

Hennepin County Progress Report

Pandemic Response Projects

July – September 2023



Executive summary	3
Pandemic recovery funds	4
Project inventory	5
CONNECTIVITY DOMAIN	
Broadband and Digital Inclusion	6
EMPLOYMENT DOMAIN	
Employment Strategies	9
HEALTH DOMAIN	
Behavioral Health	15
Maternal Health	17
Public Health	21
Vaccine Incentives.....	27
HOUSING DOMAIN	
Housing Recovery.....	30
Services for People Experiencing Homelessness	33
INCOME DOMAIN	
Economic Recovery	39
Raise the Baseline — Empowering Families with Guaranteed Income.....	42
JUSTICE DOMAIN	
Anti-Hate Initiative	45
COVID-19-Related Court Backlog	47
Violence Prevention.....	49
OTHER/DOMAIN INFRASTRUCTURE	
Countywide HVAC COVID-19 Response.....	51
Digital Experience.....	53
Engagement Services	56
Enterprise Integrated Data System	60
Information Technology	63
Information Technology: Community Connectivity	65
Voter Participation	66

Executive summary

Hennepin County will leverage its American Rescue Plan Act — State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA- SLFRF) to further its mission and vision to support residents who are adversely affected by disparities; to support innovative, equitable and sustainable changes in service delivery; to promote private and public partnerships within our community, and to seek other funding sources to maximize our investments and best position Hennepin County for the future.

Through the ARPA-SLFRF program, Hennepin County has a total award of \$245.9 million to respond to the economic and public health impacts of COVID-19 and to mitigate its impact on the community, residents and businesses. In March 2022, the county board took action to use the dollars from ARPA-SLFRF for government services. Starting in 2022, the county has used other revenue sources for pandemic response and recovery efforts, which is anticipated to result in efficiencies. Programs and services previously authorized by the board will continue but will be funded through other sources outside of the ARPA-SLFRF.

Key principles and priorities have been set to build upon the county's approach to disparity reduction and to support pandemic recovery efforts. Hennepin County is committed to using a racial equity lens to target resources and focus outcomes on reducing disparities in the following domains: connectivity, education, employment, health, housing, income and justice. In addition to the domain areas, overarching infrastructure and supports have been prioritized.

This progress report summarizes Hennepin County's pandemic response projects from July 2023 through September 2023. Projects are presented by disparity domain area. The following details are provided for each project:

- Project name
- Allocation amount
- Project description
- Progress narrative
- Key performance indicators
- Next steps

Pandemic recovery funds

Hennepin County continues to leverage federal funding to serve residents and to advance disparity reduction efforts. Various federal funding streams, identified below, have allowed the county to provide timely services and programs for residents in crisis. Specifically, ARPA-SLFRF has enabled the county to continue investments in the public health response, jump-start disparity reduction strategies, and drive transformational change.

As described in the 2021 Recovery Plan for ARPA-SLFRF, Hennepin County has established the following principles and priorities to guide pandemic response efforts.

Principles

- Hennepin County embraces and embodies core values of continuous improvement, customer service, diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, and workforce development as we serve our residents.
- Hennepin County is committed to using a racial equity lens to target resources and focus outcomes on reducing disparities in the following domains: connectivity, education, employment, health, housing, income, and justice..
- In response and recovery efforts, Hennepin County embraces opportunities for transformative change including lasting investments and more efficient, effective and accessible service delivery for residents in communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.
- Hennepin County will pursue and leverage other available federal and state funding before using CARES or SLFRF funding to support the recovery of residents, communities and businesses.
- Hennepin County is committed to a people-centered, inclusive and equitable approach in policymaking and service delivery.

Priorities

- Fund health programs to respond to COVID-19.
- Ensure legally required functions of county government can continue during COVID-19 pandemic.
- Invest in capital resources and infrastructure that help improve service delivery, remove barriers and mitigate health risks.
- Prioritize strategic investments that will have long-term value or cost reductions.
- Support the recovery of communities, residents, small businesses and nonprofits impacted by COVID-19 in ways that will help our region emerge from this crisis with an even stronger, more inclusive and resilient economy over the long term.
- Expand support and outreach to culturally specific human services and health care providers to strengthen their long-term ability to meet community needs.

