



Washington Families Fund Systems Initiative Evaluation: Interim Report

VI: Advocacy

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Report Authors:
Debra J. Rog, Ph.D.
Kathryn A. Henderson, Ph.D.
Ranita Jain, M.P.P.
Martena C. Reed, M.S.W.
John R. Haight, B.S.

Westat

Overview

The Washington Families Fund (WFF) Systems Initiative is a \$60 million comprehensive systems change intervention aimed at ending family homelessness. Implemented in three counties in the Puget Sound region of Washington State (King, Pierce, and Snohomish), the Initiative is guided by a theory of change that builds on proven and best practices as well as emerging new concepts from a number of communities across the United States. The Initiative, created over the course of several years by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMFG), was approved in October 2007 and officially launched in 2009. Building Changes, a local nonprofit organization with a long history of working on homelessness issues at local, state, and federal levels that was designated in 2004 by the state to oversee a public and private pool of funds for statewide supportive housing programs, was selected by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) in 2009 as the intermediary to operate the Initiative. The three communities were funded to conduct a three-stage planning process, culminating at the end of 2010 in multi-year implementation plans that are currently being put into action.¹

Westat, a national research firm with extensive background in the evaluation of program and system-level interventions for homeless families, has been commissioned to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of both the implementation and outcomes of the Initiative. This first set of coordinated reports documents both the baseline status of the systems for homeless families in each of the counties prior to the Initiative and the implementation of the Initiative in its first two years after the launch (2009–2011). The reports are intended to provide a foundation of understanding of the Initiative and to provide formative feedback to BMGF, Building Changes, and stakeholders in the Initiative counties.

The eight brief reports, all under the title, *Washington Families Fund Systems Initiative Evaluation: 2012 Interim Report*, are available on BuildingChanges.org. They include the following:

Executive Summary

Summary of Key Baseline and Early Implementation Findings

- I. The Role of the Funder
- II. The Role of the Intermediary
- III. The Role of the Evaluation
- IV. The Role of the Counties: Promising Practices
- V. Interagency Collaboration and Data-Driven Decision Making
- VI. Advocacy

¹ Due to changes in the economic climate since the strategy was initially approved in 2007 and the length of time it took for the Initiative to unfold, BMGF has decided to extend the timeframe of the Initiative for an additional three years to allow for economic recovery.

Three sets of appendices include additional description and analysis of the implementation of the Initiative in each of the counties (Appendices I A-C); the role of selected organizations in the system and in the Initiative (Appendices II A-G); and the list of key informants for our site visits in Summer 2009 and February 2011 (Appendix III).

This report describes the Foundation and Building Changes' advocacy efforts, which constitute one of the four focus areas outlined in the Theory of Change of the WFF Systems Initiative. Advocacy has been defined as building awareness and support among policymakers and key third parties about emerging strategies to end family homelessness, a sense of shared accountability, and a broad base of support for reallocating existing resources and promoting new sources of funds. We begin this report with an overview of the role of advocacy within the Initiative, followed by a description of the advocacy activities and grants conducted in the first two years of the Initiative, and an appraisal of the efforts and their impact to date.

Overview of the Role of Advocacy within the WFF Systems Initiative

Since the beginning of the Initiative's strategy development phase (described in Chapter I: *The Role of the Funder*), the Foundation has had a strong emphasis on building awareness and support for the Initiative itself, as well as an emphasis on making the public aware of the problems of family homelessness and how the problem can be successfully addressed.

Building Changes also has had a role in advocacy prior to the Initiative. For example, a main area of its work has been in helping to stabilize and strengthen homeless advocacy at the state level. In particular, between 2009 and 2011, Building Changes played a key role in the state advocacy arena. During this time, one of state's key homeless advocacy organizations, the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless (WSCH), was undergoing internal capacity issues that were limiting its ability to lobby at the state level. In 2009, the WSCH started conversations with both Building Changes and the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance (WLIHA) about a possible merger, and in 2011 a merger between WSCH and WLIHA was finalized. While these conversations were in process, Building Changes provided support to navigate the transition and fill gaps in the state's homelessness advocacy agenda. These supports include: registering as lobbyists to help staff the statewide legislative process; providing in-kind staff and support for the 2010 and 2011 Annual Homeless Conferences that were typically led by WSCH; and having Building Changes' Executive Director join the board of WLIHA in 2010.

Advocacy activities that are part of the Systems Initiative are expected to bolster all other areas of the Initiative, including: helping the Initiative counties effectively implement the pillars of promising practices; supporting effective collaboration and coordination among the providers and other stakeholders that provide for resources to support the pillars; and encouraging the necessary development or enhancement of data systems that provide reliable, accurate, and timely data to

inform decision-making at service and system levels. As of February 2012, advocacy efforts within the Initiative have been primarily conducted by the Foundation and Building Changes and have included:

- Meetings with government official, including extensive and ongoing contacts with municipal, county, state and federal officials to help foster and support policies and programs that can help to prevent and reduce homelessness;
- Targeted legislative advocacy to remove barriers and improve implementation practices in homeless programs;
- Policy papers that synthesize existing research and best practices implemented by various communities and propose strategies to prevent and reduce family homelessness;
- Pilot projects aimed at reforming both mainstream and homeless services systems;
- Site visits and learning trips for participants in the three counties and the State to communities across the country where innovative practices and reforms are underway;
- Participation and leadership of Foundation staff in Funders Together to End Homelessness, a national network of funders supporting grant-making to end homelessness; and
- Funding of nearly 30 grants to a range of organizations in the counties and across the state intended to both increase visibility of family homeless and mobilize support for needed policy changes.

Each of these areas is described in sections below.

Meetings with Government Officials

As described in both Chapter I: *The Role of the Funder* and Chapter II: *The Role of the Intermediary*, the Foundation and Building Changes spend much of their time meeting and connecting with local, state, and federal government officials. The goals of this work are to keep abreast of changes that are occurring that may affect at risk and homeless families, maintain the visibility of the Initiative at these various levels, and influence policy changes that can benefit the Initiative as well as changes in systems that serve homeless families more widely. Advocacy with government officials occurs through one to one meetings; ongoing groups such as each county's Funders Group, the Washington Families Fund Leadership Committee, and the tri-county monthly meetings; and more formal convenings.

