Community Services Division
Housing Assistance for Vulnerable Families

January 2015

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Date: January 20, 2015

TO: Chair Kafoury; Commissioners Shiprack, McKeel, Smith and Bailey; Sheriff Staton;
         District Attorney Underhill.

From: County Auditor Steve March; Auditors Fran Davison and Marc Rose

Subject: Community Services Division (DCHS) Housing Assistance for Vulnerable Families

This focus is on the Department of County Human Services' Community Services Division's housing assistance for vulnerable families. We previously released a Housing Inventory Special Report* with basic information from all County programs that provide housing related assistance. As we noted in the previous report, the County is a small but important part of the housing safety-net, filling some of the gaps using both County General Funds and limited federal funds in a system that has been pieced together to a great degree by our other community partners in response to various federal initiatives.

Solving homelessness and housing issues will require a broad, comprehensive and coordinated approach that the County cannot achieve alone, particularly given its limited funds. We noted activation of the County's housing working group and also the greater partnership between the County, cities, housing agency and non-profits working together as "A Home For Everyone" Coordinating Committee. The County and its partners will need to analyze all programs from a system point of view, with strong performance measures guiding decision-making around effectiveness and impact. The County can lead that effort by better analyzing its own existing data on housing-related service programs in the Community Services Division (CSD). In part CSD, facing restricted budgets, focused on providing services over analysis, but it still needs to determine which services have the best outcomes. Though need may exceed budgets, not assessing effectiveness may produce less than the best results.

Larger questions of what gaps in services require on-going work not only involves County programs and services but those of our other partners in the community, including the Cities of Portland, Gresham, and others including the housing agency HomeForward and the non-profit organizations that provide a lot of the direct services. A major part of the challenge will be bringing this multi-partnered community response together with a clear focus on what are the priorities and how best to meet them efficiently and effectively, and at the same time being a strong data-driven partner in that effort.

Housing Inventory link found here: https://multco.us/auditor

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Overview

The Multnomah County Auditor's Office performed a high level review of Community Services programs, particularly those that provide housing assistance to homeless and low-income households, primarily families. Our objectives were to identify programs offering housing assistance, describe the barriers to service, and gain an understanding of the impact of programs on vulnerable and homeless families.

The Community Services Division, in the Department of County Human Services, offers an array of programs that provide housing assistance to homeless and low-income households. During our review, we found the following:

- Many programs appear to be innovative implementations of best practices.
- The portfolio of services is complex and program costs and system performance are difficult to track.
- Data could be used more effectively for decision-making.
- Great demand and limited capacity limits the number of people who can access and receive services from these programs.

Background The federal Government Accountability Office (GAO) asked state and local government auditors to participate in a study of housing assistance for low-income households. The initial portion of that project is included in the appendix. The GAO project looked specifically at programs that provided rent assistance to low income households and gathered information on performance measurement and funding. The STRA program in the Community Services Division of the Department of County Human Services was the only County program that matched the GAO criteria. See Appendix 2.

As we were gathering information for the GAO audit, we also looked at other Community Services programs that provide housing assistance to low-income households.

We identified eighteen programs in Community Services that provide housing assistance to some extent. Housing assistance services provided by Community Services programs include rent assistance, case management, emergency shelter, flexible funding, and supportive services. According to figures provided by management, Community Services' expenditures on housing assistance totaled approximately $11.8 million dollars in fiscal year 2014. The County General Fund support was approximately $7 million.

This audit focused on eleven programs that provide services primarily to families. We did not focus on programs for youth. Community Services' expenditures on these programs totaled $8.4 million in fiscal year 2014 including $5.4 million in County General Fund support. See Appendix 1 for a list of programs included in our review.

The County's Role in Housing Assistance
Multnomah County's primary role in regard to housing assistance is to provide homelessness prevention services for families, survivors of domestic violence, and youth. The County, in its role as a human services provider, also provides other types of assistance to low-income families through a number of programs. The County receives federal, state and other funds to provide services.

