

# Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)

Qualitative  
Analysis of Year  
3 Annual  
Performance  
Report (APR)  
Narrative  
Responses



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## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) tasked Abt Associates with preparing this report. The report provides a qualitative analysis of the narrative responses submitted by HUD’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) grantees in their third and final Annual Performance Report (APR). The APR responses came from 399 grantees and cover the period from October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012.<sup>1</sup>

By analyzing the successes and challenges grantees faced while implementing HPRP, this report aims to inform the design and implementation of the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program and the Rapid Re-housing component of the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program. Not only is this information useful to HUD, but it will assist ESG recipients, and CoC recipients with projects funded under the Rapid Re-housing component as they develop guidance, tools, and other resources for their programs. Abt Associates conducted a similar analysis of the Year 1 APR narrative questions.

The report has the following sections:

1. The *Executive Summary* highlights the key findings and recommendations, and the Introduction provides an overview of HPRP and describes the purpose of the report.
2. *Methodology and Limitations* summarizes the research methodology and the limitations of the analysis.
3. The *Review of Year 1 Findings* presents the key findings from an initial analysis of the narrative responses from the Year 1 APR.
4. The *Overview of Year 3 Findings* highlights the prominent topics and trends identified in the narrative responses from the Year 3 APR.
5. The *Year 3 Findings by Question* details the seven questions included in the qualitative analysis of Year 3 APR narrative responses, the three most prominent topics associated with each question, and the prevalence of the prominent topics by grantee attributes.
6. The final section presents *Conclusions and Recommendations* for the implementation of the rapid re-housing projects funded by the ESG Program and the CoC Program.

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<sup>1</sup> This report uses the terms “grantee” when referring to eligible entities receiving HPRP funding from HUD and “recipient” when referring to eligible entities receiving ESG or CoC funding from HUD. Similarly, “subgrantee” refers to entities receiving HPRP funding from a grantee and “subrecipient” refers to an entity receiving ESG or CoC funding from a recipient.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Congress authorized the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) 2009. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded 535 grantees across the nation \$1.5 billion in HPRP funding over 3 years to prevent or resolve homelessness for individuals and families. HUD tasked Abt Associates with analyzing the Annual Performance Report (APR) data submitted by HPRP grantees to draw out useful lessons about program design, accomplishments, coordination, and obstacles. By analyzing the successes and challenges grantees faced while implementing HPRP, this report aims to inform the design and implementation of the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program and the Rapid Re-housing component of the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program. The report focuses on the 399 grantees that responded to the narrative questions on the APR for the third and final year of the program, covering the period ending September 30, 2012. Abt Associates used NVivo—a qualitative data analysis software program—to organize and analyze the narrative responses provided by HPRP grantees. While the analysis has several limitations, which are summarized below and described in greater detail later in the report, it highlights the main areas of success and concern for HPRP grantees, making it useful for future program designs and implementations.

### Methodology and Limitations

HUD asked grantees to respond to seven questions on the Year 3 APR and gave them up to 2,000 characters for their responses to each question. In its qualitative data analysis, Abt Associates also used NVivo to determine the most prevalent topics in responses for each question and to determine any variations in prevalence of the prominent topics by grantee attribute. The text of the questions and a detailed description of the prevalent topics can be found in the *Year 3 Findings by Question* section of this report.

The analysis and data have several limitations:

1. The APR questions were open-ended and grantees chose, within the space allowed, to describe some elements of their program. Consequently, these responses do not include all of the relevant details of any particular program or issue.
2. Although the narrative responses included references to measurable program results, such as the number of people served, this was not a quantitative analysis of program results. For more information on the methodology and limitations, see the section on *Methodology and Limitations*.

### Key Findings

The Year 3 APR included seven questions that asked about: program accomplishments; barriers to outreach and targeting for rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention; mid-course corrections; approaches to providing appropriate levels of assistance; strategies for increasing housing stability; and plans for the transition to ESG to continue support for homelessness prevention and/or rapid re-housing activities. All responses that fit under each of the questions were analyzed and the top three topics mentioned by grantees for each question were determined. A review of the top three topics across the seven questions identified the grantees' three most

frequently mentioned topics: design and planning; financial and grants management; and oversight and monitoring.

Looking across these topics, the following two common themes emerged among grantees:

1. **Challenges aligning with HUD policy:** Grantees expressed challenges in understanding and implementing HUD’s policies and goals for HPRP in Year 3 responses despite increased policy guidance from HUD over the course of the program. This was also a major theme identified in Year 1 APR responses. For example, HUD guidance stressed greater targeting of assistance to people who, “but for” HPRP, would become or remain literally homeless.<sup>2</sup> In response to the guidance, some grantees understood and operationalized deeper targeting to adhere to HUD’s policy goals. However, a number of grantees adopted targeting and screening approaches to limit assistance to households with a greater perceived chance of success and less perceived need for assistance because of concerns about assisting households that might need more intense and/or longer-term assistance and the limited availability of resources toward the end of the program.
2. **Investments in developing capacity:** Many HPRP grantees engaged in capacity development and compliance activities. Virtually every grantee invested in tools, such as assessment forms, compliance checklists, and policies and procedures, and in training subgrantees and other partners to ensure the program was being delivered in compliance with HUD rules and local program design. Even grantees experiencing difficulty aligning with HUD policy and guidance were investing in developing capacity and implementing their local targeting strategies with standardized tools and forms. Grantees also invested in their Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to meet data collection and reporting requirements, improve data quality, and collect data for program and system monitoring and reports. These capacity development activities were beyond what many grantees, primarily State and local government entities, had previously conducted under HUD’s former Emergency Shelter Grants Program. That program did not require the same level of grantee involvement in designing new local program policies, in executing a fast ramp-up, or in emphasizing data collection and reporting.

## Key Recommendations

Participating in HPRP gave jurisdictions, homeless crisis response systems, and providers substantial experience designing and implementing effective homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing activities. For HUD and many of these organizations, the lessons learned and capacity derived from HPRP also support ESG and CoC Program implementation. This report analyzes grantee responses to provide recommendations for ESG and CoC recipients and subrecipients around the three most prevalent topical areas identified across HPRP grantee responses: program design and planning, financial and grants management, and oversight and monitoring. Recommendations based on the findings of this analysis are summarized below.

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<sup>2</sup> When this report uses the term “literally homeless,” it refers generally to persons who are sleeping in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets or other places not meant for human habitation—in other words, what is now paragraph 1 of the definition of “homeless.” This is consistent with HUD’s use of the term.

1. **Program design and planning:** HUD program recipients and subrecipients should:
  - ensure they clearly understand HUD’s vision and expectations for programs—this is especially important when HUD promotes new paradigms, such as Housing First, and specific practices and related evidence that may run counter to recipient or subrecipient values and beliefs; and
  - consider how best to communicate information to subrecipients and contractors about the impact and proper delivery of rapid re-housing and targeted homelessness prevention assistance to ensure consistency and increase emphasis on performance-based program models.
2. **Financial and grants management:** Recipients should:
  - develop a funding strategy that takes into account the complex eligibility and compliance requirements associated with administering homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing programs;
  - allow for reasonable start-up and on-going expenses when assessing minimum program size and budget for funding subrecipients; and
  - account for start-up time when developing benchmarks and performance measures, metrics and indicators for new subrecipients. This helps to balance the need for successful and efficient operations with the reality of a ramp-up period as subrecipients develop capacity and expertise with the program over time.
3. **Oversight and monitoring:** Recipients should:
  - focus on using local data to inform targeting strategies, to monitor the program, and to review documentation and eligibility requirements to determine if they are appropriately designed or could be streamlined to increase program access;
  - monitor HUD communications for new program guidance, review program implementation based on new guidance, and incorporate new guidance or requirements in staff training; and
  - adopt a continuous quality improvement process to support such efforts and ongoing performance improvements.

### Overall Considerations

It was not possible to identify the most effective interventions with the data collected through the HPRP APR. However, the Year 3 APRs provided numerous points for reflection that continue to be relevant to homeless assistance challenges faced by recipients and subrecipients of ESG and CoC funding going forward.

- **Research:** CoC and ESG administrators and planners should continue to explore opportunities to design research projects to identify the most effective targeting and screening approaches, programmatic interventions, and to further educate all organizations implementing rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention programs.
- **Coordinated entry and prioritization:** HPRP grantees reported that “potential clients had difficulty navigating intake through multiple points of access.” This highlights the importance of coordinated entry systems, which should prompt communities to work to

improve the effectiveness of their systems. In addition, grantees reported that “unclear application processes and protocols” presented a challenge. This implies that clarity in a community’s coordinated entry and application processes is key to targeting, outreach, and serving people most efficiently. Under HPRP, many grantees found themselves overwhelmed with demand, especially for homelessness prevention assistance. This highlights the importance of establishing clear, targeted intake procedures when providing limited homelessness prevention assistance in the community as a whole.

- **Outreach:** Often, grantees found that “outreach media used were not accessible to the target population.” At the same time, some communities found that barriers to effective outreach—especially for rapid re-housing—were addressed through building varied and numerous partnerships. These experiences can help other communities improve outreach systems to reach those who are hardest to serve.
- **Housing stability:** Grantees took a variety of approaches to services, with varying levels of intensity and requirements (e.g. participant agreements, mandatory financial literacy training, employment search requirements) to try to increase housing stability. They reported perceiving that “services provided through case management were critical to helping program participants achieve housing stability,” not just getting them into housing. Further research could help determine whether the housing stability outcomes for households with more case management, or particular case management, or other service requirements were better than those who received less assistance or less conditional assistance.
- **Housing locators:** Some grantees reported successes with establishing a staff position dedicated to building relationships with landlords, developing a housing database, and establishing a point of contact with landlords in case there were problems. Although more challenging without the funding provided by HPRP, establishing a specialized staff position for this function could be a best practice for improving the speed of helping homeless persons obtain housing, meeting landlord needs and mitigating concerns, and possibly further contributing to housing stability.
- **Case management:** “Case managers were often the principal staff that determined the appropriate levels of subsidy.” Gaining an understanding of how case managers made these decisions—and how they make them today—could inform how communities target ESG funds, and how this targeting can be done better across a community. The case managers were often responsible for providing many other services—budgeting, referrals to other programs, housing placement, housing search, etc. Though grantees and subgrantees place significant decision-making responsibility on the case managers, it is unclear whether this was optimal for program participants or the program. The flexibility certainly helped grantees adjust assistance for individual households (i.e., not over- or under-subsidizing by program design). However, further analysis would be required on training and supervision strategies to best support case management flexibility and decision-making.
- **“Right fit” of assistance:** Some grantees/subgrantees required case management and reassessment more frequently than every 3 months. Further research could help to clarify whether this helped ensure participants received the right amount, type, and duration of assistance, and not more than what was needed.

- **Partnerships:** Throughout HPRP, grantees reported that one of the most positive outcomes was the improved partnerships in the community, which they expected to be able to continue forward. Collaboration with other organizations not only helped with outreach, but also helped program participants with other challenges by connecting them to resources beyond HPRP (such as job training), which could have ultimately contributed to the household's ability to retain their housing.



## INTRODUCTION

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The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) was a 3-year effort authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). To more completely understand HPRP grantees' experience operating the program, HUD included a series of narrative questions on the program's Annual Performance Report (APR). APR responses were analyzed to learn about program design, accomplishments, coordination, and obstacles, providing useful information for recipients and subrecipients of HUD's Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Continuum of Care (CoC) programs. A preliminary analysis, undertaken in 2012 and focused on the first year of responses, is summarized below in the *Review of Year 1 Findings* section; this report expands on that initial analysis by assessing the Year 3 APR responses.

