies that keep youth with their families and prevent their becoming an accompanied youth are greatly needed. The Steering Committee members believe that an early warning assessment system that recognizes and responds to the needs of unaccompanied youth is an essential component of a homeless prevention and intervention system because it takes a proactive stance to stop youth from becoming homeless and doubles as an intervention that strengthens whole families. Furthermore, the family strengthening efforts have an exponential effect as they benefit younger children in the family. It was also noted that pregnancy rates are particularly high among unaccompanied youth experiencing homeless and that these youth often become chronically homeless, making service to these youth of singular importance.

**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.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** Developing an early warning screening tool will include reviewing effective practices around family strengthening and functionality. The goal is to identify questions that will be rigorous and sufficient enough to make informed decisions and determine such factors as the risks faced by the youth experiencing homelessness and what the family needs to create a safe, stable and nurturing home for the youth. This information must be useful in determining the next steps which are in the best interest of the youth. These choices should focus first and foremost on implementing research-based strategies to build the skills and strength of families. The expectation is that the screening tool risk assessment metrics would help assess youth and family needs and yield initial information about the family's preservation service needs as well as the results of intervention.

**Strategy 1.2.2: Identify, engage and train partners in the early warning system, including use of screening tool and referral process.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy entails developing a cadre of trainers will be developed to identify, engage, and train the wide array of family/youth providers to administer a brief 5 to 10 question survey to



determine whether diversion services are most appropriate or whether the family needs to be referred to Coordinated Entry. These questions may help gauge, for example, whether the main reasons the youth is at risk of becoming unaccompanied stem from a family's need to access counseling, parenting or conflict resolution supports, or help determine whether the family needs housing information and assistance or emergency financial assistance through flex funds or other resources. The optimal goal is to help the youth stay with her/his family while the whole family works on issues that are contributing to the youth becoming at risk of leaving home.

**Strategy 1.2.3: Develop protocols for collecting and sharing early warning and referral data.**

*What will this strategy entail?* This strategy will entail: (1) establishing clear protocols and timelines for collecting, storing, using and sharing participant level data with partners; (2) developing participant consent forms and partnership agreements; (3) developing timelines for sending, responding to and tracking referrals; (4) establishing intervention outcomes with "positive outcome" being operationally defined; and (5) developing protocols for preserving the confidentiality of sensitive youth and family information around factors within families such as domestic violence, substance abuse, mental and/or physical health issues, sexual abuse, and/or other conditions.

**Strategy 1.2.4: Coordinate with partners to ensure follow-up with youth at risk of becoming an unaccompanied homeless individual and make appropriate referrals.**

*What will this strategy entail?* The early warning screening tool will be piloted with a sufficient number of providers and families to see if the providers feel that the tool works equally well, for example, with youth and families from different educational backgrounds and English Language Learners. In addition, this pilot process will include assessing if there are issues that may be influencing the successful administration of the screening tool and, if there are concerns, observations of survey administration by Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates.

**Strategy 1.2.5: Disseminate information to connect parents/caretakers of youth at risk of becoming an unaccompanied homeless individual and make appropriate referrals.**

*What will this strategy entail?* This process will include the dissemination of information to families and youth at risk of homelessness so that they can make informed choices about whether to proceed with plan development and pursuit of next steps services. Materials disseminated to families and youth by trained outreach staff will describe the next steps in the process and explain why the family and/or youth is either being diverted from the system or referred to Coordinated Entry. A tracking and referral mechanism will be set in place to monitor the next step actions of the families and the youth, including whether the youth becomes unaccompanied at any point in time, and to assess, as possible, the appropriateness of the intervention provided.

**Objective 1.3: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a menu of comprehensive diversion/prevention services, including housing assistance and support services, to prevent homelessness for families and youth at risk of homelessness.**

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

Families interviewed as part of the Landscape Assessment required a variety of prevention services, including counseling, medical and psychological evaluations and treatment, parenting, childcare, budgeting, housing information, and financial assistance. Many were unaware of or did not know how to access needed prevention services. Moreover the Landscape Assessment identified significant gaps in prevention services, noting that there are very few resources available to identify families in need of prevention services. These findings were echoed in *Everyone at Home Now*, Snohomish County's 10-Year Plan to end homelessness in the recommendation that homelessness prevention services be expanded. This is coupled with the Snohomish County Continuum of Care recommendation that there be a decrease in the number of homeless households with children and related recommendations discussed above.

**Strategy 1.3.1: Use best practices research to develop a menu of services needed to retain/maintain housing.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** Providers working with families will identify the services that families most often request and need. In addition, families themselves will be asked to participate in service menu brainstorming, and encouraged to look at their experiences and to consider what resources might help alleviate their current challenges to retaining, maintaining, or locating different housing. Also the menu designers will look at other available data sources such as 2-1-1 data and tools such as the Snohomish County Self-Sufficiency Matrix to develop meaningful service lists for differing levels of need.

**Strategy 1.3.2: Use best practices research to develop a menu of diversion/prevention services to include but not be limited to mediation, information, referral, coaching, family strengthening and strengthening, and access to financial assistance and supportive services.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will entail reviewing effective programs for lists of diversion/prevention services that researchers and local families indicate are most beneficial. In addition, these services will be correlated with domain and levels of service intensity identified as appropriate. At the same time, the menu items will be linked to information which identifies the costs and eligibility for accessing services, a process which could later be referenced when examining different service access experiences of families. The menu of services will also include offerings designed to build on family strengths within the context of their culture and community and will include social networking opportunities to give families a chance to give and receive peer support.

## **Goal 2: Develop a Screening/Initial Assessment System**

***How does this goal support a high-performing system?*** Research suggests that the use of data collection to target services coupled with strategies that develop community motivation and ensure the ongoing availability of

data to track progress and improve on service delivery efforts is effective (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2005). A high-performing system requires an efficient and consistent way to screen and conduct initial assessment of families to determine level of need and appropriate amount of staff assistance required to address that need. The speed and accuracy of referrals will increase as a result as will the appropriateness of the level of service. The data gleaned from this process offer a greater potential for “telling and responding to the story” of and creating a compelling case for family need to help ensure that adequate funding is available to provide families with the right services in the right amounts.

**Objective 2.1: By December 31, 2016, develop and fully implement an intake tool that collects common key data elements and unique identifiers for families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness to be administered to \_\_\_families, increasing the efficiency of intake by receiving partner agencies as documented in surveys of agency staff.**

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

The interviews conducted by Business Government Community Connections for the Landscape Assessment indicate that families are being required to participate in numerous intake and assessment activities that collect many of the same data elements and information as they journey through current housing, economic opportunity, and other human services systems. These redundant activities are confusing to families and are not cost effective for service providers. A cornerstone of a high-performing system for serving families that are homeless and at risk of homelessness is the collection of common key data elements one time with each partner and adding to the information initially collected as needed to determine eligibility for and appropriateness of specific programs and services. The sharing of data will be contingent upon a given family’s informed consent.

**Strategy 2.1.1: Develop a process for identifying common key data elements and unique identifiers for the system.**

**What will this strategy entail?** In coordination with The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes, and Westat, this strategy will entail: (1) developing unique family and child identifiers to ensure that each family and child can be tracked as they transition through the system and longitudinally after system engagement, (2) identifying common key data elements that have relevance for the system families and providers using input from these constituencies and a review of promising practices to ensure that this process is effective, and (3) establishing a process for collecting and summarizing these elements and using them to better define and understand family needs.

**Strategy 2.1.2: Develop and Beta-test tool for screening/initial assessment.**

**What will this strategy entail?** This strategy will entail a review of the chart developed by the original Tailored Services Pillar Work Group to identify levels of family need. It will also entail ensuring that the questions are based on effective practices, are culturally competent, and are able to garner the desired information. The tool

will be tested with a representative sample of providers and families experiencing homelessness to determine how they regard the question flow, type, approach, and usefulness for screening and assessment purposes. This process will also include following up with referral sources to see if the tool is regarded as appropriate by these entities.

