

2023



# HOME Investment Partnerships American Rescue Plan Program Allocation Plan

HIDALGO COUNTY  
URBAN COUNTY PROGRAM

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# Hidalgo County HOME-ARP Allocation Plan

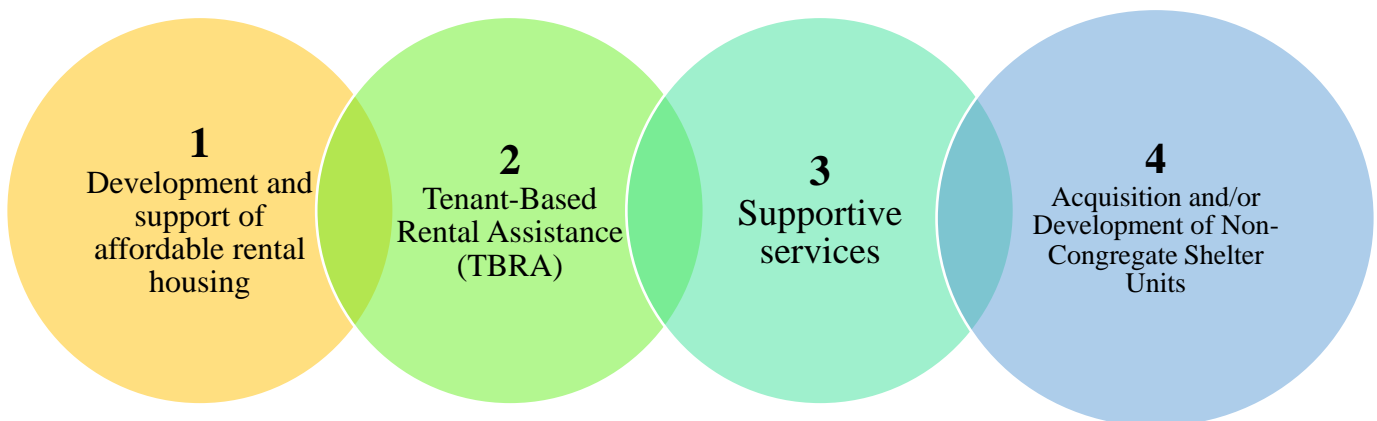
With the enactment of the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA” or “ARP”) on March 11, 2021, Hidalgo County became aware of the availability of HOME Investment Partnerships Program (“HOME”) to offer assistance to qualifying populations such as individuals or households who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, and other vulnerable populations by providing housing, rental assistance, supportive services, and non-congregate shelter, to reduce homelessness and increase housing stability across the country.

As a Participating Jurisdiction (PJ) that qualified for an annual HOME Program allocation, Hidalgo County was awarded 7,461,494 in Home Investment Partnerships Grant – American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP).

To receive funding, the County of Hidalgo must develop and submit to the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) a HOME-ARP Allocation Plan, which describes the distribution of HOME-ARP funds to the qualifying populations. All findings including unmet needs and gaps are described in detail.

Eligible activities that may be funded with HOME-ARP include: (1) development and support of affordable housing; (2) tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA); (3) provision of supportive services (such as housing counseling, homelessness prevention, childcare, job training, legal services, case management, moving costs, rental applications, and rent assistance); and (4) acquisition and/or development of non-congregate shelter units.

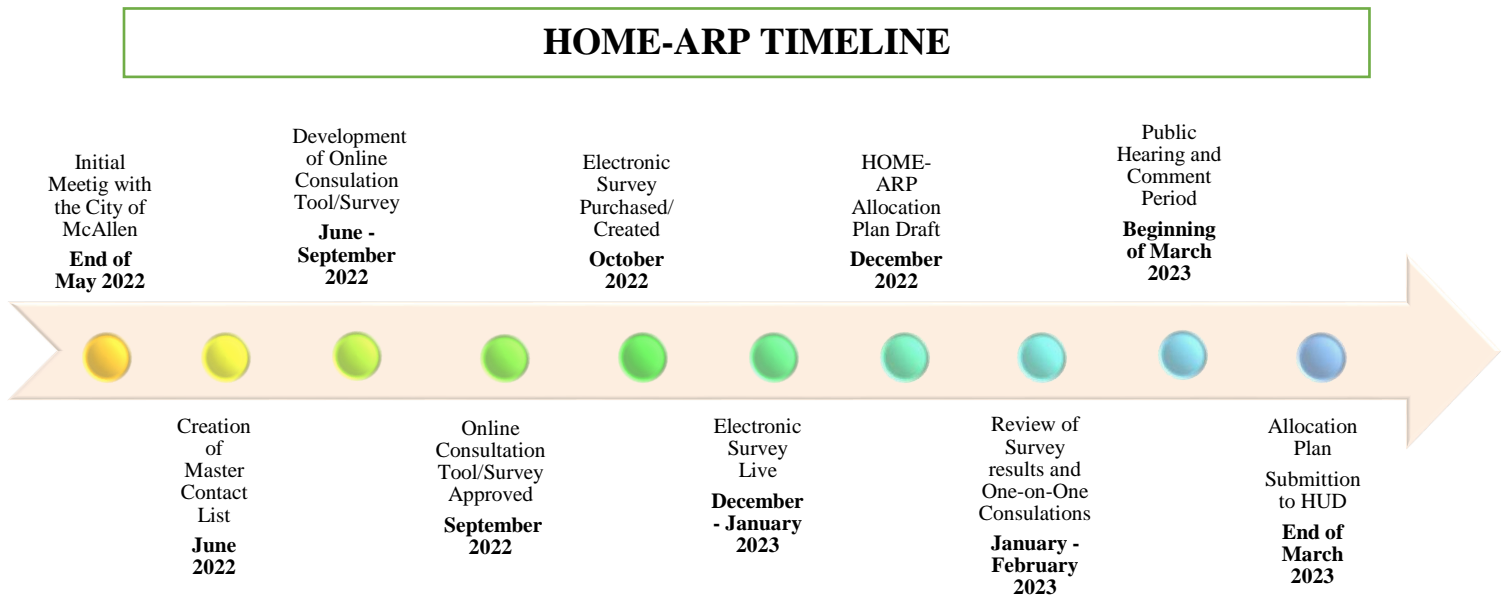
## ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES





- A summary of the consultation process and results of upfront consultation;
- A summary of comments received through the public participation process and a summary of any comments or recommendations not accepted and the reasons why;
- A description of HOME-ARP qualifying populations within the jurisdiction;
- An assessment of unmet needs of each qualifying population;
- An assessment of gaps in housing and shelter inventory, homeless assistance and services, and homelessness prevention service delivery system;
- A summary of the planned use of HOME-ARP funds for eligible activities based on the unmet needs of the qualifying populations; and
- An estimate of the number of housing units for qualifying populations the PJ will produce or preserve with its HOME-ARP allocation.

The development of the Allocation Plan followed the HOME-ARP Calendar and HOME-ARP Timeline below:



The joint consultation results indicated a gap and an unmet need in the provision of affordable rental housing as well as supportive services such as financial and wellness (trauma) counseling, transportation, and increased case management to access mainstream resources. In order to address the gaps identified during the consultation process, Hidalgo County is proposing to fund the Development of Affordable Rental Housing, Tenant Based Rental Assistance and Supportive Services with its HOME-ARP allocation. However, should an amendment to this document be necessary, the County will follow its Citizen Participation Plan noted in the Consolidated Plan Amendment and in accordance to §24 CFR 91.105(c) section.

## Consultation

As the only two Participating Jurisdictions in our area, Hidalgo County contacted the City of McAllen to pursue a thoughtful and analytical approach to improving efforts in regional data collection. The consultation planning began early summer 2022 with staff from Hidalgo County – Urban County Program (UCP) and the City of McAllen’s Grant Administration Office. During this period, the team worked closely to strategize and create consultation tools which would ultimately develop a framework for the Allocation Plan. Staff also participated in online HUD trainings and reviewed resources dedicated to the development and submission of the Allocation Plan.

The initial consultation steps consisted of compiling contact information from all potential participating agencies and key partners that provide assistance to the qualifying populations in our area. More than 150 local and regional stakeholders, public agencies, and elected officials who could assist in determining needs and unmet gaps while also identifying services currently available for the qualifying populations were included in the Master List (Appendix A). This consultation provided a basis for Hidalgo County’s strategy for distributing HOME-ARP funds for eligible activities to best meet the needs of qualifying populations.

