



Framing The Future

Why plan?

Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.

– Will Rodgers

It's true – you can't stay still and continue to be effective. Challenges arise constantly and regional and national events profoundly impact local communities. Social-purpose organizations have a public mandate to stay nimble and work smarter.

As the largest provider of affordable housing in Oregon, the Housing Authority of Portland (HAP) plays a critical role in meeting the needs of low- to moderate-income households in the community. For Portland residents facing difficult times, HAP's services are more important than ever before.

That's why HAP has embarked on a thoughtful, inclusive process to assess the current environment, reflect on what's working, identify what could be improved, and then commit to a way forward.



Getting it right

The Housing Authority of Portland strives to become an even more effective and innovative housing provider, leader and collaborator. These are the touchstones of our vision for HAP's future.

HAP's strategic planning process began with a candid and critical look at the agency as it operates currently. Our leadership first identified broad policy areas to be examined throughout the process. Internal stakeholders—employees and managers—sharpened and refined those ideas into the policy areas you'll find on the other side of this page.

A variety of diverse stakeholder groups are being invited to provide input throughout an iterative process during which the policy areas will be narrowed and opportunities for improvement explored.

A complete strategic planning process ultimately leads to an action plan, and program outcomes that can be evaluated for future improvement. It's a cyclical process, as suggested in the image to the left.

Framing the Future, HAP's strategic planning process, begins with Taking Stock and moves through Defining Direction—providing HAP with strategic direction for its future. The next phase of the work will be to create the plan: to lay out the details that make it real.

Framing the future

The initial stages of the strategic planning process are focused on broad policy questions representing significant opportunities for transformation and improvement. HAP leadership has framed these policy initiatives as a starting point:

1. Prioritization of populations served

Because the need for housing far exceeds available resources, HAP must employ an allocation strategy. It currently uses a combination of waiting list and lottery to allocate most housing resources. This approach provides equal access to all qualified applicants, with allocation based primarily on a first-come, first-served basis. Given the growing imbalance between available units and need, is this allocation strategy still the best approach, or should HAP prioritize more of its housing resources for specific populations?

If HAP decides to prioritize how it distributes its resources, it must develop criteria for deciding which populations should be prioritized over the general population of eligible households, and it must identify the best mechanisms for allocating resources to these priority populations.

2. Housing-services continuum

Members of the HAP community – residents and program participants – have a broad range of needs that go well beyond housing. HAP will continue to connect people to the services they need, but the question is whether it should go further, either in deepening its role of referring/connecting members of the HAP community with resources or in directly providing the services people require to meet their needs.

3. HAP's role in the housing market

In pursuit of its mission, HAP has developed significant core competencies. How can HAP strategically build on its existing areas of expertise to enhance its contributions to the affordable housing systems in our region? Secondly, how might HAP use its core competencies to build additional revenue to support its mission-related work?

4. Geographic scope

HAP is charged with serving all of Multnomah County, but it is perceived as a Portland-focused organization. This planning process offers an opportunity to compare reality with perception, to determine how HAP

can most effectively serve the community, and to be thoughtful about how large its service area should be.

There are two other critical dimensions of the planning process. They do not pose strategic choices in the same sense as the issues identified above, but must be kept clearly in focus throughout the planning process because HAP's success in each of the other areas depends upon them:

5. Organizational development

HAP's management and staff are widely viewed as its greatest asset. To successfully pursue its mission and new strategic directions in the future, HAP must take full advantage of these strengths.

6. Community engagement

Members of the HAP community – residents and program participants – are the reason the organization exists. HAP is committed to listening to their voices on matters that affect them, both to be fair and also because they are the experts on their needs and the quality of their lives.

We're listening

Encouraging broad and diverse ideas about the issues is key to a thorough and thoughtful strategic planning process. At every step, new ideas are carried forward into the next dialogue. HAP is offering a variety of opportunities for input, from surveys to Focus Groups to Listening Sessions.

Visit us at www.hapdx.org to learn more!

