

Community Strengthening - LIFT Data Collection Report January 2016

The Community Strengthening Cohort is a strong network of the most effective organizations in the Portland Metro region who are leading the way in improving the lives of children and families living in poverty and low income households, while prioritizing and addressing prevalent racial and ethnic disparities in poverty outcomes.

Vision: To strengthen organizational and collective capacity by creating culturally responsive systems so communities have equitable access to resources needed to thrive and contribute to social change.

Theory of change: We aim to break the cycle of childhood poverty by creating an environment where organizations are continuously improving ways to move kids and families out of poverty so that we can build knowledge around solutions. Because of this, we will focus on the following 3 areas

Student Success: Every child thrives in school, meets benchmarks and graduates high school ready for college or career.

Family Stability: Families have basic needs met, have stable housing, income and equitable access to resources.

Connected Communities: Communities in the region have deepened engagement and strengthened fabrics of support.

Our long term outcomes are centered on the notion that by working together we will see the following changes:

- 1) Improved effectiveness of services provided so children and families are able to break out of the cycle of poverty
- 2) Shift in organizational decision making structures and organizational processes that will increase members of communities of color breaking the cycle of childhood poverty
- 3) Affect policy change to eliminate barriers and improve systems at different levels for individuals and families living in poverty

UWCW and OHCS – LIFT Collaboration

Given the scope of work of UW's Community Strengthening cohort and the focus on Family Stability, we collaborated with OHCS as part of the LIFT Committee to design a set of questions that can help provide direct feedback in regards to:

- Development of an equity lens
- Creation of meaningful service partnership models between community-based, culturally specific service providers and traditional housing developers that would help at-risk families access new homes and be successful renters
- Chart methods and approaches to deepening engagement between housing providers and early learning hubs

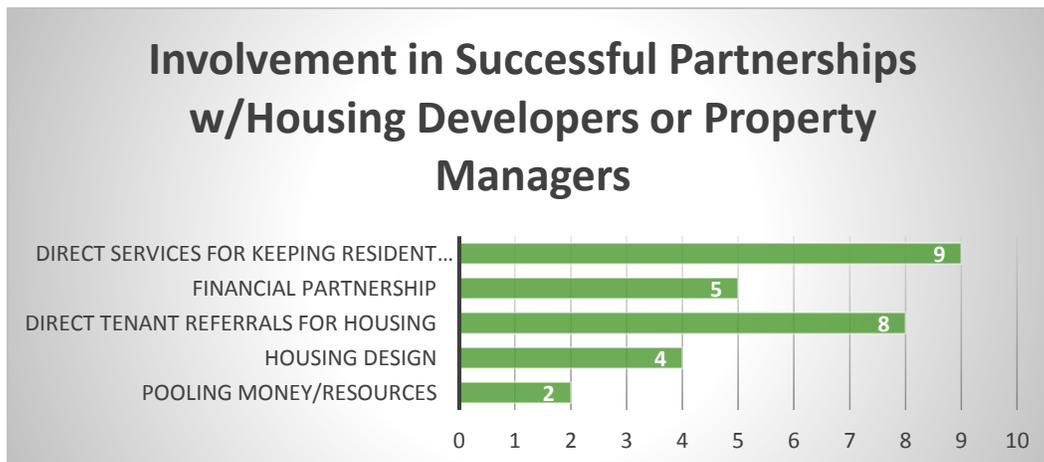
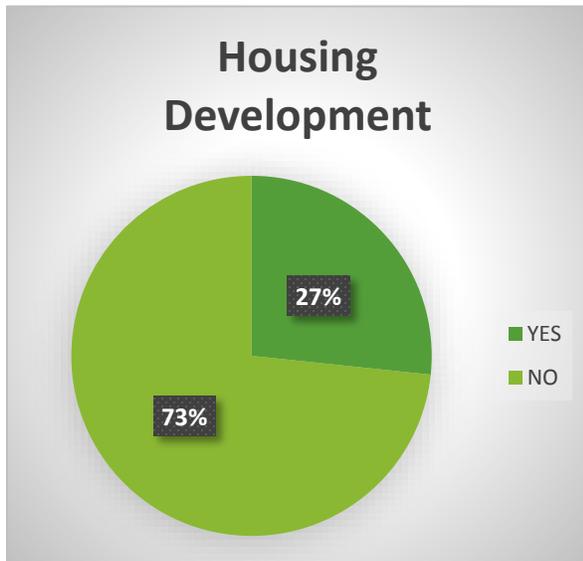
The co-designed survey was distributed among the CS cohort in December or 2015. Of the total number of organizations that are represented in this effort, 23 agencies responded, over 1/4 involved with Housing Development; 1/3 have successful partnerships with housing developers or property managers.

Virginia Garcia Memorial Foundation
Human Solutions
Innovative Changes
Adelante Mujeres
Council for the Homeless
Reading Results
IRCO
Bienestar
"I Have a Dream" Foundation-Oregon
Self Enhancement, Inc.
Friends of the Children
Community Action

YWCA Clark County
Centro Cultural of Washington County
Bridge Meadows
Clackamas Women's Services
LifeWorks NW
Urban League of Portland
PCRI
Children First for Oregon
Latino Network
Hacienda CDC
Verde

Housing Development

Are you involved in housing development *and* service delivery for your community? Are you currently involved in a successful partnership(s) with a housing developer or property manager?