Engaging Federal Partners. Meetings with federal officials have occurred both in the Pacific Northwest and in Washington, D.C. For example, in 2010, the Foundation hosted key representatives from federal departments, such as HUD, HHS and USICH, who visited the Pacific Northwest and met with Washington State leaders and various stakeholders in the Initiative counties. During this visit, representatives met with the Initiative's intermediary and stakeholders with the state and Initiative counties. Later in that same year, the Foundation sponsored a trip for Initiative stakeholders to visit government officials in Washington, D.C. A contingent of 12 individuals, including representatives from the Foundation, Building Changes, Washington State, the Initiative counties, local housing authorities, and provider

organizations, took a three day trip to Washington, D.C. to meet with federal officials at the White House, HUD, HHS, and the Department of Labor. The goals of the trip were to inform federal partners about the activities underway in Washington State and in the Initiative counties, to develop new and strengthen existing partnerships with multiple systems and stakeholders at the federal level, and to outline opportunities for further partnership. While on the trip, the Pacific Northwest contingency learned that the federal agencies were initiating cross-systems work among one another and were able to discuss how this work could assist efforts at the local and state level. Federal agency officials offered advice on areas where the Initiative could focus to potentially gain federal policy and funding support. These areas included programming targeted towards homelessness prevention, education and training for TANF and veteran families, and housing and child welfare. The meeting also highlighted to participants how much of the funding at the federal level continues to operate in silo fashion, despite the efforts to bridge the work.

Washington Families Fund Leadership Committee. The WFF Leadership Committee also is a vehicle aimed at helping promote change at the state level. This Committee was established by Building Changes according to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by 24 entities in March of 2009. This MOU articulated a shared intention to continue and expand the public-private partnership administered by Building Changes, known as the Washington Families Fund (WFF). The WFF Leadership Committee was established as an oversight board for WFF to champion the purpose and goals of efforts to prevent and reduce family homelessness, review evaluation findings and monitor progress towards stated goals, identify and promote necessary policy changes, and recommend investment strategies. Further details regarding the MOU are provided in Chapter II: *The Role of the Intermediary*. The WFF Leadership Committee is co-chaired by a representative from the Foundation and a representative from the Governor's office. Other representatives include: staff from the Foundation and Building Changes; state government officials; the County Executives and other representatives from the Initiative counties; leaders from the Initiative counties' local housing authorities; members from the public and private philanthropic foundations; and representatives from two major Pacific Northwest employers, Boeing and Microsoft. The committee's biannual meetings have largely served informational purposes, briefing the committee on the status of the Initiative as well as other work under WFF (e.g., supportive housing for families). For example, meetings have included presentations by the county leads on their plans and implementation progress, presentations on the Westat evaluation, and presentations by Building Changes staff about upcoming plans related to the WFF.

Engaging County Partners. At the county level, both the Foundation and Building Changes work closely with the County Executives and other officials to support the work of the Initiative. One of the mechanisms through which Building Changes staff works with county officials is each county's funders' group. These groups have representation from both government and non-government organizations that provide funding for homeless and at risk of homelessness families in their respective counties. The King County Funders' Group started prior to the Initiative, but the groups in Pierce and Snohomish counties developed or became more formalized in the past two years, with some impetus and encouragement by Building Changes and the Foundation. Across the counties representatives include, but are not limited to, county and city officials, Workforce Development Councils, the United Way, and

other local foundations. Building Changes also sites on each group. Each of the funders' groups meet regularly to share information about the community's needs, including identifying service gaps, coordinating funding priorities, and streamlining application processes and reporting requirements. While the scope of work for each funders' group is broader than the WFF Systems Initiative, decisions made at this local level contribute towards the reallocation of existing resources and promotion of new sources of funds towards ending family homelessness. For example, in 2010, Pierce County decided to allocate a portion of its 2163 funds to support the implementation of the county's first centralized intake system for prevention and homeless housing.

Tri-County Meetings. Beginning in January 2011, Building Changes and the Foundation initiated a monthly tri-county meeting with their staff and the county leads. The meetings are designed to foster cross-county learning as well as provide opportunities to focus on key topics and bring in selected speakers. For example, in 2011 representatives from DSHS were invited to share developments for a new web-based benefits portal that enables users to determine if they are eligible for a range of DSHS benefits and to assist them in applying for those benefits. Examples of other speakers for the monthly meetings include representatives from the Washington State Coalition against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) and from the Refugee Supportive Housing Network (RSHN) who shared information about the housing needs and barriers of the special populations they represent.

Convenings. The Initiative also holds more formal convenings to bring together policy makers from all levels as well as practitioners and others working in the arena of family homelessness. Up through February 2012, the Foundation and Building Changes held four convenings. Three of these convenings were to explore data solutions to improve the implementation of the Initiative, and are discussed in greater detail in the section below that describes activities to reform the system. The fourth convening occurred in October 2011. The Foundation and Building Changes co-sponsored a two day meeting, called *Silos to Systems: Solutions for Vulnerable Families*, where researchers, policy experts, government and philanthropic leaders, and innovative practitioners met together to developed a shared agenda for policy and system-change reform. The focus of this convening was to discuss and develop strategies that would improve the skills, employment opportunities, and incomes for families living in poverty and support the well-being of homeless families that come to the attention of the child welfare system. The meeting was supported by two policy papers, discussed in further detail below. Two key strategies that emerged from this convening were to 1) promote more cross-systems collaboration work that focused on the most vulnerable families and invested in best practices, and 2) invest in enhancements to existing data systems to improve the coordination across systems to serve vulnerable families.

Targeted Legislative Advocacy

Much of the advocacy work at the local level of the Initiative occurs through informal individual meetings and more formal gatherings between Foundation and Building Changes staff and state officials, both those at various levels in the executive branch, as well as those working in the legislature.

