

Phase I Outreach Summary Report

January 18, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) with their consultant, EnviroIssues, and in partnership with the Oregon Human Development Corporation (OHDC), engaged hundreds of service providers and recipients in the initial phase of outreach from September through December 2017. In this Phase I outreach, OHCS, EnviroIssues and OHDC staff conducted three main types of meetings. The lead agency for each meeting type is shown in parenthesis below.

- Presentations at conferences and discussions with service providers (OHCS)
- Focus groups with low-income Oregonians who receive OHCS services or who have had difficulty receiving OHCS services (EnviroIssues)
- Focus groups with agricultural workers (OHDC)

Presentations at Conferences and Discussions with Service Providers

OHCS attended 11 industry conferences and partner meetings, held 22 partner and housing advocate forums to discuss the Statewide Housing Plan and Oregon's need for housing and community services. Leaders from all nine Tribal housing organizations were presented with information about the SWHP and engaged in discussions about how to participate in the planning process. These presentations and discussions took place from October through December 2017. Throughout this process staff met with over 575 people to hear the local and statewide housing concerns. Additionally, OHCS developed a discussion guide for in-person and electronic engagement. Finally, OHCS hosted a webinar to share information and learn from partners and providers.

Several themes emerged over the course of the conversations and submitted responses. This report presents key themes from the outreach, however, the list is not a complete list of all topics discussed or the range of conversation developed. The key themes are intended to highlight issues that were raised across the state.

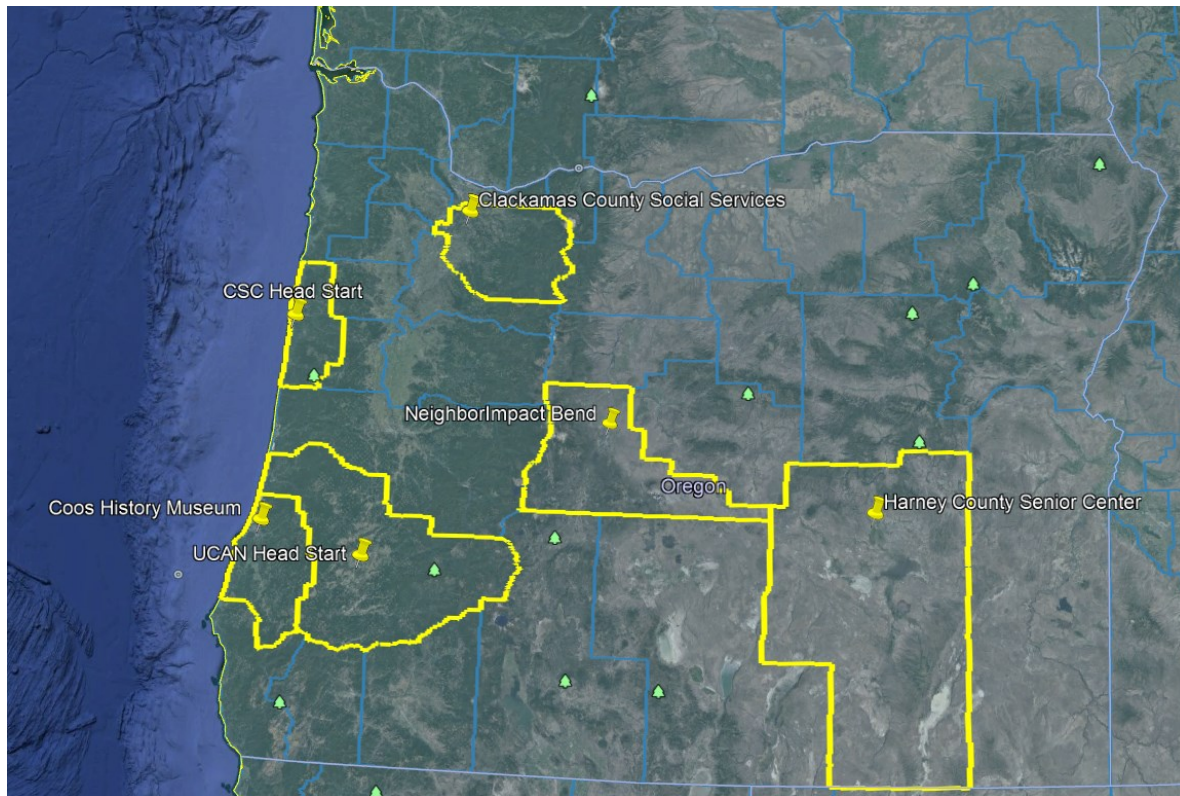
Focus Groups with Low-Income Oregonians

EnviroIssues facilitated seven focus groups, including one in Spanish, with low-income Oregonians to gather feedback that will inform the development of OHCS' Statewide Housing Plan. The focus groups took place between Nov. 29, 2017 and Dec. 14, 2017. EnviroIssues expects to facilitate two additional discussions in Scappoose and the Columbia River Gorge in February 2018.

The purpose of these focus groups was to complement the project team's housing need and gap analysis (quantitative data) currently under development with qualitative data. The qualitative data were obtained by listening, learning, and understanding barriers and challenges faced by low-income Oregonians accessing OHCS' funded human and housing services.

To hear perspectives from around the state, EnviroIssues held the focus groups in partnership with communication action service providers in Deschutes, Coos Bay, Clackamas, Lincoln, Douglas and Harney counties. Focus groups were held in Bend, Coos Bay, Oregon City, Newport, Roseburg and Burns at various times of day (Image 1). Table 1 reflects the details of the discussions.

Image 1: Focus group location map with highlighted county boundaries



To recruit participants for the focus groups, EnviroIssues is grateful for the partnership and effort to recruit participants provided by NeighborImpact, Oregon Coast Community Action, Clackamas County Social Services, Community Service Consortium, United Community Action and Community in Action. To support recruitment efforts and honor participants’ time and expertise, participants received a \$75 grocery gift card from Fred Meyer or Safeway, a meal, and child care services as needed.

In total, 60 Oregonians participated in these focus groups. EnviroIssues staff members Mari Valencia and Kirstin Greene moderated and took notes. In August 2017, prior to the events, EnviroIssues sought the review and concurrence of the OHCS project team on the approach and questions. The facilitators developed ten discussion questions and a Facilitator Guide to guide the discussion. Copies of these materials are included in Appendix A and B.

Table 1: Focus group locations, dates, times and attendance

Date	Time	County	Partner	Location	Attendees
Nov. 29	3:30-5 p.m.	Deschutes	NeighborImpact	20310 Empire Blvd., Bend, OR, 97701	8 confirmed; 5 attended
Dec. 5	3:30-4:30 p.m.	Coos Bay	Oregon Coast Community Action	Coos History Museum, The Sprague Room, 1210 N. Front St., Coos Bay, OR 97420	8 confirmed; 8 attended

Date	Time	County	Partner	Location	Attendees
Dec.11	4:30-5:30 p.m.	Clackamas	Clackamas County Social Services	2051 Kaen Road #135, Oregon City, OR 97045	10 confirmed; 8 attended
Dec. 11	Spanish Session 1-2 p.m. English Session 2-3p.m.	Lincoln	Community Service Consortium	CSC Head Start, 253 NE 1st St., Newport, OR 97365	Spanish Session: 8 confirmed; 4 attended English Session: 8 confirmed; 14 attended
Dec. 12	10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.	Douglas	United Community Action Network	Roseburg Head Start, 948 SE Roberts Ave., Roseburg, OR 97470	16 confirmed; 13 attended
Dec. 14	11 a.m.-1 p.m.	Harney	Community in Action	Harney County Senior Center 17 South Alder Burns, OR 97720	8 confirmed; 8 attended

Focus Groups with Agricultural Workers

During this same time, the OHDC, statewide provider of Farmworker services, facilitated six open forum discussions with Farmworkers in six different Oregon Farmworker communities including Hermiston, Hillsboro, Hood River, Klamath Falls, Ontario and Woodburn. The discussions helped OHDC understand the state of Farmworker housing conditions. A total of 150 Farmworkers across these communities participated in the open forum discussions.

Additionally, OHDC developed a standardized survey and encouraged Farmworkers to fill it out after the open forum discussions. Farmworkers not able to attend were asked to complete the online version of the survey. A total of 160 surveys were completed by Farmworkers in person and online. A detailed outreach report produced by OHDC is included in Appendix C.

KEY THEMES: PRESENTATIONS AT CONFERENCES AND DISCUSSIONS WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS

1. There is a profound need for affordable housing in every part of Oregon. There is need for affordable housing across the housing continuum and across all incomes. Housing affordability is elusive across the state. In every community visited there was a shortage of safe, decent and affordable housing. This shortage not only affects extremely low and low-income Oregonians and their families, but also affects vulnerable populations. The lack of affordable housing impacts people with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, families needing larger units, youth aging out of foster care and youth without housing, and people in transition out of homelessness. People have limited options for housing and in many situations nowhere to go. Lack of options also impacts people with limited English proficiency and people who are undocumented. When experiencing housing insecurity, many Oregonians may not be able to complain about substandard conditions, as they could face discrimination and threats from neighbors or abuse. The lack of supply has led Oregonians to double up, causing overcrowding and cramped living conditions, or live in their cars or recreational vehicles. OHCS staff heard that many people are living in national forests, on city streets and in parks because of the lack of affordable housing options. Where there

is subsidized housing, the waitlists are too long making people feel hopeless. In communities with a high number of vacation rentals, people can only secure 8-month leases.

2. Oregonians are facing significant barriers to securing safe, decent and affordable rental housing. Lack of tenant protections and increasing costs and fees to move into a home were high on the list of things causing this problem. Due to the limited supply of units in many communities, landlords are able to be more selective, and people with poor credit histories, criminal backgrounds or other screening issues are losing out on places to live. The high cost of application fees has an impact on low-income people looking for housing. People are having a hard time coming up with the move-in fees and security deposits necessary to secure a lease. As wages continue to be low throughout the state, the affordability of housing will continue to be out of reach. Many Oregonians are continuing to face discrimination in the rental or homeownership markets. Low wages are affecting communities of color, the LGBT community and special needs populations. Once housing is found, people are unsure as to whether they will be able to keep it due to no cause evictions and lack of tenant protections. They fear retaliation from their landlords. This leads to people living in substandard housing.

Additionally, OHCS staff consistently heard that people are paying more than they can afford on housing, leaving them with little money available for food, clothing, medicine and other essentials for daily living. Rent burden is affecting people in every part of the state and has lasting effects on health, education and financial security.

3. The housing crisis is disproportionately impacting seniors, people with disabilities, single-parent households, communities of color and youth. Community members highlighted populations who are disproportionately affected by housing instability including seniors, people with disabilities, single-parent households, communities of color and youth. Participants noted that many people are spending almost half of their income on rent and other housing costs. A common theme that resonated in many communities was the link between housing instability and overall financial insecurity. For example, participants noted that residents living on fixed incomes are increasingly at risk of homelessness. They must make tough decisions between necessities like rent and life-saving medications while their rents continue to rise. Their fixed incomes may not allow them to make much-needed changes to their home that would increase accessibility and allow them to remain in their home. People need to access supportive programs like rent and energy assistance to keep a roof over their heads.

