Workgroup on Expediting Rental Assistance meeting summary, November 9, 2023

- Participants listed at the end.
- To review the meeting agenda, presentation slides, and any other relevant documents from the meeting, visit the [workgroup webpage](#) and select the "Meetings" tab.

Main meeting topics

The third workgroup meeting began with an introduction of Lori Schultz from Minnesota Community Action Program, who joined the workgroup this month in place of a former colleague at MinnCAP.

Workgroup attendees heard an overview of how previous meetings' outputs related to potentials solutions to top challenges were synthesized and categorized to prepare the current summary on the online whiteboard tool, Mural.

Workgroup attendees then shifted into small group discussions of solution options' feasibility and impact, and whether options were short-term or long-term solutions.

Following the small group work, the workgroup came together for a brief discussion, and then shifted into individual voting on which solution options should be developed into recommendations.

Workgroup attendees had a closing discussion about looking at solution options and recommendations and their combined impact as well as individual impact.

Key agenda items

- Workgroup business
- Research in Action presentation on findings from Community Convene
- Review of summarized solution options
- Groupwork on prioritizing solution options
- Individual voting task
- Group discussion

Presentation to the workgroup

Emma Wu and Tsion Tulu, Research in Action—Report on Community Roundtable

The presenters gave an overview of their outreach process and registration/informed consent process (consent to being recorded), and reported participant demographics.

Themes that came out of the community roundtable were consistent with themes from the report RIA previously presented to this workgroup: Time, eligibility, technology, dehumanization, and communication. Additional observations included:

- Immigrant Experience: Challenge due to the need for housing to get a work permit, but need work to pay for housing, creating a dead-end loop
- Provider perspectives: Community members would like to hear providers share their experiences with the process

Presenters also shared community feedback on proposed solutions, including:

- Support from service providers such as information sessions, better pay for caseworkers and social workers, and peer advocates/peer navigators
- Building trust: mistrust in the system creates mistrust in interactions
- Changes to language, particularly the use of "unit" to refer to a family applying for assistance
- Development of a centralized portal/application process, and changes to required documentation

There was a brief question-and-answer period during which workgroup attendees also expressed their appreciation for the work done by RIA.

Small group and individual work

The next topic was an overview of the upcoming small group work, to select the solution options that will be turned into recommendations.

Workgroup members went to various breakout rooms in Zoom in groups of 3-4 members for discussion and moved solution options into a feasibility-impact matrix on the Mural online workspace and noted any assumptions. Each group worked on approximately one-fourth of the 34 solution options developed in prior workgroup and subgroup meetings. Workgroup members were asked to consider the options with the legislative charge in mind, that is, whether the option would improve timeliness of determination and payment.

The full group reconvened briefly following the small groups to review the feasibility-impact matrix and discuss the exercise. Members of some subgroups expressed concern that they were not able to move all solution options to the matrix. They were reminded this was an initial thought exercise, and the work would continue in the recommendations drafting process over the next two months. Results of the feasibility-impact matrix are at the end of this document.

From here, the discussion turned to the voting activity, with an explanation that this would not be a true or final vote, but "preferencing," to see where there is the most energy and alignment with the legislative charge. Solution options would move to the list for creating recommendations based on getting at least 9 votes with 13 members voting and 69% of members in agreement with option moving forward.

Instructions were given to workgroup members on how to vote (in the Mural) that a given solution option should be turned into a draft recommendation, based on the criterion of accelerating determination/payment.

Results of Member Voting—Options moving forward

(Based on getting at least 9 votes with 13 members voting, 69% of members in agreement with option moving forward.)

Listed in order of the options with most votes to options the least votes

#	Subgroup origins	Category	Options moving forward	Rating on feasibility and impact table
1	EA/EGA and FHPAP	Funding	#20 Increase or start state funding for staff 13 votes	Medium feasibility, High impact
2	EA/EGA and FHPAP	Funding	#21 Increase funding to match real time assessment of need/ Size funding to match need and provide for nimble process to consistently evaluate changing needs 13 votes	In-between High-Medium feasibility, High impact
3	EA/EGA and FHPAP	Processes and procedures	#1 Simplify verification process/ Allow for self-attestation 12 votes	Low feasibility, Medium impact
4	EA/EGA and FHPAP	Processes and procedures	#2 Utilize inclusive electronic signature process/ Require universal adoption of electronic signatures 12 votes	In-between High-Medium feasibility, High impact
5	FHPAP	Processes and procedures	#8 Provide application support 12 votes	Not rated
6	EA/EGA and FHPAP	Communications	#11 Provide access in multiple languages 12 votes	High feasibility, High impact
7	EA/EGA and FHPAP	Technology	#29 Integrate systems/ Develop communication system that integrates all programs seamlessly to benefit all stakeholders 12 votes	Medium feasibility, medium impact