Overall Themes & Additional Comment:

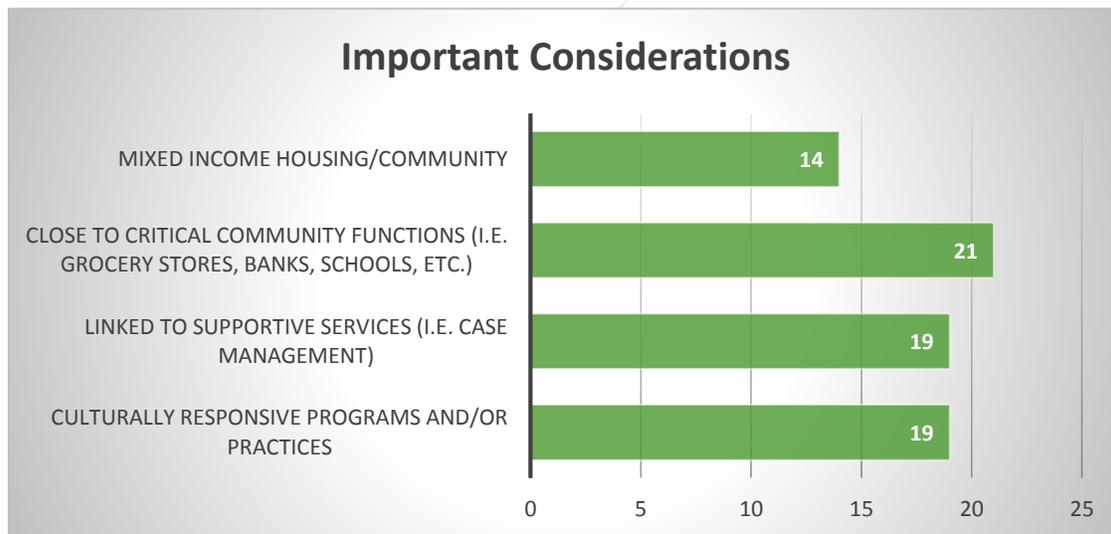
What's Working:

- Resident Services
 - Community Building-Relationship Building
- Assertive Engagement-based rental assistance & engagement
- Good relationships with property managers
 - Tenant referrals
- Risk Reduction funds
- Rent Well classes
- Integrated social services & housing
- Evaluating all programs through an equity lens
- Resident driven
- Bi-Cultural, Bi-Lingual staff

What Isn't Working:

- **Funding** Resident Services
 - Rural Development projects do not allow funding for services
- Assertive Engagement-Based Rental Assistance funding is too limited
- Not enough housing units; long waiting lists
- Developing new housing is difficult
 - Lack of affordable land
 - Onerous application processes at all funding stages
- Market pressures and the private market – very difficult for low-income families and families of color to access affordable housing even with vouchers

What are important considerations when thinking about housing for communities of color and low-income families?