For the Poor in Multnomah County, Housing is Difficult to Obtain
Many factors come together to make Multnomah County a difficult place to obtain and maintain housing, particularly for the very poor. In addition to the challenges of a very tight rental market, a lack of affordable housing and the erosion of employment opportunities, national studies indicate that very poor households experience a high incidence of a range of challenges including mental illness, low educational background, weak employment history, trauma, and experience with domestic violence. These experiences present significant barriers for very poor and homeless households to obtain and maintain safe, stable housing.

The County Collaborates with the City and Home Forward to Provide Housing Assistance

Roles and responsibilities for housing assistance and homelessness prevention are shared by the County, the City of Portland, the City of Gresham, and Home Forward, the local housing authority. For a number of years, the City and County have coordinated some services to minimize duplication.
In 2004, the City and County, along with many community partners developed "Home Again," a ten year plan to end homelessness.

In 2013 the City, County, and Home Forward set a revised course for ending homelessness, with a plan called "A Home for Everyone," which pledged to increase collaboration and build on the success of the ten-year plan. In 2014, the "A Home for Everyone" Coordinating Board was chartered, establishing a more concerted effort toward shared governance and oversight for combating homelessness.

Results

As part of our audit, we reviewed literature on best practices and successful strategies for homelessness prevention among low-income and homeless families. The following includes a selection of best practices and approaches that have been successful in reducing homelessness among families in other communities:

Coordinated Entry, a national best practice, provides a centralized process designed to coordinate program participant intake, assessment and referrals.

Homelessness Prevention helps keep families in their homes and prevent them from becoming homeless with services such as landlord mediation, help with overdue rent and utility bills, short-term rent assistance and supportive services.

Emergency Shelter provides shelter to those whose homelessness cannot be prevented.

Rapid Re-housing, a nationally recognized best practice, provides short-term assistance intended to move homeless individuals and families toward permanent housing and stability as quickly as possible. Services may include housing search

assistance, some upfront rental assistance and transitional case management to families. Programs work to reduce the time families stay in emergency shelters, or by-pass the shelter system, with quick placements into permanent housing.

Support Services provide flexible, coordinated services tailored to each household's specific needs. Support services may include budget planning; connecting households to resources such as child care; or case management. These supports can be essential to helping families rebuild and maintain stability and self-sufficiency.

What Appears to Be Working Well

Leading Practices are Woven into Community Services Programs

A number of Community Services programs we reviewed incorporate leading practices that work to prevent homelessness, help move homeless people quickly into housing and provide support to keep them housed. Underlying many programs are client-centered support services, intended to engage people in ways that will support client success and build on individual strengths.

The chart below shows selected Community Services programs that follow principles that have been successful in addressing homelessness among households and families, and align with best practices.

Community Services Program	Leading Practices
Short-term Rent Assistance (STRA) provides short-term housing assistance to low-income households at risk of homelessness and emergency shelter and rapid re-housing placement to low-income households experiencing homelessness. This multi-jurisdictional program, administered by Home Forward is funded by the County, the City of Portland, the City of Gresham and Home Forward. Created in 2006, the STRA Program aimed to consolidate the community's resources to improve efficiency and results. According to managers, this is a nationally recognized model with a long history of interjurisdictional collaboration.	**Prevention** **Emergency Shelter** **Rapid Re-Housing**
Coordinated Entry for Homeless Families includes 211info and referral, shelter services, the Winter Warming Center and mobile housing placement. The Year-round Shelter and the Winter Warming Center, funded during winter months, provides emergency shelter beds, support services, day shelter services and motel vouchers . The County partners with faith-based communities who provide shelter space for families. According to managers, shelters have a no turn-away policy for families during winter. A Coordinated Entry system is provided through 211info. The Mobile Housing Team receives referrals from 211info, rapidly re-houses vulnerable families and provides services and case management to help them maintain housing. The Mobile Housing Team stands out as an innovative approach in which case managers from six different agencies work together to house vulnerable homeless families as quickly as possible. Case managers reported that this has been a unique opportunity to work collaboratively as they share information about how to develop the best plan for each individual family.	**Emergency Shelter** **Coordinated Entry** **Rapid Re-Housing** **Support Services**
Anti-Poverty Services provides support services to low-income households to assist them in gaining skills to achieve self-sufficiency. Enrolled households typically receive rent assistance through STRA, or other Home Forward programs.	**Support Services**
Assertive Engagement Training provides a curriculum and conducts trainings on a client centered approach to case management. The assertive engagement model is an underlying component in programs for homeless populations. The Assertive Engagement model is used to enhance service delivery in an effort to improve outcomes for those in need of housing and support services. Case managers from service providers had positive comments on the training.	**Support Services**

