

# Hennepin County Final Report

## Pandemic Response Projects

March 2021 – December 2024



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# Summary

From the start of the pandemic, Hennepin County faced an unprecedented health, economic and social crisis that needed a coordinated response. In 2020, Hennepin County was able to partner with more than 600 community organizations for multiple efforts, thanks to federal funding through the CARES act.

Hennepin County has leveraged its American Rescue Plan Act — State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA-SLFRF) to further its mission and vision to support residents who are adversely affected by disparities; to support innovative, equitable and sustainable changes in service delivery; to promote private and public partnerships within our community, and to seek other funding sources to maximize our investments and best position Hennepin County for the future.

Through the ARPA-SLFRF program, Hennepin County had a total award of \$245.9 million to respond to the economic and public health impacts of COVID-19 and to mitigate its impact on the community, residents, and businesses. In March 2022, the county board took action to use the dollars from ARPA-SLFRF for government services. From 2022 through 2024, the county has used other revenue sources for pandemic response and recovery efforts, which has resulted in efficiencies. Programs and services previously authorized by the board continued but were funded through other sources outside of the ARPA-SLFRF.

Hennepin County established key principles and priorities to build upon the county’s approach to disparity reduction and to support pandemic recovery efforts. Hennepin County is committed to using a racial equity lens to target resources and focus outcomes on reducing disparities in the following domains: education, employment, health, housing, income, justice, and connectivity. In addition to the domain areas, overarching infrastructure and supports have been prioritized.

## Principles

- Hennepin County embraces and embodies core values of continuous improvement, customer service, diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, and workforce development as we serve our residents.
- Hennepin County is committed to using a racial equity lens to target resources and focus outcomes on reducing disparities in the following domains: education, employment, health, housing, income, justice, and transportation.
- In response and recovery efforts, Hennepin County embraces opportunities for transformative change including lasting investments and more efficient, effective, and accessible service delivery for residents in communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.
- Hennepin County will pursue and leverage other available federal and state funding before using CARES or SLFRF funding to support the recovery of residents, communities and businesses.
- Hennepin County is committed to a people-centered, inclusive, and equitable approach in policymaking and service delivery.



## Priorities

- Fund health programs to respond to COVID-19.
- Ensure legally required functions of county government can continue during COVID-19 pandemic.
- Invest in capital resources and infrastructure that help improve service delivery, remove barriers and mitigate health risks.
- Prioritize strategic investments that will have long-term value or cost reductions.
- Support the recovery of communities, residents, small businesses and nonprofits impacted by COVID-19 in ways that will help our region emerge from this crisis with an even stronger, more inclusive and resilient economy over the long term.
- Expand support and outreach to culturally specific human services and health care providers to strengthen their long-term ability to meet community needs.



## Project inventory

Hennepin County has supported residents through the pandemic and beyond as residents and communities worked to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This final report includes a summary of Hennepin County's pandemic response projects from March 2021 through December 2024. Projects are presented by disparity domain area.

The following pages provide a summary of each project that relied upon pandemic response funding. Each section may be pulled out to serve as a stand-alone fact sheet.

# CONNECTIVITY DOMAIN



## Broadband and Digital Inclusion

**Allocation amount: \$10,000,000**

### Project description

Project funding was primarily used to continue the most successful parts of the Connecting Hennepin initiative: to ensure all county residents have access to, and can easily and safely use, modern technology to help realize their life goals. This program aims to reduce disparities in the areas of computer access, internet access, and digital skill building.

Data from the American Community Survey and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, among other sources, show geographic, racial, and economic disparities in digital equity. Households that include Black, Indigenous, Hispanic or other people of color are less likely to own PCs or have home broadband.

To overcome these barriers, Hennepin County invested funds to ensure all residents experiencing digital disparities are aware of and able to engage with programs effectively.

### Project outcomes

Broadband and Digital Inclusion (BDI) employed a resident-based approach utilizing evidence-based strategies and best practices to maximize the investment. For the reporting period, highlights include:

- Distribution of 12,894 Windows laptops and Chromebooks to eligible residents
- Installation of more than 250 miles of fiber serving more than 3,750 homes
- Installation of broadband for 10 affordable multi-dwelling units (MDUs) for a total of 670 bedrooms with new connections
- Referrals for thousands of residents to partner community-based organizations (CBOs) for supplemental training and / or support

Support for residents was primarily delivered by our Digital Navigation team. The team worked with community partners to ensure residents were referred, when needed, to culturally and linguistically appropriate services. BDI provided services to residents who met the following eligibility requirements: residency within the county, income at or below 180% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (household annual incomes at or below \$65,000), certified completion of Hennepin County's internet safety course, and confirmation they lack adequate technology or connectivity. When asked, residents indicated they would use technology to meet various needs, with job seeking or for education as the most common response. This was followed by accessing services online, such as for a housing search, attending telehealth appointments or therapy sessions, meeting with probation officers, or attending court appointments.

Among residents who reported their race, nearly 40% identify as Black or African American, and 8% identify as American Indian. Both African American and American Indian households in Hennepin County are overrepresented among households with digital barriers. More than two thirds (70%) of people served reside in Minneapolis, with the greatest concentration of clients residing in the ZIP codes of 55404 in the South Minneapolis neighborhoods of Phillips, and 55411 in North Minneapolis bounded by Lowry Avenue North and Olson Memorial Highway. These ZIP codes are part of qualified census tracts and have some of the greatest digital disparities shown in American Community Survey data.

While many of the residents referred for technology support are "digitally ready," meaning they demonstrate intermediate or higher digital skills and online safety practices, they lacked access to technology and often required additional assistance with complex online systems. Residents identified as having limited or no digital skills (about 1 in 5 residents) received more robust training and technology support.

For residents experiencing difficulties affording broadband at home, BDI launched a campaign to promote the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). This was created to address concerns raised by partners regarding the lack of affordable internet options. More than 55,000 Hennepin County households were enrolled in ACP as of the final enrollment date of February 8, 2024. As ACP was winding down, BDI updated an ACP outreach campaign and used it to inform residents of details outlining a county-supported bridge program for eligible households as part of the Hennepin Connectivity Plan (HCP). 25,319 households were automatically enrolled in this program, providing them with up to a \$9.95 credit towards their monthly Internet Essentials or Internet Essentials Plus bill. BDI continues to work with partners throughout the county, as well as with national organizations, to advocate for legislative policies and coalitions to continue addressing broadband accessibility and affordability issues.

BDI also addressed inadequate internet access to residents in affordable multifamily housing. The access issue had been identified as a problem through analysis of data by Education SuperHighway and Hennepin County. Based on a successful pilot at Pursuit Hometel and Stevens Square Residence that provided access for 206 units, eight additional properties were identified and entered contracts throughout the reporting period. As of December 31, 2024, these additional properties enabled broadband accessibility to 464 additional bedroom units in Minneapolis and Plymouth.

With increased technology access and rising cyber security and privacy risks, Hennepin County provides basic online safety training to all program participants. Although some residents demonstrate a robust understanding of how to stay safe online, nearly a quarter have no or very limited knowledge in this area. Digital services like online banking, telehealth, and county-delivered services involve sensitive and private data and frequently implement security measures such as two-factor authentication. In response to this need and in accordance with data showing the importance of trusted advisors in digital inclusion efforts, BDI launched an informational site ([think2click1](#)) inspired by the carpenter's saying of "measure twice, cut once." The goal was for residents to ensure accuracy before taking an action that cannot be reversed, especially since one wrong click can cause damage. The site continues to provide residents with specific, targeted information and tools for most residents, including parents and youth, senior citizens, and non-English speaking residents. The various ads focused on internet safety yielded more than 14 million impressions across all channels and resulted in 57,435 website clicks.

## Project feature

We used targeted outreach that helped residents understand they could get the digital help they need to complete personal tasks and goals. Below is one of the many quotes and testimonials from participants to help illustrate this impact.

"This laptop will now allow me to complete schoolwork online outside of school and my home without trying to submit everything on my phone! Thank you!"



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## Educational Services

**Allocation amount: \$500,000**

### Project description

Hennepin County’s Education Support Services (ESS) department provides support and resources to youth who receive county services with a focus on student empowerment, skill building, and collaboration with families, schools, and support professionals. Hennepin County Library (HCL) is a national leader of library service, innovation, and excellence. The 41 libraries, website, and outreach services serve 1.2 million county residents over 611 square miles. HCL’s mission is to inspire, facilitate, and celebrate lifelong learning.

For this collaborative project, ¡Aprendamos juntos! / Let’s learn together, the objective is to provide immediate educational support to youth and families in the Hennepin County family shelter system who are new arrivals to Minnesota. The project team from ESS and HCL has focused on assisting families with school enrollment, helping with integration into Hennepin County schools, and identification of needed academics supports for youth. The team has also worked to identify and deliver needed education supports for parents and caregivers.

