



HOME American Rescue Plan Engagement Plan

Overview

Authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Minnesota Housing was awarded a one-time allocation of approximately \$31M to increase housing stability by addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. These authorized funds will be allocated under the HOME American Rescue Plan (HOME ARP) program.

Minnesota Housing has partnered with ICF Incorporated LLC (ICF), to help implement the HOME ARP program and develop its allocation plan. Outlined below are activities that ICF will undertake to help ensure credibility as it assists with implementing HOME ARP. ICF is a national technical assistance provider in affordable housing and community development based out of Fairfax, Virginia. ICF has been in business since 1969. For more than 40 years, ICF has assisted federal, state, and local government agencies to meet their goals and address housing and homelessness issues.

Engagement Guiding Principles

ICF interacts with others with integrity, challenges assumptions, embraces differences and brings passion to its work. ICF is also guided by the following principles:

- **Collaboration.** ICF will be a strong partner with Minnesota Housing and local community members. ICF values the expertise each person brings to discussions and approach challenges as opportunities. ICF communicates directly and listen actively.
- **Transparency.** ICF will maintain transparency in every stage of the planning process as the HOME ARP allocation plan is developed—both with Minnesota Housing and all community members who engage in opportunities to provide input to the allocation plan. ICF will help ensure that all partners who participate in any form of engagement are provided with information that clearly outlines allowable uses of HOME ARP funds and how their input will be utilized. All feedback received though engagement opportunities will be documented and/or synthesized by the ICF team, and participants will have a clear understanding of how their input will be shared and managed. Throughout the engagement process, ICF will deliver summary documents, main theme documents and other identified written materials

for posting on Minnesota Housing’s website or for Minnesota Housing to disseminate in a manner determined by Minnesota Housing and at its sole discretion.

- **Equity and Inclusion.** ICF acts based on what it learns from diverse communities, which is the foundation for any audience centered communication or outreach efforts. It is crucial to understand how each community can be effectively reached, and understand their priorities, cultural nuances, preferred language and lived experiences. ICF’s multicultural team of experts can help identify and address barriers that prevent communities from participating in opportunities to provide input into planning work that may benefit them. Through culturally adapted strategies and understanding of culturally diverse backgrounds, ICF will identify community influencers, leaders and organizations that will be the most effective in delivering information regarding the HOME ARP program

How Community Member Input is Used

Input collected from consultation and community member surveys will be used to inform the needs assessment and gaps analysis that serves as the basis for Minnesota Housing’s strategy for distributing the one-time allocation of HOME ARP funds. To maintain transparency throughout the planning process necessary to develop the allocation plan, ICF will provide a summary of the feedback received in all sessions held during December and January, prior to the public hearing. Minnesota Housing will subsequently post the summary on its website for review with the draft allocation plan. The summary will identify main themes and survey results.

NOTE: To maintain confidentiality, the names of individual meeting participants and/or information that would identify individuals will **not** be included.

Internal Engagement Activities

Discovery Sessions

Held between ICF and Minnesota Housing staff to meet the following objectives:

- Create comprehensive lists of known partner organizations/coalitions to include in engagement efforts
- Identify partners that understand the needs and gaps of all qualifying populations (QPs) and relevant subpopulations who would also benefit from these funds, with particular attention paid to populations who experience higher rates of homelessness and housing instability
- Identify community influencers, leaders and organizations that will be the most effective in delivering program information to historically excluded communities

- Understand community outreach efforts conducted by Minnesota Housing to date and what has been communicated about HOME ARP
- Obtain access to data sources necessary for a Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis and establish a plan for filling any gaps identified in that data
- Successful implementation of the needs identified in Governor Walz’s Housing Task Force documents, Responding Effectively as a Region to Unsheltered Homelessness, and [Ten Key Trends in Housing](#)

Consultation with Other State Departments

ICF will convene listening sessions with Department of Health and Human Services staff, members of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, and staff from the Department of Corrections and the Department of Employment and Economic Development to:

- Gather insight and information relative to existing housing gaps and needs for each QP, including discussion of current solutions, solutions that are pending but have not yet been implemented, and possibly develop new solutions to address housing instability

