



June 2021

Community Consultation & Engagement Report

A report on the comprehensive engagement of the housing sector regarding two new opportunities available in Manitoba.

Housing Sector

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association (MNPHA) was approached to take the lead on the development and implementation of two new initiatives that will have an impact on the housing and homelessness sector.

1. Housing Support Initiative - \$2.56 Million of new funding opportunities for the sector.
2. Manitoba Rent Relief Fund – A pilot project that is taking a phased approach for Manitobans.

The intent of this consultation and engagement project was to consult a diversity of individuals and organizations across the province that are involved in the sector to engage them in a couple of approaches to:

- Provide additional information on both initiatives.
- Share information and exchange ideas on successes and challenges facing the sector.
- Gather feedback on views pertaining to funding priorities for the Housing Support Initiative.
- Collect perspectives and input on the Rent Relief Fund development and implementation.

Based on the extensive feedback and learnings gained in this process, three priorities have been identified.

- 1. Maintaining Successful Tenancy**
- 2. Sector Capacity Building**
- 3. Case Management**

In addition to the priorities, a number of key considerations were identified and should be contemplated as MNPHA rolls out these new initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Established in June 2011, the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association (MNPHA) association represents over 100 non-profit housing providers who collectively own and manage more than 24,000 affordable homes across 23 communities in Manitoba.

Membership in MNPHA is the best way to be part of the larger community that is building the non-profit and affordable housing sector across the province.

Vision

Non-profit housing in Manitoba is secure, sustainable, and affordable for all who need it.

Mission

MNPHA supports its members to build a thriving, sustainable non-profit housing sector in Manitoba.

We do this by:

1. Providing our members valuable programs and services that support them to provide safe, secure, and affordable housing across Manitoba
2. Developing the capacity of the Non-Profit Housing sector through professional development opportunities, networking, and knowledge exchange
3. Advocating on behalf of members with government, funders, and other stakeholders on issues of importance to the sector
4. Building partnerships within the non-profit housing sector and with other sectors that support resilience, relevance, and innovation

Guiding Principles

1. MNPHA is a membership organization, and our agenda is driven by our members' concerns, needs, and aspirations. We will remain non-partisan and respectful of our diverse stakeholders in all our endeavors.
2. MNPHA believes that safe, secure, and affordable housing is a basic human right and we understand that access to housing is a social determinant of health, both for individuals and communities.
3. MNPHA is committed to ensuring that affordable housing is available in our communities.
4. MNPHA honours the history of affordable housing in Manitoba by building on the strengths that exist and sharing the successes of our members.
5. MNPHA provides innovative responses that assist our members to improve the financial viability and sustainability of the affordable housing sector.
6. MNPHA is committed to creating opportunities to be part of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

The Objective

MNPHA was approached earlier this year to take the lead on two very important initiatives for the housing/homelessness sector in Manitoba. MNPHA will develop and implement;

1. A provincial supported Housing Support Initiative that provides for new funding opportunities.
2. A Rent Relief Fund, a federally funded program that will provide household loans to assist with rent relief.

These new initiatives are important to MNPHA and the sector. For MNPHA, these are completely new projects that require organization and operational enhancements and for the Sector these projects have the ability to provide additional resources and supports to a growing issue and concern for Manitobans – Housing and Homelessness.

The objective of this project was to engage with members of the sector to consult them as MNPHA works to develop and implement the two new initiatives. MNPHA knows and understands how extremely important it is to consult people and organizations on matters that may affect them and/or the sector.

Housing Sector

The intent of this project is to consult and engage a diversity of members from the sector that represent participation from across the province to:

- Provide additional information on both initiatives
- Share information and exchange ideas on successes and challenges facing the sector
- Gather feedback on views pertaining to **funding priorities** for the Housing Support Initiative
- Collect perspectives and input on the Rent Relief Fund development and implementation

The Process

The Community Consultation and Engagement project provided for a process that considered the present environment we are experiencing due the pandemic. The project worked to engage a variety of representatives and invited participation from both the supply and demand side of housing and homelessness, representation from across the province, also included tenant representation as well as Newcomer and Indigenous.