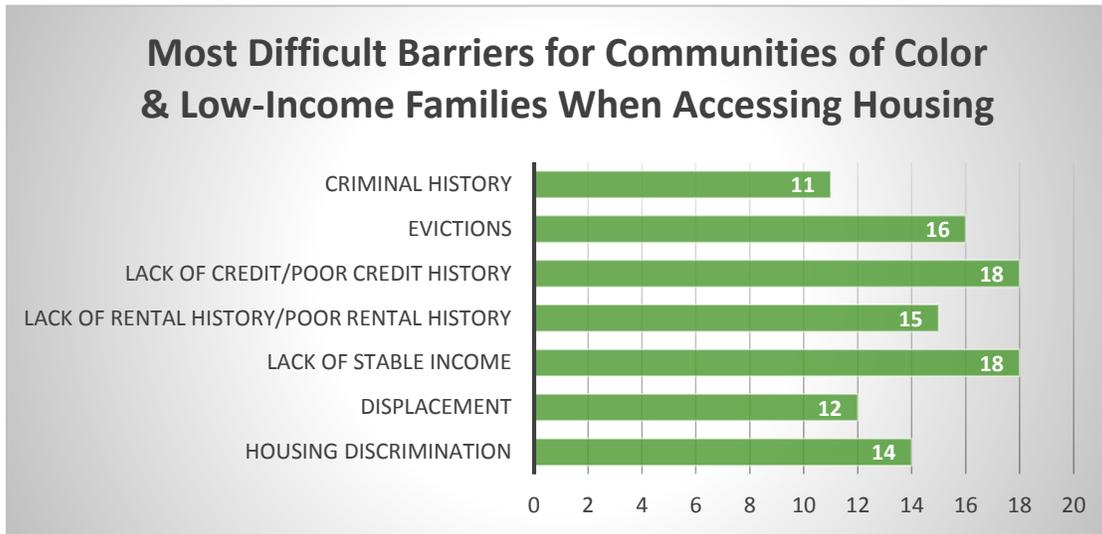


Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

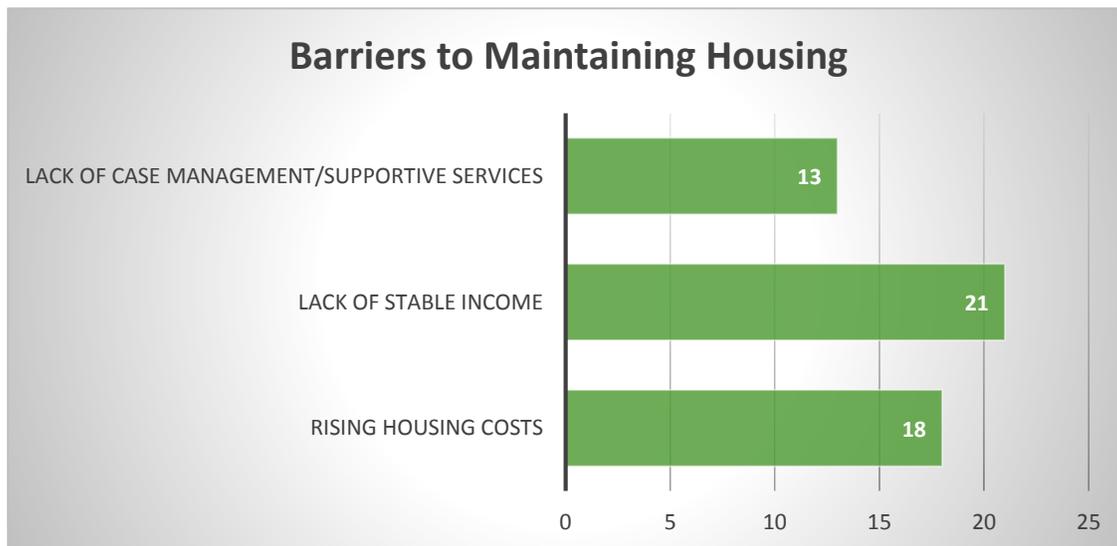
- Housing-linked services should be comprehensive, culturally responsive & resident-driven
- Multi/Intergenerational services
- Enabling people to remain in their neighborhoods and/or school catchment areas
- Support resident retention by providing asset building services & economic opportunities
- Environmental education
- Transportation access

Barriers

What are the most difficult barriers you see for communities of color and low-income families when it comes to accessing housing?



Once an individual/family accesses housing, what are the barriers that make it difficult to maintain the housing?



Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

Barriers to Accessing Housing:

- *Lack of credit/poor credit history*
- *Lack of rental history/poor rental history*
 - *Eviictions*
- *Lack of stable income; and lack of funds for deposits*

- *Housing discrimination*
- *Finding vacancies, and filling out paperwork*
- *Lack of multiple bedroom units for larger families*
- *Safe neighborhoods*
- *Immigration documentation*

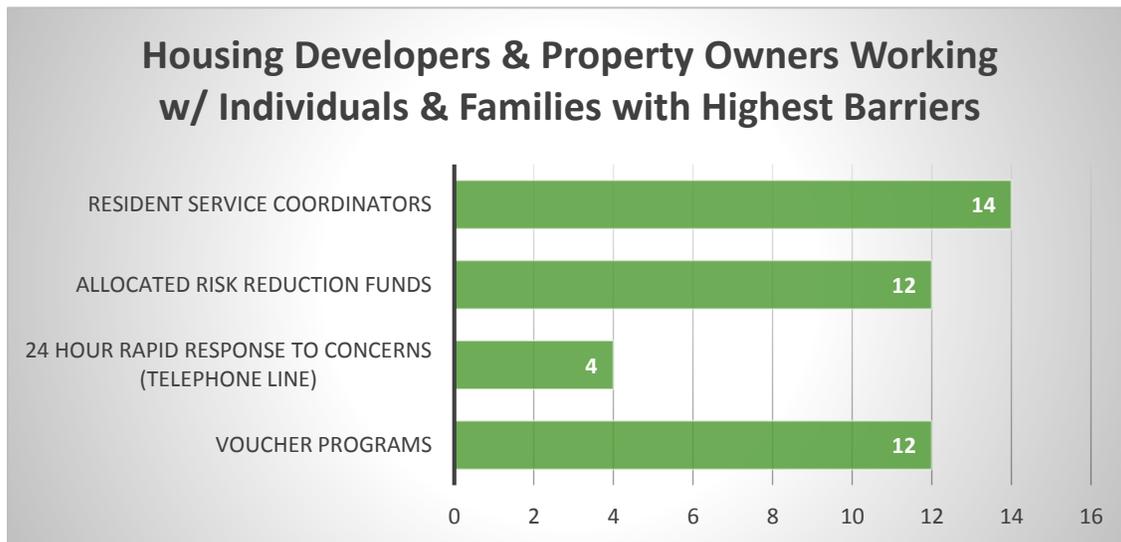
- *Language barriers*

Barriers to Maintaining Housing:

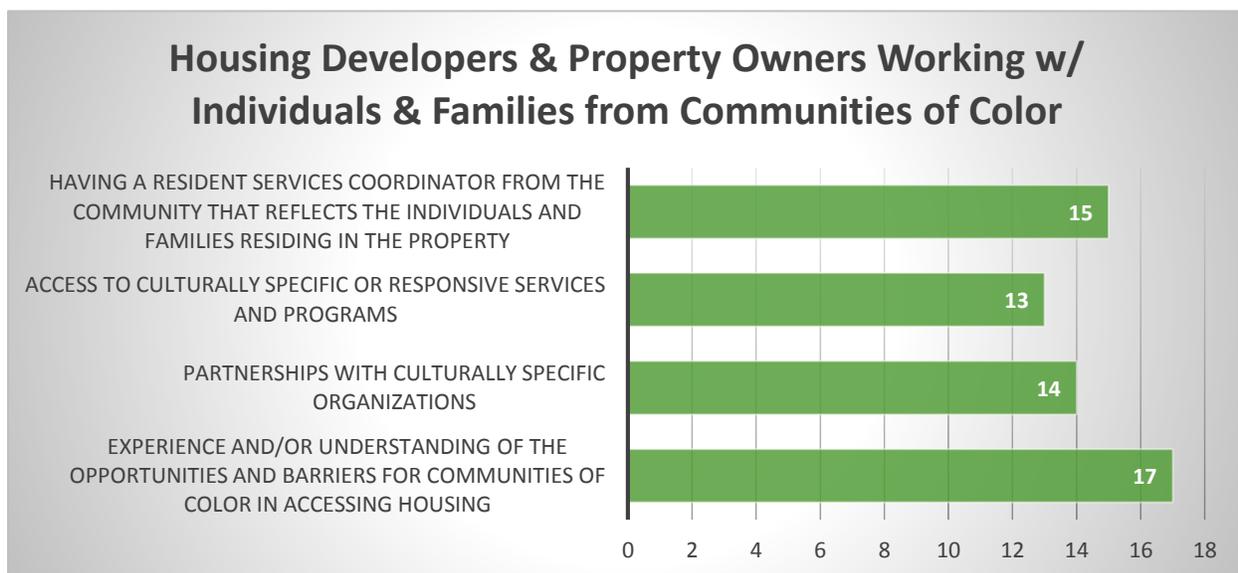
- *Lack of stable income*
- *Rising housing costs*
- *Lack of case management*
- *Work related issues – transportation, daycare, health care costs*

