



Operationalizing Resident Centered Values – Facilitating Resident Agency & Voice

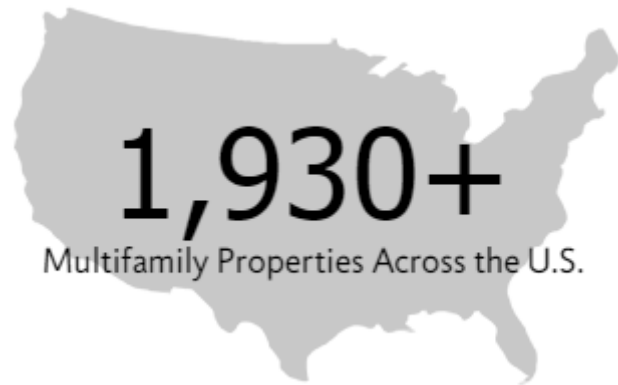
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CLPHA – Housing Is Summit



contact@sahfnet.org

Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future



140,000+

Rental Homes for Families, Seniors, and Special Needs Populations

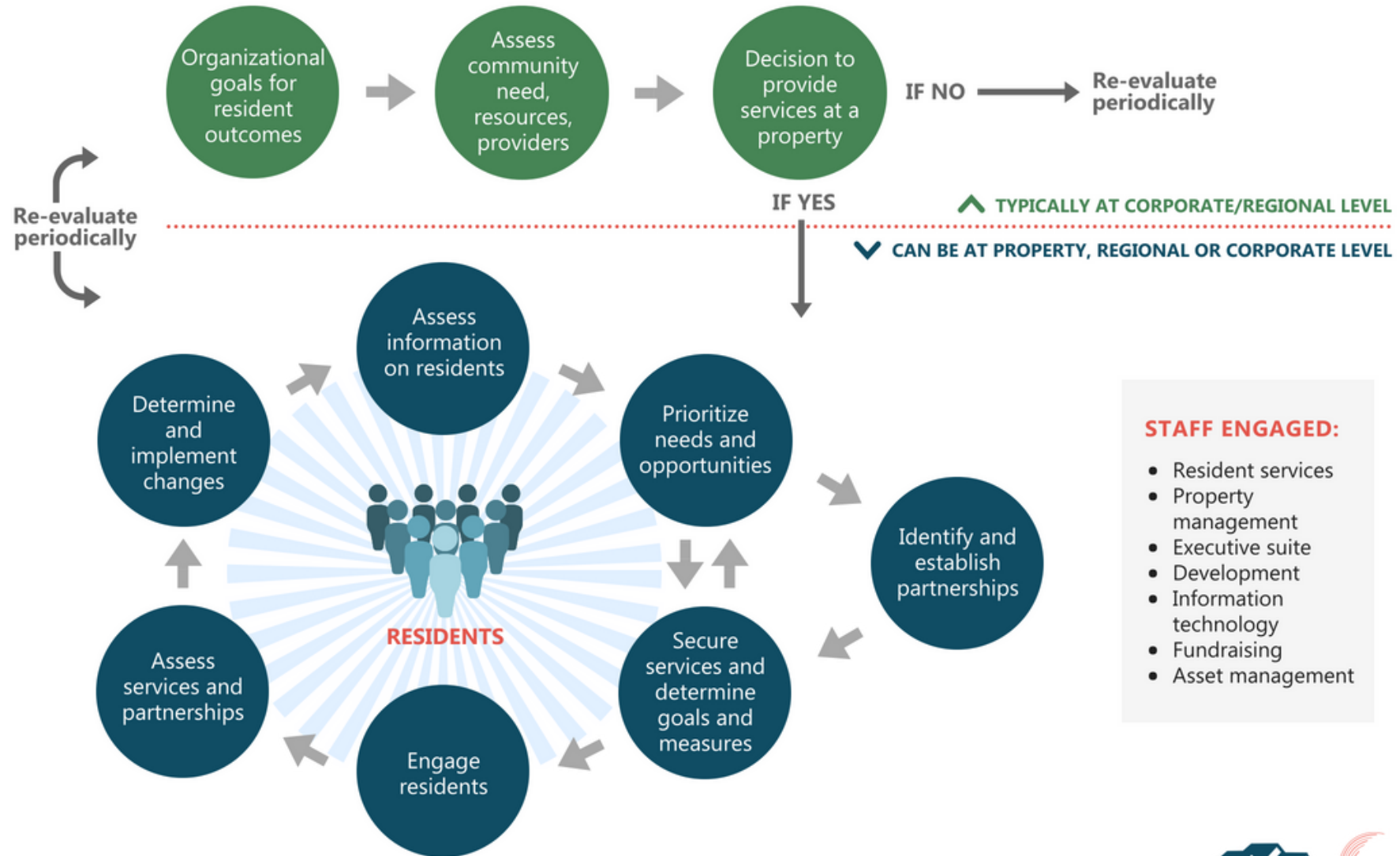


250,000+

People Served by SAHF Members

FRAMEWORK FOR THE SYSTEM OF RESIDENT SERVICES COORDINATION

A Resident Services Coordination System includes all functions tied to the organizational mission to implement resident services in affordable housing rental properties, including the corporate and site-based staff; funding and partnerships; technology systems; services and programs; research and evaluation; and organizational knowledge gained over time.