**Strategy 2.1.3: Beta-test tool and process, refine and take to scale.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** Based on the results of the initial beta testing, the tool will be refined and retested, ensuring efforts to take to scale are carefully planned and accompanied by training designed to address any questions that emerge. Implementers of this strategy will heed special variables which may influence scale-up efforts, including the need to balance scale-up activities, with the ability of the system to weather growth and continually examine these conditions in tandem.

**Objective 2.2: By December 31, 2016, develop and fully implement a universal screening/initial assessment tool and process to ensure appropriate level of support for \_\_families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness, 75% of whom agree that the service(s) provided were value-added.**

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

Many families interviewed for the Landscape Assessment indicated that they lacked information about resources and needed support to access resources. The intake tool will help efficiently assess families and will speed access to the right amount of services at the right time. Families on wait lists, such as those served by Community Case Management, will receive support in all relevant life domains as a result. This need is echoed in *Everyone at Home Now* which recommends the development of a community-wide access system to minimize the duration and impact of homelessness and maximize effective resource allocation. It aligns with Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan Goal 1 to ensure all county residents have the opportunity to obtain safe, sanitary, and affordable housing and with the Program Year 2005 Action Plan recommendation that a Community Case Management system be developed. It is also echoed in the Snohomish County Continuum of Care recommendation that Community Case Management continue to be developed to prevent homelessness and reduce the duration of homelessness.

Additionally, the Landscape Assessment interviews and data showed that many families experiencing homelessness do not receive services that are adequate to help address the needs of their family. By linking the results of the universal screening/initial assessment tool to family feedback and follow-up results, information about the effectiveness of these efforts will inform subsequent assessment-related continuous improvement efforts.

**Strategy 2.2.1 Develop a process for identifying programs and screening/initial assessment criteria for the system.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include: (1) developing a process for identifying the programs selected for participation in the universal screening system; (2) executing partner criteria and agreements; (3) measuring partner willingness and ability to engage in required assessment, data tracking, evaluation, and system improvement efforts; and (4) developing the 10-20 questions required to establish a family's level of need for staff assisted support using the chart for identifying level of family need developed by the original Tailored Services Pillar Work Group.

**Strategy 2.2.2: Develop a screening tool that identifies complexity and urgency of needs to triage families as low, moderate, or high need for staff-assisted services (low=self-service, medium = information and referral, high = Advocate assisted services).**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include utilizing the screening/initial assessment criteria to develop a tool which measures whether a given family has low, medium, or high need for staff assisted services based on complexity and urgency of the family's issues. For example, the tool will identify high risk factors that indicate if the family's safety or health is an issue. The tool will match the assessed needs of families with their assessed capacity to access services. This crosswalk will also take into account family characteristics that may have an impact on the efficacy of services. For example, the tool will be designed to consider intervening factors such as the needs of families who may have more difficulty accessing services due to language, physical challenges, and/or other factors.

**Strategy 2.2.3: Build on the existing Community Case Management platform to launch a pilot program.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** The Community Case Management initiative, described in the Landscape Assessment, utilizes a team of trained professionals to collect information and maintain a web-based wait list for families that are homeless and seeking housing through Snohomish County's Continuum of Care. Although the strategy has been very successful in streamlining the process and ensuring equitable access to shelter and transitional housing, the Community Case Management model does not provide screening/initial assessment and referral services for the vast majority of families on these wait lists nor does it speed access into permanent housing. To address this gap, efforts to sustain and increase the capacity of this strategy will be implemented, and will include, for example, utilizing the Community Case Management wait lists to launch a pilot program which includes effective assessment tools, screening, triage, referral, and case planning strategies. In this new model, families assessed as having high need will receive staff assistance with access to needed services immediately rather than wait until they are in housing to begin moving toward self-sufficiency.

**Strategy 2.2.4: Beta-test tool and process, refine, and take to scale.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** The expansion of the Community Case Management strategy and process will include developing new wait list processes, assessment and referral tools, and establishing parameters for targeting high need families for engagement in the new pilot program. Part of this process will include developing different expansion models to ensure that the proposed changes can be adequately addressed via the system partnerships in place to serve families. Evaluation processes will include piloting the new tools and

processes, and making improvements needed to improve these efforts. Family and provider feedback tools may be designed to facilitate this process.

**Objective 2.3: By June 30, 2010, for families assessed as high need, develop a universal screening/initial assessment tool and process for making a referral to an appropriate generalist or specialist Advocate based on the family's primary presenting issues.**

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

This objective is based on the need of many families for staff assisted support to address their primary presenting issues which may include a host of life domains other than housing as shown in the Landscape Assessment analysis of family interviews conducted by Business Government and Community Connections. These life domains include: Access to Services, Career Resiliency and Training, Childcare, Education, Employment, Financial Life Skills, Legal, Mental Health, Physical Health, Substance Use, Support System, and Transportation. The need for a community-wide access system is echoed in *Everyone at Home Now* and the Snohomish County Continuum of Care and Program Year 2005 Action Plan.

**Strategy 2.3.1: Identify presenting issues requiring specialist support, e.g., domestic violence, chemical dependency, mental health issues, family preservation/strengthening needs, prevention support, intervention support, specialized youth support.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** Many families will require one or more services requiring specialist support. The assessment tool will be tested for its ability to design questions which identify any specialist staff needs. A system for collapsing and categorizing presenting issues to inform referrals will be discussed with content experts in the above-named areas.

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

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will entail staff modeling analyses that take into account: family needs, family locations, the leveraged and other supports for families involved at different sites, the site's proximity to and relationship with other family providers, and many other factors. The criteria will be examined and potentially adjusted for families with low, medium, and high need and evaluated using a job task analysis that defines standards for the level of support generalists and specialists will be expected to provide.

**Strategy 2.3.3: Identify where the Advocates are to be located (e.g., with screening/initial assessment staff or at other agencies).**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include many of the factors listed in 2.3.2 and will consider, for example, whether the likely services families will receive are to be accessed via site-based or virtual services. Staffing locations will be determined through an analysis of where families live and the availability of services and/or transportation. The decision of where Advocates will be located will also be influenced by such factors as

family proximity to provider systems recognizing that some Advocates may be more needed in areas which are comparatively isolated. Additionally, as the program evolves there may be some natural cohorts of families who are to be served at sites such as WorkSource Centers, K-12 schools, community colleges, Family Support Centers, and community hubs in rural areas.

**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.**

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

The Landscape Assessment data showed that the numbers of unaccompanied minors is increasing, pointing to the need for family interventions. Families with older youth, ages 13 – 17, may be at particular risk because the family unit may not stay intact as youth engage in unhealthy practices that lead to their falling behind in school or running away. The benefits of reacting swiftly to the needs of these families would likely significantly increase the stability of families and the likelihood that youth will remain at home. This process will include the engagement of youth and their families in a set of age appropriate interventions that will be designed to keep the family intact and to enhance the coping and life skills of youth and families. In many instances this will involve dual and in tandem interventions focused on the needs of families and youth.

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

***What will this strategy entail?*** The assessment design process will involve engaging youth experts in all aspects of the effort to develop the intake and screening/initial tool and design strategies to ensure that youth and family providers, including housing providers, are equipped to address the assessed needs of youth with provider resources in a team-based, family-led case management environment. This process will also focus on the design of communication and service integration protocols to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to utilize assessment findings to catalyze changes that will result in more youth staying with their families, and in more families addressing the circumstances that threaten their stability and housing status.

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

***How does this goal support a high-performing system?*** The research to date suggests that programs that combine housing with services succeed in stabilizing families but there has been little research on comparing these programs to programs that provide subsidized housing alone (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2009). We propose to advance knowledge in this arena through the development of universally administered family self-sufficiency plans and stabilization services that facilitate the integration of cross-system services and act as a bellwether for identifying areas where there may be staff or service shortages. The results of the plans



will be tracked carefully over time, providing insight into the needs of families and the ability of the system to promote family self-sufficiency. These results will be instrumental to the operation of a high-performing system.

