

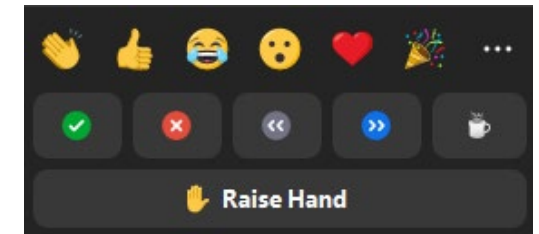
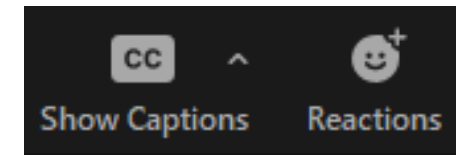
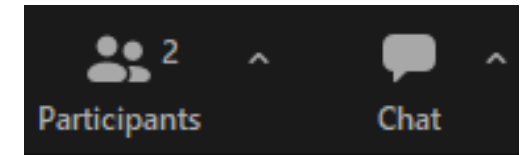
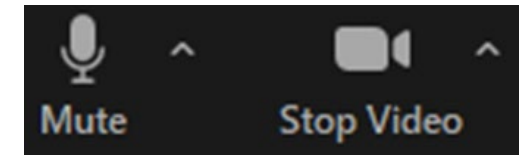
Welcome to the Workgroup on Expediting Rental Assistance!

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

- **Mute/Unmute:** Turn your microphone on/off. Use the arrow to adjust settings.
- **Stop/Start Video:** Turn your camera on/off. Use the arrow to adjust settings.
- **Participants:** See who's currently in the meeting.
- **Chat:** Open the chat panel.
- **Show Captions:** Turn on live captions (it only turns on for you, not everyone).
- **Reactions:** Use the Raise Hand feature to show you'd like to talk.

Please ensure Zoom shows your preferred name, and (if you like) add your pronouns.

- Click the “Participants” button.
- Hover your mouse over your name, then click the three dots beside it.
- Click “Rename.” A pop-up box will appear – edit your name and your pronouns.
- Click “Change.”



1. Workgroup business and updates
2. Determine workgroup decision making approach
3. Review draft and give input on draft recommendations – includes 10-minute break
4. Wrap-up and next steps

Workgroup business

- Josh Ney is representing MinnCap today in place of member Lori Schultz. Subject matter experts John Petroskas from DHS as well as Diane Elias from Mn Housing are joining us today. Trevor Frey from MAD will be providing support to the meeting.
- Any changes to the November meeting summary?
- External consultation: any comments on tribal engagement or other consultation work and tracking on Google drive?

Workgroup meeting flow (to develop recommendations)

Month	WERA meeting	FHPAP and EA/EGA meetings
September	Build common knowledge	Further analyze issues
October	Brainstorm options	Refine options
November	Select options to turn into recommendations	Prepare to draft recommendations Write draft recommendations
December	Review draft recommendations	Meeting with program SMEs
January	Finalize and vote on recommendations Review draft legislation	-
February	Finalize and vote on legislation Discuss final report Wrap up and celebration	-

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)

Legislative Language Subgroup Updates

MAD and MMB have reached out to:

- MMB, MN Housing and DHS legislative relations and policy staff
- House and Senate research staff
- House and Senate committee staff

Process:

- Workgroup approves final language for recommendations at January 11 WERA meeting
- Nonpartisan research staff do primary drafting of language (second half of January)
- Workgroup volunteers review draft language to ensure it matches language and spirit of recommendations as approved by workgroup (late January/early February)
- Concurrent review by agency staff and committee staff for accuracy (late January/early February)
- Workgroup votes on final draft legislative language at February 8 WERA meeting

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
- Reference sections: authorizing legislation; workgroup members; draft legislation; list of all options developed by workgoup; acronyms and definitions

Determine workgroup decision making approach

Proposed Decision-Making Approach

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.

- The recommendations that advanced were based on an approval percentage of 62.5% or higher.
- Discussion and Questions – members will vote on threshold today

Vote on Voting Threshold

Workgroup members will vote using Zoom polling on the threshold for a passing vote

Wording for vote on threshold

I approve the voting threshold:

“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.”

