



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Salt Lake County, UT

COMMUNITY CONTEXT	
Community Population	1,079,721
2014 PIT (overall homeless)	9,566
2013 CoC award	\$6,377,242
2013 WIA formula grant allocation	\$12,560,012 (PY 2013/FFY 2014; includes Adult, Dislocated, and Youth)
Current unemployment rate	3.6%

DESCRIPTION

Salt Lake County addresses homelessness through a cross-sector collaborative composed of state and local government agencies working in partnership with the nonprofit sector. Using federal, state, and local funding, the partnership integrates employment and training into emergency shelter and housing options designed to meet the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

The Department of Workforce Services (DWS) has allocated full time staff to be stationed at shelters throughout the Salt Lake Valley. We have 16 full time staff stationed in the community who are located onsite at various local shelters and permanent supportive housing sites. It is often difficult for customers to understand and navigate application pathways and to be aware of all the services and programs that help them get housed and employed. Stationing staff in the community helps with this barrier. Of the 16 staff, 14 of them are employment counselors who focus on job searching and employment strategies in a one-on-one environment with each customer.

DWS offers several programs to customers that help them toward their goal of employment. Customers can apply for Food Stamps, Financial Assistance, Medicaid, Child Care, Training funds, and can receive assistance on how to find, obtain, and maintain a job. These programs help individuals as they focus on their own path back into the workforce.

A customer who applies for any of the public assistance benefits gets individualized employment plans which target a specific occupation goal based on an assessment, with associated services, tasks, and referrals to services which help achieve their employment goal. This team of workers reaches out to those who may not qualify or be interested in any of our public assistance programs and are able to still provide employment counseling, assessments, job coaching, and job search assistance to the homeless population regardless if they are attached to a specific program.



Common barriers are identified through assessments given to customers so all staff can focus on how to help customers overcome these constraints. Resources from DWS and partnering agencies can then be better coordinated and provided to customers. These include services such as transportation, physical and mental health, computer literacy, and others. Employment strategies are also identified based on common needs and occupations, along with patterns of personal constraints.

Most of the homeless population looks for jobs in similar industries. This enables employment counselors to target specific employers, identify how best to apply, and discover what the employer is looking for so customers are prepared for applications. Beyond individual counseling, workshops and a Job Club specifically for customers at the various housing and shelter sites in the community are offered. These help address constraints that this target population faces and reveal how these barriers disrupt their career pathway. Employment strategies for customers focus on supportive employment opportunities where the employer is either subsidized to hire the customer or training and coaching on the job is offered. Non-supportive employment focuses on targeting industries and occupations.

The target population includes both those who are chronically homeless living in a supportive housing site and those individuals who are residing in emergency shelter. Some of those in shelter who are identified as chronically homeless transition into permanent supportive housing sites while the Rapid Rehousing program transitions the rest of the target population into more stable housing.

COLLABORATION

This collaborative effort began when Utah created a 10 year plan to end chronic homelessness. This is the statewide committee that is chaired by the Lieutenant Governor; each major state agency plays a vital role in this committee. Each agency allocates funds to help in this effort. In an effort to better coordinate and align goals of housing and employment, Utah's Department of Housing and Community Development joined the Department of Workforce Services. This has made it easier to collaborate and communicate in all efforts geared towards helping those facing homelessness. DWS also partners with local nonprofit shelters, Salt Lake County and City government – Housing Divisions, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the local offices for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and local nonprofit and governmental health clinics. There is both a statewide and local countywide committee organized by service providers that get together and coordinate services and funding in order to determine how best to serve the homeless populations.



The Salt Lake County Continuum of Care (SLCoC) also promotes a community-coordinated response to ending homelessness. SLCoC oversees outreach, shelter, housing, and prevention activities. The goal is to quickly end homelessness by helping homeless individuals and families access and maintain housing through mainstream resources and employment. SLCoC has leveraged ESG and TANF with CoC funding to provide Rapid Re-Housing and has focused the majority of CoC funding to provide permanent housing. The majority of this funding is tenant-based rental assistance.

Another local collaborative group called the Partner Administration Team (PAT) is made up of members from DWS, Housing and Community Development (DWS), Salt Lake County Housing, The Road Home, and Advantage Services (employer). This committee focuses on how to engage our customers residing in supportive housing sites with activities that will lead to employment. These meetings are ongoing and continue to provide a focus on what kinds of supportive employment opportunities we can engage customers in, what is working, what is not, and includes a reporting of how many residents are employed.

INNOVATION

The major goal of Utah's 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness was to focus on using the Housing First model in providing housing for chronically homeless individuals. Utah was successful in that effort in constructing more than 500 units of housing in the last several years in addition to the use of dozens of scattered site housing in the community. Having stabilized formerly homeless with housing, it became apparent that there was more that needed to be done both by those who administer the programs and by the formerly homeless. The obvious next step was to provide them with employment opportunities that would further integrate them back into the community as well as provide them increased self-sufficiency.

