To: Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
From: Chicago Jobs Council on behalf of the Employment Task Force (ETF) of the Chicago Continuum of Care (CoC)

Re: Comments on Local WIOA plan

March 16, 2020

The Employment Task Force (ETF) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the local WIOA Plan. Our feedback on the plan consists of two parts. First, we have updated recommendations we made to the Partnership in June of 2016 early in the implementation in WIOA (the original document is included in Appendix A). Second, we have included in Appendix B the input that the ETF provided to the Partnership in December; these include several recommendations made by participants in focus groups of people with lived experience of homelessness and frontline provider organizations.

Our first updated recommendation is regarding priorities for services. We believe that there is clear direction under WIOA to prioritize job seekers with barriers to employment and in June 2016 we recommended and outlined a public process to inform local priorities of service. We recognized that this is a big departure from current practice, but given a stronger labor market we thought (and continue to think) that there is an opportunity to focus on service priorities in a meaningful way.

We really appreciated the invitation to provide input in this planning process although the only reference to any of the work that the ETF has been doing that the Partnership has been involved with was the data match between Career Connect and HMIS. There is little mention of prioritizing individuals experiencing homelessness in the local plan and we are looking for ways that WIOA funds will be used in new ways to reach people with barriers to employment. For example, potentially delegates who work with job seekers who are served in Continuum of Care programs might get a portion of a special set-aside funding to serve those individuals. Where there is note of expanded services for any special populations, it appears that it is non-WIOA funds that created the opportunity.

Our second recommendation still stands with the addition of some highlighted wording: From the experience of Task Force members, the ability to serve job seekers with barriers in without time limits and with a “zero exclusion” approach is a priority and we offer the following to describe what employment success looks like for homeless job seekers and job seekers who are being served by providers in the Continuum of Care system:
Multiple attempts at jobs or job training supports before attachment, understanding that job seeker resilience and persistence improve their long-term success

- Increased flexibility on length of service or gaps in services, so that we can re-engage participants who have stabilized their housing
- Tracking other evidence of persistence in job seeking process
- Part-time, contract employment and other ways of increasing earned income which should be included in a definition of employment and identifying additional ways to recognize and reward agencies for provision of meaningful work

To the extent that the Partnership can increase flexibility and can exercise its discretion on performance—whether through monitoring, delegate agency selection or negotiation on performance measures—we encourage the consideration of this information. The Task Force can assist in the development and collection of additional information.
Appendix A: Recommendations provided by ETF to Partnership in June 2016

Employment Task Force of the Chicago Continuum of Care
Recommendations for implementation of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

June 17, 2016

The Employment Task Force (Task Force) of the Chicago Continuum of Care (Continuum) is tasked with increasing the numbers of individuals that exit the homeless services system with employment income. A main area of focus is improving the connections between housing-related services and workforce services. Because the new Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that priority be given to “public benefits recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient” when providing career and training services, Task Force members believe that we have a crucial opportunity to improve how the local WIOA system serves job seekers who have major barriers to employment.

We acknowledge that the state and local areas have always stated that individuals with barriers to employment have a priority for services; we know that the local service delivery system has affiliate agencies that specialize in serving individuals with barriers; and we know that WIOA performance measures (over which the state and local areas have no or very little control) are often a disincentive to providing services to individuals with barriers to employment. We believe that the following recommendations build from that context and encourage the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (Partnership) to take steps to improve and expand services to job seekers experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The spirit of WIOA is clear, with respect to prioritizing services to job seekers with barriers. Supporting the spirit of the law, Christine Quinn, U.S. Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA) Regional Administrator, encouraged the Chicago Cook Workforce Innovation Board to think flexibly about how WIOA is implemented to serve those with barriers, despite the delay in final federal policy.

