

**Multnomah County
Department of County Human Services
Community Services Division**

Action for Prosperity

Final Report on Program Outcomes July 2009 – October 2010

April 2011

In July 2009, Multnomah County's Community Action Agency, the Community Services Division of the Department of County Human Services, received \$1 million of Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). At the same time, WorkSystems Inc. (WSI) received ARRA Workforce Investment Act funds and the City of Portland received approximately \$4 million in ARRA Homeless Prevention and Re-Housing Program (HPRP) funds – a portion of which was allocated to rent assistance and delivered through the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP). All funding was required to be used to assist those hardest hit by the recession, with the greatest potential to be self-sufficient within 12-18 months.

A community input session was convened to identify potential strategies for most effectively serving recession impacted households in this short timeframe. It was attended by community members, Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), the county's Anti-Poverty System of Care providers (AP), the City of Portland, the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP), and the Commission on Children, Families & Community (CCFC). The group recommended implementation of a new model of integrated services and supports based on existing cross-jurisdictional and discipline planning discussions about how to improve outcomes for local households living on low-income.

Key Assumptions Made

1. There were households recently impacted by economic conditions who would be able to return to a level of self-sufficient employment with strategic and targeted assistance.
2. The combination of housing stabilization, workforce training and employment, and assertive engagement, in addition to systems alignment and service and benefit layering would be effective for these households.
3. Despite the economic environment, when presented with trained and skilled applicants businesses and employers would hire them.

The model, Action for Prosperity (AFP), called for the alignment and layering of housing, workforce, and life skills building and flexible financial assistance delivered by and through a variety of systems to provide households with the services and supports needed to truly increase self-sufficiency. The goals of AFP were to:

- Stabilize housing;
- Increase life skills necessary to remove barriers to meaningful employment;
- Provide comprehensive workforce development services; and,
- Test system and jurisdictional ability to align services and collaborate under mutually agreed upon goals with shared outcomes, resources and risk.

The components implemented by AFP included:

Program Model - development of program services, logic model and desired outcomes shared by all partners

Data and Evaluation - implementation of protocol for shared data collection and evaluation among all partners

Funding - leveraged funding allocation to providers aligned across jurisdictions and systems

WorkSource Liaisons - joint funding for 2 FTE to bridge and translate between the AP providers and WSI's workforce system and providers

Rent Assistance - provided directly by AP providers and through leverage of short-term rent assistance from HAP to stabilize household living situations so that focus would be placed on life skill building and workforce development activities

Employment Training - provided by WSI to deliver an array of employment products including job training, internships, short-term skills training, occupational skills training, on-the-job training, and employer wage supplements.

Assertive Engagement and Flexible Cash Assistance - provided by AP providers to work with households in identifying their skill level in six life domains (utilizing a newly developed matrix based on best practice) and creating a plan of action to increase skill levels in each area.

The Matrix - a tool for assessing participants in six life domains that correlate with self-sufficiency, was developed. The six life domains measured by the Matrix included Housing, Employment, Income, Financial Management Skills, Training, and Employment Life Skills. Participants were given scores on the Matrix in each life domain including, in ascending order, In Crisis, Vulnerable, Stable, Safe, and Thriving. (Appendix A)

Based upon funding and other considerations such as system and provider capacity, it was determined that an estimated 286 households with income at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines, recently unemployed or underemployed would be served through September 30, 2010, the end of ARRA funding.

What follows is detailed information about participant demographics, service delivery, outcome achievement and recommendations for next steps for Action for Prosperity.

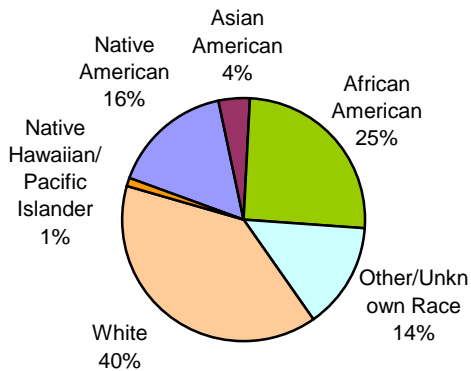
PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

This report summarizes demographics, services provided and outcome data from the 287 participants who engaged in services and received a minimum of 11 hours of assertive engagement¹. The average length of stay in the program was 300 days, ranging from 74 to 436 days².

