

NCSHA 2015 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

Deadline: Wednesday, June 10, 2015

Visit ncsha.org/awards to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

Instructions: Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact Matt Cunningham at mcunningham@ncsha.org or 202-624-5424.

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

Entry Name: _____

HFA: _____

Submission Contact: (Must be HFA Staff Member) _____ **Email:** _____

Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page:

HFA: _____

Entry Name: _____

Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			

My Employment Plan: Steps to Success

Introduction:

New Hampshire Housing's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program assists over 200 housing choice voucher households annually. Each client is assigned a coach who guides and supports them through the entire job search process: employment assessments, resume writing, interviewing and education. This includes providing employment assistance to various populations including people with disabilities.

While resources abound for anyone undertaking a job search, coaches found that consistently providing the appropriate ones could be challenging. For example, some resources did not include everything the client needed or focused only on professional level jobs when clients needed entry level jobs. New Hampshire Housing created *My Employment Plan: Steps to Success* to give coaches a complete format that combines the best of numerous job search tools and resources. Coaches use the workbook as a focal point to address clients' unique circumstances and job search stage.

With one all-inclusive employment workbook, coaches are more efficient and effective in their coaching. With a job search tool that incorporates the myriad stages of a search as well as its plentiful but ever-changing resources, clients also save time – time that is precious to them given their often demanding and busy lives. Additionally, *My Employment Plan* helps clients to stay on track in their job search and helps coaches to accurately track client progress for HUD reporting.

The Challenge and the Need: Facing the Realities

Background and Needs:

Family Self-Sufficiency clients are low-income families, sometimes single parent households or individuals, who live in cities as well as rural towns in New Hampshire. They are unemployed, under-employed, or seeking to make a better wage. Given their economic status and/or their geographic location, coaches have learned that time is a precious commodity for these clients. They lack availability of or easy access to employment resources which, though abundant, are often scattered (i.e. community, state or national agencies, online or through schools).

To conduct a thorough, successful employment search, FSS coaches recognize that it requires knowledge, motivation and commitment. They understand that job searching is time consuming; they know it can be a full-time job to find a job. They understand that there are numerous resources, tools and tips that need to be tapped.

Coaches connect with FSS clients most often by phone, or in person on a weekly or monthly basis. A scheduled appointment time may not happen as clients get stopped in their efforts by their own personal or family challenges, or they feel stuck and do not want to reach out for assistance.

Coaches need to be aware of another reality: their clients are at different stages with their employment goals. Many have little experience with job search strategies or planning; some are seeking a 'stepping stone' job; others are looking to advance in their job; still others want a new career; or it can be a combination of any of these.

Challenges:

Given these realities that are different for each client, coaches found it challenging to manage and coordinate the next best steps for a client's employment journey. They may not have the time needed to assess or reassess the client's current situation and job needs to be able to provide the appropriate and best resources. Perhaps there are needs other than employment that require attention.

So how could they be assured that the client was consistently working on the next best step? How could coaches provide the "bigger picture" of a job search, which could give the client a clearer perspective of what they needed to do to be successful? And, lastly, how could the coach accurately track the client's progress to ensure they weren't missing an important job search step?

This last question also speaks to the need for the Family Self-Sufficiency Program to report employment successes to the Department of Housing & Urban Development. Complete tracking of defined job search steps must be consistent as well as accurate for annual reporting. HUD recognizes and audits the FSS Program for the number of clients who are able to find and maintain suitable employment and the number who have been able to reduce their housing assistance payments.

Creating a Solution:

It became clear that providing coaches with a more structured approach to assist clients in their employment goals would address these needs and challenges.

New Hampshire Housing decided to develop an organized, structured product using the following steps:

- Research what was currently available online;
- Explore options already created by various local community agencies; and
- Brainstorm ideas through staff department meetings to ensure that the new employment product would be easily accessible for all clients.

A decision was made to design a resource in-house, and *My Employment Plan: Steps to Success* began. Experienced staff were assigned to begin developing an all-inclusive format – one that would address the employment steps as well as the numerous employment resources and tools.

Features:

- *My Employment Plan: Steps to Success* is both a workbook and a guide for the employment journey.
- The workbook is divided into three sections to provide both direction and focus: Assessment; Job Search and Career Exploration; and Education.
- The Table of Contents outlines the steps that people can choose wherever they are in their job search.
- Each section has specific tools, activities, and exercises that lead to a greater understanding of what they want in employment and how to get there.
- Links to the most current online employment resources are embedded throughout for easy access.
- With *My Employment Plan*, clients can manage their own job search process when it's convenient and easiest for them to do so.
- The complete job search journey is addressed: identifying current strengths and qualifications; finding the right job match; and exploring new career opportunities.

Outcomes:

My Employment Plan gives Coaches a strong foundation for an employment conversation with all clients. Through discussion and questions around the workbook, they learn exactly where the client is in their job search process. This means that coaches are assured that the numerous tools and resources necessary for a successful employment search are being followed and utilized by each client.

Coaches have the assurance that accurate employment goal reporting for HUD is consistently occurring.

Clients now have 24-7 clear direction to keep them focused in what can be a lengthy process.

Clients have the opportunity to experience mini-successes through the strength building and other assessment exercises in the workbook. This increases their motivation and ability to keep going through inevitable job search disappointments.

Clients' self-esteem is heightened because they recognize or discover strengths and abilities they weren't previously aware of, so they begin to have a positive perspective on what they can offer an employer. The job search tools and resources provide newfound knowledge which also boosts self-esteem.

From feedback we have received, clients are finding *My Employment Plan* to be invaluable:

- "I learned a lot about myself...it helped to build my confidence." the client added that she feels she can now better market herself.
- "This is great...definitely helps as it puts everything in one place...and I really like the 'weekly planner'."
- "They're fun, helpful, useful, interesting and informative" (referring to the employment assessments).
- One of our clients introduced it to a Manchester, New Hampshire job networking group she attends. The group leader used it with various participants and found it had value.

While *My Employment Plan* was developed with FSS clients in mind, it is written so that anyone can use it, with or without a coach. The Community College System of New Hampshire is using it in their WorkReadyNH Program to give students the opportunity to put what they are teaching into a concrete format. The Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program is also using the workbook as an adjunct to what they offer for their job seeking clients.

By substituting a few resource links connecting to New Hampshire agencies with local resource links, *My Employment Plan* could be used in other states.

Visual Aid

A copy of the workbook can be downloaded at

<http://www.nhhfa.org/rental/renterdocs/MyEmploymentPlanFillable.docx>