Supply

This group reflects the supply of housing, those who have housing stock that rent/lease to individuals or families. This group includes individuals, private owners, public housing, cooperatives, and other organizations.

Demand

This group represents primarily organizations that provide support and guidance for those at risk or are experiencing homelessness. The degree of support varies by organization and can consist of support to maintain housing to full-service wrap around services and support.

The approach taken in this project was multi-pronged and sought ways to engage a diversity of individuals and organizations to gather their views and feedback.

- A series of 4 (four) virtual focus groups sessions were conducted
- An online survey was disseminated to the focus groups attendees to further explore the insights gathered in the focus groups
- Review of pertinent documents provided by MNPHA
- Engage with MNPHA board of directors

In addition to this engagement project and outside the scope of this particular project, MNPHA performed the necessary research, directly consulting programs and services that offer similar services and connected with experts in the field. This will enhance their ability to successfully implement two very important projects.

The Rationale

The causes of housing and homelessness issues are very complex and often multi-layered. Issues surrounding housing and homelessness are increasing across the country and Manitoba is not much different(Reference 1) .

According to the *Canadian Definition of Homelessness*, homelessness is defined as "the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it."³ Homelessness can be described through a range of situations:

- **Unsheltered:** Sleeping outside in tents, bus shelters, cars, doorways, or in empty buildings
- **Emergency Sheltered:** Staying in emergency shelters for adults, youth or family violence
- **Provisionally Accommodated:** Staying in transitional housing, hotels, motels, hostels, jails, hospitals, or "couch surfing" with family or friends, without a long-term agreement or plan.
- **At Risk:** Living in housing that is too expensive, crowded or unsafe⁴

"Homelessness is a direct outcome of a housing affordability crisis. The top barriers to finding and maintaining housing identified by people experiencing homelessness in the **2018 Winnipeg Street Health Survey Final Report** were that 'rent is too high' (77%) and there is 'a lack of suitable housing' (75%).¹⁸ In Winnipeg, 64,065 households are living in housing that is unaffordable, meaning they are paying more than 30% of their income for housing. Renters are at a higher disadvantage, with 39.5% in unaffordable housing compared to 12% of owners.¹⁹ 10,560 renters are severely rent burdened, paying more than 50% of their income on rent.²⁰

Core housing need is a metric describing households that are living in housing that is unaffordable, in need of major repairs, or unsuitable for their household composition. 12% of Winnipeggers (35,760 households), are in core housing need.²¹ For Indigenous households, the rate is almost double, with 22% (8,265 households) in core housing need.²²

These are troubling statistics, particularly when the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in thousands of Manitobans losing their jobs.²³ In 2016, 42% (40,500) of working households in Manitoba had less than one month's worth of savings, while 23,500 households had less than one week.²⁴ This means, as emergency benefits run out and eviction bans are lifted, many more individuals and families may find themselves experiencing homelessness for the first time. Access to affordable, but also safe, culturally relevant, and suitable housing, is critically important.

Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) is Manitoba's social welfare program. More than half of those interviewed for the 2018 Winnipeg Street Health Survey (55.2%) reported receiving EIA.²⁵ EIA includes a rental benefit (Rent Assist), and while this program is essential to support individuals and families maintaining housing, the amount is capped (at 75% Median Market Rent), meaning that many still cannot afford housing and may find themselves experiencing homelessness".

Experts indicate that Winnipeg is experiencing a housing crisis and the research supports such comments. Unfortunately, other major Manitoba cities and towns are also experiencing similar issues however there is very little research and literature to support and demonstrate such claims. Anecdotally, we know that centres like First Nation Communities, Thompson, Brandon, Dauphin, Swan River, Portage La Prairie, and others are experiencing similar housing and homelessness issues with limited access to coordinated supports and/or resources.

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It is important to understand that when communities outside of Winnipeg experience these issues, people often migrate to Winnipeg thinking there may be more opportunities to alleviate their housing issues. In essence, smaller centres may be becoming the feeder centres to a larger crisis in Winnipeg.

