

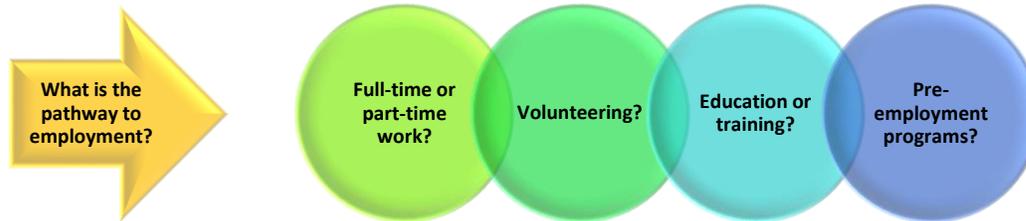
EMPLOYMENT NAVIGATOR PROJECT

THE PROBLEM BEING ADDRESSED

Housing First initiatives have demonstrated the importance of stable housing as a key component before attempting to address the complex issues many homeless people experience. Through Housing First Initiatives, individuals have been able to access a range of supports including health, income assistance and disability benefits, and life skills programs. However, Housing First Initiatives have to date, had limited success in helping people make progress towards employment.

The Employment Navigator Project (ENP) represents an exciting and unique opportunity for practitioners, policy makers and evaluators to explore how best to support tenants in supportive housing to increase their employability skills and help them achieve improvements in health, social/community integration and in their quality of life.

The ENP and evaluation are designed to address this gap in knowledge by asking the “what next” questions in relation to helping tenants explore the possibility of employment. What would employment look like to them and how would supports affect other aspects of their lives?



These are all important questions and the information generated by the project and evaluation will be used to provide evidence to help guide the development of future policy and programming and to identify best practices that can be disseminated to other settings and jurisdictions.

BACKGROUND

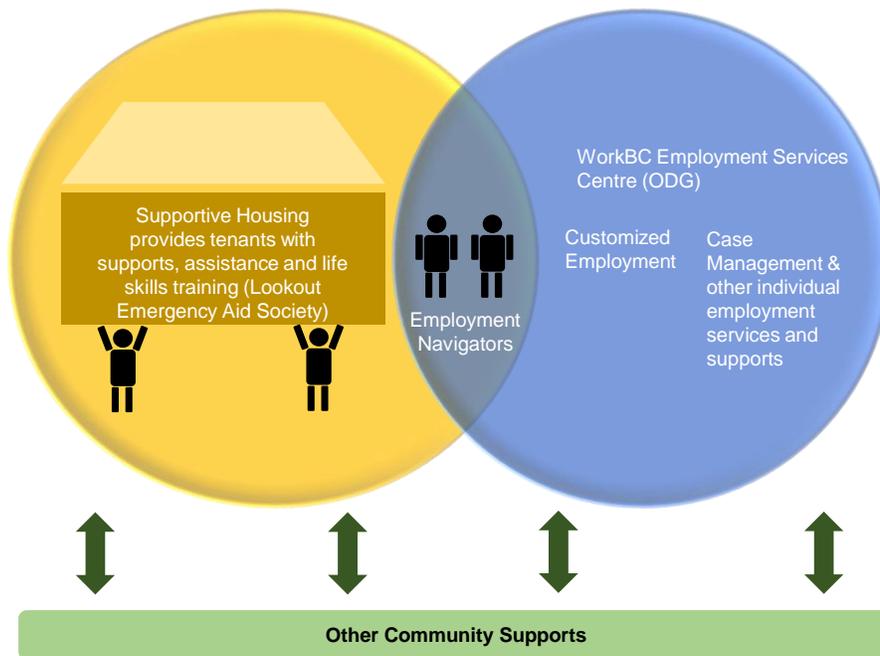
While supportive housing provides assistance and works with residents on areas such as life skills and community engagement, tenants commonly face many challenges in attempting to find and keep work. Most tenants in supportive housing have multiple barriers to employment, including mental health issues, addictions and other disabilities. The tenants are unlikely to obtain work independently or use traditional job search activities successfully. In fact, the majority of people in this group have not had an attachment to paid work for a long time.

Yet despite these challenges employment can play an important role in recovery, and contribute to ending homelessness. It can also increase confidence and provide individuals with a feeling of success as well as increase their income and resources to pay for some of the necessities in life.^[1]

“Nothing that I have studied has the same kind of impact that employment does: Medication, case management, and psychotherapies tend to produce a small impact on people’s overall adjustment. But the differences are often striking and dramatic with employment.”

– Dr. Robert Drake Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center^[2]

WHAT ENP PROVIDES? HOW IT HELPS? WHO IT HELPS?



The Employment Navigator Project incorporates best practice lessons and aims to bring together evidence-based approaches to deliver employment supports to tenants in supportive housing to help them make progress towards a range of goals including employment.

One-on-one supports will be provided to individuals in supportive housing by on-site Employment Navigators. An Employment Navigator will work closely with tenants to identify and access supports to support them along their path to employment, using implicit career search techniques.

From the housing and employment partnership, the Navigators will be able to access the range of supports and services through the Employment Program of BC, including customized employment and will act as a bridge between these two service providers. The aim of the Employment Navigators is to help participants access and use existing employment supports. It is highly innovative as the program content and delivery mechanisms will be adapted to reflect the needs of the participants.

WHO ARE THE PROJECT PARTNERS?

ENP brings together three agencies to co-develop, deliver and evaluate this initiative: the Lookout Emergency Aid Society, Open Door Group and the BC Centre for Employment Excellence.

The **Lookout Emergency Aid Society** is a non-profit charitable organization established in 1971. Lookout is the project's housing partner. It operates and manages the housing sites for this project, along with a range of services and housing 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to adult men and women who require assistance.



Open Door Group is a non-profit organization established in 1976 and is the project's employment partner. It operates the WorkBC Vancouver Downtown Eastside Employment Services Centre, and will connect project participants through the Employment Navigator with a range of client-centered services to support them to achieve employment or community attachment.



BC Centre for Employment Excellence is a non-profit organization established in 1991 and is managing and evaluating the project. The Centre is a division of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, a social research and policy organization.



HOW WILL THE PROJECT BE EVALUATED?

Previous experience in evaluating complex initiatives within vulnerable populations highlights the need for a flexible but rigorous approach to the evaluation to examine the intended and unintended outcomes that arise from a program. To ensure the evaluation captures the processes generated by ENP, the evaluation is adopting a comprehensive approach that is grounded in **developmental evaluation**. This approach is participatory and will provide a format for Employment Navigators and their respective organizations to be genuine partners in, and actively engaged with all aspects of the evaluation.

The evaluation design adopted consists of three main components—implementation research, case studies and comparison site—and each component will use a range of qualitative and quantitative methods.

The evaluation design is intended to capture the steps along the supported pathway to employment, as well as the supports and resources required to help participants increase their employment readiness and, ultimately obtain and sustain employment.

HOW IS THE PROJECT FUNDED?

The Employment Navigator Project is being funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation's Research and Innovation Fund.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE EMPLOYMENT NAVIGATOR PROJECT, PLEASE CONTACT:

Susanna Gurr
Managing Director, BC Centre for Employment Excellence
604-601-4073
sgurr@cfeebc.org

Endnotes:

[1] https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/documents/MHTS_Final_Report_508.pdf

[2] Referenced in Vaz, J., Tallengrand, A., Harbus, N., (2014) Modifying the Supported Employment Model with a Housing First Population Downloaded December 2015 from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/513e08bfe4b0b5df0ec24cda/t/533f02e9e4b016f70ff654aa/1396638441122/Modifying+Supported+Employment+for+Better+Outcome>