



COVID-19

Homeless System Response:

Coordinated Investment Planning: How the Dakota County COVID-19 Response Team is Coordinating Stakeholders to Develop a Data-Informed Investment Plan

Coordinated investment planning strategically aligns and commits resources from multiple sources to fund a community's rehousing strategy through a collaborative planning process. Dakota County, Minnesota developed a coordinated investment plan through an intensive U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) workshop, collaborating with existing partners both in government agencies and community organizations. The coordinated investment planning process implemented by Dakota County demonstrates how gathering input from community partners and creating data-informed strategies can help communities maximize and appropriately target available Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act resources.

Implementation Strategies

Dakota County has focused their coordinated investment efforts on creating and maintaining affordable housing stock. The community has few available affordable housing units and landlords willing to accept housing vouchers. Within these constraints, Dakota County developed three strategies:

- Create Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units through mobile home ownership.
- Formulate a targeted homelessness prevention program.
- Extend current hotel leases through the end of 2020, extending the amount of time case managers have to locate available units. When housed, the Continuum of Care (CoC) will provide rental assistance through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).

An innovative idea formulated by the task force was to purchase 18 mobile homes to use as affordable PSH units to quickly increase current inventory. These units would be owned by participants with a lien held by the PSH program. If the participant sells the unit, it would be purchased by the program and resold as an affordable housing unit.

Building Partnerships

The investment plan relies on a diverse set of partnerships within the Heading Home Dakota workgroup, a local coalition of different organizations that includes social services agencies, Dakota County employees, veteran services, domestic violence shelters, food pantries, community development directors, the HOME consortium, and youth programs. A rehousing task force, created as an offshoot of the group, is leading the effort and coordinating stakeholders. Led by two representatives from social services and the housing authority, the group meets weekly to engage in training, brainstorm rehousing strategies, and convene necessary partners. Leadership also includes those with lived experience and has helped design improved outreach and racial equity strategies. The entire group brainstorms rehousing and prevention strategies, which are then given to leadership to determine overall feasibility, refine, and incorporate into the coordinated investment plan by the following week.

The Dakota County Office of Performance and Analysis conducted an evidence-based model of eviction cases following the COVID-19 crisis. The model uses unemployment rates, demographics, and shelter statistics as parameters to estimate risk of eviction. The findings from this model are being used by Heading Home Dakota to assess the amount of funding needed for eviction prevention during the pandemic. In partnership with the local court system, Dakota County is now identifying households at risk of eviction, reaching out to landlords prior to the court date for mitigation, as well as providing services at the time of the court summons.

Securing Funding

The Dakota County Housing Authority manages CDBG, Emergency Solutions Grants, and HOME funds and is contributing these resources to the coordinated investment plan. Heading Home Dakota is reviewing each funding source, determining eligible populations for each funding stream, and creating funding priorities. In addition to these federal funds, the plan envisions identifying additional resources from private foundation funds, Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) funds, and other funding sources through social services that have fewer limitations to serve additional populations or increase the flexibility of current strategies. To navigate questions about how to use funding sources, the board leveraged the HUD Rehousing and Coordinated Investment Planning Tool provided through the COVID-19 Response Coordinated Investment Planning intensive workshop.