ESS and HCL are partnering with culturally-responsive community organizations to provide education supports to Spanish-speaking youth and adults in family shelter. Through engagement with families in the Hennepin County family shelter system, the project’s initial focus has been to identify needs to support literacy and education and respond with services and resources to meet the needs of the families and remove barriers.

### Project outcomes

¡Aprendamos Juntos! began serving families in May 2024, and since then has positively impacted Spanish speaking students and families living in Hennepin County family shelters by connecting them with vital education and literacy support. Programming took place at shelters in Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, and Bloomington, with offerings including virtual English and academic tutoring for youth, broadband and digital inclusion resources, onsite drop-in educational support, literacy supports, referrals for English Learning resources, educational excursions for families, and engaging activities onsite for youth.

The ¡Aprendamos Juntos! team focused on building relationships with families and community partners to support and guide the work of this project, while working alongside shelter staff to support families in school enrollment and navigation. The onsite family engagement activities and literacy supports provided through this program have demonstrated the value and need for educational support at the family shelters, giving students essential educational tools but also a sense of consistency and something to look forward to.

## Key performance indicators

- Number of contacts with youth and adults by ¡Aprendamos Juntos! staff: 1,413
- Number of youth and adult contacts with educational excursions: 116
- Number of adult contacts with English classes: 163
- Number of youth contacts with children's activities: 190
- Number of youth and adult contacts receiving tutoring or educational support from ESS: 128
- Number of youth and adult contacts for outreach and family engagement: 630
- Number of youth and adult contacts with in-person family support and resource connection: 182
- Number of books distributed: 157
- Number of parents / caregivers who have identified their own education needs: 44
- Number of computers and technology support contacts provided in living spaces or to families: 36

## Project feature

As a result of this program, participants were able to make valuable connections to county institutions like libraries. After an excursion to the library in Brooklyn Park, a parent commented that she was likely to use the library after the visit: "This is my first time in a library in the U.S., and back home our libraries are nothing like this." A few eight-year-old boys said after a library visit to Minneapolis Central Library, "We are coming back here every day!"

All in all, the program was very impactful for children and families in terms of their educational journey, but also in their relationship to the county, their new environment, to each other, and to themselves.



## Employment Strategies

**Allocation amount: \$9,280,000**

### Project description

Sustainable employment impacts an individual's ability to pay for basic needs and brings stability to individuals and families alike. This project will create and implement employment strategies that will benefit county residents and employers, and ultimately, the county's overall economic landscape. The county cannot do this work alone. The business community, community-based organizations (CBOs), educational institutions, and the public workforce system are all critical partners in creating jobs and facilitating access to in-demand jobs that pay a livable wage. The project team will work collaboratively to promote equity through the development and implementation of workforce development programs, employment readiness services, and other strategies that prepare and connect residents to employers.

Employment strategies focused on:

- Partner with the Housing Stability area and Employment and Training Services for People Exiting Homelessness initiative to provide employment and training services that supplements case management and housing-related supports for anyone interested in work, is 18 years or older, and is currently or recently experiencing homelessness. Services under this project were provided by Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota (GWES) and American Indian Opportunities Industrial Center's Takoda Stability (AIOIC Takoda Stability) and included, but were not limited to, employment coaching, skills development through training and education, and assistance with placement and retention.
- Creation of a consortia of workforce development providers, the Workforce Development Roster Program (WDRP), that provided just-in-time employment and training services leading to living-wage jobs by ensuring participants had the skills employers were seeking.
- Creation of the Workforce Leadership Council (WLC), a platform the county used to convene business partners for cross-sector sharing of ideas, promising practices and resources, and for cultivating strong partnerships to address pandemic-related economic hardships.

### Project outcomes

#### Employment and Training Services for People Exiting Homelessness initiative

Program results (March 2021 December 2024):

- 318 referrals received (183 to AIOIC and 134 to GWES)
- 226 of referrals completed an Individual Employment Plan and engaged in services
- 261 participants received support services to overcome barriers to program participation and / or employment (e.g., housing / shelter, transportation, health, nutrition, clothing / hygiene, employment related needs, and more)
- 231 participants completed a training program
- 37 participants completed GWES Work Experience program (8-week employment)
- 69 participants engaged in the stipend program
- 107 participants obtained employment (49 part-time; 58 full-time) Average wage at program exit was \$17.98
- Monthly case consultations meetings were held for cases with program participants who have barriers identified by Hennepin County Homeless to Housing case managers and AIOIC / GWES career navigators.

## Workforce Development Roster Program (WDRP)

Program results (March 2021 – December 2024):

- 18 WDRP contracts were procured to provide services
- 707 individuals participated in WDRP programming
- 484 individuals completed a training program (484 completed; 121 obtained credentials / certifications)
- 34 individuals enrolled in educational programs
- 129 individuals obtained new or enhanced employment (42 part-time; 94 full-time)
- 258 individuals received support services to overcome barriers to program participation and / or employment (e.g., housing / shelter, transportation, health, nutrition, clothing / hygiene, employment related needs, and more)
- 89 individuals obtained an increase in wages (average hourly wage at exit \$22.29)
- Quarterly Roster Program Collaborative meetings were held with community-based providers. Meeting topics included:
  - Service alignment with local needs
  - Building relationships with employers and other community-based providers
  - Resource sharing

## Workforce Leadership Council (WLC)

Program results (March 2021 – December 2024):

- Employers are actively implementing solutions within their own companies as it relates to workforce planning, skill identification, incumbent worker training, and mitigating barriers to employment.
  - Examples of solutions include the changes to minimum qualifications, the establishment of employee resource funds, identification of training requirements, and avenues for career pathway programming.
- Five businesses received human resources consulting services via Elevate Hennepin Talent, and their employees received training, financial wellness, and supportive services from a workforce development community-based organization. The human resources element is proving to be a crucial resource for businesses. The WLC supported the goal of sustaining these resources beyond this pilot resulting in the county incorporating this service into our existing 2025 portfolio.
- Upon the completion of the human resources technical assistance, the cohort of employers noted this work assisted them in understanding and implementing rules and regulations via a lens of employee recruitment, retention, and advancement.
- Talent Pipeline Management is providing a viable solution for businesses and their talent needs. We will continue to work with Real Time Talent to expand real time talent solutions for our local businesses such as this.
- The most impactful element of the WLC is the collective analysis of challenges while seeking creative solutions that address the root issue.

## Project feature

The Employment and Training Services for People Exiting Homelessness initiative has had great feedback from referring housing case managers, career navigators, and participants. Here are some quotes from participants:

“Having someone there to guide me through the process made all the difference. It wasn’t just about getting into the program — it was about feeling like someone cared and was there to help if I needed it.”

“Even when I felt like giving up, my case manager encouraged me to keep going. That support made a big difference.”

“They helped me figure out what other resources I could access, like rent assistance and food stamps. They really went above and beyond.”

“I wasn’t really sure what the program was about at first, but once I got involved, I realized how much they could actually help me. It wasn’t just about finding a job — it was about stability and support.”



## Behavioral Health

**Allocation amount: \$20,000,000**

### Project description

The Behavioral Health project will invest in early interventions, prevent overreliance on deep-end services, and reduce disparities for Hennepin County residents through behavioral health strategies and interventions.

Initiatives toward these intended outcomes included:

1. Expanding School Based Mental Health
2. Developing and expanding a network of culturally specific mental health services
3. Expanding Family Home Visiting
4. Expanding Caring Connections 4 Kids
5. Reforming 911
6. Expanding hours at 1800 Chicago
7. Expanding the embedded police social worker initiative
8. Launching a juvenile behavioral health initiative
9. Expanding Family Response and Stabilization Services
10. Piloting a family-based recovery program
11. Launching a mental health awareness campaign

Well over 20,000 residents were impacted by programs providing low-barrier, upstream, whole-person and family supports designed to meet the complex needs of diverse communities.

### Project outcomes

The School Based Mental Health (SBMH) program partners with community agencies to embed clinical therapists into school buildings to provide direct services to students and support mental health needs of Hennepin County schools through collaborative efforts with school personnel. At program end, this program reports a total of 230 FTEs serving up to 6,900 youth. The Developing and Expanding a Network of Culturally-Specific Mental Health Services Initiative sought to bring awareness to and expand access to behavioral health services with a community centric lens and eliminate stigma around access to care. Final outcomes include 3,000 residents served; 19,000 reached online / social media; 15 cultural groups represented.

