

Long-term Rent Assistance Pilot

Qualitative Evaluation

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CORE

Center for Outcomes
Research and Education

Contents



What we wanted to know



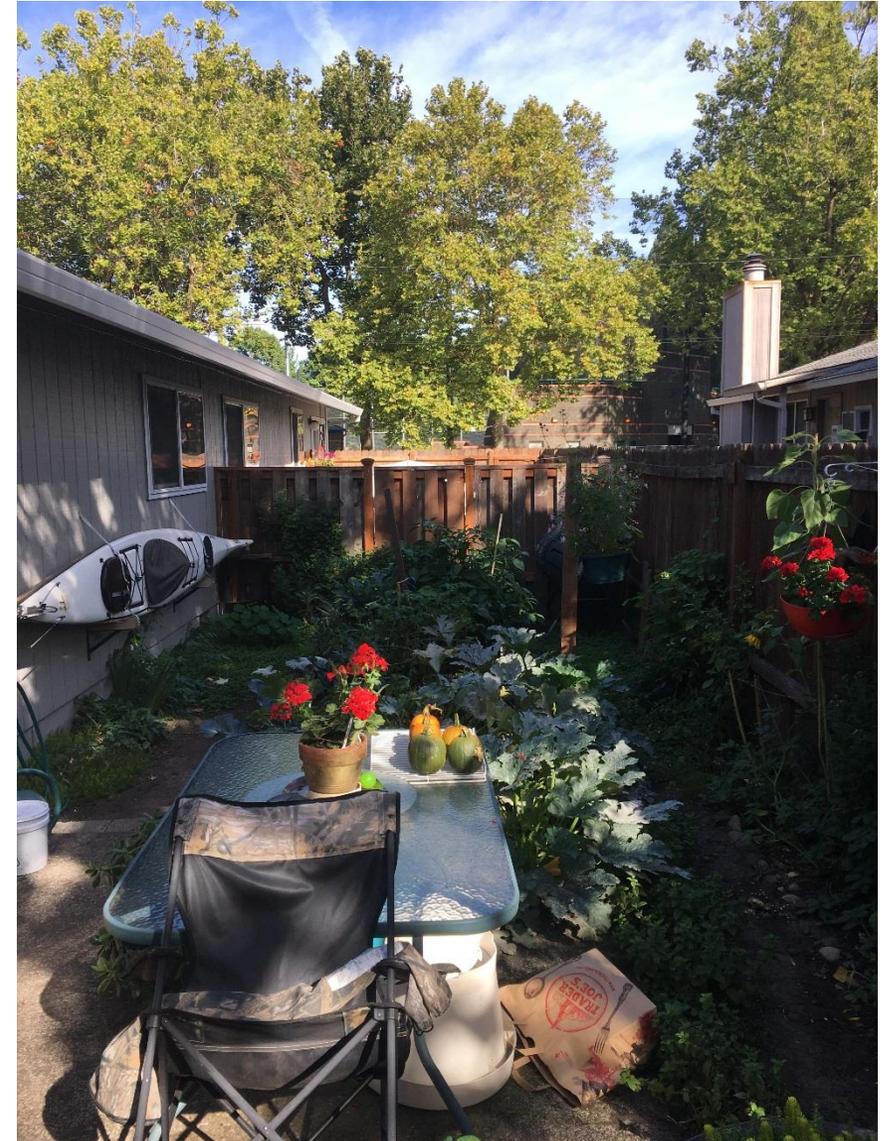
What we did



What we found



What we learned



Long-term rent assistance (LRA)

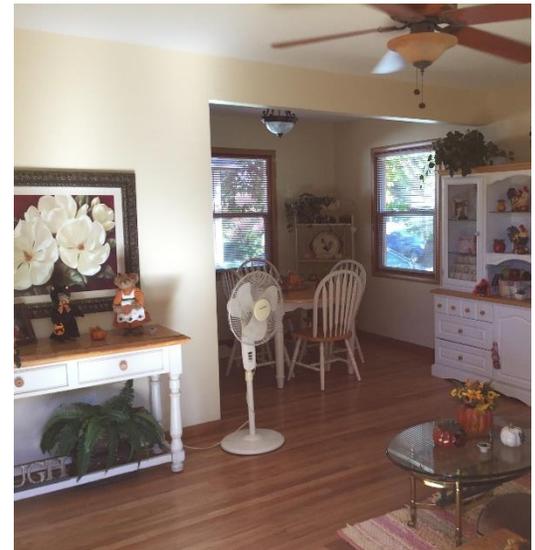
- Housing is becoming increasingly more expensive, fewer affordable options for low-income individuals and families
- NWPP and partners respond with Long-term Rent Assistance (LRA) pilot
- LRA is a **permanent** rental housing subsidy for eligible individuals
- LRA pilot started with 45 participants to test effectiveness



What We Wanted to Know



What are the potential impacts of a long-term rent subsidy on a person's life and wellbeing?