In addition, OHCS staff heard efforts must be responsive to both the communities the agency serves and the cultures within those communities. This means developing housing strategies that consider vulnerable populations, immigrants, communities of color, people with disabilities and seniors.

4. The quality of rental housing is poor overall and has a disproportionate impact on low-income households. Across the state there is concern about the quality of housing stock. The quality of homes and apartments available to rent impacts the health and livelihood of many Oregonians. Poor quality homes often have mold, poor insulation, and poor quality and improperly working systems that add to the monthly utility bills. In many communities there is little incentive to upgrade naturally occurring affordable housing, meaning the housing is owned by private landlords and is not subsidized, because the community rents are low, and owners do not see the value in making improvements.

Low-income tenants able to secure housing units with a Housing Choice Voucher will face the reality that it will more than likely not pass the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Quality Standards, the entity that establishes the minimum criteria for the health and safety for units receiving payment in the voucher program. OHCS staff heard repeatedly that because of the lack of affordable

housing, people were not willing to complain about housing quality due to fear of eviction or fear of rent increases that would lead to their inability to afford their housing.

Poor housing quality is a persistent problem in manufactured and mobile home parks where owners may own or rent the home and pay a lease fee for the land it sits on. Low-income residents have little left over each month to make necessary repairs. More than 55 percent of the manufactured homes in Oregon were built before 1980, and construction of homes was unregulated before 1976. The aging stock of manufactured homes is compounded by the instability of not owning the land the homes sit on. Residents often experience housing instability from lease increases, poor infrastructure and possible closure. In addition to this issue, residents face the additional concern about parks being sold, closed and redeveloped. Closure of a park could be devastating for the community in which it is located due to the immediate loss of affordable housing for a large number of residents. Because of the expense, moving a mobile home is rarely an option. The lack of loan products for manufactured homes is also a challenge for homeowners to make repairs or to move the home if a park closes.

5. There is a strong need and will for more permanent supportive housing and support for those experiencing homelessness. Across Oregon, there is a need for more permanent supportive housing as an evidence-based practice for addressing homelessness. OHCS staff heard about the need for more funding to develop it and pay for ongoing services, as well as major challenges associated with building it. Partners want comprehensive training on permanent supportive housing and Housing First principles, assistance with financing deals, and better connections between housing developers and potential supportive housing service providers. Providers also referenced the importance of connections to mental health services and serving people returning to community after incarceration. Participants noted that there are needs to better align services and resources for those exiting institutions such as the Oregon State Hospital, jail, or prison and that OHCS needs better integration of services specifically in housing stock, housing placement and retention. The requirements of the Oregon Performance Plan with the U.S. Department of Justice were referenced as being critical in OHCS' work with health-sector partners.

6. Addressing homelessness takes a comprehensive and strategic approach. Community members across Oregon expressed significant concern about people experiencing homelessness in their communities. Four major themes emerged: the intersection of poverty and homelessness, the lack of shelter, the need for a local government engagement strategy, and the impact low-vacancy rates have had on homelessness.

Tackling homelessness takes leadership and collaboration among groups of dedicated public servants. It takes a mix of the right partners to take on new initiatives that bring innovation and momentum to communities. Participants noted that they would like more opportunities to work collaboratively with OHCS staff and colleagues to collectively reduce homelessness statewide. Many communities lack a shelter for people experiencing homelessness and long waiting lists for many affordable housing programs. Many communities face challenges with homelessness, including public perceptions and the ability to work communitywide, spanning multiple systems such as parks, criminal justice, mental health, and other touch points of people living on the street. The current housing crisis is having a real impact on Oregon families, the disabled, and seniors who are challenged to find new housing in a tight housing market. Providers are working diligently to assist people experiencing homelessness and there is a need for the state to assist local efforts by providing leadership, guidance and technical assistance to communities.

7. Housing, health, jobs and transportation are interconnected. Many communities identified the lack of public transportation systems as an issue. In rural areas, it can be difficult for residents without a car to access jobs, childcare and services. This dynamic adds additional cost burden for low-income residents, which should be considered when thinking about the ability for individuals and families to build savings. In

most communities, there is a clear consensus that housing, health, jobs and transportation are interconnected. The emerging partnership of health and housing is important to develop.

A key element of alignment with community partners is through support of coordinated entry models where clients can access services, regardless of where or how they present for services. Lowering barriers for people experiencing homelessness and low-income people seeking services is important for strengthening partnerships and coming into alignment with the delivery of services.

Regulations such as the Olmstead requirements continue to be a challenge for OHCS partners. There is the need to explore if there is a role for OHCS to partner in a way to reduce the impacts. The current Olmstead agreement ignores economies of scale by clustering.

8. The housing crisis cannot be solved without family wage job investments in economic/workforce development. The intersection between economic development, jobs and housing was referenced in almost all communities. Participants described issues related to lack of family wage jobs, as well as underemployment in some areas. Some lower wage jobs offer a maximum of 30 hours with no health benefits. This dynamic severely impacts the ability to pay increasing rents. Another issue related to economic development and workforce is the lack of general contractors and subcontractors, impacting new construction timing and costs, as well as rehabilitation projects to improve housing quality.

9. Regulations and lack of community support are barriers to developing needed affordable housing. Participants identified state and local policies as barriers to the development of new housing. Some communities have been engaged in housing planning, and stated barriers related to the lack of affordable and available land that is zoned appropriately with infrastructure ready for development. In addition, OHCS staff heard about some factors impacting the feasibility of development such as local fees, System Development Charges and lack of incentives available for developers to achieve financial feasibility.

A big topic in many areas was the “Not in My Backyard (NIMBY)” attitude toward new affordable housing development, which is linked to increased density. In some areas, participants highlighted the desire to explore innovative housing types such as co-housing, smaller houses, modular houses, cottage clusters, accessory dwelling units and others, but acknowledged unclear or restrictive zoning codes. Additional local issues include difficulty in addressing code enforcement for resolving health and safety problems.

Some communities highlighted impacts from lack of regulation and the increased conversions of rental units to Airbnb short-term rentals, an issue compounded by new construction focused on second homes on the coast and communities that are vacation destinations. In addition, OHCS staff heard that some community members perceive Urban Growth Boundaries as a key driver in lack of affordable and available land for new housing development.

10. OHCS programs need to be more flexible and aligned with the work of partners and other state departments, as well as work on the ground. OHCS staff heard from nonprofit partners, agencies, and developers of affordable housing that OHCS must strengthen partnerships and align programs with the work that is being done in communities. There was considerable conversation about the need to be aligned with other state departments including but not limited to Department of Land Conservation and Development, Department of Human Services and The Oregon Health Authority.

The need for flexibility in every aspect of the department was a recurring theme in the outreach sessions. To be a strong partner, OHCS needs to consider and be responsive to the unique needs of various communities and see the differences in local needs. For example, how housing and services are accessed varies based on location. The community and partner recommendations ran the spectrum of seeking new

initiatives that would support innovations such as, cluster homes, land banking, creating a state bank which could be chartered to support affordable housing, and offering revolving loan funds. It was recommended that information about funding opportunities be more readily available. This seemed to be consistent with the need for more technical assistance and community planning. Participants encouraged OHCS to look to successful programs for inspiration and consider a navigator to assist. There was the desire for OHCS to bring partners in to collaborate on solutions and address concerns related to definitions that limit access to services, for example chronic homelessness. Repeatedly, partners requested OHCS be clear about policy; the lack of clarity makes it more difficult for partners.

At the East Portland Action Plan meeting, an interesting issue was raised by a property owner who was seeking to refinance his units. The bank was not willing to refinance unless he raised his rent to cover the increased debt. Other partners had trouble refinancing buildings due to their funding streams. It was suggested that OHCS play a role as a partner to reduce the risk to banks and help keep rents low.

11. Homeownership, foreclosure assistance and rehabilitation for low-income homeowners needs to be part of Oregon's housing strategy. Participants highlighted the need to include affordable homeownership as a part of an overall housing strategy and continuum of housing options for Oregonians. Lack of supply is a major barrier in many communities for prospective first-time home buyers causing people to return down payment assistance dollars simply because they cannot find a home in their price range. Participants overwhelmingly noted the high costs of rent also make it difficult to save money for a down payment, keeping people stuck in the rental market.

There is a need for increased knowledge of and access to affordable loan products that allow prospective homebuyers to not only purchase new homes, but also to rehabilitate older homes that may have been sitting empty and for manufactured homes. Overall, there is a need for increased partnerships with local banks working to support local homeownership efforts.

For those who currently own homes, the rising housing market is making it difficult for people to maintain their homes. Participants noted that community members living on fixed incomes are often not able to keep up with mortgages and home maintenance costs, leading them into foreclosure. In some places, the home structures are so old that people cannot afford to keep up with home maintenance. Without funds for rehabilitation, they defer maintenance that affects their ability to sell, leaving them stuck in their home and likely leading to foreclosure. This is also true for families with low to moderate incomes who bought their homes when prices were low, but as prices and taxes increase, are no longer able to manage the mortgage payments. Often, these foreclosed homes sit vacant for months at a time.

In some communities, participants highlighted the disproportionate impact that the lack of homeownership opportunities has had on communities of color. Communities of color have historically been left behind in economic wage growth because they were not able to benefit from the aggregation of wealth over time. This has made it difficult to enter into the homeownership market.

The years of depressed supply has affected the need for options for potential and existing homeowners. Few options exist for first-time homebuyers and working families below 80 percent or even 120 percent of Median Family Income. The impact of investors buying portfolios and cash buyers have been felt by communities across the state. In communities where vacation rentals are prevalent, there is the added pressure on the market from people buying second homes.

12. Building networks and scaling up work through technical assistance, convenings and peer-to-peer learning is needed. OHCS staff heard a clear need for help building capacity for affordable housing projects, homeless services, and economic and community development work across Oregon. Partners want for

more opportunities for peer-to-peer learning across the spectrum of services and to build up networks across resident services, self-sufficiency programs, re-entry, child welfare, and affordable housing development. When looking at potential technical assistance and peer-to-peer learning opportunities, it is important that an assessment of the existing resources be included. This should include technical assistance services currently provided to Community Action Agencies, Continuum of Care (Homeless Services), Housing Developers and other providers. A few of the key areas where participants mentioned the need for technical assistance include opportunities for rural economic development, homelessness, building shelter capacity, building housing at all income levels including permanent supportive housing, and building partnerships across funding silos. It was recommended that OHCS consider what philanthropic, business, local government, and federal assistance providers give in terms of assistance and funding, and how these resources can be leveraged.

KEY THEMES: FOCUS GROUPS WITH LOW-INCOME OREGONIANS

1. Significant housing burden costs and pressures. In all seven focus group discussions, obtaining and accessing affordable housing, including market rate and/or public, is a common challenge participants face. Generally, participants accessing housing assistance endure long waiting periods and constant risk of losing housing support (i.e., section 8) due to eligibility requirements. Section 8 eligibility requirements consider family status, income level, citizenship status and eviction history. The income requirement only considers gross income or the salary/wage amount before employer deductions, and there is no consideration for other expenses such as utility, vehicle, or credit card bills. This income requirement was raised as problematic for participants because it does not reflect income pressures and suggests the expenses be considered. Some participants expressed that affordable options are unaffordable and inaccessible given the limited availability. Some participants requested a need for rental cost caps to prevent rent increases, especially significant increases. Some participants suggested landlord penalties for rent increases be introduced to keep them accountable.