Challenges

Program Costs and System Performance are Not Transparent

As detailed in our related Special Report: Housing Inventory, released in October 2014, eighteen separate programs make up the Community Services housing assistance portfolio, and eleven of those programs fall under the focus of this audit, housing assistance to low-income and homeless families. Frequently evolving programs, multiple programs providing similar services, and multiple programs imbedded into single program offers make this a complex system of programs, and we found little documentation to describe how the programs operate together efficiently.

Multiple Programs Serve Similar Populations

The Coordinated Entry for Homeless Families program provides short-term rent assistance and rapid re-housing to vulnerable homeless households. The STRA program also provides rapid re-housing services. And, the Multnomah County Family Futures grant-funded program provides rent assistance and case management services to homeless families. These programs have similarities, yet each is delivered by a different group of overlapping providers. There may be opportunities to consolidate programs or streamline service delivery.

It is Difficult to Observe Costs and Benefits of Programs Over Time

Programs have evolved over time and program budgets are often grouped together in different combinations from year to year making it difficult to identify funding for specific programs and track funding across years. For example, the Program Offer Housing Stabilization for Vulnerable Populations included a number of services in FY 2010 that were dropped, changed names or moved to another Program Offer by 2014. In such circumstances, it is difficult to observe the benefits and costs of various programs.

Budgeting Structure Obscures Costs and Performance Information

Program offers – the most accessible resource for descriptions of County programs – provide program descriptions, costs and revenues, and performance measures that are useful for understanding the services and performance of County programs. Some programs in Community Services, Bridges to Housing and Short-Term Rent Assistance (STRA), for instance,

are grouped into one program offer, which makes it difficult for an outside observer to observe the costs and performance of these individual programs. In another case, one program, Coordinated Entry for Homeless Families, spans two program offers, again making it difficult to develop an understanding of the costs and performance of the individual program. Our previously released audit, Special Report: Housing Inventory, illuminated these individual program costs and ouputs, but is a snapshot in time, based on fiscal year 2014 data, and will become less useful over time and as programs continue to evolve or program offers change.

Data Could be Better Utilized for Decision-Making
One of the benefits of an integrated Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) such as the County shares with its partners is that useful data can be analyzed to better understand the needs of the population served and to evaluate program effectiveness. Housing assistance providers under contract with the County collect and input data about each client they serve with housing assistance, making these data a resource for understanding the types and needs of households served which could be used to help better align program offerings with the needs of clients.

We heard from providers and County staff that they did not have the resources to analyze the HMIS data. Providers and County staff emphasized that they prioritized staff capacity and funding toward providing services. However, the risk of forgoing data analyses is that programs and services may not be optimized to be as efficient and effective as possible. Much is known about what helps clients stabilize into housing: housing search assistance, rent assistance or assistance with deposits and other fees, and case management. What is not known precisely is the combination of services and assistance that is most effective based on characteristics of the client. Analyzing the collected data could help to better understand why some households were successfully stabilized and others were not.

Demand for Services Outweighs Supply

With thousands of people experiencing homelessness in Multnomah County, it is not surprising that the demand for housing assistance exceeds what is available. As described previously, numerous factors limit the availability of low-income and affordable housing. Community Services has done well to leverage federal and state funding sources by paying for case management, administrative overhead for providers, and for expenses that federal programs don't cover. For example, Community Services has leveraged federal funding by paying for deposits and moving expenses for veterans who otherwise would not be able to make use of their VASH vouchers. It appears that Community Services staff and service providers have become quite adept at managing the complicated mix of funding and eligibility requirements, particularly for federal programs.

Still, getting housing assistance is difficult. In spring 2014, 211info produced a report showing that shelter was the second highest need mentioned by callers, behind only electricity payment assistance, but the top need for which a referral was not available.