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

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

Landscape Assessment data reveal that families are accessing services from fragmented multiple provider systems, making it difficult for families to negotiate these systems. By having a continuum of housing and support services in place and measuring family need, access to, and use of this system, data generated from this effort will act as a beacon for identifying service gaps, strengths, and areas of needed alignments. These system-building needs were identified as priorities in the Landscape Assessment. This need is echoed in the City of Everett Consolidated Plan and *Everyone at Home Now*.

**Strategy 3.1.1: Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist families experiencing homelessness to secure housing.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates will develop referral partnerships with housing providers to ensure that families have access to services that include housing prevention services as well as a variety of other types of housing including emergency shelter/motels, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, Section 8, other subsidized housing, affordable housing, and market rate rental housing. Strategies to assist families to secure housing will include helping in the completion of applications and advocacy designed to help families overcome potential obstacles, such as poor credit histories, landlord resistance, and other challenges that can make housing difficult to secure.

**Strategy 3.1.2: Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist homeless and at risk of families experiencing homelessness to retain housing.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include providing families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness with tenant advocacy, budget planning, benefit counseling, and other interventions to ensure they are able to retain housing. Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates will help the family develop integrated plans that ensure that families are able to reside, whenever possible, in close proximity to family social supports, childcare, transportation, and the schools which their children attend.

**Strategy 3.1.3: Ensure that other tailored services identified in the plan are available to each family within 30 days of identification.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will entail working with each family to identify what other services it needs and will include documenting needed services and timeframes for accessing those services. Follow-up dates will also be set to determine if and when families access services as well as outcomes and include



information such as: did they get needed services, were they put on a wait list, and did transportation barriers intervene with their service access?

**Strategy 3.1.4: Create a flexible fund in the amount of \$\_\_ to support the implementation of and access to the broad array of integrated services.**

**What will this strategy entail?** This strategy will result in the pooling of dollars in a flexible fund which can be used to help with a given need, such as rent assistance or car repair, which cannot be addressed in a timely fashion through subsidies or other means to help the family retain housing or access critical services.

**Objective 3.2: By December 31, 2016, develop and implement a continuum of housing assistance and support services to assist youth at imminent risk of homelessness and youth experiencing homelessness to prevent homelessness and/or secure and maintain housing responsive to \_\_% of needs identified by youth at intake.**

**What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment or other community plans?**

Landscape Assessment data identify a high number of youth who are at risk of homelessness or homeless due to family issues. The data underscores the need to intervene early at the places where vulnerable youth turn to keep them engaged in services and connected to their families whenever possible. In order to prevent youth homelessness, a continuum of housing assistance and support services will be developed and implemented that ensures that youth providers have protocols in place to connect youth and their families to the family service delivery system for needed services. These providers may include providers of runaway services, family reunification services, group and independent housing providers, educational institutions, courts, foster care providers, mental health and drug and alcohol treatment providers, and shelter and transitional housing providers. This strategy may also involve developing temporary housing options for youth, such as dormitory or shared housing, that provide positive and cost effective alternatives not currently available for those youth who cannot remain or be reunified with their families when no other resources are available.

**Strategy 3.2.1: Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist youth experiencing homelessness to secure housing and/or reunite with their family.**

**What will this strategy entail?** The service delivery system will promote family reunification and services that strengthen families and youth and will place heavy emphasis on post-secondary education access; responsible tenancy; budgeting and other life skills; and how to find, apply for, and successfully utilize community resources. Families that need support to reunite with youth will have access to necessary counseling, health, financial management, parenting, and housing support services.

**Strategy 3.2.2: Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist youth experiencing homelessness youth at risk of homelessness to retain housing independently or with their family.**

**What will this strategy entail?** Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates will focus on helping youth and their families, as applicable, make safe choices about transitioning to housing, including helping youth access needed

subsidies, work experience, and education necessary to get jobs so that they can afford rent when reunification is not an option. Youth will be engaged in budgeting and housing retention focused exercises and workshops and engaged in incentive focused programs that encourage their involvement with positive role model adults and with the Family Self-Sufficiency Advocate. Specialized youth landlord advocacy services will be provided as well as youth independent living support. Conflict resolution, de-escalation training, and positive family functioning support will be provided to help support youth and their families wishing to remain or become intact.

**Strategy 3.2.3: Create a flexible fund in the amount of \$\_\_ to support the implementation of and access to the broad array of integrated services.**

**What will this strategy entail?** This strategy will entail developing a flexible fund that youth and/or their families may need to access integrated services. This fund can be used to help youth complete their education and pursue resources for job search when financial supports are not available in a timely manner through other programs or subsidies. It may also include incentive payments to recognize incremental milestones in a given youth's development.

#### **Goal 4: Develop a System for Accessing Economic Opportunity Services**

**How does this goal support a high-performing system?** Research shows that even when families are stabilized in housing, most families that have experienced homelessness or were at risk of homeless continue to have incomes well below the level needed for self-sufficiency and remain dependent upon subsidies. Even those who make gains in income and employment frequently remain unable to afford market rate housing, even after a transition period (*Ending Homelessness for Homeless Families. The Evidence for Affordable Housing*, National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2009 and *Final Findings Summary: A Closer Look at Families' Lives During and After Supportive Transitional Housing: Seattle: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*, Northwest Institute for Children and Families and University of Washington School of Social Work, 2007). Thus, a high-performing system for families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness must include the comprehensive and timely integration of employment, education, and financial asset development services necessary to ensure that families access opportunities to increase their skills and income. The pathway each family member will take to develop these skills and successfully pursue jobs must be carefully tailored and will vary considerably. In all cases, this effort will be accelerated if families and providers have access to the education and employment information and supports and tracking mechanisms to help families succeed.

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

**What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?**

The Landscape Assessment provides a strong call to action for a unified housing, human services, and economic opportunity system that is responsive to the needs of families experiencing homelessness and

families at risk of homelessness. The Landscape Assessment identifies, for example, that WorkSource staff need to have a more in-depth understanding of the needs of families experiencing homelessness and the services available to meet those needs. It also paints a compelling picture of why many homeless wage earners need more intensive support to access and benefit from the economic opportunity services available through community colleges and WorkSource. The Landscape Assessment presents a solid case for ensuring that these families have the career planning support needed to move from entry-level jobs to jobs that offer a living wage in growth industry clusters with career advancement opportunities. It explains how many English Language Learners and wage earners who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness and have been out of school for a significant period of time can benefit from customized program such as our state's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs and from other employment and education strategies that assist families to obtain and retain employment and earn wages which are sufficient to afford housing. It also makes a case for the coupling of these supports with financial asset development strategies that will help families retain housing and achieve self-sufficiency. The need for specialized employment and job training programs for families experiencing homelessness is also identified in the City of Everett Consolidated Plan and the need for longer-term, career-based employment services is identified as a recommendation in *Everyone at Home Now*. This is mirrored in the Workforce Development Council Snohomish County Strategic Plan which identifies the need to deliver career foundation and advancement products and initiatives to youth and adults and provide career planning and advancement services. A specific action step identified in the Snohomish County Continuum of Care is to ensure that Workforce Development Council Snohomish County and the Homeless Policy Task Force partner to increase the number of WorkSource connection sites within Snohomish County to expand portals to employment services for homeless individuals and families.

**Strategy 4.1.1: Develop and pilot opportunities to build soft and hard employment skills.**

**What will this strategy entail?** This strategy will include workshops on school readiness, employability skills, job retention and life skills that will assist families in balancing life, school and work. Activities will also include leveraging the work of the Snohomish County Financial Assistance Development Coalition to develop workshops on managing finances and developing resources tailored to the needs of families that are homeless and low-income. As part of this strategy, new research and development models for training, education, and employment that will be most effective for homeless family members will be examined. The strategy will utilize this information to capitalize and expand on existing subsidized employment opportunities with non-profit organizations and unions as well as for-profit businesses to include the full continuum of opportunities to prepare for supported and competitive work opportunities as well as entrepreneurship. The aim of this work will be to help new labor force entrants who are homeless or at risk of homelessness gain work experience and practice employment soft skills. In some cases, these efforts will include engagement of individuals in on-the-job training options including apprenticeships and internships with the possibility of employment after the training period.

