

# Critical Ingredients for Offering an Integrated Employment Service in Housing

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Name of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This list includes essential ingredients of place-based strategies in four domains: Vocationalizing, In-house Hiring, Job Development and Placement, and Linkages with Employment & Training Resources. The list may be useful as a guide to developing employment services in supportive housing. Indicate which ingredients are present in your program.

***I. VOCATIONALIZING THE ORGANIZATION/BUILDING/CULTURE:*** As one employment staff person put it, “Every policy, practice, activity – my whole organization – supports my ability to help tenants get employed.” The isolated employment staff person or tenant can’t make significant changes in the rate of employment or quality of opportunity available to tenants effectively.

***An organization is "vocalionalized" if...***

- The written mission includes tenant employment as a central purpose of the organization
- A high-ranking staff member (e.g., on par with the Director of Housing and the Director of Social Services) has authority and responsibility for implementing employment services
- The key staff person for employment services has experience and/or training in job development, job training, vocational counseling, and/or developing business enterprises
- Communication mechanisms are in place among social services, housing management, and vocational services that result in effective problem solving and integrated service delivery
- Social service case managers have regular contact with the employment staff and consider supporting tenant employment goals to be part of their job
- Personnel policies, the policy and procedures manual, the services manual, and job descriptions reflect thoughtful and consistent approach to prioritizing tenant employment
- Employment outcomes are tracked and reported
- Staff members are held accountable for employment outcomes
- Budget reflects designated funds allocated for voc services
- Property management and services support employment goals
- There is an identified physical space dedicated to employment services
- Tenants have input into the overall program design.

***A building is "vocalionalized" if...***

- Tenants are asked about their job-related skills and employment goals at intake
- Tenants are informed, verbally and in writing, of the employment resources and opportunities available to them within the organization
- Tenants use available resources in their building (e.g., office equipment) for developing a resume, sending letters, and making and getting phone calls
- Support groups and other activities around employment issues are attended by tenants
- Tenants are recognized for their successes along the education, employment continuum (e.g., posting pictures of tenants receiving their first paychecks, periodic celebrations during which tenants are recognized for achievements)
- Staff work schedules include hours to meet and support tenants who work between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

***II. HIRING IN HOUSE:*** In-house employment uses the budget of the supportive housing industry to put money in the pockets of the people the industry is created to serve, provides jobs structured flexibly as first-tries, increases agency accountability to tenants, and enables nonprofits to more confidently approach private-sector employers. However, there is a real difference between (a) hiring scores of tenants in dead-end, make-work positions and (b) structuring all experiences to build skills and confidence and lead to progress.

***The organizational commitment to tenant hiring is realized when...***

- The organization employs tenants in permanent staff positions
- Volunteer/stipend/training positions are structured as part of a continuum of increasing pay and responsibilities that lead to competitive jobs.
- Work assignments are meaningful tasks necessary to the functioning of the organization.
- Workplace accommodations such as splitting shifts to create part-time positions, flexible hours to make up for medical appointments, etc. make jobs accessible to employees with special needs
- Positions available to applicants with special needs are diverse in function and range in level of responsibility
- Tenants in permanent inhouse jobs are offered employee assistance plans or other forms of appropriate support
- Tenant employment structure (wages, benefits, reporting practices) complies with applicable Department of Labor and Internal Revenue Service rules
- Supervisors have received specialized training to supervise employees with special needs
- All staff members, including tenants who become staff members, receive regular supervision and performance evaluation
- Learning and advancement are part of all staff positions.

**III. JOB DEVELOPMENT AND PLACEMENT:** Thirty years of training and employment programs consistently have yielded one finding: programs that include job development and placement (e.g., finding and matching jobs with tenants) have better outcomes than those that do not. Once again, supportive housing providers have demonstrated creativity in adapting traditional job development/placement services when necessary to include group placements, temporary supported employment, internships, cross-listing with other nonprofits, etc.

***The job development and placement approach is effective when...***

- Tenants have access to a job developer
- The job developer reaches out to employers and identifies job openings based upon the needs, interests, and choices of tenants
- Tenants are notified about vacant positions and getting jobs either verbally, through postings on bulletin boards, or through written information
- Job developers make use of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit with employers
- The jobs identified represent the diverse skills and interests of the tenants
- Tenants learn about job search skills through the job development/placement process
- Tenants get feedback and support during the job search and interview period (e.g., through mock interviews, feedback on dress for interviews)
- Tenants in competitive employment continue to receive follow-up supports after they get a job
- Employers receive followup support services (with tenants' consent)
- During the process of job matching, tenant's "soft skills" needs are identified and addressed as well as their hard skills.

**IV. LINKAGES WITH EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING RESOURCES:** The supportive housing industry should not replicate the existing training and employment system. There are hundreds of training programs. Rather, supportive housing providers should network with existing programs and institutions, including WIA-funded programs; community colleges; literacy, education, and General Educational Development (GED) programs; etc., whenever possible and pragmatic. Training programs provided onsite are those that specifically relate to the supportive housing industry and are not available elsewhere; e.g., peer specialists, training for tenant advancement in social services positions within the supportive housing industry.

***An organization is maximizing existing resources when...***

- The employment staff is aware of employment training resources in their area
- Many tenants are referred to a variety of occupational skills training programs, literacy programs, education programs, and GED programs
- The supportive housing agency has partnerships with employment and training providers which result in increased vocational or educational outcomes for tenants because of better coordinated or integrated services
- Eligible tenants are referred to the State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency
- The organization works with the State VR agency to coordinate the tenants use of State VR educational and employment services
- Tenants regularly use work incentives such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and Social Security Administration work incentives (i.e., PASS, IRWE, and Subsidy)
- The supportive housing organization receives government funding for their employment services.