Yes or No

Proxy Voting Approach

1. Workgroup members are strongly encouraged to be present for all formal workgroup votes even if they cannot attend entire workgroup meetings on Zoom.
2. If a workgroup member has an unavoidable conflict and is unable to be present for part(s) of meetings where voting is occurring, they may:
 - a) Notify MAD by no later than 3:00pm the day before the meeting of their vote(s) on proposed agenda items; OR
 - b) Notify MAD by no later than 3:00pm the day before the meeting of the name and email address for the person who will attend as their proxy and cast vote(s) on their behalf.
3. If a workgroup member is absent at the meeting and has not provided advance notice or responded with information listed in point 2 above, their absence will be noted in the voting record and they will not be counted in the percentage to calculate the threshold of votes needed at the meeting to advance an action.

Review of Draft Recommendations

Recommendations development status and overview

- **November 11 WERA meeting:** members evaluated 34 "options for solutions"
 - 15 options advanced to recommendation drafting phase
 - 2 options suggested as out of scope
 - 17 options did not receive sufficient votes to advance to recommendation drafting
- **First drafts of recommendations** (15 options above) mostly completed Dec 1.
- **SMEs reviewed first drafts** in advance of today's meeting
- **Count of recommendations by category as of today – 14 total:**
 - Communications – 2; Funding – 2; Processes and procedures – 3; Program rules – 4; Technology – 1; Miscellaneous – 2.

Recommendations development status and overview

- **Discussion at Operations Subgroup meeting last week:**
 - Beyond scope options (stay on evictions; county risk sharing)
 - Data collection and measurement
- **Steps since that meeting to tee up review and input by workgroup today:**
 - County risk sharing: could be incorporated into a broader funding recommendation
 - Two additional recommendations:
 - Develop criteria to measure conditions and timeliness of processing applications
 - Review of related housing statutes for alignment with recommendations
 - Proposal to combine four technology draft recommendations into one recommendation.

Process for recommendation review

- Will walk through all of the recommendations in groups by category
- Members ask questions for clarification
- Do a “pulse check” on each recommendation with Zoom polling. Members give input on each recommendation on a scale from 1-5 on how they feel about each recommendation
- At the January meeting, there will be a formal vote where members consider each recommendation
- SMEs are here for questions on content

Do you support recommendation ____ as a recommendation for WERA to move forward with?

- Polling Scale:
 - 5 I love it
 - 4 I like it
 - 3 Live with it (I can live with it)
 - 2 Leery of it (I don't like it)
 - 1 Loath it
- For those members especially who gave the recommendation a 1 or 2 in polling, discuss what concerns and questions do you have about the recommendations AND edits.

Communications and Funding Recommendations

Recommendation A: Provide access in multiple languages not currently available (R6)

- Research current requirements under state law or reg and what is already being provided
- Require EA, EGA, FHPAP to meet federal language access standards in Title VI
- 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)

Assess interpreting services for applications and customer service stuff - do these exist? quality? Improve? Requirement for FHPAP providers to provide a certain level of language access when working with applicants (require same level as EA/EGA and other state programs)

Recommendation B: Build landlord trust / Proactively engage rental property owners and critical partners in housing stability (R12)

- MHFA, in collaboration with planning partners and stakeholders, will develop a Landlord Engagement Program. MHFA will offer a competitive RFP for finding qualified service providers to implement this program.
- Program service providers will collaborate with rental housing providers and renters to engage services and provide awareness and access to the many housing resources that are available. The goal is early intervention that prevents eviction filings and allows rental housing providers to help their renters have direct access to the resources they need to stay stably housed.

Recommendation C: Increase or start state funding for staff (R1)

- Increase funding for administrative needs including staffing for program administrators.
- Counties will have the option to use the funds for other approved expenditures (EA and EGA would look similar to FHPAP.)
- State agencies and program administrators should explore creative solutions to fill staffing gaps, including centrally administered staffing pool, greater MN counties pooling funds, etc.
- State agencies and program administrators will explore and identify potential strategies for what is needed to pay adequate compensation to program staff.