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

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will result in all system service delivery staff having up-to-date roadmaps about training and education programs, including criteria set for program entry, program steps, options and outcomes. This will include training on industry clusters targeted for attraction, retention, and expansion by the Snohomish County Blueprint Partnership (see <http://www.snocoblueprint.org>) and the career pathways within those clusters (see <http://www.careertrees.org>). As a result, these staff, and the Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates will be able to convey this information to families in a timely and accessible way. In addition, because many families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness need to compress their education and training as much as possible, information about special compressed educational offerings will be included in resource sharing materials and training. Procedures will also be implemented to ensure that all system service delivery staff and Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates consistently track and communicate about families' progress. Families and providers will also receive ongoing information about the effects of benefit cliffs and changes in benefit packages as these issues influence their training pathway plans and trajectories.

**Strategy 4.1.3: Locate Advocates at WorkSource and community colleges.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will focus on the development of economic opportunity related job responsibilities for Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates which will include: serving as the coordinating point of contact with agency case managers; assisting families in career planning; sharing their knowledge of WorkSource services and community college programs with families and providers; and partnering with WorkSource staff, community colleges, and community-based agencies to share resources and training needs. This strategy will also include identifying economic opportunity system sites where Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates will be placed, ensuring geographic coverage for North, South, Central, and East County.

**Strategy 4.1.4: Create a unified job development team.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy would capitalize on the current WorkSource Centers' Business Services Team and include the hiring of a dedicated Job Developer to work with families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness as a member of the Business Services Team. The primary responsibilities of the Job Developer would include coordinating with other members of the Business Services Team and the Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates to work with employers to identify needs, provide job matching services, make job referrals, and follow-up on job placements as needed. The Job Developer would also coordinate with housing provider job development staff to ensure all are working together effectively.

**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 to secure living wage jobs.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include making recommendations on modification of performance standards for Workforce Investment Act programs, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, and Federal and State Financial Aid; increasing resources to support employment and training opportunities

including subsidized employment options; and supporting new research and development models for training, education, and employment that will work most effectively with families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness.

## **Goal 5: Develop a Housing Supply Continuum**

**How does this goal support a high-performing system?** A high-performing system is predicated on the availability of a continuum of housing options, including housing options that will increase the access of affordable housing available to families with low- to moderate-income and are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. The importance of these options to Snohomish County, where the supply of affordable housing is low and where the cost of housing is high compared to the incomes of many residents, is described in the Landscape Assessment. Strategies that work with families across the housing continuum are required, as are strategies that increase the flow of people into private housing so that additional housing becomes available for families on wait lists. Research shows that most effective programs for increasing access to private housing target landlords who own relatively few properties. While larger landlords can be more rigorous in the application of screening requirements, smaller landlords can be more personally involved and may be motivated by the idea of helping people in need (*Homeless Prevention: Creating Programs that Work. A Companion Guide*, National Alliance to End Homelessness, July, 2009)

**Objective 5.1: By December 31 2010, develop and implement a program that has engaged and incentivized private sector landlords in the provision of housing to assist 100 low to moderate risk families per year.**

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

The Landscape Assessment identifies a significant gap in the availability of housing including programs that focus sufficiently on marketing to and recruiting landlords as a strategy for increasing the availability of affordable housing stock. Many organizations, including the Urban Institute, have regularly advocated for affordable rental housing, describing it as a key ingredient to preventing widespread homelessness.

**Strategy 5.1.1: Develop the statement of purpose and program parameters for a private sector landlord program.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will result in program designers more fully defining the purpose, goals, strategies, and main tenets of the private sector landlord program. They will establish parameters for the type and level of landlord engagement, potential methods to match families with shallow subsidies, including whether, for example, to pilot this project with different “feeder” providers, such as shelter or transitional housing providers or other service systems, such as Section 8 or TANF. Determinations about the locations and types of landlords to be engaged will be made and decisions will be reached about the potential mechanisms to establish project baselines and measure the success of the program.

**Strategy 5.1.2: Create a management and delivery capacity and select providers to operate the program.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will result in identifying the desired staffing levels, performance goals, and outcomes of the program; methods to measure progress; and key competencies sought in the management, implementation, and oversight of this project. The request for proposals developed to procure an operator of the program will specify these factors, as well as data collecting, reporting, and evaluation requirements that will be essential to measure and sustain this effort into the future.

**Strategy 5.1.3: Adopt a housing assessment instrument to document barriers for establishing level of risk to housing status.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** A housing assessment tool will be developed to assess the level of risk and type and length of services needs of families selected for the program. This tool will be based on a review of effective practices, and have the capacity to assess family risk factors including tenant background, readiness to pursue this type of housing option, and alignment between family need and level of services to be provided. At the same time a landlord risk assessment will be developed to determine the desirability of working with different landlords, and past history of these landlords with tenant management and disputes. The landlord assessment will likely include questions to gauge landlord interest in participation and need to receive interventions envisioned as part of the landlord support package. It may also measure landlord willingness to give timely notice about issues that may interfere with the tenant's ability to retain housing.

**Strategy 5.1.4: Assemble a pool of shallow subsidy resources sufficient to serve 100 families per year.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will entail developing a pool of resources that may be used to subsidize a portion of the rent for 100 families per year. Modeling of how these resources will be used will occur to determine whether the resources will be offered on a graduated basis and tied to progress on Family Self-Sufficiency Plans or whether the subsidies will be brief in duration and act as bridges to next steps housing.

**Strategy 5.1.5: Provide tenant training to families for accessing and retaining housing.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include developing a curricula and strategies for integrating tenant training into the housing retention efforts of families, including efforts to help families learn how to communicate with landlords, file complaints, and learn information about renter and landlord responsibilities. Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates will continually integrate this information into housing search and retention efforts.

**Strategy 5.1.6: Provide support to landlords for placement and retention of tenants.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include providing landlords who agree to rent to targeted families with assurances of help to intervene with tenant problems. Landlords will also learn about the criteria used to select families and will be apprised of strategies they will employ to reduce risks for landlords who agree to rent to clients who would not ordinarily be considered as tenants. As part of this strategy landlords will be provided with assurances of reimbursement in case of damages or late fees associated with tenants placed as part of this strategy. They will also be provided with 24/7 mediation if problems arise. In addition, this strategy

may entail looking at incentives; such as reduced rate weatherization, green housing accommodations, and other incentive strategies; for participating landlords.

**Objective 5.2: By December 2016, create a plan to generate \_\_\_ affordable housing units for families experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth.**

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

The lack of affordable housing has been cited repeatedly in local community plans and the Landscape Assessment and is one of the top causes of homelessness identified in the Point in Time count. The Snohomish County Consolidated Plan identifies three main barriers to creating housing that is affordable for entry level workers and their families: (1) the increased housing demand due to population growth; (2) the high cost of land, development, and construction; and (3) limited funding for affordable housing. In addition, because wages do not keep pace with housing costs, many families cannot afford housing with youth being at particular disadvantage.

**Strategy 5.2.1 Engage a consultant to lead a community planning process.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will entail hiring a consultant to expand upon the existing affordable housing plan for families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness, taking into account such factors as population trends, age of residents, building trends, zoning analysis, land built-out analysis, age of housing, housing and rental housing and engagement of the community in a process to define realistic goals for generating additional affordable housing.