Collaboration between the two PJs also led to the creation a consultation plan to effectively coordinate discussions with stakeholders. In order to broaden input, a region wide survey was made available to the community at large as well as those identified in the master contact listing. Due to the high number of Spanish speakers in the community, a Spanish version of the survey was made available and, for those without access to online resources, hard copies were available by request.

The Consultation Tool, available online via SurveyMonkey.com, consisted of a general 24-question survey divided by sections, such as HOME-ARP Program introduction, objectives, eligible activities and qualifying populations, demographic information by qualifying information, and additional comments section (Appendix B). The creation of the online survey tool, as well as future discussions one-on-one, followed the HUD issued Discussion Guide for HOME-ARP. Of note, the survey was available from mid-December 2022 through January 27, 2023.

The local consultation plan allowed the City and UCP staff to divide the list of agencies with whom consultation was mandated by HUD, as done previously in the development of Consolidated Plan and Strategies. This practice was employed to reduce duplicative efforts. Furthermore, the reduction in duplicative meetings had the added benefit of limiting contact, a best practice for mitigation efforts.

Additionally to the online consultation, Hidalgo County in partnership with the City of McAllen staff held a comprehensive one-on-one consultation meeting with approximately 20 agencies, including The Salvation Army, Women Together Foundation, Inc., Catholic Charities of the RGV,

and 2-1-1 Texas via phone, zoom, and/or in person. The consultations specifically included the collection of regional or local data, demographics, priority needs, gaps in services, and suggestions of services to better assist qualifying populations.

Despite multiple attempts, the percentage of agencies participating in the County's and City's consultation meetings and online survey hovered at less than 50%.

To assure the consultation meetings were fruitful, HUD's consultation guide was tailored to discuss the services and facilities provided by the agencies, as well as facilitating a discussion of barriers and priority needs for the qualifying populations. In each consultation meeting, the following topics were discussed:

- Hidalgo County Urban County and City of McAllen Allocations
- Qualifying Populations
- Eligible Activities
- Allocation Plan submission deadline
- Unmet shelter, housing and services
- Supportive services
- Gaps in services
- Priority needs
- Characteristics of housing markets
- Demographics
- Recommendations and suggestions

The Hidalgo County UCP and City of McAllen staff were successful in consulting with the groups noted in CPD 21-10, including the CoC serving the jurisdiction's, homeless and domestic violence service providers, veterans' groups, public housing agencies (PHAs), public agencies that address the needs of the qualifying populations, and public or private organizations that address fair housing, civil rights, and the needs of persons with disabilities.

In addition to the consultation meetings and survey, the City utilized the annual Point-In-Time (PIT) study to support the development of its Allocation Plan. PIT is a one-night census of the homeless population, including unsheltered and sheltered individuals which can be dwindled to the City of McAllen's respondents. Census/American Community Survey, Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data enhanced the City's demographic homeless profile.

## List of Organizations Consulted

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org and QP(s) served	Method of Consultation and Date of Consultation	Feedback
<b>The Salvation Army of McAllen</b>	Homeless service provider  All QPs served	In person consultation  December 20, 2023	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Affordable rental housing</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Lack of financial assistance, transportation</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Mental health services</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization identified a need for family shelter based on current space challenges. In addition they noted that housing has become increasingly unaffordable after the COVID-19 pandemic and so affordable rental housing is their client’s priority need.</p>
<b>Affordable Homes of South Texas, Inc.</b>	Organization that addresses civil rights/ <b>fair housing</b> /needs of people with disabilities  Low-income individuals Elderly and people with disabilities	Telephone Conference  December 27, 2022	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Affordable rental housing</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Construction cost, increased cost of living, limited funding for rehab projects</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Additional social services</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization has a identified a need for affordable rental housing due to increased cost of living after the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition they noted that after the pandemic, the construction costs have also increased considerably. Additionally, there is limited funding for rehab projects. The organization’s clientele are families of 3-4 members and individuals, Hispanics mostly, at 50%-80% AMI. Affordable rental housing is their priority need.</p>
<b>Silver Ribbon Community Partners</b>	Organization that addresses civil rights/ <b>fair housing</b> / <b>needs of</b>	Telephone Conference  December 28, 2022	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Supportive services</p>

	<p><b>people with disabilities</b></p> <p>Elderly and people with disabilities</p>		<p><b>Barrier:</b> Transportation, healthcare, age-restricted financial assistance and services, no job/income</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Lack of utility assistance, rental assistance, home repairs (ramps)</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization identified a need for supportive services based on post-pandemic financial situation of population with fixed income or no income, such as the elderly and people with disabilities. Homeless seniors need shelters tailored to their specific healthcare needs. The organization’s clientele are 0-30% AMI senior individuals and people with physical and mental disabilities.</p>
<p><b>Workforce Solutions</b></p>	<p><b>Organization that addresses civil rights/fair housing/needs of people with disabilities</b></p> <p>Low-income individuals Elderly and people with disabilities</p>	<p>Telephone Conference</p> <p>December 29, 2022</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Supportive services</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Transportation, clients not aware of assistance programs</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> n/a</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization identified a need for supportive services due to the poor post-pandemic financial situation for low-income individuals. Additionally, housing has become increasingly unaffordable and clients lack knowledge on current services available. Although the needs of services vary throughout the year, a continuous priority need is rental assistance and utility assistance for people who are unable to sustain a job while they are completing their higher education. The organization provides services to anyone in the three different counties Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy; the region covers mostly Hispanics.</p>
<p><b>United Way of South Texas</b></p>	<p>Public Agency that addresses the needs of the qualifying populations</p>	<p>Telephone Conference</p> <p>January 4, 2023</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Affordable rental housing and supportive services</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Transportation, mental health services</p>

	All QPs served		<p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Lack of a centralized social service hub, affordable college education</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization identified an increased need for supportive services after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially counseling services and assistance for Domestic Violence victims. The organization noted that TBRA is a short-term solution, which provides temporary housing stability for the qualifying populations. The priority need is making affordable housing for all.</p>
<b>Endeavors - McAllen</b>	Homeless service provider  Veterans	Telephone Conference  January 4, 2023	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Supportive services</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Clients criminal history</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Mental health services/PTSD services, locally no assistance available for veterans who were dishonorably discharged</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization identified a high need for supportive services including education, employment, health care, and mental health to decrease the number of homeless veterans. The clients served are mostly single-male with the age group being 45-70 years old, with an income less than 35% AMI. Additionally, there are limited shelters in the area. Access to transportation for residing outside of city limits and utility assistance was listed as priority services. Supportive services was identified as priority need.</p>
<b>Tropical Texas Behavioral Health</b>	Public Agency that addresses the needs of the qualifying populations  All QPs served	Telephone Conference  January 4, 2023	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Development and support of affordable housing</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Transportation, mental health awareness, financial assistance</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> No day shelter at Hidalgo County</p>

			<p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization identified a need for supportive and housing services since for the organization to offer these services to clients, they need to be patients. Clients are referred out to Cameron County because no day shelter is available in Hidalgo County. Low-barriers include long wait list, in-person appointments for services, transportation, and government issued IDs. Development and support of affordable housing is their patients priority need post-pandemic.</p>
<p><b>McAllen Housing Authority</b></p>	<p>Public Housing Agency (PHA)</p> <p>Low-income families At risk of homelessness</p>	<p>Telephone Conference</p> <p>January 4, 2023</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Affordable rental housing</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Limited supply of affordable units, transportation</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Lack of wrap around social services, lack of available vouchers- long waitlist</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization identified a need for permanent support services in our community. They service income groups between 30%-60%. They currently house 89 public units with qualifying populations, 54 emergency homeless at risk, vouchers 99% utilization. The organization has witness an increase of applicants under the 30% AMI applying for public housing and housing choice vouchers. The priority need for eligible activity includes development and support of affordable housing.</p>
<p><b>Hidalgo County Community Service Agency</b></p>	<p>Public Agency that addresses the needs of the qualifying populations</p> <p>All QPs served</p>	<p>Zoom meeting</p> <p>January 4, 2023</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Affordable rental housing</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Lack of funding, lack of case managers, financial instability</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Lack of a centralized social service hub, mental health services</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization identified a need to incorporate supportive services that include education, job training, health care, and counseling to help</p>

			those at risk of homelessness. This agency has seen an increased number of people victims of domestic violence during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The agency noted there is no capacity to service the high number of people in need, there are only four case managers and more staff is needed. Affordable rental housing is the priority need for the qualifying populations.
<b>Emily's Meals</b>	Non-profit  Homeless	In-person meeting  January 4, 2023	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Supportive services</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Transportation, limited or no access to phone/internet to request assistance</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Lack of day shelters, lack of supportive services such as education, job training, health care, transportation, and mental health, lack of centralized social service hub/wrap around social services</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> This agency serves to the homeless in a daily basis, they stated they deal with all qualifying populations. According to our consultation, one of the biggest needs for the homeless is transportation to travel to the closest shelter available. There is a lack day shelters and a lack of supportive services such as education, job training, health care, transportation, and mental health. The homeless population at Hidalgo County is mainly composed of Hispanics, but there is also a considerate number of white males migrating from the North and single parents with and without children. There is a high need of a one-stop shop where all supportive services are available for the qualifying populations, as currently in our area services are scattered at different locations and this is a barrier to obtain such services. Most people of this population do not have transportation and/or access to technology/cell phone to request assistance of any kind.</p>