About two-thirds of the participants were female (63% female, 37% male). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 62, with the average age being 37 years. Female participants were generally younger than male participants, with 54% of women under age 34 compared to 37% of men under age 34.

Most of the participants identified themselves as being from a culturally-specific group and/or spoke a language other than English in their home. In addition to the race categories represented in Figure 1, 23% identified their ethnicity as being Hispanic.

Figure 1: Race



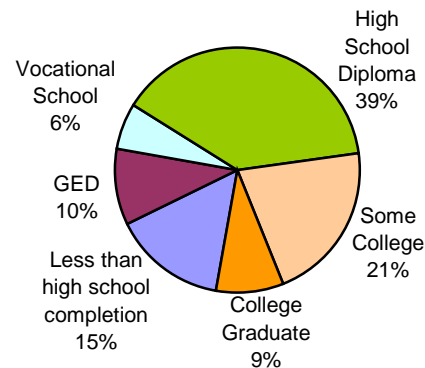
The primary language for most participants was English (63%), with 15% Russian speakers, 14% Spanish and 9% speaking other non-English languages.

The majority of participants were living in poverty and not working at the time of enrollment.

Eighty-seven percent were unemployed and 87% had an income at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level³. Half of the participants had no health insurance.

Although participants were in crisis at the time of enrollment, two-thirds (69%) had at least a high school diploma, an important foundation upon which to build employment training.

Figure 2: Education Level



A significant number of households were also dealing with other challenges. Just over a quarter of the female participants served were survivors of domestic violence, and 12% of all participants were living with a disabling condition.

Most households were families with children, but single individuals were also served. Household types included single parent families (40%) and two-parent households (30%). Single individuals represented 25% of those served and the remaining 5% were couples with no children and other family units.

¹ Total number of participants served was 359. Participants not included in this report were those enrolled during the first few months of implementation who did not actively engage with their case manager.

² There was one participant enrolled in the last three weeks of the program who received intensive Assertive Engagement for 22 days.

³ Federal Poverty Guidelines were updated in 2009 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In 2009, the threshold for a family of four was an annual income of less than \$22,050.

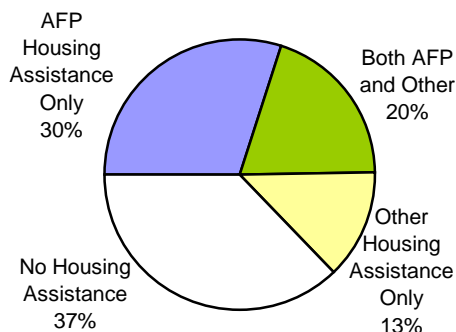
SERVICES

Action for Prosperity households received three types of services: rent assistance, employment training products, and assertive engagement which included flexible funds for housing or other basic needs. All households received assertive engagement, but not every household needed or received rent assistance, job training or flexible funds.

Assertive engagement received by households during their enrollment averaged 50 minutes a week for a total average of 35 hours per household.

Households received flexible funds from AFP as well as from other county and city programs. Half of the participants received housing assistance from Action for Prosperity funds and 33% received housing assistance from programs such as HPRP, STRA (Short-Term Rent Assistance) and transitional housing programs. The average amount of housing assistance was \$2580. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of housing assistance by funding source.

Figure 3: Housing Assistance



Most households (88%) received non-housing related flexible funds to pay for transportation, child care and other basic needs, averaging \$1114.