Impact of Resident Agency on Health and Economic Mobility

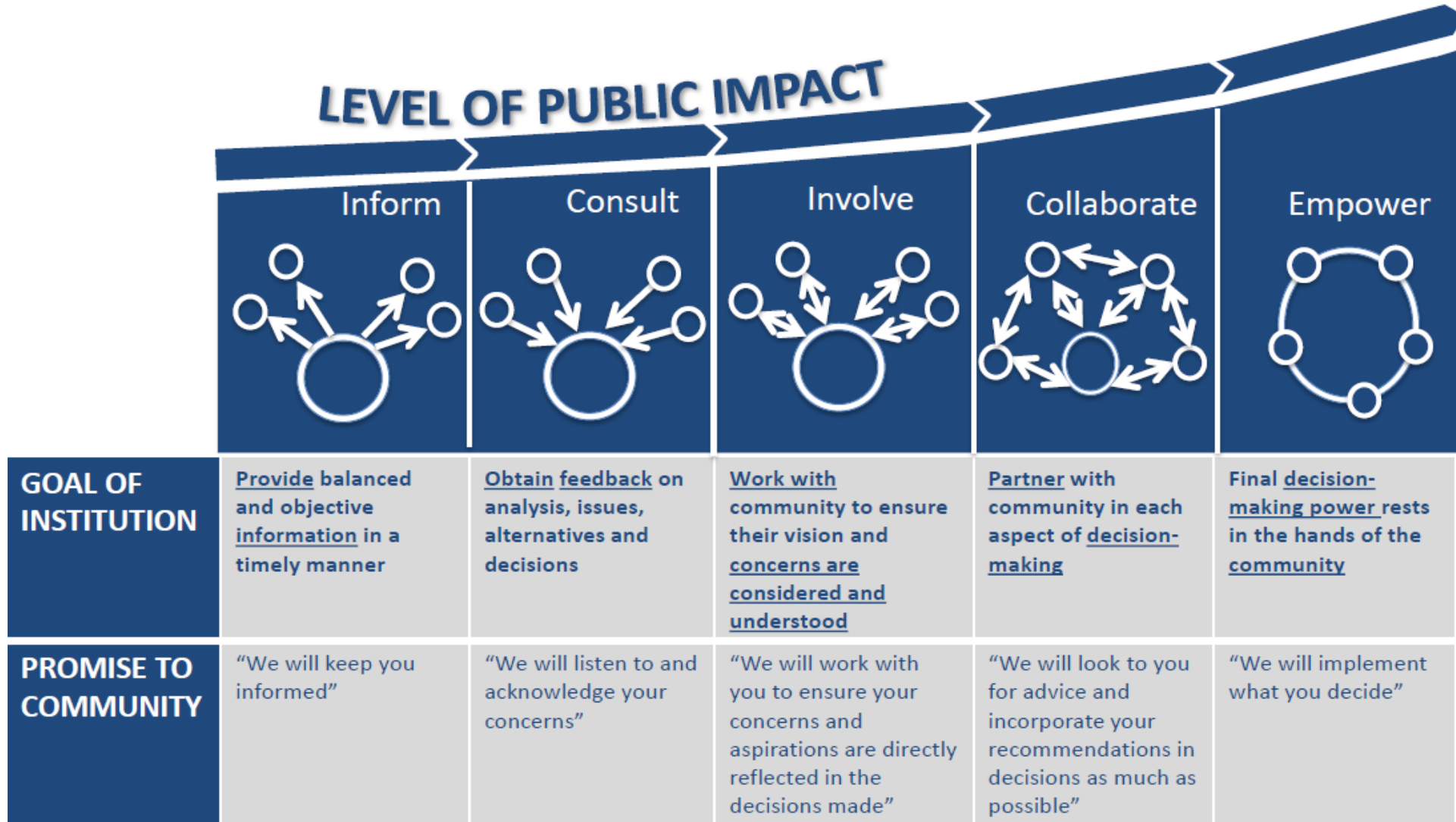


Source: *Measuring Mobility from Poverty*, 2018

US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty at the Urban Institute

- Evidence demonstrates that perceived control plays a role in mitigating trauma and toxic stress, especially as it relates to control over the present and future.
- Sense of agency/control over one's life can help to mitigate sense of isolation and loss that many seniors experience due to the limitations of declining physical health
- The US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty identifies three critical pillars for economic mobility: (1) Power & Autonomy, (2) Being Valued in the Community, and (3) economic success.

Levels of Community Engagement



Source: International Association of Public Participation

A photograph of two young women embracing outdoors. The woman on the left has long dark hair and her eyes are closed. The woman on the right has curly dark hair and is smiling. They are in a grassy area with trees in the background.

Fostering Resident Agency and Voice in Affordable Housing

Goals for the Project

- Engage directly with residents, frontline staff, and “corporate-level” staff to better understand:
 - Perceptions of resident voice, power, and engagement in decision making where they live/work
 - Perceptions of and the value of resident data collection; and opportunities for sharing data back with residents
 - Perceptions of how the property (where they live) and interactions with staff support resident health and wellbeing, with particular emphasis on mental health
- Identify meaningful opportunities and strategies for resident engagement and partnership that foster greater resident voice and power
- Better understand where “good intentions” and “resident-centered values or mission” breakdown in the daily business of operating properties and resident services initiatives
- Update the [Framework and Guidelines for a System of Resident Services Coordination](#) with key learnings to help practitioners identify and implement resident-centered strategies
(Updated Framework will be publically available later this year)

Levels of Engagement & Methodology

- **Resident Focus Groups:**
Conducted six focus groups in three locations – 58 residents participated
- **Frontline Staff Interviews:**
Interviewed RSCs and Property Managers for all three sites