### Overview of HPRP

On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed ARRA, which included \$1.5 billion for a HUD program, which HUD renamed HPRP. This program provided 535 State, local, and territory government jurisdictions with funding to be expended over 3 years.

ARRA also included a requirement for HUD to publish a Notice implementing the program within 30 days. The *Notice of Allocations, Application Procedures, and Requirements for Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program Grantees (HPRP Notice)* established the program requirements and was published on March 19, 2009.

Under HPRP, grantees provided four main types of eligible activities:

1. financial assistance to:
  - prevent homelessness for households at-risk of literal homelessness (under the homelessness prevention component); and
  - quickly house literally homeless households (under the rapid re-housing component);<sup>3</sup>
2. housing relocation and stabilization services, also for both homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing;
3. data collection and evaluation (HMIS and comparable databases); and
4. administrative costs.

HPRP was a response to the nation's economic downturn, and HUD's decisions regarding implementation of the program reflected this. For example, HUD established the income maximum for eligibility for the program at 50 percent of Area Median Income (AMI), which was

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<sup>3</sup> When this report uses the term "literally homeless," it refers generally to persons who are sleeping in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or on the streets or other places not meant for human habitation—in other words, what is now paragraph 1 of the definition of homeless. This is consistent with HUD's use of the term in other guidance.

higher than the 30-percent AMI requirement included in the then-proposed Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009. HUD made this decision in order to reach a wider net of individuals and families—still considered “very low-income” by HUD’s standards—who were affected by the economic downturn, about to become homeless, and needed urgent, short- or medium-term help. At the same time, HUD communicated that funds should be targeted to those most likely to actually become homeless without assistance.

In addition, ARRA established strict expenditure deadlines to ensure that the funds were expended to meet the great needs in communities. Grantees signed their grant agreements in the summer of 2009 and HUD required them to expend 60 percent of their grant amount within 2 years of the date HUD signed the grant agreements and 100 percent within 3 years. Including households at a higher AMI was partially aimed to help grantees expend the funds more quickly, and partially in order to reach a wider net of individuals and families still considered “very low-income” by HUD’s standards who were affected by the economic downturn, about to become homeless, and who needed urgent, short- or medium-term help.

To collect key data on how the funds were being used and the outputs and outcomes of the program, HUD required grantees to submit APRs at the end of each program year. In addition to collecting annual data on outcomes, HUD used the three APRs to elicit narrative descriptions of various aspects of program implementation—including program accomplishments, program design and strategies, barriers and challenges, oversight and monitoring, and the transition to the newly revised ESG program.

HUD recognized that grantees faced a difficult balance between expending the funds quickly to meet the statutory deadlines and expending the funds well. HUD also recognized the challenge of targeting those most likely to become homeless, but who only needed short- or medium-term assistance. Some of the feedback from the APRs reflects this. However, information grantees provided in these responses reflects a great deal more: resilient, creative, and dedicated grantee and subgrantee staff; increased community collaboration and partnerships that would last beyond HPRP; and improved “best practices” in both homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing that can be carried forward into other programs. While HPRP was not an experiment, it was an immense opportunity for communities—and organizations and staff—to learn and improve practices around serving populations who were homeless and at risk of homelessness.

Overall, HPRP funding enabled communities to build an infrastructure to understand and deliver two relatively new interventions to prevent and resolve homelessness. During the three years of administering the program, HPRP provided assistance to over 1.3 million people experiencing a housing crisis, which speaks to the far reach of the program. While the full impact may never be known, this was a unique opportunity which had a real and positive effect in hundreds of communities across the country.

## **Purpose of Report**

By analyzing the successes and challenges grantees faced in implementing HPRP, presented to HUD in their own words, this report serves partly as a record of the program and partly to inform the design and implementation of the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program (formerly the Emergency Shelter Grants program). As part of the HEARTH Act, which amended the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the ESG program was revised to include some of the same activities that were funded under HPRP.

This report will also be useful to HUD as it develops guidance, tools, and other resources for the ESG program. ESG recipients can also learn from the HPRP grantees' experience as they plan and implement ESG-funded homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing programs in their communities, and HPRP grantees might be interested to know how their experience compared with that of other HPRP grantees. The findings specific to rapid re-housing can also inform the design and implementation of projects providing rapid re-housing funded by the CoC program.

For more detail about the history of the development of HPRP, as well as an analysis of the numerical data collected in the Year 3 APRs, see the *HPRP Year 3 Summary Report*.

## METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

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This section summarizes the research methodology and identifies the limitations of the analysis. The previously conducted analysis of the Year 1 responses is summarized in the *Review of Year 1 Findings* section. Many grantees reused their Year 1 responses when answering the questions on the Year 2 APR (the questions were exactly the same). For most questions, more than half the answers repeated the information provided in Year 1. Given the lack of new information from so many grantees, the level of effort required to undertake an analysis, and the fact that HUD did change the questions in the Year 3 APR, a determination was made to focus on the Year 3 APR responses.

### Prominent Topics Discussed in Responses

The methodology used in this report was applied using the qualitative analysis software NVivo to organize and analyze the numerous narrative responses. Grantees provided a lot of information about their programs in response to the APR questions, but they did not consistently provide the same sets of information to each question being posed. Because the questions were narratives and open-ended (as opposed to multiple choice, for instance), grantees often did not answer the specific question; rather they provided information related to several questions in one response.

The research team took the following approach. They:

- assigned responses to the most relevant question and then coded all responses using a topics and subtopics hierarchy;
- based the Year 3 topics and subtopics hierarchy on the framework for cataloguing HPRP resources and tools on the HUD Homelessness Resource Exchange website (HRE), now known as the HUD Exchange.
- identified the most prominent topics and subtopics by counting the number of grantees that made a reference to the topic or subtopic;
- counted grantees only once in calculating prevalence for each topic, regardless of whether the grantee provided multiple comments on the topic; and
- used NVivo query functions to determine themes and trends within those topics and subtopics after the most prominent topics and subtopics were identified.

### Grantee Attributes

The research team also examined grantees' responses through the lens of grantee attributes, including the type of jurisdiction, size of award, and number of subgrantees. The categories of grantee attributes and the number of grantees with each attribute are listed in Table 1.

The grantee attribute analysis determined that, when analyzed by category, responses that were 10 percentage points or more away from the norm for that question were either more or less prominent than the norm for the response for that topic. For example, the topic with the most responses under Program Accomplishments was Oversight and Monitoring, with 53 percent of grantees' answers related to this topic. When looking at grantee attributes, grantees with awards

over \$10 million mentioned this topic in 72 percent of their responses; therefore, the analysis determined that this topic is more prominent for grantees with very large awards.

**Table 1: Category and Attributes of Grantees**

Jurisdiction Type	Number	Percent	Award Size	Number <sup>a</sup>	Percent	Number of Subgrantees	Number <sup>b</sup>	Percent
State	51	10	\$500K–750K	182	34	1	134	25
Insular area	4	1	\$750K–1.5M	178	33	2	82	15
Urban County	146	27	\$1.5M–3M	77	14	3 to 5	116	22
Principal City	243	45	\$3M–10M	63	12	6 to 9	73	14
Satellite City	91	17	\$10+M	35	7	10+	59	11
-	-	-	-	-	-	Unknown	71	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>100</b>

a The number of grantees was corrected because information from the APR was incomplete for 71 grantees. Information from the HPRP Notice was used as a proxy to approximate the award size and determine the appropriate award size category for the 71 grantees.

b Information about the number of subgrantees was not available for 71 grantees.

### Limitations of the Analysis

The information provided in the HPRP APR narrative responses does not include all of the relevant details of any particular program and/or implementation.

First, as mentioned above, the APR questions were open-ended. Respondents were asked to describe “any significant accomplishments” and “elements of the HPRP program design and implementation.” This means that respondents were, at best, identifying the features they thought were interesting and/or significant. Given the local context, different respondents might have attached different levels of importance to the same program accomplishments and elements. For example, a respondent that created a coordinated entry process where none existed previously would be more likely to note that as either a significant accomplishment or an element of design and implementation than a respondent that leveraged a preexisting coordinated entry process for the HPRP program.

Second, in some cases respondents might have been familiar with the guidance on the program and related resources posted on the HRE, and might have anticipated the features that HUD would find interesting or significant and included only those elements in their responses. At the extreme, a number of responses used verbatim HPRP Notice and HPRP FAQ language to describe the design and implementation elements—such responses did not add to the understanding of the local programs.

Finally, although the narrative responses often included references to measurable program results, such as the number of people served and the percentage of program participants who became stably housed after exiting the program, this analysis did not include any analysis of quantitative program results. Rather, the themes that emerged from this analysis serve to enrich our understanding of HPRP program elements and implementation by providing context and by supplementing and expanding on information from other sources that describes and quantifies HPRP program results. The research team did use quantitative analysis to analyze qualitative information (e.g., counts of grantees who referenced a particular topic and percentages of the prevalence of that topic among a certain group of grantees) to indicate the relative strength (or deficit) of a topic and to examine observed correlations between topics and grantee attributes. However, this report does not offer a causal explanation of the relationship between certain types of interventions or grantee attributes and HPRP program accomplishments and challenges. Further, the coding process assigned responses to topics and the software allowed the data to be extracted by topic to calculate topic prevalence, but the analytic approach did not allow prevalence to be calculated at the level of themes and trends.

## REVIEW OF YEAR 1 FINDINGS

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This section reviews and analyzes the Year 1 APR responses for context and comparison to the Year 3 response analysis. On the Year 1 APR, grantees reported encountering multiple challenges to implementing HPRP, including the following:

- **Rapid start-up:** Particularly because the funding for HPRP was substantially more than any previous homeless assistance program administered by grantees, grantees were challenged to quickly disburse the resources into communities.
- **Lack of experience with program components:** HPRP provided funding for homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing, two program models with which most grantees had no experience administering. Although grantees under the Emergency Shelter Grants program had been allowed to provide homelessness prevention, many grantees had used little or none of their funding for these activities. HPRP-funded homelessness prevention also differed from previous community homelessness prevention programs by:
  1. requiring screening to determine that participants would literally become homeless “but for” the assistance;
  2. offering program participants more than one-time financial assistance; and
  3. requiring grantees to offer housing stabilization and case management assistance.

Because rapid re-housing was also a relatively new intervention for most grantees and subgrantees, successful implementation required substantial investment in program development and training.

- **Extensive implementation and oversight requirements:** Unlike other programs where grant funds were only used to pay for services and operations, HPRP provided financial assistance on behalf of the program participant for move-in, housing, utilities, and other needs (though no cash was given directly to the participant). This created the potential for fraud and required high levels of oversight by the grantees and subgrantees.

Additionally, HPRP necessitated that grantees design and administer a coherent program with program-wide policies and procedures developed by the grantee, and often implemented by multiple subgrantees. Further, HUD required grantees to collect more data and submit more involved and frequent reports than were required under the Emergency Shelter Grants program.

Two main themes emerged from the analysis of grantees’ Year 1 responses. First, grantees were confused about HUD’s policy goals for the program, and second, the size and capacity of the grantee influenced its approach to collaboration, challenges, and successes.

### Impact of Misunderstanding HUD Policy Goals

Grantees’ APR responses indicated that they were confused about the policy goals of the program. The HPRP Notice stated:

“While HUD will allow grantees the discretion to develop prevention and/or rapid re-housing programs that meet locally-defined needs, HUD also expects that these resources will be targeted and prioritized to serve households that are most in need of this temporary assistance and are most likely to achieve stable housing, whether subsidized or unsubsidized, outside of HPRP after the program concludes.”