<p><b>Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (TRLA)</b></p>	<p><b>Organization that addresses civil rights/fair housing/needs of people with disabilities</b></p> <p>At-risk of homelessness Low-income individuals Elderly and people with disabilities</p>	<p>Zoom meeting</p> <p>January 5, 2023</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Tenants unaware of their rights, lack of financial assistance</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Lack of counseling, education, job training, and healthcare</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The representative specified that the population TRLA most services are those at-risk of homelessness. On a daily basis, TRLA deals with eviction cases, family law, court registry, resident rights, rental assistance, housing services, and outreach. According to our consultation, the most requested service is rental-assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic increased rental-assistance requests from at risk population, among the most affected groups are the elderly, people with disabilities, and single-parent households. For TRLA the gaps include supportive services such as counseling, education, job training, and health care. Continuous request have been made by clients for financial assistance to help them pay for past rent and utilities. From the eligible activities for HOME-ARP, the most needed for the population served by TRLA are rental assistance, supportive services, homeless prevention services, and housing counseling. The production and preservation of affordable housing is another activity that will benefit their clients.</p>
<p><b>Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley</b></p>	<p>Homeless Service Provider</p> <p>All QPs served</p>	<p>Zoom Meeting</p> <p>January 12, 2023</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Supportive services</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Financial instability</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Shortcomings in data, comprehensive data base for local service providers</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization emphasized the importance of identifying the needs for each qualifying population and the director noted the difficulty</p>

			of obtaining accurate human trafficking data and numbers in our region, limiting resources to this QP. The priority QP are those at risk of homelessness because the increase of cost of living and low wages prevents them from accessing basic needs such as groceries; these groups are families and single parents. Community referrals occur to ensure services are provided to the qualifying population. The focus on the unmet housing and supportive services is critical.
<b>C.A.M.P. University</b>	Organizations that address civil rights/fair housing/ <b>needs of people with disabilities</b>  People with disabilities	Telephone Conference  January 12, 2023	<b>Greatest need:</b> Development and support of affordable housing  <b>Barrier:</b> Transportation  <b>Gaps in service:</b> Mental health services  <b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization provides post high-school services to disabled adults to continue enhancing their cognitive skills. The priority need for the qualifying population is development and support of affordable housing. In addition the organization noted the lack of transportation and mental health services in the region.
<b>McAllen Independent School District</b>	Public Agencies that address the needs of the qualifying populations  Low-income families Unaccompanied youth At risk of homelessness	Telephone Conference  January 12, 2023	<b>Greatest need:</b> Development and support of affordable housing  <b>Barrier:</b> Transportation, financial instability, no job/income  <b>Gaps in service:</b> Emergency assistance (hotel vouchers), NCS  <b>Feedback/Observation:</b> McAllen ISD provides supportive services to the students and parents identified under McKinney Vento. They rely on community agencies for emergency shelters and hotel vouchers. Unaccompanied youth struggle the most; staff coordinates with coaches to lend showers to these students. The priority need is development and support of affordable housing. However, the

			<p>need for emergency assistance (hotel vouchers) was reiterated; these students need services available to them the same day, being on a waitlist or following an application process that can take a few weeks does not help the student but further distract them from attending school. The community liaison and staff oversee this current school year 2022-2023 approximately over 400 students. Shelters are always at capacity, a solution is to increase the number of family units available. This also indicates a need for Non-Congregate Shelter.</p>
<p><b>Easter Seals Rio Grande Valley</b></p>	<p>Organizations that address civil rights/fair housing/<b>needs of people with disabilities</b></p> <p>People with disabilities</p>	<p>Telephone Conference</p> <p>January 16, 2023</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Affordable rental housing</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Access to technology, transportation</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Mental health services, NCS</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization provides services to young individuals that have disabilities. They recently opened a Family Resource Center to assist families that do not have access to technology or WI-FI and exploring additional resources through the help of staff. The center has a food and diaper pantry, free counseling, and nursing room. Since they opened on average 25 families receive assistance monthly. The gaps in services include reliable transportation to complete in person applications such as housing services. Ensuring integration is available in all neighborhoods is imperative. To continue the building of affordable rental housing, and offering rental assistance is priority, as well as temporary, safe and clean housing (NCS).</p>
<p><b>2-1-1 Texas</b></p>	<p>Public Agencies that address the needs of the qualifying populations</p> <p>All QPs served</p>	<p>Zoom meeting</p> <p>January 12, 2023</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Affordable rental housing and rental assistance</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Transportation</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Food assistance, utility assistance</p>

			<p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The 211 Emergency Management Coordinator described the current unmet housing needs at Hidalgo County and listed affordable rental housing and rental assistance as their top priorities. Food assistance is a top need for Hidalgo County residents, followed by utilities assistance. The biggest barrier is the lack of transportation, especially for those residing outside of McAllen, Mission, and Edinburg area. All priority services such as health care, food assistance, and rental assistance are located in the bigger cities of Hidalgo County. The number of calls for rental assistance and of people looking for jobs increased considerably after COVID-19.</p>
<p><b>Texas Continuum of Care (CoC)/Texas Homeless Network (THN)</b></p>	<p>Public Agencies that address the needs of the qualifying populations</p> <p>All QPs served</p>	<p>Telephone Conference January 20, 2023</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Those mentioned by community agencies</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Those mentioned by community agencies</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Lack of Homeless Coalition locally, lack of a centralized social service hub</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> During consultation the Director of Engagement for Texas Homeless Network emphasized the need of establishing a homeless coalition in Hidalgo County; this could strengthen the community network and provide additional resources to the qualifying populations. When asking about familiarity to the priority needs and gaps in services in our region she encouraged to seek input from all community agencies (majority listed in this group of consultation agencies).</p>
<p><b>Women Together Foundation</b></p>	<p>Victim service providers</p> <p>Fleeing, or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating</p>	<p>Zoom Meeting January 23, 2023</p>	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Affordable rental housing and supportive services</p> <p><b>Barrier:</b> Transportation, lack of funding, lack of shelters</p>

	violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking		<p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Financial assistance, lack of wrap around social services, case managers</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The organization serves QP3. This establishment, the only of its kind in our region, is open 24/7 with three different staff shifts. Services offered to survivors include emergency shelters, counseling (need for long-term counseling for trauma), legal services, educational services, a men’s program - men charged with domestic abuse, and other services to keep victims safe and stabilize their life as survivor and their families. A barrier mentioned was transportation, some of these families live outside of city limits making it difficult to access services. Due to the post-pandemic financial hardship seen by the organization, the priority need is affordable rental housing and supportive services.</p>
<b>Fair Housing Council of Greater San Antonio</b>	<p>Regional Non-Profit with focus on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity</p> <p>All QPs served</p>	Telephone Conference February 22, 2023	<p><b>Greatest need:</b> Affordable rental housing and supportive services</p> <p><b>Barriers:</b> Housing discrimination</p> <p><b>Gaps in service:</b> Education and outreach</p> <p><b>Feedback/Observation:</b> The Executive Director discussed their role in the community is to eliminate housing discrimination, provide equitable housing opportunities, and educate/outreach to the community to reduce housing disparities. Their highest form of discrimination is disability; not only regional but nationwide. Housing problems are an issue, accessibility continues to be a rising problem. The stakeholder has a Testing Program, comparable to a mystery shopper, testers are sent to different sites, and the results are evaluated to determine if discrimination is occurring.</p>

Hidalgo County and the City of McAllen requested participation of all agencies included in the Master List. The listing of entities who declined and/or did not respond are provided in the Appendix C.

