



homeforward

Long-term rent assistance in Multnomah County

Ian Davie, Chief Operating Officer, Home Forward

Laura Golino de Lovato, Executive Director, Northwest Pilot
Project

Goals

Discuss long-term rent assistance and its role in increasing housing access, affordability, and stability to members of our community.

What is rent assistance?

- Emergency rent assistance
 - One-time, often due to an emergency like a pending eviction
 - Sometimes links with services to improve future stability
- Short-term rent assistance
 - Time-limited, often to initially stabilize a household in new housing, sometimes after an experience with homelessness
 - Often administered by a non-profit or services provider
 - Sometimes the subsidy is income-based, sometimes it is a set amount
- Long-term rent assistance
 - Permanent as long as household needs assistance
 - Subsidy seeks to make the rent affordable and is based on household income and composition

Long-term rent assistance

Two primary options in Multnomah County:

- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program: Federal program funded by HUD and administered by public housing authorities (eg Home Forward)
 - Vouchers are “portable” so households can choose their home.
 - “Special purpose vouchers” limit eligibility to certain populations eg VASH (veterans), FUP (families and youth in the foster system); mainstream (non-elderly individuals with a disability); emergency housing vouchers (homelessness or at risk of homelessness)
 - Project-based vouchers: Housing Choice Vouchers that are attached to a building but are not portable.

Long-term rent assistance

Two primary options in Multnomah County:

- Regional Long-term Rent Assistance (RLRA):
 - Program is locally funded through the Supportive Housing Services Tax Measure and overseen by Metro.
 - Supports vouchers in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties with potential to be “portable” between counties.
 - Vouchers are both “housing choice” - recipient can choose their housing – and project-based.
 - Vouchers are administered by public housing authorities or services providers
 - Current focus is to pair vouchers with services to support chronically homeless households through the Permanent Supportive Housing service model.

Local Landscape - Numbers

- Voucher level utilization in Multnomah County:
 - 7,146 Housing Choice vouchers
 - 4,785 tenant-based vouchers
 - 2,361 project-based vouchers
 - 1,625 special purpose vouchers
 - 838 Regional Longterm Rent Assistance vouchers (currently budgeted at this number, and scaling up over time with tenant-based and project-based options)

Local Landscape – Access

How does a household access long-term rent assistance?

- **Home Forward:**

- Waitlist: randomized waitlist for 2,000 to 3,000 households (e.g. opened in September 2016: 16,797 applied, 3,000 placed on list)
- Set-asides: vouchers are aligned with specific effort (eg Homeless Family System of Care)
- Statutory requirement: there is a legal requirement to use a certain referral mechanism (e.g. VASH referrals from Veteran's Administration)
- Transfer from certain Home Forward properties through a process known as "RAD Mobility"

Local Landscape – Access

How does a household access long-term rent assistance?

- **Joint Office of Homeless Services:**
 - Coordinated entry: centralized access system based on assessment of need administered by the Joint Office of Homeless Services (e.g. mainstream vouchers, RLRA)
 - Supportive Housing Services Program
 - Administered by JOHS
 - Focus on PSH for chronically homeless households
 - Referrals to Department of County Human Services acting as Multnomah County's Community Action Agency

Local Landscape - Demographics

Current Households as of May 1, 2023

Race/Ethnicity		
Person of Color	5,013	54%
White Alone, Not Hispanic	4,334	46%
Total	9,347	100%

Alone or in Combination		
Asian	383	4%
Black	3,459	37%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	139	1%
Hispanic/Latino	859	9%
Native American	546	6%
White	5,380	58%

Household Composition		
Household with Children	3,043	33%
Seniors/People with Disabilities	5,536	59%
Work-Focused	768	8%
Total	9,347	100%

Head of Household Gender		
Female	6,126	66%
Male	3,170	34%
Non-Binary/Other	51	1%
Total	9,347	100%

2020 Census 5-Year Estimates

Households in Poverty in Multnomah County

Race/Ethnicity		
Person of Color	50,664	48%
White Alone, Not Hispanic	54,197	52%
Total	104,861	100%

Alone or in Combination		
Asian	9,449	9%
Black	13,274	13%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	675	1%
Hispanic/Latino	20,847	20%
Native American	1,815	2%
White	67,554	64%