**Strategy 5.2.2: Advocate for an allocation of federal housing vouchers.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will entail advocating for an expansion in the number of housing vouchers available as a cost-effective and flexible solution to family homelessness. They are particularly needed in times of recession when the turnover rate of vouchers is extremely slow. This strategy will also include a cross-domain case for the need for rent assistance among families with lower skills who are not able to compete successfully for scarce jobs.

**Strategy 5.2.3: Identify and implement opportunities for our community to be more competitive for federal, state, and private housing funds.**

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include competitive grants for which we can apply to advance the goals, objectives, and strategies of our effort to serve families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness. It will also include developing strategically integrated federal, state, and private housing communication, modeling, marketing, and evaluation strategies that demonstrate cost savings and effective results. The strategy will also include utilizing data more strategically to engage in the case making necessary to promote local innovative practices.



**Objective 5.3:** By September, 2010, create an emergency shelter model for serving families experiencing homelessness in Snohomish County.

***What is the relationship of this objective to the Landscape Assessment and/or other community plans?***

As the Landscape Assessment shows, emergency shelters are a major provider of housing for many Snohomish County families. It is unknown, however, what happens to families when they exit these shelters, and it is likely that our current efforts to engage families into case planning and other services can be enhanced. Interest in creating an emergency shelter model for serving families experiencing homelessness in Snohomish County that incorporates best practices will contribute to the overall service delivery system.

**Strategy 5.3.1:** Engage the Homeless Policy Task Force and shelter providers in drafting a scope of work for a consultant to assess the capacity of the existing emergency shelter system in Snohomish County.

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include engaging the Homeless Policy Task Force and shelter providers in identifying the key questions and issues they consider important to ask in order to assess the capacity of the emergency shelter system in Snohomish County. As part of this effort the Task Force and shelter providers will engage in discussions about the proposed shelter system evaluation report and have an opportunity to recommend criteria for evaluating the current emergency shelter system. They will also be asked to recommend other models they would like a consultant to explore and will collectively develop a scope of work for the consultant.

**Strategy 5.3.2:** Engage a consultant to complete an evaluation of the current emergency shelter system and recommend models for Snohomish County.

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will include examining such things as the current shelter provisions for supporting families, methods to refer families to next steps housing and services, and collaborations between shelters and other provider systems, documenting the results associated with these activities. The consultant will conduct interviews with shelter staff and shelter users, including administrators and service delivery staff, and document the capacity including number of families, number of shelter beds, duration of stay, types of services, results, and partnerships. The consultant will also examine shelter models from across the county and engage local shelter providers in discussions about the pros and cons of these models as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the local shelter system.

**Strategy 5.3.3:** Secure funder and provider support for adoption of a best practices emergency shelter system in Snohomish County.

***What will this strategy entail?*** This strategy will entail engaging funders and providers in meetings focused on sharing, reviewing, and developing an understanding the benefits of adopting a best practices model drawing upon presentations, site visits, data, and stories from locales using these models and by conducting candid comparisons of local models to other effective practices. This will also entail a significant effort to educate



fundors and providers and to garner their feedback about different best practice models. In addition, this strategy will include working with local homeless coalitions and housing groups to marshal support for effective practices and identify champions able to work with fundors and providers to invest in the infrastructure and implementation changes necessary to improve existing services.

## **Section V: How have we prioritized strategies?**

All of the strategies set forth in this Strategic Plan are regarded as essential to developing a high-performing family homelessness prevention and intervention system. Given that resources are not sufficient to fund all of these strategies initially, a methodology has been established to identify those which are most essential to pursue in years 1 and 2, years 2 and 3, and years 4 through 6. The criteria established to identify high priority strategies for first and second year implementation are presented below. They are strategies which:

- Will contribute to the launching of a total system redesign.
- Are determined to have the greatest potential to contribute to increases in family self-sufficiency.
- Address a high priority system-building need.
- Serve as an essential starting point, linchpin, or focal activity.
- Maintain and/or mine the potential of existing capacity/infrastructure essential to the redesigned system.
- Reflect promising or effective practices according to research.
- Have the potential to fill an immediate need and yield future benefits.
- Have the greatest impact given the amount of funding and human resources invested.
- Have measurable outcomes within the timeframe of the Implementation Plan.
- Are priorities that align with existing plans to end all homelessness in Snohomish County.

Applying these criteria, the cluster of strategies which have the highest priority for first and second year implementation are those that will allow the partners to develop and implement a pilot service delivery system to help families on the current Community Case Management wait lists and new families experiencing and at risk of homelessness access the full array of needed housing and self-sufficiency resources. These strategies include:

**Strategy 1.1.1:** Utilize research-based indicators to develop a 5-10 question early warning screening tool.

**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.

**Strategy 2.1.1:** Develop a process for identifying common key data elements and unique identifiers for the system.

These strategies are currently being addressed through a combined effort under the coordinated leadership of The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes, and Westat with the involvement of representatives from Washington State and King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties.

The following additional strategies are critical to implement at the local level.

**Strategy 2.2.1:** Develop a process for identifying programs and screening/initial assessment criteria for the system.

**Strategy 2.2.2:** Develop a screening tool that identifies complexity and urgency of needs to triage families as low, moderate, or high need for staff-assisted services (low = self-service, medium = information and referral, high = Advocate assisted services).

**Strategy 2.2.3:** Strategy 2.2.3: Build on the existing Community Case Management platform to launch a pilot program.

**Strategy 3.1.1:** Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist homeless families to secure housing.

**Strategy 3.1.2:** Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist homeless and at imminent risk of homeless families to retain housing.

**Strategy 3.1.4:** Create a flexible fund in the amount of \$\_\_ to support the implementation of and access to the broad array of integrated services.

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

**Strategy 4.1.3:** Locate Advocate at WorkSource and community colleges.

These priority strategies will be implemented by launching a pilot project which has clearly articulated assessment and tools, tailored services, and partnerships. It will also require hiring and training the first Family Self-Sufficiency Advocates to help families negotiate the service system including ongoing access to economic opportunities and clear strategies to help families achieve optimal self-sufficiency.

The second cluster of strategies that have been identified as having a high priority for early implementation are those related to increasing the stock of available housing through engagement of private sector landlords.

These strategies include the following:

**Strategy 5.1.1:** Develop the statement of purpose and program parameters for a private sector landlord program.

**Strategy 5.1.2:** Create management and delivery capacity and select providers to operation the program.

**Strategy 5.1.3:** Adopt a housing assessment instrument to document barriers for establishing level of risk to housing success.

**Strategy 5.1.4:** Assemble a pool of shallow subsidy resources sufficient to serve 100 families per year.

## Section VI: How will we finance these priority strategies?

As noted above, there is currently a wide array of programs and services designed to address the housing, economic opportunity, and related services needs of families experiencing homelessness and at risk of homelessness. These programs and services, each important to and effective at addressing specific needs, do not currently work in concert to address the complex and wide-ranging needs of families, ultimately resulting in too many families remaining, becoming, or returning to homelessness. This lack of connection among programs and services has its etiology in the way such programs and services are funded. Each has its own eligibility criteria, its own funding cycle, and its own allowable and unallowable activities. Through the course of its development of the local Landscape Assessment and this Strategic Plan, the Investing in Families partners identified key gaps in services resulting from this fragmentation as well as key strategies that need to be undertaken to address those gaps. The above strategies identified as priorities for Years 1 and 2 may be categorized as:

- **infrastructure strategies**, that is, foundational software and equipment, training, inventory development, data collection and analysis protocols and systems, and related strategies and
- **implementation strategies**, that is, innovations in service delivery and services that can be implemented within the redesigned Investing in Families system framework utilizing the infrastructure developed to meet the complex needs of families.