**Summary of feedback received and results of upfront consultation**

During our consultations participating agencies were asked to rank HOME-ARP eligible activities based on the priority needs in the community. The highest ranked priority need for the qualifying populations is development and support of affordable housing. The agencies concurred the affordability in the area was unreasonable for the qualifying populations to sustain much less with the increase of cost of living.

The second highest ranked need is tenant-based rental assistance. HUDs Fair Markets Rents (FMR) are low; rent in the region is too expensive. Supportive services to assist the qualifying populations was the third highest ranked. Agencies expressed how supportive services sets the foundation through education services by precluding the cycle of homelessness.

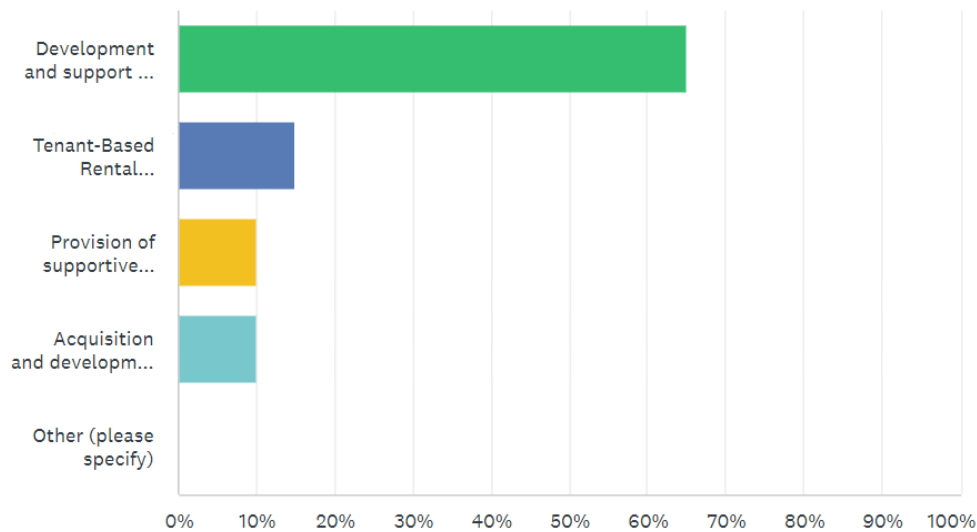
After COVID-19 the majority of organizations consulted have witnessed an exponential increase of requested shelters for all QPs. Community agencies are proactively working on delivering services to individuals or households who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, and other vulnerable populations.

**Collected responses from survey participants**

Complete online consultation tool results attached as Appendix D.

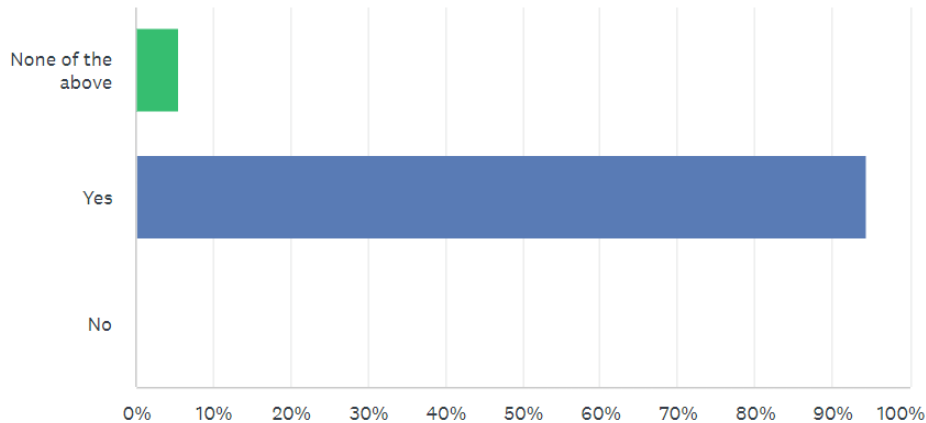
Which of the following activities do you feel is most important to reduce homelessness in your community?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



Due to COVID-19, have you witnessed an increase of individuals needing assistance?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 2



## Public Participation

- ***Date(s) of public notice in both *The Monitor* and *El Periodico* newspapers: 2/22/2023 and 3/8/2023***
- ***Public comment period: start date – 3/2/2023 end date – 3/16/2023***
- ***Date(s) of public hearing: 3/9/2023***

As an entitlement community, a Citizen Participation Plan (CPP) has been adopted for Hidalgo County. Of note, the CPP mandates a minimum 30-day notification prior to holding a public hearing. However, the HOME-ARP CPD Notice 21-10 for Public Participation requirements along with the HUD issued document “Waivers and Alternative Requirements for Implementation of the HOME American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) Program” allows for PJs to follow alternative requirements for plan submissions. Public Participation Notice in English and Spanish attached as Appendix E. *Hidalgo County followed its CPP except for the 15-day public comment period.*

Hidalgo County made this document available for public review for no less than 15-days as mandated by HUD. Hidalgo County’s comment period began on March 2, 2023 and expired on March 16, 2023. The County of Hidalgo held one public hearing regarding the development of the allocation plan, on 3/9/2023.

As part of our Public Participation process, Hidalgo County published the 15-day Public Notice for Citizen Participation as required by HUD in the region’s highest circulating newspaper “The Monitor”. The latest U.S. Census data reveals the largest Hidalgo County racial/ethnic groups are Hispanic (92.5%) followed by White (5.7%) and Asian (0.9%). As of 2020, 76.2% of Hidalgo, TX

residents were US citizens, which is lower than the national average of 93.4%. The U.S. Census also estimates that about 85 percent of households in Hidalgo County speak Spanish at home and one-third of Hidalgo residents are considered limited in their English proficiency (LEP). As a community with a high LEP population, the posting of notices included the highest circulating Spanish newspaper “El Periodico”. The County’s HOME-ARP public notice for public comment and public hearing were published on the same dates of February 22, 2023 and March 1, 2023 in both The Monitor and El Periodico (Appendix E).

### ***Efforts to broaden public participation***

Additionally, the posting of notices in both English and Spanish language included Hidalgo County Urban County Program outside bulletin board. All public hearings held in conjunction with the solicitation of public comment occurred in handicapped accessible facilities. Consultation partners, Cities, public libraries and Precincts within our jurisdiction were contacted to request publication of the public participation notice on their agency’s public common area (Appendix E).

Other efforts to broaden public participation include the posting of the English and Spanish version of the 15-day Public Notice for Citizen Participation in Hidalgo County social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

### ***Comments and recommendations received through the public participation process***

During the 15-day public comment period no written comments were received. However, the following comments and recommendations were received through the public hearing process:

1. People living in colonias need additional financial assistance for more opportunities to move into permanent housing.
2. Rental programs should not require landlord participation. People renting in colonias have been dealing with uncooperative landlords, resulting rental assistance not being provided to tenants.

### ***Comments and recommendations not accepted and the reasons why***

Comments accepted – The Director, Ann Cass, of Proyecto Azteca, a local non-profit and Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), indicated the development of permanent housing should be considered. Our office informed Mrs. Cass that it is not an eligible HOME-ARP activity. Regarding landlord participation, the requirement for landlord participation will be addressed in our HOME-ARP policies and procedures. These P&Ps will be soon developed.