Although not all policy guidance is final, we think there is no reason to wait and that we owe jobseekers the earliest possible improvements to the systems serving them. There are three areas that we focus on:

- Process for setting local priority of service
- Investment in services and strategies appropriate for homeless job seekers
- Data collection, analysis, and performance measure strategies

1. Process for setting local priorities

There are two components in the local planning guidance that are relevant to this area—first, a description of how the local board will determine priority populations and how best to prioritize services; and second, a description of how local plan modifications will be made in the future.
There is clear direction under WIOA to prioritize job seekers with barriers to employment and the law provides an opportunity for our local area to focus on service priorities in a meaningful way, allowing local boards to establish a process that gives priority to additional populations (§ 680.600). Given this, the Task Force recommends that the Partnership conduct a public process to inform local priorities of service. We recognize that this is a big departure from current practice, but given that the regional labor market is stronger and job seekers with fewer barriers are accessing jobs more quickly, and limited WIOA resources cannot serve all job seekers with barriers, this is an opportunity to focus on service priorities in a meaningful way. And there are many stakeholders who can contribute to a thoughtful process and enhance the decision-making process of the Partnership and its Workforce Innovation Board (WIB).

The Task Force recommends that the Partnership take steps in the first half of program year 2016 to conduct an inclusive stakeholder engagement process to collect meaningful input on priority populations and service strategies, build some consensus, and determine which priority of service strategies are actionable and how to implement them. Given that this is a large undertaking, the Task Force is willing to work with the Partnership to make it a truly inclusive and effective process and possibly find resources to support it. This requires the Partnership to both be fully committed to the process and to follow through on results. Task Force members have familiarity with the Technology of Participation (TOP) process that can be successfully used with large groups and is designed to build and gain consensus. At a minimum, we envision providing a broad set of stakeholders the opportunity to give input and then designate a smaller group of stakeholders (for example, members of WIB committees, the Task Force, and members of Suburban Cook Continuum of Care) to help the Partnership determine consensus.

After the stakeholder engagement process, meaningful next steps would include the following from the Partnership:

- Report results to the WIB and the Department of Commerce (DOC);
- Determine the implications for the current service delivery structure and what can and cannot be changed;
- Commit to implementation; and
- Modify the local plan in accordance with the changes. If the formation of a new WIB committee is a recommended next step, we advise that it have the power to make decisions that are actionable by the Partnership. We also recommend that the description of the extent of the committee’s authority be included in any modification of the local plan.

In the new local plan, the Partnership can commit to revising the priority of service with a public process and has the ability to revisit the plan within the first year, if modifications are necessary. The Partnership can then collect public comments to plan modifications that they make, as detailed in the plan modification procedure.

The Task Force is also recommending that an individual with experience serving homeless youth be a member of the Youth Council.
2. Investment in services and strategies appropriate for homeless job seekers

The Task Force recognizes that some adult and youth job seekers experiencing homelessness are served by the WIOA system at delegate agencies that specialize in serving that population. Given WIOA’s emphasis on job seekers with barriers to employment, there is an opportunity to improve the WIOA system’s ability to serve those individuals, especially because fewer than 20% currently leave the homeless services system with increased income due to employment earnings. The Task Force offers the following three recommendations to improve services for individuals experiencing homelessness:

Pilot an ‘Employment Navigator’ model

The Task Force has had an opportunity to learn about a model in Seattle that uses an ‘employment navigator’ to increase access to employment and training services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Since 2010, Seattle/King County has contracted with provider organizations to serve as employment ‘navigators’ for adults and youth engaged in the homeless/housing services system. The ‘navigator’ works with homeless services providers to link referred individuals with employment and training services at three community-based organizations. The ‘navigator’ has the following responsibilities:

- Provides engagement, assessment, and employment navigation services, which are mobile and operate out of local One Stop sites;
- Serves as a resource within the WIOA system to link homeless households with needed assistance/services; and
- Co-enrolls and supports families in mainstream workforce services (i.e. WIOA, SNAP E&T) and captures data in HMIS and workforce data systems.

In order to pilot this model, we recommend that the Partnership:

- Partner with the Employment Task Force to design an ‘employment navigator’ pilot program that will leverage the strengths of the WIOA delegate agency system and commitment of the local Continuum of Care/homeless services system.
- Set aside local WIOA formula funds for a project and work with the Task Force to seek additional or matching funds.