Grantees were confused about who the program should serve and how much assistance they should receive because of the reference to households being stabilized.

**Population served by program:** In response to very high demand from households at risk of homelessness, many grantees focused on providing homelessness prevention assistance, limiting rapid re-housing assistance (assistance to households experiencing literal homelessness).<sup>4</sup> In some cases, this was a response to high demand from households at risk of homelessness. In other cases, it was because homelessness prevention was easier to administer, and sometimes it was by program design. Furthermore, confusion on HUD’s policy goals affected many grantees’ design of tools and policies for screening households at risk of homelessness. In screening at-risk households, grantees adopted requirements for participants to demonstrate their potential stability, such as requiring a job or giving preference to households with lower barriers and in need of less financial assistance to regain housing stability.

**Level of assistance provided to target population:** In addition to screening households at risk of homelessness for stability, grantees were more likely to adopt limits on the type, amount, or length of financial assistance for homelessness prevention than on rapid re-housing. Like the screening criteria, this could have had the effect of screening out households at risk of homelessness with greater need who were applying for prevention assistance.

Soon after the program launched, HUD issued additional guidance and technical assistance to clarify that its top priority was serving people with the greatest need and highest risk of literal homelessness. Some, but not all, grantees adjusted their programs to align with the new guidance.

### **Influence of Grantee Attributes on Capacity and Collaboration**

The grantee attributes of award size and number of subgrantees correlated with greater capacity, coordination, and collaboration.<sup>5</sup> Grantees with larger awards were more likely to report conducting program design and planning in collaboration with CoCs and other ARRA programs. Larger grant award size also correlated with more linkages with other programs, including mainstream public benefits serving the same target population as HPRP, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Community Services Block Grants (CSBG), Medicaid, and Social Security. Similarly, grantees with more subgrantees appeared to offer a larger menu of financial assistance and housing relocation and

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<sup>4</sup> Other reasons for the allocation of more funding to homelessness prevention than rapid re-housing, include the level of effort required to conduct outreach and provide housing location and inspection services and the need to coordinate with shelter and street outreach providers who were not convinced that rapid re-housing was an effective approach to ending homelessness.

<sup>5</sup> HPRP grant sizes ranged from a minimum of \$500,000 to a maximum of \$74 million.



stabilization services. Moreover, both larger award size and more subgrantees seemed to correlate with more evolved CoC features (including coordinated entry) and a greater variety of services available for program participants (including more options for HPRP financial assistance and other non-HPRP funded services, ranging from food resources to employment search, and legal assistance).

However, even as having more subgrantees correlated with greater diversity in assistance to program participants and extensive coordination/collaboration efforts, capacity challenges were more commonly cited by grantees with more subgrantees than by those with fewer subgrantees. This was likely due to the added coordination and management responsibilities associated with oversight and monitoring, communicating and clarifying HUD requirements, and providing training and guidance to partners. Grantees who proactively monitored their subgrantees through desk audits, site visits, training sessions, and regular meetings committed staff time and resources to ensure both compliance and continuous improvements in quality and performance. While even some larger grantees had insufficient capacity for the rigorous oversight required by HPRP, grantees with smaller awards had still fewer resources to provide comparable levels of administrative oversight and investment in coordination and collaboration.

## OVERVIEW OF YEAR 3 FINDINGS

The Year 3 APR contained seven questions about: program accomplishments; barriers to outreach and targeting for rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention; mid-course corrections; approaches to providing appropriate levels of assistance; strategies for increasing housing stability; and plans for the transition to ESG. This section highlights key findings related to the most prominent topics in the grantees' APR responses and associated grantee attributes.

### Analysis of Prominent Topics

Researchers analyzed all responses to determine, the top three topics mentioned by grantees for each question. As explained in the *Methodology and Limitations* section, topics and subtopics were based on the framework for cataloguing HPRP resources on HUD's HRE. The most prominent topics and subtopics were identified by counting the number of grantees that referenced the topic or subtopic. Once the most prominent topics and subtopics were identified, themes and trends within those were determined using NVivo query functions.

A review of the top three topics by APR question (see *Table 2: Top 3 Topics by APR Question* below) reveals the three most frequently mentioned topics across all seven questions:

1. Program design and planning (top three for three questions)
2. Financial and grants management (top three for three questions)
3. Oversight and monitoring (top three for five questions)

**Table 2: Top 3 Topics by APR Question**

APR Question	Top Three Topics by Question <i>Topics in bold are prominent and appear three or more times across the different questions</i>
Program Accomplishment	<b>Oversight and Monitoring</b> <b>Program Design and Planning</b> <b>Financial and Grants Management</b>
Barriers to Effective Outreach and Targeting for RRH	Partners Context Corrections and Coping Mechanisms
Barriers to Effective Outreach and Targeting for HP	Determining and Documenting Eligibility and Need <b>Oversight and Monitoring</b> Context
Mid-Course Corrections	Targeting and Access <b>Oversight and Monitoring</b> <b>Financial and Grants Management</b>
Appropriate Level of Assistance	<b>Program Design and Planning</b> <b>Oversight and Monitoring</b> Staff

APR Question	Top Three Topics by Question <i>Topics in bold are prominent and appear three or more times across the different questions</i>
Strategies for Housing Stability	Providing Assistance: Services <b>Program Design and Planning</b> Access
Transition to ESG	Barriers and Challenges <b>Financial and Grants Management</b> <b>Oversight and Monitoring</b>

The *Year 3 Findings by Question* section provides detailed analysis of each APR question. The overview of the prominent topics below identifies some of the themes and trends relative to the prominent topics.

### *Program Design and Planning*

Rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention were new programs for most grantees, and design and planning was a major focus for most grantees in the first year. This topic continued to be important in Year 3 as grantees made adjustments to their programs because of various factors, including additional guidance from HUD, local performance evaluation, program monitoring, national research, and the requirement to expend funding by the end of the 3-year grant term. Particularly as related to housing stability and ensuring the appropriate level of assistance, program design and planning activities were focused on the following:

- Identifying target populations based on stability:** In their attempts to ensure housing stability, some grantees targeted households they believed were most likely to succeed (e.g., households with limited needs that could be resolved with short-term/one-time assistance, households with income). Others focused on working with households that had a source of ongoing rental subsidy who needed the HPRP assistance as a bridge to housing stability.

#### *Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“Homelessness Prevention Program was targeted to households who only needed a small amount of assistance to re-establish stability after a crisis, such as unforeseen car repairs, income loss, or medical expenses. This approach allowed the City to serve more households who were at risk of becoming homeless.”

“[I]n ensuring that program participants receive the right amount of assistance for the right amount of time, it is important that households assisted through this program have the income and elements of self-sufficiency that are necessary to be successful. Housing stability is impossible without an adequate income and the ability to maintain the household long-term.”

“[L]astly, the effective use of HPRP as a bridge fund that provided security deposits and first month’s rent for clients with long term housing subsidies (e.g., VASH and Section 8) accelerated the housing stabilization process.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or HUD guidance.*

- **Structuring assistance to reflect the needs of the target population, including level of appropriate case management:** Other elements of program design related to appropriate levels of assistance included structuring the amount, length, and type of financial assistance, establishing requirements for how much grantees would require participants to contribute to their rent while in the program, and designing the case management component. Grantees structured financial assistance in various ways that they believed would promote housing stability, such as providing a declining amount of assistance over time. Some grantees required program participants to sign a program participation agreement that described the financial assistance available to the participant and the expectations regarding case management and, often, activities required of the participant to try to increase their income.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[F]or prevention clients, households were required to pay a minimum of 50 percent of the rent amount. Rapid re-housing clients were expected to pay a minimum of 30 percent of the rent amount. After the initial assistance was provided, case managers worked with clients to track income increases and subsidy decreases over time.”

“[T]he key factor that one of our agencies used was intense case management with clients that consisted of daily contact, job search for all adult residents in the home, and the use of other funds such as CSBG to remove barriers such as lack of education (GED or H.S. Diploma). The leveraging of other programs helped the agency to ensure that clients were able to maintain their living conditions after assistance subsided.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

Overall, the focus on stability, instead of assisting people with the highest needs, and the adoption of many stability-related requirements for beneficiary targeting and assistance levels is a concern, as it implies that a number of grantees might have continued to misunderstand HUD policy goals into the third year of HPRP operations. This should inform HUD’s approach to publishing additional guidance and providing training, technical assistance, and oversight and monitoring, program requirements for the ESG and CoC Programs, as the programs mature. It should also reinforce to grantees to the need to continuously evaluate their program design and requirements to ensure consistency with HUD program requirements and published guidance.

***Financial and Grants Management***

Financial and grants management was a major focus for grantees, especially with the strict expenditure deadlines and extensive administrative requirements of HPRP. Many grantees took the following steps to meet Year 2 and 3 expenditure deadlines:

- **Reallocating funds.** Some grantees reallocated funds between their subgrantees, using various approaches to making reallocation decisions, including investing in specific program or geographic areas with higher levels of demand, increasing funding to higher-performing subgrantees, and targeting funding based on HUD guidance about the priorities.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[O]ne additional lead agency was brought into the program half-way through the three year program, largely in order to meet the 60 percent expenditure deadline. This additional provider was very capable and brought its own network of local landlords into play.”

“[A] second reallocation of funds from slow-performing projects to a high performer enabled the City to increase re-housing options for homeless persons, and to fully expend HPRP funding for those in need.”

“[W]e also needed to adjust our budget to reflect the demand for prevention. Our original budget targeted resources at 55 percent for rapid re-housing services and 45 percent for prevention. We adjusted that to 30 percent rapid re-housing and 70 percent for prevention.”

“[T]he grantee was able to coordinate and shift resources where needed. More emphasis was placed on rapid re-housing. This change in planning provided more homeless placements. Our rapid re-housing placement[s] were equal to the prevention activity. We were also able to coordinate veterans placements with VASH vouchers allowing more HPRP assistance to be used by non-vets.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- **Adjusting level of assistance provided.** Grantees adjusted the caps or maximum amounts of assistance they had set for the programs.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[I]nitially, because of the limited funds and the overwhelming need in the area, [grantee] decided to put a dollar cap on the amount of assistance that clients received. The idea being this would help spread the funding around and ensure that all clients were treated equally. However, we quickly found that these restrictions did not fit with the whole idea of stimulus funds getting into the economy quickly and also the need for clients to be viewed individually and decisions needed to be made based on their financial situation as a whole.”

“HPRP [funding allocation] was revised during the spring and summer of 2010 to make HPRP sustainable to the end of the program period (June 30, 2012). This was based on public comments received during the program amendment process. HPRP was originally set-up as ‘month to month’ assistance based on ‘first-come, first-serve’ preferences. Public comments and internal staff review requested that [the program] be modified toward serving fewer clients overall, but serving them better (with clients initially qualifying as 6-month, 9-month, 12-month, and 18-month clients).”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

With regard to the transition to ESG, grantees expressed a number of concerns related to financial and grants management, in part because the amount of money available through ESG is substantially less than what was available through HPRP. Concerns were related to their ability to do the following:

- maintaining new rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention programs while at the same time continuing to fund emergency shelter, which was one of the other uses of the previous Emergency Shelter Grants Program;
- maintaining sufficient funds for case management for effective rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention;
- implementing and maintaining coordinated entry processes; and
- balancing costs of administration, data management, and case management services with the need to provide adequate financial assistance to targeted program participants within the overall lower level of ESG funding.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“...[i]nsufficient funds to cover all of the costs to meet the administrative requirements including procurement/award of subrecipients, grant administration, monitoring, use of IDIS and HMIS, and planning/reporting through [grantee].”

