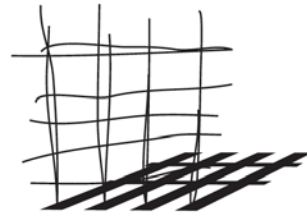


DRAFT

Strategies to Eliminate Poverty:

Collaborations Report

August 2008



**BUILDING
CHANGES**
END HOMELESSNESS
TOGETHER

This report was developed with funding from the Strategies to Eliminate Poverty (STEP) program.

DRAFT

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BUILDING CHANGES is a catalyst for ending homelessness.

Right now more than 250,000 households in Washington State must choose between food and rent. Nearly 25,000 individuals will experience homelessness this year. Families with children are among the fastest growing segments of the homeless population nationwide, and in Washington, nearly half of the people staying at homeless shelters are families with children. In King County, over 8,000 people are homeless at any given time, including approximately 1,000 young people between 18 and 25 years of age and possibly as many as 500 youth under age 18.

Our services are provided primarily in Washington State. Our activities serve approximately 8,000 individuals annually, including homeless families with children, homeless single adults, housing and service providers, and government entities.

We address the economic and social conditions that adversely affect people's housing, health, and job opportunities. Building Changes coalesces public and private resources to create lasting solutions, transforming the way people in need are served. We achieve results by:

- Acting as an intermediary between public and private funders and grantees, and, in that role, by making grants, leveraging funds, and managing investments;
- Providing expert advice to government agencies and housing and service providers through technical assistance, training, and consulting; and
- Advocating for state and county policy, funding, and system reform.

Our work builds the capacity of community-based housing and service organizations, increases state and local collaboration, and builds strong networks and partnerships. Our efforts support the following key strategies for ending homelessness:

- Simple, coordinated entry into the system of homeless services
- Ample supply and availability of affordable housing
- Changing the ways systems provide services and reforming funding policy
- Tailored social services so people get the help they truly need
- Economic opportunity through education, training, and employment
- Collecting and sharing data and evaluating programs

Building Changes is moving away from building buildings and toward building a movement to end homelessness. Advocacy for system-wide change, beginning at the local level and jettisoning upward, is central to our work. In essence, everything we do aims to enhance the momentum toward ending homelessness. A strong spirit of collaboration now exists. Your support will sustain and nurture this spirit. We'll know we've been successful when each of us has the opportunity to secure basic human needs: healthcare, sound nutrition, a source of income, and a permanent, safe, and affordable place to live.

Is it really possible to end homelessness? It will take time, determination, significant resources, and a spirit of hope to turn the tide but with your help...

Yes, we can end homelessness, together.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Collaboration Profiles.....	3
Analysis and Conclusions	15
Community Employment Pathways	21

Introduction

Building Changes, a non-profit funder and technical assistance intermediary focused on collaboratively ending homelessness in Washington State, embarked on the research that led to this report to inform the development of a new, statewide initiative to improve employment outcomes for homeless job seekers.

Historically, Building Changes, known as AIDS Housing of Washington until 2007, has highly valued collaboration as a means of integrating and supporting the increased efficiency of the systems serving people living in poverty in this country. We have focused our systems change efforts in the fields of housing and supportive services, including health care, and have played a part in some minor and major successes during our 20-year history. Yet our agency is a relative novice to education and workforce development policy, advocacy, and practice.

The Strategies to Eliminate Poverty (STEP) program, which funded the research that led to this report, provided Building Changes staff with the time and resources to review workforce development-related collaborations in the Northwest states. We determined that we would focus our research on initiatives that included collaborations from the workforce development, education, human services, and affordable housing systems. We sought to identify the critical success factors from the collaborations we studied and to use this information for building a movement among human services, workforce development, and private-market entities in Washington state that will result in improved housing and economic stability for people experiencing homelessness in our state.

This research project has already been useful to Building Changes in the crafting of our own collaborative initiative. We have stolen and borrowed from our research subjects as we have launched the Community Employment Pathways (CEP) program. This initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other sources, provides workforce development and homeless housing and services providers with the training, tools, strategies, and technical support needed to collaboratively increase economic opportunities for people experiencing homelessness. Our activities focus in three areas: technical assistance, policy and advocacy, and evaluation.

We found three collaborations of particular interest, each of which provided us with opportunities to learn from their experiences. In this report, we begin by describing these collaborations, including how the entities work together and the approach they have taken to affect systems change. The report then goes on to consider and analyze the aspects of these collaborations that may be useful to the Community Employment Pathways program, and the recommendations we drew from our research. Finally, we describe the formation of CEP itself, and our next steps.

Collaboration Profiles

We conducted this research in the eight-state Northwest region to learn from promising collaborations that are integrating the workforce development and human services systems.

We considered workforce and human services collaborations in each of the 8 Northwest states: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota. We found the following collaborations to be sources of knowledge and inspiration as we developed the Community Employment Pathways program:

- Montana's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, and its efforts to increase employment rates for homeless individuals, while also addressing worker shortages in Missoula;
- Oregon's Career Pathways Program, which transformed Oregon's education system to focus on helping Oregonians attain degrees, certificates, and credentials that lead to high demand occupations, increased wage gain, and lifelong learning.
- Minnesota's M-Powered Program, a sector training initiative that serves unemployed or under-employed low-income individuals or individuals working in lower-paying, unskilled positions within the metal-forming sector.