At the legislative level in particular, much of the work is conducted in collaboration with other key groups working on similar issues. During Washington State’s legislative sessions, Building Changes advocates for additional funds to support its supportive housing grant-making programs. The organization also partners with housing and homelessness advocacy organizations (such as the Washington State Low-Income Housing Alliance and the Children’s Home Society of Washington) and public entities (local county governments) to promote promising practices, pass legislation, and maintain or increase funding aimed at ending homelessness. For example, much effort was placed on maintaining the funding and support for low-income and homeless housing programs, such as funding for the Washington Housing Trust Fund. As another example, in 2012 Building Changes led an effort that resulted in the State allocating an additional \$10 to the document recording fee to fund the Home Security Fund, which supports homeless programs such across the state. One of the most notable achievements that Building Changes led was an effort in 2011 to pass state legislation allowing telephonic consent for Homelessness Management Information Systems (HMIS) data collection. Building Changes led this effort with the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV), Washington State Coalition for the Homeless (WSCH), Committee to End Homelessness in King County (CEH), and the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance (WLIHA) that resulted in allowing individuals requesting housing assistance to share their information over the phone so it can be entered into HMIS. The work required conversations with domestic violence advocates and other providers and negotiations to ensure that necessary safeguards were in place, that written consent was to be obtained as soon as practicable, and that the system operate as an opt-in process rather than an opt-out process. This policy change, passed as Substitute HB 1811 and signed into law on May 3, 2011, is instrumental to the implementation of coordinated entry for the Initiative counties.

Policy Papers

Three policy papers have been produced by Building Changes over the course of the last two years. The first paper, “Ending Family Homelessness in Washington State: An Emerging Approach,” published in 2010, captured emerging practices in communities throughout the United States to prevent and end family homelessness, and offered policy recommendations in support of that goal. In 2011, Building Changes also hosted two meetings in Seattle, WA and Washington, D.C. to discuss a draft of the policy paper, “Ending Family Homelessness in Washington State: An Emerging Approach” and its implications. Attendees of the Seattle meeting included state and local officials, and a wide range of individuals attended the meeting in Washington, D.C., including representatives from federal agencies, national intermediary and advocacy organizations, and foundations, among others. Attendees discussed the policy paper and offered recommendations for different fund sources or programs that could support the work in Washington State. While this meeting was not directly related to the Initiative, Building Changes intended to use the learnings from this paper to identify key homeless policy initiatives or targets of change that support and strengthen its approach to ending family homelessness.

Three additional papers were developed in 2011 to support the convening, *Silos to Systems: Solutions for Vulnerable Families*. “Silos to Systems: Preserving and Strengthening Families and Children Experiencing Recurring Child Welfare System Encounters and Housing Crises” examines a small subset of extremely vulnerable families frequently involved with both the homeless and child welfare systems, describes early evidence about effective models of serving this population, and outlines the systems changes necessary to bring these interventions to scale. The second paper, “Silos to Systems: Connecting Vulnerable Families to Work and Incomes to Prevent and End Homelessness,” identifies collective approaches that can be made by government, philanthropy, and service providers to integrate housing and support services with workforce, education, and training systems necessary to end family homelessness. The third paper, “Silos to Systems: Solutions for Vulnerable Families: Summary Report”, was developed after the convening and provides a summary of the strategies identified.

Activities to Reform the System

The Foundation and Building Changes also participate directly in activities in the State that they believe will fast track reforms to benefit the systems in the three demonstration counties. A series of activities are directly related to bridging a connection between the housing and the child welfare system. The first activity, which began in late 2010, stemmed from the desire of local legislators and housing authorities to continue the services funding for the transitional housing units developed under the Sound Families Initiative. Building Changes began coordinating an effort to help housing authorities explore strategies for serving families with child welfare involvement as one means to preserve those units for homeless families and introduce new funding options.

This effort was temporarily put on hold as, shortly thereafter, HUD released a funding announcement for Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers and Building Changes convened the original group around the idea of creating a statewide Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen each housing authority’s FUP application. During meetings, housing authority representatives noted that their allocation for FUP vouchers had decreased over time. In addition, the federal allocation for FUP vouchers was changing from a more formula basis to a competitive application. Believing that a statewide collaborative effort would enhance the chances of having a successful application, Building Changes facilitated meetings with the housing authorities and the state’s Children’s Administration. These meetings resulted in a MOU among the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the housing authorities, and other community partner agencies that allowed for housing authorities across the state to apply for FUP housing vouchers independently but using a single MOU describing the commitment of the state’s Children’s Administration. The collaborative application was successful and, in 2011, over 200 new FUP vouchers were awarded in Washington State. Notably, this was the highest single award of FUP vouchers across the nation.

After the joint FUP MOU and successful award, conversations began again about utilizing Sound Families or other available housing authority units to house homeless child welfare involved families. In

2011, Building Changes led an 18-month planning process that began with two local housing authorities to discuss how currently existing housing resources could be used to provide supportive housing for families being served by the Children's Administration who need housing to either reunify with their children or to maintain the intactness of their family. This work evolved to include other housing authorities in the Initiative counties, the county leads, local service providers, as well state representatives from DSHS' Economic Services Department and the Children's Administration. The concept was that the housing authorities would put housing resources in the hands of local child welfare agencies to use at their discretion to prevent foster care placement or to speed up reunification. The pilot was entitled the Coming Home Program and was to be implemented in the Seattle/King County/Tacoma area. As the group explored what resources were available and the flexibility of the funding streams, it became apparent that the Children's Administration had limited flexibility to fund services for the families that would be housed through this pilot, and the planning work was stalled.

In 2012, DSHS decided to pursue a Title IV-E waiver from the federal Department of Health and Human Services which, if approved, would provide the needed flexibility for the housing/child welfare collaboration. This opportunity redirected the group working on the pilot project to support the waiver by adding the additional commitment of housing resources. The Foundation and Building Changes, with key support from Tacoma Housing Authority who enlisted 17 other housing authorities throughout the State to commit FUP vouchers and additional units to the collaboration, supported an effort by Washington's Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to apply for a Title IV-E waiver under the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act. The waiver was to be submitted by July 2012. It is a competitive process through which applications will be accepted on a rolling basis for the next three years. This waiver will provide Washington with flexibility in use of its Title IV-E funds, such as the ability to provide prevention services and will formalize a relationship between housing authorities, the Children's Administration and other divisions of DSHS to work together and combine rental subsidies with tailored, community-based services for families involved with the child welfare system that go above and beyond the traditional level of service associated with FUP vouchers.