2. Housing supply does not meet demand. In all seven focus group discussions, obtaining housing at all was a prevalent recurring theme. Some participants raised awareness of vacant and foreclosed housing options that are inaccessible, suggesting they be made available given the high housing supply needs. Others suggested a need for affordable housing supply innovation including offering underutilized spaces like hotels and schools as housing options and shelters for people.

3. Overall poor housing quality and conditions are experienced by participants. Most of the participants at all seven focus group discussions currently endure poor housing conditions, including leaky roofs, no heat, mold, and unreliable amenities, at the expense of not losing their current housing. Additionally, general lack of fair housing laws and protections inhibit participants from advocating for themselves. Many participants suggested a need to keep landlords accountable for providing decent livable conditions.

4. Innovative housing supply solutions and support needed. Many participants raised awareness of foreclosure and vacant housing options that are inaccessible due to bank ownership limitations. Other recommendations suggest reusing empty buildings like schools and hotels for housing options. Additionally, participants wish to be financially independent and free of housing and financial burden and request support for housing and financial stability. Participants recommended new homeownership programs, ideally at no cost, credit support for home buying, and positive letters of recommendation if lacking credit or have previous criminal history.

5. Housing discrimination and profiling is quite prevalent. In all seven focus group discussions, participants raised discrimination and profiling experiences as barriers in accessing housing. Participants mentioned having experienced racial, marital status, disability and family size discrimination. Participants with housing

assistance experience expressed negative prejudgments and labeling by landlords in large part due to previous landlord experiences with tenants with housing assistance. The negative prejudgments often resulted in housing denial.

6. A centralized resource location and/or portal for supportive services is needed. Trauma-informed and skilled staff is preferred. Generally, focus group participants were aware and/or had experience with supportive services, including energy bill assistance, weatherization and homelessness. Participant experience with these services were positive once obtained. However, participants were very discontent with the required eligibility paperwork, varying service resource locations, and information and customer service leading to approval. Many participants found the requested documentation and applications to be a challenge due to the length and complexity. Multiple visits to various locations for different supportive services was a common theme. Participants were very discontent with the process because of transportation, availability and time impacts. Participants suggested supportive services be centralized by an in-person and/or online location to reduce multiple trips to different locations and allow all service providers access to user information, eliminating redundant user application and information retrieval. Overwhelmingly, participants were very discontent with the customer service they received, highlighting that supportive service staff are not well equipped to handle trauma victims and do not show empathy or sensitivity to user experiences and needs.

DETAILED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FINDINGS

This section presents a detailed summary of the responses received from each question posed by EnviroIssues staff at the focus groups.

Housing: What Comes to Mind and What Does it Mean to be Stably Housed?

The focus groups began with a discussion about their initial thoughts when thinking about housing. This conversation created group ease and rapport, and provided a high-level understanding of current sentiments around the subject matter.

In general, across all focus group discussions, participants had negative associations when they thought of housing, including hardship and difficulties accessing quality, comfortable and affordable housing options as overarching themes. On the other hand, some participants associated housing with positive sentiments of warmth, stability, security and ownership – though many of the participants do not currently experience these sentiments.

Discussion about the meaning of housing stability followed. A range of responses were provided, many aligning with responses received for the first question with consistency across all focus group discussions. Major themes included security, ownership, safety, quality conditions, financial independence and the ability to be stationary over time. Additionally, the participants from the Newport discussion group conducted in Spanish expressed freedom from racial discrimination from neighbors and landlords to as part of their definition of stable housing. This group, comprised of four women of Latino ethnicity, expressed constant fear of losing their housing because of their ethnicity, highlighting landlord practices that seem to turn away or slowly remove tenants of color and/or of different ethnic backgrounds.

Table 2 summarizes full participant feedback, by focus group location, received for these two questions.

Table 2: What comes to mind when you think of housing? What does it mean to be stably housed?

Deschutes County: NeighborImpact (Bend, OR)	
When you think of housing what comes to mind?	What does it mean to be stably housed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing is too expensive • Sense of security • A safe place for the family • A warm place to sleep • A place to be at ease and comfortable • A place to relax and spend most of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security • Have your own place • Ownership/rental • Roof over your head • A place to call home
Coos County: Oregon Coast Community Action (Coos Bay, OR)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family size (3) e.g., 3 bedroom. Rents for 3 bedroom homes are \$900-\$1,200-\$1,600/month in this area • Affordability • Not enough availability • Homelessness • Happiness • Good management • Family with children in the budget • Slumlords and poor conditions – fear of reporting and eviction • Safe roof over our heads • Rent • Stress: affordable space for the size of family, with kids to feed, negative spiral down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security: a place to live and can call your own • Safe roof over our heads • Stress free environment • Landlord power: eviction, risk of homelessness; fear of no cause evictions • Stress with pets, companion dogs • Lack of landlord care • Single-level housing for my child with a brain injury, consideration of what stability would be
Clackamas County: Clackamas County Social Services (Oregon City, OR)	
When you think of housing what comes to mind?	What does it mean to be stably housed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing is too expensive • Difficult to find affordable housing options • Stressful • Complicated rules • Minimal availability of housing with inventory quickly diminishing • Constant rent increases • Trapped in negative situations such as housing quality • Fear of losing the housing • Homelessness • Sense of security • Challenging obtaining housing for young people • Lack of trust to landlord/property management • High utility bills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A family’s ability to exceed in life • Consistency • Comfortability • Security • Mental Health • Stable Income • Independence • Appreciation and gratitude for stability • Safety • A sense of guilt if stable
Lincoln County: Community Service Consortium (Newport, OR)	
When you think of housing what comes to mind?	What does it mean to be stably housed?
<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in English)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income options minimal • Insufficient housing supply for people • Overpriced and unaffordable • Comfortability 	<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in English)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure right now • Ability to pay housing rent, utility bills and food • Flexible • Low risk of losing home

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A place to call your own • High utility bills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not having to fear foreclosure • Ability to pay rent on a month to month basis • Earning an income that covers all bills and more • Livability • Safety and security
<p>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in <i>Spanish</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of security • Comfortable • Roof over head • Sense of stability • Beautiful • Quaint • Affordable 	<p>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in <i>Spanish</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stationary over time • Security • Rent that doesn't increase • Not having conflicts with neighbors for being of a different race and ethnicity (i.e., Mexican, Salvadorian) • Free of landlord racial and ethnic discriminatory practices
Douglas County: United Community Action Network (Roseburg, OR)	
When you think of housing what comes to mind?	What does it mean to be stably housed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A place to call your own • Safety • A place that offers warmth and dryness from the weather • Housing is too expensive • Cosigners are always needed • Homeownership • Dreams come true • Obtaining housing is goal to aspire to • A place for kids to feel safe • Stability and promising future • Many vacant and foreclosed options yet all are unavailable • Too many barriers/challenges associated with obtaining housing • Housing crisis statewide • Many people sharing small housing spaces due to expensive housing costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stationary over time • Affordability • Home ownership • Appreciation for stable housing • A private space of your own • A sense of freedom • Stable income and employment • Ability to take on many responsibilities • Getting out of debt
Harney County: Community in Action (Burns, OR)	
When you think of housing what comes to mind?	What does it mean to be stably housed?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Stability • Compatibility • A basic need is met when housed • A place that is livable and safe • Electricity should be paid with housing • Too many housing quality issues • A stress-free environment • Affordable housing options • Ability to get the right price for the right house • Constant need to make sure everything works in the entire home • Discrimination against allowing service animals in housing • Poor housing quality: roof leaks, slum lord conditions, not safe, repairs never made • Stability for low-income families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to pay the mortgage (can be cheaper than paying rent at times) • Landlord accountability for repairs and safe living conditions

What Concerns Do You Have About Your and Your Family’s Housing?

Participants were asked to share their current housing concerns. Three general themes were shared across all focus groups:

- **Discrimination by landlords heavily prevalent.** Participants raised marital status, disability and family discrimination as barriers to accessing or securing housing. Racial discrimination was raised by participants of color in two focus groups, Newport (Spanish) and Roseburg. Feelings of vulnerability and inability to have any control were associated with discriminatory experiences.
- **Poor housing quality and conditions.** Participants shared experiences that include unsuitable living conditions, such as mold within housing unit; nonfunctional amenities like the electric wiring, water, and heat; and poor ceiling, wall, and roof conditions. Participants endure these unfortunate conditions so to not risk losing their current housing and/or causing issues with landlords that could result in eviction.
- **Affordability.** Not surprisingly, participants expressed significant challenges obtaining affordable housing. Similarly, many participants stated experiencing high rents and rent increases with ranges varying from \$50 to \$200 annual increases. High levels of vulnerability and lack of security associated with rental housing given non-ownership. The Newport group conducted in Spanish noted tremendous housing pressures during off seasonal work, including fishery, hotel room cleaning, gardening, and exterior painting.

Table 3 summarizes full participant feedback, by focus group location, received for these two questions.

Table 3: What concerns do you have about your and your family’s housing?

What concerns do you have about your and your family’s housing?	
Bend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program support expiring • Uncontrollable externalities affecting housing security due to financial burden • Home ownership • Affordability • Discrimination • Experiencing hardship and/or profiling from landlords due to past negative experiences with low-income or housing assistance tenants • Housing conditions are not livable
Coos Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing is too small for what is in budget • High electrical bills (almost \$400/month, no hot water) • Affordability encompassing rent, electricity and other expenses • Poor maintenance/ repairs low (quality) • Fear of complaining, being marked as a “troublemaker” • Lack of or poor rental history as a barrier • Application fees are significant and non-refundable
Oregon City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfamiliarity with tenant laws resulting in being taken advantage of • High rent and/or significant rent increase • Problematic neighbors • Discrimination for being a teenager • Landlord selling - displacement • Landlord expectations: 2x income and deposit fees (3x costs) • Kids in schools, trying to keep kids in • Changing water, utilities • Voucher in time/long waiting list • Problematic roommates • Past criminal history impacting housing • Lack of credit history impacting housing access

What concerns do you have about your and your family's housing?	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough rental history impacting housing access • General shortage • Rapid rehousing by vouchers • Difficulties with housing providers accepting section 8 vouchers
Newport (English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent increases • Discrimination for being a single mom with two children with disabilities • Quality housing availability • Bullied and taken advantage of by landlord including threats to being kicked out. Landlords openly stating, "you are disposable" • Inability to stay warm • Not receiving section 8 assistance due to limited availability • Rapid rehousing • Lack of shelters for homeless population, current shelters do not meet need
Newport (Spanish)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No flexibility and/or sensitivity from housing providers for tenants when other bills become burdens such as shortage when children's tuition is due • Racial and ethnic discrimination. Landlords seem to be slowly removing people of color, specifically Latinos, from apartment complex and fears being next. • Lack of Spanish interpreters and/or employees at housing managements • High pressures during off seasonal work including fishery, hotel room cleaning, gardening, and exterior painting
Roseburg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of heat at current housing • Poor housing conditions and inability to request upkeeps out of fear of losing housing • Fear of losing housing as a renter with no stability control • Inability to find housing with the right amount of space to accommodate large family size • No flexibility from landlords though burdened by other bills and uncontrollable externalities • No access to reliable public transit or personal vehicle • Lack of affordable housing options
Burns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in home upgrades/fix ups though under risk of losing housing due to no cause eviction. A lack of security and vulnerability with no protection against no cause evictions. • Landlords are not accountable for providing safe and livable housing conditions • Tenants become "complainers" when fix up submissions are requested to landlords • Too many homes sit vacant that could be offered to people with housing needs (bank owns them and for some reason cannot access them to offer them to people) • Long waiting periods for housing assistance • Poor housing conditions including leaking roofs, slums with no landlord care, repairs and/or action • Unsafe living conditions (mold, electrical failures) • Fear of no cause evictions • Housing voucher options that meet wheel cheer disability accommodations

Positive and challenging experiences obtaining housing

Participants were asked to share positive and challenging experiences in obtaining housing. Rich feedback was provided at each focus group with the following themes expressed at two or more of the discussion groups.