Recommendation D: Increase funding to match real time assessment of need / Size funding to match need and provide for nimble process to consistently evaluate changing needs (R2)

- The State Legislature should pass legislation that codifies and provides funding to match Annual Projection of Need for emergency rental assistance based on the expanded eligibility criteria and flexibility incorporated in the WERA's recommendations and include in such legislation a requirement for administering agencies to conduct an Annual Projection of Need based on local economic factors and number of households in the service area that are within the eligible income parameters. Further, the enabling Legislation should contain provisions that increase funding to meet the Annual Projection of Need in the next biennium.

Zoom Polling on Recommendations A-D

Do you support recommendation A, B, C or D as a recommendation for WERA to move forward with?

Input on Communications Recommendations A & B

- -

Input on Funding Recommendations C & D

- -

Processes and Procedures Recommendations E, F, G

Recommendation E: Simplify verification process to remove barriers for applicants / Allow for self-attestation and landlords to provide verification materials directly (R3)

Reduce barriers for rental assistance applicants by simplifying verification process: Direct Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, in consultation with Department of Human Services and local officials, to develop recommendations to reduce barriers to entry for applicants for emergency rental assistance by simplifying the verification process, including permitting short-term self-attestation of emergencies. As an additional step to reduce barriers for applicants, landlords shall be able to provide verification materials directly to the local and/or state entity charged with disbursement of rental assistance. We also recommend policy changes to allow residents to be able to give verbal authorizations for rental assistance administrators to communicate directly with landlords and utility providers. In addition, DHS will align EA and EGA programs asset verification to align with General Assistance cash program for simplified processing.

MHFA shall seek to align these recommendations for the verification processes where possible for FHPAP, EA, and EGA. MHFA will implement changes to FHPAP and provide technical assistance to counties and local agencies who will be required to adopt and implement program changes to simplify verification.

MHFA shall prepare recommendations by January 1, 2025 with the goal of adoption in FHPAP by July 1, 2025. Local counties shall update their program rules by July 1, 2025. Nothing precludes MHFA or local partners to move forward more quickly.

Recommendation F: Utilize inclusive electronic signature process / Require universal adoption of electronic signatures (R4)

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. State agencies and program administrators may need to adjust policies and procedures to enable e-signatures. [Note: uniform has to do with the definition of what constitutes an allowable e-signature]

Recommendation G: Provide application support / Develop a singular hub to take initial referrals and answer questions about the process (R5)

Write into law to provide 100% funding for emergency rent help Navigators. Providers could opt out completely, opt to hire, or contract out the work.

Develop infrastructure so one hub (such as 211) could take initial referrals and answer questions about the process. FHPAP providers retain control over what their application looks like.

Zoom Polling on Recommendations E-G

Do you support recommendation E, F or G as a recommendation for WERA to move forward with?

Input on Processes and Procedures Recommendations E, F, G

- -

Input on Processes and Procedures Recommendations E, F, G

- -

Program Rules Recommendations H, I , J, K

Recommendation H: Increase maximum issuance to \$6,000 total combined or \$4,000 per check (R10)

- Pending

Recommendation I: Expand and increase effective outreach / Unify all programs' eligibility criteria for early intervention (R11)

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 rental assistance availability and how to apply for assistance.

Unify all programs' eligibility criteria

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

Recommendation J: Expand program rule flexibility and clarify requirements (R13)

Require all state funded programs that provide emergency rental assistance to tenants to develop program rules that have the flexibility to provide relief to crises in a time frame corresponding to the emergency and are simple enough for applicants to understand.

In coordination, DHS and Minnesota Housing shall create a uniform definition to guide allocation of “emergency rental assistance” to recipients and adopt, across all programs, an easy-to-understand criterion for application approval that centers on the minimum requirement of “has the tenant demonstrated that they cannot pay rent that is owed or will be owed?” DHS and Minnesota Housing shall be directed to promulgate program rules that conform to this simple standard.

Recommendation K: Reduce amount of requirements / Identify restrictive requirements that could be removed (R14)

Analyze all statutes and regulations that govern requirements

Analyze requirements in relevant program manuals

Develop ceiling of requirements - that counties or FHPAP cannot exceed

e.g., something like: 504B.321 Subd. 1b. Notice constitutes verification of emergency.