The Foundation also initiated another activity with a local non-profit legal agency, Columbia Legal Services, to facilitate work with the Educational Service Districts across the state. In this work, Columbia Legal Services has facilitated meetings to explore strategies that would strengthen connections between local school districts' McKinney Vento requirements and homeless service providers. As a result of this work, in 2012 Pierce County began working with its local McKinney Vento liaisons to begin planning for a new pilot project that would focus on delivering employment services to homeless families identified by schools.

Another set of reform activities was specifically designed to spur changes in the HMIS as well as help to increase the accessibility of other data in the system for the Initiative. In 2009, the Foundation hosted a Data Summit meeting involving state and Initiative county representatives to raise issues about the quality and usefulness of HMIS, identify needs for other data to inform the Initiative, and discuss data solutions. The Foundation and Building Changes then co-hosted a series of Data Solutions workgroup

meetings in 2010 and 2011 attended by representatives from DSHS, the Department of Commerce, and provider organizations, as well as HMIS administrators for each county. Discussions during these meetings helped create strategies for the state and Initiative counties to improve data availability, quality, and uses within the Initiative. These strategies included the identification of data elements that would be useful to incorporate into HMIS to implement the coordinated entry systems and the integration DSHS and HMIS data with the local public housing authority data. Further details about these efforts are provided in Chapter V *Interagency Collaboration and Data-Driven Decision Making*.

Learning Trips and Conferences

One of the ongoing activities of the Initiative is the learning trips that are sponsored by the Foundation to regions of the country where promising practices are in place. Six of these trips occurred between January 2008 and February 2011, including trips to Columbus, Ohio; New York City, Boston, Massachusetts; Portland, Oregon; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Chicago, Illinois/Minneapolis, Minnesota. The trips, involving several different representatives from each Initiative county and the state, were intended to expose the site visit team to new initiatives that might be adopted and to show local and state policy makers what is possible and how those practices can be fostered through various legislative and executive changes. In addition, the Foundation believes that having policymakers and practitioners together on trips helps to put different stakeholders on the “same page” with respect to understanding what is possible, and also fosters communication and rapport that may help to build relationships further.

The Foundation and Building Changes also have sponsored local contingents to attend a number of conferences that pertain to family homelessness issues. For example, each year, a set of representatives from the three counties and the state attend the National Alliance to End Homelessness’s Family Homelessness conference. In addition, Building Changes’ provided stipends to help local service providers cover the travel and registration costs to attend the annual statewide homeless conferences organized by WSCH. In 2013, this meeting will be held in Seattle, offering the Initiative and other stakeholders a more central role in organizing and participating in the meeting.

Another key meeting attended by stakeholders was a training conference offered by the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare in Washington, D.C in November 2010. The Foundation sponsored a contingent of approximately 20 people, including representatives from the Initiative county government and local housing authorities, to attend the meeting. The purpose of inviting representatives to attend the meeting was to expose them to housing and child welfare strategies being implemented elsewhere in the country, and to address the new competitive grant FUP process. Following the trip, about eight of the folks who attended the meeting continued to meet about the intersection of child welfare and housing and were involved in the housing and child welfare planning efforts described in the section above.

Funders Together to End Homelessness

Established in 2004, Funders Together to End Homelessness is a coalition of 140 philanthropic organizations across the country that provide funding to end homelessness. Its mission is to build a national network of funders who are committed to solving homelessness through leadership, education, and advocacy; strategic collaboration and grant-making; and effective promotion and replication of best-practice models in their communities and across the nation. In 2010, the program officer for the WFF Systems Initiative became the President of this affinity group and in May 2011 the group created a nonprofit organization to support the efforts. This group has a strategic leadership role in homelessness, helping to push for reforms that are not possible for the government to push and to fund gaps in federal homeless funding. A local Pacific Northwest network of Funders Together, of which the Gates Foundation is a convener, also operates to share information, invest together, and provide support for ten-year plans.

Advocacy Grant Portfolio

A major element of the Initiative's advocacy focus has involved awarding grants to a variety of organizations within the State and the three demonstration counties. Since 2009, the Foundation has awarded over \$5 million in nearly 30 grants to 20 different organizations. Table VI-1 provides a listing of the grants, including the organization receiving the grant, its purpose, the funding amount, the time period of the award, the geographic scope, the organizational sector, and the substantive focus.

BMGF's desire is to build awareness about homeless families and the need for systems and policy change through communication, and to motivate different groups of stakeholders to take action and promote policy changes that will lead to ending family homelessness. BMGF program officials note that, with these objectives in mind, they have built their portfolio on both an examination of gaps and an assessment of strengths. For example, at the county level, they have identified and funded organizations with long track records of working with other organizations and constituencies in the area. The Housing Development Consortium (HDC) of Seattle-King County, for example, organizes over 65 non-profit affordable housing developers, housing authorities, and associated professionals and provides them with an opportunity to meet and discuss issues and share their common interests. The YWCA of Seattle-King County-Snohomish County has ten sister YWCAs across Washington State and together they represent a 20,000 member constituency. Similarly, there are well-known and well-respected organizations at the state and national level, such as the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance (WLIHA) and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) that have agendas already aligned with that of BMGF, and can work as partners with the Foundation in strengthening the tri-county Initiative and the context within which it sits. For example, the Foundation provided funding to the WLIHA to strengthen its state advocacy agenda and the growth of the organization, and provided funding to NAEH to expand its capacity to research, advocate for, and help communities implement promising practices for significantly reducing family homelessness.