- *Habitability issues*
- *Multigenerational & potential overcrowding, lease violations*
- *Once a person’s income changes slightly, it changes their life dramatically; they become ineligible for services (Barriers Cliff)*
- *Health issues*

From your experience, what has worked with regard to housing developers and property owners working with individuals/families with the highest housing barriers, and the ability to mitigate their risks?



From your experience, what has worked with regard to housing developers and property owners working with individuals/families from communities of color?

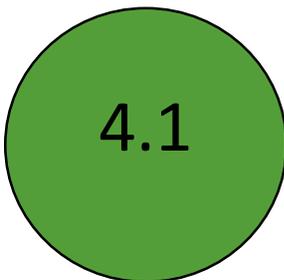


Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

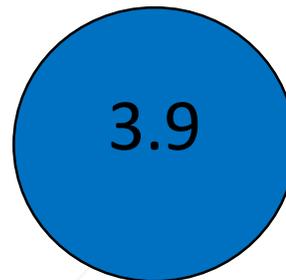
- Wrap-around, supportive services that incorporate natural community
- Relationships with staff in community-based organizations
- Rent/Move-in assistance
- Case management & economic opportunities; asset building services
- Property managers having an understanding of the services provided to residents

How important is linking them to someone responsible for assuring residents are linked to critical supportive services needed to maintain housing stability (Resident Services Coordinator)? Scale 1 – 5: 1 = Low, 5 = High.

Cohort Average



Learning Community Average



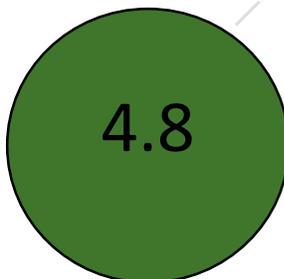
Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

- Resident Services Coordinators (RSC) are **critical** to helping people work through life circumstances that create barriers to access/maintaining housing
- They are more than just navigators – they can help bridge the gap and break the cycle
- RSC's should be very skilled - not just case management; they help residents THRIVE
- Although crucial, not much funding for **quality** RSC work
- Funding for RSC's should support the work; it should not be an after-thought

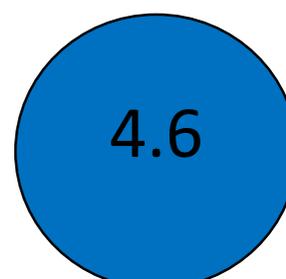
Culturally Responsive Services & Partnerships

How important is it for housing developers and property managers to adopt culturally responsive practices as part of their housing development opportunities. Scale 1 – 5: 1 = Low, 5 = High.