A key component of Action for Prosperity was the ability to access the WorkSystems, Inc. employment and training products that were set

aside specifically for AFP participants, and most (88%) did engage with WSI. One of the first steps for participants was to be assessed by AP agency staff to determine what skills they may need to be successful accessing certain training products or in specific jobs. The WorkSource Liaisons then assisted the case managers in referring participants to Worksource sites and connecting with Worksource staff to implement the plans generated through Career Mapping. A continuum of workforce training products was available for AFP participants. Participants were able to utilize one or more products as identified in their plans of action. Figure 4 shows the percentage of participants accessing each type of WSI product.

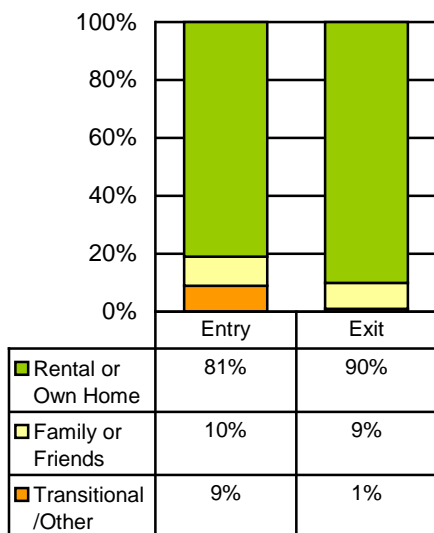
Figure 4: Engagement with WSI

| WSI Product | Percent accessing |
|--|-------------------|
| Assessment An evaluation of a participant's interests, aptitudes, abilities, educational and vocational history, and existing skills | 88% |
| Workshops Examples include Career Exploration, Resume Workshop, and Job Club | 76% |
| 1 on 1 Services Examples include Interview Coaching, Job Search Assistance, and Prosperity Planning | 76% |
| Advising A broad category including helping participants develop career plans and coaching them about which WSI products to access | 69% |
| Training Occupational Skills, Short-Term Vocational, and On the Job training | 45% |
| Math or Computer classes Basic math, workplace math and/or computer literacy | 29% |
| Internships Short-term learning and training experience in the workplace | 19% |
| ESL classes Includes English language instruction using job search and workplace topics | 15% |
| General Education Formal written curriculum designed to address individualized basic skill deficiencies | 8% |

HOUSING

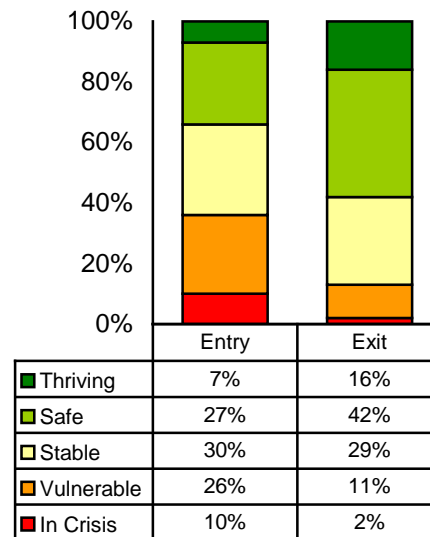
The families served by AFP entered the program in relatively stable living situations compared to other anti-poverty or homeless family programs. Most (81%) were either renting or owned their homes at entry. The remaining 19% were either living with friends or family or in transitional housing or motels, and 41% of all participants had been in their current residence for less than a year. However, most of these families were unemployed or underemployed, which would put them at risk for losing their housing. At exit the percentage of families residing in rental or owned housing increased to 90%. Figure 5 shows the change in housing situation from entry to exit.

Figure 5: Housing Situation



Not only was there an increase in the number of families living in their own homes, there was also significant improvement in the stability of that housing. At entry into the program, 37% of families described their housing as In Crisis or Vulnerable, generally meaning it was unaffordable and/or they were at risk of losing their housing. The percentage of families in this group dropped to 13% by program exit. Figure 6 shows the change in Housing Stability at entry and exit, as measured by the Matrix.

Figure 6: Housing Stability



The housing stability success of AFP was in large part due to the rent assistance component of the program. Sixty-three percent of families received rent assistance during their time served by AFP. The average amount of assistance received was \$2580 per family for the ten months of tenure in AFP. The relatively small investment of \$258 per family per month for the families that used rent assistance was able to produce a stably housed population at the end of the program. It was anticipated that the income gains produced by the workforce component of AFP would allow families to pay their own housing costs after leaving AFP.