Revenue replacement

In early 2022, Hennepin County took action to use the dollars from ARPA-SLFRF for the provision of government services. The revenue replacement calculation was submitted in the April 2022 Project and Expenditure Report and applies to expenditures from January 1, 2022, through the duration of ARPA-SLFRF. Programs and services previously authorized by the Hennepin County Board will continue but will be funded through other sources outside of ARPA-SLFRF.



Project inventory

Hennepin County will continue to support residents through the pandemic and beyond as residents and communities work to recover. This progress report includes a summary of Hennepin County's pandemic response projects from July 1, 2023 through September 30, 2023. Projects that have expended their full allocation amount are no longer included in this report. Projects are presented by disparity domain area.

Project name

Allocation amount—This is the amount of funding allocated for the project.

Project description

Progress narrative

Key performance indicators—This is a description of the key performance indicators set for each project. Results and outcomes vary by project due to implementation timelines.

Next steps —This is the work that will occur in the next three to six months.

HOUSING DOMAIN

Housing Recovery

Allocation amount: \$46,000,000

Project description

The economic impacts of COVID-19 were felt most heavily by people with low incomes, and by Black and Indigenous people and people of color. The pandemic exacerbated existing inequities from the very beginning, and while emergency response efforts in 2020 and 2021 ameliorated these impacts — keeping people fed and in their homes — the economic fallout continues to disproportionately impact those who already had less before the pandemic.

As Hennepin County moved from emergency response to long-term recovery, the county board approved \$46 million in funding to support equitable housing recovery strategies. These strategies aimed to create or preserve approximately 2,000 units of affordable housing and support more than 100 households in buying homes by directly addressing both causes and symptoms of the economic fallout from the pandemic. Planned activities included:

- Investments to immediately increase affordable multifamily housing production, such as:
 - Gap funding to kick-start projects delayed by pandemic-related construction cost increases.
 - Financing to accelerate the development of affordable housing projects serving populations disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency: those most vulnerable to economic recessions.
 - Investments to address a backlog of deferred rehab needed in naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) properties and support for additional nonprofit preservation acquisition of at-risk NOAH properties, which are a primary source of housing for populations disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Acquisition of properties supporting affordable housing along the housing continuum, especially for single adults who were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency and are now struggling with homelessness and housing instability.
 - Homeownership programs targeting populations disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Progress narrative

Since allocation, Housing and Economic Development (HED) has been programming funds through its program components: Affordable Housing Development Accelerator, Homeownership, NOAH Preservation, Pandemic-Related Cost Increase, and Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing. As noted earlier, staff have implemented policies to drastically shorten the development process to meet funding requirements, and more importantly to open doors faster.

In July through September of 2023, staff executed funding agreements for two (2) projects to create 125 affordable housing units. These agreements totaled \$3,800,000 in pandemic recovery funding.

- Housing recovery component: Affordable Housing Development Accelerator
 - Emerson Village (Beacon Interfaith): new construction of 40 supportive housing units in Minneapolis; 32 affordable to incomes at or below 30% AMI and eight affordable at or below 50% AMI; 12 for families involved with Hennepin County child welfare.

- Whittier Community Housing (CommonBond Communities): preservation and rehabilitation of 85 housing units with project-based Section 8 assistance; four units for households with incomes at or below 30% AMI and 41 at or below 50% AMI; 19 large family units.

In total, HED has executed funding agreements for 21 of the 35 projects, which will create or preserve 2,037 units of affordable rental housing, and create 35 homeownership opportunities. The signed agreements total over \$25 million in pandemic recovery funding.