Major milestones for the Expanding and Sustaining Family Home Visiting initiative include hiring 40 Public Health Nurses and 6.5 supervisors to ensure county families have access to services and resources they need at all stages of the prenatal to kindergarten continuum. For sustainability, this program secured \$2 million in funding for County Strong Foundations Family Home Visiting programs in 2024, and \$2 million in funding from the City of Minneapolis.

The Expanding Caring Connections 4 Kids (CC4K) initiative set out to provide screening of children ages birth to 18 years with open Child Protection (CP) case management workgroups, including in-home and out-of-home placement. Final outcomes total 1,987 screenings completed servicing 1,866 children. The Reforming 911 initiative launched the Alternative Response Team (ART) pilot composed of a social worker and medical professional responding to low-level 911 calls in the community for mental health and behavioral health related calls. Final outcomes include 1,823 referrals received; 1,175 unique individuals served; and 2,434 referrals made by social workers for services.

The Expanding Access and Hours at 1800 Chicago initiative was launched to increase access to the Behavioral Health Walk-In Center (BHC) which serves residents and the community in three main ways: reducing ER visits; reducing in-patient hospitalization; and reducing jail booking for low-level offenses. Final outcomes include 12-hour days including nights and weekends; 4,693 unique residents served; 5,122 referrals for service (Jul. 2021 – Dec. 2024); 15,507 visits (Aug. 2022 – Dec. 2024). The Expanding the Embedded Police Social Worker (ESW) initiative was developed to place social workers in police departments across Hennepin County. Final outcomes include all 30 police departments in Hennepin County had access to a Hennepin County ESW.

The Launching a Juvenile Behavioral Health initiative partnered with youth substance use disorder programs and held community engagement events fostering partnerships with community organizations. Final outcomes include the strong launch of the Rule 20 Pilot, and 53 youth have been served by the pilot program. The Expanding Family Response and Stabilization Services (FRSS) initiative provides immediate response for families and youth when a behavioral health concern or difficult escalating situation occurs that the family feels they are unable to manage. Final outcomes report 1,600 families received FRSS.

The Piloting a Family-Based Recovery initiative (In-Home Family Recovery) provides quality, in-home behavioral health services to aid family preservation and enhance long-term recovery goals that include a 5-to-12-month cycle of clinical treatment, and mental health and substance use disorder therapy. A total of 75 families were served and 25 children remained at home with their family to date. The Launching a Mental Health Awareness Campaign initiative created a direct connection between community and residents to raise awareness of mental illness, normalize conversations, and reduce stigma associated with mental illness. Final outcomes include 202 million total impressions; 252,332 digital ad clicks; 162,348 unique users; and 4,794 direct new users.

## Project feature

### **Launching a Youth (Juvenile) Behavioral Health Initiative**

The Hennepin County Youth Justice Behavioral Health (YJBH) Summit: Supporting Wellness and Connection was held on October 5, 2024, at the Capri Theater in Minneapolis. The Youth Summit was created in response to community and youth needs, in collaboration with a team of youth advocates and community members, as well as the YJBH Coalition.



## Food Insecurity

**Allocation amount: \$5,825,000**

### Project description

The purpose of the Food Insecurity project was to provide financial support to organizations providing food access to communities impacted by COVID-19. Awards were made through an application process.

Organizations that received funding met following criteria:

- Provide for the food insecurity needs of Hennepin County residents through the distribution of perishable and non-perishable food items, including culturally specific food to mitigate the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 public health crisis for people of color and low-income communities, since the organizations’ services prioritize racial equity, inclusion, and culturally specific outreach.
- Be registered as “active/good standing” with the Minnesota Secretary of State.
- Have the capacity to serve Black and Indigenous people and people of color in a manner that considers culturally specific foods
- Deliver healthy food items whenever possible.
- Be a trusted faith-based organization, community organization, educational institution or nonprofit.
- Be part of a longer-term strategy to address food insecurity issues in Hennepin County.

Well over 20,000 residents were impacted by programs providing low-barrier, upstream, whole-person and family supports designed to meet the complex needs of diverse communities.

### Project outcomes

From 2021 to 2022, the 71 agencies that received funding through this project represented a broad selection of small, medium and large community organizations, some well-established and others relatively new. The agencies also represented specific communities such as seniors, Somali, Spanish-speaking, Asian, East and West African, American Indian, students and others. Many organizations reported that while originally focused on a particular community or culture, they ultimately served individuals beyond their target group including newly arrived Afghan and Ukrainian families. The organizations also reported that new arrivals are showing up at distribution sites/events in record numbers including newly arrived Ecuadorian families who have migrated to Hennepin County from the southern border.

In 2023 and 2024, 48 agencies received funding. While many of the agencies were ones that received funding in 2021 and 2022, several new communities were served by this funding, furthering our reach in to underserved communities. With the increase of arrivals of Southern border many food shelves and community distribution points struggled to keep up with the demand. Additionally, identifying culturally appropriate food options across the South and Central American communities proved challenging given the diversity of the food needs and the very specific dietary needs of some new residents. This also amounted to increased costs for providers.

The availability of funding to support the food needs of our communities was warmly received and very much appreciated by community partners. The ability to identify partners, engage communities and quickly process payments all contributed to the success of this process. The major themes identified as successes were:

- The ability to deliver culturally appropriate food to communities that struggle to keep food on the table.

- Appreciation by community members as to the ability of some organizations to tailor food distribution specific to cultural staples, ability to choose food that speaks to the diversity of the community. Some organizations expanded food distribution outside normal business hours, allowing residents to access food resources evening, weekends and in non-traditional spaces.
- The ability to reach socially isolated individuals such as seniors and those experiencing homelessness and offer them food and food choices.
- Distributing food items in environments that were safe and trusted by the community. No shaming. Distribution of prepared meals to those suffering from food instability.
- The ability to buy food in larger quantities (bulk) which kept normally higher prices lower.
- The ability to deliver culturally appropriate food to communities that struggle to keep food on the table.
- The ability to reach socially isolated individuals such as seniors and those experiencing homelessness and offer them food and food choices.
- Distributing food items in environments that were safe and trusted by the community. No shaming. Distribution of prepared meals to those suffering from food instability.
- The ability to buy food in larger quantities (bulk) which kept normally higher prices lower.



## Maternal Health

**Allocation amount: \$9,500,000**

### Project description

The Maternal Health Initiative (MHI) focused on strengthening and expanding existing services, partnerships, and resources to improve maternal health outcomes for Black, American Indian, and birthing people of color. The resources expanded Hennepin County Public Health’s (HCPH) capacity to partner with the community to influence systems change, provide maternal and child health education, and increase access to health care in the community. To facilitate community-driven solutions to maternal health, HCPH used funds to invest in community-based efforts and providers focused on improving outcomes for those facing the worst disparities. This included forging new partnerships and supporting a sustainable birth justice and maternal health infrastructure for systems change to get at the root causes of inequities.

### Progress narrative

#### Expanding access to care and services

- Total number of individuals served through Hennepin Healthcare, NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center, Roots Community Birth Center, and Public Health Clinical Services
  - 5,839 clients and patients served
  - 3,708 health professionals attended trainings
- Number of training and educational sessions offered, topics covered and attendance
  - 42 trauma-informed care trainings held
  - 13 infant mental health trainings held
  - 176 maternal and child health education and group sessions held
  - 5,627 community members and health care professionals attended sessions
- Number of individuals receiving referrals to supportive resources
  - 2,469 individuals received 3,744 referrals to social determinants of health resources, including behavioral health, nutrition, dental, social work, and human services
  - 63,498 culturally-congruent food bags distributed to patients experiencing food insecurity
  - 692 individuals screened via East Lake Clinic’s trauma screening tool and referred to trauma responsive supports
- Number of visits completed with patients including prenatal and postpartum OB/Gyn, doula, and midwifery care
  - 4,004 visits with providers
  - 373 visits with Maternal Health RN
  - 633 doula visits

Across all contracted providers, several themes of success arose with expanding access to maternal health services and programs. Providers shared that the funding helped support:

- Building frameworks, accelerating progress and expanding services,
- Improved collaboration and quality,
- Building partnerships and solidifying relationships,
- Equity, and
- Serving clients better.

## Continuing community engagement process to create a birth justice strategic plan

The Birth Justice Collaborative (BJC) was initially formed by four Black -and American Indian-led organizations that oversaw the development of a birth justice strategic plan. The BJC engaged and centered community voice throughout their process:

- 300 community members across Hennepin County were convened to uplift community wisdom, which guided the birth justice plan development, and
- 81 leadership coalition and strategy group members participated in the strategy and workplan development for the birth justice strategies.

