Bring It Home Rental Assistance Program
Frequently Asked Questions

Bring It Home was established under Minnesota Statute 462A.2095 as a statewide rental assistance program that provides tenant-based and project-based rental assistance through Program Administrators.

The information in this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is supplementary to the Bring It Home Program Guide and Grant Contract Agreements. In the event of any conflicts between the information in this document and the Bring It Home Program Guide and/or Grant Contract Agreement, the information in the Bring It Home Program Guide and/or Grant Contract Agreement will govern and control.

Updates to this FAQ will be identified and dated accordingly.

Please review the Local Government Housing Programs webpage and Bring It Home Program Guide for additional details, including program eligibility requirements, eligible uses, definitions and related information.

A) Request for Proposals (RFP) Application Materials

Overall & Program Administrator Eligibility

1. **What is the grant period for the first round of the Bring It Home Rental Assistance Program?**

   The grant period for the first round of the Bring It Home Rental Assistance Program is two years.

2. **Can a Program Administrator apply for more than the minimum grant amount?**

   Yes, however there may not be additional funding to provide more than the minimum grant amount.

3. **If you are a Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) that doesn't currently administer Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), can you apply to be a Program Administrator?**

   Yes, HRAs that do not currently administer HCV may apply to become Program Administrators for the Bring It Home Rental Assistance Program, if there is not an HRA that administers HCV that is planning to serve that area. The eligibility requirements outlined in the Program Guide

include demonstrating the capacity to effectively administer the program within their Service Area. All applications will be reviewed through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to determine if the applying entity meets the necessary criteria to administer the program.

4. **Can a Tribal Nation and a Housing Authority or other entity from the same Tribal Nation both apply to be Program Administrators?**

    Only one entity can be selected to be the Program Administrator/Grantee for a specific Service Area and only one entity can apply to administer the Bring It Home program per Tribal Nation. If two applicants propose to serve the same Service Area, Minnesota Housing will determine who will be funded based on the scoring criteria outlined in the RFP.

Program Features and Policies

5. **What guidance will be provided to Program Administrators that want to project base their vouchers? What specific obligations will need to be delineated in a Bring It Home version of a project-based HAP contract?**

    Program Administrators should refer to their existing procedures to determine how to project base vouchers or suggest an amended or different procedure through Options 2 or 3 in the Program Guide. Program Administrators can use a form similar to their existing HAP contracts for Bring it Home as long as it complies with the statutory requirements. NAHRO could provide a template for a Bring It Home project-based contract that is standard across Program Administrators. Minnesota Housing reserves the right to review project-based contracts.

6. **If we project base vouchers, do those have to be prioritized for households with children under 18?**

    ~~Yes, if~~If you choose to use project-based vouchers, those vouchers must be prioritized for households with children 18 and under and with incomes at or below 30% of the area median income (AMI). PHAs may also have ~~and~~ additional priority populations based on local need. ~~18. This aligns with the program's statutory requirement to give preference to households with children under the age of 18 and annual incomes at or below 30% of the area median income (AMI). Program Administrators must implement this priority across all rental assistance options, including project-based vouchers, to ensure compliance with the Bring It Home Program guidelines.~~

7. **Can Program Administrators establish additional priority populations, and how does this align with the prioritization of households with children under 18 and incomes up to 30% AMI?**

    Yes, the statute allows Program Administrators to establish additional priority populations based on local needs. ~~However, this must be done in alignment with the program's primary statutory priority: households with children under 18 years of age and annual incomes at or~~

~~below 30% of the area median income (AMI).~~ Any additional priorities ~~must not conflict with or override this requirement~~should have preference equal to or less than households with children 18 and under and incomes up to 30% AMI. ~~and should complement the program's overarching goals.~~

8. **Will any grant funding be advanced to Program Administrators since most Program Administrators will not have the funds to cover the first month or two of HAP payments?**

   Yes. The Agency has approved advanced payments to Program Administrators who are selected as grantees of up to 50% of Start-up costs and 3 months of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP).

9. **Can the program cover back-owed rent?**

   No.

Start-Up Costs

10. **Can you provide an estimate of Start-Up Costs to help with budgeting?**

    Start-up funding depends on the number of vouchers you plan to issue. We recommend using an estimate of approximately $959 per voucher for start-up costs to align with start-up costs provided by HUD for the HCV program. However, smaller program administrators (those issuing 60 or fewer vouchers) may require a higher per-voucher estimate, while larger program administrators may need less due to economies of scale.

    In total, $6 million has been allocated for Start-Up Costs across all eligible program administrators, including HRAs and tribal entities.

