

# Director's Message



February 1, 2016

Dear Partners:

Today marks the opening of the 2016 Oregon Legislative Session. It also marks the end of this agency's Transition Planning, and I want to provide our partners with updates on both of these milestones.

First to the Legislature. As many of you know, this session will have an unprecedented focus on the need for affordable housing. With skyrocketing rents and few if any apartment vacancies in many Oregon communities, a frightening number of families and individuals with limited incomes are facing the prospect of unstable housing or even homelessness. This session, the Legislature will consider a large number of bills that could ameliorate the crisis in both the short-term and the long-term. As always, OHCS stands ready to implement new programs and expand existing ones if any of these new bills are passed in to law.

Governor Brown has put forward one key bill this session on behalf of OHCS: [Senate Bill 1582](#). SB 1582 provides guidance to the agency for how we will comply with constitutional requirements related to the \$40 million in general obligation, Article XI-Q bonds committed by the Legislature in 2015.

Over the last several months, the agency has been working with its [new Housing Stability Council](#) and two subcommittees to [design](#) the Local Innovation and Fast Track (LIFT) Housing Development program to utilize this new funding. We are grateful for the assistance of the diverse experts we brought together to help us think about the best ways to implement this important new housing finance program, and the resulting [draft program design recommendations](#) that will be presented to the Housing Stability Council on February 5, 2016 that are based on work over the past few months.

This work of the Housing Stability Council lies at the heart of the redesigned OHCS. Two years ago we made a set of recommendations to the Legislature about our redesign, and those recommendations called for us to reorient our work towards facilitation and service on behalf of communities we serve; to drive our business and policy decisions based on data and research; to reduce our costs of program delivery and match those costs to available revenue; to align our housing investments with the work of other state agencies; and to strengthen policy and governance systems.



In twenty-four months OHCS has made great strides against each of these imperatives, and I could not be more proud of our employees for their tireless efforts and openness to continual process improvements. Among the accomplishments that give me pride are:

- The transparency, collaboration and drive for excellence that has marked our approach to allocating scarce and competitive multifamily finance resources in recent months;
- The deployment of Housing Integrators who are making tremendous connections between OHCS and the issues surrounding housing stability with local and regional partners including early learning hubs, regional solutions teams, coordinated care organizations and others;
- The evolution of our asset and property management professionals towards evaluating and mitigating risks inherent in our publicly-finance portfolios of real estate;
- The transparency of our fiscal operations that enables partners and legislators to track detailed revenue and expenditures of major funding streams like [document recording fees](#) and public purpose charge (coming soon);
- The publication of county-by-county data about poverty and its underlying causes in partnership with Community Action Partnership of Oregon;
- The streamlining and simplification of rules and improvement of grants and contract management systems across all program areas, but especially those within our Housing Stabilization Division; and
- The development of a high-quality five-year Consolidated Plan that benefited from unprecedented community engagement and a renewed emphasis on ways in which historically disadvantaged communities face the toughest housing barriers. This planning work will set the stage for our statewide long-range housing investment plan that the Housing Stability Council will take up in 2016.

All of us in OHCS leadership are cognizant of the fact that we have more work to do in all of these areas to continue to strengthen our work and position the agency to serve more struggling Oregonians on their paths to economic stability. But we do so recognizing the great progress made, and guided by as strongly as ever by our vision that all Oregonians can pursue prosperity and live free from poverty.

The current housing crisis in many ways is terrifying. I am heartened by the leadership shown by Governor Brown and the Legislature as they take up the issue in new and serious ways. The agency I am privileged to lead is ready to serve in whatever capacity asked of us by our elected officials.



As always, I appreciate the support of our many business and community partners throughout Oregon, especially over these past few years of transition. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Public Affairs team. The team is led by Assistant Director Rem Nivens, and supported by Alison McIntosh, Government and Communications Liaison ([Alison.mcintosh@oregon.gov](mailto:Alison.mcintosh@oregon.gov) or 503-986-2079), and Mike Boyer, Legislative Coordinator ([mike.boyer@oregon.gov](mailto:mike.boyer@oregon.gov)).

We are looking forward to the coming thirty-five day session and hearing the discussion and interest in ensuring all Oregonians have a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Best regards,



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