# Housing Trust Fund Program Rental Assistance

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Updated April 27, 2023*

1. **Q: Would a federal capital-funded HUD HRA qualify?**

   A: Refer to Eligible Entities in the section 2.01 of the Program Guide. Public housing agency. Note further in Minnesota Administrative Rule 4900.3610, the definition of "'Public housing agency' means any state, county, municipality, or other governmental entity or public body, or agency thereof, that is authorized to engage or assist in the development or operation of low-income housing."

   1a. **Q: Is it only agencies that utilize Minnesota Housing capital funds that are not eligible?**

      A: Minnesota Housing is not funding any new Sponsor-Based Rental Assistance (SBRA) under this RFP. If you are a current SBRA grantee, you are eligible to apply for funding.

2. **Q: Can Housing Trust Fund (HTF) fund singles over the age of 25?**

   A: Refer to the definition of Long-Term Homeless in "Appendix A: Terms" of the Program Guide.

3. **Q: Is the $27 million more than has been available in the past, and do you expect this to be consistent going forward?**

   A: Funding for the 2021 – 2023 grant term was $26.5 million. Funding for the 2023 – 2025 grant term is $27.1 million.

4. **Q: From the last cycle, how many applicants did you have and how many were awarded?**

   A: Minnesota Housing received 44 proposals in the last RFP. There are currently 41 funded grantees.

5. **Q: If we currently are not an agency that utilizes HMIS, and we plan to use a contractor for HMIS, how do we complete that question on the application?**

   A: The applicant should identify in the application the entity responsible for the HMIS data entry and reporting.

6. **Q: If we don't have any experience with rental assistance, but we do have deep experience with mortgage assistance, are we eligible?**

   A: Refer to the "Eligible Applicants" section of the RFP Application Instructions. Also, refer to the Program Guide, section 2.01., "Applicants must demonstrate experience and ability in the administration of housing assistance payments or experience in housing management or must partner or contract with an organization that has experience and the ability in the administration of housing assistance."

7. **Q: If we have a lapse in this funding source for this past term, will we be considered a new applicant?**

    A: You would be considered an applicant that has had experience in administering HTF rental assistance. There is one question that asks about current data. Since you would not have this, you would respond to that question as a new applicant, and you could discuss your past data.

8. **Q: Is this program specifically for rent assistance for apartments or for homeowners who offer space for rent in their home?**

    A: Refer to the Program Guide, section 5.01 – "Eligible Units." Note: "Shared housing is defined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as a single housing unit occupied by an assisted Participant and another resident or residents. The shared unit consists of both common space for use by the occupants of the unit and separate private space for each assisted household. The unit may be a house or an apartment."

9. **Q: Can Housing Navigation funds be used to re-house households that have extensive barriers and have to move because they lost their housing but still have their subsidy?**

    A: Yes. Refer to the Program Guide, section 5.08 – "Housing Navigation."

10. **Q: Can HTF be used to support other government grant programs for housing assistance?**

    A: It depends on the rules that govern your programs. Check with each programs' guidance. Regarding HTF specifically, HTF rental assistance can be leveraged with mainstream benefits other than additional rental assistance.

11. **Q: How would we develop an MOU with a landlord? Do you need data identifying need? How would we structure that for you?**

    A: Generally, MOUs are used when a partner is going to provide elements of required aspects of the grant. For example, social service and benefits referrals, income building referrals, and work skill building resources, to name a few. Some organizations provide all of these types of services within their own organization, some partner with other organizations.

    11a. **Q: If we have an MOU with a landlord, can we go outside of them and work with other people?**

    A: Outside of meeting [HUD Housing Quality Standards](), the HTF program has no opinion on the nature of administrator and landlord relationships.

12. **Q: Regarding the $500,000 housing navigation funding, is everyone competing for that pool?**

    A: Yes, and only awarded TBRA applicants will be eligible for housing navigation funding.

    12a. **Q: Is the housing navigation funding also renewable, or is it only for this term's allotment?**

    A: Housing navigation funding is one time funding and awarded through a competitive process.

13. **Q: Could an agency that owns properties use HTF to pay for the rents?**

    A: If Minnesota Housing was involved in providing capital funding, there are other administrative issues that would affect the ability to do so. Refer to the Program Guide, section 5.01 – Eligible Units.

14. **Q: If we are a Tribal Nation, we do not need an MOU for this application. Is that correct?**
    A: MOUs are necessary when a non-Tribal Nation organization is partnering to deliver services. If different areas of a Tribal Nation are partnering, then an MOU is not needed. However, if a Tribal Nation partners with a non-Tribal Nation organization to provide services, then an MOU would be required.

15. **Q: For performance statistics for current administrators, do we use information from the start of the current grant period through 3/31/23?**
    A: Yes, performance data should be from 10/1/21-3/31/23.