The following profiles summarize these collaborations. Each of these collaborations demonstrates the impact that collaboration among business, government, and non-profit sectors can make for low-income workers, and provides some lessons for collaborations seeking to increase economic opportunities for low-income workers.

Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness (Montana)

Why did we research this collaboration?

This collaboration is representative of many Ten-Year Plans to End Homelessness across the country, and within the Northwest region. The Montana collaborative recognized that we will not solve homelessness without increasing work participation among those impacted. This type of collaboration is familiar to Building Changes, in that it focuses on homelessness, involves convening players from multiple systems and cultivating leadership, and includes collaborative planning and consensus-building. In addition, this collaboration includes an objective similar to that of the Community Employment Pathways program, although using a different approach: improving the employment outcomes of the homeless population.

In addition to its relevancy to our work in Washington, the Montana homelessness planning collaborative held some interest for us for a number of other reasons. First, a worker shortage is occurring simultaneously with an increase in homelessness in Montana, and particularly Missoula. Second, there are business owners who are committed to providing opportunities to homeless individuals and the building of relationships and champions for homeless people within the business sector is an excellent model. Third, homelessness has been shown to be very expensive for local and state governments, and this collaborative is using those findings to raise awareness and support for ending this pervasive social problem. Overall, the Montana homelessness collaborative is seeking to foster systems changes by bringing the public, private, and non-profit sectors together to focus on a specific issue of relevance to all.

Who is involved?

- Montana Council on Homelessness
- Billings Council on Homelessness
- State of Montana Department of Health and Human Services
- Billings Metropolitan Improvement District
- Master Lube (Billings, MT)
- 100+ other community members and organizations, including the business community, foundations, workforce development entities, and non-profit housing and service providers

What is the program?

The State of Montana has committed itself to ending homelessness in the state by 2014. The State has engaged stakeholders from throughout the state in this effort, including local business, and developed a plan, *No Longer Homeless in Montana*. The collaborative is working to shift public attention and resources from the management of the homeless to the development of solutions to end homelessness.

This collaboration builds on broader efforts in the state to eliminate poverty by increasing the housing stability and self-sufficiency of its poorest residents. Recently, the State and City of Billings have engaged in strengthening the tether between the success of the people of Montana and the success of business in the state. These efforts are gathering momentum in 2008, including initiatives such as their supported and customized employment programs for the homeless, the

Homeless to Homeowner program, SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) training, One Stop Events, and a recent Social Enterprise Conference.

Where does funding come from?

Addressing the housing and support service needs of homeless individuals and families requires significant financial investment. Most of these programs include income supports, including federal programs that provide rental assistance, ensuring access to entitlement resources, and workforce development programs. The funding for the various programs includes federal, state, local, and private resources. To form and sustain the collaborative itself, the State has committed Community Services Block Grant discretionary funding.

What do they do differently?

Montana's collaborative to end homelessness includes many strategies to achieve its overall objective. As in most communities engaged in homelessness planning, these include supportive housing programs to serve those most in need, rental assistance, mental health and chemical dependency treatment, life skills training, and a host of other strategies.

The innovation in Montana's homelessness planning is the focus on involving the business community in finding shared ownership in this social problem. They have begun to see success in aligning the need of employers to hire and retain quality employees with the needs of employees for stable income due to a number of persuasive arguments and cultural factors:

- Homeless planners have estimated that it costs approximately \$31 million per year to serve the 2,000 people who experience homelessness in Billings each year, including emergency room, jail, shelter, etc. Meanwhile, national studies have demonstrated that providing housing with supportive services (Permanent Supportive Housing) is less expensive than the alternative: the business-as-usual approach.
- There is a worker shortage in Montana. Businesses indicate they lose almost half of their employees within the first 90 days, thereby losing the money they had invested in training. In Billings, businesses are actually closing due to a shortage of workers and are offering signing and retention bonuses.
- At the same time, the state has seen an increase in the number of people who are homeless, and yet only 25 percent of homeless people in Billings hold part-time or full-time jobs currently.
- Homeless advocates have emphasized their willingness to provide the necessary support for employers who hire clients who are homeless. With this network of assistance at their disposal, employers feel that homeless or formerly homeless employees come with more support than traditional employees, about whom the employer knows very little.
- Existing employers have had success with employing this population on a limited scale and have been vocal about their success, becoming champions for this issue. They are also proponents of aligning the need for workers with the need to build self-sufficiency among the homeless in the state.