#	Subgroup origins	Category	Options moving forward	Rating on feasibility and impact table
8	EA/EGA and FHPAP	Communications	#10 Invest in infrastructure for flexible communication options/ Offer a variety of accessible communication options 11 votes	Not rated
9	EA/EGA	Technology	#24 Modernizing the processing system to improve the application, communication, training timelines, etc. 11 votes	Medium to low feasibility, High impact
10	EA/EGA	Program rules	#18 Increase maximum issuance to $6,000 total combined or $4,000 per check 9 votes	Not rated
11	FHPAP	Program rules	#14 Expand, increase effective outreach, and unify all programs' eligibility criteria to allow more households to be eligible and for early intervention 9 votes	Medium feasibility, High impact
12	FHPAP and EA/EGA	Communications	#12 Build landlord trust/ Proactively engage rental property owners as critical partners in housing stability 9 votes	Medium feasibility, High impact

Results of Member Voting—Options on the Cusp

(Based on getting at least 8 votes with 13 members voting, 62% of members in agreement with option moving forward.)

#	Subgroup origins	Category	Options *potentially* moving forward	Rating on feasibility and impact table
**	EA/EGA	Program rules	#16 Expand program rule flexibility and clarify requirements 8 votes	
**	EA/EGA and FHPAP	Program rules	#17 Reduce amount of requirements/ Identify restrictive requirements that could be removed 8 votes	

#	Subgroup origins	Category	Options *potentially* moving forward	Rating on feasibility and impact table
M, *	EA/EGA and FHPAP	Technology	#28 Establish an online system for uploading, storing, and sharing documents/ Implement a tool for immediate worker visibility when documents are uploaded *Revision: Improve of better coordinate the process of uploading, storing, and sharing documents, including ability for workers to immediately see what documents are uploaded* 8 votes	

Options Potentially Out of Scope—Options NOT related to timeliness of application determination or payment

#	Subgroup origins	Category	Options moving forward	Comments
1	EA/EGA	Program rules	#19 Stay eviction while pending application—could still include a cap	I disagree with moving this. This should be considered in scope for the recommendations coming from this group. - MK
2	EA/EGA	Funding	#22 Risk-sharing when counties overspend	

Group discussion

When voting was complete, workgroup members reviewed the preliminary list of solution options that met the threshold for moving forward.

Highlights from the conversation:

- A member expressed reservation regarding the option related to inclusive electronic signature—electronic signatures are in English only and do not translate well.
- Suggestion to look at the solutions together and consider whether, if all were implemented, the goal timelines would be achieved.
- Expression of surprise at little support for a unified application process—high impact but also high risk.
- Agreement that there were a lot of parts that would be helpful to explore more as a group to understand the impact
- Considering whether to vote for item to create unified application; hesitation because a unified application would be very tricky due to different requirements for different programs.

- Note about improving document uploads. Noted that the option for modernizing processing system which has a lot of support and would be relevant for both FHPAP and EA/EGA. What would this mean? Ability to go online and apply and see status of application.
- If giving an eye toward getting to the goal (as noted earlier), wondering whether the workgroup can meaningfully predict this. Might not be able to be definitive in assessing that likelihood. There is a whole list of options that could have impact, and what's moving forward seems to be what will most likely have impact.
- Considering the sum of the parts of the recommendations becomes an important conversation. Yes, we won't be able to be definitive in our report even in best circumstance. But good to consider it
- When voting, looking at capacity within our current structure to do the thing. Like electronic filing system—staff of EA/EGA would need to know 2 systems, because they cover things other than rent payments (moving expenses, damage deposits). Already insufficient staff to cover the current work with one system. Could there be a guarantee that the necessary additional admin funding will be provided if the recommendation passes the legislature?
- Not sure how, but we need to look at the framework of the system vs. individual components.
- Any recommendations that are identifying bigger systems-level changes, it's critical we pair that with the nuance of the kind of funding/support that is necessary to make that recommendation achievable for all partners involved. Don't limit our thinking. Let's recommend the things we think will have impact, AND the funding or other resources that will allow them to be implemented well.