Program component	Number of project awards	Award amount	Project agreements executed	Funds encumbered	Affordable units funded
Affordable Housing Accelerator	18 projects	\$27,666,076	9 projects	\$17,135,514	711
Homeownership	7 projects	\$3,328,000	3 projects	\$1,400,000	39
NOAH Preservation	5 projects	\$4,905,924	4 projects	\$4,605,000	986
Pandemic Cost Increase	5 projects	\$2,000,000	5 projects	\$2,000,000	340
TOTALS	35 projects	\$37,900,000	21 projects	\$25,140,514	2,076

The remaining \$8.1 M is allocated to Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing acquisition and rehabilitation. As of the end of September 2023, HED:

- Released an RFP for an SRO developer for the Aqua City Motel site
- Executed purchase agreements for the University Inn and Metro Inn Motel
- Neared 90% completion of rehab and conversion scopes for the University Inn and Metro Inn Motel

Since inception, HED has expended over \$4.3 million on SRO acquisition and rehabilitation, and nearly \$17.5 million on pandemic recovery contracts.

Key performance indicators

Financing goals

Housing Recovery goals were to finance the creation or preservation of 2,000 rental housing units, and 100 homeownership opportunities, while meeting the county’s ongoing goals to maximize affordability. HED surpassed the rental goal with funding awards to multi-dwelling projects containing 2,810 affordable units, including pending SRO units, and is close to the homeownership goal with 77 units.

Affordability goals

Current progress is also surpassing the county and HRA’s affordability goals and has not changed since the last quarter.

30% AMI Rental Goal: 25% of new units financed are affordable to households with incomes below 30% of the area median income (AMI)

- Outcome: 27% of new units financed through Housing Recovery are affordable at or below 30% AMI

50% AMI Rental Goal: 75% of new units financed are affordable to households with incomes below 50% AMI

- Outcome: 74% of new units financed through Housing Recovery are affordable at or below 50% AMI

Homeownership goal: 25% of homeownership opportunities financed are affordable to household incomes below 60% AMI.

- Outcome: 33% of homeownership opportunities financed through Housing Recovery are anticipated to be affordable at or below 60% AMI

Production goals

Creating affordable rental housing typically takes five to seven years. With HED's Housing Recovery goal of accelerating production, measures show that we have more than doubled our production from average years.

	Number of projects closed	Number of affordable units in those projects
Average (non-pandemic) annual	11	615
Last 12 months (October 2022 through September 2023)		
Pandemic recovery-funded	13	1,1476
Projects without pandemic recovery funding	6	340
Total	19	1,816

Next steps

Over the next three months, HED will continue to progress undertaking financial closings and expenditures in order to open even more doors to new and preserved affordable housing.

Planned activities for October-December 2023

- At two SRO properties: complete rehabilitation, execute sales and begin lease-up
- Complete additional improvements on remaining SRO properties
- Identify planned projects that will not meet encumbrance and expenditure deadlines; rescind awards and competitively re-award remaining funds to the above program components
- Negotiate and execute four funding agreements:
- Wangstad Commons, 54 units of affordable housing in Brooklyn Center
- Union Park Flats, 60 units of affordable housing in Saint Louis Park
- Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, four homeownership opportunities converted from tax-forfeited lots in Minneapolis
- Harrison Townhomes, 17 homeownership opportunities in Minneapolis
- Expend \$3.6 million
- Continued outreach to all funded projects to confirm all will close by 12/31/2024

HOUSING DOMAIN

Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

Allocation amount: \$36,070,000

Project description

There are multiple projects involved under this umbrella project description, including (but not limited to) housing- focused case management (Homeless to Housing team), system-wide shelter diversion, low- barrier shelters, shelter and board and lodge capital, 24/7 shelter, eliminating self-pay in shelter, and encampment response (Streets to Housing).

Hennepin County's Office of Housing Stability (OHS) has an existing strategy in place that guided funding decisions to ensure that this influx of vital and never-before-seen funding will create concrete results to make homelessness as brief as possible for anyone experiencing it in Hennepin County. Hennepin County believes that homelessness is unacceptable and that there are solutions for it. The focus of the Services for People Experiencing Homelessness was to infuse national best practices that will simplify and improve the system for the people in crisis who are accessing it, such as system-wide diversion. There was also intent to actively work to lower barriers for people who are accessing emergency shelter so that more people would be willing to seek the safety of our emergency shelter system and thereby gain access to housing resources and services. The project team has accomplished this by bringing culturally specific low-barrier shelters online and investing in much-needed infrastructure that will improve the day-to-day experience of people experiencing homelessness. Throughout OHS staff have emphasized a laser focus on quick connections to housing. Even with thoughtful and impactful investments in shelter, there are some people who simply will not come inside. Using "housing first" principles, the encampment response program — called Streets to Housing — will focus on quick connection to resources including housing. The team is collecting data so that not only the needs of unique encampments are known, but the housing priorities and barriers for each person staying there.