Key gaps in constituencies outside of the typical advocacy and social service community that required outreach included the business community and the faith community, two communities that may not be as familiar with family homelessness and yet may be key resources in addressing the problem. Making inroads into the business community was not straightforward, according to BMGF program officials. The Chambers of Commerce was not interested in participating, and funding individual businesses would not have the same amount of traction. The decision was made to contact the three Rotary International Districts that encompass the three counties (and also cover wider territory) and which are tied into the business community. These organizations have worked with the Foundation in funding polio eradication and have reportedly been a strong partner. The Foundation is building on this partnership by funding local Rotary Clubs to become more involved in the issue of family homelessness through fundraising and volunteering. It is believed that these efforts by the Rotary International will raise the profile of these issues in the minds of influential local community members, including elected officials and high-level agency directors.

Similarly, the Foundation provided funding to the Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry (STM) to organize 12 congregations of diverse faiths around an interreligious advocacy agenda on family homelessness. By specifically targeting diverse interfaith congregations, including evangelical Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions, this initiative represents an attempt to re-energize the local faith community, to draw increased attention to the problem of family homelessness, and to create a clearer and more effective message about the moral imperative to help families in need.

The Foundation also has committed to raise the profile of family homelessness within the Puget Sound region by educating the public, community and business leaders, and policy makers on issues of family homelessness through media and communications efforts. BMGF provided funding to the Seattle University Center for Strategic Communications to establish a number of journalism fellowships in family homelessness that provided journalists with a deeper understanding of the extent, causes of, and strategies for reducing family homelessness in Washington, and to support a town hall discussion about family homelessness during which these journalists shared their learnings with a larger audience.

In the following sections, we outline the types of advocacy grants funded by BMGF beginning with the scope of the work and the sector (e.g., government, philanthropic, advocacy, etc.) of the grantees. Then we discuss the goals of the funded advocacy work and how they align with the focus areas outlined in the Initiative's Theory of Change.

Alignment of Advocacy Grants within the Initiative

How the advocacy grants fit into the Initiative can be examined in several ways. One of the measures of implementation for the Initiative is the extent to which it funds other sectors and projects to promote visibility of the Initiative and to foster support of the work. There are a number of sectors and organizations that are relevant to family homelessness. These include the advocacy sector (spanning different areas such as affordable housing, homelessness, etc.), media, higher education, community based service organizations (homeless, housing, service), housing authorities, civic

organizations, government, faith-based organizations, schools, justice and legal departments, and business organizations.

Figure VI-1 displays the sectors that the Foundation has targeted through funding to date and the scope of the awarded organizations (national, state, tri-county/regional, and specific counties). As the figure shows, the most commonly funded organizations are advocacy organizations at all levels, with the greatest focus at the state level through grants to WLIHA, Alliance for Justice, Common Ground, and the Washington State Budget and Policy Center. In fact, the most commonly funded organizations have a state or tri-county focus. NAEH, the nation's primary advocacy organization on homelessness, has been the only national organization funded thus far across the sectors.

In addition, the Foundation has awarded one or more grants to an organization in each of the sectors except the business sector. However, as stated earlier, although a grant may be awarded to an organization that fits within a particular sector, the work may actually affect other sectors. For example, the Rotary International Districts are civic organizations but are typically comprised of business leaders. As another example, Columbia Legal Services, a legal services program that provides free civil legal assistance to low income people in Washington State, is funded to work with school districts in the three demonstration counties to ensure that families who are eligible for McKinney-Vento supports are receiving the services they need.

Chart VI-1 provides a picture of how the advocacy grants align with the focus areas of the Initiative. Although there is some alignment with all the pillars, the most common purposes for the grants align with Focus Area 4. The WLIHA, for example, has been funded to advocate for increasing affordable housing and to educate policy makers and law makers, among others, about ways that may be accomplished. Additionally, the Washington State Budget and Policy Center was funded to build organizational capacity and an identity as a credible resource for tax and budget analysis and responsive policy evaluation, with specific alignment to Foundation strategies. Other organizations, such as Alliance for Justice, Common Ground, and Funders Together, have been funded to build the capacity of key constituencies to be agents of social change. Among the constituencies targeted are boards of non-profits, members of Rotary Clubs, leaders in diverse religious organizations, service providing organizations, and homeless and formerly homeless persons themselves.

It is helpful to look at the grants together, particularly at a singular policy level, to understand the underlying funding strategy. Figure VI-2 shows the array of projects funded at the state level and each project's potential at having either direct or indirect influence on Washington State policy makers and lawmakers. As the graphic illustrates, the Foundation funds a number of organizations to work directly with policy makers: Building Changes has a core responsibility in convening and educating policy makers; WLIHA, as noted, is charged with advocacy and education on affordable housing; the Washington State Budget and Policy Center is funded to conduct analyses of the budget and different budget scenarios; and Solid Ground is convening a "Community Table" with specific policy and funding goals. Indirect influences on policy come from the journalism and media work with Seattle University in creating awareness of family homelessness, and demand for improved

policies from grassroots groups such as the YWCAs, the non-profit boards, and the members of the Rotary Clubs.

Table VI-1. List of BMGF Funded Advocacy Grants

Grantee	Amount	Grant Term	Scope	Sector	Focus Area	Purpose
Funders Together	\$50,000	1/11 – 12/11	National	Philanthropic	Advocacy	To provide general operating support to Funders Together
National Alliance to End Homelessness	\$375,000	1/09 – 12/11	National	Advocacy	Promising Practices; Advocacy	To advance a new framework for ending family homelessness
Alliance for Justice	\$11,000	10/09 – 12/09	State	Advocacy	Advocacy	To build capacity for advocacy
Common Ground	\$135,000	1/09 – 1/11	State	CBO	Advocacy	To motivate, engage, and train non-profit boards to be advocates for social change
Solid Ground	\$200,000	1/09 – 1/11	State	CBO	Advocacy; Data	To recruit and convene a “Community Table” comprised of approximately 20 stakeholders that will develop specific policy and funding goals for the 2010 and 2011 legislative sessions
Washington Low Income Housing Alliance	\$175,000	1 year	State	Advocacy	Affordable Housing; Advocacy	To provide general operating support to WLIHA and support strategic planning around a possible merge with WSCH