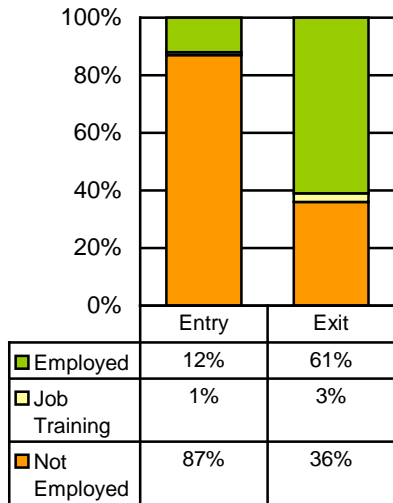
Three months after leaving AFP, 100% of families contacted remained in stable housing without ongoing rent assistance from the program.

EMPLOYMENT

A total of 175 (61%) participants gained employment during their enrollment or shortly after their exit from AFP. This result, from an average of ten months of service, in dire economic times, clearly demonstrates effectiveness of the AFP model.

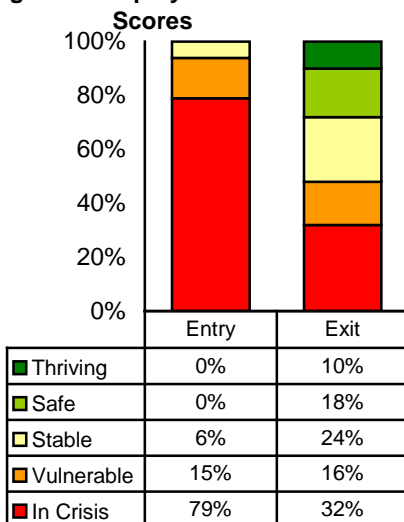
Figure 7 shows the change in employment status from program entry to exit.

Figure 7: Employment Status



AFP Matrix scores in the Employment domain support the progress made by families during their program tenure. The percentage of participants with In Crisis or Vulnerable scores moved from 94% at entry to 48% at exit. Also, while there were no participants with employment matrix scores of Safe or Thriving at entry, at exit 28% scored in this range. Figure 8 shows the change in the Employment Matrix Scores from entry to exit.

Figure 8: Employment Matrix Scores



Data about employers and job categories are known for 117 of those who became employed and wage data is known for over half of those participants. There were 97 unique employers who hired AFP participants, with an average wage of \$11.72 for all job categories. Figure 9 shows the number of participants employed by job category and the average wage.

Figure 9: Job Categories

| Job Category | Total | Average Wage |
|------------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Office Admin Support | 43 | \$11.50 |
| Healthcare Support | 12 | \$10.85 |
| Production | 11 | \$11.88 |
| Building Grounds Maintenance | 6 | \$10.30 |
| Food Preparation | 6 | \$9.95 |
| Sales | 6 | \$13.71 |
| Education/Training/Library | 5 | \$14.00 |
| Installation, Repair | 5 | \$13.25 |
| Personal Care | 5 | \$9.90 |
| Construction | 3 | \$12.48 |
| Transportation | 3 | \$14.00 |
| Arts, Sports, Entertainment | 2 | \$15.00 |
| Business/Finance | 2 | \$9.00 |
| Community/Social Service | 2 | \$10.43 |
| Healthcare | 2 | \$12.75 |
| Life, Phys, Social Science | 2 | \$14.63 |
| Farming, Fishing, Forestry | 1 | Unknown |
| Protective Service | 1 | Unknown |

Three months after the conclusion of the program, 90% of the contacted participants who obtained employment during their enrollment in AFP remained employed. An additional fourteen participants who were not employed at program exit had obtained jobs within those first three months after program conclusion.