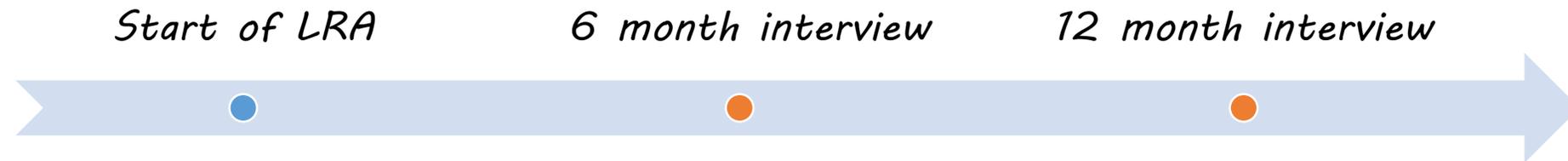


What We Did



Interviews

- Longitudinal interviews with subset of pilot participants



- Discussion and survey questions covered experiences with rent, LRA program impact, program satisfaction, and future plans.



The Framework Approach

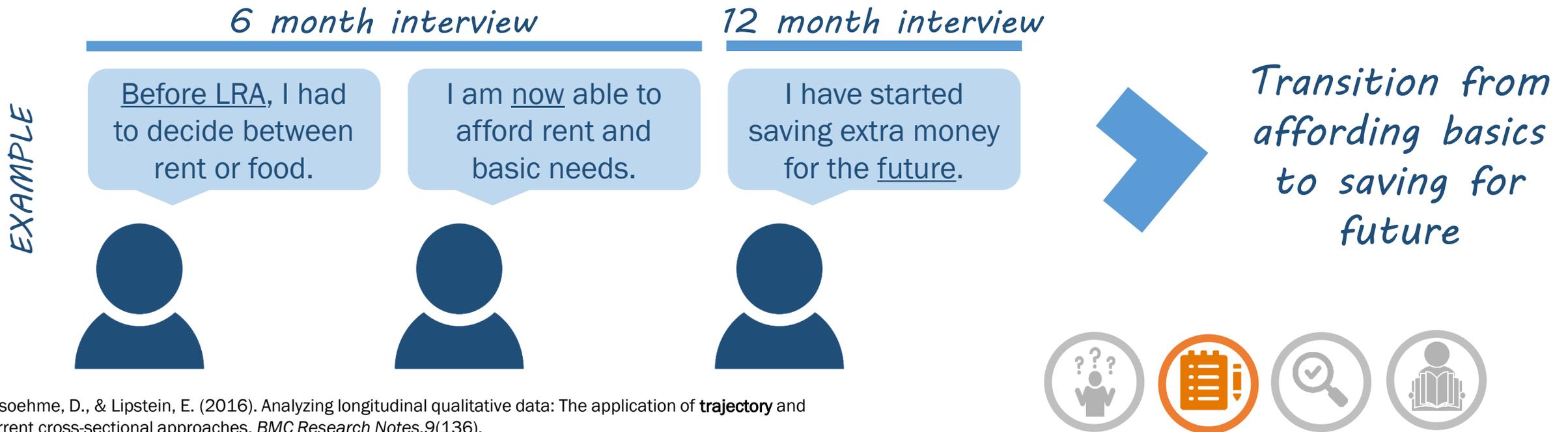
- Interviews were “coded” using Atlas.ti
- Quotes were pulled by code and analyzed for similarities and differences
- This created an analytic framework of **themes**

EXAMPLE



Trajectory Analysis

- For each theme, we examined what participants said over time and compared it with others' experience.