**Infrastructure Strategies:** We are submitting an Infrastructure Grant proposal to launch the infrastructure strategies prioritized by the Investing in Families partners to The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The strategies for which we are requesting funds include:

Strategy Number	Description
1.1.1	Utilize research-based indicators to develop a 5-10 question early warning screening tool.
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.
2.1.1	Develop a process for identifying common key data elements and unique identifies for the system.
2.2.1	Develop a process for identifying programs and screening/initial assessment criteria for the system.
2.2.2	Develop a screening tool that identifies complexity and urgency of needs to triage families as low, moderate, or high need for staff-assisted services (low=self-service, medium=information and referral, high=Navigator assisted services).
5.1.3	Adopt a housing assessment instrument to document barriers for establishing level of risk to housing success.
3.1.1 (a)	Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist families experiencing homelessness to secure housing.
3.1.2 (a)	Develop a broad array of integrated services to assist families experiencing homelessness and families at imminent risk of homelessness to retain housing.
4.1.1 (a)	Develop opportunities to provide the ability to build soft and hard employment skills.
5.1.1 (a)	Develop the statement of purpose and program parameters for a private sector landlord program.
5.1.2	Create management and delivery capacity and select providers to operate the private sector landlord program.

The specific outcomes related to these strategies that we hope to support with Infrastructure funds include:

1. utilizing research-based indicators to develop common key data elements and unique identifiers for the system, early warning identification tools and processes, screening/initial assessment tools and processes, service delivery tools and processes, related privacy protection and data sharing protocols, and a unified database and processes for capturing data;
2. developing an inventory of tailored, economic opportunity, and housing services to be integrated to meet the needs of families; and
3. developing the parameters, processes, and inventory for private sector landlord engagement in the expansion of affordable housing available to support our effort.

**Implementation Strategies:** While the above infrastructure strategies are being launched in Year 1, the Snohomish County Human Services Department will undertake a comprehensive review of the different funding streams currently available to finance a pilot project to serve 50 to 100 families addressing the following implementation strategies starting in July, 2011:

Strategy Number	Strategy Description
2.2.3	Build on the existing Community Case Management platform to launch a pilot coordinated entry program.
3.1.1 (b)	Implement a broad array of integrated services to assist families at risk of homelessness to secure housing.
3.1.2 (b)	Implement a broad array of integrated services to assist families at risk of homelessness and families at imminent risk of homelessness to retain housing.
3.1.4	Create a flexible fund to support the implementation of and access to the broad array of integrated services.
4.1.1 (b)	Pilot opportunities to provide the ability to build soft and hard employment skills.
4.1.3	Locate Navigators at WorkSource and community colleges.
5.1.1 (b)	Pilot a private sector landlord program.
5.1.4	Assemble a pool of shallow subsidy resources sufficient to serve 100 families participating in the private sector landlord program per year.

The review will be used to determine which proposed strategies might be implemented utilizing those existing funding streams. This examination will also include identification of the collaborative process for determining the use(s) of each potential funding stream and an identification of the body(ies) that would need to concur with any re-purposing of funds from that stream. The streams to be considered will include the following funds under the management of Snohomish County:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG)
- HOME Investment Partnership (HOME)
- Supportive Housing Program SHP)
- Homeless Grant Assistance Program (HGAP)
- Transitional Housing, Operating, and Rent (THOR)
- Emergency Shelter and Assistance Program (ESAP)
- Ending Homelessness Program (EHP)
- Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)

The Snohomish County Human Services Department will also examine the feasibility of using Community Services Block Grant funds as well as mental health, chemical dependency, and other human services funds to support this effort. The Department will work with Everett Housing Authority and the Housing Authority of Snohomish County regarding the potential targeting of project-based vouchers to support rapid re-housing for pilot families. Additionally, the Department will convene a meeting with the City of Everett to determine the feasibility of aligning the City's CDBG, HOME, AHTF, and Human Needs funds to support implementation of the pilot project. The Department, Workforce Development Council Snohomish County, and Edmonds Community College will also meet to determine the feasibility of utilizing Workforce Investment Act funds as well as federal financial aid, state need grant, Worker Retraining, Basic Food Employment and Training, WorkFirst, Opportunity Grant, I-BEST, foundation grant, student college funds, and related resources available to these economic opportunity providers to support implementation of the pilot. These partners will also engage Everett Community College in this effort. Finally, the Department will continue dialog with the K-12 school districts in our county to identify additional public resources that may be dedicated to our pilot effort.

Once these fund sources have been identified and selected, we propose to submit an application or applications for matching funds to Building Changes for Washington Families Fund Systems Innovation Grant funds to help launch our pilot project.

## **Section VII: How do we expect to measure results?**

Our plan for measuring results is evolving as The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes, and Westat undertake work on data collection and coordinated entry in concert with state and local stakeholders. As described in the Landscape Assessment, the Homeless Management Information System is not being used uniformly nor is it being used to capacity to collect and analyze data as needed to measure results. There are several components of the system that must be addressed to create a fully-functioning process for measuring, evaluating, and continuously improving upon the efficacy of the high-performing system being built. These include: data elements, database, data collection and entry protocols and processes, data analysis, performance review and evaluation, and continuous improvement identification and processes. Each of these is addressed below.

### **Data Elements and Database**

In concert with The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes, and Westat, we will be exploring a process for collecting common data elements as well as ways to coordinate or combine the current Community Case Management database with the Homeless Management Information System database, recognizing that migration to a statewide database may be in order. We will also be examining options for instituting practices which result in the availability of data for service delivery staff and program managers as well as funders. In addition to common intake data elements, we will need to identify common data elements to collect in terms of planned services as well as service actually provided and outcomes.

### **Data Collection and Entry Protocols and Processes**

We anticipate that data will need to be collected in electronic family files that will be continually updated to reflect the changing composition of families and their progress over time. Protocols will need to be established to ensure that the data collected will be shared among providers only with the informed consent of families. We will examine the relative feasibility of having service delivery staff enter data versus having training staff review the data collected for completeness, accuracy, and internal consistency and entering that data through time/task analyses and data validation.

### **Data Analysis, Performance Review, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement**

For outcomes, we anticipate using the Snohomish County Self-Sufficiency Matrix (see <http://www.worksourceonline.com/js/matrix.htm>) to chart family progress in the following life domains: access to services, career resiliency and training, childcare, education, employment, financial life skills, legal, mental health, physical health, substance use, support system, and transportation. We anticipate that the Matrix will need to be reviewed and updated by subject matter experts and that staff will need training on use of the matrix to chart family progress. We will also examine the feasibility of integrating selected elements of the economic opportunity system's management information systems with the Homeless Management Information System database, including the possibility of accessing employer tax data to track families' long term progress toward self-sufficiency as measured using the Self-Sufficiency Calculator. The Calculator is a particularly powerful and research-based statewide tool which has been endorsed by the Washington State Department of Commerce in its 10-Year Homeless Plan Annual Report for 2008. The statewide portal to the Calculator may be found at <http://www.thecalculator.org>.

We expect that our work will also be informed by the Washington State Department of Commerce's efforts to establish statewide performance measurement standards as outlined in the Department's 10-Year Homeless Plan Annual Report for 2008 (see page 45).

Once we have agreed upon measures, we will explore developing "canned" reports for tracking families and outcomes at individual service delivery, agency, and program levels. We will also have system "power users" generate performance reports on a regularly scheduled basis. These reports will be reviewed by a team of analysts who will also identify areas where there is significant variance between planned and actual performance. Such variances will trigger an analysis of the reasons for the variance and possible corrective actions, if indicated.

Ultimately, through effective implementation and continuous improvement of all of the above strategies over the six year implementation period, we anticipate the following outputs:

- The development of an exemplary service delivery system that serves families in an effective and culturally competent manner.
- The development of an integrated service delivery system that results in families getting the services they need, in the right amount, in the right place, and for long enough to support their goals of

permanent housing and optimal self-sufficiency. This includes the forging of Memorandum of Agreements and cross system partnerships that result in partners more strategically integrating their training, communication and referral systems, services and funding streams, and a more transparent service system for families.