“[T]he challenge with limited funds will be, at the very basic level, who will receive the funds and how to monitor and gage [sic] the effectiveness of the programs in the subgrantees’ respective communities from a statewide perspective.”

“[F]inding a funding source for the coordinated point of access that was implemented using HPRP funds. Having a coordinated point of access is HEARTH-mandated requirement but using new ESG funds for an existing program is unallowable. Since HPRP funds have ended and ESG funds cannot be used, other funds must be identified in order to continue operating the coordinated point of access.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

Given the funding limitations and concerns expressed above, it is clear ESG recipients have to balance competing demands and focus on minimizing costs while maximizing performance. It is important to select subrecipients with capacity to administer the program and to provide adequate funding to ensure they have sufficient resources to balance these competing demands. Going forward, it is important for HUD to provide guidance on strategic uses of limited resources to encourage recipients to focus on activities with the highest impacts on project and system outcomes.

Under HPRP, grantees demonstrated the ability to monitor expenditure and performance and to reallocate funds between subgrantees and/or program components as warranted. As they continue to evaluate subrecipient capacity, progress, and output/outcomes under ESG, recipients should ensure that the performance metrics and indicators used are appropriate to the activity funded and implementation phase (initial funding of new subrecipients and ramp-up of program versus on-going administration by experienced subrecipients).

## *Oversight and Monitoring*

Under HPRP, grantees had significant responsibilities for oversight and monitoring, which was a prominent concern throughout the APR responses. Grantees were focused on ensuring program compliance to avoid findings when HUD monitored the program. The following subtopics were prominent:

- **Determining and documenting eligibility:** The most complicated aspect of the program was determining and documenting eligibility and need for the program, which had to be established for the household applying for assistance, plus documenting requirements related to the housing unit in which they would live. For households seeking homelessness prevention assistance, HUD required that grantees document that the household would become literally homeless “but for” the assistance. Many of the tools developed and refined by grantees were related to determining and documenting eligibility.

### *Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“A barrier encountered was establishing and verifying the “but for” clause for those potential clients. This was overcome by implementing specific detailed questionnaires and verifying information provided in detail. Screening was very detailed and time consuming for this population to confirm that those persons were in fact “but for” the assistance ... literally homeless.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- **Managing HMIS, data collection, and reporting:** HMIS was a challenge for a variety of reasons, including lack of experience with HMIS, issues with implementing data collection and reporting, and the need for ongoing improvement of data.

### *Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“HMIS continues to be a challenge for all local ESG and CoC agencies. Random data errors continue to occur in the HMIS database for many projects. Error rates will randomly spike, even if no staff has entered any data into the system. Our HMIS administrator is constantly trying to ‘put out the fires,’ but the persistent problems are demoralizing for staff and policy makers.”

“(O)ne of the greatest challenges thus far has been connecting all subgrantees with HMIS since many had not been involved with their local CoC before receiving these funds. In addition, some parts of [the state] do not have an HMIS or have an HMIS that does not function very well. [Grantee]’s approach to date has been to work with subgrantees to make the local connection and allow for HMIS costs in contract budgets so that connection is feasible.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- **Providing guidance:** To reduce the risk of noncompliance, guidance—in the form of policies and procedures, standardized tools (i.e., checklists and forms), and training and technical assistance—was an integral part of ensuring adequate oversight and monitoring.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[W]e simplif[ied] the process and trained the subrecipient so everybody would be on the same page in reference to HPRP policies. We also establish[ed] policies according to HUD regulations.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- **Transitioning to ESG with provisions for additional investments in guidance and HMIS:** In answering the question about how they were preparing for the transition to ESG, grantees cited ongoing concerns about oversight and monitoring, determining and documenting eligibility, and HMIS capacity. In response to these concerns, grantees reported that they intended to invest in guidance (by revising the HPRP tools and training to be consistent with ESG rules) and to invest in HMIS (by expanding HMIS capacity to facilitate coordinated entry, serve as a desk review and oversight and monitoring tool, and assist with referral management of ineligible households).

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[Three] challenges: 1. Documenting eligibility. 2. Ensuring those most [in] need of prevention receive assistance. 3. Compliance with reporting. How we will meet those challenges: 1. We have developed HPRP like forms for the grantees to use when documenting ESG client eligibility. Forms and templates are required by all of the grantees. 2. Continued information sharing of grantee client data regarding the characteristics/demographics of clients in shelters so grantees can recognize those attributes in households requesting prevention assistance. 3. Ensuring the HMIS data standards are being followed by grantees through on-going technical assistance.”

“[W]e are carrying many of the same practices used for HPRP into ESG, such as dedicating resources to ensure good HMIS data quality. For example, we will use the same practice of checking HMIS data upon receiving reimbursement requests before issuing payment.”

“For individuals and families whose income exceeds 30 percent, our subrecipients’ case managers will identify other service providers within the Continuum to refer the clients. This will go beyond giving the client(s) a phone number to call. The case managers will contact the referring agency and submit all appropriate paperwork for the referral through the HMIS system. Also, case managers will identify mainstream services that may be available to the client(s).”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

In summary, grantees used HPRP in different ways, to meet different needs. For example, some grantees used HPRP as a bridge, or in combination with other programs, while others used it to



try new approaches to homelessness prevention and to meet needs that they had identified in past years but lacked the necessary resources to adopt. During the 3-year program, grantees invested in tools, such as policies and procedures, and in training subgrantees and other partners in an effort to ensure the program was being delivered in compliance with HUD requirements and local program design. The program had substantial data collection and reporting requirements, and some grantees used funds to invest in their HMIS to meet these requirements, improve data quality, and obtain data for program and system monitoring. The investment in tools, training, and technical assistance is consistent with other findings in this analysis indicating that many grantees developed and refined targeting tools to reach specific populations and levels of need as a result of increased policy guidance from HUD and declining resources toward the end of the program.

Although HUD clarified that grantees should expend funds on persons experiencing homelessness who were actually sleeping in emergency shelters and on the streets in order to end homelessness in communities, many grantees continued to focus on homelessness prevention and stability. However, from the discussion under program design and planning activities, the fact that many grantees continued to emphasize stability requirements suggests that grantees might have misunderstood HUD's clarifications. This, in turn, implies that the tools, forms, and checklists that grantees created codified targeting strategies that were, in some cases, contrary to HUD's intentions.

### **Analysis of Grantee Attributes**

Researchers analyzed the responses by grantee attributes (type of jurisdiction, size of the HPRP award, and number of subgrantees). To identify prominence of topics by grantee attribute, the prevalence of a topic was calculated for each category within the grantee attributes (see *Table 1: Category and Attributes of Grantees*). As explained in the *Methodology and Limitations* section, prevalence by category was compared against the norm (i.e., the prevalence across all grantee responses) and a deviation of more than 10 percentage points from the norm established the topic as either more or less prevalent for the category under analysis.

There were a few patterns in the ways different types of grantees responded. Grantees with larger HPRP awards, more subgrantees, and State grantees were more likely to respond to APR questions with a discussion of oversight and monitoring, and financial and grants management. On the question about planning for the transition to ESG, grantees with larger awards, more subgrantees, and State implementations all responded more frequently with comments about oversight and monitoring, and barriers and challenges.

Grantees from satellite cities with populations under 50,000 and smaller awards were less likely to mention design and planning and oversight and monitoring in their responses to a number of questions. These grantees, which are less likely to receive ESG funding, also were less likely to respond to the question about planning for transition to ESG. In response to the question on planning for transition to ESG, a number of grantees indicated that this question was not applicable to them because they were not ESG recipients and, therefore, were not planning for a transition to ESG. Others specified that they would look to coordinate with their State grantee for funding under the State's ESG allocation. More detail on attributes is in the next section, Year 3 Findings by Question.

## YEAR 3 FINDINGS BY QUESTION

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For each question on the Year 3 APR, this section presents the details of the top three topics in the responses to the question and any variation in prevalence of the top three topics by grantees with different attributes.

### APR Question 22–Program Accomplishments

*Please describe any significant accomplishments achieved by your program during the reporting period.*

This question elicited responses from 264 grantees. However, 38 grantees repeated, verbatim, their answers from Year 1 or Year 2. Additionally, 23 grantees described their program accomplishments in the space allotted for other questions. Therefore, all discussions of accomplishments under any of the APR narrative responses are reviewed here. The top three topics mentioned by grantees related to program accomplishments were oversight and monitoring, design and planning, and financial and grants management.

**Table 3: Prominent Program Accomplishment Topics**

Top Program Accomplishment Topics	Prevalence <sup>a</sup>
1. Oversight and monitoring	53%
2. Design and planning	48%
3. Financial and grants management	35%

<sup>a</sup> Prevalence rates do not add up to 100 percent because grantees touched on many topics in their responses. Therefore, a grantee is likely represented under multiple (or all) topics.

### *Accomplishments in Oversight and Monitoring*

In response to the question, grantees varied in the ways they used quantitative data to report the number of persons served and program outcomes.

- Data grantees used to convey accomplishments included quantitative outcomes, such as the number of people, housing status at exit, average length of stay, and returns to homelessness.
- Fewer grantees described accomplishments by citing outcome and performance metrics related to various aspects of delivering the programs (e.g., call center volume, processing times for determining eligibility) and the potential impact of HPRP on the population experiencing homelessness within the grantee’s jurisdiction.
- A few grantees mentioned client satisfaction surveys, post-assistance assessments, and participation in random trial studies related to homelessness prevention.

Interspersed in the discussion of data and numbers of persons served, some grantees made references to accomplishments related to HMIS, such as data collection, tracking and reporting, and data quality and control.

Grantees also varied in how they described successful monitoring activities.

- Most grantees cited desk and on-site, in-person monitoring reviews of subgrantee activities, including reimbursement requests.
- Some grantees initiated monitoring after spending the first year providing extensive training related to start-up. Others were responding to HUD monitoring and addressing issues identified by HUD.
- As part of the activities described under monitoring activities, grantees also often provided guidance to subgrantees by answering questions, clarifying misunderstandings uncovered during monitoring activities, and developing tools to address common issues across subgrantees.

### *Accomplishments in Program Design and Planning*

Grantees identified their success in implementing their targeting strategies by highlighting subpopulations served and the targeting strategies used to identify the appropriate subpopulations (i.e., likelihood to stabilize, greatest needs, lowest income households).

- Grantees described the subpopulations they had successfully targeted and served.

#### *Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“HPRP served 320 VASH clients during the programs term, housing more than 90 in the first 100 days of 2012”

“[O]f the domestic violence clients served by the City’s program, 100 percent were stably housed at program exit.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- In some cases, the success was attributed to their efforts to target households that were most likely to stabilize during the HPRP assistance period.

#### *Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[A] significant percentage of households assisted remained stably housed. An important part of our review process to determine who was most appropriate for services was making sure that those assisted had sufficient income and resources to maintain stable housing after our assistance ended.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- Other grantees were concerned about serving households with the greatest need, and their targeting parameters reflected this concern.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[T]he programs both targeted households with multiple barriers to maintaining permanent housing with 91% of the households reporting as stably housed at program exit.”

“The average median income for participants receiving assistance was below 30 percent, which means the City was successful in serving households with severe financial challenges.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

***Accomplishments in Financial and Grants Management***

Grantees described success in expending HPRP funds, carrying out fiscal oversight, and monitoring activities to ensure compliance with expenditure deadlines and review reimbursement requests.

