# Welcome to the Workgroup on Expediting Rental Assistance!

Please use this time to get settled and test out Zoom features.

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- **Participants:** See who's currently in the meeting.
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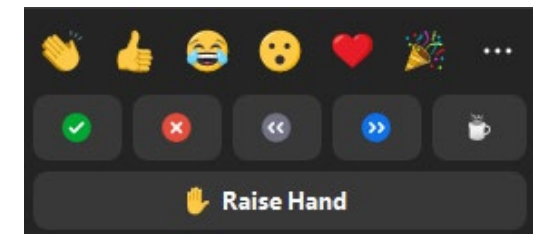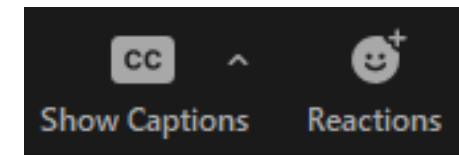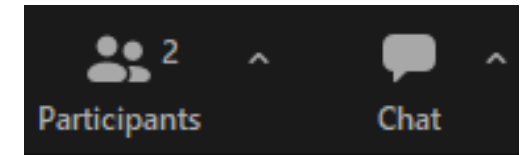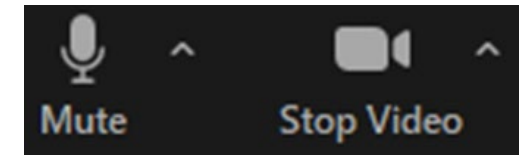
Workgroup business

1. Workgroup business and updates

2. Updates on workgroup timeline and milestones, external consultation, final report, and legislative language process

3. Discussion and voting on final recommendations – includes 10-minute break

4. Wrap-up and next steps

- Welcome to Davin Sokup, Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee Administrator, who will be the proxy for Senator Port today.

- Any changes to the December meeting summary?

Identify what **processes, procedures, and technological or personnel resources would be necessary** to enable agencies administering rental assistance to meet the following goals:

- within **two weeks** of receiving a completed application for rental assistance, make and **issue a determination** on the application; and

- within **30 days** of receiving a completed application for rental assistance, **issue payment** on an approved rental application to the landlord.

Programs in scope:

- Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP)

- Emergency Assistance (EA)

- Emergency General Assistance (EGA)

2 weeks

30 days

Workgroup timeline and milestones

Month	WERA work and milestones
September	Build common knowledge and analyze issues
October	Brainstorm options; refine options at subgroups
November	Select options to turn into recommendations Write draft recommendations
December	Review draft recommendations
January	Finalize and vote on recommendations
February	Finalize and vote on draft legislative language Discuss final report Wrap up and celebration

External consultation

- Research in Action Final Report – sent via email last week; posted on RIA's website at https://www.researchinaction/wera

- Research in Action organizing a second Community Convene session. Senator Port and Ellen Sahli will represent the Workgroup at the first part of the gathering.

- Please enter any remaining notes or logs of consultations to the WERA Google Drive to ensure the final report contains complete info.

Report Sections:

- Executive Summary

- Introduction (to include workgroup charge, duties, structure, process, and external consultation)

- About FHPAP, EA and EGA programs (comparison tables; information from SMEs)