- The more timely and effective use of participant assessments and self-sufficiency tracking tools to drive collaborative agreements, cross system service delivery, policy and funding changes.
- The implementation of housing support strategies that increase the successful housing retention experiences of families and more rapid advancement of families to housing that requires fewer subsidies and supports.
- The development of an exemplary model for using shallow subsidy resources in tandem with landlord support and tenant training services to successfully help families access and retain housing, thus opening up more subsidized slots to higher need families.
- The establishment of a greater pool of private sector landlords who provide housing to low- and moderate-income families, resulting in a service delivery model which continually engages new landlords and sustains the involvement of landlords for a longer time.
- An improved understanding of the best practices associated with an exemplary emergency shelter system, resulting in families experiencing homelessness served in these venues accessing family plan development and stabilization services and permanent housing in a timelier manner.
- The development of a flexible funding pool of resources that can be readily tapped to fill gaps in family eligibility for vital services, such as childcare, that are essential to achievement of Family Self-Sufficiency Plan goals.
- A reduction in the number of families on existing wait lists.
- More timely and effective services and cost savings.
- Snohomish County becoming regarded as the place to pilot new homeless initiatives.

Ultimately, effective implementation and continuous improvement of these strategies will also help us realize the following outcomes:

- Fewer families will become homeless.
- More families experiencing homelessness will acquire permanent housing.
- More families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of homelessness will achieve optimal self-sufficiency within a shorter period of time.

- Fewer families will experience recurring homelessness.

### **Section VIII: What infrastructure is needed to support this work?**

In order for these strategies to work, a strong infrastructure needs to be in place. In addition to the data-related infrastructure described above, infrastructure development efforts will include:

- Hiring a Program Director to plan and prioritize the work envisioned in this plan;
- Identifying other consultant hiring needs to implement priority strategies;
- Developing more extensive articulation of partner roles, responsibilities, reporting, and performance requirements associated with priority strategies including the identification of the desired skill sets, sequence, and timing necessary to implement and align different phases of the work;
- Developing procurement processes for selecting providers;
- Developing common screening tools;
- Designing and offering of partner training needed to familiarize those who may be engaged as designers, implementers, or advocates for the system;
- Identifying and convening potential funders who may be interested in supporting the work; and
- Engaging in sustainability planning.

### **Section IX: What is the next phase of this work?**

During the next phase of this work, the Implementation Plan developed will describe how decisions will be made regarding next step actions to be taken to launch immediate high priority strategies identified above. The Implementation Plan will also describe the involvement of Snohomish County Government departments in the implementation process. The Implementation Plan will be constructed around the Malcolm Baldrige Actionable business-nonprofit criteria excellence framework and outline the status of the decisions which the County has made regarding each quality standard including Leadership; Strategic Planning; Customer Focus; Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management; Workforce Focus; Process Management; and Results.

Finally, the Implementation Plan will recognize the contributions of all of the stakeholders who have generously contributed their time and talent to the development of the Landscape Assessment, Strategic Plan, and Implementation Plan resulting in the development of a high-performing system for families experiencing homelessness and families at risk of becoming homeless. It is because of the collective efforts of dedicated stakeholders that Snohomish County will be able to effectively reduce and end family homelessness in our community.



## **Appendix A: Links to Effective Practices**

Continuously updated links to effective practices and other resources may be found at:

<http://www.wdcsc.org/initiatives/investinginfamilies/resources.html>

## Appendix B: Key Planning Documents

Title	Produced By	url
Everett Housing Authority Consolidated Plan and Five Year Plan	City of Everett	<a href="http://www.everettwa.org/default.aspx?ID=414">http://www.everettwa.org/default.aspx?ID=414</a>
Everyone at Home Now: a Strategy for Ending Homelessness in Snohomish County by 2016	Snohomish County Homeless Policy Task Force	<a href="http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Publications/Everyone_At_Home_Now.htm">http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Publications/Everyone_At_Home_Now.htm</a>
Housing within Reach: a Call to Action for Snohomish County Communities	Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County	<a href="http://www.housingsnohomish.org/pdf/08Housing_Within_reach_report.pdf">http://www.housingsnohomish.org/pdf/08Housing_Within_reach_report.pdf</a>
Housing within Reach (Slides)	Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County	<a href="http://www.housingsnohomish.org/pdf/08Housing_Within_Reach_slides.pdf">http://www.housingsnohomish.org/pdf/08Housing_Within_Reach_slides.pdf</a>
Promoting a Globally Competitive Workforce for Snohomish County	Workforce Development Council Snohomish County	<a href="http://www.wdcsc.org/resources/reports/documents/Two-YearStrategicPlanFINALWithCover.pdf">http://www.wdcsc.org/resources/reports/documents/Two-YearStrategicPlanFINALWithCover.pdf</a>
Snohomish County Affordable Housing Production Plan	Snohomish County Human Services Department	<a href="http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Publications/Affordable_Housing_Production_Plan.htm">http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Publications/Affordable_Housing_Production_Plan.htm</a>
Snohomish County 2009 Housing and Community Development Annual Action Plan DRAFT	Snohomish County Human Services Department	<a href="http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Divisions/OHHCD/Consolidated_Plan/Draft_Action_Plan.htm">http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Divisions/OHHCD/Consolidated_Plan/Draft_Action_Plan.htm</a>
Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan	Snohomish County Planning and Development Services	<a href="http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/PDS/Divisions/LR_Planning/Projects_Programs/Comprehensive_Plan/">http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/PDS/Divisions/LR_Planning/Projects_Programs/Comprehensive_Plan/</a>
Snohomish County Continuum of Care/HMIS	Snohomish County Human Services Department	<a href="http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Divisions/OHHCD/Program_Overviews/HMIS_Overview/default.htm">http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Divisions/OHHCD/Program_Overviews/HMIS_Overview/default.htm</a>
Snohomish County General Policy Plan	Snohomish County Planning and Development Services	<a href="http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/PDS/Divisions/LR_Planning/Projects_Programs/Comprehensive_Plan/General_Policy_Plan.htm">http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/PDS/Divisions/LR_Planning/Projects_Programs/Comprehensive_Plan/General_Policy_Plan.htm</a>
Snohomish County Housing and Community Development 2005-2009 Consolidated Plan and Program Year 2005 Action Plan	Snohomish County Human Services Department	<a href="http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Divisions/OHHCD/Consolidated_Plan/default.htm">http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Divisions/OHHCD/Consolidated_Plan/default.htm</a>
Snohomish County Low Income Needs Assessment	Snohomish County Human Services Department	<a href="http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Publications/Low_Income_Needs_Assessment.htm">http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Human_Services/Publications/Low_Income_Needs_Assessment.htm</a>
Snohomish County Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Action Plan	Snohomish County	<a href="http://www.housingsnohomish.org/pdf/08MentalHealth_Dependency_Plan.pdf">http://www.housingsnohomish.org/pdf/08MentalHealth_Dependency_Plan.pdf</a>



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			Prevention	Coordinated Entry	Rapid Re-housing	Tailored Programs	Economic Opportunity	Access to Services	Career resiliency/training	Child care	Education	Employment stability	Housing	Income	Legal	Life skills (financial)	Mental health	Physical health	Safety	Substance use	Support system	Transportation	
		particularly families with children and youth experiencing homelessness.																					
		Housing strategy 3: Maintain current funding for housing projects, rent subsidies and service programs for people with special needs including the elderly and frail elderly, the mentally ill, people living with physical and developmental disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, people in recovery from substance abuse and survivors of domestic violence. Support the development of new facilities and service programs for these groups.				X		X									X	X	X	X	X		
		Housing strategy 4: Provide assistance to low-income homeowners to help them maintain, and be able to continue living in, their homes.	X										X										
		Housing strategy 5: Support increased homeownership for low-income, first-time homebuyers.	X										X										
		Housing strategy 6: Promote housing choice by encouraging the dispersion of low-and moderate income housing throughout the City. <sup>1</sup>											X										
		Transitional housing units											X										
		Emergency shelter beds											X										
		Facilities/capital investment for health care clinics, food banks, childcare								X								X				X	
		Advocacy, planning and development																					
"Everyone at Home Now"	Sno. County Human	Expand homeless prevention services	X					X															
		Develop a community-wide access system to minimize the duration and impact of homelessness		X	X			X														X	

