

Regional Housing Legal Services 2013-2014 Annual Report



Welcome to the 2013-2014 Annual Report

Dear Friends and Supporters,

The Regional Housing Legal Services team is grateful to celebrate another year of providing unique expertise in affordable, sustainable housing, utility matters, economic development, and the preservation of home ownership.

Though the challenges we face in fulfilling our mission remain great, RHLS continues to innovate systemic change that will provide housing and strengthen communities, improving the lives of low-income and vulnerable Pennsylvanians.

We are mindful that we cannot sustain our work without the continued support of our partners and engaged constituents. Thank you for helping to make our work possible.

Sincerely,

Markita Morris-Louis
President, RHLS Board

Mark Schwartz
Executive Director



Mission & Strategic Priorities

Our mission is to work to create housing and economic opportunity in under-served communities in Pennsylvania and to effect systematic change for the benefit of lower-income households statewide.

RHLS achieves its mission by:

Providing free legal services and technical assistance to community-based organizations that develop affordable housing and engage in economic development activities that benefit low-income people;

Informing, training and supporting consumers and those who serve consumers, on housing and utility issues; and

Engaging in policy analysis and promoting system innovations focused on critical housing, economic development, neighborhood revitalization and utility issues.

Affordable Shelter

RHLS works to preserve and increase the availability of affordable shelter for Pennsylvania's very low-income and/or vulnerable populations.

Comprehensive, Community-Based Development

RHLS supports comprehensive, community-based development efforts to stabilize and improve neighborhoods in a way that benefits existing low-income residents.

Stabilize Households & Neighborhoods

RHLS works to stabilize households and neighborhoods and preserve occupied housing by addressing practical and legal conditions that threaten long-term home occupancy.

Advancing the Field

RHLS provides services and leadership that advance the field.



Development Services

RHLS works with nonprofit developers and community-based organizations to plan, finance, and build developments that provide affordable housing and community services. Our legal team provides technical skills and expertise in acquiring or developing property, as well as navigating complex financial arrangements with government entities. RHLS provides these services free of charge from concept to completion.

In 2013-2014, more than

270 Units of housing were developed

97 Projects worked on this year

benefitting as many as **1,682** low or very low-income households.

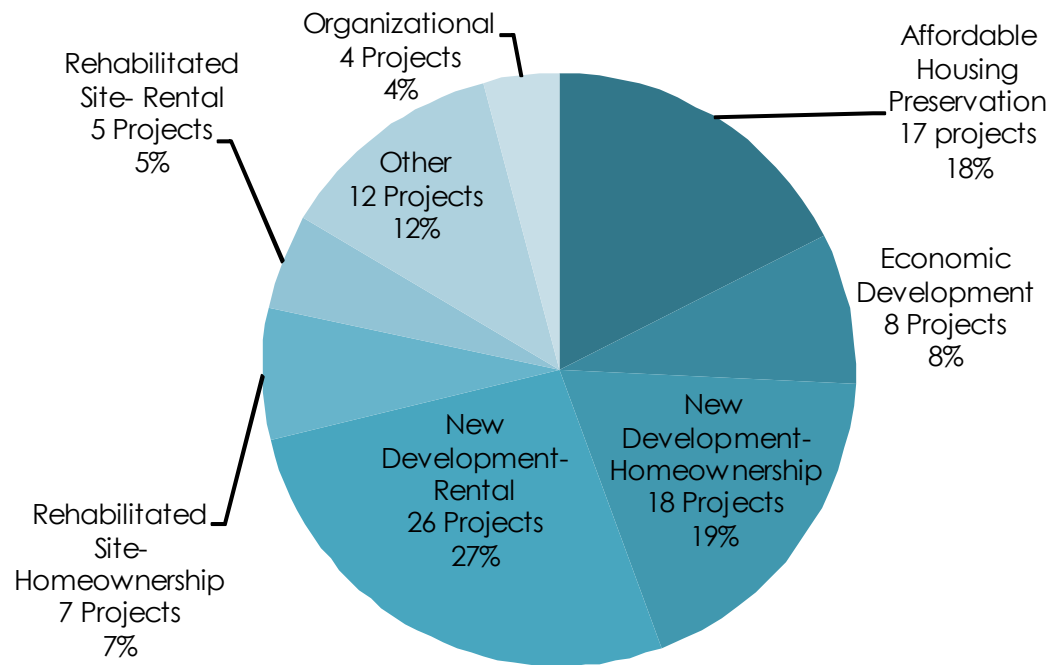


McKeesport YMCA

Pittsburgh, PA

RHLS worked with ACTION-Housing to acquire and rehabilitate a former YMCA, preserving 84 units of housing for very low-income, formerly homeless individuals. The project involved over \$10 million in financing.