INCOME

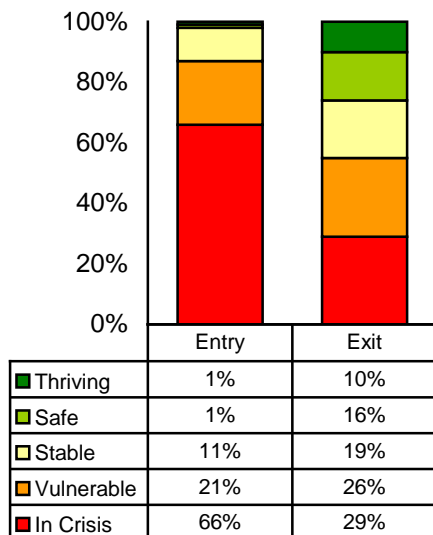
The Income level for AFP families was measured by the Matrix, which assigned a score based on the household's gross income as it relates to the Federal Poverty Level. As an example, Figure 10 below shows the Federal Poverty Level related to each Matrix score and the actual income amount for a three person family.

Figure 10: Federal Poverty Level Example

| Score | Percentage of Federal Poverty Level | Annual Income for Three Person Family |
|------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Thriving | More than 200% | More than \$36,620 |
| Safe | Between 176%-200% | \$32,043-\$36,619 |
| Stable | Between 126%-175% | \$22,888-\$32,042 |
| Vulnerable | Between 101%-125% | \$18,310-\$22,887 |
| In Crisis | Less than 100% | 0-\$18,309 |

AFP households increased their income during their tenure in the program. At program entry, 87% of households were scored as In Crisis or Vulnerable, which decreased to 45% at exit. The number of households with Safe or Thriving income increased from 2% to 26%. Figure 11 shows the change in scores from entry to exit.

Figure 11: Income Level

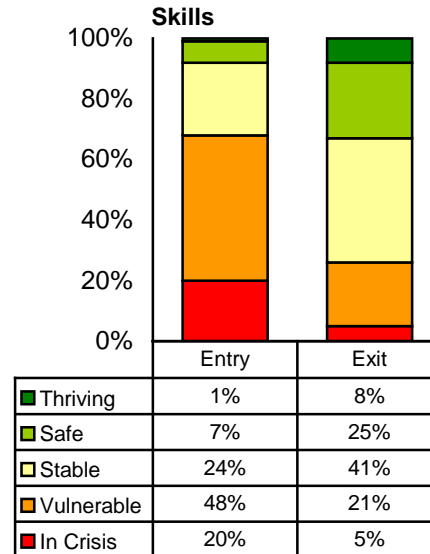


In addition to helping households stabilize their housing, improve their employability and increase their income, AFP was also intended to address three other domains that correlate with long term self-sufficiency, Financial Management Skills, Training, and Employment Life Skills.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Financial Management Skills include establishing and maintaining a budget, managing debt, and ensuring household spending is consistent with household goals. At program entry, two-thirds (68%) of participants had Matrix scores indicating their Financial Management Skills were In Crisis or Vulnerable, meaning they were generally unable to meet their basic living expenses. At program exit, this number dropped to 26%. Figure 12 shows the change in scores from entry to exit.

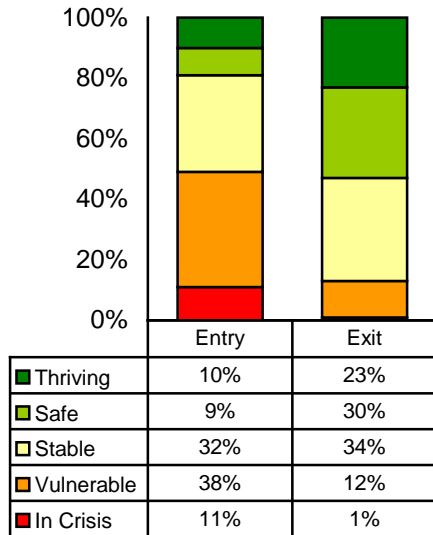
Figure12: Financial Management Skills



TRAINING

Training is defined as having marketable skills that can lead to employment. The scores on the Matrix can range from In Crisis, meaning a person has no training or marketable skills, to Thriving, which indicates certification or a license from a training program that lasted at least a year. At program entry, 39% of participants were In Crisis or Vulnerable in this domain, and at exit there were only 13% with those scores. Figure 13 shows the change in Training scores from program entry to program exit.

