

The seal of Hidalgo County, Texas, is a large, light gray watermark in the background. It is circular and contains the text "THE COUNTY OF HIDALGO" at the top and "TEXAS" at the bottom. In the center is a five-pointed star surrounded by a wreath of oak and olive branches.

**Hidalgo County American Rescue Plan Act
Housing Program**



Table of Contents

Background Information	3
Program Description	4
Response to COVID-19 Public Health Emergency	4
Identification of Eligibility Category	5
Projects	5



Background Information

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the US was facing extreme housing challenges.¹ Housing insecurity or the lack of quality and affordable housing has increased while federal investments in housing have decreased which contributes to the current housing crisis. Coupled with the pandemic, the already unstable housing system heightened, especially for economically marginalized populations experiencing socioeconomic disparities.² The social determinants of health are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality of life outcomes and risks. One domain is neighborhood and built environment.³ Studies have shown that various aspects of the built environment can have direct profound effects on both physical and mental health outcomes and magnify the burden of illness and/or disease particularly among ethnic minority populations and low-income communities. Dilapidated housing is associated with exposures to lead, asthma triggers including mold, moisture, dust mites and rodents and mental health stressors such as violence and social isolation.⁴ Low-income and/or minority communities are the populations who are living in substandard conditions. Furthermore, in 2019, over 37.1 million households were reported as experiencing housing instability, which may include having trouble paying rent, overcrowding or spending the bulk of household income on housing. Of these, 17.1 were cost burdened or severely cost burdened, which means they have little left over each month to spend on other necessities such as food, clothing, utilities and health care.⁵ The connection between one's home and health has been a longstanding issue and it is of utmost importance to not only address the harm but to develop projects that will mitigate the negative economic impacts long-term. The final rule clarifies and expands

¹ <https://www.habitat.org/stories/7-findings-covid-19s-impact-housing>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9874908/>

³ <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>

⁴

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1257572/#:~:text=Dilapidated%20housing%20is%20associated%20with,as%20violence%20and%20social%20isolation>

⁵

<https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/housing-in-stability>



the ability of recipients to use SLFRF funds to address the general lack of affordable housing and housing challenges underscored by the pandemic.⁶

Program Description

The Hidalgo County American Rescue Plan Act Housing Program will provide housing support and services to negatively impacted populations. Investing in these services will help prevent further disrepair, improve the function and efficiency, and keep individuals and families safe. The objective of this program is to provide housing support and/or services to eligible homeowners who are in need of home repairs, rehabilitation, or replacement of housing to improve housing insecurity and health outcomes. This includes but is not limited to materials, labor, and other construction costs for the substantial reconstruction of owner occupied dwellings. Substantial reconstruction may be necessary if the housing unit is dilapidated beyond rehabilitation, or the cost of the rehabilitation is greater than the cost to reconstruct.

Response to COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

Addressing the quality of housing as a public health issue may help prevent and reduce negative health outcomes. All neighborhoods are different; however, how well homes are maintained affect the quality of housing. Widespread deterioration can negatively affect mental, physical and social health outcomes. This may also affect environmental conditions, crime and violence and access to public services. To prevent poor quality housing in disadvantaged neighborhoods, Hidalgo County aims to provide services and support to disadvantaged residents to improve quality of life and leverage health equity.⁷

Under the interim final rule, recipients may use SLFRF funds to provide a set of housing services to communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Specifically, the interim final rule provided that programs or services that address housing insecurity, lack of affordable housing, or homelessness, were responsive to the negative economic impacts of the pandemic when provided to

⁶ Department of the Treasury. (2022). Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. *Federal Register*, 87(18), p. 4360

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<https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/quality-housing>



disproportionately impacted households and communities.⁸ Hidalgo County aims to invest in its most vulnerable communities by developing housing projects that will leverage health outcomes and mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19.

Identification of Eligibility Category

One of the priorities highlighted in the American Rescue Plan Act is to ensure funds reach historically-disadvantaged communities. Communities of low-income level suffer from disparities in access, but many rural areas also lack access. The Hidalgo County American Rescue Plan Act Housing Program is eligible under the ‘Negative Economic Impacts’ category as outlined by the U.S. Treasury. The final rule provides clarification and builds on the objectives stated in the interim final rule to improve access to stable, affordable housing, including through interventions that increase the supply of affordable and high-quality living units, improve housing security, and support durable and sustainable homeownership.⁹

The Hidalgo County American Rescue Plan Act Housing Program will assist eligible homeowners who are in need of home repairs, rehabilitation, or replacement of housing. In addition, it provides a critical opportunity to improve health and well-being by addressing disparities thereby improving public health outcomes.

Projects

Numerous projects will be included as part of the Hidalgo County American Rescue Plan Act Housing Program, including but not limited to the projects listed below.

- Hidalgo County Precinct 2 Small Repairs and Rehabilitation Housing Project - Project Number: ARPA-22-122-098
- Hidalgo County Precinct 2 Revitalize and Renew Home Replacement Program- Project Number: ARPA-24-122-371

⁸ Department of the Treasury. (2022). Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. *Federal Register*, 87(18), p. 4365

⁹ Department of the Treasury. (2022). Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. *Federal Register*, 87(18), p. 4365