

IN CELEBRATION OF SHIP: PERFORMANCE, TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY



The State Housing Incentives Partnership program (SHIP) is Florida's nationally-acclaimed model for using a dedicated revenue source to effectively and efficiently meet community housing needs. It has a proven track record for performance, transparency, and accountability. Unfortunately, it also has a record of being swept into general revenue when the state faces a budget deficit. The good news is that Florida is not facing a budget deficit in 2014.

Performance: Individuals with disabilities are able to live independently in fully-accessible homes; families moved from rental to homeownership, extremely low income renters were lifted out of substandard and unsafe housing conditions into redeveloped and energy efficient apartments. These are among the thousands of SHIP successes. But most SHIP success stories are from long ago; it has been years since SHIP programs have been adequately funded to meet community needs.

SHIP assistance spans from preventing homelessness to providing homeownership. It can help with foreclosure recovery, emergency repairs, and disaster recovery. For more than twenty years, the SHIP program has been used for all of the above, providing a safety net for our most vulnerable populations, including the elderly and youth aging out of foster care, and saving taxpayer money by avoiding unnecessary use of government institutions.

Transparency: Topping off the exemplary performance record of the SHIP program is its adherence to statutory mandates that require the funds to be encumbered and expended rapidly, without using more than ten percent of the funds for administration. A three-year plan, typically informed by a local advisory group predominantly representing the interests of the private sector, is adopted by the local governing body after public hearings. The SHIP plan, which includes advisory committee recommendations for regulatory reform, is adopted pursuant to public hearings and approved by the state after determining that it complies with all statutory criteria for expenditure of funds and regulatory reform.

Accountability: As the SHIP program is administered, the governing body is tracking the use of SHIP funds on a spreadsheet that has data fields for the "who, what, when, where, and why" of every dollar spent. These reports are filed annually with the state and reviewed for compliance. Accountability is further ensured through the use of private sector compliance monitors engaged by the state to periodically inspect local SHIP offices.

SHIP Today: In Fiscal Year 2014-15, Florida will have approximately \$291 million available for appropriation from the state and local housing trust funds. Seventy percent of those monies are for SHIP.

If the Florida Legislature appropriates the housing trust funds for housing, it will create over 27,000 jobs and more than \$3.4 billion in positive economic impact for Florida. Using housing trust fund monies for housing is supported by a diverse and wide range of interests from industry groups including the Florida Realtors and Florida Home Builders Association to low income advocates and faith based organizations such as the Florida AARP, and Florida Catholic Conference. If the housing trust funds are used for housing, SHIP success stories will no longer be a thing of the past, but of the present and future.