- **Senior Level Resident Services Staff Interviews:**
Interviewed senior level Resident Services Staff members from three organizations

A Selection of Key Learnings – Focus Groups

- When asked what they liked best about the property – **connection to people** (community, proximity to family, connection with neighbors, supportive property staff etc.) was mentioned most frequently
- Residents talked about the **value of resident services coordinators and “relationship oriented” staff** - felt supported by them. The social environment created by staff (both Property Management and Resident Services) at the property matters deeply to residents.
- **Social environment** is an important aspect of resident satisfaction – **relationships** with staff and neighbors, **access to common spaces/amenities**, and **ability to organize resident-led events**.

Key Learnings – Focus Groups Continued...

- Resident's feelings about their personal data intersect directly with issues of empowerment – they were less concerned with privacy issues, but wanted **better communication** and to **understand why data is collected and how it is used**.
- Residents also expressed feeling a **sense of obligation** - that there is an expectation for data collection and **less expectation of privacy** because they are living in subsidized apartments.
- Residents at all three sites asked if there would be future forums for discussion on these topics and themes – there was a **desire for continued engagement**. Residents expressed that identifying and holding a set of **shared values for their property/community matters** to them.

A Selection of Key Learnings – Staff Interviews

- When asked to define resident engagement – **most staff focused on participation in events** rather than engagement in **decision making** or development of **relationships, community, and trust**
- All staff believe they are **accessible and approachable** – this did not always align with the discussion and feedback in the resident focus groups
- Staff felt that engaging and including residents in decision making or programming decisions **helps them to be successful in their work** – both completing tasks and grounding their work in meaning
- Some staff questioned the value, practicality of, and ability to power-share with residents – implementing a different approach would be a **significant cultural and operational shift.**

Key Learnings – Staff Interviews Continued...