Programs that have focused on building the human capital of people experiencing homelessness in Montana include:

- Supported and customized employment programs operated by local employers, including Stella’s Kitchen, Master Lube and the Billings Metropolitan Improvement District, with support services provided by non-profits. Master Lube also offers housing supports to its employees through a master leasing approach.
- SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) training for case managers to increase their knowledge and to increase access by homeless disabled individuals to income supports such as Supplemental Security Insurance, Social Security Disability Insurance, and work incentives.
- Homeless to Homeowner program, which gives back to renters the money they have paid monthly at the end of their lease, so that they may apply it as a down payment to buy their own home.
- A Social Enterprise Conference, held in 2008, during which government, non-profit and business partners convened to focus on employment and economic development strategies to end homelessness in the community.

What obstacles did the collaboration run into, and how did they address them?

A primary obstacle has been addressing the root causes of homelessness. This includes not only the lack of housing or employment but also the skills required to maintain a home or a job. The employers in Billings who are targeting their programs to those with histories of homelessness have addressed these issues in several ways:

- Learning disabilities or illiteracy – Master Lube has assisted in literacy courses and facilitated GED course trainings for employees.
- Mental health and chemical dependency treatment – supplementing housing and employment services programs with mental health and chemical dependency treatment to foster long-term recovery.
- Employee reliability – if employees are late or come to work drunk or exhibit behavioral problems, some employers will ask the employee to leave for the day without pay, rather than terminate employment. Multiple opportunities are provided to improve, and support is provided by service providers where appropriate.

Another obstacle to implementing the strategies of the Ten-Year Plan has been the rural, frontier nature of the State. Forty-six of 56 counties qualify as Frontier communities (six people per square mile or less). These are vast areas where it is difficult to quantify and address homelessness. There is no ability to provide any economy of scale for programs, so people need to funnel into the seven more populous communities for assistance.

In addition, it has been difficult to get the cities themselves to participate in addressing the issue. Billings has taken this on, but it is the only city; and the State gave Billings \$300,000 in Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF) flexible funds to use to address homelessness to incentivize their participation and kick-start their efforts. But these funds may not be a sustainable resource.

Another obstacle is that there is no organized statewide advocacy for homeless issues in the state. The Council on Homelessness is appointed by the Governor, so it is limited in its ability to advocate. In addition, the State Legislature does not currently include a “champion” for this issue.

How did this collaboration impact policy and systems changes?

Thus far, the collaborative has set the stage for policy and systems changes but has not had systemic impacts. These preliminary steps promise future changes of a larger scale:

- Raising awareness about the issue among general citizenry and business leaders through conferences, homeless memorials, and One-Stop Events for the Homeless in seven Montana cities.
- The Governor’s Council on Homelessness brought agency leaders, the business community, service providers, and advocates together to develop and implement a plan.
- At the program level, they have been able to bring in additional federal resources to address issues faced by chronically homeless Montanans.
- In Billings, business leaders and service providers are working together to end homelessness through shared ownership of this issue.

Career Pathways (Oregon)

Why did we research this collaboration?

Oregon's Career Pathways demonstrates how small-scale, pilot programs can build momentum and influence state policy changes. The community colleges are working together with high schools and the workforce development and human services systems in this far-reaching collaboration. They seek to make education and training offerings more client-focused, to ensure that students have the support needed to succeed, and to develop workers for local employers and industries, and jobs for low-income people who need them.

Career Pathways are designed to create training “chunks” that jobseekers can use to build on towards certifications or degrees, at their appropriate pace, thereby acquiring skills necessary for local employment opportunities. The goal of this collaboration is to provide a system of pathways for local jobseekers to acquire skills that match employment in their region.

Who is involved?

- Oregon's 17 community colleges
- The state's high school Career & Technical Education (CTE) Network
- Department of Education
- Employment Department
- Department of Human Services
- Workforce Investment Boards

What is the program?

Several initiatives across the country are now emphasizing career pathway programs, which typically comprise an integrated continuum of programs and services designed to prepare low-income workers for employment and advancement in targeted industries and occupations. Career pathways specifically target jobs in industries of importance to local or regional economies. The goal is to create avenues of advancement for current workers, jobseekers and future labor market entrants while also meeting local employers' needs for qualified workers.

In 1999, three community colleges in Oregon launched Career Pathways, funded by the local workforce investment boards (WIBs) and the League for Innovation in the Community College. Southwestern Community College focused on information technology occupations, and Portland Community College and Mt. Hood Community College focused on entry-level health occupations. As these model programs developed, the three community colleges formed the Oregon Pathways Alliance, along with Linn-Benton Community College, and Chemeketa Community College. The goal of the Alliance was to learn from their peers and build career pathways capacity.

In 2004, the Alliance was awarded funding to develop Career Pathways roadmaps and convene an Oregon Pathways Academy to build awareness about career pathways. Using these funds as leverage, the colleges developed career pathway "roadmaps" for 29 demand occupations. This process included working with faculty, department chairs, employers, Employer Advisory Committees, student services, and labor-market data, and involved creating and offering “stepping

stones” or “chunks” of degrees, such as certificates or credentials tied to jobs in demand in the local labor market. The roadmaps are featured on web pages that link a student to course offerings and additional information. In addition, the colleges have identified the common elements that are included in Career Pathways roadmaps.