Coordinated Entry is a national best practice. It offers a solution for smoothing the process of access to services by providing "one door," but during the time of our review the Mobile Housing program had a waiting list due to being overwhelmed by demand for services, while enrollment in other programs such as STRA is based on varying processes set up by providers. Some providers use a lottery system to distribute funding and others open phone lines, typically on one day a month. But the available slots for STRA are not enough to meet demand. One provider told us that up to a thousand people a month sign up for the lottery, but capacity of the organization allows them to serve only about twenty to thirty.

Conclusions The Community Services Division of Multnomah County has shifted programs to align with best practices, particularly rapid re-housing, and has created some innovative programs that incorporate best practices. However, the Division does not clearly communicate to an outside audience specific information on individual programs regarding goals, performance, and impact, and does not appear to be using data as effectively as possible.

Successful programs know their community, set goals, monitor their performance and make adjustments based on analysis of data. Research and best practices suggest that a data-driven approach can increase the effectiveness of homelessness prevention programs. Regular reports that inform on performance measures, goals, challenges, and successes illustrate the impact of the individual programs and the system as a whole. Analyzing the collected data for characteristics and types of the clients, and the strategies that work, helps align services with the needs of the community.

Recommendations

- To provide transparency to a system with numerous, evolving programs, describe individual Community Services programs and how they work together to provide services to vulnerable families. Consider developing an online dashboard to describe programs and provide regular reports on program performance.

- Analyze data to illuminate the typologies and characteristics of the client population and to better understand why some clients are successfully stabilized into housing and others are not.

Objectives, Scope and Methodology

The federal Government Accountability Office (GAO) asked state and local government auditors if they would like to participate in a collaborative project on the topic of housing. In Oregon, the State, the City of Portland and the County Auditor's Office all offered to participate. The GAO determined that the audit topic would be a study of housing assistance for low-income households. The Multnomah County Auditor's Office had Community Services on the 2014 Audit Schedule and it made sense to complete the GAO work alongside our audit of Community Services. The GAO portion of the project is included in the appendix. It looked at specific programs that provided rent assistance to low income households and gathered information on performance measurement and funding. The Short-term Rent Assistance (STRA) program was the only County program that matched the GAO criteria.

Objectives: The objectives of this audit were to identify Community Services programs offering housing assistance to families and describe barriers to service in these programs.

Scope: The scope of this report is limited to Community Services programs, identified in the FY 2014 Adopted Budget, that provided temporary shelter, housing placement services, transitional housing, rent assistance, emergency housing assistance or other services that help families access or maintain housing. Our primary aim was to inventory housing assistance programs in Community Services, identify the types of assistance provided, and describe how programs are funded. The results of this objective are largely communicated in our previously released Special Report on Housing Assistance. The secondary aim of this report was to describe barriers to service in the identified programs.

Methodology: To accomplish the secondary objectives described above, we conducted interviews with Community Services program staff and managers. We reviewed best practices in homelessness prevention for families, and program offers; we visited 211info. We also interviewed service providers under contract with Home Forward and Multnomah County that deliver services. Due to the breadth and depth of Community Services housing assistance programs, limited time, and a focus on the housing inventory previously released as a special report, our review of Community Services programs and the assessment of program performance is at a relatively high level. Though we talked with providers and management about barriers to service, that information primarily served as context to better understand the environment in which housing programs are operating, and to shed some led on capacity and demand for services.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Response to Audit

January 20, 2015

Dear Auditor March,

Thank you for your thoughtful review of the Community Services Division and your particular focus on programs and services for homeless and low income families and households.

I applaud your recognition of the Division's use of innovative best practices. I championed many of these practices when I served as Commissioner and I hope to support the Division in continuing to strive for excellence and results.

I also agree that unfortunately, demand for housing programs and services outstrips the limited resources we have to respond. While the nation's economy has roared back to life, many people in our community have been left behind to struggle with stagnant wages and rising housing costs. Vacancy rates in affordable housing units are near zero and income inequality is at its highest levels since the 1920s. This demands that we continue to innovate, and just as importantly, collaborate with our partners and allies across the state.