**If we do not help them locally, then you know they will show up in Winnipeg.
-Rural Focus Group Participant**

Presently, there is an eco-system of organizations and systems that work in collaboration to attempt to address the complex housing and homelessness issues in Winnipeg. This similar eco-system does not exist anywhere else in Manitoba, with exception of Thompson albeit on a much smaller scale.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

As indicated, MNPHA was approached by government representatives to take the lead on two important initiatives that can provide some support to Manitobans that may be at risk or are experiencing homelessness. Below is a detailed description of each initiative and some preliminary ideas on structure and implementation.

Housing Support Initiative

In March of 2021, the Province of Manitoba announced that they would be providing \$2.56 million to MNPHA for Manitoba projects over the next two years to transition homeless people into stable housing environments. This new initiative is a COVID-related 2-year pilot that will provide one time funding, over two years, and must demonstrate effective outcomes through a third-party evaluation.

The Housing Support Initiative aims to:

- ✓ Develop and support partnerships between non-profit housing organizations and homelessness support organizations to provide support for tenants within non-profit and Manitoba Housing units.
- ✓ Enhance existing supports that non-profits have to make their building more available and tenancies more stable for those who need additional supports.
- ✓ Fill gaps in eviction prevention and housing supports across the province.

Potential Outcomes

Initial goals envisioned for the funding include:

- Reductions in evictions/increased stability of tenancy within non-profit housing
- Increased access to non-profit housing for people exiting homelessness
- Stability of tenancy for those exiting homelessness
- Successful and sustainable partnerships between non-profit housing organizations and housing support organizations

Proposed Project Governance and Partnerships

MNPHA will house and deliver the Housing Support Initiative and will work in collaboration with key community stakeholders that are representative of the sector, specifically in the area of proposal review and selection. MNPHA proposes that a Proposal Review Committee be developed and implemented to ensure

there is sector participation and recommendations for approval of projects that meet the funding criteria and eligibility. Invitations to participate will include a diversity of organizations from within the sector to ensure there is broad representation of views, perspective and experience.

Timeline and Process

The funding will primarily be provided to Manitoba non-profit organizations, including MNPHA members and organizations that support people experiencing homelessness, through a call for proposals process. The call for proposals process will be accessible and low barrier, to provide a fair and transparent allocation process without creating burdens on providers.



Once funding agreements are in place and funds allocated, it is anticipated there will be;

- ✓ Quarterly check-ins and support to funding recipients
- ✓ Interim reports and initial evaluation - September 2022
- ✓ Final evaluation: December 2022
- ✓ Share results and develop sustainability plan

Manitoba Rent Relief Fund

A “Rent Bank” provides loans to renter households who have regular income but are facing eviction as a result of a short-term financial crisis like illness, job loss, relationship breakdown and/or eviction. The loans are low or no-cost and have generous repayment terms – usually up to 24 months.

Rent Banks already exist in several provinces. Some rent banks offer damage deposit and help with payment of utilities. Most Rent Banks offer a complete suite of services including access to financial literacy training, financial counselling, and budgeting.

This new \$5.6 million dollar initiative is a two-year pilot being developed collaboratively between MNPHA and Manitoba Housing. MNPHA will administer the Rent Relief Fund and partner organizations will deliver it across Manitoba utilizing an online centralized intake process that will provide for interest-free loans with repayment options tailored to the client need and ability to repay.

The funding for this project will cover the loans, support services, administrative and overhead expenses, and establishment of an endowment fund to support the continuation of the rent bank.

Potential Outcomes

- Reduced evictions due to arrears
- Increased and faster access to housing
- Increased stability of income
- Increased rent and utility payments
- Improved relationships between landlords and tenants

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- Stabilized revenue for landlords experiencing cash flow issues because of arrears
- Long term plan for Manitoba Rent Relief (endowment)

