

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: March 20, 2023

Topic

Housing Trust Fund Program Updates

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stats. §§ 462A.201 & 462A.204
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Stephanie Paulson, Metro HRA Assistant Director, (651) 602-1584
Division/Department:	Community Development / Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Background

The Council's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA) has administered the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) Program since 2002 in partnership with Anoka County. In the current model, the Metro HRA executes a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Anoka County to fulfill all program requirements. The program provides rent assistance to households in Anoka County experiencing homelessness.

Metro HRA responsibilities:

- Accept program referrals from Anoka County
- Rental assistance calculations and recertifications
- Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections

Anoka County responsibilities:

- Obtain program referrals through the Coordinated Entry System
- Provide case management supports necessary to maintain housing
- Assist families in long-term housing stabilization goals

In July 2021, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) awarded the Metro HRA \$609,000 to continue the HTF with Anoka County. The current HTF Contract Agreement with MHFA expires September 30, 2023. The Metro HRA does not intend to apply for a renewal HTF Grant. In partnership with Anoka County, it was decided that the current program design should be updated to address an unmet community need. The Metro HRA intends to partner with Anoka County, as the grantee, for a Homework Starts with Home Program (HSWH).

Homework Starts with Home

Homework Starts with Home (HSWH) is a collaborative effort between schools, housing organizations, and local governments to identify, engage, and stabilize students and their families experiencing homelessness. The goal of this program is to prevent homelessness whenever possible and if homelessness does occur to make sure that it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

In 2019, Anoka County was awarded a HSWH planning grant from MHFA. The 2021 planning report outlined the many negative impacts, including disparate educational outcomes and

increased childhood trauma, that children and youth experiencing homelessness in Anoka County encounter.

In the next application period, Anoka County intends to submit applications for both HSWH and HTF to support children and families in Anoka County to maintain or obtain decent, safe, and sanitary housing within Anoka County. The Metro HRA will act as a subgrantee in administration of rental assistance and Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections for HTF rather than acting as the primary grantee.

Current and Future HSWH Partnership Opportunities

The Metro HRA has a current partnership with Solid Ground, and Suburban Ramsey County Family Collaborative to provide rent assistance to people of underserved and under-supported populations in suburban Ramsey County schools. The Metro HRA adopted a formal preference for up to twenty (20) Housing Choice Vouchers per calendar year for the partnership.

In addition to the Anoka County HSWH program described above, the Metro HRA is in discussion with Hennepin County and Carver County for potential HSWH partnerships that would replicate housing stability initiatives in other parts of the region. The partnerships are focused as investment in place strategies to bring housing stability to students and their families experiencing homelessness.