(a) Receipt of the notice under subdivision 1a shall be deemed by a county or other agency requiring verification of emergency to qualify a tenant for assistance to be sufficient demonstration of an emergency situation under section 256D.06, subdivision 2, and Minnesota Rules, chapter 9500. For purposes of chapter 256J and Minnesota Rules, chapter 9500, a county agency verifies an emergency situation by receiving and reviewing a notice under this section.

(b) When it receives a copy of the notice required by this section, the county must not:

(1) require a tenant to provide additional verification of the emergency; or

(2) require additional verification that the landlord will accept the funds demanded in the notice required by this section to resolve the emergency.

Zoom Polling on Recommendations H-K

Do you support recommendation H, I, J, K as a recommendation for WERA to move forward with?

Input on Program Rules Recommendations H, I, J, K

- -

Input on Program Rules Recommendations H, I, J, K

- -

Technology Recommendations - L, M, N, O (combined recommendation)

Recommendation L/M/N/O: Develop and create a centralized rental assistance portal that provides access to information for all admins to support applicants (R7, R8, R9, & R15)

- Develop and create a centralized application, communication, and processing system 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, improve tracking and leverage other existing technology.
- Flexible and Scalable: The State owns the contract for the software. Counties and tribes would be able to opt in to different portions of the system (application, communication portal, EDMS, processing system, case management system) for EA/EGA and/or FHPAP. If a jurisdiction chose to opt out of using the system the state would process eligibility for EA/EGA, and FHPAP providers could process following their current processes and procedures. Applicants could choose their preferred providers and exclude local government if that is their preference. Applications could be completed online, on paper, or by phone and would be available in multiple languages.
- Customizable:
- Optional screening questions customized by each jurisdiction
- Optional chat feature or state will fund resources to offer extended phone hours and online chat features
- Different access roles for different processors/providers
- Notices/communications to applications - jurisdictions should be able to add templates
- Statuses viewable by clients with detail about what might be needed
- Ultimate flexibility would allow for current funding streams and use (example: EA/EGA for car repairs) and processing of other programs (CDBG, other grants, other county-funded programs, etc.).

Interfaceable:

- Verification of income, assets, and Xcel account status and billing history
- Multiple EDMSs for information sharing/reporting to other programs (specifically OnBase, Laserfiche(?), and CaseWorks)
- HMIS for FHPAP tracking
- Accounting systems for check issuances, W-9s, and payment tracking
- Allow for workflows and communication between providers
- MAXIS for previous use and confirmation/verification of other existing information

Other:

- Documents and information would be readily available to all program administrators to view and upload
- Applicants will have secure access to view and upload documents, communicate with providers, and view their case status
- System tracking using one case number per household
- Application requests releases for other organizations, landlord/shelter providers, and utility companies as needed
- client could select mail, text, or email as preferred method of communication, and system would comply
- print to mail
- Plain language especially for screening, provider selection, and releases
- Editable case notes for up to 24 hours
- Read receipts on client electronic communications
- Approve/Deny documents
- Ability to add notes/comments on documents
- FHPAP providers will need to be able to turn applications “off” and back “on” to control volume
- Ability to forward/exchange communications to specific agency representatives

Zoom Polling on Recommendations L-O

Do you support combined recommendation L, M, N, O as a recommendation for WERA to move forward with?

Input on Technology Recommendations L-O

- -

Input on Technology Recommendations L-O

- -

Miscellaneous Recommendations – P, Q

Recommendation P: Develop criteria to measure conditions and timeliness of processing applications (R16)

Minnesota Housing, in consultation with 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 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.

Recommendation Q: Review of related statutes (R17)

Placeholder: The workgroup urges the legislature 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.

Zoom Polling on Recommendations P, Q

Do you support recommendation P, Q
as a recommendation for WERA to move forward with?

Input on Measurement Recommendations P

- -

Input on Review of Related Statues Recommendations Q

- -

Wrap-up and next steps

- **Next workgroup meeting** is Thursday, January 11, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.
- MAD will email the **meeting summary** to members and post it on the website.

Thank you!