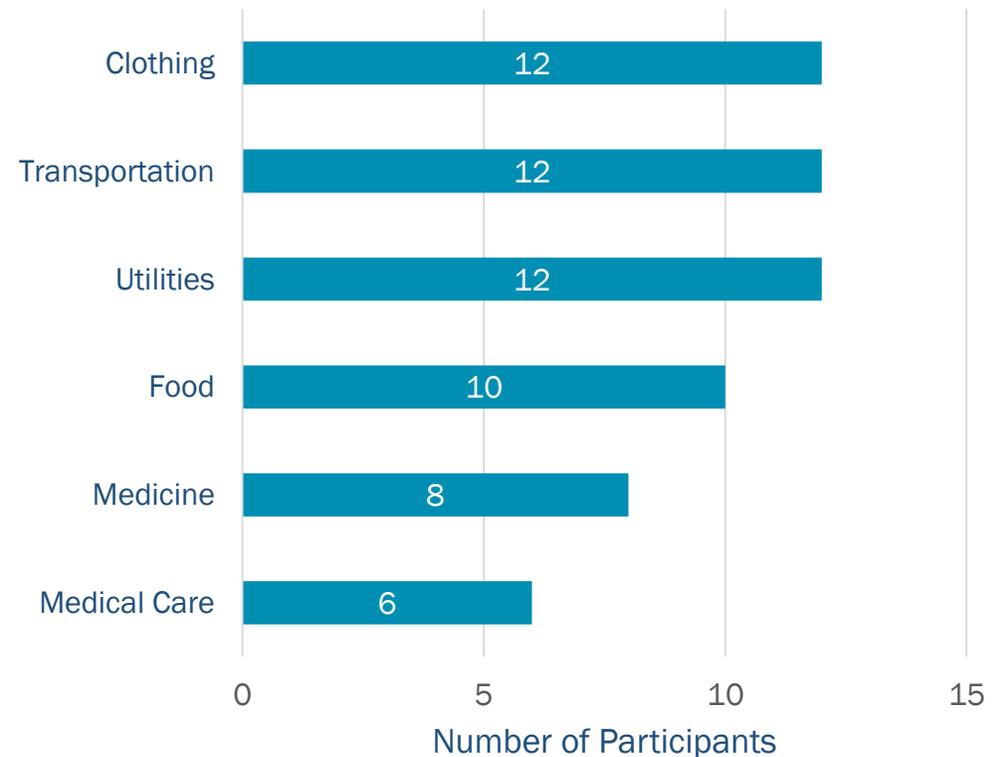
What We Found



About the Participants

- We interviewed **22 participants**.
- We were able to interview **18 participants** at both time points.
- About half were White (55%), a quarter were Black (27%), and the majority were female (73%).
- All participants had at **least one unmet basic need**, and half reported **homelessness in the past**.

Unmet Needs During the Year Before LRA (n=22)



“

It was challenging. I get very little money. I was frantically going everywhere to get help for rent, get help for utilities – sometimes I didn't eat.

”



Impact Themes

Housing Security

Financial Health

Mental Health

Health & Access

Social Support & Leisure



LRA





Housing Security

Participants talked about the “peace of mind” that came from gaining secure, stable housing.

Before LRA...

“I love my apartment complex. I've been here for years. And I was on the verge of losing it all and not being able to pay the rent [...] My rent was going up \$200 [...] I would have been homeless. Probably living in my car.”

After six months...

“[LRA] gave me an opportunity to have my own place to lay down at night [...] I wouldn't have to worry about if somebody gonna steal something from me [...] I like the location. I'm close to shopping, and the Max lines and all that.”

After one year...

“The peace of knowing that, you know, just signing my lease again in February this year, is that I cried for days [...] It's like ‘okay, you've got another year.’ [...] It was something I was never sure of for many, many, many years.”



Financial Health

Participants described a shift from needing financial support to affording most needs on their own.

Before LRA...

“Anything that cost money was kind of a struggle, and occasionally I would get help, but that’s one of the biggest things, just general things you don’t think about, where I would have to go somewhere and gather this or that from maybe a pantry.”

After six months...

“It’s allowed me to pay for my basic needs, which, before this, my family and friends were kind of pitching in [...] now I can pay my own utilities, and groceries, and, you know, go out to eat once in a while.”

After one year...

“My daughter who lives in [another state] is real sick, [...] and I am trying to keep enough in reserve so that if I need to go back to [state] real fast, I can.”





Mental Health

Many shared that stress had decreased and that mental health has improved over time.

Before LRA...

“I gave up. I actually quit. And I knew I quit. [...] I was getting myself prepared to move back into the streets. I didn't know how I was gonna survive out there [...] I was at the end of my rope and had nothing to grab onto.”

After six months...

“[Mental health] is better today than it was. I was pretty depressed, like why am I even here? I know it wasn't the way to live. Just felt no purpose of being. And of course that brings other thoughts [...] [LRA gave] a sense of security.”

After one year...