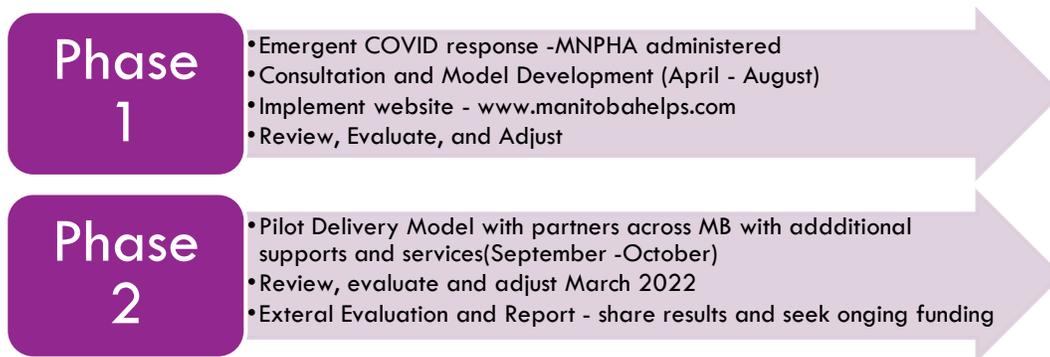
Proposed Project Governance and Partnerships

MNPHA will work in partnership with Manitoba Housing to support program development and establish criteria and eligibility to be approved by Treasury Board. Other key stakeholders and partners are required to effectively roll out this provincial wide initiative therefore an Advisory Committee will be developed and implemented consisting of representation from organizations within the sector from across the province and reflective of the diversity that exists.

There are several community service organizations that may be considered partners in delivery. It will be important to create synergies with grassroots organizations that are on the ground supporting individuals and families.

Timelines

This initiative is taking a phased approach:



WHAT WE HEARD

The essence of this project was to consult and engage a variety of individuals and organizations that participate in the housing and homelessness sector. Speaking directly to individuals is vital to learn more about priorities, best practices, and gaps in the eco-system. The approach utilized consisted of facilitated focus groups and an online survey.

Focus Group Sessions

There was total of four focus group sessions held in the month of May. There was a large component of individuals and organizations from across the province invited to participate in one of the four sessions offered. The facilitated sessions brought together the supply and demand sides of the sector and learned directly from them, their views, and perspectives.

The format of each session was a facilitated discussion focusing on four questions and below is a summary of the feedback.

1. We know and understand that funding is limited and short term for the Housing Support Initiative, provide your top 3 priorities that you would like to see funded and/or achieved with this initiative.

The participants agreed that funding available is inadequate to deal with the number of complex issues facing people in housing or homelessness circumstances. There was agreement that this is a start of an important conversation, and each participant provided their views. The vast majority agreed that the top priority is to increase affordable and accessible housing across the province including transitional housing. This funding will not be able to meet that need at this time however there are other priorities identified.

Mental Health – Many participants indicated there was a lack of resources in the Mental Health area and sometimes the issue is amplified depending on where you are located within the province. Some spoke of the need for crisis stabilization support, expertise in hoarding, and basic training of employees to ensure de-escalation, support, and safety. Mental health of individuals experiencing housing and homelessness issues is significant and support is needed in all parts of Manitoba to varying degrees.

Addictions Support – Almost all of the participants outside of Winnipeg talked about the lack of resources around addictions support, safe detox sites, recovery programs, and transportation to rural settings that do have existing resources. We know that addictions tend to be a contributing factor to those that are at risk or those experiencing homelessness. An increase in support for addiction issues is important to many organizations working in the sector including sober living centres and controlled wet housing (damp sites).

Pest Control – This came up several times in the discussions. Many tenants often get evicted when they are unable to effectively deal with pests (lice, bed bugs, cockroaches). There are several reasons tenants may not be able to deal which include lack of financial resources to pay for treatment, physical limitations, mental health, and/or addictions. Whatever the reason, participants indicated that attention to this issue is required as it is deemed fixable and can prevent evictions thus keeping people housed.

Case Workers – There were a number of positive examples of how proactive case workers can make a difference in peoples lives. This view is shared by many and can be utilized in a variety of ways. Some talked about the need for on-site wrap around support, outreach workers, housing support workers, eviction support, and some longer-term support for those that may be considered harder to house. Essentially, case management support of some degree is important and is often expressed as a best practice. The support must be person centred, non-judgmental, and relationship based with the ability to meet people where they are at in their personal journey.

Tenant Empowerment – It was identified that building the capacity of tenants thus empowering them, could be another solution to keeping people housed. In this context, participants referred to programs and services for individuals that could enhance the life skills required to maintain residency. This includes programs like financial literacy and budgeting, crisis management, problem solving, goal setting, hygiene and light housekeeping, basic home repairs, and cooking etc.