Data Requests

The following external engagement activities will inform data collection and the drafting of reports:

- **Source and Collect Data.** ICF will explore multiple sources to gather robust data to help ensure a thorough understanding of each QP in Minnesota. In addition to data elements provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the eCon Planning Suite and those used to inform [Draft Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development 2022-2026](#) and the [2022-2023 Affordable Housing Plan - With All Appendix](#), ICF will incorporate data from across the homeless response system in Minnesota such as the most recent Point-in Time Count, Housing Inventory Charts, [Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation 2021 Report \(CAPER\)](#), Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), and/or other sources identified by Minnesota Housing to inform the Needs Assessment. ICF will coordinate with Minnesota Housing on the best strategies for obtaining data not available or easily obtained from these systems, including coordination with domestic violence service providers.

Qualitative and quantitative data gathered both through the engagement with state agencies and the consultation with and public participation in activities listed below will be analyzed. ICF will also review with the latest industry data and reports, such as [Minnesota Housing Partnership-State of the State's Housing report](#), [Policy Link National Equity Atlas equity data](#), and [Urban Institute’s Spatial Equity Data Tool](#).

- **Data Analysis.** ICF will conduct a thorough analysis, including identifying racial and ethnic disparities, of the data sources listed above to provide Minnesota Housing with a clear picture of the size and demographics of all QPs for HOME ARP services. The data analysis proposed by ICF will include sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations; Minnesotans currently housed but at-risk of homelessness; people who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking; households who have previously experienced homelessness; households that are receiving temporary or emergency housing assistance; low-income households experiencing a severe cost burden; and households who have an annual income at or below 30% area median income and also meet one of the conditions for at-risk of homelessness established by HUD as described in [CPD Notice 21-10](#).
- **Unmet Needs.** Once ICF has generated a clear understanding of the number of people in Minnesota who qualify for HOME ARP services, the information gathered from the consultation and public participation activities described above will be evaluated against existing resources (both public and private) to identify the gaps in shelter beds, the housing market, the service delivery systems of care across Minnesota, and racial disparities.

External Engagement Activities

Hearing from Minnesota communities impacted by housing instability is integral in designing the strongest HOME ARP allocation plan to meet community needs. ICF will provide multiple avenues to elicit and collect feedback from interested parties, detailed in the Consultation Methods section below. External engagement activities will fulfill all HOME ARP consultation and public participation requirements referenced in CPD Notice 21-10. ICF will look to leverage standing meetings as much as possible to solicit input from community members without adding a time burden or duplicating efforts. ICF will schedule flexible meeting opportunities, as needed, for community members to discuss gaps, needs and funding priorities.

Written materials and a PowerPoint with a recording covering a basic overview of HOME ARP will be provided for publication on Minnesota Housing's website. The materials will be available for distribution in advance of consultations and other engagement activities when possible. These materials are intended to help orient the community to the funding opportunity, including the agreed upon principles and values guiding the planning process, a description of the qualified populations and eligible activities, the feedback needed, and how input will be used for program creation. Materials will be made available as necessary, in collaboration with Minnesota Housing, that are linguistically and culturally appropriate, prioritizing materials in Spanish, Somali and Hmong. The ICF multicultural team can provide materials in Spanish. ICF will collaborate with Minnesota Housing staff for translation of materials in Somali and Hmong.

Whenever possible, if an organization or community member has provided their input and feedback to their local participating jurisdiction, Minnesota Housing and ICF will not duplicate efforts and will incorporate the feedback to be included on the state level. Other participating jurisdictions within Minnesota conducting similar consultations are as follows:

- Duluth
- Minneapolis
- St. Paul
- St. Louis County
- CNSRT – Dakota County

ICF will work to obtain the data and feedback from participating jurisdictions to prevent duplication of consultations, ease burden on community members' time, and allow for specific outreach efforts to marginalized communities. Please note that an organization or community member's decision to engage with the local participating jurisdiction's plan does not prohibit the organization from engaging during the state level consultation process. Community members may engage in multiple HOME ARP consultations as desired.

