9% Program Values

Tax credits in the 9% Program are allocated through an annual competitive process in which projects are evaluated and scored according to the Commission's established criteria, as outlined in the Qualified Allocation Plan and Program Policies.

In addition to these documents, we also evaluate our programs, policies and allocation methodology through a race and equity lens and strive to create a more intentional, inclusive process.

Below are the core values that drive our LIHTC policy and allocation decisions.

1. Advance Racial Equity

We acknowledge that communities of color and other socially disadvantaged communities have experienced barriers and challenges to accessing capital for developing housing, and that tenants of color experience discrimination throughout the life cycle of a development. We are committed to addressing the inequities and impact that our approach to allocating resources has created. In addition, we are committed to lifting and amplifying the voices of tenants and communities of color, and organizations who authentically represent their interests and needs.

This Racial Equity value is an umbrella under which all the following values will be held. We will apply a racial equity lens to each of the other values stated here, considering the historical and systemic context, identifying and addressing any potential power imbalances that may be at play and bearing in mind how this may affect different groups.

2. Align Resources

Key resources at the local, state, and federal levels work together to make investments in affordable homes, with the 9% Housing Tax Credit being a critical piece of the financing stack. The Commission values actively working with other funding partners to create a predictable pathway for developers that effectively leverages available resources to timely advance projects. These public funds, or contribution of land, are a proxy for priorities either driven by the local jurisdiction or by the state legislative process and represent important needs in the community. We value working closely with the geographic pools (Metro, Non-Metro and Seattle-King) to ensure that local and state priorities are reflected in the commitment of these limited resources.

3. Meet Affordable Housing Needs Everywhere

Housing affordability is in crisis across the state. We value helping all communities who are experiencing challenges in accessing housing. The 9% Housing Tax Credit is a statewide resource, and so statewide geographic dispersion of the Housing Credit remains a policy priority for the Commission. Our policies must also balance statewide objectives and local priorities, urban and rural issues, and jurisdictions with more and fewer resources for affordable housing.

To balance these needs, in 2012 the Commission established specific percentages of our annual LIHTC authority for three geographic pools: King County; Metro (consisting of counties with larger populations, greater density and more local housing funds); and Non-Metro (counties that are more rural). Projects compete for credit allocations based on the pool in which they are located. This ensures physical distribution across the state, and also takes into account local priorities. As we evaluate projects, we seek to incentivize inclusive processes for determining these local priorities.

4. Ensure High-Quality and Affordable Housing for Residents in the Long Term

Many affordable housing projects serve people formerly homeless, seniors, households with disabilities, etc., who are likely to have significant barriers to access housing. For this reason and others, the existing statewide affordable housing portfolio must be preserved so that long-term affordability and housing quality are both maintained and improved over time. Properties are at risk of dropping out of our LIHTC portfolio when regulatory covenants expire, rental income no longer covers operating and maintenance costs, and/or they need major capital repairs. Addressing these risks through preservation efforts allows current residents to remain in quality housing and avoid displacement or homelessness. The Commission values maintaining housing affordability and stability, and financing improvements that ensure a healthy and safe living environment, with the ultimate objectives of improving the quality of life for residents, preventing vulnerable households from falling into homelessness, and ensuring we don’t lose ground on efforts to increase the affordable housing supply.

5. Use Our Limited Resources Efficiently

The Commission seeks to serve as many low-income households of Washington as possible by ensuring that the LIHTC program supports the most cost-efficient projects, in line with the other values of the program. The Commission will continue to seek ways to provide competitive and cost-saving incentives to projects applying for resources.

6. Prioritize Populations Who Most Need Help

We commit to targeting resources towards individuals and households experiencing the greatest barriers to safe and affordable housing across the state. This may mean focusing on different populations in different parts of the state; for example, homelessness has been a key issue in King County while in the Non-Metro pool, projects committing to serving farmworkers have been given preference. We will be responsive to regional concerns and target resources to populations that are in greatest need in each locality, while also complying with federal law that requires us to give preference to projects serving residents with the lowest incomes for the longest period.

7. Foster Healthy and Sustainable Homes

Many low-income residents in Washington face increasing exposure to extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and unhealthy indoor living conditions. These challenges are compounded by longstanding patterns of unequal investment that have left some communities with inefficient housing and at higher risk of worse health outcomes.

Advancing healthier and more resilient housing is central to the Commission's mission to expand access to safe, affordable homes and ensure responsible use of public resources. The Commission aspires to incentivize cost-effective construction and rehabilitation practices that improve indoor comfort and strengthen building performance.

These investments deliver long-term value for Washington by protecting residents' health, preserving affordable housing, reducing strain on public systems, and strengthening community resilience.