

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TEAM

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## PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

### **Recommended Action:**

Secure \$12 to \$16 million over the next three years to bring to scale the Pathways to Employment program. This would include expanding the USDA pilot program to include subsidized employment and several policy changes including: (1) no-to significantly lower match requirement; and (2) allowing a federal match to match the USDA FSET program if the federal match supports the FSET match in terms of housing, health care, mental health and substance abuse programs.

Recent reports on homelessness indicate that unemployment is the primary cause of homelessness and poverty, despite the high percentage of individuals who are homeless who have skills and experience and are seeking employment.

### **Background:**

The Pathways to Employment (PTE) program is a project in Sacramento, CA that provided training and permanent employment to individuals who were homeless, long-term unemployed, and facing multiple barriers to obtaining employment. This innovative project was the first subsidized employment program to target the unique needs of homeless individuals in Sacramento County. It was implemented through one-time Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) discretionary funding and was highly leveraged with formula CSBG, Workforce Investment Act, and TANF funding.

Led by the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA), it succeeded as a result of close collaboration with governmental and local entities, including the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance, Women's Empowerment, Volunteers of America, the State Department of Rehabilitation, Sacramento Steps Forward, and the Sacramento Housing Alliance.

SETA, as the local Workforce Investment Board that operates a system of fourteen (14) Job and Training Centers and administers the CSBG program in Sacramento County, was uniquely qualified to provide comprehensive employment and support services and maintain a working collaborative that would help the most vulnerable individuals overcome barriers to employment.

**Program Components:**

Program participants were provided with: (1) up to 3 months of subsidized OJT employment; (2) pre-employment skills training emphasizing communications skills, reentering the workplace, job search and interviewing strategies; (3) support services to overcome transportation barriers and to help stabilize participants during their OJT experience; (4) financial incentives upon reaching key benchmarks, such as successfully completing their OJT and securing unsubsidized employment; (5) case management, including career coaching and mentoring, to help overcome conditions of homelessness and succeed in their chosen career. Further, interested employers are able to post available jobs to the continuum of care through an online web-portal.

**Outcomes:** Planned goals were surpassed by 133%. By the end of the project period, June 30, 2013, the projected outcomes were exceeded, as detailed. Specifically, the following results were achieved:

- 1) 33 individuals were enrolled during the program year vs. planned enrollment of 24;
- 2) 24 participants obtained permanent, unsubsidized employment by June 30, 2013, the end of the project year;
- 3) The average unsubsidized wage for participants was \$10.05 per hour, 20% higher than the local minimum wage;
- 4) Follow-up contacts indicate that the majority of clients maintained employment after 90 days;
- 5) Additional outcomes that exceeded expectations include: 1) the number of participants exiting the program with a better understanding of their job interests and skills; 2) completion of OJT experience with gained skills needed to qualify for unsubsidized employment; and 3) gaining a greater knowledge of community supports to help avert future homelessness. A final outcome that was more difficult to measure were the progressively improving attitudes and self-confidence exhibited by most program participants as they reached benchmarks in their individual employment plans and developed trusting relationships with what was the most important program component of all – experienced, caring case managers.