

HSD Provider Conference

June 16, 2026

Notes from Session: Setting Providers Up for Success

Presenters: Tonya Jones – Co-chair of Equity Committee, HSD Equity Advisory Committee (EAC), Yemaya Benton – Co-chair of Equity Committee, Black Community of Portland, Raquel Barajas – Homeless Services Department

Moderators: Erin Pidot

Zoom Host: Alexa Rommel-Smith

Notetaker: Aj Fouts

-Main Points from Session Overview/Presentation (high level):

- Introductions
- Definition of “small provider”?
 - # of staff: less than 100, OR
 - Combination of roles at high-level leadership: leadership structure is still being filled out
- Purpose
 - Provides guidance and recs on racial disparities in the HSD work of ending homelessness. Advisory res from comm will be provided to HSD director deputy director, and equity manager
 - Summer 2025, EAC members led a process to identify the root causes of racial disparities within HSD services, led to the key topic of providers needing to be set up for success
- Process
 - Education (relationship building) - Summer 2025
 - Planning (research and voting) - Fall 2025
 - Draft (narrow and draft recommendations) - Winter 2025
 - Presentation (share recs) - April 2026
- Who we are
 - EAC composed of members w lived experience and Culturally Specific (CS) provider expertise
 - 8 current members
 - Members identify as Black, Latine, Pacific Islander, and White
 - All have expertise or lived experience of homelessness and have gone on to become leadership

- Overview of 4 barriers
 - Outdated reimbursement model
 - Overburdens small and CS orgs, taking too much time and impairing their ability to operate efficiently
 - Sustaining funding crisis
 - Awarded contracts usually do not cover the true costs that include admin, staffing cost of living etc
 - Pause in services disrupts staffing,
 - Equity provider gap
 - Funding favors larger, established orgs, leaving small CS and new and emerging providers under resourced or unable to compete.
 - Intentional contract onboarding
 - More info that is needed for new orgs to be successful beyond what is shared by contract managers
- Depth of barriers and solutions/ideas
 - Outdated reimbursement model
 - Grant-to-contract models
 - Upfront fund disbursement
 - Integrate flex funds w/in contracts
 - Data shared, f/u with Yemaya
 - Sustaining funding crisis
 - Contingency plans and external funding backup strategies
 - Dedicated emergency support funds for small CS providers
 - Offer contracts of varying sizes designed to sustain small providers
 - Equity provider gap
 - 3 year partnership/mentorship between large/established orgs and small and new and emerging orgs
 - Brings us together
 - Share systems, knowledge, dollars
 - Potential concern: don't let mentor dictate how the work is done, just allow them to advise and share resources as the mentee requests
 - Embed dedicated capacity building funds within all contracts with CS providers
 - Consider implications of shared services upcoming change
 - Prioritize small non profits, CS and new and emerging providers in all competitive and non-competitive funding opportunities
 - Requires change to scoring mechanism "which agency that apply have a greater impact" which favors larger orgs

- Implement and track a system for lost or exited contracts, including analysis of root causes and use findings to improve system design and retention strategies
 - Not having that info standardized, aggregated and shared is silencing the trends and potential analyses
 - Specific request to add info on this in quarterly reports
- Intentional contract onboarding
 - Establish a dedicated small CS and new and emerging HSD education boot camp for new contractors and those unfamiliar with government systems
 - Walking through systems needed to adequately manage an HSD contract
 - accounting software,
 - policies and procedures needed,
 - Provide dedicated consultant support for newly contracted HSD providers
 - Clearer expectations
 - Break down complex processes to actionable tasks
 - Relationship building
 - Supports flexibility needed to adequately onboard at each agency's pace (meet them where they're at, rather than current blanket approach)
 - Facilitate peer learning opportunities
 - Move beyond one-time / short-term support
- Definition of "small provider"?
 - # of staff: less than 100, OR
 - Combination of roles at high-level leadership: leadership structure is still being filled out
- Questions for the group
 - QR code shared with physical attendees
 - [menti.com](https://www.menti.com) - 6275 4174

-Questions/Answers (summarization):

- What's a picture perfect idea of large/small org partnership?
 - MOU currently established for providers working with providers, EAC took part in editing this template document
 - Be present with each other, accountable and transparent
 - Mentee needs to solidify what areas they need support with, what their goals are, current state to work from.

- This allows mentor to plug in exactly where the mentee needs
 - It's okay that the mentee does things differently
 - Transcending Hope ED offered support in providing data for this purpose, and mentoring, as an organization that moved from small/emerging in 2021 to medium (~50 staff) currently
 - Have you thought about what type of review process that takes place during this relationship to ensure the mentor is adequately meeting the needs of the mentee?
 - Transparent, communicative relationship needed
 - Mentor helps establish relationship b/w mentee and TA
 - Thorough, involved, but not punitive in nature
- Feedback
 - Next time, include a real life example of mentee/mentor relationship
 - Tonya Jones shared an example here recently
 - MHAAO fiscally sponsored and mentored ED of Us First Initiatives
 - UFI had to ask MHAAO for use of funds
 - MHAAO provided operational support
 - Entities shared resources and opportunities with each other
 - Yemaya Benton found success by meeting regularly with another agency's ED regularly
 - This relationship was established previously, if brand new relationship it would be necessary to have relationship building time