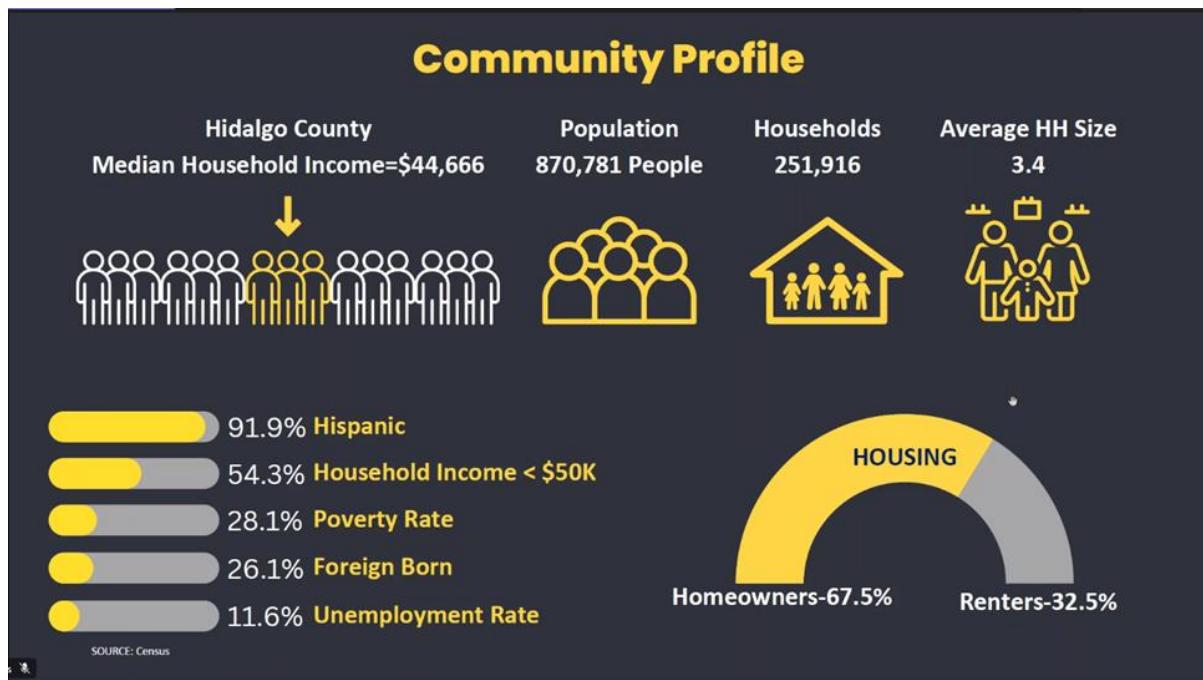
## Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis

In accordance with Section V.C.1 of the Notice (page 14), a PJ must evaluate the size and demographic composition of all four of the qualifying populations within its boundaries and assess the unmet needs of each of those populations. In addition, a PJ must identify any gaps within its current shelter and housing inventory as well as the service delivery system. A PJ should use current data, including point in time count, housing inventory count, or other data available through CoCs, and consultations with service providers to quantify the individuals and families in the qualifying populations and their need for additional housing, shelter, or services.

### About Hidalgo County

Hidalgo County, TX borders Brooks County, TX, Cameron County, TX, Kenedy County, TX, Starr County, TX, and Willacy County, TX. Hidalgo County's estimated 2023 population is 899,584 with a growth rate of 1.08% in the past year according to the most recent United States census data and it is the 8th largest county in Texas. The 2010 population was 774,769 and has seen a growth of 16.11% since that time. Hidalgo County has a median age of 29.4 and a median household income of \$44,666.

The following Community Profile depicts additional size and demographic composition of Hidalgo County's population:



SOURCE: U.S. Census

\* Data after 2020 is projected based on recent growth in the region.

Specifically, the size and demographics of the qualifying population are exhibited in the Point-In-Time (PIT), American Community Survey (ACS), Continuum of Care Housing Inventory Count (HIC), and Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) reports.

## **Size and demographic composition of qualifying populations within Hidalgo County**

### *Homeless as defined in 24 CFR 91.5*

#### ***Year 2021***

In January 2021, due to complications from COVID-19, each community was given the option to conduct a socially distanced observation count of those staying in unsheltered locations (streets, cars, outdoor encampments, etc.). However, as stated by the Texas Homeless Network, this data is not as accurate as doing the full unsheltered count. Hidalgo County decided to opt-out of the unsheltered count at the recommendation of the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care Board.

According to the Annual Point-in-Time Count (PIT) conducted on January 28, 2021 in Hidalgo County there were 36 individuals experiencing sheltered homelessness. From the total, 5 of these individuals were experiencing homelessness due to COVID-19 pandemic.

From the 36 individuals experiencing sheltered homelessness, the PIT Count identified 15 as female, 14 as male, and 7 as “unknown” gender. There were 32 adults of 18 years and older, 2 were young adults between 18 to 24 years of age, 14 were children, and 2 were veterans. 28 identified their ethnicity as white, 3 as having multiple ethnicities, 1 as American-Indian, 1 as “other”, and 3 as “unknown”.

In 2021 in Hidalgo County there were 2 emergency shelter projects and 1 transitional housing project. In emergency shelters there were 26 individuals and 10 individuals who were in transitional housing. Additionally, this PIT Count identified that from the 22 adults experiencing homelessness, 6 had serious mental illness, 2 had a substance use disorder, and 9 were survivors of domestic violence.

#### ***Year 2022***

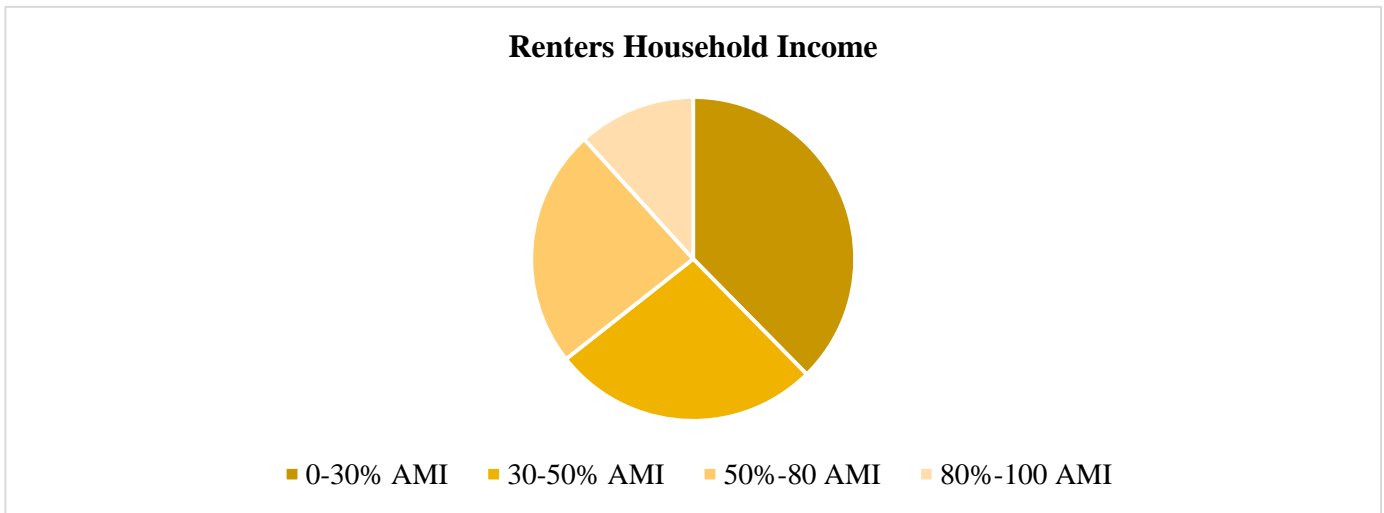
The 2022 Annual Point-in-Time Count (PIT) resulted in a total of 448 homeless persons. The 2022 PIT Count for Hidalgo County showed combined results, meaning that the total numbers account for sheltered and unsheltered homeless people.

From the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness, this report identified 317 as adults of age 18 years or older, 25 were young adults of ages 18 to 24 years, and 131 children were in a state of homelessness. There were 2 individuals identified as chronically homeless and 8 individuals were veterans.