Head of Household Gender		
Female	56,833	54%
Male	48,028	46%
Total	104,861	100%

Local Landscape – Renting

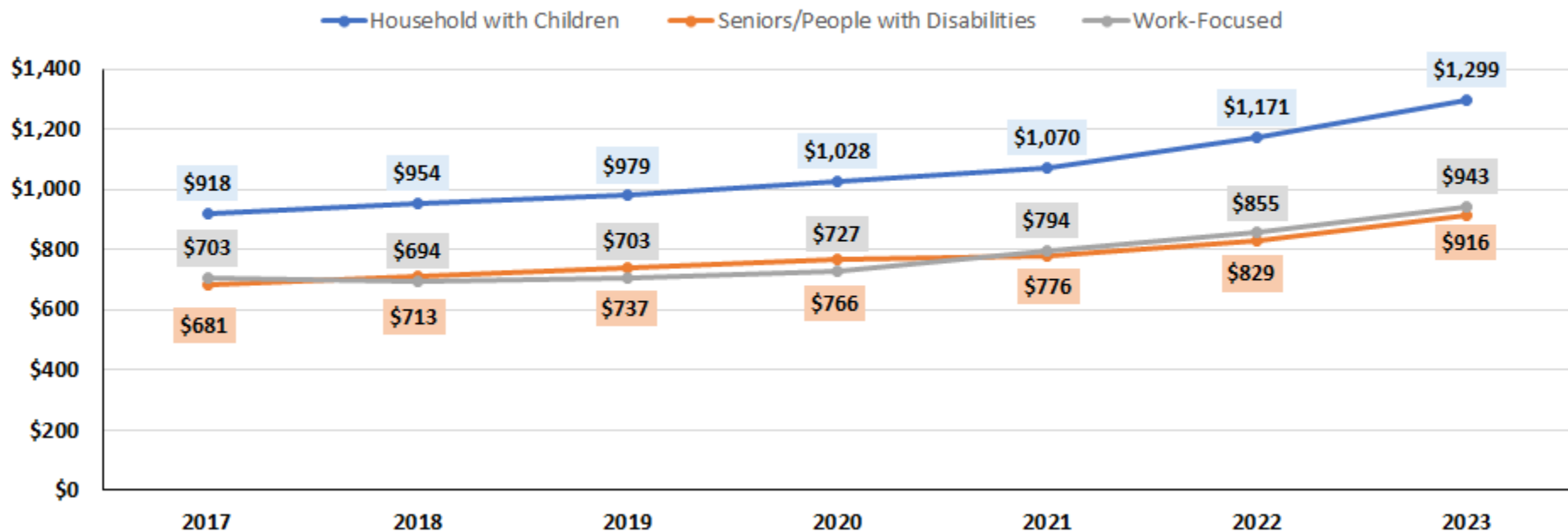
How does a household use long-term rent assistance?

- **Voucher:** Based on household size, a household is eligible for a certain number of bedrooms, the “voucher size”. The voucher size links to a ceiling rent known as the “payment standard.”
- **Housing search:** The family finds a place to rent. The home is inspected to make sure it passes housing quality standards.
- **Affordability:** The family pays a “tenant portion” that is roughly 30% of income. Home Forward pays a subsidy as the remaining amount of rent.
 - If the family rents a home above the “payment standard” ceiling rent, they pay the additional rent amount as well.

Local Landscape - Costs

- Average cost is approximately \$1,041 per month, or \$12,495 per year.
 - Family with minor children: \$1,299
 - Tenant-based voucher: \$1,076

Average Monthly HAP Expense



Policy Considerations

- Rent burden (% of income that a family pays)
- Tenant supports (leasing navigation, deposit assistance)
- Landlord supports (landlord incentives, owner services team)
- Services alignment (RLRA alignment, limited EHV supports)
- Choice versus certainty: can families choose where to live with a HCV, or do they value the certainty of a PBV?

Home Forward Policy Reforms

- Dramatically reduced the reasons a household's assistance can be ended.
- Reduced federally mandated fee on ineligible non-citizen households from \$100 to \$1 per month.
- Removed use of \$100 or \$200 rent floors due to racial disparities.
- Paused rent increases during 2021 in response to pandemic.
- Ongoing reviews of proposed rent amounts for compliance with Oregon rent stabilization law.
- Continuing work to remove unnecessary or harmful barriers to access.

Advocacy Impact - RLRA

The Regional Longterm Rent Assistance program exists due to tireless advocacy by Northwest Pilot Project:

- 2017-18: advocacy with JOHS, Home Forward to fund a small local pilot program, the Long Term Rent Assistance, or LRA, Program would work like the federal Housing Choice Voucher program while streamlining administrative burdens and removing many harmful elements of the federal program.
- 2017 City/County budget: provision for 45 vouchers.
- 2019: LRA launched with 45 long-term vouchers.

Advocacy Impact – RLRA (con't)

Regional Long Term Rent Assistance Program, con't:

- 2019-2020: advocacy for expansion and increased funding of the program. Currently providing 72 vouchers.
- 2020: passage of Supportive Housing Services included commitment to created long term rent voucher program
- 2020-21: The LRA Program served as a model for developing the Regional Long Term Rent Assistance

Advocacy need

Rent assistance is one of the most effective means to make housing affordable for all households, and an effective strategy for eviction prevention.

Yet for every household that qualifies for a long-term rent assistance voucher, there are 4 more households who do not.

To meet the need, we need more dedicated long-term rent assistance...while we continue to pursue other goals to increase affordability and housing justice.



homeforward

Long-term rent assistance in Multnomah County

Ian Davie, Chief Operating Officer, Home Forward

Laura Golino de Lovato, Executive Director, Northwest Pilot
Project