Cohort Average



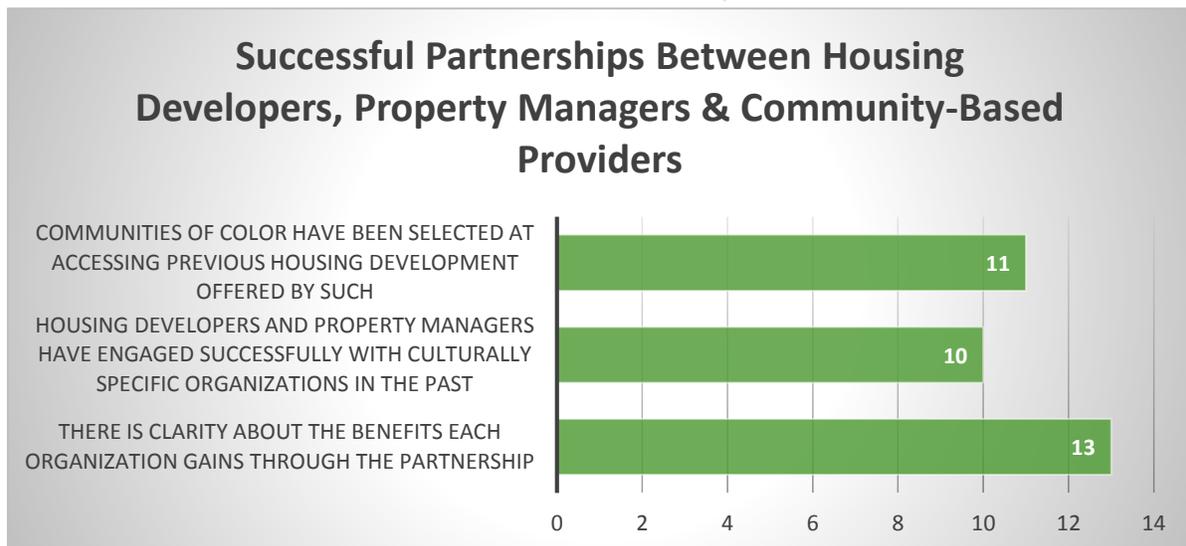
Learning Community Average



Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

- *Because poverty is concentrated in communities of color, there are more people of color needing access to affordable housing, therefore there is a greater need for culturally responsive practices, and culturally responsive developers*
- *Without cultural responsiveness, we can be missing or even creating barriers to our families accessing/maintaining stable housing*
- *Culturally responsiveness can decrease turnovers and instability, thus creating profits for landlords and developers; prevents notices and evictions*
- *Respect and preserve the cultural attributes of the community*
- *Gentrification and rising housing costs are extremely high barriers faced by communities of color in our region. Housing developers and property managers should have some responsibility for providing mixed-income housing, affordable housing, and for being able to respectfully and successfully address families' needs.*
- *Every family has unique circumstances and needs, so a comprehensive variety of culturally-specific, culturally-sensitive, and culturally-responsive service programs and referrals are essential to a family's success. In addition, families/individuals with the highest housing barriers often need outreach to feel like "it's for me" or that housing developers/property owner/managers are willing to work with someone who has higher barriers.*

What does a successful culturally responsive partnership between housing developers, property managers and community based service providers look like?

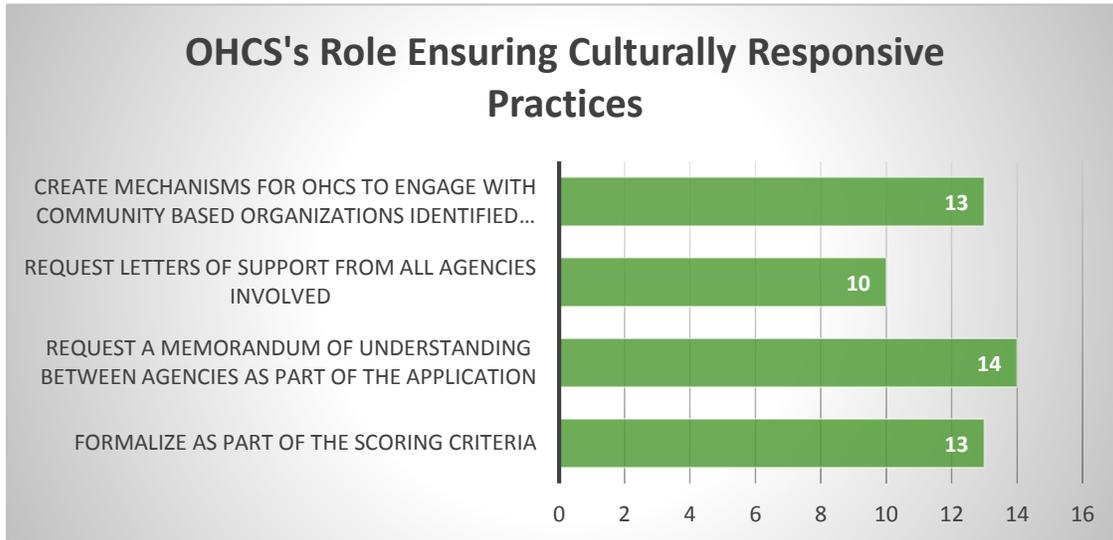


Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

- *More funding to culturally-specific housing developers*
- *Property staff members (management, facilities, and resident services) have culturally responsive training. There is a welcoming and equitable office or resident area. A culturally diverse neighborhood with specific anti-gentrification goals is chosen.*
- *In addition to the above, it is important that each partner 1) is reliable in following through on their responsibilities; 2) has done their due diligence to understand the population they're working with; and 3) is dedicated to seeing that each individual served succeeds.*

- *Property management rules and procedures are written and evaluated using an equity lens*
- *In the most successful partnerships, service providers and property managers must be culturally-competent and have alignment among their respective missions, as well as clarity about benefits gained and services provided (and by whom)*

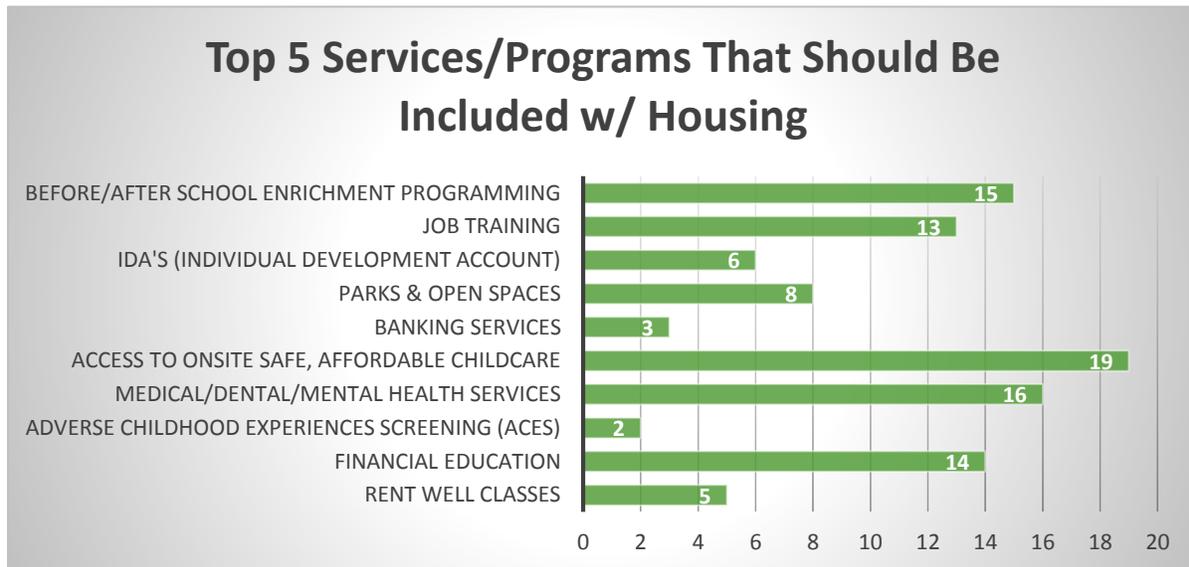
How can OHCS play a role to ensure that culturally responsive practices are encouraged through the development of such partnerships?



Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

- *Research best practices of these kind of success partnerships, practices with developers*
- *Make it pro-actively easier for culturally specific housing providers to access housing development resources*
- *Formalizing and creating, as part of the scoring criteria, mechanisms for community engagement*
- *As part of the scoring criteria, have specific cultural competency practices outlined that they are engaging in. There needs to be a defined and clear expectation about what constitutes culturally responsive practices.*
- *Especially important for OHCS to engage with culturally competent organizations and ensure culturally-specific organizations are integrally engaged in establishing criteria and scoring applications to ensure partnerships are deeper than simply "paper" partnerships*

What would be top 5 key services and/or programs that should be included with housing for low income families and families of color?



Top 5 Key Services and/or Programs:

1. Access to onsite safe, affordable childcare
2. Medical/Dental/Mental Health services
3. Before/After school enrichments programming
4. Financial education
5. Job training

What are existing culturally responsive housing service delivery models that have been successful at engaging and supporting communities of color from an asset based mindset?

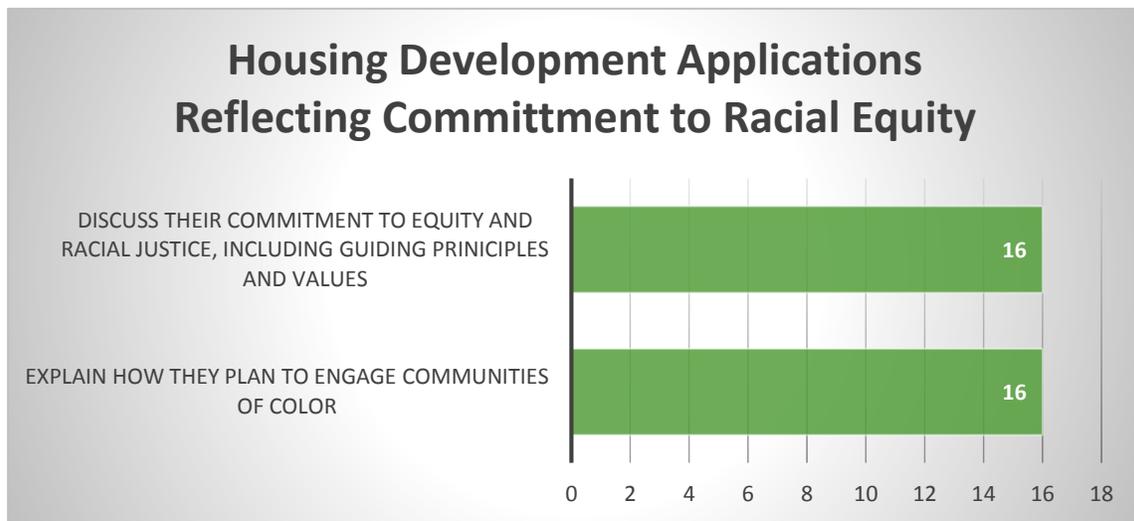
- Resident Services has been the backbone of providing culturally responsive services, engaging residents of all ages - strengthening roots and ties to their community
- PCRI has a spectrum moving people from rental homes to home ownership which in turn is great for asset building
- Home Forward's Goals Program set aside rental payments into escrow accounts to help residents work on a goal
- Rent reporting for credit building
- Bienestar, PCRI and Hacienda CDC have existing models
- Culturally-responsive delivery of rent assistance, energy assistance and related case management services using an assertive engagement approach like that promoted by Multnomah County SUN Service System provides a good model.
- Bienestar's existing model builds upon the innate leadership ability of select residents, who then receive stipends and training in working as outreach workers for their neighbors. This model supports a higher level of participation of residents in programming, along with on-site programming provided by bilingual/bi cultural resident services staff.
- Community Housing Resource Center: They are not culturally specific, but they have effectively worked with referrals from our program. They run credit histories and help the families we work with address

credit/debt and eviction barriers, set financial goals, and create a simple budget. They have also helped us develop financial empowerment classes specifically designed for survivors of domestic violence.

- *The intergenerational model has been successful in providing/creating a community of families and elders that support one another during times of challenges as well as celebrations. The above services are extremely helpful, however social isolation is a major factor in poor academic, social and mental health wellbeing. Additionally, once connected neighbors are able to pool resources, ideas and talents for the benefit of all.*
- *Community Healing Initiative program has been successful in using client assistance dollars to help families stay housed and find housing for low-income families from the Latino Community. These resources have helped families with multiple barriers.*
- *We have found that JOIN works to find solutions.*