Invest WIOA funds in Transitional Jobs (TJ) for job seekers experiencing homelessness

WIOA prioritizes expanding work-based learning opportunities, including transitional jobs (TJ). Under WIOA law (§ 680.840), local boards are permitted to allocate up to 10 percent of combined Adult and Dislocated Worker formula funds for TJ programs. Under federal and state policy, TJ programs can count toward the requirement that 40 percent of local funding be spent on training. The Task Force has identified TJ as a best practice for helping homeless job seekers successfully reconnect to the labor market and has identified local provider experience and expertise, including some current WIOA delegates. Several workforce providers in Chicago have long-time experience and expertise providing TJ programs to job seekers with barriers to employment, including homelessness. New WIOA policy and guidance combined with a wealth
of local expertise in the TJ model is an opportunity to improve WIOA services for job seekers experiencing homelessness with a proven model.

The Task Force recommends that the Partnership design an approach to funding TJ programs targeted to job seekers experiencing homelessness that also focus on improving basic skills and/or preparing for industry-specific skills. Designing and funding a skills component with a TJ program will ensure that participants are prepared for unsubsidized employment and skills gains. We recommend using the TJ program designed by the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board, as an example of using WIOA funds for TJ programs (this is attached). A first step towards implementing this recommendation would be to convene local TJ providers to learn the current TJ landscape and how WIOA investments to support TJ programs can be maximized. The Task Force is currently conducting an asset mapping project that includes identifying existing TJ programs to share with the Partnership.

Additional Services that Address Barriers for Homeless Job Seekers

The Task Force has identified three additional services that homeless job seekers, as well as the providers that serve them, need in order to be successful in employment. We ask the Partnership to take a role in improving the following services:

- **Digital access and digital literacy services**: There are a number of initiatives in the City and County that are intended to improve digital literacy amongst residents and reduce the digital divide. Given that the Partnership is very involved in some of these initiatives, the Task Force would like to explore how these could be leveraged to reach homeless job seekers that receive services through Continuum of Care providers. In particular: expand/replicate the Partnership/Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) digital skills training initiative for CHA residents to the Continuum providers, in order to increase digital literacy of homeless job seekers; fund basic digital skills training (Chicago Public Libraries’ cyber navigators) for job seekers at Continuum providers—designating one or two WIOA delegates to provide the training with special funding; and work with the Partnership’s employer partners to identify basic digital competencies by occupation and industry (using the targeted occupations list).

- **Financial capability**: Basic financial capability and asset building skills are necessary for employment retention and many of these basic skills are lacking for job seekers experiencing homelessness. The Task Force has identified many financial capability curriculums in use across workforce providers, but the capacity of providers to implement them differs greatly. The Task Force recommends that the Partnership identify the existing curricula in use by its delegates (and any other best practices) and support building additional capacity (through funding and training) to deliver financial literacy training. In particular, the Partnership can partner with local experts on training frontline providers on how to utilize strengths-based, trauma-informed financial conversations with job seekers, and also how to educate employer partners on the cost (to them) of financial instability and their role in supporting employee financial literacy and asset building practices.
• **Employment Rights:** Most employees are not aware of basic workplace rights and economically vulnerable job seekers (including the homeless) are often at risk for abuse by unscrupulous employers and other predatory entities (payday lending). The Task Force recommends that the Partnership support the training and implementation of “Workers’ Rights for Workforce Development” ([http://cjc.net/frontline-focus/tools-for-frontline-staff/](http://cjc.net/frontline-focus/tools-for-frontline-staff/)) across its delegate agencies. In addition to important information to prevent abuse, the curriculum helps to build job seeker skills, including negotiation and conflict resolution that improves retention and success in the workplace.

3. **Data collection, analysis, and performance measure strategies**

We recognize that rules and guidance regarding performance measures have not yet been finalized by DOLETA and the DOC.

By codifying the new Statistical Adjustment Model under WIOA, Congress and DOLETA recognize that success for job seekers with significant barriers to mainstream employment, as well as success for any job seeker in a weak labor market, should be defined differently from the universal placement, retention and earnings gains under WIA.