Your audit also identified county budget process challenges and the lack of data analytics. As a county, we have focused tight resources on direct services during the economic downturn, eliminating much of the capacity we had to analyze our data and performance.

However, this year I will be working closely with DCHS and others to prioritize investments which seek to enhance data capacity to drive decisions. I will also be working with the Department and Division to increase transparency and accountability across the board, including revising program offers for clarity and engaging the Communications office to better inform the community about what services are available to our residents.

Ultimately, the most comprehensive solution to ensuring families are able to provide for their families and live out of poverty is to ensure families have a home and a stable income. Locally, as Chair of the Home for Everyone Board, I will continue to call for greater investments in housing and social supports for vulnerable families, and we will continue to work with our partners in workforce, housing, education and health care to better align our existing investments.

Thank you for your attention to housing and homelessness programs. Addressing poverty requires a community response, and I view your input as a critical piece of the path forward.

Sincerely,

Deborah Kafoury

Appendices

Appendix 1

Community Services Division of the Department of County Human Services

Community Services Programs that Provide Housing Assistance to Homeless Families	
Program Name	Program Description
Coordinated Entry for Homeless Families	Provides year-round access to day and night shelter and safety off the street to homeless families. Rapidly re-houses vulnerable families and provides services and support to help them maintain housing.
Family Futures	Provides housing assistance, stabilization services, and long-term case management for homeless families.
Bridges to Housing	Long-term housing and case management that help stabilize high-resource using homeless families.
Facilities Based Transitional Housing	Facilities-based transitional housing and services for homeless families. Assists families to move out of homelessness in a service-rich transitional housing environment.
Oxford Houses	Democratically-run group housing for families with children. Provides a shared housing option for small families leaving homelessness.
East County Outreach - Homeless Families Shelter and Emergency Services	Outreach to homeless households camping or living on the streets in East County. Provides access to housing and services for these homeless households.
Short-Term Rent Assistance Program	STRA provides short-term housing assistance to low-income households experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
Anti-Poverty Services	System of Care providing anti-poverty services to low-income households, primarily families. Assists households gain skills to achieve self-sufficiency.
Family Unification Project (FUP)	Case management services for low-income families with foster care involvement. Services help stabilize households and connect families to employment training.
Alder School	Action for Prosperity program for low-income families with a child at Alder School to help them achieve self-sufficiency.
Action for Prosperity	Provides case management to low-income households, primarily families, to help them achieve self-sufficiency. Provides flexible funds that leverage housing assistance and other services.

**GAO's Intergovernmental Initiative
Audit Plan**

**State and Local Partners' Review: Outcomes Achieved
In the Area of Rental Assistance**

The following are Multnomah County's responses (in blue) to questions developed by GAO (in black). Responses are based on information provided by Multnomah County housing officials and Home Forward staff.

<u>Audit Questions</u>

Q1.) HUD defines a low-income household as one earning 80% or below of the median income of that area. Does your jurisdiction's income eligibility differ from HUD's definition? If so, please provide.

> Yes, Multnomah County follows the HUD definition. However, Multnomah County has targeted rent assistance resources towards very-low income households -- those earning 50% or below area median income.

Q2.) HUD deems housing "affordable" if its cost—rent plus basic utilities—consume no more than 30 percent of a household's income. HUD defines "worst case needs" as renters with incomes below 50 percent of the regional median income who do not receive government housing assistance and who either paid more than half of their income for rent or lived in severely inadequate conditions, or who face both of these challenges. Does your jurisdiction's definition of affordable housing differ from HUD's definition? If so, please provide.

> Multnomah County uses the HUD definition of affordable housing.

Q3.) Does your jurisdiction have one or more ***performance goals for a desired output*** for rental assistance to low-income households that relates to more than one program? If so, please provide.

> Multnomah County does not have County-wide output goals that relate to rental assistance programs.

Q4.) Does your jurisdiction have one or more ***performance goals for a desired outcome*** for rental assistance to low-income households that relates to more than one program? If so, please provide.