11. **Is Start-Up Costs funding separate from Administrative Fees?**

    Yes, Start-Up Costs funding is separate from Administrative Fees. Start-up costs cover the necessary expenses to establish program staff and infrastructure for operating the Bring It Home Rental Assistance Program. These costs may include developing program policies, hiring and training staff, marketing, setting up waitlists, and establishing program procedures during the first 12 months of the program.

    Start-up costs will be provided through the initial grants for the first round of funding only and are in addition to the Bring It Home Rental Assistance Program grant proceeds used for Housing Assistance Payments and Administrative Fees.

12. **Are Start-Up Costs limited to the first 12 months of the program?**

    Yes, Start-Up Costs are generally limited to what will be needed in the first 12 months after signing the grant agreement to prepare for administering the program, but may possibly be extended under certain circumstances with approval by Minnesota Housing. After this period,

Program Administrators will transition to receiving ongoing funding through Administrative Fees, which are based on the number of vouchers issued.

13. **Can multiple HRAs have a single contract with one entity for specific start-up costs such as software updates or program form creation?**

Yes, however, the cost to the HRA and the contractor must be included in both the Bring It Home application and the workplan that will be attached to the grant contract agreement. If the cost to the HRA is greater than $10,000, the bidding and procurement process as outlined by Office of Grants Management would need to be followed.

14. **What if we start administrating the program and determine that we cannot administer it? Will we have to repay our start-up cost funding to the state?**

Yes, if a Program Administrator cannot fulfill their responsibilities, Minnesota Housing will require repayment of start-up cost funding as outlined in the Grant Contract Agreement.

15. **Is there an "out clause" in the grant contract agreement, in the case that we determine that operating the program is not feasible?**

There is not an "out clause" in the grant contract agreement. If a Program Administrator has issued vouchers and has households receiving rental assistance, the Program Administrator must continue to provide that rental assistance until the 2-year grant period has expired. If the Program Administrator decides it cannot operate the program at that time, it may find another eligible Program Administrator to administer the program.

B) Program Implementation

Eligible Households

16. **Do eligible households need to be below 50% AMI at both initial eligibility and annual recertification?**

Yes, households must be at or below 50% AMI at both initial eligibility and annual recertification.

17. **Should we use gross or adjusted gross income for household income calculations?**

Minnesota Housing is authorizing Program Administrators to use adjusted gross income in their income calculations to be consistent with existing HCV procedures.

18. **Can Program Administrators serve households above 50% AMI at initial eligibility or annual recertification if their current HCV Administrative Plan allows it?**

No, this is not allowable. The requirement must be met regardless of what your Administrative Plan permits. Statutory requirements are outlined at the start of Chapter 3 in the Program Guide to ensure compliance.

19. Is there a "grace period" for a household if they exceed 50% AMI at recertification?

If a household's income exceeds 50% of the area median income (AMI) at recertification, Program Administrators must provide a written notice to the household. Program Administrators may offer up to a 180-day grace period, similar to the HCV program, to allow the household time to adjust to the change in their assistance status. This grace period ensures a smoother transition while maintaining compliance with program guidelines.

20. What can be included in the rent payment? For example, if a tenant has to pay for renters insurance and that is in the lease agreement, can it be counted as rent?

In general, rent includes the actual rent payment plus all non-optional ongoing fees that are required to be paid as part of a total monthly payment and listed in the lease. Please refer to Minnesota Statute 504B.120 Subd 1.

21. Can we structure the program so that households can pay less than 30% of their income in rent?

You can, as long as the difference between what a household is paying for rent and the actual rent is the same amount or less than the difference between a household paying 30% of their income in rent and 120% of the payment standard.

22. Do applicants need to be a Minnesota resident? Is this something that we need to screen at time of applying to ensure that the applicant is a Minnesota resident?

Yes, applicants do need to be Minnesota residents. Program Administrators should refer to their existing HCV procedures as to how they define Minnesota resident and/or establish their own process to determine Minnesota residency such as looking at a driver's license or utility bill. Program Administrators should decide on a procedure and apply it consistently.

23. Is the rental assistance only for existing renters?

No, rental assistance is not limited to existing renters. The Bring It Home Rental Assistance Program provides financial support to eligible households, whether they are currently renting or seeking housing. Eligibility criteria include being a Minnesota resident, having an annual income at or below 50% of the area median income (AMI), and paying more than 30% of household income on rent.

24. Does an applicant have to be "cost burdened" in order to apply?

Yes, applicants must be "cost burdened". Minnesota Housing has interpreted the statute to include households that are experiencing homelessness as cost burdened. Program Administrators can use their existing procedures or another process to determine whether a household is cost burdened, as long as it is applied consistently.

25. If we have families in our community that are in short term emergency housing, can those families be eligible for Bring it Home?