From the experience of Task Force members, we offer the following to describe what employment success looks like for homeless job seekers and job seekers who are being served by providers in the Continuum of Care system:

- Multiple attempts at jobs or job training supports before attachment, understanding that job seeker resilience and persistence improve their long-term success
- Increased flexibility on length of service or gaps in services, so that we can re-engage participants who have stabilized their housing
- Tracking other evidence of persistence in job seeking process
- Part-time and contract employment which should be included in a definition of employment and identifying additional ways to recognize and reward agencies for provision of meaningful work

To the extent that the Partnership can increase flexibility and can exercise its discretion on performance—whether through monitoring, delegate agency selection or negotiation on performance measures—we encourage the consideration of this information. The Task Force can assist in the development and collection of additional information.

Next, we recommend taking steps toward a better connection to the Continuum of Care’s HMIS data system managed by All Chicago. Currently the data systems do not “talk to each other,” but the work of the Task Force has already informed improvements to how each system tracks relevant information about housing and employment service data for individuals receiving services in each system. An important first step is to institute regular processes to:

- Share existing relevant information: Given that the Task Force has representatives from both All Chicago/Continuum and the Partnership, over the next year, schedule quarterly reports from each about relevant information (e.g. aggregate data on the WIOA
systems’ service of homeless jobs seekers and their outcomes; data collection methods/options and data limitations; basic data that would be helpful to refer clients between the two systems). Ensure the quarterly report presentations from the WIOA and the Continuum systems are available to a broader audience—through the Partnership’s delegate agency meetings, All Chicago’s The Learning Center, CJC stakeholder meetings, etc.

- Determine the next steps needed to establish a data agreement between the two systems that:
  - Allow data sharing to answer critical questions related to homeless job seekers including: How many job seekers experiencing homelessness or unstable housing does WIOA serve? Which agencies serve them? What types of services do they receive? What outcomes do they experience? How many referrals are made to WIOA services from Continuum of Care providers?
  - We recognize that each system may not collect the data needed to fully answer these questions, and that consent/data privacy issues prevent sharing of certain information. The Task Force recommends that the Partnership and All Chicago/Continuum identify the barriers, limitations, options, and plans to be able to answer the questions. This joint project would also inform both the WIOA and Continuum systems about what is learned—we would recommend reviewing those updates on a quarterly basis.
  - Ensure that the Career Connect processes, currently being established, could interact with HMIS, when/if there is a more formal link with HMIS.
  - Develop client consent procedures that will allow data matching between the two data systems in order to support analysis.
  - Determine regular times to collect and analyze information across data systems and ensure this data is used to inform local planning on an ongoing basis.

- Make it a priority to collect information related housing status and related barriers in Career Connect/WIOA system, in order to support service delivery—even if this information is not needed for WIOA eligibility.

Finally, we would like to work with the Partnership to advance WIOA policies and procedures at the state-level, in order to:

- Give local workforce areas the flexibility to capture additional data about housing status and related barriers, in such a way that it can appropriately adjust the performance requirements through the statistical adjustment model.
- Create incentives for WOIA agencies to capture all customer barriers beyond what is needed for eligibility, without requiring agencies to document additional barriers.
Appendix B: Input provided by the ETF in December 2019

December 20, 2019

To: Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership  
From: Chicago Jobs Council on behalf of the Employment Task Force (ETF) of the Chicago Continuum of Care (CoC)  
Re: Input for the next local WIOA plan

**Background:** The Chicago Jobs Council has served on the ETF for many years and as one of its four co-chairs since 2014. Three and a half years ago, the ETF made specific recommendations to the Partnership on the implementation of WIOA with respect to job seekers experiencing housing instability. Many of those recommendations are still relevant today, so we are including them as an attachment to this memo and the final section of the memo includes a review of progress on those recommendations since 2016.