Figure 13: Training

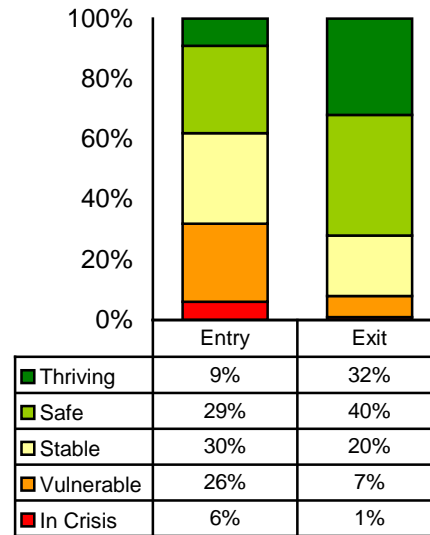


EMPLOYMENT LIFE SKILLS

Employment Life Skills are broadly defined as appropriate conduct in the workplace, including timeliness, interpersonal communication, dressing appropriately, and

following workplace rules. At entry, about a third (32%) of clients were In Crisis or Vulnerable in this domain, which dropped to 8% at exit. Figure 14 show the change in scores from entry to exit.

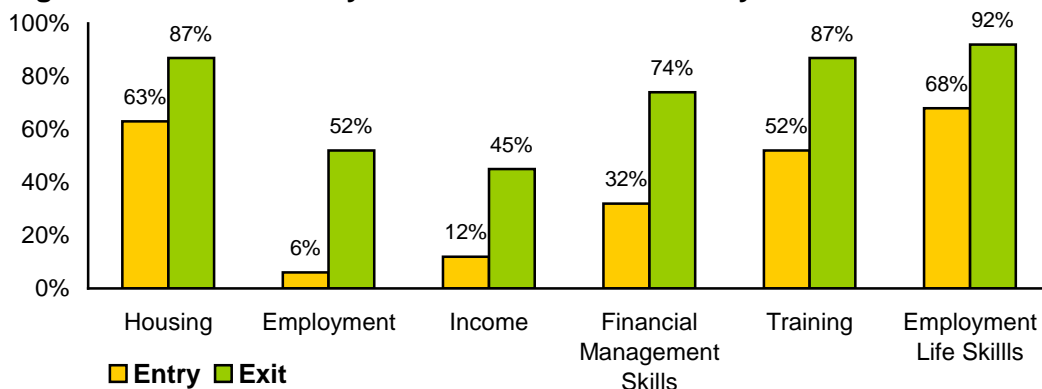
Figure 14: Employment Life Skills



OVERALL MATRIX SCORES

One final way to demonstrate the success of Action for Prosperity in moving participants toward self-sufficiency is by focusing on overall participant stability for each domain, at entry and at exit. Scores of Stable, Safe and Thriving were combined into one group called "Stable". Participants made statistically significant improvement on each of the life domains during enrollment in AFP, moving from the Crisis group at entry to the Stable group at exit. Figure 15 shows the percentage of participants in the Stable group at entry and exit for each domain.