Strategies in the birth justice plan centered around five categories of action for improved maternal health in Black and American Indian communities:

1. **Acknowledge and address impacts of racism** by piloting a postpartum support program serving and retaining 35 Black and American Indian families for the first 15 months after birth.
2. **Advocate for and radically reform policy** by collectively pursuing a shared advocacy agenda. The advocacy team successfully coordinated a Minnesota legislative appropriation of \$600K planning dollars for an African American HomePlace and American Indian Birth Center in 2025.
3. **Create and expand culturally meaningful workforce pathways** by providing supports for cultural providers, including training 27 doulas in a doula billing curriculum.
4. **Support a system of anti-bias accountability** by hosting community education forums and piloting an obstetric anti-racism program within a health system.
5. **Invest in a network of trusted cultural providers and resources** by developing work plans and budgets for the African American HomePlace and the American Indian Birth Center.

## Developing and investing in community-initiated solutions to reduce disparities

Hennepin County Public Health investments in birth justice strategies implementation: Over \$3.8M invested into

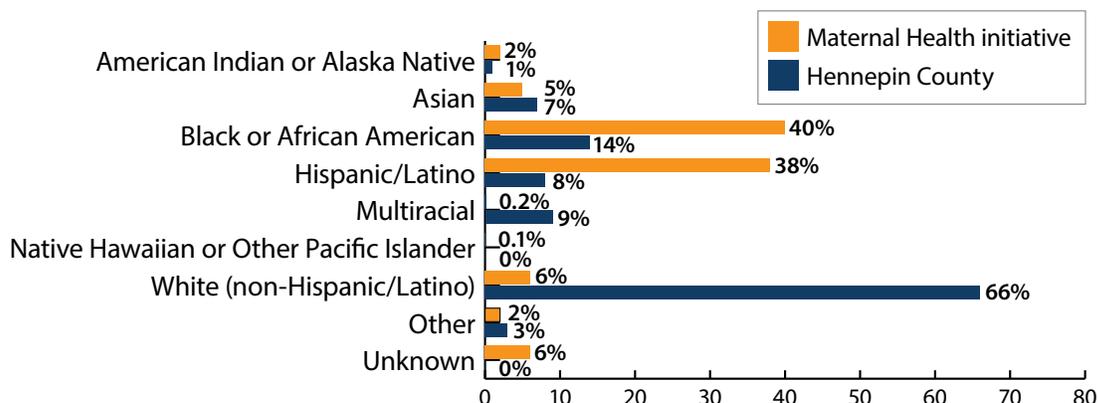
- Direct services, planning, and community education such as the postpartum support pilot program, African American HomePlace and American Indian Birth Center planning, anti-bias accountability pilot program, cultural provider business supports, and advocacy, and
- Ongoing birth justice infrastructure, community governance and participation, coordination, project management, and cross-agency collaboration.

## Project feature

“The County giving community space and resources to identify solutions that would address issues they face has been enormously important in the success and not trying to micromanage that at the strategy development level has been really, really important.”

– Birth justice project partner

Race and ethnicity of MHI participants compared to Hennepin County residents





## Public Health

**Allocation amount: \$9,700,000**

### Project description

This project focuses on rebuilding and strengthening critical public health capabilities and services that are essential to protect community health during the pandemic and in a post-COVID-19 era. Efforts focus on bolstering public health infectious disease response and coordinated immunization outreach and delivery; increasing and enhancing capacity to respond to public health emergencies; strengthening health promotion programming to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 in the community; and coordinating early childhood development strategies to improve access to services for families. Foundational to these efforts were expanded assessment capabilities and increased project management capacity with the aim to address long-standing and newly-emerging public health challenges.

### Project outcomes

**Infectious disease response:** In response to previous outbreaks, the Community Based Infectious Disease response team (CBID) was created. Mpox confirmed the necessity of this program and helped guide the team in understanding their role. Mpox vaccine was initially distributed in the Public Health clinic given the demand. Health disparities emerged through data tracking. CBID was mobilized to expand access to the vaccine by working with community organizations to offer vaccine clinics outside the clinic. From Q3 2022 through Q4 2024, CBID has served 5,284 clients and given 9,025 Mpox vaccines.

**Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (PHEPR):** The PHEPR program utilized new technology to develop e-learning training modules that were designed to meet the individual learning styles and preferences of all staff. In 2024, 1,276 modules were accessed by staff, resulting in 95% of Public Health staff completing one or more emergency preparedness courses. The Emergency Response and Recovery Plan (ERRP) was revised to prioritize actions that advance equity for disproportionately affected populations, increase the plan’s resiliency, and strengthen our capability and capacity to protect all Hennepin County communities.

**Infection control in long-term care facilities (LTCF):** The Long-Term Care Infection Prevention Unit was created during the COVID-19 response out of an abundance of need to provide support for nursing homes in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in their facilities and protect medically vulnerable residents. The pandemic funding enabled the unit to evolve and develop into a sustainable program in the post-COVID-19 environment. This funding supported the in-person outreach to 52 skilled nursing facilities in Hennepin County, ongoing logistical and planning support for the Long-Term Care Infection Prevention Coalition of Hennepin County and convening subject matter experts to plan and deliver an antibiotic stewardship webinar training series. The funding also supported the development of hand hygiene and transmission-based precautions training kits and a toolkit resource for use by facility infection prevention staff and ongoing support for 2.0 FTE including staff development, training, and certification.

**Chronic disease:** Public Health Promotion funded 15 community-based programs focusing on reconnecting with health care services, bolstering trauma-informed health systems, expanding access to Community Health Workers (CHW), and supporting Black youth mental health. Contracted partners delivered community-based health care services to those without access to insurance, improved dental care access, and increased screenings for hypertension and diabetes across the county. Over \$800,000 was invested in the community, and together the programs and initiatives reached 17,395 residents.

**Age friendly:** Community-based organizations were supported to prevent or address social isolation among older adults through 22 contracts. These projects focused on culturally-relevant programming and specific ways older adults in Hennepin County can feel connected to one another, to resources, and to information. The initiative also built and delivered a training on ageism, supported the county in becoming an age-friendly employer, and built support around the county with cities, organizations and residents working together to address the concerns and needs of older adults.

**Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP):** CHIP funded nine organizations or community members to implement projects that addressed community mental well-being and social connection. Through these efforts, CHIP helped rebuild community life and foster resilience by supporting a range of initiatives: a writing workshop for people of African heritage; a mental health fair at the Ecuadorian Consulate; and a mental health seminar for caregivers at the Park Avenue Church, to name a few examples. Partnership remains essential to the county's collective recovery, and CHIP is grateful for the opportunity to support initiatives that empower communities to thrive.

**Coordinate early childhood development strategies:** Strong Beginnings is a childcare and education program that serves low-income families. Pandemic funding expanded the Strong Beginnings program to two early childhood centers, which increased access to high-quality early childhood services for families in the western suburbs and South Minneapolis. The Early Childhood Coordinator also facilitated two meetings of key early childhood program leaders in Hennepin County. These meetings are integral to coordinating services available to families and have allowed for planning and communication about barriers to collaboration. Additionally, an early systems coordination strategic plan was developed and new referral pipelines for programs were created between Hennepin County programs servicing families with children under five years of age, which increased family home visiting utilization.

**Increase planning and project management capacity:** Public Health incorporated racial and health equity (RHE) concepts into aspects of department work to better meet community needs and prepare staff for reducing health disparities. Examples include the development of RHE plans, training of 15 RHE champions that lead RHE efforts in their program areas, and the creation of a Daily RHE Tool. Public Health also conducted a baseline RHE survey in 2021 and a follow-up survey in 2023 to assess competence with these concepts and track progress. Additional achievements include Public Health's ability to support community engagement efforts through the development of tools, trainings, and an inventory for capturing engagement activities across the department. Workforce development goals were accomplished by developing and implementing a core competency assessment of staff. This allowed for the creation of a Workforce Development Plan to prepare the department for success in several priority areas, including knowledge of RHE concepts and resources.

**Expand assessment capability and SHAPE survey:** SHAPE (Survey of the Health of All the Population and the Environment) provides data on the health status and factors that affect health for adults in Hennepin County that is used in planning, programming, and policy development. Most recently, the SHAPE survey was implemented in 2022 and approximately 40,000 randomly selected households in Hennepin County received a mail survey. The team also collaborated with 10 community-based organizations and hosted 50 community events to complete surveys in-person. We received 8,093 completed responses from the mail survey and 2,133 surveys from in-person data collection. The SHAPE team has presented the data throughout the county to many stakeholders who can utilize this information to better serve residents.

## Project Feature

"Work performed during the funding period vastly improved the Public Health Department's infrastructure and its ability to integrate critical concepts, such as racial and health equity (RHE), into daily work. HCPH now hosts robust teams of staff and dedicated leaders to ensure actionable plans for advancing RHE are in place."