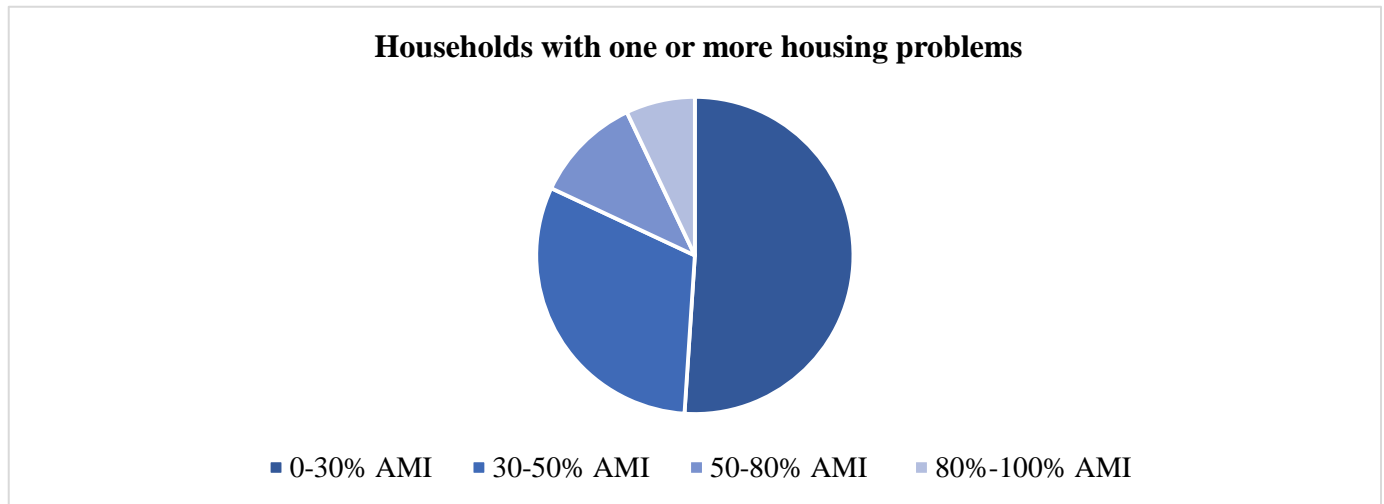
***At Risk of Homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 91.5***

Limited data is available. The information below is based on the 2015-2019 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data. The CHAS data outlines “housing problems” as a measure of the number of households in need of housing assistance. There are four housing problems in the CHAS data: 1) housing unit lacks complete kitchen facilities; 2) housing unit lacks complete plumbing facilities; 3) household is overcrowded; and 4) household is cost burdened. A household is said to have a housing problem if they have any 1 or more of these 4 problems. Hidalgo County has a total of 76,180 renter households. Of these, 41,025 have at least 1 of 4 housing problems and 28,370 have at least 1 of 4 severe housing problems. Approximately 25,465 are at or below 30% AMI and 14,355 renter households are at or below 50% AMI but above 30% AMI.

**Renters Housing Needs Inventory**



\*SOURCE: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)



\*SOURCE: Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)

***Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking, as defined by HUD in the Notice***

In the 2022 PIT Count, the number of people experiencing homelessness who were: domestic violence (DV) survivors, dating violence survivors, sexual assault survivors, or stalking or human trafficking survivors was 9 (2.01% of the total count), the same number of people from the 2020 count of DV survivors in shelters. Of note, because the HOME-ARP definition does not require households to be homeless to qualify, this is likely an undercount of the QP.

Although the number of DV survivors has remained the same for the PIT Count of 2021 and 2022, according to Hidalgo County's one-on-one consultations with Salvation Army and Women Together Foundation the demand of services for victims of domestic violence of abuse have increased exponentially since the onset of the pandemic, mainly due to isolation, financial and work-related stressors, homeschooling, and the cost of childcare.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), intimate partner violence accounts for 20% of all violent crimes in the U.S. As of 2023, 34.5% of women and 35.1% of men in Texas experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes, which is higher than the national average of 25% of women and 11% of men.

The only shelter in the Hidalgo County for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking is Women Together Foundation, Inc. located in McAllen. They provide services for survivors seeking housing at the emergency shelter. In 2022, the emergency shelter reported in the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) a total of 14 beds with households with children and 4 units with households with children. They operate a transitional housing complex of 16 apartment style units of two or three bedrooms; year round they are at capacity. Housing Inventory Count recorded 45 beds for households with children and 3 units for households with children. A significant demographic characteristic of those seeking assistance are women with children, with fewer men. The victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and stalking are all in need of housing assistance.

Historic data shows the number of victims receiving services is likely to continue. The Texas Crime Report for 2021 filed by Texas Department of Public Safety reported 41 offenses of sexual assault in the City of McAllen. The report also captures human trafficking reports; McAllen was not listed as having high reports in human trafficking. The City of McAllen Police Department annually generates a National Incident – Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Crime Report 2022, an overview of the crimes for each reporting year. NIBRS includes the categories of crimes against persons, crimes against property, and crimes against society. No reported human trafficking (commercial sex acts or involuntary servitude). Over 50 cases of sexual assaults reported, an increase compared to reporting year 2021. In total, a reported 108 sex offenses are reflected in the NIBRS data. The exploitation endured by qualifying population 3 require housing and supportive services to help rehabilitate into permanent housing.

***Other populations requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness and other populations at greatest risk of housing instability as defined by HUD in the Notice***

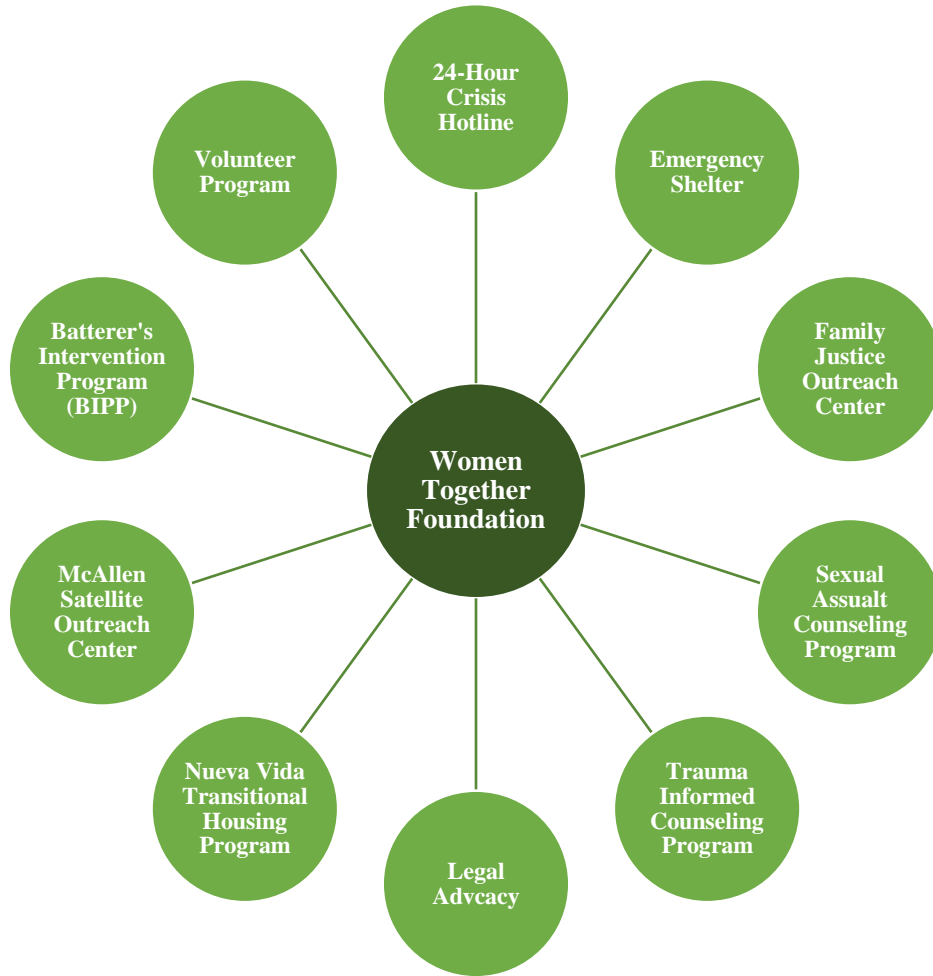
The Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) accurately captures the size and demographics for the families requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness and at greatest risk of housing instability; including veterans and families, meeting one the components, under the qualifying population CPD-21-10. The defining difference from qualifying population 2 is the income limit. The annual income is less than or equal to 50% of the area median income, as determined by HUD. CHAS recorded a total of 3,335 renters. All renters have one of the following housing problems incomplete kitchens facilities, incomplete plumbing facilities, or/and more than one person per room. Results indicate the need to improve housing conditions and an economic crisis for the each household identifying 1,220 renters struggling with cost burdens.