Minnesota Housing has drafted a list of interested parties and groups that are recommended to take part in the consultation process, ICF will use this list to organize consultation efforts. The list of organizations consulted will be included in the Allocation Plan to ensure engagement across the groups identified below.

Per [CPD Notice 21-10](#) the following groups' input are required as part of the consultation process:

- Continuums of Care in the Geographic Area
- Homeless Services Providers
- Domestic Violence Service Providers
- Veteran's Groups
- Public Housing Agencies
- Public Agencies Addressing the Needs of QPs
- Public or Private Organizations that Address Civil Rights and Fair Housing
- Public or Private Orgs that Address the Needs of People with Disabilities

Due to the unique and diverse landscape of the State of Minnesota, the following additional consultation groups were identified as key partners for consultation in addition to the required groups:

- Tribal Nations
- Persons with Lived Expertise
- Housing Developers
- Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Programs (FHPAP)
- Community Action Agencies (CAP)
- Other organizations that provide services to or advocacy for QPs

Consultation Methods

- **Virtual Listening Sessions (up to 12) (Stakeholder and Public Consultation).** Each virtual listening session will be up to one hour in length utilizing virtual interactive and accessible engagement tools such as Mentimeter and/or JamBoard to gather and document insights from participants. Virtual listening session participants will be provided with written HOME ARP fact sheets in advance of each session, outlining the local allocation, the QPs, and eligible activities. Each session will begin with an overview of HOME ARP funding mirroring the content of the written materials, followed by a guided discussion focused on the needs and gaps related to the HOME ARP QPs and eligible activities allowing for in-depth feedback and opportunities to engage on issues key to session participants.
- **Historically Excluded Partners Interviews (up to 10).** ICF will work with Minnesota Housing staff to identify key points of contact and conduct three to five, one-hour informational interviews to gain additional insight on identified service gaps within the existing homelessness and housing systems related to HOME ARP eligible activities. These interviews will specifically target historically excluded communities. ICF will prioritize individualized sessions for Tribal nations and native speakers of Spanish, Somali and Hmong, and when possible and available, will use outside interpretation services and consult with community partners who may provide additional insight. In furthering equity and inclusion in the planning process, ICF will engage communities using trusted community experts to ensure all voices have a respectful and safe space to provide insights and solutions. Individual interviews will include the same HOME ARP overview provided in the virtual listening sessions to help ensure equitable access to information.

When referring to experts, ICF is taking into consideration organizations that serve the Indigenous, Spanish, Somali and Hmong communities. It is important to leverage existing relationships and trust that the organizations hold with the community, as they have an in-depth understanding of the community's lived experiences and have established relationships to effectively deliver the information regarding HOME ARP. As diverse as communities are, organizations also have different levels of capabilities and capacity, which will be taken into consideration. Questions used for the interviews will be written in plain language, and for reporting purposes. ICF's multicultural team will ensure the information collected reflects the audience.

ICF will conduct informational interviews with community and faith-based organizations whenever possible who are trusted by community members experiencing homelessness or housing gaps. The interviews will help ICF gain insight into priorities and understand service gaps related to HOME ARP eligible activities.

To further equity and inclusion, ICF will partner with Minnesota Housing to ensure materials translated in Spanish, Somali and Hmong are available. ICF also has a native Spanish speaking team that can serve as moderators, if needed. Where translation is requested Minnesota Housing will make available services that are consistent with its other programs. Developing audience-based materials helps to create an emotional connection and build trust. It is important for community members to understand that their time and participation in this process is valued, and ICF will present a clear message on how the overall community being served will benefit.

- **Surveys.** To increase accessibility and help make providing feedback easier, a virtual survey will be made available through Minnesota Housing’s survey platform. This survey will be offered as an alternative method for gathering feedback on the use of HOME ARP funds. The survey will be distributed along with the program overview, fact sheets and other HOME ARP materials. Respondents may indicate which HOME ARP eligible activities exist within the state, what activities are most needed, recommend preferences for subsets of HOME ARP QPs, and suggest potential collaborations for administering HOME ARP funds. Respondents will be invited to share their views on the impact those activities have within their communities and the statewide homeless system. A survey question sample is an addendum to this document.