Supply Supports – Supply is made up of individuals and organizations that have housing and are either looking for tenants, support for existing tenants or exploring ways to support the sector. There is recognition that some supports may be required for landlords that are doing the right things and not taking advantage of people or situations. Some spoke of support to landlords that provided resources to clean and/or do repairs on units quickly that will enable faster access for tenants.

Systems Advocate – Due to the complexity of these issues many participants felt there is a need for a systems advocate who could navigate the systems interconnected to housing and homelessness which could result in better outcomes and resources for the sector and the people they serve.

2. What outcomes and/or successes would you like to see with the Housing Support Initiative funding?

Participants do have expectations of the funding and would like to see outcomes that positively impact the sector and the people they serve by improving their quality of life. There is also recognition that status quo is not the best approach that we may need to be more innovative and look for non-traditional approaches and partnerships.

Sector Capacity Building – Presently, there is limited resources available to organizations in terms of ensuring staff have the right kind of skills and abilities to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness. The client need is often complex and multi-faceted, so staff require a number of resources, tools, skills, and abilities to effectively meet those needs. Many participants agreed that an important outcome for this project would be the increased capacity of the sector which could be achieved by enhancing learning opportunities, formal training, increased networking, and sharing of best practices.

Collaborative Approach – The sector agrees that a collaborative approach to addressing housing and homelessness is necessary and long overdue. Many feel this is a great motivator to ensure there is strong and respectful partnerships that could do good work together. There is a need to bring the supply and demand side together more often to collaborate on projects that are important to their particular community.

Better Relationships – This was articulated in a few ways. Successful outcomes should result from better relationships. Participants referenced respectful relationships between the service provider and tenant, supply and demand, local community relationships, system relationships, tenant and landlord, and proponent and funder.

Stable Housing – As individuals get the support and services they require, there is an expectation that many people will become more stabilized and could lead to sustainable long-term housing. This would mean there are less evictions and an overall better quality of life.

3. What elements should a rent relief fund encompass? What considerations, including potential barriers should be given in developing and implementing the fund?

MNPHA has done extensive research in this area as other provinces have implemented similar programs. However, it was important to also hear directly from grassroots organizations who will be working with individuals and families utilizing the program.

- Speed of funding with a timely response will be important to avoid evictions.
- Need to ensure EIA is consulted/involved.
- Can loans be considered for pest control, moving, utilities, damage deposits (market rate)?
- Ensure the eligibility is wide enough to support a diversity of people -low barrier.
- Are we thinking about the expired rent supplements that may be coming in the next 2-3 years? The process should consider this.
- The program needs to be fine with the fact that some people will not pay back the loans.

- Consider partial or full forgiveness of loan if you complete “X”.
- Ensure current income is considered rather than previous year’s tax return.
- Applications- make simple as possible, ensure the process is easy and use layman language.
- Ability to refer support services to clients so it not just about money, but a service and education to actually use the money for whatever reasons.
- Consider all the legal aspects of things – privacy, mediation etc.
- Landlords influence on tenants to use the service is a concern – is there a way we can have a contract or something with the landlord if they accept this loan so there is confirmation there will be no eviction.
- How often would you provide rent relief – what’s the long-term plan?

4. Tell us what funding principles you would like to see reflected in these projects?

Overall participants would like the funding to be balanced geographically throughout the province with representation of projects from both urban and rural settings. Many like the idea of partnerships to foster positive collaboration in the sector and an application and reporting process that is not too cumbersome for organizations.

Another principle that was brought to the forefront a few times is the necessary balance of supporting existing programs and services along with some new innovative approaches to address the issues. Here are some verbatim comments;

- Funding is not a lot; projects should be targeted and available for those who need it most
- Avoid duplication – balance new and gaps
- Housing (supply) needs training and needs to understand the issues
- Rural is important in considerations
- Like the idea of partnerships. The figures on the table are pretty small. Focus on most promising practices. Indigenous needs to be prioritized.
- Look at the merit of what is coming in whether if its new or existing. Either way you are going to need targets.
- Indigenous lens needs to be included
- I think matching funding to in-kind contributions from participating organizations is an important funding principle
- Focus on adapting and being flexible with people and a holistic approach is important.
- Tapping into existing network is good
- Outcome based approach. An understanding of what the measures are going to be

Online Survey

Housing Sector

The online survey link was shared with all the focus group participants as they were invited to provide further detail and clarification to a series of questions that arose from the Focus Group sessions. Below is a summary of the responses.