Progress narrative

Board and lodge capital improvements

- Pursuit Hometel:
 - Monthly check ins were held with the provider to ensure that their projects remain on track to finish within the funding timeframe.
 - The bids for the outdoor landscaped space were completed so that the contract for this work could be signed, allowing work to begin next quarter.
 - The project team is working to resolve barriers that have come up with the air conditioning installation.
- Clifton Place: Work continues with the building renovation.
- Missions Lodge: This quarter they completed the schematic design review and pricing phase for its renovation work.
- Cullen Homes: The deck was installed while the AC installation for the building has been in the city's permit process.

Housing-focused case management services: Homeless to Housing

Overview of program:

- Housing-focused case managers and case aides begin rapport building and outreach upon assignment to a new person experiencing homelessness.
- Once connected, the case manager provides housing-focused case management using a trauma-informed lens and person-centered approach.
- These teams work with people experiencing literal homelessness both in sheltered and unsheltered settings.
- Goal plans are created with clients that include obtaining vital documents, locating safe, affordable, and desirable housing while connecting clients with available resources and subsidies.
- Case managers help house clients and then work to stabilize them in their new homes with wraparound services and supports.
 - At the same time, case aides complete housing readiness tasks (obtain vital docs, deliver move-in kits, tour apartments) with clients.

Overview of program improvements and progress made this quarter:

- Person-centered and trauma-informed approach to case management.
- Streamlined onboarding process.
- Solicited feedback from staff, community partners, clients (former and current), and other county departments to ensure continuous improvement.
- Staff continued to expand, organize, and streamline the building and delivery of move-in kits for clients in our storage units; this includes a new culturally appropriate hair care option.
- Two case aides have partnered with Minneapolis Public Housing Authority to support them in helping clients housed with an Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) to recertify and maintain housing.
- Continued to staff up and stabilize workforce to continually sustain a full team, ensuring that the team is utilizing all available FTEs at all times.
- Established ongoing meetings between line staff and Coordinated Entry Priority List Managers and with Eligibility Supports for better communication and cohesion to better support both staff and clients.
- Training three existing case aides to be MNsure Assessors for the team — this will help streamline services and create further efficiencies.
- Two social workers focusing on the unsheltered population partner with the Homeless Action Team (HAT — part of Metro Transit) by offering services to people experiencing homelessness who are riding the light rail, buses and staying near train / bus stations.

24/7 shelter

- Four agencies have funding to operate 24/7 emergency shelter for single adults (18+ without dependents) —Catholic Charities (Higher Ground Shelter), Salvation Army (Harbor Light Shelter and the Women's Only shelter), Agate (510 and First Covenant Church Shelters), and Simpson Housing Services (Simpson Shelter).
- Funded programs have been at full capacity, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week while providing shelter guests with meals, housing-focused case management, access to laundry, and more.
- Funded programs continue to correctly enter their data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
- Funded programs are changing some of their policies and practices to ensure all beds aren't only spoken for, but also being used every night.

Low-barrier shelters: Avivo Village and AICDC Homeward Bound

Avivo Village

- Continuing to work with staff at Avivo Village to ensure shelter access is equitable, and that quickly moving people into housing is a priority.
- Avivo Village experienced a fire, which took seven beds offline. They temporarily sheltered guests of impacted units at a hotel.

AICDC Homeward Bound

- Continue to work with staff at AICDC Homeward Bound to ensure accurate data quality.
- Shelter continues to be at capacity every night
- This program is managed by an Indigenous organization and is targeted to people who identify as Native American and offers culturally-specific services.

Eliminating self pay at Harbor Light Center

- Harbor Light Center continues to shelter all guests without requiring payment.
- Harbor Light Center completed renovations of their 2nd and 3rd floors of shelter (using State of Minnesota capital improvement funding), which included their men's emergency housing program.
- Capacity is now 104 in the emergency housing programs where self-pay was eliminated. The program serves 52 men and 52 women daily.