Since that time, the ETF has made significant progress in collecting more data and information to understand the needs of job seekers who are served through the Chicago Continuum of Care. Individuals who come to a CoC program are seeking housing, but the majority of them also identify as job seekers and seek help. Here is what we know:

- **People experiencing homelessness are motivated to work:** Anywhere from 52% to 59% of people assessed for housing each quarter are interested in getting help finding a job.\(^1\)
- **The profile of job seekers experiencing housing instability is similar to any unemployed job seeker:** Inspiration Corporation’s qualitative research revealed that job seekers assessed at coordinated entry have recent labor market attachment and skills: 77% of those they interviewed had 5+ years of work history, 74% worked in the past year, and 50% had at least some college.\(^2\)
- **Virtually no one getting housing-related services through the CoC gets WIOA-funded workforce services:** The recent data match between the CoC’s Housing Management Information System (HMIS) and Career Connect data, showed that in the two year period of the data match, only 273 individuals received services from both systems.

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\(^1\) This information comes from the coordinated entry assessment. When someone seeks assistance with housing, they are assessed at a point referred to as “coordinated entry.” The ETF advocated that the assessment include a question about employment.

\(^2\) [http://www.inspirationcorp.org/research-pages-161.php](http://www.inspirationcorp.org/research-pages-161.php)
Due to the ETF’s work, this is the first time we have data to inform the development and expansion of workforce-related services for job seekers experiencing housing instability. In addition to this new data, the ETF created a vision and a set of strategies to increase income of individuals in CoC programs. Key staff from the Partnership have been actively involved in developing the specific strategy to better connect the CoC to the public workforce system. To further expand on this data and provide additional input to the Partnership, the ETF prioritized conducting two focus groups: one with the Lived Experience Commission (LEC) and one with CoC providers (both housing and workforce). CJC facilitated the focus groups on 12/9 (LEC) and on 12/13 (with providers at the monthly ETF meeting).

**Focus Group Findings:** The first focus group was with the Lived Experience Commission of the CoC. This is a coalition of individuals who are receiving or have received services from Chicago’s homeless system, people who were formerly homeless or people at risk of becoming homeless. This commission was formed to ensure an organized voice for those with lived experience of homelessness. Fourteen LEC members participated in the focus group.

The second focus group was held at the monthly ETF meeting and included invitations to other CoC members who don’t regularly attend ETF meetings. Individuals from 13 organizations participated and included those that provide emergency, transitional, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing, as well as organizations that provide workforce services. A number of organizations provide both housing and workforce services.

The questions in each group were intended to find out: their experience with any type of workforce services, including WIOA-funded services; the labor market experience of job seekers they know; what they identify as the key challenges for those same job seekers.

Below are key themes that emerged from both groups, including specific examples from each.

*Familiarity with the public workforce system (WIOA) amongst people experiencing homelessness and housing providers is low.*

- While some of the attendees of the Lived Experience group had heard of or worked with a few workforce development organizations (including North Lawndale Employment Network, the Safer Foundation, CARA, and Thresholds), none of the attendees had ever heard of an American Jobs Center or an Individual Training Account.
- One attendee reported attempting to get assistance from a One-stop about 12 years ago. She filled out a lot of paperwork and provided documentation, but no one ever followed up. In the focus group she said, “I’m still waiting.” She had a clear memory of a poor experience.
• The only providers that had familiarity with the WIOA system were those who were current or former WIOA delegates and one emergency housing organization that had referred a few people to Pyramid.
• Those who were familiar with WIOA reported that the “suitability” determination used by the local WIOA system meant that individuals with housing and related challenges don’t get served and providers that serve them are unlikely to be successful with a WIOA contract.
• One provider noted “upkeep of the contract was harder than serving clients.”

Depending on the housing program, different approaches to employment are needed.

• Providers noted that the rapid rehousing program is a time-limited housing subsidy and finding a job quickly is necessary to be successful. One provider noted that urgency plays a role for both the job seeker and the housing case manager -- they might be more likely to work on finding an employer than enrolling a client in another “system.” The need for a job, quickly, limits the ability of the client to enroll in many WIOA services, including training.
• Although individuals who have a permanent housing placement might be more likely to have some kind of health condition or disability, employment is still a goal of many individuals. One LEC member shared his experience with the Senior Community Service Program and how that worked out for him. Providers did mention familiarity and work with Individualized Placement and Support (ISP) programs. Three issues came up;
  o Many people on SSI or SSDI want to work, but understanding the interaction of earned income and benefits is challenging for individuals and for frontline staff. Members of the LEC expressed concern about the ability to maintain benefits while working. They explained that they had a disability, and were interested and able to work part-time. However, they needed trained case-managers that could help ensure they would not lose public benefits while working.
    Employment Task Force members explained that clients with disabilities need individualized services when it comes to dealing with benefits and the limits for earned income. Some organizations successfully work with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities for benefits analysis.
  o People who want to move into work, after having been out of the workforce and having some limitations on what they can do, need more time and to be able to set their own goals.
  o Success in employment is varied and may not fit neatly with the performance measures in public workforce contracts.
People with unstable housing do find work, but experience challenges to getting into specific sectors.