In addition, ICF will develop an online survey tailored to community members who meet the HOME ARP QP definition. Similar to the survey developed for general distribution, questions will be developed based on the services that HOME ARP may provide. Note, however, that this survey will aim to seek feedback from QP residents on whether the framework of HOME ARP activities would be personally beneficial and accessible to them. The survey will be developed so that it may be completed on a phone or computer.

- **Public Hearing.** To provide for and encourage public participation in the development of the HOME ARP allocation plan, one public hearing will be held to gather additional information. The public hearing will be scheduled later in the afternoon to early evening to maximize and accommodate community members’ schedules. The public notice of the hearing will be distributed widely through mass emailing, website postings, press releases, State Register, newspaper and social media, and will include the HOME ARP overview from other written materials. ICF will collaborate with Minnesota Housing to provide translation services and reasonable accommodation requests.
- **Public Comment Period.** A draft allocation plan that synthesizes the input obtained during the consultation period will be posted for a public comment period per Minnesota’s Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) and described in [CPD Notice 21-10](#). All community members involved in the consultation will be notified of the draft’s publication. The public notice will be disseminated broadly. ICF will continue to ensure that cultural adaption and plain language is

used to improve understanding and encourage participation of communities that have historically been excluded. Public comment submission processes will be accessible, and reasonable accommodation requests will be provided. The process will also allow for meaningful participation for people with limited English proficiency. ICF will ensure that materials soliciting comments are posted in easy-to-access locations, in clear and easy-to-read formats, and with instructions on how to submit feedback.

Project Timelines and Milestones	
Virtual Listening Sessions	Within 10 days of Effective Date (by 12/14/22)
Engagement Plan	Within 15 days of Effective Date (by 12/19/22)
Consultation Period Begins	Begins within one month of Effective Date (1/5/2023)
Gaps Analysis and Needs Report Draft	Tuesday, January 31, 2023
Public Hearing on Minnesota HOME ARP Funds	Wednesday, February 1, 2023
Draft Allocation Plan	On or before Wednesday, February 15, 2023
Public Comment Period on Draft Allocation Plan	
Final Minnesota HOME ARP Allocation Plan	Within 10 days of the close of the public comment period
Submission of Minnesota HOME ARP Allocation Plan	By Friday, March 31, 2023

Addendum

Draft Consultation Questions for Virtual Sessions

1. Provide your organization’s name (if applicable).
2. Are you involved in the delivery of any of the following activities (select all that apply)?
 - a. Affordable rental housing
 - b. Non-congregate shelter
 - c. Supportive services
 - d. Tenant-based rental assistance
 - e. None
3. What are the unmet needs of people in your community or the community you serve (select all that apply)?
 - a. Affordable rental housing
 - b. Non-congregate shelter
 - c. Supportive services
 - d. Tenant-based rental assistance
 - e. Nonprofit operating and capacity building
4. Provide details related to unmet needs. (open-ended)

5. Describe any racial or ethnic disparities not being addressed in your current system. (open-ended)
6. How would you prioritize qualifying populations (QPs) within the population you serve? (scale)
 - a. Homeless as defined in [24 CFR 91.5 \(The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act\)](#)
 - b. At-risk of Homelessness [24 CFR 91.5 \(The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act\)](#)
 - c. Fleeing or attempting to flee dating violence, sexual violence, stalking, and/or human trafficking
 - d. Other populations where providing supportive services or assistance would prevent the household from becoming homeless or would serve those with the greatest risk of housing instability
 - e. Nonprofit operating and capacity building
7. Rank your funding priority for HOME ARP activities based upon QP needs. (ranking)
 - a. Affordable rental housing
 - b. Non-congregate shelter
 - c. Supportive services
 - d. Tenant-based rental assistance
8. Would you recommend setting a preference for any specific subpopulation for HOME ARP services and if so, what would that preference be and what need would it meet?
9. In terms of rental housing and shelter, what challenges does your community face? (open-ended)
10. Among the following capacity building categories, what does your organization need to successfully operate a HOME ARP program?
 - a. Salaries for new hires
 - b. Employee training
 - c. Equipment (e.g., computer software, upgrades, and supplies)
 - d. Contracts for technical assistance