System-wide shelter diversion: Hennepin Shelter Hotline

- Hennepin Shelter Hotline has been in operation for nine months.
- The county recently added \$450,000 to budget to add five FTEs to their team with the goal of eliminating voicemails, reducing wait times, and adding Spanish-speaking staff.
- Hennepin Shelter Hotline has posted the positions
- Changed service area lead overseeing this program and contract, resulting in addition of weekly meeting with Hennepin Shelter Hotline's program manager.
- Service area lead and Hennepin Shelter Hotline staff provided feedback on HMIS drafted diversion report.
- Hennepin Shelter Hotline reported an increase in new Americans / asylum seekers needing shelter—expressed challenges in serving this new population and needing to adjust service delivery in order to meet the emerging need.

Encampment response: Streets to Housing

- Streets to Housing continues to make a significant impact in the landscape of unsheltered homelessness. Leading with a Trauma Informed approach, housing-focused services Streets to Housing spends time working in encampments and other known locations to conduct housing assessments and triage for benefits and other mainstream resources, healthcare, and support to access shelter or other safe, appropriate alternatives to sleeping in places unmeant for human habitation. Engagements occur at encampments and other known locations and is transparent and posted here: [Help for unsheltered homelessness on Hennepin.us](https://www.hennepin.us/help-for-unsheltered-homelessness)
- Streets to Housing along with another Hennepin County Planning Analyst facilitating an 'unsheltered' case consultation that focuses on households with open referrals, households that are new to unsheltered homelessness, families, and other special sub-populations to ensure coordination and non-duplication of services. This case consultation will also provide a real time opportunity for data quality to ensure data in HMIS is accurate and up to date. This service coordination meeting will also review the various encampments to ensure full coverage and reduce duplication of street outreach teams.

Key performance indicators

Board and lodge capital improvements

- The first of the capitably funded projects was completed on August 25, 2023.
- A deck space was built at Cullen Homes for residents to gather outdoors.
- Housing- focused case management services: Homeless to Housing The team has been tracking consistent data points since launching the team.
 - Number of clients housed, numbers of vital docs obtained, stats on recidivism (return to homeless response system after housing), maintaining equitable housing outcomes by race, client satisfaction.
- 50 people housed during this reporting period
 - 66% of clients identify as people of color and 65% of people housed identify as people of color (statistically equitable)
 - 81% of clients have photo ID at closing, 62% have SS card, 83% of client satisfaction surveys have been positive, 96% of those housed are not back in the homeless response system currently.
- Data is reviewed bi-weekly to ensure positive progress and to make program adjustments and invest in continuous improvement.
- Evaluation: the team reviews client surveys quarterly and there was a University of Minnesota Capstone project conducted on the effectiveness of the model.

24/7 shelter

- 730 people used shelter
- 359 people left shelter
 - 19% (50% when excluding missing / don't know data) of people who left had a positive exit:
 - 10 exited to a permanent destination, 10 to an institutional setting, and one to a non-homeless setting
 - 25 people returned to homelessness, two people died, and 311 people were missing data

Low-barrier shelters: Avivo Village and AICDC Homeward Bound

Avivo Village

- 120 people used shelter
- 32 people left shelter:
 - 53% of people who left had a positive exit, nine exited to a permanent destination, one to an institutional setting, and seven to a non-homeless setting
 - 13 people returned to homelessness, 1 person died, and 1 person was missing data.
- Among people who left shelter, 16 people used shelter for less than 183 days, 10 people used shelter for 183–365 days and six people used shelter for more than 366 days

AICDC Homeward Bound

- 125 people used shelter
- 75 people left shelter:
 - 36% of people who left had a positive exit, 17 exited to a permanent destination, four to an institutional setting, and six to a non-homeless setting
 - 11 people returned to homelessness, one person died, and 36 people were missing data
- Among people who left shelter, 13 people used shelter for six days or fewer, 32 people used shelter for 7–30 days, 27 people used shelter for 31–182 days, and three people used shelter for more than 183 days