- Providers reported that the people they work with typically have access to jobs in some manufacturing companies (food processing was an example), hospitality, retail, food service (fast food), commercial cleaning, staffing agencies (light industrial), and customer service. In all of these areas, the providers noted barriers. They also noted that “there are plateaus.”
- Providers reported that jobs at big institutions -- specifically, hospitals, universities and museums -- are of interest because there would be more opportunities to advance, but the application systems and processes are confusing and lengthy. They have automated HR systems with lengthy application and interview processes and there is difficulty finding HR contacts even when there’s a case manager helping. One youth provider noted that for young people with emotional challenges and recovering from trauma, the lengthy and confusing process can be triggering. Others agreed that this is true for adult job seekers.
- Administrative jobs are of interest for people looking for a “professional environment”, but access is limited. Information technology, in particular, was noted by providers as inaccessible for people they work with because of justice backgrounds, drug testing, and specific experience and skill requirements. Providers also noted that there are few internship opportunities to build some skills or experience in administrative jobs. One provider noted that youth, especially those pursuing a college-degree, are especially interested in gaining experience in an office environment.

Public funding doesn’t allow for the actual path that people with unstable housing take to get to stable employment

- One of the members of the LEC noted that people need to take a first job or a temporary job and, at the same time, need support to find a better job.
- One provider noted that it’s a longer “career development process” that can take anywhere from one to four years. Both the housing and workforce funding expectation is that something happens quickly, but many people have a few jobs that are temporary at first.
- Another provider noted that the “survival job” is part of the career pathway. We don’t have a system or funding that recognizes that.

Barriers to employment are many and are exacerbated by housing instability.

- Transportation challenges included late hour transit and jobs in transit deserts; it also included the transportation charges of staffing and day labor jobs (for example,
employer vans from transit stops to work locations that charge weekly rates to employees, whether they work a particular day or not).

- Limitations on availability for jobs due to rules or requirements related to housing. For example, curfews at shelters were noted by the LEC. Housing programs and other benefits may have meeting or appointment requirements, and people with chronic health or disabilities have health appointments necessary to maintain good health. While these were noted as barriers, they were not noted as reasons that someone should not work, rather that it affects the opportunities available.

- Unworkable work hours--for example, second and third shift and unpredictable schedules were noted by providers.

- Both groups listed childcare as a barrier to employment, especially for jobs with varying hours or 2nd and 3rd shifts.

- Few employers are willing to take a chance on someone who might have challenges. This was noted by the housing providers who have case managers or dedicated staff able to help people with employment.

- Other barriers noted are frequently noted for all job seekers:
  - Lack of a high school diploma
  - Limited work history
  - Justice system involvement/records
  - Language barriers
  - Employer personality tests
  - Racial discrimination, bias against immigrants, bias against youth of color
  - Lack of mental health services

Information about jobs, workforce services, and referrals is found through networks.

In both groups, people noted a wide range of sources of information. The housing providers were mostly doing their own research, rather than using any of the information from the public workforce system:

- Networking with other colleagues
- Doing their own research
- Facebook groups that post jobs
- Connections provided by coworkers
- Networking with community members and local employers
- Program participants that get jobs and then share information
- Apps and online services (vouch circle, gig tracks, Moonrise, Solve)
Workforce services for people in housing programs need to be participant-centered and focus on helping them navigate complexity of both services and the labor market.