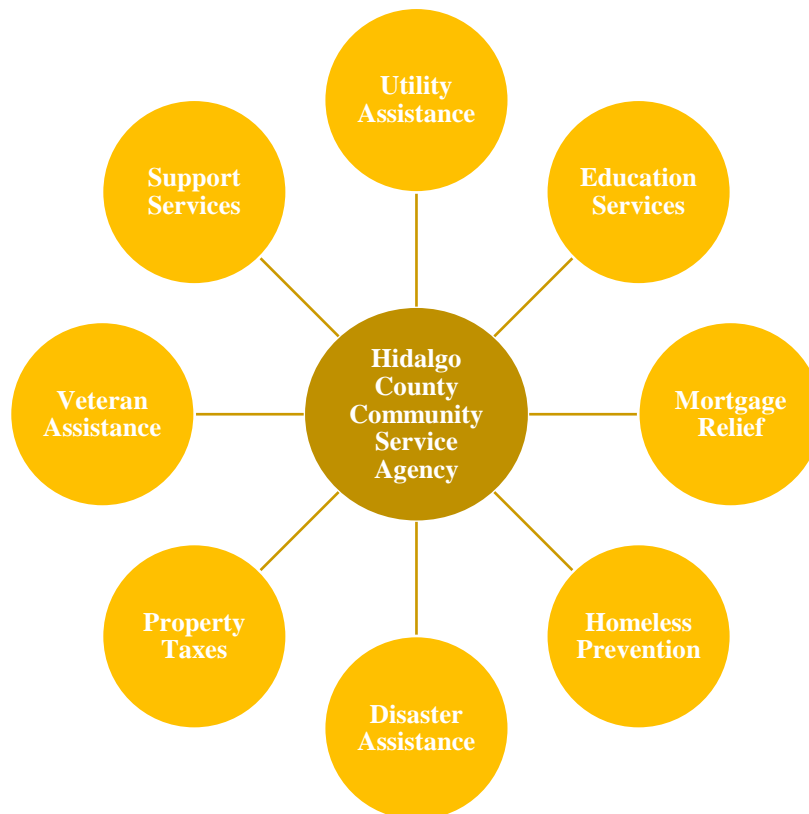
The latest Census identified a population of 880,356 individuals residing at Hidalgo County. The percentage for the population living at or below poverty level is 28.8%, an estimate of 253, 543 persons. CHAS Data shows a total of 40,230 Hidalgo County renters with housing cost burden at or below 30% AMI. Renters and homeowners alike have unmet needs in Hidalgo County. Community voices and Census data show needs are greatest for households with the lowest incomes.

**Current resources available for the qualifying populations at Hidalgo County**

Although, Hidalgo County does not provide any direct services to benefit homeless persons, the county funds are distributed annually to local providers to meet the needs of homeless persons. The mainstream services in the area are fully used to compliment services targeted to homeless persons. Hidalgo County does not provide any direct services to benefit the homeless. However, Hidalgo County funds (3) sub recipients under the HESG program that provides the direct benefit to the homeless. The organizations that provide these services are: The Salvation Army, Women Together Foundation, and Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley.

The needs provided at these facilities were addressed by providing services to homeless persons in case management, eviction/rental assistance, utility assistance and other services related to the homeless. Additionally, these organizations provide outreach, emergency shelter, health care and behavior health care, rental and utility assistance, food assistance and clothing. These complimentary services exit to provide auxiliary support to the homeless and at risk of becoming homeless persons.





## **Unmet housing and service needs of qualifying populations**

- Sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations;
- those currently housed populations at risk of homelessness;
- other families requiring services or housing assistance or to prevent homelessness; and,
- those at greatest risk of housing instability or in unstable housing situations:

### ***Homeless as defined in 24 CFR 91.5***

The homeless--both sheltered and un-sheltered--are in need of permanent, affordable, and decent housing, and may need other supportive services such as food, subsidized child care, housing search assistance, mental health services, and employment training. Emergency and transitional housing assistance with supportive services are also necessary to meet the growing numbers of homeless individuals and families. Some causes of homelessness have been noted as due to: Unable to pay rent or mortgage, mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse, domestic violence, overcrowded living conditions, or because the household is earning less than 30% of the median income and paying more than 60% of their income on housing expenses.

In addition, episodic homelessness is also of concern. With a staggering wait list (months to years) at the public housing authorities within the area and no transitional housing for the general population, few options for stable housing exist for persons experiencing homelessness. Chronically homeless individuals represent a significant concern for homeless service providers. Often times, their reasons for becoming homeless and/or continuing their homeless status is a multitude of life events including unemployment, divorce/separation, domestic violence, mental/physical disabilities, addiction or incarceration.

### ***At Risk of Homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 91.5***

Consultation with homeless service providers and CoC leadership identified an immediate need for additional homeless prevention resources. With eviction court proceedings now resuming after a pandemic moratorium, as well as rising rent prices and economic uncertainty, providers of homeless prevention services see an increased demand for their services to help relocate families who have been evicted and to help maintain stability for families not yet forced to leave.

The Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley discussed how the unmet housing and supportive services negatively affect households at risk of homelessness. Further noted in the Comprehensive Housing Affordability those whose income are between 0-30% AMI, 4,960 renters all reported having housing problems. The units available fail to meet adequate living standards with incomplete kitchen facilities, plumbing facilities. Of these housing problems, more than 1 person per room is another component reported; multi-generational households can be attributed to a higher number of persons living in a rental unit.

***Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking, as defined by HUD in the Notice***

Women Together is the only emergency shelter for fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, in the region. They work efficiently to ensure the safety of the victim and survivors of sexual assault. The Director mentioned during the one-on-one consultation how space capacity was not an issue since they work with neighboring counties to house anyone seeking immediate shelter. Nueva Vida Transitional Housing is managed and operated by Women Together for the victims and families. Annually, they assist approximately 13 families the duration of time is 18-months. During this course of time they attend weekly life skills sessions and counseling. The Director emphasized the need to hire more counselors for the long-term trauma suffered by victims of domestic and survivors of sexual assault and their families. Women Together have two counselors; they require additional counselors to meet with the demand of providing long-term trauma counseling. Data from their Program Highlights for 2021 -reported trauma informed counseling programs saw each 279 for individual counseling and 230 for crisis intervention, a combined total of 509. Additionally, the same counselors conduct the sexual assault counseling program seeing 273 sexual assault survivors in 2021.

***Other populations requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness and other populations at greatest risk of housing instability as defined by HUD in the Notice***

The need to deliver unmet housing and supportive services to the other population critical as described in consultations as those greatest at risk of housing instability since their income to rent ratio is too low; the income requirement for this qualifying is 0-50% AMI. Most community agencies, stakeholders, and direct providers discussed how they are likely to struggle due to the continued rise of cost of living; most of these individuals are on a fix income or their salary is unable to sustain today's expenses. Furthermore, most expressed the need to make rental assistance available with additional supportive services. Veterans and families most of which are single and older male adults are affected as reported by Endeavors during the consultation. The increase witnessed in the last two years for permanent supportive housing is rooted from the pandemic.

**Hidalgo County gaps within the current shelter, housing inventory, and service delivery system**

1. Limited access to decent, safe and affordable housing - The prevalence of colonias in Hidalgo County compared with the rest of the state as well as the number of households lacking plumbing and kitchen facilities raise great concern. In addition, rising housing costs and stagnant/low wages inhibit some homeowners and rental providers from readily making housing improvements. Further, overcrowding situations occur more frequently in the region due to cultural norms.

2. Limited access to publicly supported housing - Shortages in number of publicly supported units compared to waitlist currently exist for housing authorities in Hidalgo County. Communities have faced decreasing federal support related to homebuyer and rental subsidies over the past few years. Limited number of qualified low-income housing providers are located within the area. Rents, particularly in the MSA, reflect a steady increase. Private investment in affordable housing is limited or non-existent in some areas.
3. Limited access to transportation - While regional transportation routes have increased over the past few years, parts of Hidalgo County remain without access or with limited access. Areas of interests, such as health care, social service, educational and commercial facilities are becoming more increasingly accessible; however, the need for reliable and low cost transportation continues to exist.
4. Location and type of affordable housing - The region struggles with lack of appropriately sized units, particularly for families, large size families and multigenerational households. Further, compounding the issue is cost burden and severe cost burden concerns. Inequity exists between urban and rural areas in relation to availability of affordable housing.
5. Limited access to equitable financial services - In the recent past, predatory lending practices occurred in the area. Households who were victims of these lending practices continue to face the ramifications, including poor credit. Also, a lack of financial literacy has posed a hindrance to accessing traditionally available consumer credit. Further, credit agencies often compete for financially uninformed households. Lastly, high number/proportion of Spanish-speaking residents face challenges when reviewing and executing English-composed documents.
6. Lack of resources regarding fair housing - Housing practices and enforcement vary by community. Information regarding fair housing and the ability to purchase or access housing where one chooses may be impeded by socio- or economic factors. Further, apathy in fair housing issues exists within the region.
7. Limited access to proficient schools - Educational policies, such as open enrollment, may sway or, conversely, limit a person's ability to freely choose the location of their home. Educational inequities are most apparent in areas or jurisdictions where a higher number of non-English speaking persons reside. Some of the school districts within the area face dwindling population while others scramble to accommodate the influx of students.
8. Jurisdictional variations - Inequities in infrastructure, quality of buildings and housing construction, and emergency services are apparent between municipalities and rural locales. Social services and access to these services may be hindered by the distance of one's residence to the MSA. Jurisdictions vary in implementation of policies, such as code enforcement, access to job training and job sites as well as availability of services for special needs populations.