Yes, as long as they are cost burdened and not receiving federal rental assistance.

26. If an applicant is currently on the Section 8 waitlist, can they move to the waitlist for Bring it Home?

Yes, as long as they are not currently receiving rental assistance, if there are separate waitlists for Section 8 and Bring It Home vouchers, an applicant can be on both lists.

27. If an applicant currently has an HCV or project-based voucher, can they give it up and get a tenant voucher through Bring it Home instead?

No. Under statute households currently receiving federal tenant-based or project-based rental assistance under Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 are not eligible for tenant-based assistance through the Bring It Home Rental Assistance Program.

28. If a household is currently receiving short term rental assistance, such as FHPAP, can they be switched to a longer-term voucher under the Bring It Home program?

A Program Administrator may use a 6-month "look forward" period to evaluate applicants for the Bring It Home program. If an applicant is on short-term rental assistance, and that rental assistance will expire within the next 6 months, or the household will otherwise meet the requirement of paying more than 30% of their income toward rent, then they can be switched from the short-term rental assistance to a Bring It Home voucher.

Prioritization for Rental Assistance

29. For the priority for households with children under 18, do we give those households preference on the waiting list?

To be clear, the priority is not for households that have children under 18 years old. It is for households that have *both* children under 18 years of age or under in the household *and* have incomes up to 30% AMI. If both of these criteria are met, these households must be given priority. Program Administrators must ensure that these households are prioritized when determining eligibility and issuing rental assistance.However, program administrators can establish additional priority populations based on local need. This prioritization aaapplies to both tenant-based and project-based rental assistance and should be integrated into the

waitlist and application procedures to align with program requirements. ~~If there are no households meeting this priority, Program Administrators may move to priorities based on local needs.~~

30. **What if there are no households with children under 18 needing rental assistance? Can we prioritize a different demographic?**

    Yes, <u>Program Administrators can establish additional priority populations based on local need.</u> ~~if there are no eligible households with children under 18 applying for or on the waitlist for rental assistance, Program Administrators may provide assistance to other eligible households~~. In such cases, Program Administrators should follow the prioritization guidelines outlined in their approved Administrative plans and<u>/or propose additional priority populations under Options 2 or 3 to</u> ensure compliance with the Bring It Home Program requirements.

31. **If we are a Tribal Program Administrator and we are planning to serve more than one geographic area that includes non-tribal lands, can we have a preference for Tribal members that are not living on tribal lands?**

    Program Administrators may not have preferences for protected classes under the Fair Housing Act or the Minnesota Human Rights Act, unless otherwise allowed by law (for example, on tribal land.) Political classification is not a protected class under either the Fair Housing Act or the Minnesota Human Rights Act; therefore, if a Tribal Nation has a priority or a preference for a particular political classification, that would not be a violation of civil rights laws.

32. **Can we serve households that have a tribal member in it?**

    Yes, you can serve any household that has a tribal member in it.

Program Operations

33. **When will we have to request reimbursement by for each month (i.e. what date)?**

    Requests for reimbursement must be submitted by the 15th of the month unless other arrangements have been approved by Minnesota Housing.

34. **What documentation do we need to show to receive admin fees?**

    To receive Administrative Fees Program Administrators must submit documentation verifying the issuance of vouchers. Administrative Fees are disbursed on a per-voucher, per-month basis, to Program Administrators based on the number of vouchers issued. Disbursement requests must be submitted using the form provided by Minnesota Housing and in accordance with the timelines and procedures outlined in the Grant Contract Agreement.

35. **If we are serving more than one county what payment standard should we use?**

If you are serving more than one county, you can choose to use the higher payment standard of those counties or an average of those payment standards or propose another method for determining the payment standard for that area. If an alternative method of determining the payment standard is used, it must be approved by Minnesota Housing.

36. What is the process for approving modifications or amendments to administrative policies after executing the grant agreement? Are there thresholds or limits we should plan for?

Modifications to administrative policies may be necessary after the grant agreement is executed, especially during the early years of the program as opportunities for improvement are identified.

If additional modifications to your administrative plan under Option 2 are needed, you will likely need to submit an updated workplan to Minnesota Housing. Our team will review the proposed changes in consultation with our legal and grants teams. Once approved, the grant contract agreement will be amended to incorporate the modifications.

You can make changes to your workplan under the program, but any significant adjustments will require an amended grant contract to ensure compliance with program guidelines.

37. Do we need to use HMIS to report on the program?

No.

38. How will new questions and issues be addressed?

The Bring It Home team plans to hold bi-weekly webinars after grant contracts are executed (and/or after selections) to answer questions and troubleshoot potential issues.