16. **Q: I'm reviewing the Minnesota Housing program guide and for the information below, does that include Beyond Background $300 fees?**
    *"Financial Assurance/Risk Mitigation Program Fees Some populations pose increased barriers to obtaining housing. Programs exist that work to increase landlord participation. When these programs have fees, the fees are eligible expenses. The fees are paid by the participant or an Administrator on behalf of the participant."*
    A: Yes. Minnesota Administrative Rule [4900.3763](#) states, "Funds from the housing trust fund program may be used to provide tenant-based rental assistance, sponsor-based rental assistance, or project-based rental assistance and to pay security deposits, damage claims or fees, application fees, vacancy payments, utility connection fees, and other fees necessary to obtain owner participation or to prevent repeat episodes of homelessness."

17. **Q: In the Multifamily Secure Upload Tool Instructions, please confirm my understanding of the following:**
    - **Step 4 recipient email address should be: Multifamily RFP application team: [mhfa.app@state.mn.us](mailto:mhfa.app@state.mn.us)**
    - **Step 5 subject line should be: Project Name-RFP application? Is there a specific name needed?**

    **Please give an example of what the subject line needs to say.**
    A: Refer to the [Minnesota Housing Secure Upload Tool Instructions](#). Step 4 indicates the appropriate email address as [mhfa.app@state.mn.us](mailto:mhfa.app@state.mn.us). Step 5 indicates the subject line option of "Project Name-RFP Application," where the "Project Name" could be the applying organization's name. For example: "ABC Services, Inc.-RFP Application."

18. **Q: Under the broader category of 'utility connection fees', does Minnesota Housing consider phone access a housing related utility?**
    A: Refer to [2022 Minnesota Statutes 8.33, Subdivision 1, paragraph (3)](#) where "'Utility services' means electricity, natural gas, or telephone services distributed to residential utility consumers by a public utility." If the phone carrier is not a public utility, then it is not considered a housing related utility.

19. **Q: [We] currently have a grant for the FHPAP RRH program and I'm wondering if we could use the rental assistance funding from MN [HTF] to support youth households in this program.**

    19a. **Q: RRH is time limited; MN [HTF] is not. Would that be a conflict in using rental assistance funding as RRH requires an exit.**

A: Using FHPAP funds for supportive services in conjunction with non-FHPAP direct assistance, such as rent payment for the same household, is eligible. However, Hennepin County, as the grant administrator, would need to approve the use of these funds being paired together. The housing provider would only be able to provide 24 months of FHPAP funded supportive services to the household and they would have to exit the household from the FHPAP funded services at 24 months. The household could be exited in FHPAP HMIS to a permanent destination since they are stably housed using Housing Trust Fund program rental assistance.

Using FHPAP direct assistance, such as rental assistance for the same household that is receiving Housing Trust fund rental assistance, is not eligible, as this would be considered a duplication of assistance. There may be exceptions, such as using FHPAP for a rental deposit and Housing Trust Fund for ongoing rental assistance. Contact the Hennepin County FHPAP administrator, Mike Radcliffe, if you want to know more about exceptions.

19b. **Q: RRH requires basic HUD homeless definition, MN [HTF] uses High Priority Homeless definition; is that an issue if we use MN [HTF] funds to support youth in the FHPAP RRH program?**
A: FHPAP requires the grant administrator and subgrantees to receive referrals from the Coordinated Entry system for RRH. If the Coordinated Entry system allows this concept as part of the Coordinated Entry policies/procedures, it would be allowable.

19c. **Q: How would youth in the FHPAP RRH program that are supported by MN [HTF] funds be documented in HMIS? How would we capture both sets of data for the same youth?**
A: The household would be entered into HMIS for FHPAP but would not receive direct assistance; it would be supportive services only. The household would also be entered into HMIS for Housing Trust Fund funds. Thus, there would be two entries in HMIS but the supportive services and rental assistance are distinct. Check with your HMIS administrator for guidance.

20. **Q: I am wondering if [we] were to want to expand the service area to include [additional service areas] where we already have staff – would that be a separate application for an expansion, or would we submit all together?**
A: Refer to the Application Instructions Equity and Funding Request/Budget sections where Service Areas are discussed.

21. **Q: Are domestic violence service providers required to use HMIS or could we use a comparable database? In most cases, exceptions are made for crime victim services providers to ensure crime victim identities remain confidential.**
A: If an agency is a Victim Service Provider (VSP) they are not allowed to use HMIS to track client data. Depending on their funding, VSPs may instead be required to enter data into a comparable database. Generally speaking, federal programs such as the Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) programs will require the use of comparable

databases, whereas Minnesota's state-funded programs may allow for alternative reporting methods, as is the case for Office of Economic Opportunity funded projects.

The [HEARTH Act](#) defines a VSP as "a private nonprofit organization whose primary mission is to provide services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Such term includes rape crisis centers, battered women's shelters, domestic violence transitional housing programs, and other programs."
If a domestic violence service provider receives funding, that recipient would not be required to use HMIS to tract client data.  That entity should contact Minnesota Housing to determine the appropriate reporting method.

22. **Q:  Can [a grantee] be exempt from HMIS data entry?**
   A:  Refer to the Program Guide, section 7.03., "Data Privacy, Data Entry, and Reporting."

   22a. **Q:  If we need to hire a third party for HMIS data entry, will HTF funds cover the additional costs?**
      A:  Refer to the Program Guide, section 7.03., "Data Privacy, Data Entry, and Reporting."