1. What outcomes would you like to see with the Housing Support Initiative funding that is tangible in the next 2 years?

This is a similar question to what was asked in the focus group. Responses are very similar with emphasis on eviction prevention, sustained supportive housing, supports for women, supports for people to stay housed, capacity building in the sector, and collaborative relationships.

2. Given that funding is limited, provide your top 3 priorities that you would like to see funded with the short-term Housing Supports Initiative?

This question was also asked in the focus group sessions and a variety of responses are documented which were not much different here. This is a word cloud of the most important words used to describe the responses.

rural_{work} Mental Health_{help} supports_{people}
housing_{Continuing} individuals_{keep}

3. What are some “low hanging fruit” initiatives/projects that could be achieved with the Housing Support funding?

Feedback indicates that funding organizations that are already providing eviction prevention, housing search, and assistance for tenant transition into new housing would be invaluable. Other low hanging fruit included networking opportunities, training for staff in the sector, training for tenants, pest control and wrap around supports.

4. Are there specific funding criteria that you would like to see in the Housing Supports Initiative?

Again, a similar question to what was posed in the focus groups. The respondents honed in on keeping people housed, a mixture of new and older projects, experienced partnerships, inclusive and open to new ideas, low barrier, supply and demand together with own resources invested, and avoid duplication.

5. There are many factors and gaps that lead to housing loss for people. Are there specific program responses, partnerships, or other ways this Housing Support Initiative funding can address those factors/gaps?

Below are some verbatim responses:

- Lack of mediation services before RTB is involved. Lack of understanding of tenant rights, eviction rights, eviction process. Need for advocates to help tenants through the process, provide support, attend hearings with tenants. Funding this kind of work and advocating to RTB to changes in policy/procedure would be useful.
- Childcare, treating complex problems individually as opposed to an all-in-one approach creates a variety of gaps and challenges, the funding can drive collaboration within the service sector to best help those navigating complex or co-occurring disorders, training in Trauma informed client centered approaches and in mental health and safety.
- I was pleased that during the presentation, MNPHA articulated that while most causes of homelessness are economic, this funding pot, can't possibly address this in a meaningful way. So, the intervention has to focus on non-economic causes that are contributing to homelessness.
- Links and supports to community resources.
- Transitional housing and more support for single folks, people exiting addictions treatment, abuse, mental health facility need extra support

6. Many feel that Mental Health is a factor for those at risk or experiencing homelessness. What kind of mental health supports would you like to see, that this funding might address?

Mental Health as a factors in those that are at risk of homelessness or experiencing homeless continues to be at the forefront. This question was asked with the hopes that respondents would provide greater detail to the types of mental health supports required.

- It would be helpful if this funding allowed for access to therapy services, gym memberships, massages or physio for individuals who may have physical manifestations of their mental health symptoms, harm reduction approaches for those using maladaptive coping mechanisms for mental health issues, respite child care for appointments or errands without children for those needing the break or help (pandemic has really impacted parents mental wellbeing as they have less access to family or friends as child care relieve).
- Mental health supports/consults offered in people's homes/units.
- Housing staff need better training, but the housing provider also needs access to specialized supports that can not only maintain the person at risk of homelessness, but also reduce other kinds of risks to neighbouring tenants and staff.
- Get proper organization (i.e., WRHA) involved that can assess struggling individuals' health/mental state. Have follow-ups. This approach will later assist in long-term success planning.
- Trauma Therapy

7. Many feel that addiction is a factor for those at risk or experiencing homelessness. What kind of addiction supports would you like to see, that this funding might address?

Addiction is also another factor that surfaces when address housing and/or homelessness. This question was asked with the hopes that respondents would provide greater detail to the types of mental health supports required.