Figure 12: Client Stability across Domains from Entry to Exit



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. **Action for Prosperity served its target population effectively. The families served by AFP tended to be housed but with little or no income to support their housing and almost entirely unemployed. At exit, most were still housed and almost two-thirds gained employment.** The large increase in the percentage of participants employed is especially remarkable in light of the current economic climate.
2. **Participating in Action for Prosperity helped stabilize families and move them toward self-sufficiency.** The assumption that stabilizing housing, removing barriers to employment and increasing life skills would make households good customers of workforce training services appears to have been solid. Worksource products were used by AFP participants and those products helped most of them get jobs.
3. **Flexible funds for barrier removal and meeting basic needs was valuable in stabilizing families and readying them for training and employment.** Case managers reported that having access to flexible funds was crucial in removing the barriers to employment and employment training that many of these households faced.
4. **Measuring participant functioning using the Matrix was beneficial to participants and case managers.** Most case managers reported that assessing participants on the six life domains at regular intervals helped them understand their participants' specific needs and to develop a realistic action plan. The Matrix was also a sensitive measurement of participant change during the program.
5. **Follow-up data currently being collected will help determine if participants are able to maintain the positive changes made during the program.** Follow up phone calls are being made at 3, 6, 9, and 12 months after exit from the program and income, housing and employment data are being tracked.
6. **The collaboration between Multnomah County and WorkSystems Inc. was beneficial and has strong positive implications for ongoing system alignment.** By utilizing the specialized skills from each system, the collaboration made the employment training products offered by WSI much more accessible for low-income families. At the end of the program, WSI staff reported that over the course of the year AFP participants became some of their most prepared and motivated customers. Case managers reported that learning how to access the WSI system and having employment-related products reserved for their participants empowered them to more effectively motivate participants to do the necessary employment readiness work. The WorkSource Liaisons functioned as a critical link between the two systems, by providing ongoing support and technical assistance to case managers.

The development of Action for Prosperity has benefitted not only the households being served but has also had a positive impact on the community, both economically and systemically. Through the partnership with WSI, the capacity of our community's trained work force has increased. Aligning and layering services has leveraged benefit beyond that of an individual household by initiating a system of care cultivating provider relationships that will be sustainable over time.
7. **The success of the Action for Prosperity has generated interest from other partners.** Work has begun to continue AFP using existing resources

and expand the partnership to directly include HAP and the Oregon Department of Human Services Self-Sufficiency Program (DHS). The expanded model will seek to replicate the success of AFP with households challenged with more significant barriers to self-sufficiency.

Next Steps

1. Work with DHS and HAP to expand the program to include shared current households served by those systems and expand the services offered to include benefits coordination and longer term housing subsidies.
2. Expand the program to include formerly homeless families served in supportive and transitional housing programs as well as a greater proportion of those served by the Anti-Poverty System of Care.
3. Consider the AFP model as a standard best practice for helping families living in poverty retain their housing and achieve long term self-sufficiency.
4. Seek additional funds to support expansion and addition capacity.



Action for Prosperity Matrix

Client Name _____

ServicePoint ID _____

Program Entry Date _____ 3M Check In Date _____ 6M Check In Date _____ 9M Check In Date _____ Program Exit Date _____

Instructions: Please record each client's score (from 0-10) for each of the Domains below. Clients are to be assessed at Program Entry, at 3 months following entry (3M), at 6 months (6M), at 9 months (9M) and at Program Exit. Determine the score that most closely fits with the client's situation at each assessment point and enter the number in the appropriate Score Box. The Benchmarks for each Domain are intended to be examples and case managers can determine the most appropriate numeric score. Be sure to enter the date of each assessment in the appropriate space above.