Development Services



JBJ Soul Homes

Philadelphia, PA

RHLS partnered with long-time client Project HOME to build JBJ Soul Homes, a LEED Silver certified building that provides 55 units of housing to formerly homeless and low-income adults. Nine of the units are reserved for young adults, a population with an increased risk of experiencing homelessness.

Policy and Systems Innovation

2,000 Unit Initiative in Philadelphia

RHLS is working with the Philadelphia Council President's Office to help devise a strategy to use 4% of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to develop as many as 2,000 units of affordable housing in Philadelphia.

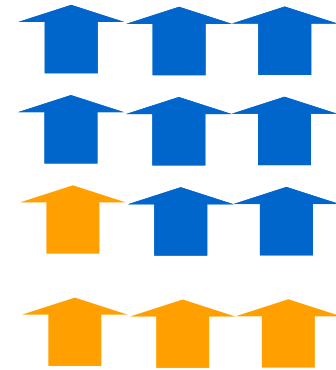
Housing Veterans

RHLS worked with a number of allied organizations to successfully advocate for the creation of a Special Program Priority for Veterans in the Neighborhood Assistance Program. This success will increase funding opportunities for projects providing quality services to veterans.

Housing Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

RHLS continues to work intensively to address housing issues affecting young people aging out of the foster care system. In May of this past year, RHLS co-hosted the Supportive Housing Pre-Summit to the National Summit on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care. This event brought together service providers, funders, and housing developers to discuss challenges facing this population.

In 2012, RHLS advocated for changes to Pennsylvania's Qualified Allocation Plan to address the need for housing vulnerable populations. These changes resulted in triple the annual Low-Income Housing Tax Credit awards for developments that provide supportive services for each of the last two years.



Policy and Systems Innovation

Weatherization

Recognizing the need to increase energy efficiency in multi-family properties and low-income communities, RHLS worked to increase awareness, resolve practical and policy issues, and help organizations collaborate to make our communities more efficient. RHLS coordinates the Philadelphia Conservation & Weatherization Collaborative and participates in the state-wide group, focused on energy efficiency in multi-family properties.

Homeownership Choice & RECLAIM

RHLS worked with ACTION-Housing and The Heinz Endowments to study the effectiveness of the shuttered MUFI program, which provided critical funding for homeownership and mixed-use developments. Drawing upon the results of the study, we have been working with the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to create the next generation of MUFI – RECLAIM. PHFA has set aside \$1.5 million to launch the program in Philadelphia, pending a matching commitment from the City and another \$1.5 million for Allegheny County.

Conservatorship and Blight

RHLS has partnered with organizations around our state to provide community leaders and developers with the tools to tackle blight in their neighborhoods.



Our Programs

HEMAP Help Center

Provides consumers with the information and feedback needed to submit the strongest possible application for mortgage assistance, with the goal of improving an applicant's chances of getting a loan.



Section 3 Certification helped me a lot. People have been calling us when they want jobs done for them and their business. Most of the calls I received was from being a part of Section 3 Business Program. I am in my 2nd year and I am excited about it.

-Barbara Strothers, CEO of Grace Security

Section 3 Business Certification

Helps businesses that are owned by low-income people or that hire low-income people in Allegheny County to connect with contracting opportunities on federally-funded projects. Certified businesses are listed in an online database that is used by developers and contractors.

Housing Law Project

Supports legal services programs that address issues related to affordable housing:

- Providing legal advocates across the state with information about current issues.
- Developing training sessions concerning important legal issues related to housing.
- Monitoring, reviewing, and recommending legislation and court rules.

Pennsylvania Utility Law Project

The Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP)'s mission is to assist Pennsylvania's low-income, residential utility consumers to connect to and to maintain affordable utility and energy services within their homes.

2,000

Hours of policy work with the General Assembly to pass legislation increasing protections for low-income customers and survivors of domestic violence, collaborating with utility service providers, and engaging in ongoing litigation to protect vulnerable customers from variable rates.

Gained or retained **\$4,300,000** in weatherization assistance programs for low-income families.

Heat and Eat Program Advocacy

PULP partnered with Community Legal Services' Public Benefits Unit to help low-income Pennsylvanians retain their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. The advocacy resulted in the preservation of \$300 million of food aid for 400,000 families in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