- Harm reduction supports, safe consumption and pre-treatment programming, maintenance supports.

- I don't know that this funding would be able to address the depth of the gaps in addiction supports in our current system. The system needs more capacity at RAAM clinics, more treatment beds, more mobile withdrawal supports, safe injection sites, more harm reduction supplies.
- I like harm reduction, "housing first" options in the spectrum of housing. I am not sure how well that translates from a building dedicated to this approach and into a community housing provider where a handful of people may be grappling with addictions. Not saying it can't be done, but it needs some thinking. (Not my area of expertise).
- Onsite supports that protect vulnerable people from being exploited, Support to assist people with setting boundaries.

8. What potential barriers may your clients/tenants/community members experience in accessing a rent relief fund?

This question is similar to what was asked in the focus group but reframed to draw out barriers. Respondents think the biggest barrier will be lack of awareness of the fund and others include ability to obtain required documentation, no bank account, application may be too complex, English may not be first language (language barriers), length of time to access funds, ability to repay, lack of internet access, not having a phone or computer, and transportation to service provider.

9. Are there specific funding criteria that you would like to see in the Rent Relief Fund?

- Damage deposit, first month's rent, temporary rent relief when facing eviction for non-payment, filing fees for RTB processes, pest preparation, cleaning.
- Broad, as inclusive as possible, higher program income limits.
- Anyone living at or below the poverty line should automatically qualify for the rent relief fund.
- I think the fund has to be sure to include marginalized communities, and that outreach and promotion ensures the fund isn't gobbled up by people who have a better knowledge of the system. I think the applicant has to be at risk of eviction, and I think the landlord/housing provider has to identify the tenant as someone who would otherwise be a tenant they want to keep.

10. Describe ways in which housing (supply) and those providing supports (demand) can enhance and build stronger relationships?

A vast majority in the sector would agree that stronger relationships are required among the supply and demand groups. The intent here was to draw out some best practices or approaches in moving forward.

- One successful way in our experience is working with developers to advocate for community needs, connect them to existing funding, and provide letters of support to projects that meet community needs.
- I think the nature of the partnership has to be very clearly delineated, and each partner has to be able to do what they say they will. It isn't enough for those on the demand side to simply send hard-to-house applicants, they have to be there to help solve problems when things get bumpy. Conversely, housing providers need to actually make units available, and to be willing to work with demand side partners to solve problems.
- Consistent open communication flow and an end goal for which work will be put in.

- By meeting regularly and working together for the good of the individuals we all serve.
- I think housing providers are more likely to work with supports when supports have something to offer other than tenants. Funding things like vacancy loss and damages would be helpful.

11. What keeps you awake at night in terms of housing & homelessness?

Almost every respondent indicated a lack of safe affordable housing. This word cloud is another representation of the most common words used.

housing individuals lack additions

12. What kind of housing/homelessness projects are important to your organizations and the people you serve?

- Eviction prevention support, RTB support, hands on housing search assistance, continuing help once people transition into their new home.
- infrastructure projects, coordination/collaboration in service provision, innovative solutions or models
- community mental health and supported, transitional housing
- Increased affordable housing options with supports in place to help people stabilize (providing housing is the first step, helping people maintain housing is also an issue that requires focus).
- Finding adequate rental assistance vehicles to maintain low-income people in community housing (and not become homeless) is the main priority. Rent Assist is an imperfect replacement for RGI, and failure to address the economic causation could mean that the government actually creates more homeless people than these two initiatives will help.
- Proper rental documents (not verbal promises between landlord/tenant), energy efficiency, demographic and income survey scanning (collection of data is key), resource/ organizational placements.
- Our clients are considered homeless when they enter a domestic violence shelter. Our concern, always, is the safety for them and their children. Continued advocacy doesn't stop once they leave the Shelters. Affordable housing and supports are essential for success of the clients we see.
- There was a wonderful project to house individuals who were about to become homeless with furniture supplied by the province and vacant suites ready to be occupied. Unfortunately, these individuals came with extremely limited supports-this was the only missing piece. Projects which include actual wrap around supports for individuals where we provided the housing piece would be ideal.