> Multnomah County has one set of shared programmatic *outcomes* for rent assistance to low-income families*:*
>
> * *90% of households will maintain housing stability at 3 months after subsidy ends*
> * *80% of households will maintain housing stability at 6 months after subsidy ends*

- *70% of households will maintain housing stability at 12 months after subsidy ends*

Q5.) What program(s) address or impact the performance goal(s) identified in audit questions 3 and 4 above?

The Short Term Rental Assistance Program (STRA).

Table 1: Inventory of Programs

Program Name	Associated Performance Goal(s) for a Desired **_Output_** Identified in Section I	Associated Performance Goal(s) for a Desired **_Outcome_** Identified in Section I	Brief Program Description
STRA Short-Term Rental Assistance Program	Outputs are measured by number of households served. Output goals are not set for this program. Output targets are set in cooperation with provider agencies.	• 90% of households will maintain housing stability at 3 months after subsidy ends • 80% of households will maintain housing stability at 6 months after subsidy ends • 70% of households will maintain housing stability at 12 months after subsidy ends	STRA provides time limited financial assistance to households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Multnomah County. The STRA program includes Crisis and Emergency Services, Permanent Housing Placement with a focus on Rapid Re-Housing, and Homelessness Prevention Services. STRA is administered by Home Forward and funded by the City of Portland, City of Gresham, Multnomah County, and Home Forward. These funders provide a combination of local funding and state and federal resources that are passed through to the program. There are 19 contracted agencies that deliver a flexible tenant-based rent assistance (TBRA) program in pursuit of helping participants achieve increased housing stability. Agencies work with families, victims of domestic violence, homeless youth, people with disabilities, veterans, seniors and singles.

Q6.) What are the key program data elements that describe the programs identified in audit question 5 above?

Table 2: Key Data on Each Your Jurisdiction's Programs

Program Name: **Short Term Rental Assistance Program (STRA)**	
Key Data Elements	Standard HUD universal data elements
A.) The agency in your jurisdiction that administers the program and, if different, the entity that provides the assistance.	Home Forward is the lead contractor for STRA. Home Forward sub-contracts the assistance to 19 STRA Providers selected through a competitive Process. The STRA Providers are: Cascade AIDS Project, Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, Central City Concern, Insights Teen Parenting Program- a division of Janus Youth Programs, Outside In Medical Vouchering Program, Outside In Homeless Youth Collaborative, Domestic Violence Pool lead by Volunteers of America, Self Enhancement Inc, Transition Projects Inc, JOIN, Northwest Pilot Project, Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, Multnomah County Developmental Disability Services, Neighborhood House, Native American Youth and Family Agency, Native American Rehabilitation Association, Impact Northwest, Human Solutions, and Catholic Charities El Programa Hispano.
B.) Eligibility requirements for providing rental assistance to low-income households (these could include household size, income, etc.).	For all STRA, eligibility requirements include: 1. Residence for Eviction Prevention Services: Multnomah County residents who are remaining in Multnomah County. 2. Residence for Homeless Placement Services: Individuals and families who are homeless within Multnomah County, but placement may be into a neighboring County. 3. Income: Applicants must be income eligible for the funding source utilized. Additional eligibility requirements may be specified by individual funding sources.

C.) How many people are served? For example, 200 people were given vouchers or a tax credit was provided for a 200 unit building that can house 250 people.	2,655 households received motel vouchers and/or short-term housing assistance in FY13. This is the total served in the STRA system with housing related assistance.
D.) By what means is the rental assistance provided? Please include all that apply. These could include rental assistance to households, loans to developers of affordable rental housing, grants, loans, loan guarantees, tax incentives, zoning policies and other regulatory activities.	STRA resources can include financial assistance with rent, rent arrears, mortgages, motel expenses, application fees, deposits and move-in expenses, housing debt, and limited "non-leasing" expenses needed to eliminate barriers to housing.
E.) What is your jurisdiction's fiscal year (FY)?	July 1 to June 30
F.) Budgeted funding, if any, for providing rental assistance to low-income households for FY 2013 in dollars.	County contract (all funding sources): $960,476

Total system funding including contributions from all 4 jurisdictions: $5,833,899. |