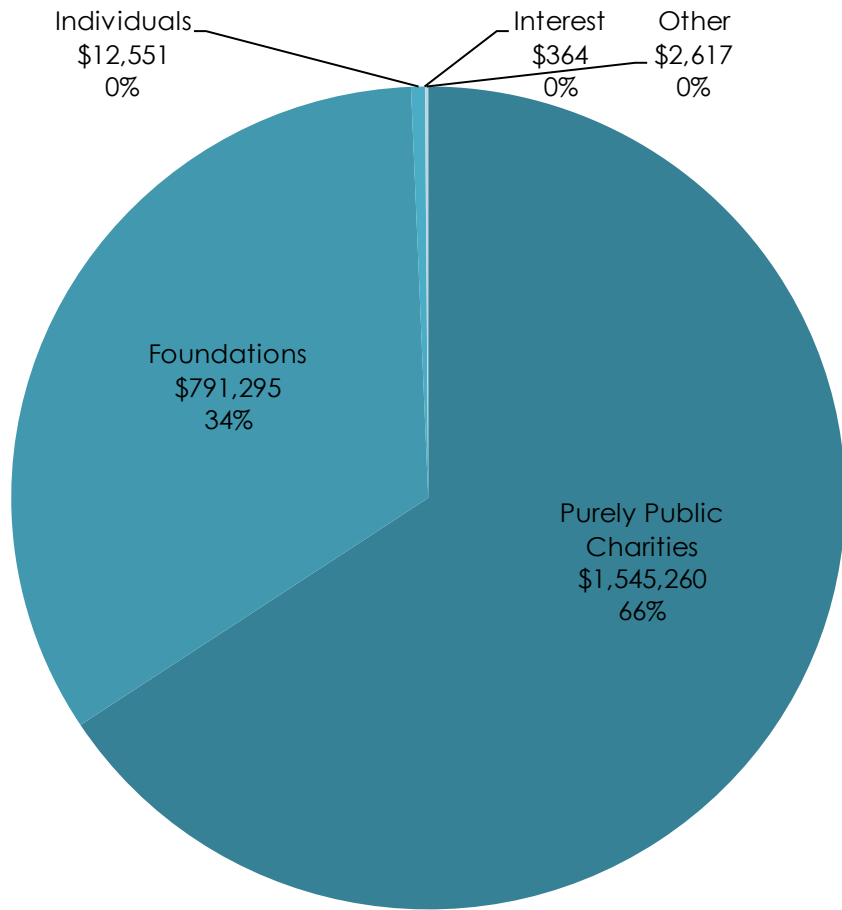


Increased funding for Customer Assistance Programs throughout the State of Pennsylvania

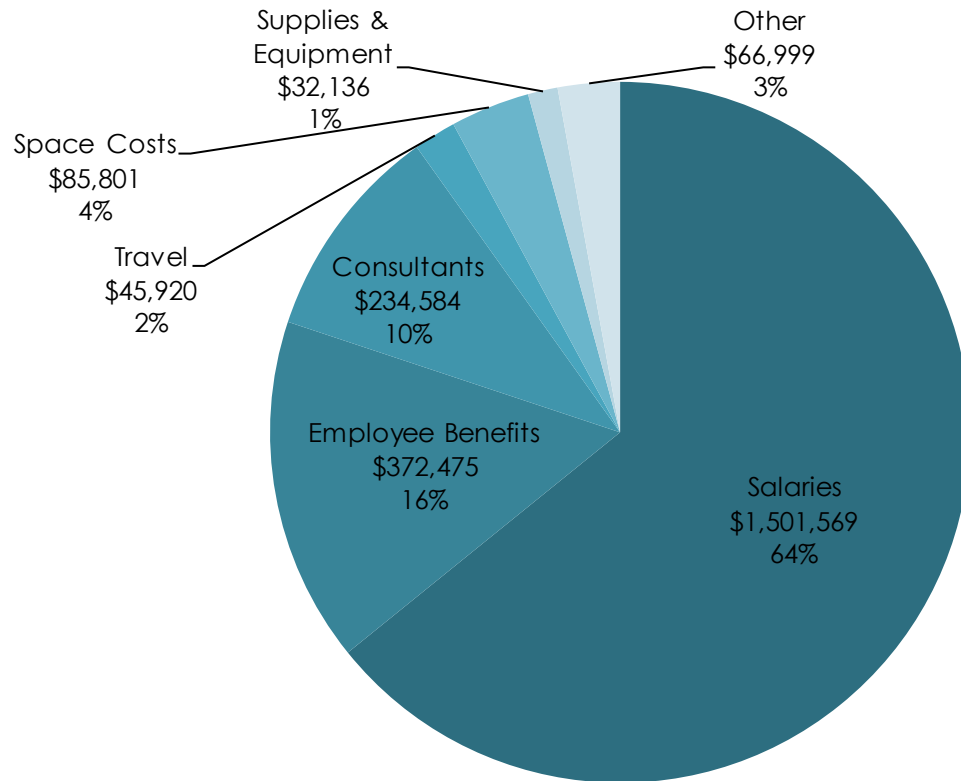
NRHLS
Regional Housing Legal Services

RHLS Revenues 2013-2014

\$2,352,087
in total revenues



RHLS Expenses 2013-2014



\$2,339,484
in total expenses

"Other" category includes insurance, printing, advertising, professional dues, tuition, subscriptions, telephone, postage, and miscellaneous expenses including depreciation.

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Southern New Jersey

Wells Fargo Foundation

William Penn Foundation

Thomas P. Witt

Thomas & Jacqueline Zemaitis



Thank You

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