

PROPOSED MOVING TO WORK PLAN SUMMARY

VISION FOR THE METRO HRA MTW PROGRAM

- The Metropolitan Council Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA) is the regional policy-making body, planning agency, and provider of essential services for the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan region. In 1967, the Minnesota Legislature created the Metropolitan Council to deal with regional issues that transcended boundaries. When the federal Section 8 tenant-based program began in 1974, the state legislature directed Metro HRA to administer the rent subsidy program for smaller suburban communities. Today, Metro HRA administers 6,502 vouchers in 96 communities. In its federal housing operations, Metro HRA administers the HCV program only. The agency divested itself of its public housing units within the past decade.
- Metro HRA believes that there is a highest and best point at which housing choice, supportive services, and cost effectiveness coincide to the benefit of participants, Metro HRA and HUD. Our goal was to analytically determine the best combination of these three elements. This was accomplished by comparing three different ways of calculating rent using the actual incomes total tenant payments of current voucher holders. The three rent calculation methods included “stepped rent” (where rent increases a certain percentage each year regardless of income); “tiered rent” (where rent increases every three years based on the income tier of a family); and a “tiered rent/hybrid” (where rents determined by income tiers are then modified by deductions). The analysis showed that the tiered rent approach resulted in the best combination of cost effectiveness, self-sufficiency, and housing choice.
- Metro HRA’s unique opportunities includes: 1) the expansive four-county jurisdiction that we serve, which provides many opportunities for housing choice to HCV families; 2) the many years in which Metro HRA has administered one of the highest rated HCV programs in the country; 3) the quality and experience of the Metro HRA staff; and 4) the numerous partner organizations with whom Metro HRA collaborates to the benefit of voucher holders.
- Unique challenges that Metro HRA faces includes: 1) deciding which MTW initiative(s) to pursue and at what point we should pursue each one; 2) the need to develop a strong resident engagement component that lasts during the six-year Rent Simplification Study and beyond; 3) balancing the funding availability with the self-sufficiency initiatives we wish to provide; 4) engaging Voucher holders in conversations regarding being selected for the treatment group vs. control group; 5) the need to develop effective systems to monitor performance, track progress, and measure program effectiveness; 6) increasing voucher acceptance rates overall and in high opportunity neighborhoods; and generally underfunding of the voucher program. The Metro HRA plans to make decisions regarding specific MTW initiatives in conjunction with Housing Choice Voucher holders through the establishment of a Moving to Work Working Group.
- Metro HRA wants to participate in the MTW program so it can serve voucher holders smarter, better, and more efficiently. By participating in the MTW program, Metro HRA can shift our focus from administrative burden to resident success. Finally, participation in MTW will allow Metro HRA to better meet local housing needs in our communities.

- The Metro HRA fair housing goals and strategies include:
 - To increase assisted housing choices for all residents across race, ethnicity and income through expansive owner recruitment and retention efforts
 - To encourage movement to areas in the region with less than 20% poverty and above average performing schools.
 - To administer programs to encourage integrated settings to provide rental assistance for persons with disabilities
 - To contribute to the State of MN goal of ending long-term homelessness and the Federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness
 - To promote self-sufficiency and stabilize families by
 - Focusing on a person-centered approach, setting program participants up for success
 - Implementing harm reduction and prevention strategies to foster housing stability
- The Metro HRA is a long-standing participant on the Fair Housing Implementation Council, an ad hoc group established in 2002 to coordinate efforts of its participating members to comply with obligations to affirmatively further fair housing throughout the Twin Cities area. The FHIC membership consists primarily of entitlement jurisdictions, along with the Metro HRA as a financial and content contributor to overcome impediments to fair housing.

PLAN FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY/RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

- The Metro HRA will create an MTW Working Group consisting of HCV families, Metro HRA staff and other stakeholders. During the Rent Simplification Study, the Working Group will evaluate progress, identify issues, and brainstorm solutions to be adopted as the program continues to evolve over time. Housing Choice Voucher holders have already expressed an interest in joining the Working Group, and continued outreach efforts will be conducted throughout the program period and beyond.
- Also during the Study period, Metro HRA will conduct outreach efforts to the broader community, to landlords who are currently participating in the program or who could participate, to existing and new service provider organizations, and to HCV families currently enrolled in the program and new families that become voucher holders. As with the Working Group, all stakeholders will be encouraged by Metro HRA to work with us over time. Stakeholder participation will ensure the success of the MTW program through increasing buy-in and making sure that no viewpoint goes unconsidered or overlooked.

PLAN FOR LOCAL MTW PROGRAM

- Metro HRA intends to use all cost savings realized by the proposed simplified rent method to promote family success through education, jobs training, career development, financial literacy, housing search, goal setting, and one-on-one counseling with families. In short, the overall focus will be on helping families overcome barriers to achievement by shifting our focus from administrative processes and procedures to resident success.

PROPOSED USE OF MTW FUNDS

- Specifically, it costs money to provide mobility support – housing search, tenant education and goal setting. Dollars realized from the HAP savings will be invested in integration efforts such as security deposits and moving expenses. The Metro HRA is a Section 8 only agency and will use the funds fungibility between HAP and Administrative funds.

EVIDENCE OF SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIPS

- The Metro HRA has operated the Housing Choice Voucher program in the Twin Cities region for over 45 years, in a region that is connected with extensive social services and partnerships.
- The Metro HRA operates in four counties and has partnerships with the social service / behavioral health, child welfare agencies and non-profits, all with goal of family success.
 - Coordinated Entry Partnerships – The Metro HRA partners with Hennepin, Ramsey and Suburban Metro Area Continuum of Care in a “Move Up” Program and preference as well as 25+ years of Continuum of Care program administration.
 - Homework Starts with Home – The Metro HRA established a partnership with the Suburban Ramsey County Family Collaborative to provide rent assistance and services to people of underserved and under-supported populations who are homeless, double up or at risk of homelessness. The Collaborative includes over 100 community resource partnerships to ensure success of families in suburban Ramsey County.
 - Rental Assistance for Anoka County - The Metro HRA operated a self-sufficiency rent assistance program for 20+ years in Anoka that included a formal partnership with the Anoka County workforce center.
 - Family Unification Program - The Metro HRA operates a Family Unification program with partnership with Anoka County Child Protection
 - Metro HRA has an outreach team with the purpose of assisting families with housing stability and includes partnerships with:
 - HousingLink – Affordable housing clearinghouse that provides vacancy information and fair housing resources.
 - Bridging – a nonprofit organization that provides donated furniture and household goods to families and individuals transitional out of homelessness and poverty.

ALTERNATIVE RENT POLICY SELECTION AND RATIONALE

- Of the three simplified rent calculation methods, the “Tiered Rent” approach with no deductions was the most beneficial in terms of HAP savings, certainty for families and availability of funding to promote initiatives that support family success.
- Of the other two methods, the “Stepped Rent” would have increased total tenant payments the most, in many cases well over \$100 in additional total tenant payments per month. In addition, total tenant payments would continue to rise year after year.
- The Tiered Rent/Hybrid method would result in the most stability in rent payment for families, but it resulted in a fraction of the HAP savings realized by the other two methods.