- Most responses related to complete expenditure of funds within the 3-year period.
- Some grantees reflected on the specific strategies that helped them expend program funds in a timely manner, including streamlined screening and intake, developing housing databases, and creating bilingual centers to help with outreach to households with limited English proficiency.
- Grantees also discussed ramp-down activities for the program such as tracking and reconciling expenditures and finalizing monitoring using HUD webinars (e.g., *Ramping Down HPRP* and *Building the Bridge: HPRP to ESG*) and other guidance.

***Prevalence of Program Accomplishment Topics by Grantee Attributes***

Grantees with larger awards and more subgrantees more frequently mentioned successes related to each topic, particularly oversight and monitoring and financial and grants management. Smaller programs in smaller cities and with lower award amounts discussed design and planning in their response less frequently than the average. Grantees with medium award sizes of \$1.5–3 million mentioned financial and grants management as a program accomplishment with less frequency than the average grantee.

**APR Question 23a–Barriers to Effective Outreach and Targeting for Rapid Re-housing (RRH)**

***What barriers did you face with establishing effective outreach strategies and targeting rapid re-housing assistance for persons who were literally homeless? Were you able to overcome these and, if so, in what ways?***

This question elicited responses from 361 grantees. Additionally, three grantees described their barriers to effective RRH outreach strategies and targeting in the space allotted for other questions. As such, all discussions of barriers to effective RRH outreach strategies and targeting

under any of the APR narrative responses are reviewed here. The top topics identified in the responses to barriers to RRH were partners, context, and corrections and coping mechanisms.

**Table 4: Prominent Barriers to Outreach and Targeting for RRH Topics**

Top Barriers to Outreach and Targeting for RRH Topics	Prevalence
1. Partners	44%
2. Context	43%
3. Corrections and coping mechanisms	29%

***Addressing RRH Barriers to Outreach and Targeting Through Partnerships***

Among grantees who responded to this question, 44 percent discussed the importance of partnerships. For the most part, responses indicated that partners helped them to overcome barriers in the implementation of RRH through the partners’ experience and networks. Partners were instrumental for outreach and targeting for RRH.

Grantees who reported success in addressing RRH barriers through partnerships did some or all of the following:

- Worked with a wide array of community partners, including the CoC, municipalities, faith-based entities, law enforcement officials, and other nontraditional partners.

***Excerpts from APR narrative question responses***

“[S]ince there are no shelters in the communities we serve...it was important that we kept in close contact with groups such as the police department and Board of Health to make sure they knew to contact us if they encountered someone living on the street.”

***Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.***

- Established a wide network by awarding funds to:
  - well-connected subgrantees (subgrantees with preexisting ties to outreach programs, emergency shelters, and homeless service providers);
  - multiple subgrantees (to take advantage of as many partner connections and networks as possible); and
  - qualified subgrantees with prior experience running similar programs (which in some cases were able to fold HPRP into existing programs).
- Provided their partners with resources to facilitate screening and referral. While some grantees mentioned using 211 screening or hotlines, there were more references to working directly with partners to screen and refer potential program participants.
  - In some cases, subgrantees contracted with shelters to participate in screening people for assistance.

- In other cases, subgrantees placed their staff on-site with shelter and outreach intake staff and transitional housing case managers to assess people for HPRP assistance.

Grantees who reported difficulty effectively conducting outreach and targeting for rapid re-housing described some of the barriers they encountered, including:

- potential program participants were unaware of the program;
- potential program participants had difficulty navigating intake through multiple points of access;
- support agencies and staff were unaware of the availability of HPRP and were not referring potential program participants; and
- agencies did not agree that rapid re-housing was an appropriate exit from homelessness or otherwise resisted participation.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[F]or the smaller shelters that serve other homeless households, including domestic violence and runaway and homeless youth, the process to refer households to rapid rehousing was not as efficient both because there were two agencies involved and because the providers for the populations did not always agree that rapid rehousing was an appropriate exit strategy. The HPRP partners have continued to educate all providers in the local Continuum about rapid rehousing.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

Some grantees reported that because HPRP staff were too busy to conduct outreach and promote the availability of HPRP assistance directly, they advertised the program through presentations at meetings and events organized by partners. To address reluctance to refer program participants, grantees used outreach, training, and education in partnership with the CoC.

*Context for Reported Barriers to Outreach and Targeting for RRH*

Researchers found context in responses related to environmental factors that shape the service delivery experience and influence outcomes. In regards to barriers to rapid re-housing outreach and targeting, grantees’ responses indicated the following environmental factors:

- Potentially eligible households were unaware of the program and outreach media used (e.g., TV, internet, local public meetings) was not accessible to the target population.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[S]elf referral through the phone and web site was less effective because the homeless individuals had limited access to phones in order for us to return phone call.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- They had difficulty maintaining engagement with households during the process of determining eligibility because of constant changes in the household’s contact information.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[T]he barriers the program faced with outreach was that people rarely wanted to enter a homeless shelter, so they often stayed with friends or in a car. Since they have no address or money, their phones would often get cut off, and the case managers would have no way of contacting them.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

As mentioned in the discussion related to *Addressing RRH Barriers to Outreach and Targeting Through Partnerships*, partners were helpful for overcoming some of the context-related issues because of their experience serving the target populations and administering similar programs. Some partners also had coordinated entry systems in place and pre-established referral networks and connections with other providers. However, some grantees could not easily overcome context issues:

- partners had problems with start-up, including unclear HPRP application processes and protocols, and had doubts about the readiness of program participants for referral to rapid re-housing; and
- lack of shelters, in some geographic areas, meant there was no existing point of contact to identify and engage the target population.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“The barriers for outreach strategies in the more rural areas was due to the fact that there is not visible homelessness on the streets, homeless prevention funding was more in demand for the rural areas.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

Finally, grantees indicated that the housing and economic context in their jurisdiction affected rapid re-housing implementation, including:

- affordable housing, including the lack of available units in public housing agency projects;
- the condition of the available housing; and
- employment opportunities for rapid re-housing participants was perceived to be a barrier for identifying households that were most likely to be stably housed by the end of the assistance period.

## ***Corrections and Coping Mechanisms to Address Rapid Re-housing Barriers to Outreach and Targeting***

Corrections and coping mechanisms (i.e., strategies to address the barriers and challenges encountered) included working with existing and new partners to increase outreach and coordination through training, contractual relationships, and community collaborations.

- Some grantees sought to address the affordable housing challenges in their environment in various ways, including creating relationships with landlords, establishing a point of contact with landlords in case there were problems, developing a housing database, and creating a dedicated staff person for housing search and placement services.

### ***Excerpts from APR narrative question responses***

“[E]stablishing effective relationships with landlords as the program progresses assisted in favorable outcomes...”

“[W]e used the HPRP grant dollars to establish an online housing database for our area that includes a 24-hour bilingual call center.”

***Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.***

- To address challenges associated with the economy, many grantees collaborated with other sources of funding and offered workforce development programs.

### ***Excerpts from APR narrative question responses***

“[M]any persons who were literally homeless did not possess marketable job skills and thus it was difficult for them to find employment in this struggling economy. By partnering with local job training programs and Workforce ... many of these persons received job training which enabled them to find employment.”

***Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.***

Some grantees also described making changes to the level of services provided, such as increasing case management to reduce returns to homelessness, having more intensive case management and home-based services, and working more closely with program participants. Some grantees reported that they had insufficient staffing to meet the documentation requirements of the program, so they had to add staff, adjust staff responsibilities, or identify other resources for increasing services available to participants.

## ***Prevalence of Barriers to Outreach and Targeting for RRH Topics by Grantee Attributes***

The topic of partners was neither more prevalent nor less prevalent than the average for any of the attribute categories, implying that use of partnerships to facilitate RRH was consistent across all types of grantees. Otherwise, some larger grantees—in terms of the size of the award, the number of subgrantees, or their position as a State grantee overseeing a broad implementation of the program—had relatively more comments than average about the context of the program or the corrections and coping mechanisms they used to improve their outreach and targeting.



## APR Question 23b–Barriers to Effective Outreach and Targeting for Homelessness Prevention (HP)

*What barriers did you face with establishing effective outreach strategies and targeting homelessness prevention assistance for persons who “but for” the assistance would have become literally homeless? Were you able to overcome these barriers and, if so, in what ways?*

This question elicited responses from 360 grantees. Because one grantee described its barriers to effective homelessness prevention (HP) outreach strategies and targeting in the space allotted for another question, all discussions of barriers to effective HP outreach strategies and targeting under any of the APR narrative responses are reviewed here. The top topics identified in the responses to barriers to homelessness prevention were determining and documenting eligibility and need, oversight and monitoring, and context.

**Table 5: Prominent Barriers to Outreach and Targeting for HP Topics**

Top Barriers to Outreach and Targeting for HP Topics	Prevalence
1. Determining and documenting eligibility and need	36%
2. Oversight and monitoring	34%
3. Context	33%

### *Barriers to Determining and Documenting HP Eligibility and Need*

Thirty-six percent of grantees indicated that they experienced barriers to determining and documenting eligibility and need. In particular, grantees reported difficulty obtaining the required documentation, operationalizing the “but for” requirement, understanding stability as an eligibility requirement, and understanding guidance related to households living in motels or doubled-up.

- In some cases staff had to assist program participants in obtaining all the necessary documentation to qualify, especially in cases where the household was overwhelmed by the stress of potentially losing housing on top of job loss or other life stressors.
- Homelessness prevention assistance under HPRP required that grantees determine that applicant households would become literally homeless “but for” the HPRP assistance. Many grantees reported difficulty with this requirement due to these challenges:
  - Predicting who would become literally homeless.

#### **Excerpts from APR narrative question responses**

“[I]t is extremely difficult to predict whether someone will actually become homeless (living in shelter or street).”

“[P]eople presented with 3 days notice to pay or quit, but there was no hard evidence that they had no other resources. To overcome this obstacle many of the subgrantees required a full legal eviction before they would pay homelessness prevention.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- Obtaining documentation to verify that the applicant’s household was in danger of losing its current housing.

**Excerpts from APR narrative question responses**

“[M]any landlords quickly realized that providing a 3-day notice to a client would meet HPRP program requirements for payment, but they would probably not have actually followed through with the eviction proceedings immediately.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

These difficulties led many grantees and subgrantees to rely on eviction, even though research has not shown that eviction alone is a predictor of literal homelessness and HUD-issued guidance had discouraged grantees from using eviction as sufficient documentation that the household was eligible.<sup>6</sup>

- There was initial confusion about HUD’s goal for the program, because the HPRP Notice contained language about housing stability that grantees interpreted as meaning they should serve households with the greatest likelihood of stability. Grantees struggled to reconcile this understanding with the “but for” requirement.

**Excerpts from APR narrative question responses**

“[I]dentifying those [who]...would be homeless ‘but for’ the assistance proved difficult. The program used a common assessment process to identify barriers to maintaining housing to determine who would become homeless but for the assistance, and who would likely remain in stable housing after the assistance was provided. The dilemma was that if the program targeted those who clearly would become homeless but for the assistance, there was a greater chance that they would not be in a better position to maintain their housing after the homeless[ness] prevention assistance was provided.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

Some grantees made targeting decisions that were contrary to the HUD priority of targeting those in greatest need and instead targeted the following:

- households living in subsidized housing that received 14-day notices to vacate;

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<sup>6</sup> D. H. Friedman, J. Raymond, K. Puhala, T. Meschede, J. Tripp, M. Kala. “Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Housing Stability: A Comparative Analysis,” *Understanding Boston*. The Boston Foundation. A joint publication with The Center for Social Policy, McCormack Graduate School at University of Massachusetts Boston, 2007.

M. Shinn and J. Baumohl, “Rethinking the Prevention of Homelessness,” 2008. Retrieved on November 21, 2008, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/progsys/homeless/symposium/13-Preven.HTM>.