Positive experiences

- Finding an affordable housing option became a reality with a supportive housing agency and caring case managers and staff. Agencies and/or programs highlighted include LO Crunch Program, Annie Ross House, Bridges Program, ORCA, Housing Authority and Clackamas Womens Services. It should also be noted that as participants offered this feedback, other participants were very receptive and

happy to learn about the positive experiences of others. Participants exchanged agency name and contact information as needed.

- Participants felt relief when housing that met family size needs and offered warmth, and security was secured, even if it was short term. A sense of independence, freedom and gratitude were associated feelings expressed when housing was secured.
- The focus group held in Burns, Oregon (Harney County) identified social media and housing management websites as useful tools to search and secure affordable housing options. Participants did note internet access requirements and joining listservs are key to successfully utilizing these tools.

Challenging experiences

- Rental assistance requirements, such as section 8, review only gross income and do not consider other bills and expenses such as utility, vehicle insurance, food and childcare, thereby capturing only partial applicant financial burden. Additionally, once section 8 support is obtained, participants struggle to find apartment complexes or housing options that take the vouchers.
- Security deposits require first month and final month in addition to general deposit fee leading to a large upfront housing cost.
- Lack of rental history and screening issues, such as criminal backgrounds, present barriers for many participants in securing housing options.
- A limited number of affordable housing options exist. If obtainable, cost of rent is still expensive leaving many participants rent burdened.
- Participants are not experienced in tenant law protections and experience frequent no cause evictions. Many participants endure inadequate living conditions so to not risk losing their housing option.
- Participants experience discrimination when obtaining housing for reasons including race, ethnicity, marital status, family size, age, and having supportive and housing assistance such as section 8 vouchers.

Table 4 summarizes full participant feedback, by focus group location, received for these two questions.

Table 4: Please describe your best and most challenging experience obtaining housing?

Deschutes County: NeighborImpact (Bend, OR)	
Best experience	Most challenging experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing assistance was not taken away during unexpected unemployment period • Housing assistance allowed the opportunity to go back to school and reduce multiple job commitments • Housing case manager was supportive in finding a home displaying genuine concern and interest in helping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental assistant guidelines review only gross income and do not consider other non-housing bills and expenses (utilities, vehicle insurance, gas, etc.) • Discrimination • Limited pet-friendly housing assistance opportunities • Apartment complexes are not flexible or accommodating for families with children or pets, or people that can work remotely • Long waiting lists for housing assistance
Coos County: Oregon Coast Community Action (Coos Bay, OR)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secured a roof over our heads • Safe place for our kids with ORCA's help. Previously lived in Bastendorf Beach in a tent with two kids (15 months and 4 years); difficult to secure housing when it's time sensitive to find housing, stressful, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotypes against the way I look, record (no dental work after a car accident/ no tooth; people assume it's from drug addiction • Tight timelines to find housing • Section 8 funding and time are both limitations;

<p>causes sickness; we were blessed to find a place, no one wants to give formerly homeless people a chance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the last four months, participant faced an eviction notice, suffering mental illness and stress, discrimination including against veterans. With homelessness, can bring a destabilization in medication, worsening of mental condition; need more leeway on time generally in finding housing. • With five kids, I've lived in five places with help from the Housing Authority and ORCA assisting with the deposit • Used to be out in Myrtle Point; now can bike to work • Short timelines to find housing, e.g., five days • Been 52 months clean, someone to give us a chance • Been 9 months clean, FAST housing through ORCA (2) • The women's shelter 	<p>restrictions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the housing is through a HUD/HAP contract, landlords should be obliged to provide safe, livable conditions; anti-discrimination should be enforced, including for Veterans. • We face retaliation if we make noise about the condition of housing • Deposits aren't refundable • Establishing a rental history if homeless is difficult
Clackamas County: Clackamas County Social Services (Oregon City, OR)	
Best experience	Most challenging experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LO Crunch program, a person was homeless (2-1-1), had to hit rock bottom • Rent assistance offered classes to learn about landlord expectations/responsibilities • Consistent Case manager at Clackamas HA • Rapid rehousing requirement for rent was positive and seamless • Obtaining housing provided a sense of freedom and leaving behind street dependency • Annie Ross House was very supportive worked to obtain affordable housing • Bridges program offered food, shelter and other needed support services • Clackamas Womens services helped obtain housing assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not having credit become barriers to obtaining housing • Identity theft • No cause eviction • High moving expenses and upfront housing deposits • Had to be "homeless" before being eligible for rapid rehousing • Long housing voucher waiting periods • Temporary and/or permanent disabilities present challenges for obtaining housing • Gross income requirements for housing assistance; other expenses and bills not considered • Housing application fees are high and financial burden • Background checks required by housing complexes are expensive and do not provide refunds (i.e. \$400) • Affordable housing apartments do not accommodate comfortably a large five-person family
Lincoln County: Community Service Consortium (Newport, OR)	
Best experience	Most challenging experience
<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in English)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding a house • Finding an affordable house that fit family size needs (duplex) • Being together as a family under one roof • Housing that was reliable and not dangerous • Having the ability to choose housing options • Relief of having a roof over head and not having to worry about weather (rain, cold, safety) 	<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in English)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to choose healthier food options because they are more expensive • Had to settle in a two bedroom though a family of six people • Shelters not available • Long housing assistance application process with long approval confirmation - children at risk, high feelings of hopelessness • Bad credit means no or minimal housing opportunities • Instability – constant moving • Lost savings upon foreclosure • Section 8 support is accepted at a small number of housing options

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing authority staff were not supportive and very insensitive • Long housing assistance requirements and applications - big barrier • Very few housing options for family members with disabilities • Permit requirements for mobile housing are painful
<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in Spanish)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing application was easy and quick in Newport in comparison to Portland • Received housing assistance but very skeptical – felt too good to be true 	<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in Spanish)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many application barriers such as documentation requirements, application length • Some people that need assistance do not get help, while those that don't, do get help • Friends and families were rejected which turned away participant applying for assistance • Poor housing quality and conditions
Douglas County: United Community Action Network (Roseburg, OR)	
Best experience	Most challenging experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having connections is beneficial • The right time makes a difference • Obtained a good price for housing option • Persistence, faith and bravery helped secure housing • Compassionate and understanding landlord • Displaying follow-through secured housing • Being transparent about housing need and ability to pay is important to landlords • Displaying good work ethic goes a long way for housing providers • Developed a positive landlord-tenant partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination (silent or vocal: too many children, not married, race, language, age) • Move in costs/fees (too high, no refund) • No cause eviction • Unfair housing costs • Maintenance ignored by landlord • Section 8 requirements are barriers • Vacant homes not available to house people • Student loans and lack of/poor credit are burden • Public company landlords are not the best • Phony partnerships • Safety, quality issues • Negative experience with return of deposit • Overcharging for leaving
Harney County: Community in Action (Burns, OR)	
Best experience	Most challenging experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media helped identify housing availability • Property managements sites are useful: Harney classified, Harney Rentals, Free Classified (barriers: tough to get on list serve or not having access to internet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord requirement of first, last and final deposit at the beginning of a rental agreement • Credit can be barriers to homeownership (medical bills do not help) • Background check, money isn't refundable • Application fees

Positive and Challenging Experiences Obtaining Supportive Services

The second half of the focus group discussions focused on positive and challenging experiences observed when accessing supportive services. Like the feedback received in the previous section, responses varied for each focus group with two or more themes shared by focus group discussions. Those themes follow.

Best experiences:

- Finding a supportive service agency and caring case managers and staff provided connection and access to a range of services and services providers. Participants shared a host of organizations, programs, and services including:
 - *Organizations/Agencies:* FAN, Boys and Girls Club, Amazon, NeighborImpact, Iron Tribe Family, DHS, NW Family Services Youth Villages, ARC Program, South Coast family shelter and Salvation Army
 - *Programs and Services:* holiday presents for children and families, housing assistance, utility bill assistance, meals, childcare and connection to other resources.

As participants shared positive experiences with their group, other participants were very receptive and like the previous section, an exchange of organization names, case manager with associated contact information occurred as needed.

Challenging experiences:

- Participants experience long waiting times after application and material submittals to secure supportive services assistance. Some participants request notice of denial sooner, rather than enduring long waiting periods to learn their application was declined.
- Five of the seven focus groups discussed discontent with customer service from service provider staff. Many participants shared experiences involving staff insensitivity to experiences and needs, prejudgments, rude behavior and lack of empathy. A few times, participants shared their discomfort in needing to use supportive services associated with sentiments of embarrassment for accessing the services and wish service staff members could be more sensitive to difficult lived experiences.
- Applications and documentation requirements are very time consuming and have turned away participants from accessing the services. Many participants struggle financially when service providers request documentation and personal information from other locations. Transportation, work and time costs are at stake.

Table 5 summarizes full participant feedback, by focus group location, received for these two questions.

Table 5: Are you aware of supportive services? Please describe your best and most challenging experience accessing supportive services?