“I've been able to stay in a pretty good mental health state. There are some things going on that could get depressing. I do a lot better at staying out of depression.”





Health & Access

LRA offered several participants the mental space and time to focus on their physical health.

Before LRA...

“It's hard. And so I was like really avoiding going to the doctor, and a lot of times when I even needed to, because it was just so stressful to go.”

After six months...

“I'm getting more exercise and more movement and stuff, so actually I'm healthier now than I think I would've been.”

After one year...

“When I have an unforeseen medical issue, I'm not going to be homeless. [...] This is the first time in 20 years I didn't have to think about being homeless in an emergency situation.”





Social Support & Leisure

Many participants felt they now had the freedom to participate – socially and for their own enjoyment.

Before LRA...

“[With LRA] you feel that you can [do social activities]. I mean, I've gotten used to not doing a lot of stuff I did before.”

After six months...

“I can get out and do more. I can find valued citizen and go to places, like Meals on Wheels. As opposed to having to stay here and stress and worry.”

After one year...

“I started [a social group] at my church [...] [LRA] gives you the security you feel that you need to be a normal person, to be able to be active in different situations.”

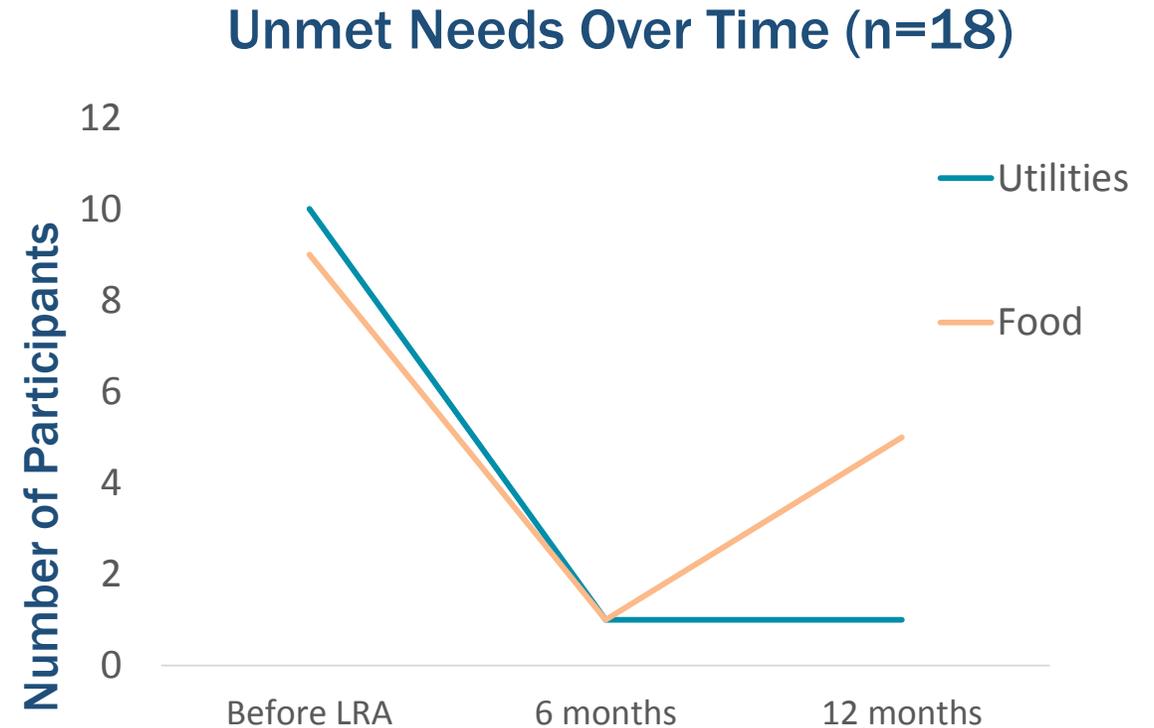


What We Learned



Rent assistance is an important first step in a longer journey to financial stability

- Social determinants of health (SDHs) are connected and interrelated
- Housing stability was achieved by all
- Some needs went down and stayed down, others fluctuated



Social service agencies play an important role in navigation and program satisfaction over time

- Social service agencies are responsive and provide systems navigation improve participant experience
- Long-term housing assistance – as opposed to short-term – sustains positive impact over time



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Limitations

- Limited to what was shared by participants
- Could not perform significance testing on survey responses due to small sample size
- Sampling was purposive and convenience based
- Non-English speakers' experience are not represented



“

This program saved my life.

”

Program Evaluation Team

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