- households experiencing a decrease in income or increase in expenses but with strong potential to maintain stability with a small amount of assistance; and
- households that scored in the middle of their assessment and were unlikely to preserve housing without assistance but likely to maintain housing with a brief period of support.
- A number of grantees were uncertain about how to qualify individuals or families living in motels or doubled-up. In some cases, these grantees deemed such applicants categorically ineligible for assistance.

Due to the challenges in determining that an applicant would be literally homeless “but for” the assistance, some subgrantees asked grantees to make exceptions to assessment models and guidance. This prompted additional guidance from grantees to subgrantees, including new policies and procedures and greater overall monitoring related to homelessness prevention outreach and targeting.

### ***Addressing HP Barriers to Outreach and Targeting Through Oversight and Monitoring***

Thirty-four percent of grantees described their efforts to provide guidance to address the barriers related to effective homelessness prevention outreach and targeting. Given the confusion around determining and documenting “but for,” as described above, many grantees developed guidance and clarification related to this requirement. In addition to creating tools, grantees also indicated that they created new policies and procedures, approval processes, and established review boards for determining which households were approved for assistance.

#### ***Excerpts from APR narrative question responses***

“[I]n order to make sure clients seeking homelessness prevention assistance would be literally homeless, an extensive ‘but for’ form was created...that contained other possible housing destinations, the current housing status, and current length of stay, alternative financial resources available, and employment and self-sufficiency referrals.”

***Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.***

Another set of tools related to managing high demand for services (a theme described in detail below under *Context for Reported Barriers to Outreach and Targeting for HP*) are also described in grantee responses. Screening tools and updated policies and procedures were formulated to help subgrantees filter through the high demand for assistance. Grantees’ responses indicate that these tools were recalibrated and refined with continued use as new approaches to targeting were adopted in an effort to respond to high demand.

#### ***Excerpts from APR narrative question responses***

“[P]roviders developed pre-screening forms and trained referring agencies on how to properly pre-screen clients.”

***Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.***

### *Context for Reported Barriers to Outreach and Targeting for HP*

Thirty-three percent of grantees described the context in their communities that made effective HP outreach and targeting difficult. Grantees reported that demand for homelessness prevention assistance was very high because of the economic conditions in communities. They mentioned unemployment, lack of job opportunities, and foreclosures in their responses.

#### *Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[H]igh unemployment and an overwhelming need in the communities proved to be barriers.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

For some grantees, the high demand was an indication that there were no barriers to accessing the program.

#### *Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“We did not experience a problem in this area. We were flooded with potential applicants.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

On the other hand, a few grantees noted that participants had trouble navigating the entry points, finding the process to be disorganized, cumbersome, and paperwork-intensive.

#### *Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“One major challenge was the overwhelming publicity surrounding the implementation of HPRP while program designs and eligibility criteria were still being established, which led to considerable frustration and confusion on all sides. Rather than allowing for strategic outreach, the program was immediately flooded with dozens of inquires a day, most from ineligible households, making it difficult for the individuals we were targeting to get through.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

Grantees responded to the high demand in various ways, including the following:

- Some grantees adopted a requirement for potential participants to access other assistance first, in compliance with the “but for” requirement.
- Some created screening systems and targeting assistance. Some used screening systems through community resources such as 211 to screen out households that were unlikely to qualify before they expended resources on a face-to-face assessment appointment. Such screening resources could also refer the households to other resources.
- Some tightened eligibility criteria. The measures adopted sometimes were used to focus program attention on households facing the greatest obstacles. For example, responses indicate that lowering the income requirements to serve households below the HPRP limit of 50 percent AMI helped grantees prioritize assistance to those most in need.

However, in other cases, the pressure to serve as many people as possible, in conjunction with misunderstanding housing stability or sustainability as a required outcome, resulted in targeting measures that worked against serving households facing the greatest obstacles. One example of this kind of targeting is requiring that the household have a “reasonable” prospect of being able to assume payment of the rent within a “reasonable time period.”

***Prevalence of Barriers to Outreach and Targeting for HP Topics by Grantee Attributes***

The prevalence, by attribute categories, of the topic of context did not vary significantly, implying that the high demand for homelessness prevention was consistent across all types of grantees. Otherwise, the largest grantees, both in terms of the size of the award (\$10+ million) or their position as a State grantee overseeing a broad implementation of the program, had more responses focused on determining and documenting eligibility and need and about oversight and monitoring than the average across all responses.

**APR Question 23c–Mid-Course Corrections**

***What changes were made to your HPRP program(s) during the past three years (e.g., changes in outreach and targeting, changes in eligibility restrictions imposed locally, changes in providers based on performance, etc.) and why?***

This question elicited responses from 362 grantees. Because two grantees described the changes that they made to their program in the space allotted for other questions, all discussions related to changes made under any of the APR narrative responses are reviewed here. The top topics were targeting; access; oversight and monitoring; and financial and grants management. Eighty percent of the targeting and access responses overlap so the two topics have been combined and treated as a single topic in the discussion below.

**Table 6: Prominent Mid-Course Corrections Topics**

<b>Top Mid-course Corrections Topics</b>	<b>Prevalence</b>
1. Targeting	52%
2. Access	51%
3. Oversight and monitoring	49%
4. Financial and grants management	47%

***Mid-Course Corrections to Address Targeting and Access Issues***

Grantees made different mid-course corrections to address access and targeting issues for homelessness prevention than they did to address those issues for rapid re-housing.

- For homelessness prevention, mid-course corrections included the following:
  - screening in response to high demand;
  - targeting to prioritize eligible participants; and

- using tools for appropriately assessing the “but for” requirement—some recalibrated these tools to appropriately target program participants with the greatest need instead of program participants most likely to stabilize once they had made the decision to shift the program focus in that direction.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[T]hroughout the program, ...[the grantee] continued to refine its extensive assessment tool, which was developed to help target and delineate what resources best met the household’s needs.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- For rapid re-housing programs, mid-course corrections included:
  - increasing outreach for the program by securing the participation of local providers or establishing referral networks, and educating organizations about rapid re-housing to address reluctance to participate in the program;
  - assigning staff to locate affordable housing and cultivating relationships with landlords to increase affordable housing options; and
  - clarifying the applicability of the homeless definition because their subrecipients misunderstood RRH to be applicable to all households who needed to move into new/affordable units with the assistance of the program.

*Oversight and Monitoring to Implement Mid-Course Corrections*

About half the grantees who provided information on mid-course corrections indicated that they made changes to their HPRP implementation based on issues and concerns identified through monitoring and oversight activities. Additionally, once issues were uncovered, grantees used tools, training, and technical assistance to facilitate implementation of the mid-course correction:

- Some grantees created and revised policies and procedures and program manuals as needed and disseminated the information through training and technical assistance, both in general sessions and as part of monitoring activities;
- Some grantees developed and distributed new and revised tools, including forms, checklists, and worksheets; and
- A few grantees developed participant agreements to clarify expectations and manage participant engagement.

Particular areas of focus for tools were screening and assessment of eligibility and need, assessment of barriers to housing and income, and budgeting tools. With regards to screening and assessment of eligibility and need, some grantees were aware of the clarifications from HUD and used these tools to convey the latest guidance to their subgrantees, while others continued to use tools to codify their misunderstanding and use of stability as an eligibility requirement.

- A number of grantees mentioned receiving clarifications from HUD related to stability and sustainability, and reported making corresponding program adjustments. For example, some changed tools to stop screening out potential program participants without income or with higher barriers.

In many cases, communities retained the housing stability requirement either because they did not recognize HUD had issued the clarifying guidance or because they found screening for and promoting stability to be useful in emphasizing outcomes for participants. As part of the effort to promote stability, grantees reported having participants agree, for example, to apply for a minimum number of jobs, affordable housing opportunities, mainstream assistance, and workforce training programs in return for continued assistance. Finally, case managers, including intake staff, were the main users of the tools and recipients of the training and technical assistance.

- A number of responses indicate that once the initial start-up trainings were conducted and case managers became more comfortable with documentation requirements, programs operated smoothly and expenditures accelerated.
- Other grantees indicated that staff turnover among case managers led to an ongoing need to provide training and technical assistance.

#### *Mid-Course Corrections in Financial and Grants Management, Themes and Trends*

By Year 3, APR grantees had experienced two expenditure deadlines for the program. Most of the responses regarding financial and grants management mid-course corrections were related to these deadlines. To ensure that the funds were expended by the deadlines, grantees implemented several types of reallocation approaches, including the following:

- Reallocation based on demand for assistance:
  - from rapid re-housing programs to homelessness prevention; and
  - from rural programs to urban programs (for states and counties).
- Reallocation based on capacity:
  - from non-performing or slow-performing subgrantees to higher-performing subgrantees;
  - from subgrantees that relied on funding advances to subgrantees operating on a reimbursement model; and
  - addition of new subgrantees to support activities in high-need areas or target populations and increased outreach.
- Reallocation based on updated HUD guidance and clarification:
  - targeted higher-need populations that needed higher levels of assistance; and
  - some grantees reallocated funds from homelessness prevention to rapid re-housing to target those most in need.

### *Prevalence of Mid-Course Correction Topics by Grantee Attributes*

The analysis of the responses to the top topics by grantee attributes found that mid-size and large grantees based on several measures—including size of award, number of subgrantees, and State jurisdiction type—were more likely to mention all three top topics for this question. Smaller grantees, based on population of the jurisdiction and size of award, were less likely to include responses about oversight and monitoring.

### **APR Question 23d—Appropriate Level of Assistance**

*What approach(es) did you use to ensure that program participants received the right amount of assistance for the right amount of time?*

This question elicited responses from 359 grantees. The top topics in the responses were design and planning, oversight and monitoring, and staff.

**Table 7: Prominent Appropriate Level of Assistance Topics**

<b>Top Appropriate Level of Assistance Topics</b>	<b>Prevalence</b>
1. Design and planning	37%
2. Oversight and monitoring	33%
3. Staff	24%

### *Program Design and Planning for Appropriate Level of Assistance*

Thirty-seven percent of grantees discussed their planning and design efforts to ensure that participants received the right amount of assistance over the length of time needed to stabilize their housing. These included locally adopted parameters developed by subgrantees or by the grantee working in conjunction with its area CoC(s) related to the perceived ability of the household to sustain housing, the limits on the amount and length of assistance provided, and the participation requirements for case management services.

- Grantees screened out households they did not judge as likely to succeed. Because of the limited time and funding remaining in the third year of the program, grantees wanted program participants to demonstrate a likelihood of stabilizing within the available time frame. Examples of program changes related to sustainability include the following:
  - Some grantees stopped accepting individuals with no income when a number of such individuals were discharged after 18 months of assistance with no significant changes to their income and with apparent continued vulnerability to homelessness.
  - Some grantees provided bridge funding for security deposits and move-in assistance for targeted populations, including veterans, seniors, individuals or families with disabilities, and for those receiving on-going rental assistance from another source.
  - Some grantees implemented requirements to help households increase their income or to access mainstream housing providers for long-term affordability. For example, some required program participants who had no income to participate in activities to increase their self-sufficiency, such as job search and application or participation in



workforce development programs. Other grantees required program participants to apply to mainstream housing providers and resources.