13. Are there any supports your organization may require in order to submit a proposal, if yes, please explain.

MNPHA wants to ensure their processes for these initiatives are not cumbersome and easy for everyone to navigate. The only feedback was to ensure there was a contact person identified in case there were questions or clarification required.

14. What do you want MNPHA to know about a Rent Relief Fund and/or Housing Support Initiative?

Overall, the respondents are excited about the new opportunities and are thankful MNPHA is taking the lead. They hope this is the beginning of longer term and more sustainable funding. They realize this is not a large amount of funds but believe the lessons learned from innovation, new partnerships, pilot projects and new models can have a lasting impact on the sector and the people it serves.

Housing Support Initiative Priorities

The main objective of this project was to determine funding priorities based on feedback received from the focus group participants, the survey respondents and other discussions with sector representatives that know and understand the sector well.

Based on the consultations, it is clear that the funding priorities for the Housing Support Initiative should focus in 3 areas.



enhance and build their capabilities.

Priority Areas:

1. Maintaining Successful Tenancy – In this case a tenant is any individual or family that is at risk of being homeless or are presently experiencing homelessness. Tenant supports encompasses all the different kinds of programs and services required to support people in their journey. This can include items that support eviction prevention such as pest control, mental health/addiction supports, or programs that empower tenants to
2. Capacity Building – The sector and the people who work in it are vital to ensuring people are supported in a respectful and meaningful way. Presently, there is limited resources available to ensure present and future staff have the ability and opportunity to get the proper training, skills, and experience to provide the best support and service possible. This priority recognizes this and will consider projects that contribute to the capacity development and enhancement of the sector.
3. Case Management – This area has proven to be a sector best practice in addressing housing and homelessness. Case management represents holistic services that provide for individualized support verses programs for groups. There is recognition that there are different kinds of support required in different circumstances and each organization does it differently. Case management is a spectrum that can range from outreach to wrap around on-site services. This priority will allow projects to continue to explore services in this area or build new processes and practices.

Key Considerations

Based on the volume and quality of the feedback, there are a few items and trends that surfaced that should be identified and considered in rolling out the new initiatives.

1. The need in the sector is massive and there are limited resources to address the issues. It will be important to focus on projects that can have an immediate impact allowing for the biggest bang for investment.
2. This could be an opportunity to consider investments in new and innovate programs and services to test new models that could have long term impacts. Be open to innovation and new ways of doing and/or thinking.
3. Consideration must be given to projects that are representative of all of Manitoba, not just urban centres. Consider allocating a percentage of the funds/projects to rural based organizations.
4. There should be a balance of new and existing projects so not to miss out on opportunities that have proven successes and results.
5. Applicants should be encouraged to think about the sustainability of the project beyond the 2-year timeframe of the Housing Support Initiative and articulate that in the application process.
6. Typically, there has been very little support and resources available for Housing providers. Consideration should be given to this group when reviewing project proposals to ensure some support is provided to this group.
7. Partnership and collaboration are extremely important and the criteria for the funding should reflect this by placing priority on projects that are partnership based and demonstrate the ability to bring supply and demand together.
8. Due to the number of Indigenous people at risk of homelessness or that are experiencing homelessness, there must be recognition and allowance for Indigenous led and driven projects that are viewed from that lens.
9. Consideration should be given to concerns identified in regard to the Rent Relief Fund and how this could be manipulated by ill intended landlords. Safeguards may have to be implemented to ensure the integrity of the project is maintained and there are little to no unintended outcomes.

CONCLUSION

MNPHA has been diligent in preparing for the development and implementation of the two new initiatives available to Manitobans to address the housing and homelessness sector. The demand for resources is significant especially now as issues of housing and homelessness have escalated. Everyone agrees that the opportunities ahead are positive and at the very least the discussion has started to address this issue throughout the province.

The sector is excited to see the outcomes of these new projects and were happy to be consulted on matters that are important to them. This approach is welcomed, supported, and should be reflected in the work as it transpires.

REFERENCES

1. <https://endhomelessnesswinnipeg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20200630-K%C3%ADkininaw-%C3%93ma-Strategy-to-Support-Unsheltered-Winnepeggers.pdf>