Eliminating self pay at Harbor Light Center

- 245 people were served by Harbor Light Center’s emergency housing programs

System-wide shelter diversion: Hennepin Shelter Hotline

- 2,249 households were served (3,718 individuals and 2,551 occurrences)
 - 1,558 single adult households served
 - 691 family households served
- 431 (17%) occurrences were successfully diverted

Encampment Response: Streets to Housing

- 583 unduplicated households served
 - 320 or 55% identified as male
 - 250 or 43% identified as female
 - 57 or 10% were between 18 and 24 years old
 - 188 or 32% were between 25 and 34 years old
 - 175 or 30% were between 35 and 44 years old
 - 40 or 7% were between 55 and 61 years old
 - 16 or 3% were 61 years or older
 - 241 or 41% Black or African American
 - 137 or 23% Indigenous
 - 138 or 24% White
 - 48 or 8% Multiple Races
 - 474 or 81% Non-Hispanic
 - 58 or 10% Missing / Refused
 - 47 or 8% Hispanic
 - 302 or 52% reported a mental health disorder
 - 91 or 16% reported a physical health disorder
 - 117 or 20% reported a chemical health disorder (drug, alcohol or both)
 - 33 or 7% reported a chronic health condition
 - 63 or 11% reported fleeing domestic violence
 - 400 or 67% met the definition of chronic homelessness
- 244 exits to date (since August 2022): Streets to Housing has exited 140 exits to permanent destinations, 89 exits to emergency shelter from unsheltered locations

Next steps

Board and lodge capital improvements

- Pursuit Hometel: The Hennepin County project team continues to conduct monthly check ins so that the bathroom and laundry room renovations remain on track for completion and the obstacles to AC installation are successfully resolved.
 - The construction of a landscaped outdoor space will begin.
- Missions Lodge: Construction work for renovations will begin next quarter.

Housing-focused case management services: Homeless to Housing

- The next few months will be busy for the Homeless to Housing program.
 - A new team (one supervisor and 11 social workers) will be hired and onboarded.
 - This new team will specialize in working with and housing families directly from the Hennepin County shelter system.

24/7 shelter

- Will continue to monitor performance measures to ensure progress is moving in the right direction.
- Will continue to provide technical assistance for entering housing outcomes and other data in HMIS as needed.
- Will rethink policies that impact the Adult Shelter Connect and how people access these shelter beds to better accommodate people moving through a 24/7 system.

Low-barrier shelters: Avivo Village and AICDC Homeward Bound

Avivo Village

- Will update Avivo Village's contract and performance measures to reflect their current practices.
- Will finalize the new prioritization tool to identify people interested in shelter.
- Will start working with leadership to more closely partner with Adult Shelter Connect and more efficiently use all shelter beds in the system.
- Will monitor seven beds that are still offline to ensure quick repairs and future utilization.

AICDC Homeward Bound

- Will monitor Homeward Bound's performance measures to ensure progress is moving in the right direction.
- Will provide technical assistance for entering case management and exit destination data in HMIS to reduce the amount of missing data.
- Will start working with leadership to more closely partner with the Adult Shelter Connect and more efficiently use all shelter beds in the system.

Eliminating self pay at Harbor Light Center

- Will continue partnering with Harbor Light Center's program managers to ensure self pay remains eliminated

System-wide shelter diversion: Hennepin Shelter Hotline

- Will continue to develop the diversion report that will have more data points and show how diversion impacts the entire shelter system.
- Will monitor the impact of the five new FTEs.
- Will focus on reducing call times when caller has no alternative solutions to shelter.
- Will continue to host weekly meetings with program manager and monthly meetings with program director to analyze data, trends, gaps, and opportunities to ensure excellent customer service and satisfaction and progress toward target performance measures.

Encampment response: Streets to Housing

- Continue to strategize and be responsive to unsheltered households in the current landscape of encampments being closed quite quickly, making 'encampment engagement events' less feasible; however, the Streets to Housing team continues to be creative and solution focused to engage with highly mobile households.
- Increase partnerships with day service locations to coordinate housing solutions and services for households with open referrals.
- Work towards purchasing a van for the team.



Hennepin County

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