- In both the LEC and the provider focus group, when asked “what is one thing to do to make sure more people served through the CoC can get help”, several people talked about ways to get better information:
  - “Easier way to understand services and navigate them.”
  - “Accessible way to understand what to expect--timeframe for getting services, how long it will take to get a job, what is the process.”
  - “Making sure youth have an understanding of services and the path and what’s involved. There is so much misinformation and lack of clarity.”
  - “Clarity about steps involved in getting a job.”
- Others noted that what individuals identify for themselves should be the starting point:
  - “Find out goals from participants”
  - “Entry points should not be for data collection.”
  - “The priority is connecting to people’s interest. Start there: motivation is the best thing.”
  - “High quality staff to start with where people are--low barrier, no shame, harm reduction.”
  - “More of the IPS model: a coach for everyone”
- Others recommended more direct relationships with employers and securing commitments to hire. One provider said, “We should put pressure on employers: we provide services for free, they should be pressured to provide better jobs and give people a chance.”

**Recommendations:**

In both groups there were several recommendations related to delivering employment-related services to individuals experiencing housing instability, some of them were specific to WIOA:

- Allow providers to set their own goals and outcomes
- Create a partnership between frontline providers and funders rather than a transactional relationship through contracts and grants.
- Eliminate unnecessary requirements to simply enroll or register someone for a service. One example was the requirement to TABE test everyone (which takes hours) in WIOA even before they assess for their job search needs.
- Figure out how to counsel people about the interaction between earned income and benefits. It cannot be a “cookie cutter” approach; it has to be low-risk on the benefits
and garner the motivation of people to work. Three providers noted “lots of people on SSI and SSDI want to work.” A starting point is to have accurate information and resources for frontline staff of both housing and workforce organizations.

- LEC members recommend that available support services should be detailed up-front so as to avoid wasting time if the person would not be able to complete the training or be successful in maintaining employment.
- LEC members recommend to get information to organizations where people experiencing homelessness already get information, including:
  - Offices where people receive benefits
  - HUD-funded agencies
  - Transitional housing organizations: Attendees felt that this would be a good place to begin because these organizations often provide the support services that help people experiencing homelessness for work, such as transportation assistance.

The provider group also made recommendations related to employers:

- Exposure to employers program for this population: understand the application processes; tours; site visits; and panel discussions with peers who have been hired and been successful.
- A specific approach for big institutional employers (hospitals, universities, and banks):
  1. Create a position at those institutions that is a liaison with community groups and community members who can give tips, information and help people understand the hiring process in those institutions;
  2. create an onboarding program within the institution that could include: internships; try-out jobs; support for applying for jobs; and
  3. (specific to hospitals/health care): Create community jobs as a first job or an entry point: HIV testers; diabetes testers; etc.

Another recommendation was that the provider group noted that “peer to peer” components are an asset in any type of employment intervention for job seekers coming through the CoC.

Other recommendations reinforced a recommendation of the ETF from three years ago that is currently a priority strategy of the ETF: creating a navigation function between the CoC and the public workforce system. This function would not only help individuals and frontline housing organizations navigate the complexity of the network of employment-related services, but it would serve as a way of turning the current public workforce system from screening people out on “suitability” grounds towards an inclusive approach that screens people into services.
Finally, the ETF reviewed the recommendations made to the Partnership in 2016 and wants to **highlight here that progress has been made** in several areas:

- **Data match:** In 2016 we recommended a formal data match between HMIS and Career Connect and that was completed in the past year. It was due to the willingness of the Partnership that this was able to happen and, as far as we know, it is the only time a data match has happened between HMIS and the WIOA system. Several other CoCs in other cities would like to replicate this best practice.

- **Navigation function:** In 2016 (and again above) the ETF has lifted up a best practice in connecting the workforce and homeless response systems: employment navigators. We appreciate that the Partnership has been active in the ETF subcommittee working on this idea.

- **Employment rights and responsibilities and financial capability training:** In 2016 we called for the Partnership to support additional capacity for providers in both of these areas. Since then the Partnership has promoted the trainings offered by Heartland Alliance, the Chicago Jobs Council, and the Labor Education Program at UIUC in these areas.