The development of roadmaps has continued to expand and be incorporated into program development processes. As Career Pathways matured and cross-institution learning continued, partners approached the program as a systemic framework to address the changing realities of student needs and demographics and employer needs in local communities.

The Alliance convened an Oregon Pathways Academy in June 2005 with all 17 community colleges sending a team as well as a team from state agencies. This Academy increased buy-in and understanding of Pathways and resulted in each community college developing a Pathways Action Plan. In 2006, the Alliance received additional funding from the Governor’s fund to continue building Career Pathways and increased college participation in the Alliance to 11 colleges. Oregon Pathways Academy II, held in April 2007, continued to build collaboration and facilitated learning, especially focusing on systems thinking and showcasing successful efforts. At the Academy II, each college developed their Pathways Action Plan for the 2007-09 Biennium.

At the state level, the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development is advancing statewide certificates and articulation agreements across institutions in a number of demand occupations, including teacher preparation, manufacturing engineering, pre-engineering, retail management, apprenticeships, and healthcare.

Where does funding come from?

In addition to leveraging existing community college resources, Career Pathways programs have received funding through:

- The Regional Career & Technical Education Network (CTE)
- Department of Human Services’ “Degree Completion Initiative,” through TANF
- Governor’s Employer Workforce Training Fund, a part of the Oregon Workforce Investment Board
- The Strategic Reserve Fund of the State Board of Education General Fund
- Individual community colleges receive funding from local WIBs, TANF, foundations, and the League for Innovation

What do they do differently?

Community colleges tailor pathways for the individual, supporting job seekers even before training starts, through the program, and during job placement. For example, at Portland Community College, program participants begin with pre-training support, including guidance on their chosen pathway, help finding financial aid and qualifying for work supports, and help navigating the enrollment process. A three-hour weekly Career Planning course supplements training with employment and job-search skill development, and the college provides employment services to assist placement of participants.

At the state level, the initiative emphasizes the integration of career-pathways planning into state funding decisions as well as the combined efforts of most of the state's community colleges. State resources are dedicated to the development of pathways that fit each region of the state.

What obstacles did the collaboration run into, and how did they address them?

One obstacle is the difficulty of funding program development for new career pathways initiatives. The pilot programs were able to access funding through partnerships with the WIBs and the League of Innovation. Their initial successes influenced the State's decisions to target unrestricted resources to expanding programs across the state.

How did this collaboration impact policy and systems changes?

Career Pathways has:

- Improved awareness of the benefits of postsecondary certification and credentials
- Improved accessibility and affordability for part-time, low-income working adults
- Increased resources for essential support services to help students, including adults, achieve their postsecondary goals
- Aligned the objectives and programs of the state's education and workforce systems
- Increased attainment of postsecondary degrees, certificates of completion and industry certifications earned through articulated pathways.

M-Powered (Minnesota)

Why did we research this collaboration?

This program's success is due to the engagement of a network of employers, a community college, and a workforce non-profit in developing job training that better fits the needs of both low-income workers and employers. In this case, there was no single intermediary, but rather a multi-agency collaborative that includes a technical college, a nonprofit employment-services provider, and a group of businesses. In addition, this project included low-income individuals in need of a career path out of poverty.

Who is involved?

- HIRED, a workforce development organization in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area
- Hennepin Technical College (HTC)
- Member companies of the Precision Metal-forming Association (PMA) Twin Cities District, including 12 on the Employer Advisory Committee
- National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), which funded the start-up and infrastructure for the collaboration, using foundation funding

What is the program?

Partners describe the program as a “sector training initiative.” The program came together in 2005 as a collaboration between HIRED, HTC, and members of the PMA. Initially called Make it Happen, the program focused on providing fast-track training to prepare low-income workers for job opportunities in the metal-forming industry.

With guidance from members of PMA, HTC adapted its existing metal-forming curriculum to create a fast-track, industry-specific job training program. “Level 1” of the training includes 96 hours of classroom instruction over 12 weeks. HTC also designed a “Level 2” on-the-job training component for participants after job placement.

Program participants come from two backgrounds: unemployed or underemployed low-income individuals referred from HIRED's normal intake process and PMA member employees that have no training in metal-forming but are promising employees (for example, currently working in lower-paying, unskilled positions). For many of the students, the training program marks the beginning of a new career, the possibility of transitioning off state assistance or an opportunity to earn a wage that will support their family.

HIRED's role is to identify program participants, access funding for their training, and provide support services to participants. These services include preparation for classroom instruction and employability skills, such as training in resume writing and soft skills like punctuality and attendance in the workplace. HIRED also connects participants with resources they need, such as child care, transportation, and housing assistance.

Where does funding come from?

Initial funding for startup, including outreach to employers and development of the curriculum, came from the Center for Workforce Success of NAM, and included grants from The Hitachi Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The initial grant award was \$100,000 for two years.

M-Powered leveraged funding from Hennepin County for training activities. HIRED leverages mainstream workforce development funding, such as TANF, Food Stamp Employment and Training, and Workforce Investment Act, for qualified program participants. Participating employers also pay for training of their incumbent employees.