- HUD’s program requirements allowed grantees to determine maximum assistance amounts or to cap amount, length, or types of assistance provided for both homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing. HUD also allowed grantees to establish requirements for program participant contributions to their housing costs.
  - Some grantees that had set low levels of maximum assistance explicitly stated that their intent was to serve as many participants as possible.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“Small amount of funding available so participants had to demonstrate a likelihood of stabilizing within the available timeframe”

“Approach to assist as many clients as possible by focusing on deposit and three months of rent.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- Other grantees allowed higher levels of assistance for program participants with greater risks or needs.
- Grantees took different approaches to requiring participant contributions to their housing costs. These included requiring participants to contribute a portion of their income for rent, ranging from 30 percent to 60 percent, or requiring participants to pay an increasing portion of the rent, with monthly, quarterly, or semiannual increases.
- In addition to describing the financial assistance elements designed to provide appropriate levels of assistance, some grantees mentioned case management elements.
  - Local program designs usually included a requirement that an individualized housing stability or self-sufficiency plan be developed.
  - Some grantees required program participants to have regular check-ins with case managers that were scheduled more frequently than required by HUD, for example monthly instead of once every 3 months.
  - During case management appointments, some programs required that case managers evaluate the program participant’s adherence to case plans or review income and expenses to evaluate the participant’s ability to assume a larger share of the rent.
  - Some programs required that participants provide documentation that they had submitted applications for employment or for mainstream resources and affordable housing programs, or had participated in workforce development programs.
  - Some programs required that full eligibility evaluations be conducted (including review of income and expenses) at monthly case management meetings.

- Some programs provided continued follow-up after the program participant exited the program.

### ***Oversight and Monitoring for Appropriate Level of Assistance***

Thirty-three percent of grantees described their efforts to provide oversight and guidance, including providing subgrantees with tools and technical assistance to help with determining and documenting eligibility and need. Tools created by grantees themselves, sometimes working in partnership with CoCs, included policies, procedures, and guidelines for appropriate financial assistance. In some cases, HMIS data was used in the eligibility determination and documentation process and to manage and follow-up on referrals.

Some of the different types of forms created to help case managers work with program participants included the following:

- eligibility assessments, including assessments to determine if the households would be literally homeless “but for” prevention assistance;
- housing barriers and needs assessments;
- sustainability assessments;
- housing stability planning, including templates for developing action plans and a housing assistance matrix;
- budget tools to assess household income and expenditures and to establish and track the household budget;
- financial assistance need forms to help predict the time frame for the HPRP assistance, determine the level of need, and calculate rent subsidies; and
- referral tools to assess all potential sources of assistance available in the county.

Grantees conducted both in-person and conference call trainings for case management staff on how to use these tools. Some grantees also used collaborative monthly meetings to discuss specific client files and cases and perform multi-level reviews, team consults for deep subsidies, and pre-approval of eligibility determinations.

### ***Role of Staff in Determining Appropriate Level of Assistance***

Grantees viewed the program staff (specifically, case managers – also referred to as resource specialists) as critical to ensuring that participants received the appropriate resources for the appropriate periods of time. In particular, case managers were responsible for determining appropriate levels of subsidy and ensuring compliance with local requirements. Case managers were also responsible for providing financial management services, such as budgeting, referrals and follow-up on employment opportunities, and sometimes housing placement services.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“Essentially, the HPRP program was a very hands-on financial assistance program that required rigorous case management.”

“A Case Manager reviewed each client's unique situation and a plan was put into place. During case management, clients would turn in documentation verifying income and showing need.... Case Managers also required clients to create and maintain a monthly budget. The budgets were then reviewed and tracked for progress and program compliance.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

As the principal staff in determining appropriate levels of subsidy, case managers were the focus of local guidance and support for carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Some grantees also described the role of supervisors in approvals or certifications; others described review teams or monitoring staff involved in reviewing case files and case management.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“Supervisors, directors, referral coordinator, and program managers reviewed case records...developed formal assessment process, review[ed] potential candidates during interdisciplinary case reviews[. C]ase managers were required to provide updates whenever a client’s circumstance changes, extensive review for additional assistance beyond three months due to extenuating circumstances, sticking to HUD’s recertification process.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

*Prevalence of Appropriate Level of Assistance Topics by Grantee Attributes*

There was no clear trend by grantee attribute in the responses related to appropriate levels of assistance. Responses related to design and planning were less prevalent than the average for satellite cities but more prevalent than the norm for grantees with a mid-level number of subgrantees (6–9 subgrantees). Responses related to staff were less prevalent than the norm for grantees with large awards.

**APR Question 23e–Strategies for Housing Stability**

*What strategies did you use that were most effective at increasing housing stability?*

This question elicited responses from 350 grantees. The top three topics in the responses were providing services, design and planning, and access.

**Table 8: Prominent Strategies for Housing Stability Topics**

<b>Top Strategies for Housing Stability Topics</b>	<b>Prevalence</b>
1. Providing services	55%
2. Design and planning	29%
3. Access	26%

### *Providing Services that Promote Housing Stability*

Many grantees reported that services provided through case management were critical to helping program participants achieve housing stability. Some of the aspects of case management that were mentioned include the following:

- client-centered planning with individualized self-sufficiency or housing stability plans identifying impediments to housing, including budgeting and financial accountability benchmarks;
- frequent follow-up (monthly or weekly versus the 3-month follow-up required by the HPRP requirements for re-certification), particularly for rapid re-housing program participants;
- intensive and extended case management, including home visits to build trust, rapport, and support tenancy before program exit; and
- referrals to job and employment programs, financial management and budgeting services, as well as other existing mainstream programs.

#### *Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“The most effective strategies for increasing housing stability were the rigorous case management requirements, which included home visits...[and] matching them to come up with an individual service plan.”

“Subrecipients reported that active case management, budgeting, and re-employment services proved to be the most effective.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

### *Program Design and Planning to Promote Housing Stability*

Grantees described several aspects of program design that were intended to increase housing stability, including requiring a participant agreement, structuring financial assistance to promote housing stability, targeting households more likely to become stable, and expanding the role of case management.

- Participation agreements were a common local requirement for the program; the requirements varied but were mainly focused on individualized housing stabilization plans and the rental responsibilities of program participants.
  - Some plans also included household budget plans, mandatory attendance at financial literacy class, and employment search requirements (e.g., look for five jobs per week).
  - Some grantees instituted mandatory savings plans.
  - Grantees, attempting to ensure that households would be able to sustain the housing, created many types of income requirements, including requiring some earned income and requiring income sufficient to support housing costs.

- The amount and structure of the financial assistance provided to program participants was intended to promote housing stability in various ways. Assistance structuring included providing only a percentage of the rent, providing a declining rental subsidy to allow the household time to increase its income, and limiting housing costs to a percentage of participant’s income (i.e., 30 percent or 50 percent of income for rent).
- Some grantees also used targeting to select participants they viewed as most likely to succeed, including those already living in affordable housing communities or those with needs that could be resolved with short-term, one-time assistance.
  - Some targeting was aimed at participants that had experienced job loss but were able to regain employment or households that had experienced hardships related to medical costs or loss of transportation.
  - Some grantees also used income requirements (e.g., minimum income of \$500 per month) to select households likely to be stably housed when they exited the program.
- Some responses attributed case management as the main program element responsible for ensuring housing stability, particularly case management with intensive follow-up, often on a more-frequent basis than HUD required. Some grantees made on-going financial assistance contingent upon attendance at the follow-up meetings. Programs used various tools to maintain focus on housing stability, including Excel tools to automate housing stabilization plans, standardized reassessment tools, and budget worksheets.

***Promoting Housing Stability Through Access to Other Resources***

The main themes related to access included the availability of affordable housing and ensuring program participant access to services, including assistance obtaining employment, cash assistance, and mainstream services. Case managers were identified as critical to connecting program participants to housing and services.

***Excerpts from APR narrative question responses***

“[Case managers] connect clients with affordable housing...working closely with landlords”

“[Case managers] provided necessary referrals to mainstream services and community supports including but not limited to increased income sources, employment options, utility programs, food pantry, etc.”

***Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.***

Some grantees associated access to other programs and services with success and as a result adopted participation agreements that required follow-up and continued participation in other programs and services.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“The most successful applicants were those that utilized the wrap around services offered to them to sustain their housing situation. Employment counseling, applications for SNAP and child care assistance, referrals to drug/alcohol counseling, participation in classes offered by Voc Rehab, Family Resources (parenting classes, anger management, etc.)”

“[Program] required evidence that they had followed up on the referrals.... Those participants who did not follow through, did not keep appointments and did not show any progress in correcting the deficiencies that led to their instable housing, were discontinued from the program.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

*Prevalence of Housing Stability Topics by Grantee Attributes*

The analysis by grantee attributes did not identify any clear patterns in the responses to the housing stability question. Providing services appeared more often in responses from grantees with only two subgrantees. Design and planning was a more prevalent topic for grantees with an award of \$3–10 million. Access was a less prevalent topic for state grantees.

**APR Question 23f–Transition to ESG**

*How will your HPRP program transition to ESG? What will be the greatest 1–3 challenges and what is your approach to resolving them?*

The Year 3 APR was completed after grantees had spent all the HPRP funding and after the ESG Interim Rule was released. Grantees had some time to plan for how they would implement ESG—with lower levels of funding and lower income limits for participant eligibility. This question elicited 362 responses; the top topics that emerged were barriers and challenges, financial and grants management, and oversight and monitoring.

**Table 9: Prominent Transition to ESG Topics**

<b>Top Transition to ESG Topics</b>	<b>Prevalence</b>
1. Barriers and challenges	48%
2. Financial and grants management	43%
3. Oversight and monitoring	41%

*Barriers and Challenges in the Transition to ESG, Themes and Trends*

Almost half of the grantees responding to this question discussed various barriers and challenges in the transition from HPRP to ESG. In particular, the lower income limits required for ESG concerned grantees. HPRP had income limits up to 50 percent AMI while ESG is below 30 percent.

- Anticipated challenges to implementing ESG included a lack of housing affordable to households with incomes below 30 percent AMI and a lack of employment opportunities.

In particular, there was concern about fewer landlords being willing to work with these households due to their lack of income or employment opportunities.

- Grantees also expected that the lower income households would need higher levels of assistance to stabilize, including more case management and services as well as more financial assistance.

Additionally, HPRP was an administratively complex program with significant documentation requirements for households as well as extensive reporting requirements using data from HMIS. Many grantees found these requirements onerous and were disappointed to see the requirements carried forward into the ESG program.

### *Financial and Grants Management in the Transition to ESG, Themes and Trends*

Substantially less money is available through ESG than was available through HPRP, and the threshold for a metropolitan city or urban county to receive funds is higher under ESG. This has resulted in the following issues:

- Some HPRP grantees indicated they would not receive direct ESG funding and would have to apply to their State government for a portion of the ESG funding the State will receive on their behalf.
- Grantees with smaller direct allocations were concerned about stretching available funds across competing needs.
  - Some grantees expressed concern about balancing adequate funding for their new rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention programs while continuing to support shelters historically supported by the former Emergency Shelter Grants Program (the primary Federal funding source for shelters).
  - Some grantees indicated that ESG funding might not be sufficient to maintain the quality of case management necessary for rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention programs or to maintain coordinated entry systems that had been developed under HPRP.
  - Other funding concerns expressed were about balancing funding for administration, data management, and case management services versus providing financial assistance to program participants.

### *Oversight and Monitoring in the Transition to ESG, Themes and Trends*

Almost half the grantees that responded to this question anticipated that some oversight and monitoring changes that would have to be made in transitioning their HPRP programs to ESG, including revising program tools, updating targeting parameters to reflect HUD guidance, and investing in HMIS capacity.