## Shelter and Housing Inventory

Continuum of Care (CoC) Homeless Assistance Programs Housing Inventory Count Reports provide a snapshot of a CoC's HIC, an inventory of housing conducted annually during the last ten days in January, and are available at the national and state level, as well as for each CoC. The reports tally the number of beds and units available on the night designated for the count by program type, and include beds dedicated to serve persons who are homeless as well as persons in Permanent Supportive Housing.

Proj. Type	Organization Name	Project Name	Community	HMIS-Participating	Victim Service Provider	Target Population	Year-Round Beds	Utilization Rate
Emergency Shelter	Mujeres Unidas/Women Together	Mujeres Unidas/Women Together ES	Mc Allen	No	Yes	Domestic Violence Survivors	45	33%
Emergency Shelter	The Salvation Army of McAllen	Red Shield Shelter ES	Mc Allen	Yes	No	NA	32	100%
Other Permanent Housing	Edinburg Housing Authority	PH  EHV   Edinburg Housing Authority	Edinburg	No	No	NA	35	14%
Other Permanent Housing	Hidalgo Housing Authority	PH  EHV   Hidalgo Housing Authority	Hidalgo County	No	No	NA	29	59%
Other Permanent Housing	Mission Housing Authority	PH  EHV   Mission Housing Authority	Hidalgo County	No	No	NA	30	47%
Other Permanent Housing	Pharr Housing Authority	PH  EHV   Pharr Housing Authority	Hidalgo County	No	No	NA	36	42%
Other Permanent Housing	Housing Authority of McAllen	PH  EHV   McAllen Housing Authority	Mc Allen	No	No	NA	54	26%
Permanent Supportive Housing	Housing Authority of McAllen	VASH-McAllen	Mc Allen	No	No	NA	21	67%
Rapid Re-Housing	Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley	ESG-CV RRH Hidalgo County	Hidalgo County	Yes	No	NA	4	100%
Rapid Re-Housing	Endeavors, Inc.	McAllen RRH SSVF	Mc Allen	Yes	No	NA	2	100%
Rapid Re-Housing	The Salvation Army of McAllen	ESG/CC/RRH	Mc Allen	Yes	No	NA	4	100%
Transitional Housing	Mujeres Unidas/Women Together	Mujeres Unidas/Women Together TH	Mc Allen	No	Yes	Domestic Violence Survivors	14	64%

\*SOURCE: Housing Inventory Count Report

## Texas Balance of State 2022 Point in Time Count -unsheltered

Data from PIT reports 395 unsheltered persons, 283 adults, 24 young adults, and 112 children. From the 283 adults, 3 reported having serious mental illness, 4 have substance use disorder, and 4 are survivors of domestic violence. HIC and PIT reporting outlines the need for additional bed/units to shelter the 283 unsheltered persons.

## Service Delivery System

Direct service providers and community agencies year-round are working towards improving methods to facilitate the application process, circulate their services in the community, and ensure their wait lists are purged frequently

## HOME-ARP Activities

The County of Hidalgo will comply with all local, State and Federal requirements to solicit proposals through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Proposals will be evaluated based on pre-determined objective criteria and the best responsible vendor will be selected to provide services.

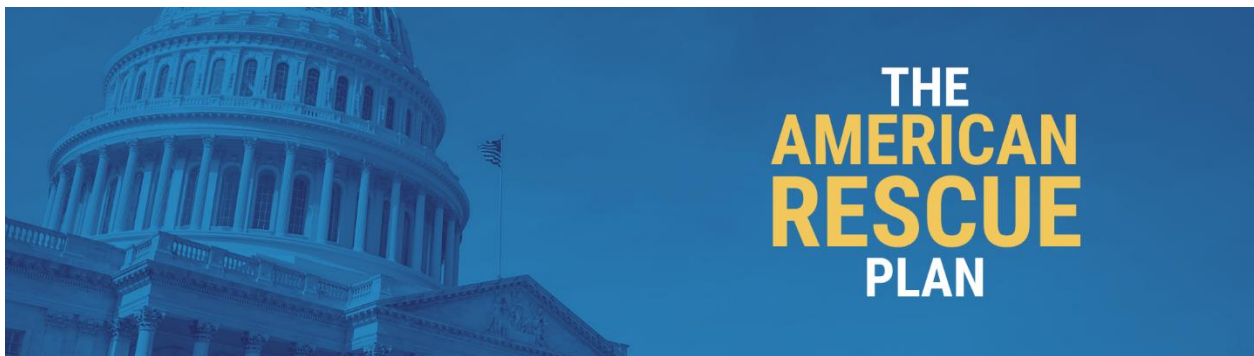
The County does not intend to administer activities directly; instead Hidalgo County will procure for service providers and sub recipients. Similarly, Hidalgo County does not intend to administer funds to a sub recipient or contractor prior to the acceptance of the HOME-ARP allocation plan.

The goal of this plan recommendation is to provide permanent housing and stability for all people in Hidalgo County experiencing a long length of stay in homelessness and/or chronic homelessness, population fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, other populations where providing supportive services or assistance would prevent the family's homelessness or would serve those with the greatest risk of housing instability, and/or veterans and families that include a veteran family member that meet one of the preceding criteria.

The Development of Affordable Rental Housing combined with Supportive Services addresses the needs of people experiencing homelessness, chronic homelessness, individuals and families at risk of becoming homeless, victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, and other populations in need of assistance.

Additionally, our consultations and unmet needs reports from multiple agencies demonstrate a need for Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA). All QPs are currently being helped through emergency housing assistance, but our goal is to not only place them at an emergency shelter instead these population are in desperate need of education, transportation services, medical assistance, and transitional housing opportunities.

*All reports utilized for this allocation plan and received from agencies consulted can be reviewed under Appendix F.*



## Use of HOME-ARP Funding

Hidalgo County will distribute HOME-ARP funds in accordance with its priority needs identified in its needs assessment and gap analysis. The distribution of funds will be as follows:

Activity	Funding Amount	Percent of the Grant	Statutory Limit
Supportive Services	\$ 1, 842,269.90		
Acquisition and Development of Non-Congregate Shelters	\$ 0		
Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	\$ 1,000,000.00		
Development of Affordable Rental Housing	\$ 3,500,000.00		
Non-Profit Operating	\$ 0	0 %	5%
Non-Profit Capacity Building	\$ 0	0 %	5%
Administration and Planning	\$ 1,119,224.10	15 %	15%
<b>Total HOME ARP Allocation</b>	<b>\$ 7,461,494.00</b>		

### HOME-ARP Production Housing Goals

- Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA): 50 units
- Development of Affordable Rental Housing: 35 units

### Preferences

Not applicable, no specific preferences are anticipated for Hidalgo County’s HOME-ARP projects and activities. Any individual or household in a Qualifying Population will have access to the Affordable Rental Housing Units, TBRA and Supportive Services provided in the Plan. Guidelines for administration of these programs will be developed in coordination with the request for proposal process.

### Referral Methods

Not applicable, Hidalgo County will not use referral methods for its HOME-ARP projects and activities. Hidalgo County will use a project/activity waiting list for all HOME-ARP funded activities.

## **Limitations in a HOME-ARP rental housing or NCS project**

Not applicable, Hidalgo County will not limit eligibility for a HOME-ARP rental housing or NCS project to a particular qualifying population or subpopulation.

## **HOME-ARP Refinancing Guidelines**

Not applicable, Hidalgo County will not use any HOME-ARP funds for refinancing purposes.