Grantee	Amount	Grant Term	Scope	Sector	Focus Area	Purpose
Washington Low Income Housing Alliance	\$335,508	7/08 – 6/11	State	Advocacy	Affordable Housing; Advocacy	To support advocacy efforts to increase affordable housing and end homelessness in Washington
Washington State Budget and Policy Center	\$225,015	3 years	State	Advocacy	Advocacy	To build organizational capacity and an identity as a credible resource for tax and budget analysis and responsive policy evaluation, with specific alignment to Foundation strategies
YWCA Seattle-King County-Snohomish County	\$250,000		State	CBO	Advocacy	To build and sustain a citizen advocacy network for long-term solutions to human services issues in WA
Rotary International District 5020	\$115,000	2 years	Puget Sound	Fraternal	Advocacy	To become more involved within their communities on the issue of family homelessness through fundraising and volunteering to support local providers and by learning more about how family homelessness is affecting their communities
Rotary International District 5030	\$105,000	2 years	Puget Sound	Fraternal	Advocacy	
Rotary International District 5050	\$105,000	2 years	Puget Sound	Fraternal	Advocacy	

Grantee	Amount	Grant Term	Scope	Sector	Focus Area	Purpose
Seattle University, Center for Strategic Communications	\$185,347 + \$180,327	2009 – 2011	Puget Sound	Education/ Media	Advocacy	To establish family homeless journalism fellowships that will provide deeper understanding of family homelessness and support a conference
Columbia Legal Services	\$300,000	1/09 – 1/11	Tri-County	Education/ Legal	5 Pillars; Advocacy; Collaboration	To work with school districts in the three counties to ensure that families that are eligible for McKinney-Vento supports are receiving the services they need
Puget Sound Educational Service District	\$253,442		Tri-County	Education	Coordinated Entry; Coordination	To align the public school systems in the tri-county area with the Initiative
Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry	\$449,341	12/11 – 12/13	Tri-County	Education/ Religious	Advocacy	To identify, educate, and organize 12 congregations from diverse faiths on the issues of family homelessness
Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County	\$50,000	--	King County	Trade Organization	Affordable housing	To provide general operating support to the HDC

Grantee	Amount	Grant Term	Scope	Sector	Focus Area	Purpose
Tacoma Housing Authority ²	\$153,000	1 year	Pierce	Government	Prevention	To support the THA Education Project aimed at improving educational outcomes for children in THA houses
Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County	\$100,000	--	Snohomish	Advocacy	Advocacy	To foster the voice of homeless families and volunteer members of non-profits

² Support was split between the Foundation's Family Homelessness Portfolio and Community Grants.