Deschutes County: NeighborImpact (Bend, OR)	
Best experience	Most challenging experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAN - provided holiday, housing assistance, bill assistance and connection to other resources • East Boys & Girls Club was helpful • Amazon offers reduced pricing to low-income customers, if you work there you can get good benefits • Neighborhood Impact was supportive with a range of assistance – utility, holiday, food, child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time duration - waiting list is too long (i.e. Medford 5-7 years, Bend 2.5 years)
Coos County: Oregon Coast Community Action (Coos Bay, OR)	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ARC project; toiletries, food • South Coast family shelter • Accessed some reduced paperwork • Getting certifications can be difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotypes against the way I look, record (no dental work after a car accident/ no tooth; people assume it's from drug addiction) • Tight timelines to find housing • Section 8 funding and time are both limitations; restrictions • We face retaliation if we make noise about the condition of housing • Deposits aren't refundable • Establishing a rental history if homeless is difficult • Limited sources/ not enough resources to fill the need; being told no due to lack of money • Could also access churches • We don't have a week to hear back • No weekend or emergency hours
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Clackamas County: Clackamas County Social Services (Oregon City, OR)

Best experience	Most challenging experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iron Tribe Family helped with journey • Rotary, local (LO) helping: moving women's group helped with storage, wild women society • Springwater when don't have time to look 12 hours a day • Morrison and DHS, NW Family Services • Youth Villages: made time to meet with you and help you with what you need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient funds • Lack of communication between providers (Annie Ross - free glasses/lenses) • Better info sharing/pantries that don't exist, accurate links • Waiting lists (shelter-transit-voucher-rapid rehousing, was supposed for 6 months then turned out to be 1 year) • Ineligibility - months of waiting, better to decline right away • Different counties have different programs • Guidance on how to help yourself (e.g. letter of support to get trust)

Lincoln County: Community Service Consortium (Newport, OR)

Best experience	Most challenging experience
<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in English)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salvation army offers prompt support for water bill and give toys and presents to families (great experience) • High priority is given to children (this is positive component of Oregon's support system) • Energy assistance was offered for 6 months and process was prompt 	<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in English)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No availability in housing assistance • Rental homes unavailable - saturated by vacation homes • Unfair treatment, mischaracterized, discrimination • Profiling • Threats • Poor quality customer service when trying to access supportive services • Eligibility requirements are barriers, long waiting times • Previous history are barriers in accessing housing
<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in Spanish)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When applied the first time it was a fast experience for one participant. 	<p><i>(Focus Group Discussion Conducted in Spanish)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor customer service - was redirected to another city for application filing and is still waiting to hear back. • Applications and materials needed are too time consuming, too much info is asked • There aren't enough employees to help people fill out apps

Douglas County: United Community Action Network (Roseburg, OR)	
Best experience	Most challenging experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High needs for services All agencies should work together Customer service needs improvement (online access, flexibility) Privacy, info, documentation are all challenges Too much wait time to access services High scrutiny Unbalanced restrictions (male/female) Too many hoops to go through to access services
Harney County: Community in Action (Burns, OR)	
Best experience	Most challenging experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbor Impact and CBDG and CAPA Agencies - firewood program AFF homeownership Vacancy tax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtained section 8 support but found it difficult to use - houses found did not take section 8 Some property management companies be afraid of renting to people with vouchers Accessing housing that accommodates a big family is difficult Stayed at a motel - high rent and had to leave because it became too expensive

Anything Else OHCS Should Know?

Before concluding, EnviroIssues staff asked participants if they had any final thoughts, comments, and/or recommendations. Two overarching themes/call to actions were reflected across all seven focus group discussions:

- Build more affordable housing options.** Most of the participants in all focus groups are rent burdened, living in unsuitable living conditions or facing unstable housing. A need for affordable housing options that meet varying family sizes and are free of discriminatory and fair housing implications was very prevalent across all locations.
- Increase availability for social services** including child care assistance, rental assistance, utility services, and homeless shelters. Participants requested improvements to the eligibility requirements, specifically consideration of net income versus gross for housing assistance requirements, training for social service staff to better equip them to handle people with trauma experiences and/or low-income individuals, and recommended social service providers be centralized to minimize multiple trips for applicants.

Table 6 summarizes full participant feedback, by focus group location, received for the final discussion group question.

Table 6: Anything else OHCS should know?

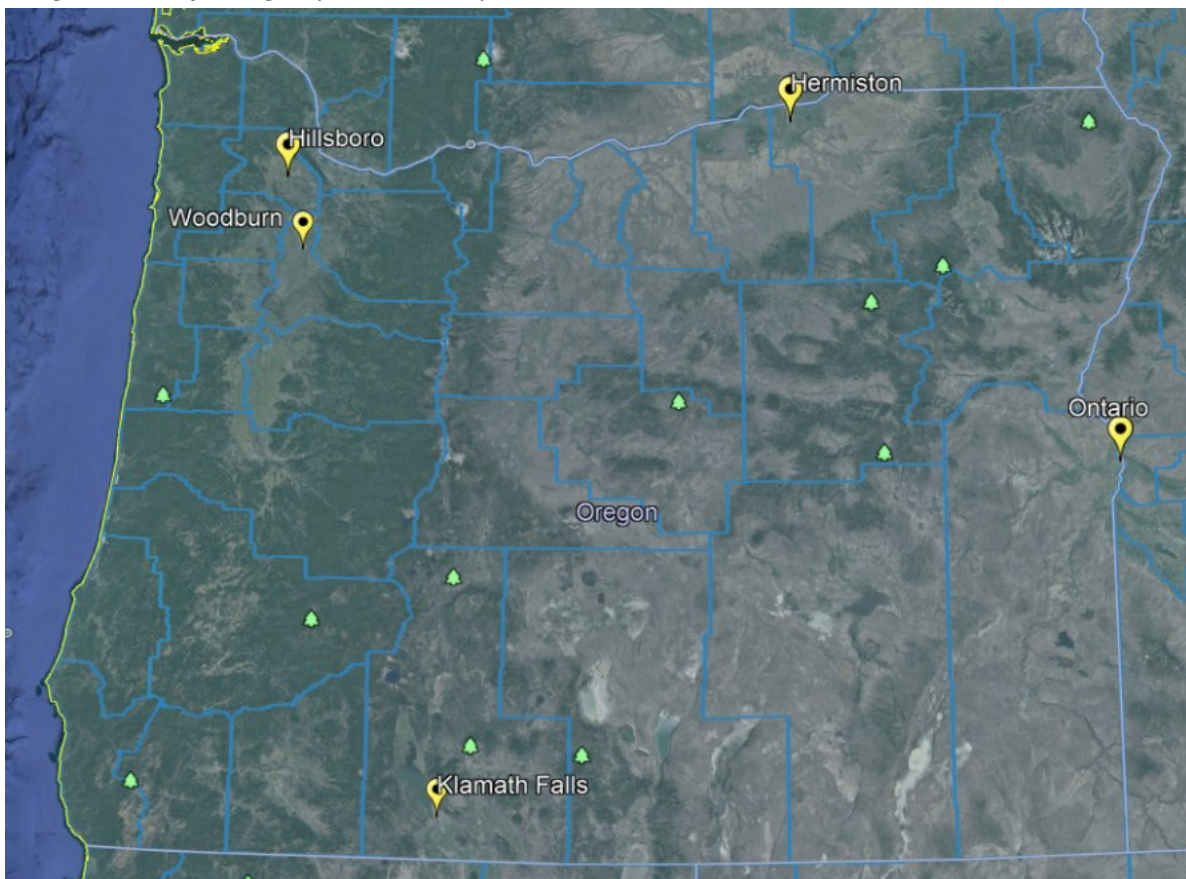
Anything else OHCS should know?	
Bend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise eligibility requirements Need more affordable housing (rental and homeownership opportunities) More social services are needed for people Affordable needs to be redefined (I.e. \$1k is not affordable) Put a cap on rent - rent is always going up every year and the amounts are too much!
Coos Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimize the deadlines; so much pressure Takes time to leave messages, get calls back Innovate to create more affordable housing supply, e.g., empty hotels, other underutilized spaces such as schools, foreclosed/HUD foreclosed properties

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more affordable supply • Share the benefits of subsidized section 8 vouchers, VAC; takes relationships • Better communication with less judgement; have personal communications • Grateful for programs such as FAST, providing shelter, homeless programs • Help provide specialized shelter conditions for kids with special needs; somewhere to care for the kids • Reduce judgement on rental/employment/criminal history • Increase care especially for mentally ill Oregonians who are reliant on steady medication
Oregon City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelters for sick children, children with cancer (with no immune system 9-year-old daughter with cancer) • Passport as legal identification/driver's license • Social security card • Better training for people on phone (consistency, manners), info on web • Better staff for DHS office • Need more affordable housing
Newport (English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build more affordable housing, offer different housing types • Legislation should direct housing to counties by need • More program types (housing, homelessness, section 8), funded by the county • Barriers placed on landlords, so they don't take advantage of renters (i.e. high rent increases, no cause eviction) • Childcare support is needed/pair it with housing support • Displacement caused by gentrification is an issue - help! • Establish community benefits • Support for people using services to be able to be successful without services • Resources/tools needed for personal growth
Newport (Spanish)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be material in Spanish and English at housing complexes and for services - awareness factor • Applications are in English and not in other languages. This becomes a challenge for people who are not English-proficient or don't speak the language along. Participants don't want to sign something they don't understand. But a lack of language assistance typically makes people sign or not even try.
Roseburg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build more affordable housing, offer different housing types • Legislation should direct housing to counties by need • More program types (housing, homelessness, section 8), funded by the county • Barriers placed on landlords, so they don't take advantage of renters (i.e. high rent increases, no cause eviction) • Childcare support is needed/pair it with housing support • Displacement caused by gentrification is an issue - help! • Establish community benefits • Support for people using services to be able to be successful without services • Resources/tools needed for personal growth
Burns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many vacant homes that are not available for housing people – affordable housing is needed! • Centralize resources to reduce travel between agencies • Offer human services portal (like medical portals)

KEY FINDINGS: OREGON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING FOCUS GROUPS

OHDC is a statewide provider of Farmworker services and member of the Agriculture Workforce Housing Facilitation Team (AWHFT) facilitated by OHCS. AWHFT convenes stakeholders to meet and discuss issues affecting the agricultural workforce in Oregon on a regular basis. Discussion topics include current agricultural issues, farmworker housing, resources available for developing farmworker housing, and how to address farmworker needs. In support of OHCS' Statewide Housing Plan, OHDC partnered with the agency to gather information on the housing needs of Farmworker families and Agricultural Workforce. To understand conditions and needs, OHDC facilitated six open forum discussions with Farmworkers in six different Oregon Farmworker communities including Hermiston, Hillsboro, Hood River, Klamath Falls, Ontario and Woodburn (Image 2).

Image 2: OHDC focus group location map



The outreach effort conducted by OHDC resulted in participation from 150 Farmworkers at the open forum discussions and 160 survey responses. In addition, 36 regional community partner agencies attended and participated in the forum discussions. The subsequent section will summarize key themes and findings OHDC highlighted in their outreach summary report and it will include comparisons or associations to themes and findings that came out of the focus group discussions conducted by EnviroIssues staff.

Key Findings and Themes

OHDC summarized the Farmworker feedback around housing issues into three key themes:

- Farmworkers face tremendous housing pressures due to the lack of available affordable housing options.
 - Farmworkers forced to share crowded housing conditions because of cost and lack of options. At times, Farmworkers are sharing homes or apartments with other families.
 - Many rely on hotels, garages, and live with multiple persons to a room.
 - Some Farmworkers have moved away from areas with agricultural work for lack of housing options.
 - These conditions are exacerbated during peak harvest seasons.
- Farmworkers struggle to meet the high costs of housing especially in the context of Farmworker wages.
 - Rentals are out of reach for most because of application fees and first and last month deposit requirements. Farmworkers generally found it unrealistic to pay 30 percent of their income on housing.
 - Farmworkers expressed concern about the seasonality of work and the need to save rental payments for months when no agricultural work is available.
- Farmworkers cited housing barriers unique to the Farmworker population.
 - Lack of income history and credit history, lack of state-issued identification and language skills prevent Farmworkers from accessing the limited private housing options that exist.
 - Most rental applications and rental documents are not translated to Spanish.
 - Many Farmworkers were unable to identify housing resources available to help them with housing needs.
 - Some Farmworkers cited racial bias and scapegoating by landlords.
 - Some Farmworkers cited lack of transportation options to the private housing options that exist.

