**Case Study: Hope Building, Housing Development Alliance, Southeastern Kentucky**

Hope Building, a program of the Housing Development Alliance, Inc. in southeastern Kentucky, identifies people in recovery who are ready for work and successfully connects them with targeted training and long-term jobs, an important focus of Phase 3 of the Ecosystem Builders Guide. The Housing Development Alliance partners with Hazard Community and Technical College to deliver training that is responsive to industry needs and to the unique issues facing individuals being served who are in recovery.

**Background – Region and Project**

The Housing Development Alliance (HDA), Inc. is a nonprofit, affordable housing developer that works in four counties in southeastern Kentucky. HDA developed the Hope Building program through extensive local partnerships with the Perry County Drug Court (PCDC), Hickory Hill Recovery Center (HHRC), Hazard Community and Technical College (HCTC), Eastern KY Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP), and other agencies in order to provide people in recovery with paid, on-the-job training opportunities in the residential construction industry that complement their recovery and treatment plan for a full year. With funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission’s POWER grant program, HDA launched Hope Building to address two challenges. First, the program aims to increase the long-term success rate of recovering individuals in response to the region’s opioid crisis and its impact on local communities. Access to a meaningful, sustainable job is essential to an individual’s sustained recovery. However, there has been a lack of entry-level jobs in the region and many individuals in recovery have landed in jobs in the fast food industry that don’t lead to a growth-oriented career. At the same time, there’s a need for construction workers across the nation and construction training imparts on-the-job skills that are transferrable to other sectors. Second, the program aims to improve the affordability of homes in a region where homes typically appraise for less than the cost to build them. Through strong partnerships with recovery and education organizations, Hope Building connects individuals in recovery with a twelve-month, paid, on-the-job construction training program that includes four community college certificates.

**Unique Approach**

The Hope Building program provides a full year of on-the-job training and independent study classes at Hazard Community and Technical College that lead to four certificates over the year-long program. Trainees receive hands-on training working with HDA sites and attend independent study construction technology classes at HCTC as a cohort. Trainees work at HDA sites under the supervision of the job trainers to build the homes through all phases of residential construction including framing, siding, roofing, insulation, painting, finish carpentry and installing floor coverings. HCTC counts the training hours as the required lab work for its construction technology classes. Participants who complete the full training cycle earn four certificates from HCTC: Basic Carpentry, Residential Roofer, Carpenter Helper, and Construction Forms Helper. These four certificates represent approximately half the course work needed to earn an Associates Degree in Construction Technology. Throughout the training and following program completion, trainees are supported by Eastern KY Concentrated Employment Program as they search for permanent job placement and receive counseling and support services from Hickory Hill Recovery Center or Perry County Drug Court.

**Results**

Since its start, Hope Building has served 34 participants. Of those 34 participants, 21 have been hired. Because most participants are hired before completing the full year-long program, only 2 participants have completed all of the certifications at the community college. Twelve additional participants have completed at least one of the courses. The remaining participants were not able to complete courses due to the timing of their employment (mid-session or between sessions) or because they were working toward their GED. Eleven homes have been completed and sold since the start of the program, though that number would be higher without the COVID-related challenges of 2020 and 2021. One additional home is complete and is expected to close soon and four additional homes are under construction.

**Key Takeaways and Lessons Learned**

* *Ecosystem Traffic Director:* HDA understands its role in the recovery ecosystem as a “traffic director” for Hope Building participants. They started with the principle that they’re not recovery experts, but they have partners that they are. Their approach is to know their role in the ecosystem, find partners with expertise in other needed roles, and let everyone do what they do well. For example, the program doesn’t provide wraparound services directly, but can help participants connect with the regional organizations that do.
* *Recovery Friendly Training:* Another important principle of Hope Building is that training is designed to support the recovery process. The program changed from a strict point system and automatic exit for a failed drug screen to a second chances model. When the existing community college class schedule didn’t work with the on-the-job training schedule, the community college responded with an option to create an independent study class just for the Hope Building participants. This gave the program more flexibility in scheduling class, while still giving participants access to community college classes and certificates.
* *Connecting with Employers:* HDA makes connections to employers that can hire trainees through monthly partner meetings hosted by the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, and most often, through word of mouth. HDA has also partnered with Fahe to create a network of second-chance employers in the region who are open to hiring trainees from the program. Connecting trainees to long-term jobs has been a success of the program. There are on ramps and off ramps built into the program, and most participants have found full-time work before completing the program.