"These initiatives allowed us to build relationships and networks in particular to address gaps in care after the pandemic that would not otherwise have been possible. And out of those relationships and foundations, our capacity in this area was strengthened even beyond the investment. Our efforts within the healthcare settings in the county have been strengthened and amplified, as well as leveraging opportunities to bring these partners together into new initiatives."

"Equity and community partner development are foundational public health capabilities, which were both negatively impacted by the pandemic. Funding community-led ideas has been crucial to rebuilding trust and restoring community partnerships."



## Vaccine Incentives

**Allocation amount: \$2,000,000**

### Project description

The vaccine incentive program is designed to build trust between Hennepin County and its residents with the goal of increasing vaccination rates and breaking down barriers.

The vaccine incentive program includes:

- Partnering with trusted community groups to host vaccine events / clinics and support the provision of free meals, groceries, or entertainment.
- Implement a Childhood Immunization marketing campaign and other communication strategies to target Hennepin County parents with children birth to 17 years and county residents who are not vaccinated.
- Outreach activities to educate the community about the importance of being up to date with immunizations and where to receive immunizations.

### Key performance indicators

#### COVID-19 vaccination events

Community partners provided a total of approximately 220 vaccination events, and \$3,000 to \$5,000 in stipends were provided to more than 130 organizations in 2021 – 2022. Organizations included places of worship, schools, childcare centers, small businesses with nontraditional workforces, cities, mental health and substance treatment facilities, and small community-based and cultural organizations. The vast majority went to organizations who serve primarily Black, Indigenous and people of color, and / or low-income communities. The vaccine stipend program concluded at the end of 2022.

Additionally, the Hennepin County Public Health's Community Based Infectious Disease response team (CBID) completed nine vaccine clinics at six shelters within Hennepin County.

- These shelters included: Homeward Bound, People Serving People, Agate — First Covenant, Agate — "510" building, YouthLink, and Simpson Shelter.
- CBID distributed 71 — \$10 Target gift cards to vaccine recipients.

#### Community immunization clinics

A total of 37 Immunization Clinics were held between March 2024 – December 2024, where 1,012 individuals received immunizations, and 3,012 immunizations were provided.

- Providing immunization clinics for new immigrant arrivals was identified in early 2024. A total of 14 new immigrant immunization clinics were held at Hennepin County shelters where 194 individuals received immunizations, and 631 immunizations were provided.
- Community-based library immunization clinics are designed to reduce or eliminate barriers to access to immunizations and educate families about the importance of following the CDC immunization schedule. A total of 10 Community-based library immunization clinics were held, 323 individuals received immunizations, and 984 immunizations were provided.
- A total of eight community-requested immunization clinics were held. At these events, 141 individuals received immunizations, and 441 immunizations were provided. Five community-requested immunization clinics were held in partnership with the City of Minneapolis Public Health Department.

- A total of five school-based immunization clinics were held, 354 individuals received immunizations, and 956 immunizations were provided. Two school-based immunization clinics were held in partnership with the City of Minneapolis Public Health Department.
- Information on registering for health insurance, a list of low-cost clinics, CDC parent-friendly immunization schedules and Baby Tracks program information were provided at all community clinics.

## Communication strategies

### Childhood immunization marketing campaign

Hennepin County Public Health's response to COVID-19 includes efforts to improve general childhood immunization rates, which have declined during the pandemic. As part of this effort, the department used its pandemic response funds to launch a childhood immunization marketing campaign that ran three times in 2022 – 2023. The campaign targeted all Hennepin County parents with children birth to 17 years, with additional emphasis placed on parents who lived in Hennepin County ZIP codes with lower-than-average childhood vaccine rates. The initial campaign generated seven million total impressions and over 7,000 clicks to the childhood immunization resources website. It's estimated that this campaign reached 49% of Hennepin County parents with children birth to 17 years with an estimated frequency of five times.

### Flyers for vaccine clinics

Flyers for the community-based library immunization clinics, community-requested immunization clinics, and school-based immunization clinics were disseminated through partner organizations, posted at community sites, and distributed by school nurses. The new immigrant immunization clinics flyers were shared with new immigrant families by posting at the shelter, placing the flyers under the doors of the shelter / hotel rooms, and having shelter staff distribute.

### Hennepin County immunization clinic website

The Hennepin County Public Health communications team maintains a website that lists all immunization clinics except for the new immigrant immunization clinics. This website allows for community-wide distribution of immunization clinic locations, times, and dates.



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## Emergency Shelter Facility

**Allocation amount: \$3,500,000**

### Project description

In 2022, pandemic response recovery funds were used to support emergency shelter. The existing Simpson emergency shelter is operated at the Simpson United Methodist Church building in Minneapolis. However, the building’s deteriorating condition means that Simpson’s ability to continue operating the shelter safely there will soon be seriously affected. Simpson’s plan to re-develop the site of the church building will address that with a new five-story building, comprising a new shelter designed to support person-centered services for at least 70 individuals in addition to 42 units of permanent supportive housing for persons who have experienced homelessness, and community and service space to provide intensive services to both shelter and permanent housing residents.

Hennepin County is contributing funding for construction of the new shelter component of this project. Transferring the county funds to the city allows the city to manage this project. Funding also comes from private gifts and pledges from the community to support the project. This ensures that Simpson can continue providing emergency shelter as part of the homeless response system, which has been a critical resource during the pandemic. The new building and shelter program (including the 42 units) is anticipated to open in November 2025.



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## Eviction Reduction

**Allocation amount: \$2,200,000**

### Project description

In 2021 and 2022, pandemic response recovery funds were used to support eviction reduction. The COVID-19 public health emergency caused many Hennepin County households to suffer a dramatic loss of income due to underemployment and unemployment. This placed residents at high risk of losing their housing. While evictions were suspended during the eviction moratorium, it was a short-term solution to what is now a broad issue of housing instability for our most vulnerable renters. Large overdue rental balances are making it nearly impossible for renters to gain stability in this tight housing and rental market.

The Eviction Reduction project was developed to provide legal representation to tenants facing eviction and to connect those facing eviction with economic and social services that will prevent their eviction or otherwise help them achieve housing stability. This project reflects a strong partnership between two Hennepin County departments: Housing Stability and Adult Representation Services (ARS). The two departments work in concert to provide wraparound services to tenants both in and out of Hennepin County Housing Court. Through this effort, the agencies have hired navigators, attorneys and support staff to aggressively work together to keep tenants housed.



## Housing Recovery

Allocation amount: \$36,600,000

### Project description

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequities from the very beginning. While emergency response efforts in 2020 and 2021 kept people fed and in their homes, the economic fallout continues to disproportionately impact those who had less before the pandemic.

As Hennepin County moved from emergency response to long-term recovery, the county board approved significant funding to support equitable Housing Recovery strategies. Housing and Economic Development (HED) used these funds to implement new programs and strategies to drastically shorten the typical affordable housing development process while focusing the impact. This included:

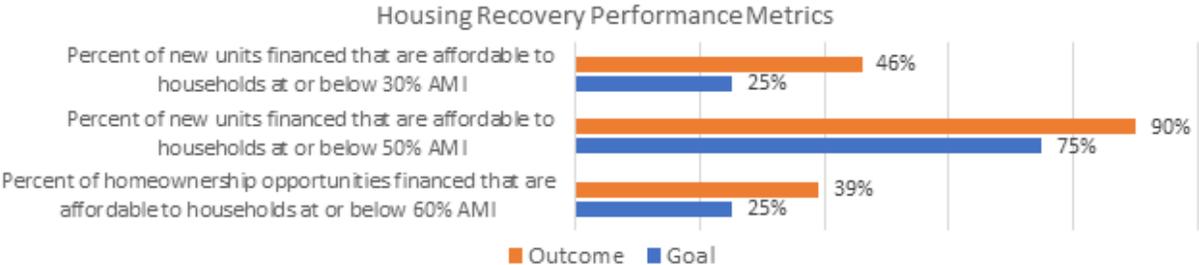
- Affordable housing development accelerator: larger-than-ever award sizes to accelerate the development of affordable housing projects serving populations most vulnerable to economic recessions
- Pandemic-related cost increase assistance: providing “top-off” funding to keep projects on track — or get them back on track — after being hit by increased costs
- Naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) preservation: infusing cash into existing housing properties with decreased rent revenues available to keep up with deferred maintenance, and ensuring ongoing affordability
- Homeownership assistance: targeting for-sale housing development funds to projects that create homeownership opportunities to people who’ve been historically excluded from them
- Single room occupancy (SRO) housing: acquiring and rehabbing properties to fill a gap in the affordable housing continuum the private market hasn’t taken on — deeply affordable, independent housing for people experiencing homelessness who can afford modest rent

These strategies aimed to create or preserve 2,100 units of affordable housing by directly addressing both causes and symptoms of the economic fallout from the pandemic.