Agricultural Farmworker and Low-Income Oregonian Focus Group Associations

The findings OHDC received from the focus groups they conducted with agricultural farmworkers had comparable results in the following ways with the findings from the EnviroIssues focus groups:

- **Lack of available affordable housing options** force residents into unsuitable living conditions including over crowded spaces. Additionally, EnviroIssues focus group participants noted having to endure poor quality housing conditions for fear of losing housing. Requesting repairs could result in evictions.
- **Expensive landlord upfront requirements**, including application fees and first and last month deposit, have strong burden on participants. EnviroIssues focus group participants suggested that the application fee be refunded at a minimum, especially if declined.
- **Lack of income history and credit history** are barriers to accessing housing. Additionally, EnviroIssues focus group participants identified past criminal history as barriers too.
- **Racial discrimination and scapegoating by landlords is very prominent.** Additionally, EnviroIssues focus group participants identified other discriminatory practices due to age, gender, marital status, and disability.

The EnviroIssues focus group participants from the Spanish Newport group also shared language barriers to accessing housing. Participants in that focus group also suggested a need for translated material for housing and social services. Lastly, participants also experienced great hardship due to nature of seasonal work. Participants suggested that housing assistance providers consider income differently for seasonal workers.

Appendix A: EI Focus Group Discussion Guide

Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. When you think of housing what comes to mind?
2. What does it mean to you to be stability housed?
3. What concerns do you have about yours and your family's housing?
4. Please describe your best experience in obtaining housing.
5. Please describe the most challenging experience in obtaining housing.
6. Here is a list of services available [interviewer to go through list below].
 - a. Rental assistance
 - b. Energy bill help payment assistance
 - c. Weatherization assistance
 - d. Homelessness assistance (emergency shelter: temporary housing to homeless)Are you aware of the availability of the mentioned services? Have you tried to access any of the mentioned services?
7. Please describe your best experience in accessing supportive services.
8. Please describe the most challenging experience accessing supportive services.
9. How could housing service providers be improved?
10. Anything else we should know to help improve housing services for Oregonians?

Appendix B: Envirolssues Facilitator Guide

1. State/introduce the focus group topic

- Thank you for coming. If anyone hasn't already filled out the registration sheet, please do so now.
- Provide project overview, discussion group purpose, etc.

2.Introductions of participants

- Ice beaker

3.Group expectations / guidelines

- Notecards on table to help with your own brainstorming of ideas and thoughts, if needed. Feel free to leave them with us at the end of the focus group if you would like.
- Read guidelines and then ask for amendments or additional rules
 - We welcome diverse thoughts and opinions
 - Let others have the opportunity to finish their thoughts; be mindful of who and how long everyone is talking
 - Only one person should be speaking at a time
 - Please keep what is said in the group confidential
 - Use "I" statements / Speak from experience rather than speculation

4.Discussion (Facilitator/participants)

5.Summary/Debrief (Facilitator)

- Refer to questions and main themes gathered. Quickly read through comments and offer edits/updates to ensure all was captured correctly.
- Reminder of what will happen next with feedback gathered during focus group

6.Thank you - we value your comments and opinions

ITEMS TO BRING

- Index cards to write responses
- Flip chart
- Facilitator markers & participant pens
- Sign-in sheet
- Notebook (in case flip chart isn't used)
- Business cards
- Fred Meyer grocery gift cards
- Refreshments

Appendix C: OHDC Agricultural Workforce Housing Focus Group Report



Agricultural Workforce Housing Focus Group Report

12/31/2017



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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Oregon Housing and Community Services is Oregon's housing finance agency, providing financial and program support to create and preserve opportunities for quality, affordable housing for Oregonians of lower and moderate income. Oregon Housing and Community Services is charged with developing a Statewide Housing Plan to articulate the extent of Oregon's housing problem and what can be done to address it.

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) helps to facilitate the Agriculture Workforce Housing Facilitation Team (AWHFT). AWHFT is a forum for stakeholders to meet and discuss issues affecting the agricultural workforce in Oregon. The AWHFT meets regularly to discuss current issues around farmworker housing, resources available for developing farmworker housing, and how to address the needs of farmworkers in Oregon.

Oregon Human Development Corporation (OHDC), is a statewide provider of Farmworker services and member of AWHFT. In support and in preparation of the Statewide Housing Plan, Oregon Human Development Corporation has partnered with Oregon Housing & Community Services to gather information on the housing needs of Farmworker families and the Agricultural Workforce.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Supported by Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) and members of the Agriculture Workforce Housing Facilitation Team (AWHFT) OHDC worked to gather clear insight and articulation on of the state of Farmworker housing across six communities in Oregon. Deliverables include raw survey data and this written report. OHDC worked closely with regional partners and stakeholders to mobilize Farmworkers and the Farmworker community members in order to describe the state of Farmworker housing in the region.

This project leverages OHDC's existing statewide community network to reach out to the Farmworkers and identify their housing needs. The focus group sessions were designed to ask general housing questions and conduct surveys specific to the Farmworker population. This sample of focus group data is valuable in that it allows decision makers to consider the impacts and alternatives to farmworker housing policy decisions. Further study and in-depth research will be needed to give clear understanding into the Farmworker population of Oregon.

OHDC facilitated open forum for discussion of Farmworker housing issues in 6 different Farmworker communities. These discussions were led by OHDC staff who asked a standardized set of questions. The forum questions were articulated in Spanish language. Note takers recorded the response to standardized questions by Farmworkers and

Community Partners. Note takers were careful to record which comments were made by Community Partners and which were made by Farmworkers.

After the open forum Farmworkers were encouraged to fill out standardized surveys. The surveys were translated into Spanish language.¹ Farmworkers were assisted by Spanish translators to record their responses. Farmworkers not able to attend were asked to complete online surveys.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A total of 150 Farmworkers across 6 different Oregon regions participated in open forum discussions on the state of Farmworker housing.² Additionally, 160 surveys were completed by Farmworkers in person and online. These surveys were translated and completed in Spanish.³ A total of 36 regional community partner agencies attended these forums and also participated in open discussion.⁴

This report is intended to provide understanding on major Farmworker housing issues.⁵ These major issues can be summarized into three themes summarized here below. First, Farmworkers face tremendous housing pressures due to the lack of available affordable housing options. Second, Farmworkers struggle to meet the high costs of housing especially in the context of Farmworker wages. Third, Farmworkers cited housing barriers unique to the Farmworker population. Lastly, Farmworkers and Community Partners pointed out practices they felt were helpful to their situations.

In general, Farmworkers face tremendous housing pressures due to the lack of available affordable housing options. Many Farmworkers are forced to share crowded housing conditions because of cost and lack of options. Farmworkers are sharing homes or apartments with other families. Many rely on hotels, garages, and live with multiple persons to a room. Some Farmworkers have moved away from areas with agricultural work for lack of housing options. These conditions are exacerbated during peak harvest seasons.

Many Farmworkers pointed out the high cost of housing compared to Farmworker wages. Rentals are out of reach for most because of application fees and first and last month deposit requirements. Farmworkers generally found it unrealistic to pay 30% of their income on housing. Farmworkers expressed concern about the seasonality of work and the need to save rental payments for months where no agricultural work is available.

Farmworkers cited housing barriers unique to the Farmworker population. Lack of income history and credit history, lack of state issued identification and language skills prevent Farmworkers from accessing the limited private housing options that exist. Most rental applications and rental documents are not translated to Spanish. Many Farmworkers were

¹ A sample survey is included in Appendix A

² The notes from these discussions are summarized here below and attached as Appendix B.

³ The surveys are attached as Appendix C.

⁴ Their comments are set apart from the farmworker comments.

⁵ Additional themes are present in the data, however these fall outside the main scope of investigation of this report.

unable to identify housing resources available to help them with housing needs. Some Farmworkers cited racial bias and scapegoating by landlords. Some Farmworkers cited lack of transportation options to the private housing options that exist.

Practices in the community that were helpful Farmworkers include where Farmworkers and Community Partners are seeing that government agencies are doing more outreach and attending more community events to promote their services and provide emergency assistance to Farmworkers. Farmworkers appreciated the outreach and assistance on housing issues. Farmworkers have also found faith based organizations helpful for emergency aid and food boxes. Expanded transportation service and hours are helpful for Farmworkers to travel to and from home and work locations.

Oregon's Farmworker families have helped to provide information across the 6 regions examined in this report. Farmworkers and Community Partners are supporting stable and affordable housing opportunities for all Oregonians. Further insight can be obtained through careful review of this report and the appendices.

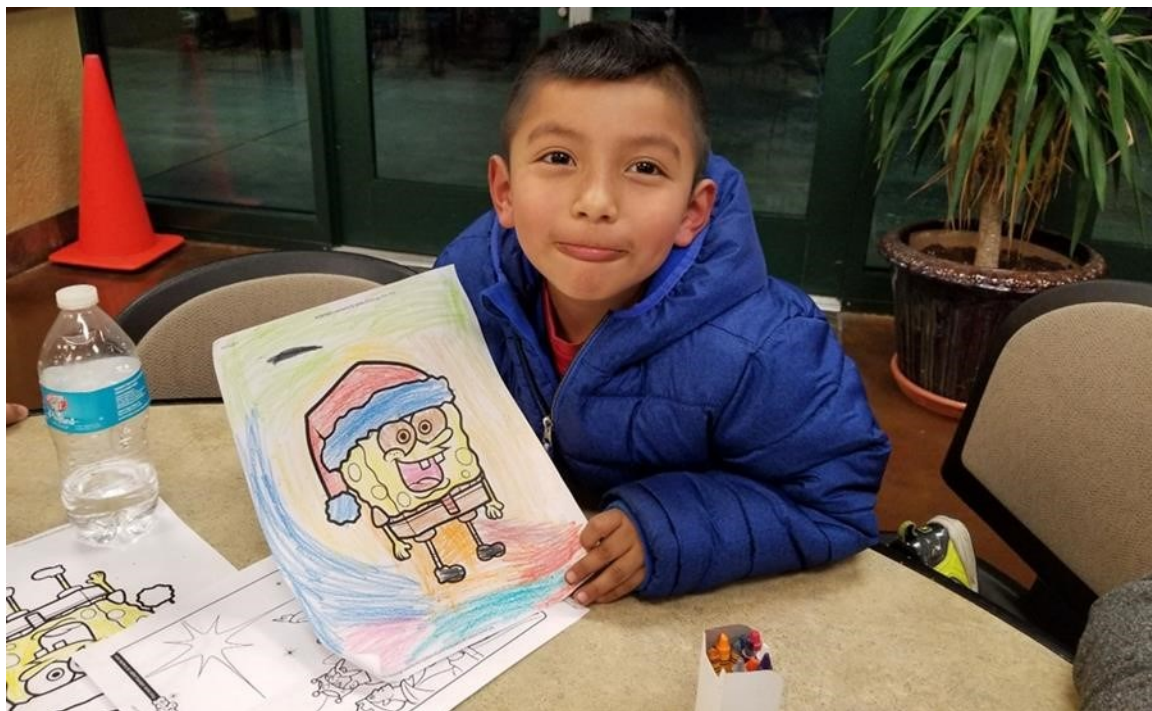


Image from Woodburn Farmworker Housing Forum (Above)

HERMISTON, OREGON

Farmworker Housing Forum Feedback
Community Partner: CP | Farmworker: FW

The Hermiston Farmworker Housing Forum had 24 Farmworkers who attended the forum. The Farmworkers who attended the forum came from local communities of: Hermiston, Umatilla, and Irrigon. Farmworkers completed 36 Surveys (14 online).