- Workgroup Vision/Narrative Statement

- Recommendations and implementation considerations

- Reference sections: authorizing legislation; workgroup members; draft legislation; list of all options developed by the workgroup (additional good ideas); acronyms and definitions
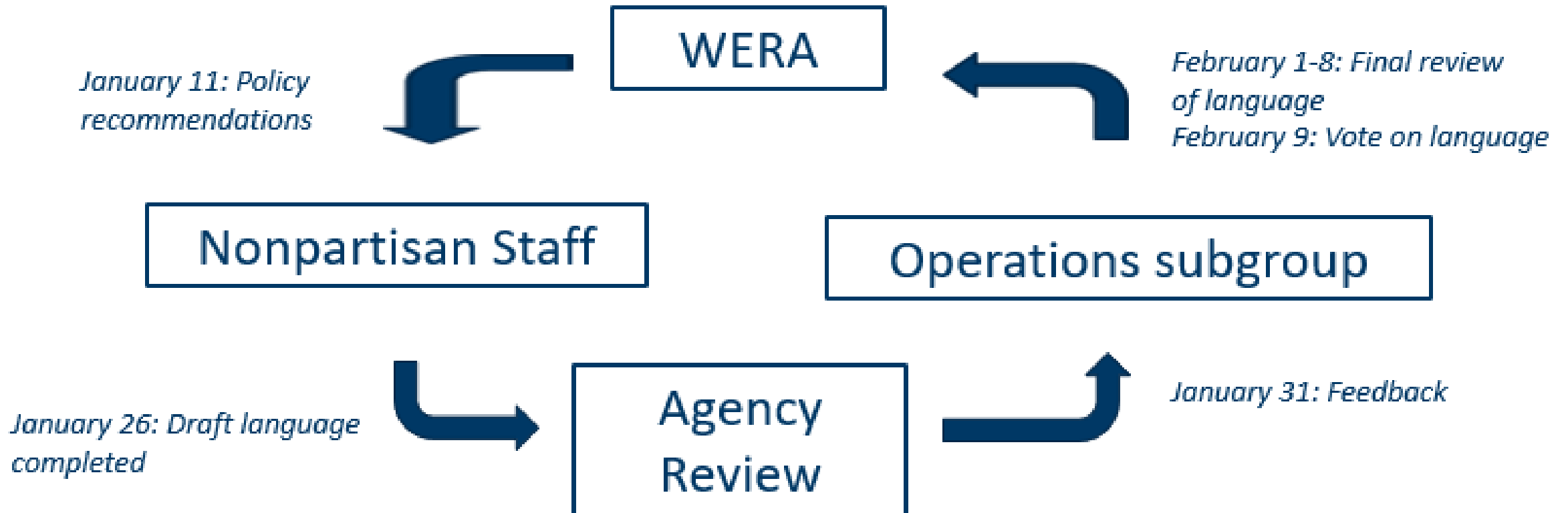
Final report process

- MAD compiling first draft; complete January 24

- **Workgroup members drafting narrative statement**

- MAD copy editor and leadership reviews the last week of January

- **Draft shared with Workgroup in Google docs for comments February 1**

- **Comments due in document by February 7**

- **Workgroup discussion about report at February 8 WERA meeting**

- MAD incorporates comments and copy editor re-reviews

- MAD submits final report to legislative leaders by February 29

Legislative language process update

- **January 11 WERA meeting:** Workgroup approves final language for recommendations.

- **January 12-February 7:** Legislative Drafting Work
  - Phase 1: Nonpartisan research staff lead primary drafting of language with support from agency staff.
  - Phase 2: Reviews by agency staff, committee staff and workgroup for accuracy.

- **February 8 WERA meeting**: Workgroup votes on final draft legislative language.

WERA

Nonpartisan Staff

Operations subgroup

Agency Review

January 11: Policy recommendations

February 1-8: Final review of language
February 9: Vote on language

January 26: Draft language completed

January 31: Feedback

Recommendations Overview

- MAD asked DHS and MN Housing to draft alternate language for a subset of recommendations to address agency questions or concerns and tee up successful implementation.

- Recommendations in the slide deck are the latest version of the recommendations. Look to the 1-11 recommendations matrix document for detail on the versions of the recommendations.

Recommendations development status and count

- Recommendations reviewed and refined from December to January WERA meeting
  - 12-18 WERA technical working session with program subject matter experts (SMEs)
  - 1-4 WERA operations meeting
  - 1-8 Recommendations check-in with SMEs
  - 1-10 Recommendations prep session with SMEs
- Count of recommendations by category – 12 total:
  - Communications – 2; Funding – 2; Processes and procedures – 2; Program rules – 2; Technology – 2; Miscellaneous – 2
- Recommendation G was moved to the "good ideas" section and Recommendation K was incorporated into Recommendation J per Ops team feedback

Process for Recommendation Review and Decision Making

- Discuss all the recommendations in groups by category

- Members ask questions and discuss any issues with recommendations. *Consider your external consultation conversations and if recommendation wording is aligned.

