TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2022-04-27 (8)

Date: April 27, 2022
To: THA Board of Commissioners
From: April Black, Executive Director
Re: Approval of Project-based Voucher Contracts

Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) issued a Request for Proposals for project-based vouchers. This resolution will award project-based vouchers to Pioneer Human to serve people exiting corrections.

Background

On January 24, 2022, THA issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for up to 25 project-based vouchers, with preference for housing providers who serve people recently released from incarceration. The intent of these project-based vouchers is to replace the 25 HOP subsidies that have been set aside for students exiting corrections (see Appendices A and B).

THA received one response to the RFP. The proposal was scored based on:

- For existing housing units, the extent to which units are occupied by families that are eligible to participate in the PBV program
- Extent to which services for special populations are provided onsite or in the immediate area
- Extent to which the project furthers THA's goal of deconcentrating poverty and expanding housing and economic opportunities
- Overall project viability
- Percentage of assisted units in the property – the lower the percentage the higher the score
- Additional points were awarded for projects serving households below 30% of area median income (AMI), working households and serving special needs populations.

The following includes a summary of the proposals and their rankings:

Respondent	Project Name	Brief Project Description	Request	Ranking
Pioneer Human Services	Exley & St. Helens Properties	The Exley and St. Helen's apartments are located in downtown Tacoma at 303 and 309 South 9th Street. The properties service low-income households with criminal histories. Referral streams include the Department of Corrections, the college Re-Entry Navigator (based out of TCC but serving all community colleges in Pierce Co.), Coordinated Entry, and self-referral. The properties provide on-site case management and supportive services. These vouchers will be used to serve new and existing households with incomes below 50% of AMI.	12	1

The RFP review committee recommends awarding project-based vouchers to Pioneer Human Services.

As transitional housing,[1] Pioneer maintains a 24-month maximum on tenancy, ensuring consistent turnover in units. After one year of tenancy at the properties, tenants would be eligible for a Choice Mobility voucher. This would allow them to retain their rental assistance and lease up on the private market. Employing Choice Mobility will help ensure participants have access to long-term housing assistance while also supporting unit turnover so that units are made available on a somewhat consistent and regular basis.

With approval of this resolution, THA will begin negotiating contracts with Pioneer Human Services. The contract terms will be up to fifteen (15 years).

Recommendation

Approve Resolution 2022-04-27 (8) authorizing THA's Executive Director to execute Project-based Voucher (PBV) Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contracts with Pioneer Human Services.

[1] Traditionally, PHAs are not permitted to PBV transitional housing. However, THA has used our Moving to Work (MTW) flexibility to allow us to PBV transitional housing. See Activity 3 (page 27) of THA's 2011 MTW Plan.

TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2022-04-27 (8)
(Approval of Project-based Voucher Contracts)

A **RESOLUTION** of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Tacoma

WHEREAS, Pioneer Human Services is the highest scoring respondent and will be awarded up to 25 project based vouchers; and

WHEREAS, Pioneer Human Services is an established, qualified service provider for people exiting corrections; and

WHEREAS, The effective date of each contract will be up the discretion of the Executive Director; and

WHEREAS, Each contract will be negotiated with the property and will be in effect for up to fifteen years (15); now therefore, be it

Resolved by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Tacoma, Washington that:

THA's Executive Director is authorized to execute Project Based Voucher (PBV) Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contracts with Pioneer Human Services.

Approved: April 27, 2022

Stanley Rumbaugh, Chair

Tacoma Housing Authority

To: April Black, Executive Director
From: Katie Escudero, Interim Director of PIE
Jess Thompson, Project Manager II
Date: February 8, 2022
Re: Re-entry Housing Proposal (DOC-CHAP voucher set-aside)

Background

Over the past few years Tacoma Community College (TCC) and Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) have held discussions around expanding the College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) to serve students who began their post-secondary studies in prison and intended to continue their education at TCC upon release. This expansion was proposed because TCC was one of three schools in the state to administer the Second Chance Pell Grant Pilot Program at the Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (MCCCW) and the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW). This provided a unique opportunity to serve justice-involved students interested in pursuing an Associate's or Bachelor's degree.