What are the conversations the community is having regarding housing?

- FW-It is too difficult to find apartment and many apartments' landlords do not allow pets.
- FW-Deposit is too high, plus you have first and last month and farmworkers cannot afford it.
- FW-Apartments do not have enough space.
- FW-Security deposit is not returned most of the time.

Does your house has everything you need?

- FW-Yes, but water bill is too expensive because I have to pay for my neighbors part.
- FW-Conditions are not healthy.
- CP-A house/apartment are being share by two families; there is not enough space.
- CP-Private owner/houses are renting rooms and they charge too much.

What other issues your family face?

- FW-Legal services are not available in Hermiston; they need to go to Pendleton.
- FW-Only one bus transportation.
- FW-Health insurance not available to undocumented people.
- FW-Lack of information/education regarding farmworkers housing right.
- FW-Not enough affordable after school activities.

Where would you go if you need help to pay rent and / or utilities?

- CP-Warmings stations, churches, Matha's house, OHDC.

What are the 3 biggest problems to be able to find housing?

- FW-There are many requirements for the housing process; it might take up two years.
- FW-If you don't have documents you need someone to sign the lease; it is hard to get approved.
- FW-If you have a background it is hard to find an apartment.
- FW-Deposits are too high.
- FW-Applications are too expensive.
- FW-Too strict; too many requirements



Image from Hermiston Farmworker Housing Forum (Above)

HILLSBORO, OREGON

Farmworker Housing Forum Feedback Community Partner: (CP) | Farmworker (FW)

Hillsboro Farmworker Housing Forum had 16 Farmworkers who attended the forum. The Farmworkers who attended the forum came from local communities of: Hillsboro, Aloha, Beaverton, Cornelius, Forest Grove, and St. Helens. Farmworkers completed 18 Surveys (2 online).

What conversations are the community is having regarding housing?

- FW- I hear from a lot of people that rent payments are increasing and housing is becoming unaffordable for families.
- FW replies: I am a single mother and I only have one job and even working overtime, I most of the time can't make ends meet because most of my earnings goes to pay my rent.
- FW- That more and more people are renting rooms to live with other families and apartments are overcrowded.
- FW- In the past I have applied for apartments and the application fees are too expensive (\$40-\$50 dollar fee for ea. adult) and even when I didn't qualify those fees were non-refundable and that's money people pay but lose when trying to find where to live.
- CP- Farmworker income is often not enough to cover rent, utilities, food and/or other bills.

- FW- There are not enough low-income housing in the area, and for the farmworker or low-income housing the waiting list its too long and we never get the apartment until 1-2 years pass.

Where would you go to get assistance to pay rent or utilities?

- FW- I often borrow money from friends or relatives, because I cannot go to community action or other agencies because of my legal status.
- FW- I go to my local church when I need assistance with a utility bill or rent but they will only assist with \$100-\$200 towards the payment I have to pay the rest.
- FW- I go to community action or now I know OHDC can help as long as I am a qualifying farmworker.
- CP- A lot of people don't know where to go, or most of them assume there is no help because they don't have a social security number or simply because they are not aware of other agencies that can possibly assist them.

Do you see homeless people in Hillsboro/Cornelius/Forest Grove?

- FW- I do see homeless people in Forest Grove and mostly in Hillsboro. Men and sometimes mothers with their children asking for money, I do see Hispanics that are homeless as well.
- FW- I see homeless people with their dogs, with children majority of them in Portland. That's where majority of them stay, it's very sad.
- CP- It is very sad to see all this homeless individuals in our state, it is nice to know that OHDC can assist our farmworker population in getting into homes or assisting with their rent and other utility bills.
- CP- Homelessness is not only considered as being on the streets but a lot of families or individuals live in garages, 3 families in one house or 8-10 people in 2 bedrooms.
- CP- Not enough warmings shelters in or near Hillsboro.

Vacancy rates are low throughout Oregon. We understand there are many factors that cause this condition. What is affecting vacancy rates in your community?

- FW- A lot of people that migrated here from other states for the season sometimes or some years they do not go back and decide to stay therefore more and more housing is occupied and no available housing for others.

We know that people are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. How is that affecting low income people, workforce members and service providers in your community? Are any populations affected or struggling more than others?

- CP- I don't know where you guys got that statistics of 30% because I have seen and hear from families that more than 50% or even 70% of their income goes to paying their housing.

- FW- Rent increase affects everybody specially farmworkers because the money they earn and save during the peak season they use it all up during the lack of work towards the end of the year to pay housing.
- FW- This affects other stuff I need to buy or pay for me or my children, when I pay rent I won't have enough money to purchase food for my family.

More people are experiencing homelessness and need services. Is this true?

- FW- A lot of people get laid off from work during fall/winter season and the demand for rental assistance increases and more and more people need help to pay their rent, this affects most of us; the farmworkers.

What is working well in your community?

- FW- The assistance that we receive from OHDC, it's a relief to know that during hardships and lack of work I may be able to get help to pay my rent and utility bills.
- FW- There are a lot of churches and other agencies that provide emergency food boxes when needed.
- FW- Tri-met is running later or earlier so that people can get to and from work more accessible.
- CP- I see that agencies are doing more outreach, attending more community events to promote their services and emergency assistance to farmworkers.

Other needs/issues in the community?

- People are not able to get an ID or DL because of legal status.
- More and more employers are requiring GED or HS Diploma to employ or employees who have been at the company for so long get pay minimum wage than a newly employee with GED or HS Diploma gets pay more.
- There is a need for people of more information or education on how to become a home owner.
- People need more information regarding Tenants Rights.
- People need other assistance but cannot afford to pay; legal assistance, immigration, short term classes, etc.



HOOD RIVER

Farmworker Housing Forum Feedback Community Partner: (CP) | Farmworker (FW)

Hood River Farmworker Housing Forum had 24 Farmworkers who attended the forum. The Farmworkers who attended the forum came from local communities of: Hood River County, Odell, Parkdale, The Dallas, and White Salmon (WA). Farmworkers completed 43 Surveys (37 online).

What conversations are there in your community regarding housing?

- FW-Group responded that housing cost is really high due to Hood River being a touristic place.
- FW-There is a waiting list of up to 1-3 years to get an apartment due to a lot of people needing housing.

- FW-What do people do when they don't have Social Security numbers and are not able to apply for apartments? FW-First month rent deposit + deposit is too high for someone that works in the orchard seasonal. He also said that the application fee is \$35 to \$50 per person and it is not refundable so if they don't get approved they lose it.
- FW-group agreed that housing conditions and apartments are in good conditions.
- FW-Due to the hard weather in December, January and February families are forced to live together to pay rent due to not being able to work in the field and provide for their family.
- FW-Landowners are also discriminating (Last name, ethnicity, race).
- FW-People that rent houses are taking advantage. They place up to 3 people in 1 bedroom and charge \$300.00 per person we are not able to have privacy or relax in our own place without feeling discomfort with everyone watching what you do every day.
- FW-group announced that the best achievement that they could ask was to build houses for farm working population.

Where would you go to get assistance to pay rent or utilities?

- FW-Most of the farmworkers that attended the forum said they could get assistance with electricity at Mid-Columbia Community Action (CAP. Rent and other Utilities assistance at OHDC as well.
- FW-In Wasco county there is also Mid- Columbia Housing Authority's that helps with rent. She also mentioned some programs have a very low income standard to being able to qualify for their service.
- Community partner said organizations that have programs like this where you are able to get assistance also have a cap on how much money they can spend on each county.

Do you see homeless people in Hood River?

- FW-Group has seen several homeless people living under bridges or on the street in Hood River and in Wasco County.

Does your house has everything you need?

- FW-There is limited space for families with multiple kids living in 2 bedroom apartment with only 1 bathroom.

The government estimates that 30% of the family income goes to cover living expenses; what is your opinion about this estimate?

- FW-Most of the attendees said they spend much more than 30% of their income covering their housing expenses.

What works well in your community?

- FW-The education their kids are receiving in local schools.

What other needs or issues are in the community?

- FW-There is limited transportation here in Hood River or Wasco County.

- FW-Community would like to have more trainings on GED in Spanish, computer classes, citizenship classes
- FW-Complained of not being able to communicate with landowners because of the language barrier
- The rental agreement forms should be in the applicant's language to understand and know what they are getting themselves into and to know their rights.
- FW-Limited places in the winter to enjoy time out with your family.



KLAMATH FALLS

Farmworker Housing Forum Feedback Community Partner: (CP) | Farmworker (FW)

Klamath Falls Farmworker Housing Forum had 17 Farmworkers who attended the forum. The Farmworkers who attended the forum came from local communities of: Klamath Falls and Merrill. Farmworkers completed 19 Surveys (2 online).

What conversations are there in your community regarding housing?

- FW-Rental Application is in English and there is a need for translation.
- FW-Deposit is too high, it is hard for a low income family to come up with that amount which usually includes first and last month, and the deposit.
- FW-Some people don't have a Social Security Number which is required in most cases so they are not able to apply.
- FW-There are people that work in the strawberry with an income that is low but not low enough to qualify for housing assistance.

FW-A lot of people live in housing with bad living conditions.

- FW-There were some that had concerns and problems regarding the cost, available housing and there were houses that are for sale or rent but you have to have money to have a good home for your family. Sometimes there are more than one family living together and trying to meet their needs.

Where would you go to get assistance to pay rent or utilities?

- Some of the attendees knew about OHDC and how we could assist them. Silvia Pacheco informed the group of other agencies that will help with rent and utilities including United Ministries, KLCAS (Klamath and Lake Community Action Services), and The Salvation Army.

Does your house has everything you need?

- FW-Most yes, but there are many that have issues with the heating system, they have mold, and issues with the stove.
- FW-Some landlords don't clean the apartments very well before someone moves in.

The government estimates that 30% of the family income goes to cover living expenses; what is your opinion about this estimate?

- FW-Most said that was not even close to what they spent in housing unless they live in a subsidized housing.
In many cases people can lose the subsidy or they have to move out because they go over the income limit; even if it is only for a few dollars. One of the attendees said that happened to her when she was over income by \$10.00 she had to move out.

What works well in your community?

- FW-OCDC has a Child Care program for migrants which is very good.
Rental assistance programs like the one OHDC is very good.

What other needs or issues are in the community?

- FW-Not enough housing for migrants. When the contractors bring workers from the south, there is not enough housing available; most of the time they have to stay in hotels and many people have to live in one room. Overall lack of housing availability; lack of decent housing; new people coming to work seasonally and not enough housing for them during the peak season, many don't qualify for HUD, as they earn fairly well during summer months, current FW housing is occupied by non FW'S.
- FW--Properties should have bilingual staff.
- FW--More low income housing is needed.
- FW--Health Care for low income families.