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January 2006	Services	and maximizing effective resource allocation.																						
		Develop housing coupled with appropriate support services targeted for chronically homeless persons.				X		X					X											
		Increase housing opportunities for people with disabilities				X		X					X											
		Increase capacity for primary health care providers to serve homeless individuals and improve access to comprehensive dental care for the homeless.				X		X										X						
		Provide longer-term, career based employment services, to attain self sufficiency	X				X		X		X		X		X									
		Streamline the application and approval process for Social Security, DSHS cash benefits and other supplemental income sources					X								X							X		
		Expand affordable housing coupled with appropriate support services where need is most prevalent. Permanent, service-enriched housing.							X						X									
		Base the development of new housing stock and services upon accurate need and capacity data													X									
		Provide funding to maintain existing housing and services that demonstrate measurable outcomes and overall progress towards ending homelessness.													X									
Housing Within Reach: A Call to Action June 2008	Housing Consort. of Everett & Sno. County	Developer Incentives: Provide developers with incentives to build affordable housing. Urban Mixed-Use Demonstration Project; Incentive Zoning in Urban Areas; Waiver of Construction Sales Tax; Home Ownership Pre-Sale Program											X											
		Building capacity: Support affordable housing partners to increase production and sustain their programs. Revolving Acquisition Loan Fund; Credit Enhancement; Snohomish County Funding Process; Preservation of Manufactured Housing Communities; Service Enriched Housing						X					X											

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		New Resources: Develop new public and private resources to fund affordable housing. Local Option Sales Tax Increase; New Dedicated Local Revenue Sources; Homeless Initiative Partnerships.												X									
WDC Two-Year Strategic Plan	WDC Sno. County	Objective 1.1 - Champion public policy goals that lead to the economic health and vitality of the community. Strategy 1.1.2 - Select and prioritize public policy objectives that align with the WDC mission					P		P				P		P								
		Objective 1.4 – Maintain a service system in which businesses attain the knowledgeable, skilled employees required to be competitive in today’s economy. Strategy 1.4.2 – Build partnerships with service providers and stakeholders.					P		P			P		P									
		Objective 2.4 – Identify and recruit job candidates using their capabilities, potential, knowledge, and experience. Strategy 2.4.1 – Develop opportunities and remove barriers for job candidates to access jobs and/or training.					P		P			P		P									
		Objective 3.4 – Ensure the right services are being delivered at the right time in an ever-changing environment. Strategy 3.4.1 – Identify current environment and services needed. Strategy 3.4.2 – Design and deliver services and measures for effectiveness.					P		P			P		P									
		Objective 4.4 – Promote and implement initiatives that advance productivity and prosperity. Strategy 4.4.1 – Deliver career foundation and advancement products and initiatives to youth and					P		P			P		P									

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		adults. Strategy 4.4.2 – Provide group and individual career planning and advancement services.																					
Snohomish County Affordable Housing Production Plan	Sno. County Human Services Dept.	Produce or preserve 6,025 units affordable to households below 80% Area Median Income through the following strategies:																					
		2. Promote and preserve home ownership for 2,100 homes	X										X										
		1. Create a new local subsidy voucher program for 630 homeless households											X	X									
		3. Reprioritize the ratio of funds allocated to new construction versus acquisition/rehabilitation to add a total of 3295 bricks and mortar new units.											X										
		4. Prioritize permanent housing for households earning at or below 30% of Area Median Income, special needs population groups and preservation of existing affordable housing units, especially rental units at risk of conversion to market rates and owner-occupied units at risk of foreclosure.											X										
		5. Build community capacity to develop affordable housing through enhanced public/private partnerships, education, increased support and technical assistance.											X										
Snohomish County 2009 Housing and Community Development Annual	Sno. County Human Services Dept.	Objectives are to assist 37 projects to produce housing and shelter facilities.											X										

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Action Plan DRAFT																							
Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan June 20, 2008	Sno. County Planning and Develop. Services	Goal 1: Ensure that all county residents have the opportunity to obtain safe, sanitary and affordable housing. Objectives: 1.A Ensure fair and equal housing opportunities. 1.B Ensure that a broad range of housing types is available in urban and rural areas. 1.C Make adequate provisions for the existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the population. 1.D Maintain an adequate supply of appropriately zoned developable land. 1.E Strengthen interjurisdictional cooperative efforts to ensure an adequate supply of housing is available to all economic segments of the county.		X										X									X
		Goal 2: Ensure the vitality and character of existing residential neighborhoods.																					X
		Goal 3: Land use policies and regulations should contribute as little as possible to the cost of housing.																					
		Goal 4: Establish a process for adjusting fair-share housing allocations and housing strategies when required.																					
Snohomish County Continuum of Care/HMIS	Sno. County Human Services Dept.	Prevention planning and coordination of prevention activities. An action team researches best practices, follows the progress of various prevention activities in the community and makes recommendations to the CoC's Coordinating Committee.	X																				
		Decrease the number of homeless households with children. One of the action steps for this objective describes the continued development of the Community Case Management Initiative/coordinated	X	X																			



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		entry to prevent homelessness and reduce duration of homelessness.																					
		Increase the percentage of homeless persons employed at exit to at least 19%. An action step in support of this objective states that the “Snohomish County Workforce Development Council and the Homeless Policy Task Force will partner to increase in WorkSource connection sites within the county to increase employment services to homeless populations.”					X																
Snohomish County General Policy Plan	Sno. County Planning and Develop. Services	Included in the Comprehensive Plan.																					
Snohomish County Housing and Community Development 2005-2009 Consolidated Plan and Program Year 2005 Action Plan May 11, 2005	Sno. County Human Services Dept.	2. Expand homeless prevention services to include rapid re-entry programs.	X		X								X										
		3. Develop a Community Case Management System		X				X														X	
		4. Develop services and affordable housing; expanding the Continuum to include safe havens and more permanent supportive housing options.				X		X					X										
		1. Maintain existing housing stock and services and expand affordable housing options and appropriate											X										

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		services where need is most prevalent.																						
		5. Develop new housing stock and services based on accurate need and capacity data. Provide continued funding to programs that demonstrate measurable outcomes and overall progress towards ending homelessness.																						
Snohomish County Low Income Needs Assessment 2006	Sno. County Human Services Dept.	Reports on a survey of low-income people. There do not appear to be any recommendations.																						
Snohomish County Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Plan Aug 2008	Sno. County	Strategy 1: Increase access to outpatient mental health treatment for individuals not on Medicaid. Target group includes those at risk of homelessness.				X		X									X							
		Strategy 5: Expand detox capacity. Target group includes homeless adults.				X		X													X			
		Strategy 7: Mental health services of domestic violence victims.				P											P		P					
		Strategy 8: Transportation assistance for individuals in public mental health and/or chemical dependency treatment systems.				P		P													P		P	
		Strategy 1 DOTC: Family drug treatment court.				P		P													P			
		Strategy 7 DOTC: Crisis intervention team training for Snohomish County Sheriff, Municipal Police Officers and other first responder personnel.				P											P		P	P	P			
		Strategy 8 DOTC: Adult crisis stabilization unit/triage center.		P		P													P			P		
		Strategy 1 HS: Housing options for individuals in the		X		X		X									X				X	X		

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		public funded mental health and/or chemical dependency treatment systems. Individuals in the mental health/chemical dependency system would be identified by counselor; referral to housing/housing voucher would be provided.																					
		Strategy 2 HS: Rental voucher program for homeless individuals and families with mental health and/or chemical dependency disorders.				X							X	X			X				X		
		Strategy 3 HS: Permanent affordable housing for persons with mental health and/or chemical dependency disorders. Target population is adults with mental illness and/or chemical dependency treatment needs and their dependent children.				X							X				X				X		