- Formal vote occurs where members consider each recommendation
  - Workgroup members are voting yes/no on passing recommendations using the following statement:

  Recommendation ___should be included in the list of recommendations submitted to the legislature in the WERA final report. Response: Yes/No

Proposed threshold: The workgroup strives for consensus with decision making whenever possible, but a majority (62.5% of membership) will count if workgroup members cannot reach consensus.

If 62.5% of the members present are in favor of an action (10 of the 16 workgroup members), then the workgroup will advance that action.

- Grouping recommendations into two groups

a. Expedite timeliness (foundational recommendations directly related to improving timeliness)

b. Access (increasing outreach, awareness of the programs, address barriers to access to programs, and strengthen systems)

*Access recommendations would be sequenced after expedite recommendations.

*Recommendations A, B, and I are access recommendations, discuss if others fit under access during recommendation review

- Recommendations section of report can include "implementation considerations" subsection as applicable under each recommendation

Agency perspective on recommendations
to "set the stage" for recommendations review

Review of Draft Recommendations

Review of Draft Recommendations—Approach

- WERA Operations team members present recommendations and explain context
- MAD facilitates discussion on questions for clarification on content, concerns, or questions
- Zoom polling will occur for each two recommendations in a category
  - Communications – 2; Funding – 2; Processes and procedures – 2;
  - Program rules – 2; Technology – 2; Miscellaneous – 2

Communications Recommendations

Recommendation A: Provide access in multiple languages not currently available

- Research current requirements under state law or reg and what is already being provided.

- Require EA, EGA, FHPAP to maintain or meet federal language access standards.

- Require MFHA to support program administrators in ensuring program access in multiple languages.

- Identify specific languages where translation is needed.

- Identify funding needs and sources to conduct translation.

- Implement a plan to have multilingual translated tabs/navigation on website applications like MN Benefits.gov (already exists in Spanish, consider adding Somali and Hmong)

Recommendation B: Proactively engage rental property owners and critical partners in housing stability

Minnesota Housing will identify and implement ways that current programs, including the Landlord Risk Mitigation Program, can support local program partners to develop strong relationships with rental property owners and ensure these owners have relevant information to help renters connect to the resources they need to stay stably housed.

Zoom Polling on Recommendations A–B

Recommendation A, B should be included in the list of recommendations submitted to the legislature in the WERA final report.

Funding Recommendations

Recommendation C: Increase or start state funding for staff

In cooperation with County and Tribal human services agencies, DHS will initiate a study to explore and identify potential approaches to promote adequate funding for processing emergency financial assistance applications.

State agencies and program administrators should consult with key stakeholders and experts, including MACSSA and Minnesota Tribal Collaborative, in planning and implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation D: Increase funding to match real time assessment of need

MHFA and DHS, in partnership with various agencies, counties and local partners, shall develop an Annual Projection of Emergency Housing Assistance needs in Minnesota. MHFA shall
submit this report yearly to the Minnesota House and Senate Housing Committees. We recommend that the Legislature appropriates funds to the various and relevant programs to meet the actual need facing Minnesotans who are experiencing emergency housing crises.

(Note to legislative language group: This should include FHPAP, EA, and EGA.)

Zoom Polling on Recommendations C-D

Recommendation C, D should be included in the list of recommendations submitted to the legislature in the WERA final report.

Processes and Procedures Recommendations E, F

Recommendation E: Simplify verification process to remove barriers for applicants

Reduce barriers for rental assistance applicants by simplifying verification process:

Direct Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the Department of Human Services, in consultation with local officials, to develop recommendations to reduce barriers to entry for applicants for emergency rental assistance by simplifying the verification process and reducing barriers.

DHS, MHFA and DCYF will provide technical assistance to counties, tribes and local agencies. DCYF, DHS and MHFA shall prepare recommendations by January 1, 2025, with the goal of adoption by July 1, 2025.

Recommendation F: Maximize use of uniform electronic signature options

Maximize the use of electronic signature options compliant with uniform available options across programs and program administrators by providing technical assistance and funding as available.

State agencies will require EA/EGA/FHPAP program administrators to incorporate and implement uniform e-signature options in EA/EGA/FHPAP program documents within 2 years of passed legislation.