Contact us:

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Katie.Hatt@state.mn.us

Workgroup website:

<https://mn.gov/mmb/mad/clients/expediting-rental-assistance/>

Appendix: Technology Recommendations

Recommendation L: Build a shared platform to allow communication between applicants/residents and case managers; among/between administrators (R8)

MHFA and DHS work together to fund and build a shared communication platform that allows for in-the-moment communication between applicants/residents and case managers, as well as communication among/between administrators.

Applies to all programs. The platform/person would be able to route tenants and staff members to who would best be able to answer questions.

It would also have the ability within the tool for administrators to share and exchange information as needed.

All Counties and local administrators of EA/EGA and FHPAP will accept documents that are emailed, texted, faxed or dropped off as part of an application.

State will fund resources (central or decentralized?) to offer language options, extended phone hours, and online chat features.

Anticipate 24-month implementation process including several phases of work:

Exploratory/Discovery/Inventory phase

- Data privacy phase
- Funding phase
- Build phase

Recommendation M: Integrate systems across agencies / Develop communication system that integrates all programs seamlessly to benefit all stakeholders (R7)

Integrate rental assistance processing systems across agencies and systems to promote clearer communication, both internally and externally, and to promote a more seamless process for rental assistance applicants. In coordination, MHFA and DHS shall create a plan to integrate rental assistance processing across different platforms. Potential areas of study for feasibility should include: data sharing between HIMIS and MAXIS, how to integrate or better share information between FHPAP/EGA/EA, consideration of a “one-stop” statewide rental assistance portal, changes that would provide greater access to information to administrators to aid them in quickly processing applications, improved tracking and quality of data, and how best to leverage existing technology.

MHFA and DHS shall coordinate with counties and local rental assistance administrators in developing recommendations. MHFA and DHS shall seek to provide recommendations to the Minnesota House and Senate Housing Committees by **DATE**. MHFA and DHS shall seek to implement changes by **DATE**.

Recommendation N: Modernize the processing system into one that is flexible, scalable, customizable, and interfaceable (R9)

- Develop and create a centralized application, communication, and processing system that is flexible, scalable, customizable, and interfaceable.
- Flexible and Scalable: The State owns the contract for the software. Counties and tribes would be able to opt in to different portions of the system (application, communication portal, EDMS, processing system, case management system) for EA/EGA and/or FHPAP. If a jurisdiction chose to opt out of using the system the state would process eligibility for EA/EGA, and FHPAP providers could process following their current processes and procedures. Applicants could choose their preferred providers and exclude local government if that is their preference. Applications could be completed online, on paper, or by phone and would be available in multiple languages.
- Customizable:
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- Ultimate flexibility would allow for current funding streams and use (example: EA/EGA for car repairs) and processing of other programs (CDBG, other grants, other county-funded programs, etc.).

Interfaceable:

- Verification of income, assets, and Xcel account status and billing history
- Multiple EDMSs for information sharing/reporting to other programs (specifically OnBase, Laserfiche, and CaseWorks)
- HMIS for FHPAP tracking
- Accounting systems for check issuances, W-9s, and payment tracking
- Allow for workflows and communication between providers

Other

- System tracking using one case number per household
- Application requests releases for other organizations, landlord/shelter providers, and utility companies as needed
- client could select mail, text, or email as preferred method of communication, and system would comply
- print to mail
- Plain language especially for screening, provider selection, and releases
- Editable case notes for up to 24 hours
- Read receipts on client electronic communications
- Approve/Deny documents
- Ability to add notes/comments on documents
- FHPAP providers will need to be able to turn applications “off” and back “on” to control volume

Recommendation O: Create online repository to host applications and supporting documentation accessible by both applicants and administrators (R15)

MHFA will create an online repository for hosting FHPAP applications and supporting documentation. The information will be readily available to FHPAP administrators and sub-contractors to view and upload documents and application details. Applicants will have secure account access to their application and documents, with the ability to edit and manage their documents.

DHS and County EA/EGA staff will access the online repository to view and upload relevant client documents. DHS will adapt MN Benefits to gain permission to automatically (by default) share documents with FHPAP administrators.

System should be completed and operational within 24 months.

Zoom Polling on Recommendations L-O

Do you support recommendations L, M, N, O
as a recommendation for WERA to move forward with?

Input on Technology Recommendations Recommendations L-O

- -