The program expanded to include training for three additional manufacturing occupations with funding from the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership, a state program that provides grants for job training partnerships between educational institutions and businesses.

M-Powered will also expand to serve young adults in the criminal justice system through an apprenticeship program funded by a federal grant.

What do they do differently?

Normally, HTC students attend two years of training. HTC adapted its curriculum to suit specific employers' needs and fast-track trainees into entry-level careers. M-Powered classes do not follow the same schedule as the rest of the college. Cohorts of students only begin classes when there is sufficient need for employees from the PMA members. HTC facilitates a "reverse career fair," and "speed dating" to help match employers with participants.

Employers were unsatisfied with the typical hiring model, in which a business would bring on temporary workers and cycle through temps until they found a fit to fill the position. This process was costly and time-consuming and resulted in expensive turnover.

From the client perspective, two years of training is not feasible while supporting families. M-Powered provides the opportunity for a fast-track to career placement, while offering the employment supports to get them ready to start and keep the job.

What obstacles did the collaboration run into, and how did they address them?

One obstacle for collaboration was the need to design a fast-track curriculum that would fit the needs of employers. Start-up funding from NAM (which included foundation grants) allowed HTC and HIRED to engage employers and collaboratively design the curriculum and other program elements. Start-up funding to expand the program to include additional manufacturing occupations has come from the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership.

A primary obstacle for collaboration is the challenge of serving individuals with barriers to employment. These barriers to program access include:

- Clients without GEDs or HS diplomas: these clients cannot receive community college training. HIRED can refer them to GED certification classes in order to overcome this barrier.

- Clients with substance use issues: this is a drug-free program, but HIRED works with potential participants to access treatment services.
- Clients with poor math and reading skills: HIRED refers potential participants to remedial math instruction prior to admittance to the program.
- Clients with language barriers: participants can be successful by taking Occupational English instruction.
- Clients with criminal backgrounds: some employers are more willing to work with trainees than others. HIRED and the college's job placement services work to place clients with employers that are good matches.
- Income requirements: funding prohibits serving clients below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

How did this collaboration impact policy and systems changes?

The community college changed its approach to manufacturing training by developing flexible, employer-driven, fast-track programs. Employers changed their hiring practices from cycling through temporary employees to investing in training program participants.

How did this collaboration impact beneficiaries (increase human capital)?

The significant impact of the program is increased investment in low-income participants who would otherwise be unable to enroll in community college for lengthy job training programs. Employers have increased their investments in employees because the M-Powered program provides the right kind of training and supports that low-income workers need to be successful.

The success of the initial pilot has led to expansion of the M-Powered program into welding, metal-stamping, machining, and bio manufacturing industries. In addition, M-Powered is developing a new apprenticeship program for young adults returning from the criminal justice system.

They have been successful in recruiting employer participation, with 47 employers involved in the initiative, and have met employer's satisfaction fully (100% satisfaction rate). They have also obtained funding for future expansion of the project, including federal funding for the apprenticeship training at prisons and private funding to support sector initiatives.

Analysis and Conclusions

The collaborations described in the previous section provide a sampling of workforce and human services collaborations in the Northwest region. The collaborations have taken on, and made some headway, in changing systems to improve the efficiency and impact of public services, including workforce development services and human services. These collaborations did not equally initiate as “systems change” efforts, in the way that supportive housing advocates, at a national level and in many cities and states as well, sought to transform the infrastructure of how services and housing were delivered to people who have been homeless.

Yet each of these initiatives, and Building Changes’ Community Employment Pathways initiative, does seek to restructure broken systems that are no longer working effectively, or at least have not worked effectively for low-income people. Each initiative germinated in response to the failure of systems serving low-income people, and each was formed as a way to bridge systems that had not heretofore been playing in the same sandbox, or if they were in the same sandbox, they were not playing well together.

In this section, we provide an analysis of the collaborations, using a “systems change” framework. The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), in 2003, developed a report titled *Laying a New Foundation: Changing the Systems that Create and Sustain Supportive Housing*. This report highlights the building blocks for engineering systems change, and, in this section, we have used the 10 building blocks framework to assess the collaborations. The 10 building blocks include:

1. *Collaborative Planning / Consensus-Building*: to change the ideas and values, establish new habits, and eventually change the use of money, power, and skills of those around the table
2. *Investment & Leveraging of Resources*: to cause existing resources to be used in new ways
3. *Coordination, Streamlining, & Integration of Funding*: reduce the funding and policy obstacles that get in the way of the collaboration’s goals
4. *Building Provider Capacity*: developing and supporting the expertise of providers to meet the goals of the collaboration
5. *Quality Assurance*: establishing and monitoring industry standards and superior quality outcomes
6. *Research & Data*: building the case for systems change: what works, at what cost, and why
7. *Communication & Advocacy*: delivering a powerful message about systems change
8. *Cultivating Leaders, Champions, & Advocates*: finding, cultivating, and empowering “true believers”.
9. *The Irresistible Force*: events that compel action, or leave little choice to operate business as usual
10. *An Intermediary as Neutral Catalyst*: an organization that serves as a broker or catalyst for change

In this section, we consider whether the 10 building blocks appear to be present and the impact of the presence or lack of presence. Finally, from this assessment, we develop our conclusions that can be of assistance for new systems change collaborative efforts, including our own CEP initiative.

Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness (Montana)

The Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Montana, and its sister plan for Missoula itself, has a clear systems change agenda. It seeks to end a persistent social problem by employing new approaches, including supportive housing and employment strategies.

This collaboration, particularly in Missoula, has benefited from compelling events, or an *irresistible force*, propelling it forward. This is particularly evident in its efforts to increase employer participation in ending homelessness, and the headway it is making in finding jobs for homeless individuals. This aspect of the Ten-Year Plan is focused on meeting a compelling marketplace need for more and higher quality employees. While the movement to develop a social enterprise and increase homeless individuals is fairly new, it has real traction potential; literally, these businesses can't continue to operate as usual.

A key building block which is not present is organized, statewide *communication and advocacy* about this issue. In many states, including Washington, there are multiple agencies coordinating their communication and advocacy agendas to increase knowledge and involvement by public officials and the public itself. The Montana planning effort has been spearheaded by the State, and as such is not a natural advocacy entity. They have developed a few *leaders, champions, and advocates*, including those in the business community. This will provide a foundation as they build momentum towards a statewide advocacy infrastructure.

This collaboration does not have an *intermediary as a neutral catalyst*. Certainly there are organizations that have spurred this collaboration forward, including the State and the City of Billings. Yet there is no single organization that has assumed this role that is not a part of the old way of doing business nor who can broker between funders and the project sponsors, advocates, and consumers. The building block of *building provider capacity* to meet the goals of the collaboration is also not present.

Collaborative planning and consensus-building is present. Committees with diverse membership, from multiple systems and sectors, have been established, and these groups have developed comprehensive, consensus-based plans. The *investment and leveraging of resources* is somewhat present, as they have been able to use existing resources in new ways, such as using TANF funding for homelessness planning in Missoula, although significant additional funding is needed to sustain the collaboration and meet the plan's objectives. Similarly, this collaboration has not yet *coordinated, streamlined, and integrated funding* for homeless people in the state, and although they are working toward developing a multi-systemic infrastructure for addressing homelessness, the state Council on Homelessness is not an interagency committee (only the Department of Public Health and Human Services is represented on the Council).

Research and data, as well as *quality assurance*, are present in a limited way. There is strong evidence of effectiveness for some of the strategies employed by this collaborative, particularly the combination of non-time-limited housing assistance coupled with services designed to support people to stay in their housing. Supportive housing studies confirm that providing homeless people

with stable housing is more cost effective than the alternative, which is a life on the streets, where they are likely to incur costs that must be paid by the public, including emergency medical care and jail. However, employment programs for the homeless have not yet been shown to make a similar impact on the bottom line, and without status as an evidence-based best practice, it is more difficult to make the case that this type of program is a worthy investment.

Career Pathways (Oregon)

Of the three initiatives, Career Pathways is the most expansive, with 17 participating community colleges, three state level departments, the high school system, and the federal workforce investment system. However, the initiative did not begin on a large scale. It started as a pilot with three community colleges, and developed into a systemic framework for institutional change. The planning and implementation of the project has also been very *collaborative* in nature, and included many local and statewide stakeholders.

Career Pathways has sought to change the educational system in the state, integrating programs and developing and promoting them as a unified, systemic framework. This new framework meets a marketplace need, in that it helps students attain living wage jobs while also addressing the workforce needs of employers. While there is not one event or *events that have compelled action*, this collaboration formed in response to a need to align educational tracks with labor market gaps and to ensure that people who are not ready for college have the support needed to enter and complete programs that provide the foundational skills to bridge their readiness for college.

Funding for this initiative was well *coordinated, streamlined, and integrated* with the purpose of simplifying access to good jobs by the student, the end-user. They have *invested and leveraged* existing resources in new ways, and have essentially institutionalized the program to a degree that it can be thought of as less of a program and more of a different approach to doing business. Funding has been leveraged from new and existing resources, including from multiple state agencies, private foundations, and federal sources.

Communication and advocacy has been a pillar of Career Pathways. A marketing plan was developed in 2007 by a subcommittee of the Steering Committee. Communication and advocacy efforts are designed to ensure strong collaboration and leveraging of resources to bring the program to interested participants statewide. The plan, and its implementation, sought to increase awareness of the program through promotional tools and a common language to use when discussing the initiative. The communications plan includes strategies for ensuring sustainability of the program through the *cultivation of advocates and champions*, including policy makers, influencers, and students. Career Pathways has an executive and a Steering Committee guiding the effort, rather than an *intermediary*, yet these entities have been effective in catalyzing change.

Career Pathways also has a strong connection to *research and data*, in that career pathways are devised based on labor market needs. *Quality assurance* is ensured through the performance-based education credentialing process, student by student.