However, as CHAP ramped up and went from serving 75 households with tenant-based subsidies to serving nearly 300 with the addition of property-based subsidies, the expansion to serve students exiting the Department of Corrections (DOC) was delayed. As TCC worked in collaboration with Corrections Education and Re-entry staff to develop program plans and proposals, a couple of external evaluations were being conducted which raised a few red flags about participants' experiences and outcomes on CHAP. Specifically, we were learning that the majority of students who applied and were accepted to CHAP were never successful at leasing up. Additionally, many of the participants were being exited from the program for being unable to meet program requirements. Expanding the program to students releasing from prison would require that the program would be designed in a way that required robust supports and supportive landlords.

Though TCC, DOC, and THA continued to explore DOC-CHAP, the COVID pandemic brought about a major disruption. The potential challenges and barriers that were already coming up in conversations around DOC-CHAP were only magnified as staff had to begin to take into consideration what program administration would look like if solely online and what would the student experience be like if it allows for only virtual participation (from a population that might not have the equipment or technical literacy required). THA was left questioning if we wanted to be a position to terminate assistance in cases where someone was a good tenant, abiding by the conditions of their community supervision (if they were under supervision to begin with), but are unsuccessful on the academic front despite their best efforts.

In the end, the PIE team assessed this approach and determined it inadvisable to move forward with DOC-CHAP for the following reasons:

- Corrections Education programs are intended to graduate a person prior to release. We have not been able to get figures on how many people exit midway through their post-secondary career.
- This population is already eligible to participate in the CHAP program. The definition of homelessness includes students exiting a correctional facility without a housing plan. We have not been able to determine the value of offering these vouchers in a separate, standalone program.
- The re-entry navigators at the college serve all two-year schools in the county. We do not believe it is wise to limit eligibility to only students attending TCC. Additionally, we were advised by subject matter experts at the Vera Institute that a partnership with a technical college might be more appealing to participants.
- More generally, CHAP is not demonstrating positive outcomes for the general student population. We do not advise expanding a program that has not proven successful, especially with a population that faces even greater systemic barriers.
- As a result of COVID, college coursework and processes have largely moved online. This presents an additional barrier as it requires the technical know-how and experience to navigate a predominately online educational experience. People exiting prison may not have the necessary skills to participate in online education effectively and successfully without supplemental support and resources.

Partnership Exploration

Once PIE determined that DOC-CHAP, as originally envisioned, might not be the best approach, staff consulted with the housing department of DOC. PIE staff were interested in learning about other potential referral pathways and more immediate ways to utilize these subsidies while getting clearer on the needs and barriers of the diverse populations exiting the criminal justice system. Despite a shared interest in serving this population, PIE staff did not feel the partnership was a strong fit for the following reasons:

- DOC was primarily interested in housing support for the time in which the individual is under their case management or supervision. Whereas THA aims to provide longer term housing support that stabilizes households and provides opportunities to strive towards long-term goals, such as education and good wage-earning jobs.
- Re-entry navigators only provide case management for 12-18 months. After that period, the participant does not receive access to case management.
- Given the lessons learned from CHAP and other "boutique" programs, it was important to THA staff that a program and partnership in this arena be led by the service provider with THA doing what we do best – providing the housing dollar. We sought to quickly get something stood up, but it became clear that THA would need to lean in heavily to design something new for a relatively small population.

PBV Proposal

PIE and Rental Assistance (RA) staff have been discussing alternative approaches to serving people exiting or having recently exited corrections.

Our proposal is to partner with a service provider that has housing units that can be dedicated to the re-entry population. Leases at the property will be time limited to ensure unit turnover. However, residents who have been successful in the program but unable to compete on the rental market without housing assistance, will be offered a move-on voucher to rent on the private rental market. If the changes to HOP are approved, staff anticipate that an HCV move-on voucher will help minimize the financial burden associated with renting in Tacoma. Additionally, we are seeking a service provider that will continue to provide some support and limited case management to participants who have moved out.

PIE and RA staff recommend using the set-aside subsidies in this way for the following reasons:

- The proposal addresses immediate and long-term housing options.
- Supportive services and case management is already available and not time limited.
- Income-based subsidies help ensure people recently exiting jail or prison who are not yet employed can afford rent. It also provides some cushion should they want to pursue post-secondary pathways or job training.
- With a move-on voucher, households should be able to transition to the private market without experiencing a significant increase in rent.
- Participants can build rental history, reducing a barrier to renting on the private market.
- The interested service provider has an established referral source and currently takes referrals from DOC, TCC, and other agencies working with people exiting corrections.

We have released an RFP for up to 25 project-based vouchers set to close March 4, 2022. We have at least one interested party that we expect to respond to the RFP.

Tacoma Housing Authority

[Insert Resolution 2018-05-23 (5)]