



# Seattle Housing Authority

## Moving to Work



The **Seattle Housing Authority (SHA)** joined the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Moving to Work (MTW) demonstration program when it was first launched in 1999, making SHA among the first housing authorities to participate. Status as an MTW agency has given SHA the flexibility to adopt reforms that enable the agency to adapt to changing local conditions, maximize the use of its resources, serve Seattle’s lowest income population and bridge a crucial gap in the housing continuum.

### Community and Housing Inventory













SHA is committed to creating and sustaining affordable housing within the City of Seattle, Washington. As of December 2020, SHA was serving 37,463 people through 19,352 units, of which 88 percent are federally subsidized. Of the households served by SHA, 86 percent have incomes at or below 30 percent of Area Median Income (AMI), which in Seattle for a family of four is \$35,800.

Participation in MTW has enabled SHA to use its housing portfolio and service strategies to better meet the needs of the local community. Overall since 1999, SHA has seen a 43 percent increase in its capacity to house individuals.

### Goals and Evolution of MTW

Since signing its first MTW contract in 1999, SHA has used MTW flexibility to improve its capacity to meet local housing needs and increase housing options for Seattle’s low-income households, improve cost effectiveness and create efficiencies and test programs and policies that promote household self-sufficiency. The flexibility to allocate MTW Block Grant revenues among SHA’s housing and programs enables the agency to balance the mix of housing types, services and capital investments to accomplish the agency’s goals. In 2000, SHA used MTW authority to introduce a project-based voucher program, which expanded Seattle’s affordable housing stock,

increased the affordability for households at or below 30 percent of AMI and leveraged partnerships with other low-income housing providers in the Seattle community.

	MTW PUBLIC HOUSING	MTW VOUCHERS	NON-MTW HUD SUBSIDIES	OTHER AFFORDABLE HOUSING	TOTAL CAPACITY	PEOPLE SERVED
2020	 5,770	 9,766	 2,170	 2,347	 19,352	 37,463
1999	 6,185	 4,658	 868	 1,305	 13,016	 21,529



## Culture and Systems Change

As a result of MTW, SHA has increased its focus on long-term outcomes. This has created a culture of innovation and problem solving in which SHA can maximize resources and impact instead of being bound by federally established regulations or spending allocations that don't necessarily meet the unique needs of the Seattle community. MTW has helped foster a workforce that brings an "ownership" mentality to the work of SHA, which has increased commitment to serving the community and dedication to being trustworthy stewards of public funds.

## Performance Indicators and Evaluation

SHA is committed to a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Drawing on its five-year Strategic Plan and MTW authority as the foundation, SHA emphasizes collecting and measuring metrics and feedback to ensure that the organization is achieving its mission. Throughout the agency, teams have developed key performance indicator dashboards to track progress and have used embedded program evaluators to monitor qualitative measures and capture resident feedback. Additionally, SHA focuses on partnerships through a number of data-sharing agreements with other agencies, which enables SHA to adjust strategies and resources based on performance indicators and outcomes.

# MTW INNOVATIONS

## Responding to Homelessness

The MTW contract has enabled SHA to convert 21 of the traditional public housing units at Jefferson Terrace to a 34-bed medical respite program for recuperating homeless individuals. The respite program is a partnership between SHA and nine local hospitals and health care providers, including Harborview Medical Center, which operates the program. The medical respite program serves more than 400 patients annually. Respite care plays a key role in how Seattle delivers health care and responds to homelessness as a community, providing a better experience of care by offering a safe place for recuperating homeless adults and assisting them in finding stable housing. It also improves health outcomes through linkages between primary care, behavioral health and housing, as well as lowering community costs by reducing lengths of stay in hospitals and reducing readmissions.

## Residential Stability and Support

Through its project-based voucher program, SHA works with community partners to provide more than 3,000 affordable housing units delivered together with supportive services to meet the needs of homeless individuals, families and people with disabilities. MTW flexibility has enabled SHA to expand its number of project-based vouchers as a percentage of total vouchers, as well as introduce 17 innovations that have resulted in more efficient operation of the

project-based program, service to more households and provision of more diverse housing choices. Development costs for housing in Seattle are very high and project-based vouchers provide an operating subsidy to nonprofits that provides the security of a long-term funding source, which enables them to access other funding sources. This, in turn means they can serve more extremely low-income clients.

## Resource Conservation

SHA's Environmental Stewardship initiative was founded through MTW. Beginning as a resource conservation program intent on pursuing energy and water conservation opportunities, it has grown into an interdepartmental effort to mitigate environmental impact through reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving building energy and water performance, improving resilience and adopting sustainable business practices. To date, the initiative and associated activities have resulted in over \$20 million in avoided costs through resource conservation and over \$7 million in grants through local partnerships. These initiatives led the agency to create its first Sustainability Agenda, which collaborates with departments and residents to implement tactics around the strategies listed above. Through the Agenda, SHA aims to be one of the most sustainable public housing authorities in the nation.