M-Powered (Minnesota)

M-Powered began in response to *an event that compelled action*, in this case the growing demand for highly-skilled workers in the metal-forming industry, changing technologies requiring new skills, an aging workforce creating demand, and the lack of demand for low-skilled jobs in this sector. As with the other initiatives reviewed in this report, M-Powered was formed in response to market needs, leaving the stakeholders involved to change the way they had previously operated. They formed a *collaboration* and alliance that worked together to *plan* a sector initiative that addressed the economic factors in a strategic fashion, meeting employer and employee needs.

The program *leverages funds* that were not previously used for this purpose, including private foundation funding, “mainstream” federal funding (TANF, WIA, FSET), and corporate funding, including grants as well as training for existing employees. *Coordination and streamlining* of funding does occur, yet on a small scale.

This initiative is *research- and data-driven*. The program has established measures from various perspectives: stakeholder (trainee placement, training and retention), operational (employer participation and participant and employer satisfaction), financial (leveraged funding, grants, financial reporting, and spend-out), and growth/innovation (future funding, curriculum development, and process documentation). They use these outcomes to *assure the quality of the program*, and to *communicate and advocate* for program funding and expansion of their employer and participant base. They also use their program successes to build *community champions* among manufacturing industry leaders, legislators, and community college administrators.

This collaboration is highly industry-driven, yet is convened and project managed by a public workforce development provider and a community college. There is not an *intermediary acting as neutral catalyst* in this case, but these entities, working together have been able to build trust and broker change.

Conclusions

We have drawn the following conclusions from our review of these collaborations and analysis of their ability to make systems changes in their chosen areas of focus.

1. The presence of a compelling, data-driven argument for making a systems change is the single most important element or building block. Each of these collaborations had some degree of evidence available to convince their target audiences of the need to change the way business had been traditionally operated. New collaborations must focus significant time and resources on developing a powerful message or case for the systems changes they are seeking to make.
2. The alignment of goals and expected outcomes is a key component, and something to address in the early stages of the collaboration. Workforce development providers, businesses, and human services providers each operate very much separately, in most cases. Bringing these disparate systems together, and ensuring that a new collaboration meets the expectations and requirements of each system and funding source, is perhaps the most challenging obstacle to overcome.

3. Leaders, champions, and advocates are necessary for success, and should include stakeholders at various organizational levels (mid-management, leadership, front-line) as well as among various sectors (political, business, government, service providers). In order to cultivate and nurture such leaders, the collaboration must make a compelling case for the project in the early stages, and use data and outcomes to demonstrate its successes.
4. None of these efforts required an entity outside the system to serve as a catalyst to lead their collaboration. Each partner in each collaboration represented one or more stakeholder groups that were invested in the outcome. However, these collaborations demonstrate that change can happen from within an existing construct. In order for that to occur, most of the other building blocks, particularly data and the compelling force for change, must be present within each collaborative in order to see successful systems change.

Community Employment Pathways: An Overview of Building Changes' New Initiative

Why Employment?

Employment, especially employment at a living wage, brings with it improved self-confidence, enhanced feelings of self-worth, and the satisfaction of being a contributing member of society. Employment also brings greater self-sufficiency and a sense of freedom to use some of the income for discretionary spending. This is as true for homeless families and individuals as it is for others.

Beyond the direct benefits that employment brings to homeless families and individuals is the benefit to the public of the eventual reduction in housing subsidy costs. The less that homeless people need to rely on housing subsidies, the more housing subsidy funds are available for others. To date, little attention has been focused on the importance of employment in ending recurring episodes of homelessness and reducing the demand for housing subsidies. With the exception of a DOL-HUD initiative that is providing grant assistance to help chronically homeless persons living in five communities to gain employment and permanent housing, no other federally-funded employment initiatives for homeless persons are underway. There has been virtually no federal funding for employment initiatives aimed at homeless individuals and families. Where local efforts have been made to span the boundaries between the homeless assistance and the workforce development worlds, the result has often been frustration.

Why Building Changes?

Building Changes has a strong commitment to improving the economic opportunities of people experiencing homelessness, as well as a strong belief in these individuals and their ability, interest, and desire to improve their situations through competitive or supported employment. We believe that work is an integral part of a person's recovery process, and we know that in places where employment services are provided to homeless people, more homeless people are working. We know that evaluators have found that it is cost effective to finance employment services in supportive housing programs. And we believe that enhanced partnerships between homeless housing and services providers and the workforce development system are essential to improving employment outcomes for this population.

In 2005, when we began to form a vision with our partners that homeless job seekers deserve the same economic opportunities as anyone, we joined forces with the City of Seattle Office of Housing and Office of Economic Development, Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County, the Committee to End Homelessness in King County, and various funders and providers to develop a collaborative plan for increasing employment opportunities for homeless job seekers.