### Project outcomes

Housing Recovery strategies surpassed their goal by creating and preserving 2,741 units of affordable housing. Funding supported the creation of 1,607 units of affordable rental housing, including completed and pending SRO housing units, preservation of 1,098 affordable rental housing units, and the development of 36 new homeownership opportunities.

Affordability outcomes also surpassed the Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority’s goals in all categories.



## Single room occupancy housing strategy progress

Under the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Housing Strategy, the HCHRA used Housing Recovery funding to grow its acquired portfolio and make capital improvements to position all five properties to permanent affordable housing conversion.

- Completed improvements at Federal Plaza required to meet residential building requirements, long-term disposition to be determined
- Completed substantial rehabilitation at Metro Inn and 925 Studios to meet residential building requirements and improve livability and sustainability, then sold to affordable housing operators to create 83 units of deeply affordable housing units under long-term affordability restrictions
- Demolished the deteriorated structures at the Aqua City Motel site, then awarded purchase agreement to an affordable housing operator to create at least 40 units of deeply affordable housing units under long-term affordability restrictions (sale Q1 2025)
- Completed substantial rehabilitation at Stevens Square Residence to meet residential building requirements and improve livability and sustainability, then awarded purchase agreement to a culturally relevant affordable housing and treatment operator under long-term affordability restrictions (sale Q1 2025)

Once fully activated, this portfolio will provide more than 200 units of essential affordable housing, supportive housing, and treatment options that would not have been created without the county's leadership and investment.

## Housing development finance progress

In a typical housing development, the county does not spend funds until two to three years after a funding award, and units become available another year after that. Under Housing Recovery strategies, HED completed five requests for proposals (RFP) and executed 31 financial closings within two years. This effort created or preserved 2,500 units of affordable housing and tripled our typical annual production.

Program component	Number of projects	Units created	Units preserved
Affordable housing development accelerator	15	1,059	
Pandemic-related cost increase assistance	7	335	112
NOAH preservation	4		986
Homeownership assistance	5	36	
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1,430</b>	<b>1,098</b>

## Project feature

Housing Recovery strategies created or preserved 2,741 units of affordable housing in two years and tripled our typical annual production. Equally important, strategies tested new models of affordable housing development for the county and created demonstrations for private developers of how to ensure options and quality across the housing continuum.



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## Protective Shelter and Isolation

**Allocation amount: \$900,000**

### Project description

Hennepin County's quick action in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic prevented deaths and widespread illness among people experiencing homelessness. The Protective Shelter and Isolation project was primarily supported by federal funding from CARES. Pandemic response funds were added to support the effort. The project objectives were twofold: to reduce risk of serious illness and death for the most vulnerable of shelter residents, and to deconcentrate shelters to reduce risk of transmission more generally.

Through previous work, Hennepin County had entered relationships with hotels and learned how to offer supports needed in the event of a mass evacuation of people experiencing homelessness into hotels. The big difference during COVID-19 was that the county decided to lease entire hotel sites and staff them as shelter. This program was devised and implemented in a matter of days. Hennepin County case workers collaborated with staff at five agencies running contracted single-adult shelters to identify people whose age and physical health indicated that they would benefit from the move. From the beginning, Hennepin County took a lead role in providing funding and convening partners to make this project a reality.

This project, which phased out in 2021, was overwhelmingly successful and has received a National Association of Counties (NACo) award.



## Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

**Allocation amount: \$35,495,000**

### Project description

Hennepin County's Office of Housing Stability (OHS) has an existing strategy in place that guided funding decisions to ensure that this influx of vital and never-before-seen funding will create concrete results to make homelessness as brief as possible for anyone experiencing it in Hennepin County. Hennepin County believes that homelessness is unacceptable and that there are solutions for it. The focus of the Services for People Experiencing Homelessness was to infuse national best practices that will simplify and improve the system for the people in crisis who are accessing it, such as system-wide diversion. There was also intent to actively work to lower barriers for people who are accessing emergency shelter so that more people would be willing to seek the safety of our emergency shelter system and thereby gain access to housing resources and services. The project team has accomplished this by bringing culturally specific low-barrier shelters online and investing in much-needed infrastructure that will improve the day-to-day experience of people experiencing homelessness. Throughout OHS staff have emphasized a laser focus on quick connections to housing. Even with thoughtful and impactful investments in shelter, there are some people who simply will not come inside. Using "housing first" principles, the encampment response program — called Streets to Housing — will focus on quick connection to resources including housing. The team is collecting data so that not only the needs of unique encampments are known, but the housing priorities and barriers for each person staying there

The next several pages provide detail on the multiple efforts involved under this umbrella project description, including (but not limited to) housing- focused case management (Homeless to Housing team), system-wide shelter diversion, low- barrier shelters, shelter and board and lodge capital, 24/7 shelter, eliminating self-pay in shelter, and encampment response (Streets to Housing).



## Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

### Homeless to Housing

#### Project description

The Homeless to Housing (H2H) program provides housing-focused case management to singles and families in Hennepin County who are experiencing homelessness in both sheltered and unsheltered settings. Supervisors assign people to case managers using a real-time by-name list, a comprehensive inventory of persons in the community who are experiencing homelessness. This allows for focused, data-driven, and equitable case assignments with the ability to pivot to fill system gaps that may arise. Case managers begin rapport building and outreach upon assignment using person-centered and trauma-informed practices. Once connected, the case managers and their clients develop housing goal plans, identify and address individual barriers to housing, and walk with clients on their housing journey. Goal plans are created with clients and include tasks such as obtaining vital documents, addressing warrants, increasing income, locating affordable housing, and connections to all other available resources and subsidies. The H2H program has access to flip phones to provide to all clients who otherwise have no means of staying in contact with their housing case managers, services providers and support systems. Likewise, the H2H team provides a move-in kit to people housed through the program that includes all the basics one would need initially moving into a new home (pots / pans, towels, shower curtain, towels, bedding, basic table setting, food for a few days, etc.). The program ensures that everyone moving in have access to furniture to help make their new apartment start feeling comfortable and welcoming.

To help ensure clients are supported after moving into housing, clients are connected to ongoing case management services in the community based on their individual needs such as community-based mental health workers. H2H case managers facilitate a warm handoff to the new case manager who will help the client remain stable and maintain their housing long after H2H successfully discharges and is able to help someone new obtain permanent housing.

The H2H program also has nine case aides embedded in the units who assist case managers by helping clients complete housing readiness tasks (e.g., obtain vital docs, deliver move-in kits, tour apartments, transport to appointments). Together the case managers and case aides deliver seamless assistance to clients with the goal of stabilizing clients in permanent homes.

#### Project outcomes

Key data points for this reporting period includes the following:

- Total H2H referral: 3,701
- Total housed: 1,546
- Retention rate: 94% of people housed have not reentered the Hennepin County homeless response system
- Median days between entry and housed: 105
- Weekly housing rate: 7.7 people
- Statistically equitable outcomes for clients of color: Yes, 76% of clients have identified as people of color, 76% of those housed have identified as people of color.

## Project feature

The best way to illustrate the impact our program had on our clients is to hear it from the clients themselves.

A few comments from clients on the H2H Consumer Survey:

- June 2022: "I finally found my castle."
- December 2022: "(My case manager) is an excellent advocate/housing case manager. Responsive, professional, understanding & a hard working lady. Housing was secured thankfully however the process is painfully long when one is homeless."
- December 2023: "I talked to the Homeless housing team provided and within a little over a month I was housed!! I'm at a loss of words but extremely Grateful. My housing worker was very persistent resourceful and Helpful! The Program is Extremely Helpful and proactive!"
- February 2024: "If it was not for Jeanetta, I would still be homeless. She would always ask me for my input and also she worked with me as a team."
- December 2024: "Every concern i had, she listened and made those things known to the landlords."

### Client in their new home after being housed by the H2H team





## Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

### Encampment response: Streets to Housing

#### Project description

Streets to Housing (S2H) works with single adults, youth, and families who are living outside, in their vehicles, or other places not meant for human habitation including encampments. The Streets to Housing team provides trauma-informed, housing-focused services that reduce barriers and identify safe, appropriate alternatives to living outside, including emergency shelter and permanent housing.

This project is aligned with Hennepin County's objective to be a housing first community that is intentionally advancing equity, providing robust housing-focused, trauma-informed services with the belief that all people want a housing option that meets their unique needs and that the solution to homelessness is housing, and that we are in a position to provide the critical and necessary supports that people need to navigate the complexities of the system and barriers that may exist.