This new model of addressing housing and employment created more opportunities for collaboration. New housing sites have partners such as the Department of Workforce Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, employers, and others that work hand in hand to provide solutions and keep people housed while working on employment strategies. The University of Utah conducted an analysis of Salt Lake County's efforts and published their results here:

<http://www.socwk.utah.edu/sri/pdf/FinalReportPalmerCourtwithmodel.pdf>



FUNDING FOR INITIATIVE/PROJECTS

There are multiple funding streams used to help with the efforts of employing the homeless population. Utah has used the Butler Funds, TANF FEP, TANF Rapid Rehousing program, State Discretionary funds, Vocational Rehabilitation, Salt Lake County funding, banking industry companies for donations and re-investment monies, and the Pamela Atkinson Homeless Trust Fund, which are donations from the private industry and community administered by a state agency.

As is often the case with federal funding (WIA), the regulations accompanying those funds tend to be generic in nature, limiting liability of the funding source and are targeted toward mainstream populations. Formerly chronically homeless individuals are considered separate from the mainstream homeless population because they have spent years of their lives on the street and usually face challenges that include mental health problems, substance abuse, criminal histories, and isolation. Providing employment opportunities is challenging and needs to occur along a continuum of employment services. The basic notion of employment may need to be taught once again. The typical type of employment (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) is not something that formerly chronically homeless can easily adapt to. In a lot of cases, employment is customized for each individual client. Again, federal regulations often don't allow for that flexibility. Therefore, other funding sources have been used.

CONNECTION TO EMPLOYERS

DWS is reaching out to employers related to the most common occupations and industries that our homeless population has for their employment goal. Staff who are assigned as liaisons to our employer community and develop relationships with employers help target employers with job openings that are willing and interested in recruiting directly from our homeless population.

This is typically done for customers involved in the Rapid Rehousing program, which quickly houses and employs customers who may already have the skills and experience to get back into the workforce sooner without retraining.

DWS also partners with several employers who offer supportive employment and have some other form of subsidy to transition customers back into the workforce. Some of these companies and organizations are part of the regular and ongoing coordination meetings and are even located onsite at the DWS employment centers and housing sites in an effort to better partner and refer customers.



From Utah's experience, the employers most effective in employing the homeless are those that offer work that is flexible in the hours of work needed, offer temporary work, allow various people to provide the service over time, provide consistency in the type of the work requested, and show willingness to work with an intermediary agency. These agencies that will contract with the employer for the service that needs to be performed and subsequently hire those who are formerly homeless to provide the work. This option removes several barriers for the employer by the intermediary organization assuming liability and offering a mentoring or support network for those entering the workforce.

DATA AND RESULTS

The evaluation of the employment project conducted by the University of Utah looked at a variety of data. Examples of data that was gathered and analyzed included: previous employment history and employment during the pilot project, employment trends over the duration of the pilot project, physical and mental health barriers of clients and their engagement with service providers, and clients receiving public benefits at the beginning of the pilot and after the pilot was completed. The focus of the study was to determine if clients had engaged in employment, employment was retained, whether there was participation in work readiness activities, use of public benefits, and to assess clients' knowledge of and attitudes toward onsite employment support resources.

The University of Utah's SRI report:

<http://www.socwk.utah.edu/sri/pdf/FinalReportPalmerCourtwithmodel.pdf>

SUGGESTIONS FOR REPLICATION

Two main concepts that have been vital to our success in Utah include initially placing staff in the community at shelters and supportive housing sites. While working where clients are located, we are more reactive and understanding of their needs as well as able to better coordinate with partner agencies and nonprofits to work together.

Additionally, it is very important to understand how to use supportive employment with organizations that take the time for extra training and coaching on the job to help our customers be successful. This helps with retention and continues to give customers feedback and opportunities to learn and grow.

It was most beneficial to the success of the pilot program to develop and put in place an overall steering committee composed of a variety of organizations that brought to the table an interest and resources to make the project move forward. Concurrently, there were regular meetings of case managers who discussed on an individual basis the employment needs of their clients and identified gaps in service. This information was then provided to the Steering Committee who could provide resources to meet those needs.



SUCCESS STORY

From homeless to employed in Salt Lake

Martha, who was hired for a part-time janitorial and housekeeping job at a local hospital, previously had an extensive period of homelessness but has resided at Palmer Court with her two sons since mid-2009. She is on Social Security Insurance and has significant mental health issues that require regular monthly medication. However, Martha has continued to defy adversity and was promoted to a lead position within her job in July 2014 with persistent advocacy and support from her Palmer Court case manager

Martha continued working, making progress and managing through ups and downs. She and her family continue to experience and meet difficult challenges. In mid-summer of 2014, Martha began applying for positions with a full-time employer. She had a strong letter of recommendation from Salt Lake City, solid work history and experience with Valley Services. In addition, the onsite Department of Workforce Services staff had interacted with her enough to know that she was ready to be an excellent employee for a new organization. When she applied she was able to produce strong individual recommendations along with a robust reference from Valley Services. Eventually, Martha was offered a full-time job.

It is clear that without the support of management from partner organizations, this opportunity for Martha would not have been made possible.

COMMUNITY CONTACT

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