What We've Done

Building Changes and the City of Seattle Office of Housing led a community planning process with the objective of improving our common understanding of the workforce services and outcomes for

homeless job seekers. This process began a couple of years into our community's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, which included only limited strategies related to increasing economic opportunities for those experiencing homelessness. That process, and the opportunities for action that the resulting report (*Developing Community Employment Pathways for Homeless Job Seekers in King County*) recommended, spurred our community to action. Over the past year, homeless housing and services funders have ramped up their funding, and their expectations, for employment programs for homeless job seekers. A few homeless housing and services providers have already stepped up to the challenge by developing new employment programs for their clients and tenants. In addition, new partnerships are forming, and existing partnerships between mainstream workforce development and educational systems and homeless housing and service providers have been strengthened.

In researching and developing the report, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Building Changes (formerly AIDS Housing of Washington) and the City of Seattle's Office of Housing set out to assess the current landscape of homeless employment initiatives and identify promising opportunities for early action. Although the research revealed several positive trends it also noted opportunities for action:

- Housing and workforce development planning should include strategies and resources for addressing the unique employment service needs of homeless individuals and families both across Washington State.
- Homeless housing and services providers should strengthen their linkages to education, job training, and job placement services for their residents and clients. Improved linkages between employment services, housing resources, and mental health and chemical dependency treatment are essential to increasing homeless persons' capacity to achieve and sustain employment.
- Many homeless job seekers need a higher level of support services than they often receive in order to access and sustain involvement in education, training, and employment. Ongoing, intensive assistance from case managers, mental health professionals, substance abuse counselors, and vocational specialists are often needed for some homeless job seekers to support their employment and career advancement.
- Many providers and homeless persons are not educated about the net impact that earning income can have on the benefits assistance received by a homeless person. Some homeless job seekers are wary of seeking a return or entry to the workforce, due to a reduction in benefits, including health care, childcare, income supports, housing assistance, and food assistance.

Washington State is often cited for having innovative models and effective programs for addressing homelessness, with many of these projects located in Seattle/King County. The scale of the homeless housing system here, the involvement of the public housing authorities in addressing homelessness, the significant support from philanthropy, and recent state legislative initiatives are all highly regarded aspects of the effort to end homelessness in our area. Given the breadth of the response to homelessness in Washington State and King County, it is somewhat surprising that improving access to employment has not been a prominent part of our region's Ten-Year Plans to End Homelessness.

The Outcomes We Have Seen Thus Far

From the lessons learned in our research, as well as from what we have learned from communities across the country, a number of steps were suggested that might be taken to improve the efforts of the workforce, housing and treatment systems that will result in positive employment and housing outcomes for homeless individuals and families. These opportunities are beginning to be seized by local funders and providers, who are beginning to work together to improve employment outcomes for homeless job seekers; examples include:

- Our Interagency Council of the Committee to End Homelessness has broadened its membership to include the local director of the Workforce Development Council (WDC) and included employment as a priority work area for 2007.
- The King County Veterans and Human Service Levy has funded 7 new employment programs, including at least 3 focused on the homeless. The Levy plan specifically stated that the recommendations from the *Developing Community Employment Pathways report* should serve as a guide for the creation of the Levy request for proposals.
- United Way of King County has begun a campaign to end chronic homelessness that has an employment component and has recently made funding available to homeless youth providers for employment services.
- The Washington Families Fund refined the moderate-level services model for its current RFP (Sept 07) that rewards applicants with strong employment services components.
- The Seattle Foundation, United Way of King County, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Microsoft, Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, community colleges, the City of Seattle, King County, and others are working together to create opportunity for people who need another chance at decent training and rewarding work. The 2nd Chance Washington partnership seeks to systems changes resulting in increasing rates of low-income workers receiving post-secondary education credentials. Building Changes is actively ensuring that this group of low-income workers includes people experiencing homelessness.

What Now?

We feel that the time is ripe to begin breaking down the barriers to employment of homeless people at the local level, to evaluate the results obtained, and to set the stage for replicating successes across the country. Therefore, in 2008, Building Changes launched the Community Employment Pathways program (CEP). This initiative seeks to improve employment and education participation, retention, and long-term self-sufficiency outcomes for homeless job seekers in Washington State. Our activities focus on three areas: delivery of technical assistance to providers, state and federal advocacy and policy work, and evaluation of the impact our initiative has made.

Building Changes' technical assistance includes partnering with funders and providers to identify and develop strategies that will expand and improve existing workforce development systems serving people experiencing homelessness. We provide community-based, hands-on technical assistance, planning, and training for workforce development and homeless housing and services providers. We provide these agencies with the training, tools, strategies, and technical support they need to succeed.

We have a strong commitment to add value, and to not duplicate work being done by our community partners. Therefore, in King County, we are collaborating closely with the Workforce Development Council, Seattle Jobs Initiative, 2nd Chance Washington and its individual member agencies, including United Way of King County. We also expect to not only support homeless providers with technical assistance, but also to invest as a partner in their success. This includes agencies that are already providing job opportunities and training, such as the YWCA, YouthCare and Downtown Emergency Services Center, but also housing and services providers with less developed employment programs.

We have a vision that homeless people deserve access to employment services, whether they are homeless or in housing, mentally ill or chemically dependent, youth or senior, formerly incarcerated or living with chronic health challenges. Yet in order to do so, access to existing programs by the most challenging clients will need to be improved, and new employment pathways need to be created.