Scoring and Selection Criteria

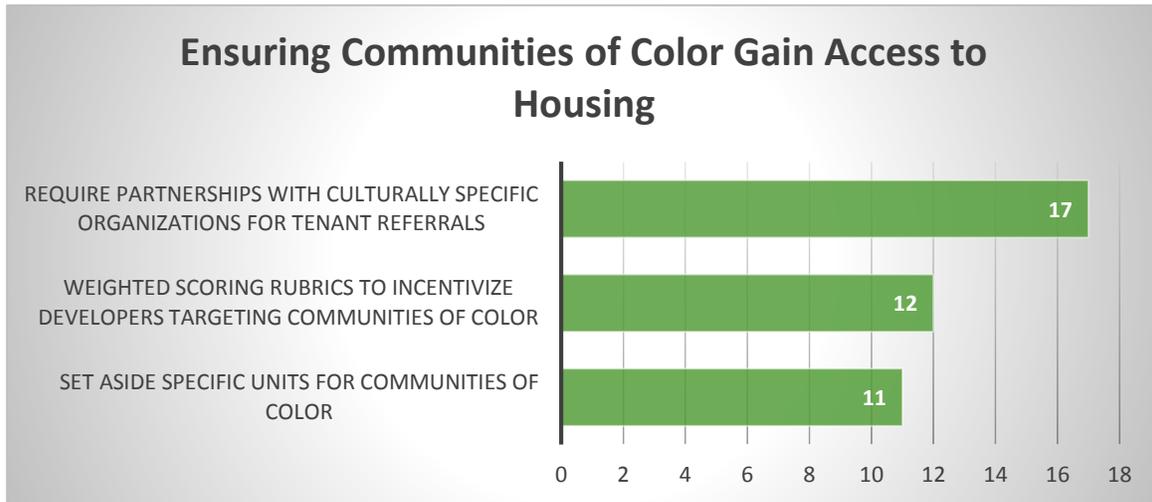
In general, how should housing development applications reflect their commitment to racial equity?



Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

- *Some demonstration of actions housing developers have already taken to engage communities of color and demonstration of their commitment should be required*
- *Demonstration of Board and staff alignment with communities of color they hope to serve; if no alignment then description of partnership commitments that allow developers effectively serve residents of color*
- *Demonstrate the commitment to their guiding principles a values at the highest level for example a signed letter from there board. Proof prior expenditure in communities of color through contracts to minority contractors*
- *Partner with agencies that serve communities of color in the development of their plans*
- *Provide data that shows the racial make up their residents compared to their target population, describe application and eviction processes, and report all housing appeals and requests for reasonable accommodation*
- *Housing developers and property managers have proved track record of successfully engaging with communities of color and culturally specific organizations*

How would you ensure communities of color get access to housing that will be built?



Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

- *It is essential to engage the community broadly for input and feedback at every step of the development of a project*
- *Strategies to help displaced residents have priority*
- *Set access targets*
- *Whether or not bigger units are included to accommodate large families; affordable*
- *Incentivize development of housing for families at 0-50% AMI and require relaxing of screening criteria to remove barriers that disproportionately impact communities of color – (i.e prior landlord debt, credit history, past evictions, etc.) - require LEP plan at application*

How would you measure the results of a partnership model to evaluate its effectiveness of removing barriers, and increasing access to, housing for communities of color and low-income families?

- *Is it resulting in more families from communities of color and low-income families being housed and achieving more stability? At the same time, with families with multiple barriers, there needs to be a reasonable amount of time to allow for success. A tool that measures the persistence in trying new strategies and not giving up on clients, that would also evaluate if partnerships or programs meet clients where they are at and works from a strengths based perspective.*
- *Dollars allocated to culturally specific housing developers (increasing percentages with an overall goal) – numbers are very low and decreasing now*
- *Some potential measurements of an effective partnership model might include:*
 - *% households of color obtaining housing through partnerships;*
 - *Average length of time housing is retained;*
 - *% of cost-burdened residents; and*
 - *% of families from communities of color*
- *Housing retention/turnover rates, rates of notices/evictions. Rates of access by communities of color and low-income families*
- *Racial equity analysis on disparities on residents accessing and retaining housing*
- *Housing developer proposals would include lots of flexibility to use tenant-allocated resources for the supports/services they need most. Using measures such as what percentage of tenant are people of*

color, how long the tenants stay in the property, whether or not they have a Resident Services Coordinator who is bilingual-bicultural, what percent of tenants are very low-income, whether or not the property itself is close to public transportation, other critical resources.

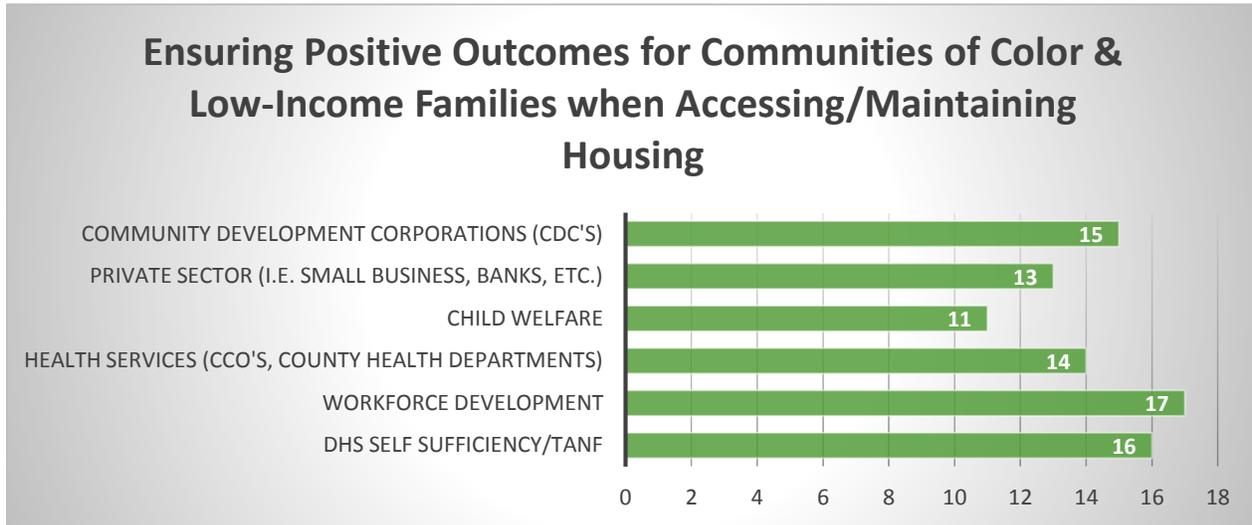
- *Surveys and interviews (with possible incentives to increase participation) to tenants as part of their paperwork when moving into their home. Survey questions should reflect their experience from both the past and present; asking about barriers, past services, desired services and their ability to access housing*
- *Number & percent of units occupied by families with income below 50% AMI, Number and percent of units occupied by people of color, turn over by AMI and Race/Ethnicity and reason (positive or negative turn over)*
- *# of families referred by culturally specific organizations housed*
- *surveys of families about their experience of living at the property*
- *Written policies regarding how they plan to address most significant, consistent barriers--Do they provide written information to tenants about their rights? What are their practices regarding late rent? Payment plans? Would they voluntarily agree to increase the amount of notification time before raising rent?*
- *Property Managers and culturally specific organizations work to lower credit threshold to allow more communities of color and low-income families to access housing.*
 - *Community based service providers help potential tenants improved credit through debt reduction and credit repair to meet credit requirements*
 - *Partnership developed a process to account for alternative income in qualifying for housing*