Streets to Housing focuses on triage and system navigation to ensure that unsheltered households understand the shelter and housing options that exist for them, based on their household composition and depth of need, and then provide the supports to help them access those resources as quickly as possible. The team consists of one program manager, one supervisor, six system navigators, and one specialist. Staff are trained on best practices including Housing First, Trauma-Informed Care, and Assertive Engagement, understanding the various stages of change and that "readiness" to change takes time and encouragement.

The schedule for Streets to Housing is transparent and pro-active so that the people who need services are aware of what the program is offering, where and when the services are available, and how to access these services regularly and ongoing. Engagement events occurring multiple times a week at encampments and other known locations throughout the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County in coordination with community street outreach partners, youth and veteran leads, and health care to reduce duplication, ensure wholistic service coordination, and ensure full geographic coverage.

#### Project outcomes

Streets to Housing was created and is being implemented and evaluated by people with lived experience of homelessness. Since the project launch in August 2022, S2H has engaged with **1,843** unique households. Here are some highlights from the data:

- 36 or 2% were veterans
- 1,137 or 61% met the definition of chronically homeless
- 186 or 10% were under age 25
- 41 or 2% were 65+
- 749 or 41% identify as a woman
- 1,055 or 57% identify as a man
- 27 or 2% are transgender, non-binary, or questioning
- 12 or .65% preferred not to answer
- 779 or 42% identify as Black / African American
- 419 or 23% identify as White
- 297 or 16% identify as American Indian

Of the persons who exited the program with a known destination, highlights include:

- **52% exited into a permanent housing destination**
- 29% exited into emergency shelter
- 5% exited into a temporary / transitional housing destination
- 3% exited into a treatment or other medical facility
- 3% exited into a place unmeant for human habitation
- 2% exited into jail / prison
- 1% deceased

## Project feature

Streets to Housing participated in a yearlong evaluation with the Hennepin-University Partnership.

**Findings from this evaluation** will inform continuous improvement of the Streets to Housing model.

Both staff and client participants shared experiences and perspectives of Streets to Housing that identified elements that enable program success. Strengths included: supportive and available leadership; positive work culture; system partnerships that further program goals; humanizing and individual approach in interactions; awareness of housing system; and community-based referrals.

### **Staff were solicited about their engagement with clients served:**

"I believe in them. I know it's a tough journey, and if they give up, just wait for them to try it again. Try it again. And I mean, I've tried it a million times too. So, I understand where they're coming from, and I know they can do it. Even though they don't believe in themselves, I believe in them."

My job is to assist people in housing, but it's also to give them hope. You know, because a lot of people come to me during crisis and [are] ready to give up... To me, it's just to give him that little, like, it's gonna be okay. You're in the right place. You're here for a reason... I can't promise them housing, but I can promise them, you're in the right place, you're here for a reason, it's gonna be okay."

### **Participants were engaged in the evaluation process throughout and here are some of the first-person responses:**

"[Streets to Housing Staff Member] just treated me like anybody else. I didn't feel like she was looking down upon me or anything like that. And I mean, she explained [the program] well enough. It just gives me an idea that there's something else out there, something I can be doing, something different."

"[Streets to Housing] is thinking about maybe this guy needs a TV. If they're thinking that far into my housing and me being comfortable in my housing, that is really great because a lot of people don't. Once you get your housing, oh, he's in the door. Goodbye. See you later. And no more thinking about that person or dealing with that person. It's over. And they were like, did you get utensils and plates and stuff like that? You got laundry detergent and toilet paper? Even asking me those questions shows that they cared about what they were doing."



## Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

### Hennepin Shelter Hotline — System-wide diversion

#### Project description

Hennepin Shelter Hotline officially launched in January 2023 after months of intensive planning and engagement with the chosen service provider, Catholic Charities, and people with lived experience of homelessness. This was the first of its kind of program in Hennepin County and has created a front door for all populations who are seeking shelter to receive diversion services, meaning that if there is a safe and better alternative to shelter, the Hennepin Shelter Hotline staff help people get there. This in turn creates more space in shelter for people who have no alternative for that night. Below is some basic information about the program to date.

Hennepin Shelter Hotline continues to be the first point of entry into Hennepin County's emergency shelter system for youth, single adults, and families. Community members only need to remember one phone number in order to easily access diversion services, reserve a bed through Adult Shelter Connect, or leave a message for family coordinated entry assessors.

The leadership team regularly meets with Hennepin County, Family Shelter Team, and Adult Shelter Connect to maintain open communication and remain aware of system changes that may impact access to shelter. Hennepin Shelter Hotline staff are also connected to other community resources that may offer safe alternatives to shelter.

Staff engage in creative conversations to problem solve housing barriers with callers and support clients in finding alternatives to shelter.

#### Project outcomes

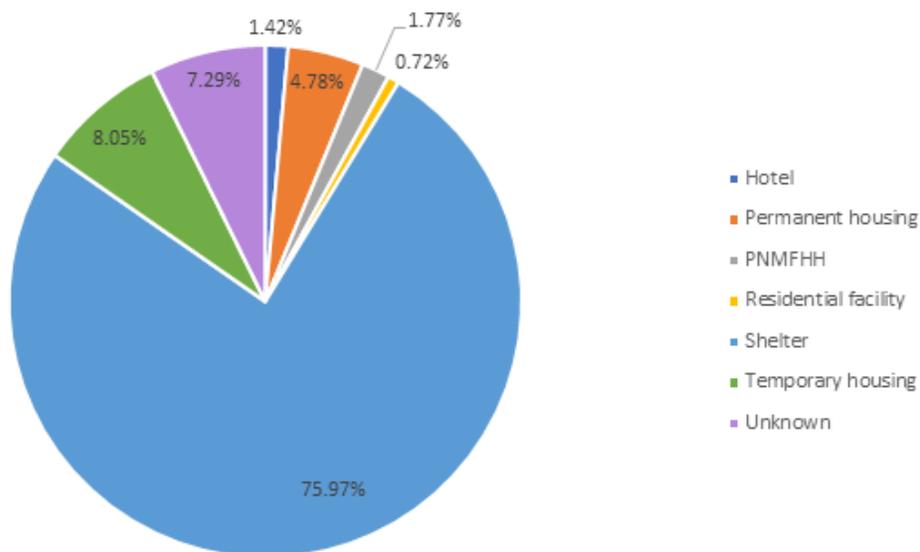
- Community members served January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2024
  - Households served: 15,732 instances; 12,665 unique households
  - Clients served: 26,724 instances; 20,678 unique clients
  - 22% of households were successfully diverted from shelter
- 131 bus tickets purchased to help households relocate to verified housing in another city
  - 55 tickets purchased in 2023
  - 76 tickets purchased in 2024
- 156 households received rent and security deposits to maintain current housing and avoid entering shelter
  - 83 households in 2023
  - 73 households in 2024
- The Hennepin Shelter Hotline began using a new phone software in October 2023 to improve call tracking. In 2024, the phone software logged 91,843 inbound calls to the main phone number, and 32,170 of those calls were handled directly by diversion staff.

## Project feature

### Examples of successful diversion

- Successful family reunion: An individual called the Hennepin Shelter Hotline seeking shelter. During the call, the client brought up their mother was possibly an option, but they hadn't spoken for years and didn't think the mother would agree to let the client stay there. The diversion navigator called the mother and discussed the situation with them. During the conversation, the mother agreed that the client would be welcome back into their home and did not have to enter shelter.
- Finding affordable senior housing: An elderly individual reached out to the hotline seeking shelter. During the call it was determined that the client could afford housing at Evergreen Residence, an affordable permanent housing community. The navigator helped facilitate the conversation for the client and within a short window of time the client had obtained their own apartment.
- Reunification with family: A diversion navigator spoke with an individual who didn't have a phone and had to borrow the library's public phone to call the Hennepin Shelter Hotline. The person asked for shelter but after exploring ideas with the navigator to avoid shelter it was brought up that they had a sister that lived in another state. The navigator made a three-way call and asked the sister if the caller could stay with them. They said yes, and the navigator obtained a bus ticket for the caller to travel to their sister's home.

Household Destination After Calling HSH





## Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

### Board and lodge capital renovations

#### Project description

The board and lodge capital improvement projects funded renovations at four board and lodge congregate facilities to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 for residents. These renovations included transforming shared bedroom space into individual bedrooms, adding outdoor spaces for residents to gather, and updating bathrooms and laundry rooms.

#### Project outcomes

The key performance indicators (KPI) are for all capitably-funded projects to be completed by December 31, 2024. These KPI were met.