FIGURE VI-1. Alignment of Advocacy

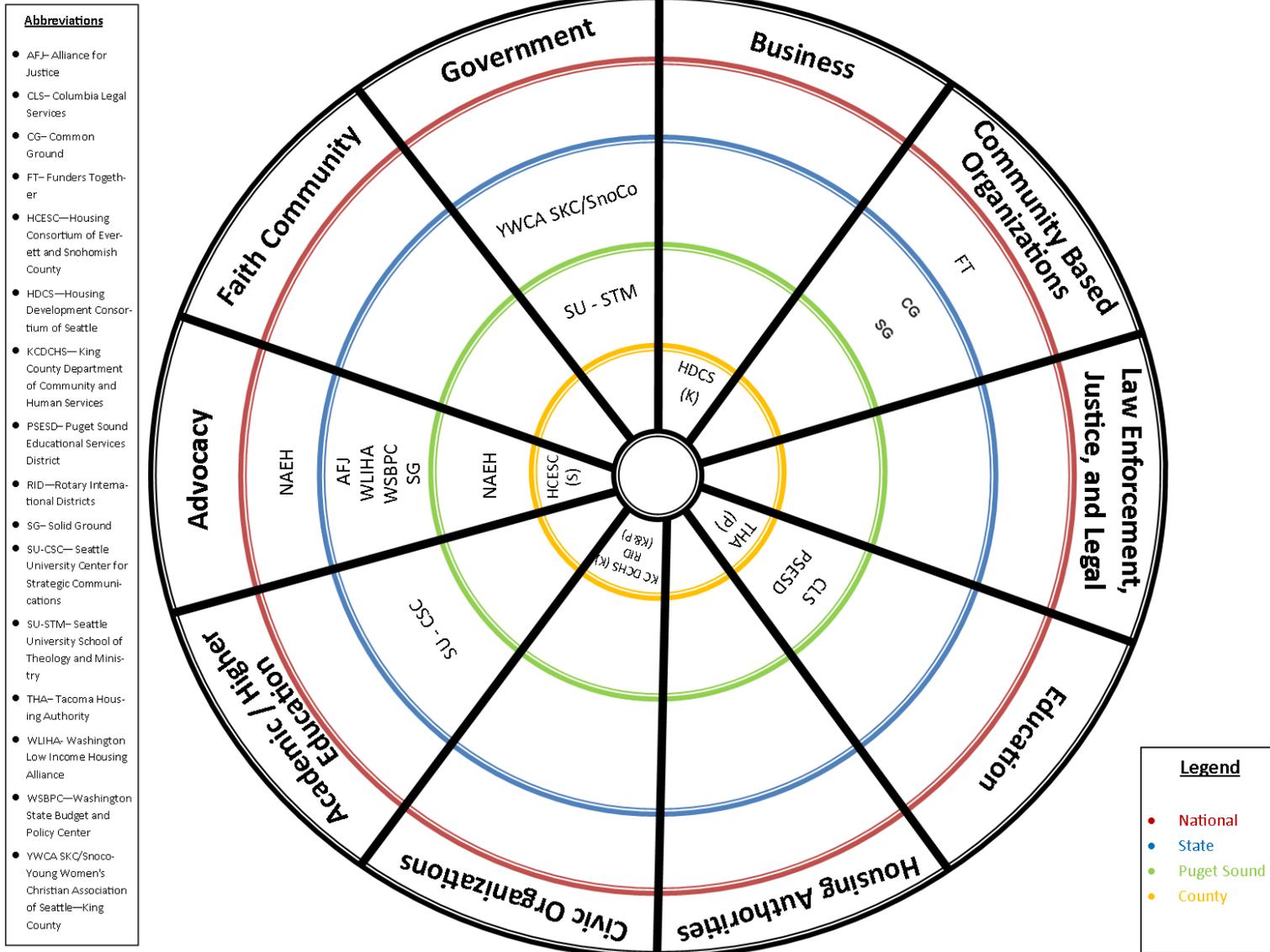
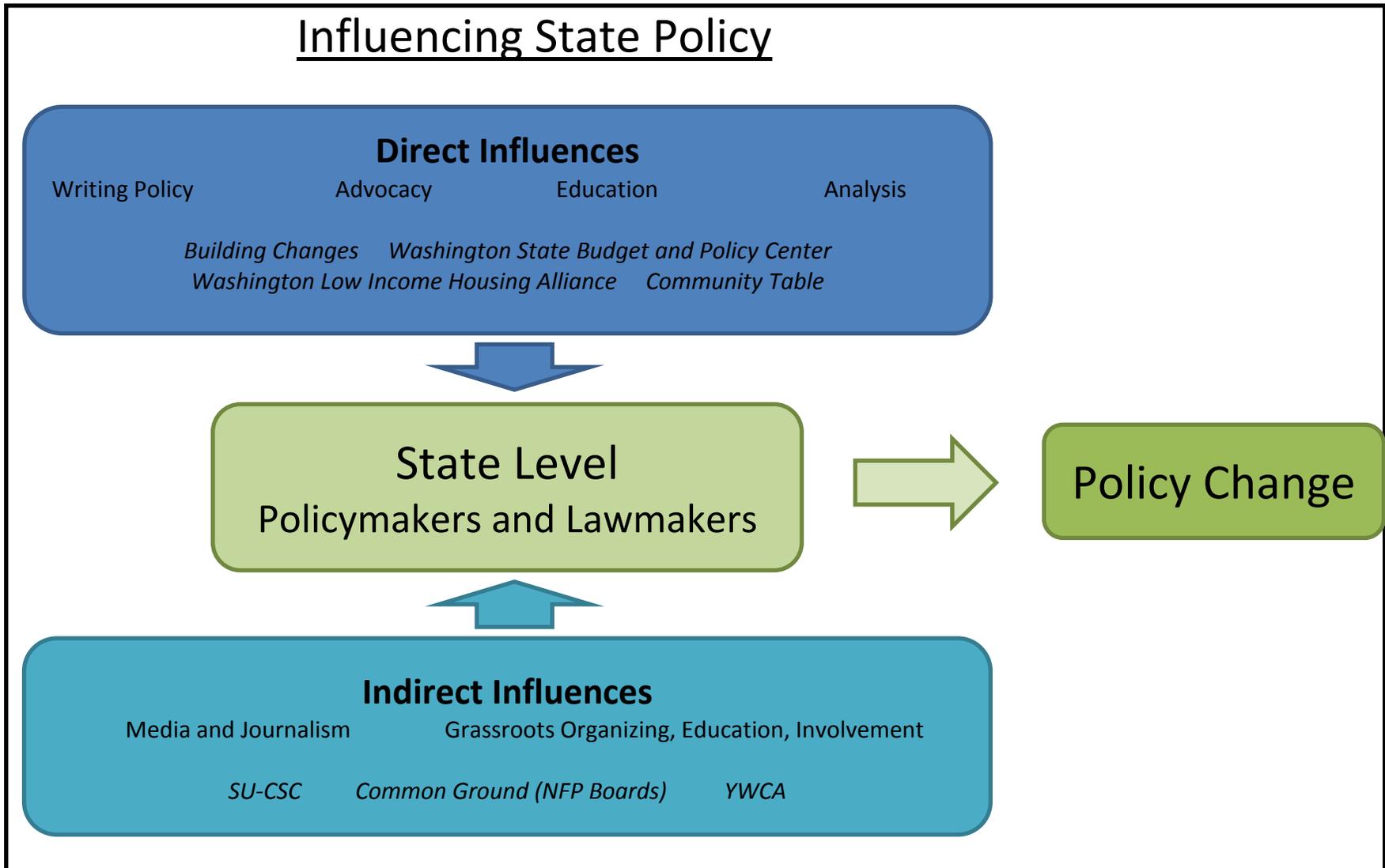


Chart VI-1. Advocacy Grants by Focus Area

<p>Focus Area 1: Promising Practices</p>	<p>Focus Area 2: Coordination and Collaboration</p>	<p>Focus Area 3: Data Driven Decision-Making</p>	<p>Focus Area 4: Policy and Advocacy</p>
<p>NAEH</p>	<p>Columbia Legal Services</p>	<p>Solid Ground</p>	<p>Funders Together</p>
<p>Columbia Legal Services</p>	<p>Puget Sound Educational Service District</p>		<p>NAEH</p>
<p><i>Coordinated Entry</i></p>			<p>Alliance for Justice</p>
<p>Puget Sound Educational Service District</p>			<p>Common Ground</p>
<p><i>Prevention</i></p>			<p>Solid Ground</p>
<p>Tacoma Housing Authority</p>			<p>WLIHA</p>
<p><i>Rapid Housing</i></p>			<p>WA State Budget and Policy Center</p>
<p>WLIHA</p>			<p>YWCA Seattle-King Co.-Snohomish Co.</p>
<p>Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County</p>			<p>Rotary International Districts 5020, 5030, and 5050</p>
<p><i>Tailored Services</i></p>			<p>Seattle University, Center for Strategic Communications</p>
<p>Solid Ground</p>			<p>Columbia Legal Services</p>
<p><i>Economic Opportunities</i></p>			<p>Seattle University School of Theology & Ministry</p>
			<p>Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County</p>

FIGURE VI-2. State Policy Change



Examining the Impact of the Advocacy Activities

As noted, the Foundation and Building Changes have implemented a variety of efforts under the general rubric of advocacy aimed at building awareness and support among policymakers and key third parties about emerging strategies to end family homelessness, a sense of shared accountability, and a broad base of support for reallocating existing resources and promoting new sources of funds. Over the course of the evaluation, we will examine the impact of these efforts both individually and in concert, as well as how they work to support the work in the demonstration counties. At this stage in the evaluation, we can begin to assess the extent to which these efforts are aligned with these three desired aims and the extent to which any have been achieved.