Outreach Strategies & New Approaches/Innovation

Can we rethink traditional approaches to funding processes that would encourage collaboration between communities of color housing developers? What is the single biggest barrier to receiving funding from OHCS today, and how can the Local Innovation & fast Track (LIFT) program remove that barrier?

- *Getting funding and commitments from multiple funding sources*
- *Lack of sufficient 9% tax credits to meet need and demand from developers. Fast Track program provides additional funding, but for families. Need funding for housing for individuals and seniors of low income as well.*
- *Prioritize according to the severity of the situation and needs and be realistic about cost*
- *Extremely competitive; limited funds*
- *In our community it is a challenge that money is passed through the county system, which then uses a portion funds for management and provision of funds, rather than providing funds directly to communities.*
- *Communities of color don't know of available resources that they may qualify for, community partners may not be aware of resources. Many times when resources are identified, the availability is so small it is not possible for people to access the resource; eligibility requirements may be difficult for communities of color.*
- *The competitive funding process and lack of long-term strategy present goals for housing developers in receiving funding from OHCS. The application process for OHCS is time-consuming, expensive, and uncertain. Most housing developers spend tens of thousands of dollars and countless hours of staff and consultant time to submit applications to OHCS without any certainty of what will or won't be funded. If there were a pre-application or other method to provide clarity and feedback on funding applications before developers invested precious resources into applications, we could develop stronger applications and do so more cost-effectively. Furthermore, OHCS (while stating a priority for racial equity) does not prioritize or incentivize racial equity within its funding decisions.*

How do we achieve positive outcomes for communities of color and low-income families when it comes to accessing and maintaining housing?



Overall Themes & Additional Comments:

- *Immigration services*
- *The relationships we really need are with housing developers and landlords*
- *All involved organizations must understand the unique barriers (both current and historic) that prevent communities of color from accessing and maintaining housing so that they can provide culturally-appropriate responses to ensure success.*

Other

When it comes to increasing access to affordable housing for communities of color and low-income families, what other questions or considerations would you like OHCS to be thinking about?

- *Consider what does affordable really mean. Often times the places that are listed as affordable are really out of the price range of low-income families, particularly in the current market.*
- *Not enough funding to support the number of projects that would meet the needs of the community*
- *Seems to be standardized type of housing development OHCS is willing/able to fund – too restrictive*
- *How can we generate more holistic solutions (i.e. jobs, housing, environmental amenities) through housing investments?*
- *To shift thinking from providing affordable housing in a broad sense to connecting to the people who need the housing, to gain a deeper understanding of their needs and the barriers they face, including transportation, literacy challenges, language and cultural differences.*
- *Policy changes must occur around exclusionary zoning and rent control*
- *How can OHCS provide technical assistance to culturally-specific organizations directly, so that these organizations can learn how to build supportive housing, or partner with builders who are receptive to working with culturally-specific organizations?*
- *How can OHCS facilitate creating a space for conversation and relationship-building between culturally-specific organizations and developers and landlords?*
- *Do Tribes access bonding dollars (greater allocation for rural communities with tribal representation – can we carve specific dollars out for tribal members)?*



- *How will OHCS be able to hold developers accountable to using the equity and partnership frame? What happens if they do not use the frame? How will you get input from the impacted community directly about what they need and want?*
- *Flexibility is so critical in any services provided to low-income families. OHCS should continually be looking at how it can set up systems and processes that are not one size fits all, but are instead able to take into account the unique and specific set of circumstances each family experiences.*
- *LIFT could encourage integration of services and housing by supporting true collaborations that provide residents with access to opportunity outside of their housing development as well as supports within it. Encouraging Housing developers to partner with mainstream resources rather than creating secondary and tertiary service delivery systems would have the additional benefit of encouraging cultural responsiveness within those systems. LIFT could also assist in reducing disparities by ensuring that the screening criteria for affordable housing units do not prevent the target population from accessing the housing. Low-income families are likely to have negative credit and rental histories. It is not uncommon for them to have had an eviction in the past and potentially owe money to a previous landlord. These things should not keep a family from accessing housing that is intended for low-income families.*
- *As we address the challenges for communities of color or low-income families, it is also important to keep in mind that those who are also victims of domestic violence have additional barriers and needs for specific services.*

Addendum A: See attached

- Community Strengthening – Stable Families Equity Lens & Partnership Model Notes