DOMAINS

| | INCOME (see other side for reference tables) | FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT | HOUSING | EMPLOYMENT LIFE SKILLS (please see other side for examples) | TRAINING | EMPLOYMENT |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| Score Boxes→ | Entry 3M 6M 9M Exit | Entry 3M 6M 9M Exit | Entry 3M 6M 9M Exit | Entry 3M 6M 9M Exit | Entry 3M 6M 9M Exit | Entry 3M 6M 9M Exit |
| | | | | | | |
| Thriving (9-10) | >200% of poverty adjusted for family size | Can meet needs and maintain a savings account; no subsidized benefits; spending is consistent with goals | Housing of choice such as home ownership or non-subsidized rental housing | Knows and understands employment life skills and is always able to use them effectively | Certification or license from a one-year or longer training program | Maintains permanent full-time employment with adequate income and benefits |
| Safe (7-8) | Between 176-200% of poverty adjusted for family size | Can meet basic needs and manage debt without assistance; spending is consistent with goals | Safe and secure non-subsidized, affordable choices limited due to moderate income | Generally understands employment life skills and is frequently able to use them effectively | Certification or license from a training program less than one year long | Full-time employment, adequate pay and/or benefits |
| Stable (5-6) | Between 126-175% of poverty adjusted for family size | Can meet basic living expenses and manage debt; little or no assistance; spending is mostly consistent with goals | Safe and secure subsidized rental, Section 8, or public housing Marginally adequate housing | Some knowledge and understanding of employment life skills and is sometimes able to use them effectively | Attends training program leading to certification or diploma Has some marketable skills | Full time employment, inadequate pay and no benefits Part time employment, few benefits |
| Vulnerable (3-4) | Between 100-125% of poverty adjusted for family size | Unable to meet basic living expenses and/or manage debt; receiving assistance; some spontaneous or inappropriate spending | Temporary/Transitional housing Unaffordable housing Eviction notice/Imminent risk of losing housing | Limited knowledge of employment life skills and is able to use them or is willing to try | Has limited training or marketable skills | Part-time employment, no benefits Temporary or seasonal employment, no benefits |
| In Crisis (0-2) | Between 51-100% of poverty adjusted for family size Between 0-50% of poverty adjusted for family size | Unable to meet basic living expenses and/or manage debt; frequent spontaneous or inappropriate spending | Temporary shelter Doubled Up/Couch surfing Homeless | Limited or no knowledge of employment life skills and is unable or unwilling to use them | Has no training or marketable skills | Unemployed with work history or skills Unemployed without work history or skills |

B
E
N
C
H
M
A
R
K
S

&

S
C
O
R
E
S

Table 1a. Determining Income level based on **Gross Annual Income** (2009 HHS guidelines)

| Persons in household or family | 50% | 100% | 125% | 175% | 200% |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1 | \$5,415 | \$10,830 | \$13,538 | \$18,953 | \$21,660 |
| 2 | \$7,285 | \$14,570 | \$18,213 | \$25,498 | \$29,140 |
| 3 | \$9,155 | \$18,310 | \$22,888 | \$32,043 | \$36,620 |
| 4 | \$11,025 | \$22,050 | \$27,563 | \$38,588 | \$44,100 |
| 5 | \$12,895 | \$25,790 | \$32,238 | \$45,133 | \$51,580 |
| 6 | \$14,765 | \$29,530 | \$36,913 | \$51,678 | \$59,060 |
| 7 | \$16,635 | \$33,270 | \$41,588 | \$58,223 | \$66,540 |
| 8 | \$18,505 | \$37,010 | \$46,263 | \$64,768 | \$74,020 |

For each additional person, add \$7,480

Table 1b. Determining Income level based on **Gross Monthly Income** (2009 HHS guidelines)

| Persons in household or family | 50% | 100% | 125% | 175% | 200% |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 | \$451 | \$903 | \$1,128 | \$1,579 | \$1,805 |
| 2 | \$607 | \$1,214 | \$1,518 | \$2,125 | \$2,428 |
| 3 | \$763 | \$1,526 | \$1,907 | \$2,670 | \$3,052 |
| 4 | \$919 | \$1,838 | \$2,297 | \$3,216 | \$3,675 |
| 5 | \$1,075 | \$2,149 | \$2,686 | \$3,761 | \$4,298 |
| 6 | \$1,230 | \$2,461 | \$3,076 | \$4,306 | \$4,922 |
| 7 | \$1,386 | \$2,773 | \$3,466 | \$4,852 | \$5,545 |
| 8 | \$1,542 | \$3,084 | \$3,855 | \$5,397 | \$6,168 |

For each additional person, add \$623

Examples of Employment Life Skills

- Timeliness
 - coming to work on time
 - taking appropriate breaks
- Crisis management
 - not letting family difficulties or crises at home regularly interfere with work
 - having a backup plan for childcare
- Personal hygiene
- Dressing appropriately
- Interpersonal Communication
 - with co-workers
 - with employers
- Conflict resolution
- Following workplace rules
- Working to the best of one's ability