Workgroup members were invited to add notes regarding concerns or reservations on any options in the Mural.

Conclusion/workgroup updates

Reminder of external consultation activities and other work assigned to be completed before the next workgroup activities, including the assignments that will be given during the subgroups next week to draft recommendations. The deadline for draft recommendations is November 30.

The next workgroup meeting is December 14, 9am–12 p.m.

The next subgroup meetings are:

- EA/EGA subgroup: November 14, 2:30–4:30 p.m.
- FHPAP subgroup: November 17, 2:00–4:00 p.m.
- Operations subgroup: December 4, 12:00–1:00 p.m.

Meeting participants

Workgroup members

- Andrea Palumbo, HOME line

- Rinal Ray, Minnesota Housing
- Cynthia Fahland, Hennepin County
- Ellen Sahli, Family Housing Fund
- Jennifer Frisbie, Community Mediation Minnesota
- Jeremy Galley, Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Julie Ogunleye, Twin Cities United Way
- Kristyn Stephens, Washington County
- Mary Kaczorek, Legal Aid
- Rebekah Grimm, Salvation Army
- Representative Mike Howard, Minnesota House of Representatives
- Theresa Dahlheimer, St. Louis County
- Cassandra Barden, Minnesota Multi Housing Association
- Lori Schulz, MN Community Action Partnership (MinnCAP)

Members Absent

- Senator Lindsey Port, Minnesota Senate
- Nicole Worlds, Human Services of Martin and Faribault Counties

Others

- Tsion Tulu, Research in Action
- Emma Wu, Research in Action

- Karen Gaides, MAD
- Kristina Krull, MAD
- Katie Hatt, MAD
- Stephanie Klein, MAD

Impact and Feasibility Matrix

*Options selected as moving forward are <mark>highlighted</mark>

Matrix	High feasibility	In-between High-Medium feasibility	Medium feasibility	In-between Medium and Low feasibility	Low feasibility
High impact	11. Provide access in multiple languages	21. Increase funding to match real time assessment of need/ Size funding to match need and provide for nimble process to consistently evaluate changing needs 2. Utilize inclusive electronic signature process/Require universal adoption of electronic signatures 33.3 Define roles and make sure gaps are filled/Create specialized and responsive staff roles (Navigators/peer support)	14. Expand, increase effective outreach, and unify all programs' eligibility criteria to allow more households to be eligible and for early intervention 12. Build landlord trust/ Proactively engage rental property owners as critical partners in housing stability 28. Establish an online system for uploading, storing, and sharing documents/ Implement a tool for immediate worker visibility when documents are uploaded 20. Increase or start state funding for staff 23. Invest in a user interface to improve customer experience/ Develop system with accessible and user-friendly interface	24. Modernizing the processing system to improve the application, communication, training timelines, etc. 33.2 Define roles and make sure gaps are filled/Create specialized and responsive staff roles (Compensation)	

| Medium impact | | | 33. Define roles and make sure gaps are filled/Create specialized and responsive staff roles (Staff Backup)

29. Integrate systems/ Develop communication system that integrates all programs seamlessly to benefit all stakeholders

31. Create an EA/EGA specialized training track

32. Streamline staff training and engagement

25. Create easy to navigate public website to explain eligibility process and criteria for each program

==18. Increase maximum issuance to $6,000 total combined or $4,000 per check==

26. Create clear and easy to understand guide to process and rules that is easily accessible online for households and landlords | | ==1. Simplify verification process/Allow for self-attestation==

27. Invest in and implement a statewide EDMS (electronic document management system) |

Matrix	High feasibility	In-between High-Medium feasibility	Medium feasibility	In-between Medium and Low feasibility	Low feasibility
Low impact					3. Revise existing application or create an emergency-specific application 4. Create unified application with same eligibility criteria and database/Create a single application with multiple options to apply 30. Ensure accessibility and technology matches the user's skills and technology access/ Create a balance with accessibility and technology