ONTARIO, OREGON

Farmworker Housing Forum Feedback Community Partner: (CP) | Farmworker (FW)

Ontario Farmworker Housing Forum had 10 Farmworkers who attended the forum. Farmworkers who attended the forum came from local communities of Ontario, Oregon and Nyssa, Oregon. Farmworkers completed 17 Surveys (7 online).

What are the conversations the community having regarding housing?

- Homeless people cannot access housing rent, is too high and not affordable. Community agencies talk about housing with one another but at this time homelessness is not being talked about in the community.
- FW-Rent is too expensive to afford and many people in the community are struggling to access housing. The conditions in many apartments are not livable and the space is not enough for a family of five or more. Many apartments with a 2 to 3 bedroom are not spacious enough for a large family. Rent deposit is too high and it is very hard when you need to come up with the first and last month rent money plus the deposit.

Does your house has everything you need?

- FW-couple said their home did not have clean water. They brought and showed two jars with water sample. The water was black, mossy and very dirty. They shower and cook with that water because they have no other choice. The couple do not drink the water due to health issues. They also brought in pictures they took to show us the water pipes outside their home. The pipes had green moss and looked dirty. The farmworker stated “you cannot have health with dirty water”.

What other issues your family face?

- FW-Daycare during the weekends is not accessible and it makes it hard when you have a job.
- FW-Overcrowded families in small house/apartment space
- FW-Transportation is not available due to a small community
- FW-Extended hours/overtime makes it hard to find childcare
- Farmworker housing (Real Vista Farmworker Housing) is starting to get too expensive for farmworkers

Where would you go if you need help to pay rent and / or utilities?

Community action assist with utility bills, OHDC has several assistances for farmworkers, churches also assist with housing shelter. Ontario WIC has a list of resources in the community that is easy to access and get information on different areas.

- Many organizations in the community will refer you to other resources. It is important as a community we are communicating to help others with resources.

What other needs or issues are in the community?

- Farmworkers cannot find enough housing not enough housing available in Ontario
- FW-Farmworkers are sharing homes or apartments with other families because rent is not affordable and finding housing is difficult
- FW-Farmworkers are moving to Nampa, Idaho it is cheaper to afford housing
- FW-A 3-bedroom apartment is about \$700 without pets
- Housing is not available for people with disabilities and elders in the community. A separate housing system for elders and people with disabilities should be made
- Generally not finding affordable housing, issues of repair work needed in the apartments and houses, landlords not being equal to tenants, not enough space in the apartments, not enough flexibility for farmworker housing eligibility or cost is too high of rent, having to come up with first, last, plus deposit when a person needs to move in, and not having enough community resources.

WOODBURN

Farmworker Housing Forum Feedback Community Partner: (CP) | Farmworker (FW)

Woodburn Farmworker Housing Forum had 59 Farmworkers who attended the forum. The Farmworkers who attended the forum came from: Woodburn, Newberg, Salem, Keizer, Gervais, St. Paul and Hubbard. Farmworkers completed 27 Surveys (2 online).

What conversations are there in your community regarding housing?

- FW-Replied she lives in a trailer mobile park-A. There is a lot of racism in the trailer park.
- FW-Many families cannot live in peace because people are complaining about them for things like: music too loud, and kids playing outside.
- FW-Lives in a house in Woodburn and she often gets police in her house because neighbors complain. She stated racism is going on with Hispanics.
- FW-Not able to live in peace in their apartment complex. They don't know about the resources in the community. She stated one example: she left her mop and broom outside the porch and she got a note from the manager that she had 24 hour to move out.
- FW-Rent deposit is too high and they cannot afford it. Some said that the application fee is \$35 to \$50 per person and it is not refundable so if they don't get approved they lose it.

- FW-Waiting list to find a 2 bedroom apartment is too large. It takes several months to a year to be able to move into an apartment. The apartment conditions are not great and they feel it is not worth the money for the apartment conditions.
- FW-Landlords are not keeping up with the apartments needs. A farmworker was living in an apartment complex and the maintenance was not kept clean and cockroaches were appearing. She was living in a Farmworker housing and she was paying \$600.00 a month.
- FW-Many landlords expect you to earn the double or triple the amount they earn.
- FW-Issues with appliances in the apartments and landlord has not done anything to solve the problems.
- FW-There is housing for Farmworkers in the area but the waiting list is too long and applicants are not able to wait.

Where would you go to get assistance to pay rent or utilities?

- Farmworkers attending the forum do not know about the community services about housing/renting.

Do you see homeless people in Woodburn?

- There are homeless Farmworkers in McMinnville and Salem area.

Does your house has everything you need?

- FW-Windows don't shut well and she needs them to be replaced and she has not been able to get management to fix them.

The government estimates that 30% of the family income goes to cover living expenses; what is your opinion about this estimate?

- FW- Attendees said they spend much more than 30% of their income and it seems like the government does not really know how low their income is or how high the rent is.
- FW-The employment position and income you earn will be different for everyone. They do not feel that farmworkers fall into that category.

FW-Gave an example, it is needed to work 120 hours to pay for rent. They are not able to pay for medical bills and other bills and cannot pay for rent.

What works well in your community?

- Nobody was able to provide a response for this question.

What other needs or issues are in the community?

- FW-There are employment opportunities in the community but the moment you start working and the income improves a bit the food stamps benefits are reduced. Because of this, sometimes it doesn't make sense to start working.
- FW-There is need for Homeownership programs in the community
- Casa Arriva community member (Casa de Oregon-Nonprofit): IDA- helps people to open a savings account that helps them obtain 5k to 9k (the program matches their saving

giving them up to three times the amount they save) to buy a house or for higher education.

- Net-code in Salem: Another program offers assistance and guidance to obtain a home.
- Habitat for Humanity: Also helps people to obtain a house (You construct your own house)
- Community needs more homeownership in the community for low income housing.
- More information needed regarding tenant rights in the community to be able to protect themselves.
- FW-The rental agreement forms should be in the applicant's language to understand and know what they are getting themselves into and to know their rights.
- FW-Many farmworkers did complaints (issues with housing) and their complaints hardly ever get listened too.
- FW-At a legal aid center they can obtain information and know their rights about housing.
- Need more information on resources to farmworkers to stop the eviction and know their rights.
- The tenants should be able to understand and look at agreement contract and take notes regarding any damages or issues with the apartments and document any incident they had in the apartments to avoid getting charged for damages they did not do.
- FW-Residents should be able to have/get identification card to be able to apply for an apartment. Many places do not accept documents from another country and it is very hard to complete an application.



ANALYSIS

150 Farmworkers across 6 different Oregon regions participated in open forum discussions on the state of Farmworker housing. 36 regional Community Partner agencies attended also participated in open discussion. 160 surveys⁶ were completed by Farmworkers in person and online. These surveys were translated and completed in Spanish.

The information and comments provided directly from Farmworkers carried three major themes. Additional issues and themes are also present in the data, however these fall outside the main investigation of this report. This analysis is intended to provide understanding on major Farmworker housing issues. These major issues can be summarized into three themes. First, Farmworkers face tremendous housing pressures due to the lack of available affordable housing options. Second, Farmworkers struggle with the high costs of housing especially in the context of Farmworker wages. Finally, Farmworkers cited housing barriers unique to the farmworker population.

In general, Farmworkers face tremendous housing pressures due to the lack of available affordable housing options. These conditions are exacerbated during peak harvest seasons. Many Farmworkers are forced to share crowded housing conditions because of cost and lack of options. Farmworkers are sharing homes or apartments with other families. Many rely on hotels, garages, and live 3 or 4 persons to a room. Farmworkers have moved away from areas with agricultural work for lack of housing options.

⁶ See Appendix A and Appendix C

Many Farmworkers pointed out the high cost of housing compared to farmworker wages. Rentals are out of reach for most because of application fees and first and last month deposit requirements. Farmworkers generally found it unrealistic to pay 30% of their income on housing. Farmworkers expressed concern about the seasonality of work and the need to save rental payments for months where no agricultural work is available. In Washington and Hood River counties Farmworkers identified rapid rising of rents.

Farmworkers cited housing barriers which impact to the Farmworker population. Lack of income history and credit history, lack of state issued identification and language skills prevent farmworkers from accessing the limited private housing options that exist. Some farmworkers cited racial bias and scapegoating by landlords. Some farmworkers cited lack of transportation options to the private housing options that exist. Farmworkers cited the language barrier as a problem for obtaining housing. Most rental applications and lease documents are not translated to Spanish. Most Farmworkers were unable to identify housing resources available to help them with housing needs.

Farmworkers also identified things in the community that were helpful. In general, Farmworkers appreciated the outreach and assistance on housing issues. Farmworkers and community Partners are seeing that government agencies are doing more outreach and attending more community events to promote their services and provide emergency assistance to farmworkers. Farmworkers have found faith based organizations helpful for emergency aid and food boxes. Farmworkers appreciate expanded transportation service hours so that they can get to and from work locations.

The detailed feedback gathered during these Farmworker Forums provides insight into many of the Farmworker housing issues around the state. Further review of the survey and feedback given in open forums may also help to highlight the issues faced by farmworkers. This data may reveal local Farmworker housing issues unique to different regions of the state. Policymakers, Advocates and Community Partners may find this report and its contents helpful in the statewide housing planning process insofar as it aids: Clear articulation of the state of Farmworker housing in Oregon; Better understanding on the role of the State and the role of Community Partners; Reliable data that allows decision makers to consider impacts and alternatives.

CONCLUSION

Every day in Oregon Farmworker families of all sizes struggle to find affordable places to live. Lack of affordable housing, rapidly rising rents, and housing barriers force Farmworkers and their families to live in unsafe, unhealthy and crowded conditions, often having to move in search of rents that stay within their reach.

Because of this, families, children and local economies are at risk.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Agriculture Workforce Housing Facilitation Team (AWHFT) Participating Community Partners Listed here below.

- Work Source Hermiston
- Legal Aid Services
- Umatilla-Morrow Head Start
- Norpac
- Oregon Rural Actions
- Radio La Ley
- DHS Herniston
- Oregon Employment Department- Alicia Stoll
- Migrant Educational Recruiter- Rocina Campos
- Oregon Law Center Farmworker Program- Isela Ramos
- Oregon Employment Department-Fernando Guitierrez
- Legal Aide of Oregon- Ana Tavera
- The Next Door
- DHS Hood River
- Columbia Gorge Community College
- Child Care Partners (OCDC and Mid-Columbia Children Council
- Work source (Washington and Oregon)
- Community Action (CAP)
- Work Source Klamath Falls
- OCDC (Oregon Child Development Coalition)
- IYS (integral youth services)
- KBBH (Klamath Basin Behavioral Health)
- Malheur County Health District-Gricelda District
- Work Source-Chris Grace
- Oregon Law Office-Maria Romero
- DHS-Dan Ramirez
- HEP- Xavier Perfecto
- OCDC-Angie Montoya
- CAMP
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- Employment Department (MSFW) – Daniel Quiñones and Alan Martinez
- Soy Sano Program! I'm Healthy!- Enedina Lopez
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A to E Follow**

Agricultural Workforce Housing Focus Group Report
12/31/2017