- Grantees discussed the need to update program tools, such as policies and procedures and standardized forms, particularly those related to eligibility assessment and the intake process. Other examples of tools requiring revision include updating: desk manuals; screening matrices for 211 hotlines; and assessment and sustainability matrices for intake staff determining eligibility and level of assistance. Grantees identified the need for

various types of training and technical assistance—advanced training for experienced HPRP providers transitioning to ESG and basic training for new ESG providers.

- A few grantees indicated that they intended to follow HUD guidance about targeting the program to serve households with greater needs who were literally homeless by shifting program focus to rapid re-housing.

*Excerpts from APR narrative question responses*

“[I]nitiating new policies and procedures based on the HEARTH Act that will help communities align their programs to a rapid re-housing model.”

*Note: Not all quotes conform to HUD’s goals for the program or guidance.*

- HMIS was specifically mentioned as part of transition planning for ESG by some grantees, both investments necessary to increase HMIS capacity and challenges related to cost and ongoing implementation issues.
  - Some of the investments include: build-out of new features for uploading documentation into HMIS; using HMIS as a tool for coordinated entry; and carrying out desk-review oversight and monitoring using HMIS.
  - Other investments related to HMIS include: developing policies and procedures; sponsoring training and technical assistance; and coordinating with the CoC and HMIS leads.
  - Some of the grantees who reported their intentions to invest in HMIS indicated their hope that this investment in HMIS would help with proactive data management, periodic reporting for data quality, and performance measurement intended to evaluate screening timelines and returns to homelessness.
  - Challenges reported by some grantees related to HMIS include reduced ESG funding and the high cost to maintain the system with good data management and quality control practices. In addition, for some grantees, HMIS issues identified during HPRP implementation were difficult to resolve, such as databases developed by domestic violence and legal service providers that were not comparable.

*Prevalence of ESG Transition Topics by Grantee Attributes*

There were clear differences in the responses to this question by grantee attributes. Larger grantees by award size, number of subgrantees, and grantees receiving HPRP funding as a State were more likely to respond on two or three of the top topics. Smaller grantees by population and award size, which are less likely to receive ESG, were less likely to respond on all three top topics for the question.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The APR response analysis identifies some of the major successes and challenges for HPRP grantees. While the analysis is not able to support statistically significant recommendations, it does offer some guidance for how funders, planners, and providers can design, implement, and monitor effective homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing programs.

### Conclusions

Grantees gained invaluable experience administering homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing programs and developed the infrastructure necessary to operationalize these programs. For example, many grantees mentioned the need to develop tools to target HPRP resources to households they had identified as appropriate for a specific program component. In response to the need, grantees and subgrantees developed screening tools, assessments, and policies and procedures, and gained experience training subgrantees in the use of these tools and in monitoring the implementation of the targeting. Even though grantees were not always targeting the households that were HUD's priority for the program, this experience with planning and designing program activities across the jurisdiction, as well as targeting assistance more intentionally, will be invaluable for implementing ESG programs with lower resource levels and for supporting coordinated entry efforts.

HPRP also facilitated the development of new relationships that have been the foundation of coordinated entry and Housing First focused system changes. HPRP grantees who are now ESG recipients built relationships with CoCs and homeless system providers they may not have worked with before. The program created partnerships between prevention programs, shelter providers, and rapid re-housing programs that can support ongoing efforts to reduce entry to shelter and length of stay in shelter, and increase exits to permanent housing. HPRP also built capacity in housing-focused activities such as housing locator services, engaging landlords, and systematizing inspections that will help shift the focus of homeless systems from managing homelessness to rapidly ending homelessness.

### Recommendations

This section reviews the three top themes identified in the Year 3 findings, and ends with overall recommendations and areas for further consideration.

#### *Program Design and Planning*

In addition to the confusion about HUD's goals for the program, rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention were new program models for most grantees. The underlying approaches in these programs—providing households with financial assistance to stay in housing or rapidly regain housing using a Housing First approach and providing financial assistance instead of program services in a facility—were fundamental paradigm shifts for many grantees and subgrantees.

- Recipients and subrecipients should ensure they clearly understand HUD's vision and expectations for programs. This is especially important when HUD promotes new paradigms, such as Housing First, and specific practices and related evidence that could run counter to recipient or subrecipient values and beliefs.

- Recipients should design, deliver, and monitor rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention programs consistent with HUD goals and evidence about what works in rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention.
- Recipients should communicate with subrecipients about the impact and proper delivery of rapid re-housing and targeted homelessness prevention assistance to ensure consistency and increase emphasis on performance-based program models.

### *Financial and Grants Management*

Financial and grants management challenges are different with ESG as the funding level for ESG is much lower than HPRP. At the same time, recipients must continue to ensure that they select subrecipients that have the capacity to implement the program in compliance with HUD and local rules consistent with Housing First and other evidence-based practices.

- Recipients should conduct an analysis to determine the minimum program size and budget needed to deliver the desired program model. For example, a subrecipient that is awarded minimal case management funding could focus financial assistance on households only needing one-time assistance.
- Recipients should be aware of organizational capacity when awarding funding for programs with complex compliance requirements. This can be addressed by investing in key organizations to increase capacity; developing an infrastructure to manage compliance issues; or funding lower-capacity programs at lower levels and with lower expectations.
- Recipients should consider providing stable funding to subrecipients with at least minimally-acceptable performance to give them time to master program requirements before addressing any necessary program performance improvements. Some predictability in funding, based on acceptable performance, can be advantageous to system development.

### *Oversight and Monitoring*

Oversight and monitoring was the most frequently mentioned topic in the APR responses. Grantees were clearly concerned about delivering the program in compliance with HUD's rules.

- Recipients should design and monitor ESG-funded activities differently than they did for the former Emergency Shelter Grants program. To determine if their programs are appropriately designed or can be streamlined to increase access, ESG recipients should focus on using local data (e.g., data on prior housing situations, income of shelter residents) to develop targeting tools and templates, program monitoring processes, and documentation and eligibility requirements. Many tools developed for HPRP could be useful templates.
- HPRP had and ESG has substantial eligibility requirements for households and housing units being assisted under the programs. These requirements could result in people who should be served being screened out because they cannot provide required documentation. Recipients should periodically review the characteristics of participants being served to determine if program rules or subrecipient implementation can be adjusted to ensure that those who are most at risk of literal homelessness or those who will remain literally homeless without intervention are being assisted.

- With the rapid start-up of HPRP, HUD released guidance as it was developed or as-needed in response to circumstances that grantees presented. With the ongoing changes to ESG and CoC programs and related activities, such as HMIS, HUD continues to update and issue guidance on an ongoing basis to provide assistance in program implementation and administration. Consequently, recipients and subrecipients should continuously monitor HUD communications for new program guidance, and if they have not already, should sign up for listserv messages that HUD issues to provide new guidance and requirements for recipients and subrecipients to incorporate and include in staff training.
- Recipients should adopt continuous quality improvement practices, including: routine internal performance monitoring and evaluation; assessment of program adherence to HUD requirements and guidance; and fidelity to the planned program model and to new evidence that might influence program design and implementation.
- Recipients should implement periodic training for recipient and subrecipient staff to review program performance, lessons learned, new HUD guidance and resources, and to promote continuous improvement.
- Recipients with smaller grant sizes or fewer subrecipients should seek out training and technical assistance on oversight and monitoring to ensure the program is being administered in compliance with financial and programmatic guidelines.

### *Overall and Areas for Further Consideration*

It was not possible to identify the most effective interventions with the quantitative or qualitative data collected through the HPRP APR. Programs continuing with ESG funding provide an opportunity to conduct research on the entire program, individual program components, performance with specific subpopulations, and in individual communities.

There are several other take-aways from the Year 3 APRs that continue to be relevant to homeless assistance challenges faced by recipients and subrecipients of ESG and CoC funding today.

- **Research:** CoC and ESG administrators and planners should continue to explore opportunities to design research projects to identify the most effective targeting and screening approaches, programmatic interventions, and to further educate all organizations implementing rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention programs.
- **Coordinated entry and prioritization:** HPRP grantees reported that “potential clients had difficulty navigating intake through multiple points of access.” This highlights the importance of coordinated entry systems, which should prompt communities to work to improve the effectiveness of their systems. In addition, grantees reported that “unclear application processes and protocols” presented a challenge. This implies that clarity in a community’s coordinated entry and application processes is key to targeting, outreach, and serving people most efficiently. Under HPRP, many grantees found themselves overwhelmed with demand, especially for homelessness prevention assistance. This highlights the importance of establishing clear, targeted intake procedures when providing limited homelessness prevention assistance in the community as a whole.
- **Outreach:** Often, grantees found that “outreach media used were not accessible to the target population.” At the same time, some communities found that barriers to effective outreach–

especially for rapid re-housing—were addressed through building varied and numerous partnerships. These experiences can help other communities improve outreach systems to reach those who are hardest to serve.

- **Housing stability:** Grantees took a variety of approaches to services, with varying levels of intensity and requirements (e.g. participant agreements, mandatory financial literacy training, employment search requirements) to try to increase housing stability. They reported perceiving that “services provided through case management were critical to helping program participants achieve housing stability,” not just getting them into housing. Further research could help determine whether the housing stability outcomes for households with more case management, or particular case management, or other service requirements were better than those who received less assistance or less conditional assistance.
- **Housing locators:** Some grantees reported successes with establishing a staff position dedicated to building relationships with landlords, developing a housing database, and establishing a point of contact with landlords in case there were problems. Although more challenging without the funding provided by HPRP, establishing a specialized staff position for this function could be a best practice for improving the speed of helping homeless persons obtain housing, meeting landlord needs and mitigating concerns, and possibly further contributing to housing stability.
- **Case management:** “Case managers were often the principal staff that determined the appropriate levels of subsidy.” Gaining an understanding of how case managers made these decisions—and how they make them today—could inform how communities target ESG funds, and how this targeting can be done better across a community. The case managers were often responsible for providing many other services—budgeting, referrals to other programs, housing placement, housing search, etc. Though grantees and subgrantees place significant decisionmaking responsibility on the case managers, it is unclear whether this was optimal for program participants or the program. The flexibility certainly helped grantees adjust assistance for individual households (i.e., not over- or under-subsidizing by program design). However, further analysis would be required on training and supervision strategies to best support case management flexibility and decisionmaking.
- **“Right fit” of assistance:** Some grantees/subgrantees required case management and reassessment more frequently than every 3 months. Further research could help to clarify whether this helped ensure participants received the right amount, type, and duration of assistance, and not more than what was needed.
- **Partnerships:** Throughout HPRP, grantees reported that one of the most positive outcomes was the improved partnerships in the community, which they expected to be able to continue forward. Collaboration with other organizations not only helped with outreach, but also helped program participants with other challenges by connecting them to resources beyond HPRP (such as job training), which could have ultimately contributed to the household’s ability to retain their housing.

## Summary

HPRP was a complex program to implement and grantees provided a wealth of information in their APR responses about how they designed, implemented, and monitored the program. The unprecedented funding levels for homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing accelerated

community engagement in implementing these models and laid the foundation for activities that HUD expects ESG recipients and CoCs to execute. Therefore, the lessons HUD has derived from HPRP are also pertinent to ESG and CoC program administrators and system-level planners and to ESG and CoC providers directly serving individuals and families. Each group has different authority and responsibilities under these programs, but each can benefit from considering how these recommendations can be implemented to improve their programs.

In the end, some societal problems posed too great a challenge for the effectiveness of HPRP—such as high unemployment and lack of affordable housing. These continue to be challenges that contribute to homelessness, but through better targeting and understanding of effective interventions for persons who are experiencing homelessness and who are at risk of homelessness—from contributions to research such as the Year 3 HPRP APR narratives—we can continue to work to end homelessness for all.