Building Awareness and Support

Many, if not most of the efforts, that the Foundation and Building Changes has implemented in this general area of advocacy has had the goal of increasing the visibility of the Initiative, the needs of homeless families, and the need for system reform. A twin goal is that by increasing awareness and understanding of the issue, the Initiative can garner support for its work.

The meetings with government officials at all levels have been the major vehicle to educate them about the Initiative and how they can provide support. Many of the grants funded to advocacy partners, in particular, have had a central focus on increasing public awareness of family homelessness. The Foundation has had a strong emphasis on building awareness and support for the Initiative itself, as well as an emphasis on making the public aware of the problem of family homelessness and how it can be reduced and eradicated.

The evaluation is not designed to assess broad community awareness created by this effort or the extent to which there is growing support for the Initiative at this level. At the stakeholder level, evidence of increased awareness of State and local officials has come through our interviews and meetings with them in which heads of agencies and others working at policy levels report increasing understanding of what the Initiative entails and what it is designed to accomplish.

With respect to the advocacy grants, the multiplicity of efforts as well as the targeting of a variety of sectors and different levels within those sectors appears to be well-positioned to create awareness and in turn support. The advocacy agenda, however, is very broad and not well tied into the work of the counties. A concern voiced by several we interviewed, especially those responsible for implementing the county efforts, is that they are not aware of these efforts and are not clear how they are designed to support their work on promising practices. It was also noted that the work feels opportunistic and may create shifts in the Initiative that do not allow earlier efforts to take hold.

Developing a Shared Sense of Accountability

Several strategies are specifically designed to promote and create a shared sense of accountability among those involved in the Initiative. The learning trips, in particular, help to create a sense of “we are all in this together” and how efforts can be coordinated and combined to tackle the problem. Almost all with whom we spoke who have participated on a visit noted that these trips were useful in bringing ideas to their attention and in helping stakeholders bond together and understand each other’s activities. Attendees noted that the trips helped in the development of plans to support the Initiative locally, but there was some concern that the communities visited are quite different than their own and thus present some challenges in understanding how practices can be replicated.

The work that is weaving together housing with child welfare has engaged leaders at the state level in the Children’s Administration to work with leaders in the housing authorities, Building Changes, and others to focus on the segment of homeless families who are served by child welfare and would benefit from supportive housing programs. The intersection of housing and child welfare has grown into a continuing area of work within the Initiative, particularly at the State level. The local leaders are primarily from the housing authorities, and the work is starting to weave into the implementation plans of the individual counties.

Similarly, the work of a variety of leaders involved in the HMIS and other data efforts through the Data Solutions Workgroup has helped to create an understanding of how their combined efforts can improve the ability to track changes in the homeless family population, as well as their needs and services received. These efforts have been integrated with each county’s work with improving HMIS to support the implementation of coordinated entry systems.

Building a Broad Base of Support for Reallocating Resources and Promoting New Resources

A key desired outcome from the advocacy efforts is to not only create awareness of the problem of family homelessness and to gain support for change, but to actually spark change at the policy and practice levels that can ultimately lead to reduced homelessness. This work almost always entails reallocating existing resources or obtaining new resources dedicated to the change. The work on repositioning the transitional housing created under Sound Families as supportive housing for homeless families involved in the child welfare system is a prime example of direct work in progress that could result in reallocation of existing resources. Similarly, the legislative efforts by Building Changes that resulted in the passage of state legislation allowing telephonic consent for Homelessness Management Information Systems (HMIS) data collection also helps to garner support for new resources as well as reallocation of existing resources. Being able to collect data over the phone for the HMIS provides for a more open coordinated entry process, which in turn provides for a more complete understanding of those in need and the resources needed to meet those needs.

At the local level, the funders group in each county was established as a main vehicle for more coordinated funding for homelessness along key system priorities. The King County funders' group, in operation prior to the Initiative, has been identified as the main leadership body in homelessness in that county and effective in determining funding priorities. It is viewed as having considerable power. The funders' groups in Pierce and Snohomish counties are much newer and have not yet been identified as a key vehicle for leadership in their communities. At the national level, Funders' Together represents a vehicle for aligning the support of the philanthropic community in this arena.

Several stakeholders singled out a couple of specific activities as not providing the clout they may otherwise have if implemented differently. The WFF Leadership Committee, for example, is generally not viewed as a central leadership body in the state for homelessness and its work, largely confined to the meetings, has not resulted to date in stimulating any policy changes or investments. It was noted that it meets too infrequently and is too large to be a body that can direct or lead change.

The meetings with local school districts to explore strategies that would strengthen connections between local school districts' McKinney Vento requirements and homeless service providers were also noted as not being as helpful as they might be if structured differently. They were viewed as focusing on issues that have been discussed for years and tied into legislation that has been on the books and unlikely to change. Much of the discussion was described as "reinventing the wheel". There was a concern that the right people were not at the meeting to provide the assistance needed and that those leading the meetings were not those with the homeless expertise that have been engaged in best practices.

Summary

The purpose of the current report is to outline and describe the advocacy efforts in place and how they are being implemented. In the short run, the projects are intended to create awareness of, and support for, the Initiative in each of the counties; increase the Initiative's visibility at all levels; and engage partners from other sectors and systems in the issue of family homelessness at all levels. Preliminary evidence suggests that awareness, support, and engagement are being created, especially from some activities such as Learning Trips.

Over time, the evaluation will track if and how these efforts influence changes in the systems, such as increased coordination and braiding of funding; realignment of funding, legislation, and policy; leveraged private and public funding; shared accountability across sectors and systems; and in turn, increased prioritization of family homelessness as an issue in the three counties. Longer-term desired outcomes stemming from these efforts include greater resources for housing and services, increased access to housing subsidies and entitlements, dedicated public funding for the key practices related to the pillars, increased flexibility and coordination of funding, and new and expanded sources of funding.

It is not expected that all projects will succeed. Many different activities are being attempted, and the Foundation as well as Building Changes expects that some will likely work more effectively than others. One of the major hopes is that by “warming up the constituencies” the different advocacy efforts will help break down the silos that exist among sectors and systems.