G.) Source(s) of funding and the name of funding program(s). Please include all funding sources. If the funding originates from the federal government and passes through a state agency, please indicate this. For example, HUD's HOME Program, to a state's Department of Housing and Community Affairs, to a city.	Multnomah County General Fund; State of Oregon, Housing and Community Services (HCS): Emergency Housing Assistance (EHA), Housing Stabilization Program (HSP) (HSP is made up of 50% EHA and 50% Temporary Assistance for Needy Families from a partnership with State HCS and State Department of Human Services), Low Income Rental Housing Fund, Emergency Solutions Grant (HUD through the State of Oregon Housing and Community Services) Other STRA funds by jurisdiction: City of Portland City General Fund, Home Forward Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), Home Forward HUD moving to Work (MTW), City of Portland Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), City of Portland HUD TBRA, Emergency Food and Shelter Program Board (EFSP).
H.) What is the funding mechanism? For example, the funding is awarded through a competitive process, a formula grant or a block grant.	Home Forward regularly conducts competitive procurements for funds in its role as system administrator. The last funding selection round was held in 2012; 19 providers were selected for 5 year contracts and a funding allocation formula was set. Home Forward distributes annual funding awards based on funding availability via the allocation formula.
I.) What is the source for the information on the funding? For example, the information source is HUD and HUD is the only funding source for this program.[Note 1]	Federal funds: HUD Code of Federal Regulations State funds: Oregon Administrative Rules and State HCS Master Agreement County funds: Multnomah County Administrative Rules
J.) Does your jurisdiction take any steps to verify and validate its funding data? If so, what are these? For example, the data is subject to an annual audit by an	Home Forward conducts periodic, on-site monitoring of STRA sub-contractors. Monitoring includes: comparison of data from invoices to back up documentation for payments to vendors, verification of compliance to program rules related to eligible households, comparison of case files to electronic records and documentation of appropriate use of funds. The County complies with A-133 audit requirements.

independent entity.[Note 1]	In addition, Home Forward has an independent organization audit by an outside financial auditor.
K.) Do you know of any potential problems or limitations with the reliability of the funding data?[Note 1]	None
L.) Program performance goal(s) for providing rental assistance to low-income households. List all that apply.[Note 2]	STRA has the following goals: 1. Prevention of homelessness through housing retention and eviction prevention 2. Utilize Rapid Re-housing for those who become homeless 3. Ensure equity and access to services for communities of color and other traditionally underserved populations
M.) Program performance measures for providing rental assistance to low-income households. List all that apply.[Note 3]	• 90% of households will retain housing 3 months after TBRA ends; • 80% of households will retain housing 6 months after TBRA ends; and • 70% of all households will retain housing 12 months after TBRA ends.
N.) Reported program output(s) for providing rental assistance to low-income households for FY 2013.[Note 4]	2,655 households received emergency motel vouchers and/or short-term housing assistance in FY 2013. This number includes the following households that began assistance in FY13 (placements): • 525 Households received Permanent Placement Assistance • 1046 Households received Eviction Prevention Assistance • 504 Households received Crisis and Emergency Services in the form of Motel Vouchers. Additional households which are included in the 2,655 (above), are not included in the bullets above count, received placements (began assistance) prior to July 1,2012 and continued to

	receive assistance in FY13.
O.) Reported program outcome(s) for providing rental assistance to low-income households for FY 2013.Note 4	• 88% of all households served with STRA remained housed 3 months after TBRA ended • 86% of all households served with STRA remained housed 6 months after TBRA ended • 76% of all households served with STRA remained housed 12 months after TBRA ended
P.) Have there been any program evaluations conducted in past 5 years? These would include process, outcome or impact evaluations. In addition, this would include any evaluations that included the program, even if your jurisdiction did not conduct the evaluation.	Yes/No If yes, please email us a copy of the evaluation(s). Yes, please see attachment.
Q.) Does your jurisdiction plan to conduct any evaluations of this program in the next year?	Yes/No If yes, please describe the evaluation and the timeframes of the evaluation. Yes, annual evaluation includes review of contract compliance, fiscal expenditures, client data collection, numbers served and outcomes achieved. See attachment, Multnomah County STRA Assessment Final 2009
R.) Has your jurisdiction submitted any reports or action plans to their funding source in the last year?	Yes/No If yes, please email us the most recent copy.