Zoom Polling on Recommendations E-F

Recommendation E, F should be included in the list of recommendations submitted to the legislature in the WERA final report.

Program Rules Recommendations I , J

Recommendation I: Expand outreach; consolidated list of eligibility criteria

Expand and increase effective outreach

MN Housing Finance Agency in consultation with nonprofit community partners, DHS and counties will develop and implement strategies to increase outreach to community members to increase awareness of emergency rental assistance availability and how to apply for assistance.

Consolidate a list of all programs' eligibility criteria for early intervention

MN Housing Finance Agency will create a resource that consolidates program requirements for EA, EGA, FHPAP assistance in one location that potential applicants can access and apply for assistance as early as possible.

A process will be in place to ensure updates are made as program changes are implemented.

Recommendation J: Simple language; timeframe flexibility

In coordination, DHS and Minnesota Housing shall pursue, across all emergency rental assistance programs:

- Adoption of policies and practices that prioritize easy-to-understand eligibility criteria and accessible, humanizing approaches to assisting people who are going through a crisis.

- Developing guidance for programs which strongly encourage program administrators to be flexible as to the forms of documentation they require and to avoid establishing documentation requirements that are likely to be barriers to participation for eligible households.

Zoom Polling on Recommendations I–J

Recommendation I, J should be included in the list of recommendations submitted to the legislature in the WERA final report.

Technology Recommendations H , L/M/N/O

Recommendation H: MAXIS modifications

Modify MAXIS system for greater flexibility in issuing assistance payments while maintaining controls to monitor and prevent inaccurate, unnecessary, or fraudulent payments. Identify gaps and plan modifications as needed to fulfill stated goals.

Recommendation L/M/N/O: Centralized or integrated technology systems

Minnesota Housing, DHS and MNIT will collaborate to develop requirements for a new centralized system, or integration between existing systems, that is flexible, scalable, customizable, and interfaceable. This would be a "one-stop" statewide rental assistance portal providing greater access to information for all administrators to better support applicants, facilitate communication, improve tracking and leverage other existing technology. The system should serve as a single source for agency staff to view applications and supporting documentation and should allow applicants to view their documentation and application status and engage with housing assistance staff.

Deadline for getting a report back to housing committees – January 2025 (Proposed edit: January 2027, assuming adequate funding is in place.)

We recommend that the legislature fund the technology recommended in the report.

(See appendix for details provided by the workgroup on emergency rental assistance.)

(SME concerns about this being sufficient time to accomplish. See edit above.)

Zoom Polling on Recommendations H, L/M/N/O

Recommendation H, L/M/N/O should be included in the list of recommendations submitted to the legislature in the WERA final report.

Miscellaneous Recommendations—P, Q

Minnesota Housing and DHS will develop a set of criteria to measure the current conditions and timeliness of the processing of emergency rental assistance, including FHPAP, EGA, and EA.

In addition, by January 15, 2027, Minnesota Housing and DHS will submit a report to the Minnesota House and Senate Housing Committees in which they've collected both qualitative and quantitative data from state and local agencies, to help assess which of the task force recommendations have been implemented as recommended and whether they have achieved the goals and charge of the task force to process emergency rental assistance more expeditiously.

The workgroup urges the legislature to work with MHFA and DHS to examine interactions between these recommendations and related housing laws to determine where there is synergy between policies and where alignment is needed to ensure maximum positive impact on preventing homelessness. This review should include housing advocates in the development of questions and work plan, and development of recommendations

Zoom Polling on Recommendations P, Q

Recommendation P, Q should be included in the list of recommendations submitted to the legislature in the WERA final report.

Wrap-up and next steps

- **Next workgroup meeting** is Thursday, February 8, 9:00 am–12:00 pm.

- MAD will email the **meeting summary** to members and post it on the website.

- Please watch for **emails from MAD** at the end of January and beginning of February for details on reviewing the **WERA final report** and **draft legislative language.**

Thank you!

Contact us:
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Workgroup website:
https://mn.gov/mmb/mad/clients/expediting-rental-assistance/