- Staff assumed that long-term residents already understood why data was collected and **assumed that data collection had become an accepted norm**. However, residents in the focus groups did not always understand why data is collected and are seeking better explanations and communication.
- Some staff saw data collection as an **opportunity to build trust**, however most staff did not have a process for sharing back data with residents.
- Most data collection is for **compliance** and **tracking resident outcomes** – not about **resident satisfaction as an engaged member of the community**.
- Of the staff who have participated in **trauma-informed trainings** and approaches, most saw the benefit of continued training, not just for the resident services team, but **for all staff who have routine interactions with residents** .

Considerations in Context of COVID

- Research suggests that the stress experienced when a resident is unable to pay rent can have some of the same negative health outcomes as a person experiencing homelessness or displacement. **How we engage in conversations about pay rent matters.**
- Owners are faced with the challenge of developing and implementing policies that evaluate and attempt to balance
 - (1) **protecting the physical health** of all community members at a property
 - (2) **supporting residents agency and autonomy** as an important component of a person's health and wellbeing.



[SAHF BLOG Post](#) and
[Communications Tip Sheet](#)

Framing difficult conversations with residents about paying rent in ways that support resident wellbeing.

Next Steps

- Finalize analysis of learning across resident focus groups, interviews with frontline staff, and the interviews with senior level resident services staff
- Integrate resident-centered strategies and recommendations into Framework for Resident Services Coordination
- Explore opportunities for better integrating trauma-informed and resident-centered strategies into the affordable housing field – development, property operations, asset management, and resident services.
- Continue to lift up these models and learnings to build greater understanding and adoption of resident centered approaches and communicate the importance of this work for fostering resident stability and wellbeing.



**Placing resident
experience, agency and
opportunity at the center
of all we do**

**THE COMMUNITY
BUILDERS**

Residents at the center of all we do

- **Why is this a strategic priority for TCB?**
- **What is the value proposition here?**
- Link to our mission: “build and sustain strong communities where all people can thrive.”

Value Proposition: Trauma-Informed Housing



Conceptual models for trauma-informed housing

Primary objective: to promote agency/control, safety, trustworthiness, transparency, collaboration, empowerment, and cross-sector approaches

- Multi-prong approaches to advance resident experience, resident agency, and residents' connection to opportunity
 - Staff development
 - Attention to physical environment
 - Assessing and responding to community needs and strengths
 - Engaging residents in problem solving and implementation, and revising housing policies and practices with residents' input
 - Revising policies and practices as needed



What are we doing next?

Staff Training: Increase staff responsiveness to resident needs; Develop shared understanding of trauma-informed practices.

- TCB Staff (Community Life & Property Management; Key community partners)

Improve systems: Identify, support, and connect residents at risk of housing instability to appropriate services.

- Health Champions (resident leaders)
- Increase access to emergency and longer-term trauma services
- Improve data collection and connecting systems

Increase knowledge and access to relevant community resources

- In addition to those above, explore increasing on-site services as well as a more holistic referral network

Enhance efforts to build social connections and social trust among residents and between residents and staff.

- Increase meeting spaces, social activities, and trauma-informed practices

Review and address policies and structures that may inadvertently contribute to or exacerbate residents' trauma and decrease agency/control

- In collaboration with residents



SAHF & TCB Presentations -- Q & A (5-10 min)

Break Out Discussion Groups (20 min)

Discussion Prompts

1. Are (how are) your organizations thinking about incorporating resident voice and agency into organizational culture and operations? How does this align or compete with other organizational goals and drivers?
2. Where are the places in your organization where you believe you do this well – where you have successfully implemented resident-centered strategies? Where are the places where you see challenges most often?
3. This type of initiative or organizational culture change requires significant buy-in and support from within the organization. What stakeholders are needed to operationalize these kinds of efforts? What are some lessons learned through your own implementation?
4. How have you measured resident engagement, resident agency, empowerment, or independence? What proxies do you use?

**Thank You
and Please Stay in Touch!**



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