| | Yes, the evaluation is the main report submitted to the STRA funders. The Action Plan for STRA was the first 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, which called for the creation of a consolidated rent assistance program. Please see attachment. |
| | The 10 Year Plan can be accessed at https://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/61284 |

Audit Questions

Q7.) What are the ***barriers to achieving*** the output and outcome performance goals identified in section I?
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Although STRA has been successful at achieving performance measures and goals there are several barriers that make program performance challenging, including:

- The variety of funding sources with differing requirements, eligibility guidelines and data collection criteria

- Differences in cross-jurisdictional policy targets

- Tight rental market in Multnomah County

- Lack of affordable housing

- Lack of living wage jobs

Q8.) Are there ***challenges to establishing outcome measures*** for providing rental assistance to low-income households for the programs identified? If so, please describe.

No. The STRA program has been established and operating effectively for many years. The program meets or exceeds established outcome measures each year.

Q9.) Are there ***challenges to collecting data and monitoring the performance of the outcome measures*** for providing rental assistance to low-income households for the programs identified? If so, please describe.

There are several challenges to data collection and monitoring, including:

- Differing requirements by funders
- Difficulty following up with a mobile population to collect data up to 12 months after service ends
- Maintaining consistency among data collection and data entry among the 19 partner agencies

Q10.) To what extent does your jurisdiction collaborate informally or formally with other levels of government to provide rental assistance to low-income households? If there is intergovernmental collaboration, are any ***mechanisms or approaches used to collaborate with other levels of government*** (e.g., task forces, intergovernmental working groups, informal meetings and discussions, mutual aid agreements)? If so, ***please describe the intergovernmental mechanism(s) used*** and your perception of its effect.

There is an intergovernmental agreement that outlines the role of each jurisdiction in the STRA program. The jurisdictional leaders meet monthly in the Jurisdictional Leaders Group (JLG) to discuss STRA and many other collaborative efforts to end homelessness.

Each jurisdiction has made a minimum level of funding commitment to STRA. However, when there are challenges to any one jurisdiction in meeting their funding commitment, jurisdictional leaders ensure that funding levels remain stable through shared investment.

The collaborative model of shared outcome, shared investment, shared management and shared risk has been high successful over a significant period of time, resulting in more people served, maximized resources and better outcomes for the community.

Q11.) Are there perceived ***barriers or challenges to intergovernmental collaboration*** that impact your jurisdiction's efforts to provide rental assistance to low-income households? If so, what are they and how do they impede collaboration between levels of government?

STRA is perhaps the best local example of intergovernmental collaboration. However there are some remaining challenges, including:

- Difference between available total funding and community wide need for these services.

- Each jurisdiction is its own entity with its own authority, resources, priorities, policies, political priorities and core mission which may or may not align with the other jurisdictions.

Q12.) Are there any steps that could be taken to ***enhance outcomes, improve collaboration, or gain program or process efficiencies where federal, state, and local programs providing rental assistance may overlap, be fragmented or be duplicative?***[1] If so, please describe them.

STRA disburses federal, state, and local funds. The local funds come with much greater flexibility and less restrictive documentation requirements. Those allow housing providers to be creative and flexible in meeting the needs of each household. Federal and state funds are more challenging to use so Home Forward has to work closely with each provider to make sure the mix of funds in their contract allows them to achieve the required outcomes for their population. Greater flexibility in the state and federal funds would streamline the system greatly. Steps that could increase efficiency include:

- Functionally block granting funds

- Create greater local autonomy for local decision making at the regional level for federal funds.

- Create greater flexibility regarding the requirements of federal and state funding sources.

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[1] Fragmentation occurs when more than one agency--or more than one organization within an agency--is involved in the same broad area. Overlap is when there are programs that have similar goals, devise similar strategies and activities to achieve those goals, or target similar users. Duplication occurs when two or more agencies or programs are engaged in the same activities or provide the same services to the same beneficiaries.