#### Project feature

Missions Lodge was able to renovate an entire residential floor of its facility through the funding it received through this project. Prior to the renovation, up to 23 people slept in a common room, with beds separated by plastic medical curtains and furniture. The renovation transformed the space into individual bedrooms with walls and windows. See before and after photos below.

Before renovation



After renovation





## Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

### 24/7 emergency shelters

#### Project description

Hennepin County funded four agencies to operate 24/7 emergency shelters for single adults without dependents at six shelter locations from March 2021 to December 2024. The initiative aimed to provide uninterrupted shelter services, address homelessness, and support pandemic recovery. This funding ensured consistent access to meals, housing-focused case management, and essential services like laundry, especially for individuals experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Four agencies have funding to operate 24/7 emergency shelter for single adults (18+ without dependents): Catholic Charities (Higher Ground Shelter), Salvation Army (Harbor Light Center and the Women’s Only shelter), Agate Housing, and Simpson Housing Services.

Shelters work with Adult Shelter Connect (ASC) to use an equitable bed reservation system. Funded programs help shelter guests access housing and now have access to barrier funds to help breakdown financial barriers to housing and move into housing faster. These increased resources have contributed to an increase in positive exits to permanent housing for all 24/7 funded shelters.

#### Project outcomes

- Funded programs consistently operated at or near full capacity, offering 24/7 services
- Positive exits to permanent housing increased due to enhanced access to housing-focused case management and housing barrier funds
- Added support by providing shelter guests with meals, housing-focused case management, access to laundry and more.
- In 2023, the University of Minnesota CAPSTONE program conducted a comprehensive evaluation and found that 24/7 shelter mixed with one-night-only shelter improved service delivery, access, and housing outcomes
- Funded programs continue to correctly enter their data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- 6,876 people served in the 24/7 shelters



## Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

### Low-barrier emergency shelters — Avivo Village and AICDC Homeward Bound shelters

#### Project description

Avivo Village and American Indian Community Development Corporation (AICDC) Homeward Bound offer safe, low-barrier shelter and services to people who have historically may have opted to sleep outside. AICDC Homeward Bound is managed by an Indigenous organization and is targeted to people who identify as Native American and offers culturally-specific services. Offering safe, low-barrier shelter to people primarily identifying as Indigenous or Native American with a specialization in people coming directly out of encampments. Avivo offer safe, low-barrier shelter to people primarily experiencing unsheltered homelessness with a specialization in people coming directly out of encampments.

AICDC has a unique expertise in working successfully with American Indians / Native Americans, who are disproportionately represented among people experiencing homelessness, especially unsheltered homelessness. And Avivo specializes in serving people experiencing substance use disorder or may have other barriers to traditional shelter such as partners and pets.

These programs emphasize equitable access and have focused on connecting individuals to permanent housing. Both programs contributed to positive exits to permanent housing. Both have housing-focused support, including case management, employment services, and medical resources. Shelter guests in these programs are consistently connected to housing-focused case managers, coordinated entry assessments and referrals, as well as other vital resources such as employment and medical services.

#### Project outcomes

##### American Indian Community Development Corporation — Homeward Bound Shelter:

- AICDC Homeward Bound consistently operated at full capacity, providing safe spaces for Indigenous individuals with housing – focused support.
- Homeward Bound participates in the Hennepin County Education and Training Pilot, a program with employment and training services and support to promote earned income for basic needs and housing stability.
- AICDC Homeward Bound continues to work with Hennepin County to ensure accurate data quality.
- AICDC provides highly needed shelter resources to the American Indian community with a housing focused mindset.
- AICDC Homeward Bound uses HMIS to ensure accurate data quality.
- 1,015 people served at Homeward Bound

##### Avivo — Avivo Village Shelter

- Shelter staff were trained on ShelterPoint in Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a bed reservation module, to match how other shelters enter data
- 641 people served at Avivo shelters
- 253 individuals moved on to safe, permanent housing; 52% of people housed identify as Native American
- 214 overdoses were reversed
- 18 babies were born to Avivo Village residents
- 35 pets (25 dogs, 10 cats) have lived with residents



## Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

### Eliminating self-pay at Harbor Light Center

#### Project description

Hennepin County partnered with the Salvation Army’s Harbor Light Center to eliminate self-pay requirements for shelter guests. This ensured equitable access to this emergency shelter program while addressing the barriers faced by individuals experiencing homelessness. Shelter guests in this program are consistently connected to housing-focused case managers, coordinated entry assessments and referrals, as well as other vital resources such as employment and medical services. A commitment to ensuring self-pay requirements is eliminated to improve equity.

#### Project outcomes

- Self-pay requirements were eliminated, making the shelter more accessible to vulnerable populations
- Renovations of the men’s emergency housing program increased capacity from 51 to 104 beds, serving 52 men and 52 women daily, totaling 104
- Shelter guests were consistently connected to case managers, coordinated entry assessments, and vital resources
- Harbor Light Center renovated their shelter’s second and third floors, which includes their men’s emergency housing program
- 1,140 women identifying people served by this shelter program
- 951 men served by this shelter program

#### Project feature

- Housing-focused support, including case management, employment services, and medical resources
- Shelter guests in this program are consistently connected to housing-focused case managers, coordinated entry assessments and referrals, as well as other vital resources such as employment and medical services
- A commitment to ensuring self-pay requirements is eliminated to improve equity



## Economic Recovery

**Allocation amount: \$17,900,000**

### Project description

Hennepin County designed and implemented an ambitious suite of strategies to advance a robust, equitable, and sustainable economic recovery from the pandemic. These strategies responded to the devastating impacts on small businesses, low-income communities, and communities of color, and the reality that the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing disparities in income, wealth, and economic mobility.

While small businesses and community-based nonprofits were among the most impacted, they were also powerful forces of change and recovery. As the pandemic waned, Hennepin County saw a surge in entrepreneurship, which brought new economic activity and employment opportunities. Similarly, many community-based nonprofits emerged from the pandemic stronger, leading efforts to rebuild that resulted in transformational community-serving development projects focused in hard-hit areas.

By design, Hennepin County’s economic recovery efforts responded to the needs arising from the pandemic, and strategically focused on bolstering the entrepreneurs, community-based developers, and nonprofits that were well-positioned to lead the long-term recovery of the most deeply impacted communities from within. Specific objectives of economic recovery strategies were to:

1. Build the long-term capacity of small businesses to recover, succeed and grow
2. Accelerate investment in, and driven by, disproportionately impacted communities
3. Explore innovative ways to advance economic mobility

### Project outcomes

Hennepin County’s multi-faceted strategies that focused on building the long-term capacity of small businesses, dubbed Elevate Hennepin, benefited a combined total of over 3,600 businesses and the 14,000 livelihoods they represent. These impacts far exceed our goal of assisting the recovery of over 1,300 businesses.

Businesses supported by Elevate Hennepin successfully accessed over \$35 million in financing, creating or retaining 688 jobs as a result. Over 60% of the financing was provided to businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Elevate Hennepin supported the launch of 222 new businesses, 72% of which were founded by entrepreneurs of color.

The depth and breadth of Elevate Hennepin created unprecedented, inclusive access to “back-office” support, capital, and specialized consulting. Core offerings included:

- A network of over 40 professional consultants under contract to provide up to 25 hours of no-cost consulting and specialized expertise to entrepreneurs and business owners
- Two new cohort-based programs, CEO Start and CEO Now, offering in-depth training and peer learning to help businesses tackle problems at key points in their business growth
- Targeted efforts to address challenges of specific sectors, including contractors and nonprofits
- Three pilot cohort programs designed to help businesses tackle key issues and opportunities, including technology, attracting and retaining talent, and achieving disadvantaged business certification

To achieve inclusive access to these resources, Hennepin County invested in three critical strategies:

- An innovative web platform at [www.elevatehennepin.org](http://www.elevatehennepin.org) that curates and filters over a hundred business resources provided by city, county, state, and federal agencies
- Easy access to book online appointments with on-staff business navigators who offer customized recommendations and referrals to the wide range of available consultants and resources
- Access to live interpreters who speak over 200 languages enabling business owners who speak languages other than English to work with specialized consultants

To accelerate investment in, and driven by, communities that experienced disproportionate economic impacts, Hennepin County launched the Community Investment Initiative (CII) in 2022. Through CII, Hennepin County invested \$6,880,000 in 13 projects by community-based developers, local nonprofits, and public agencies. While the original goal was to stimulate \$30 million, the CII-supported projects are on track to generate:

- Investment of over \$220,000,000
- 496 business incubation, affordable commercial, and commercial ownership opportunities for small businesses
- 457 created or retained jobs

Surpassing our goals, 85% of the projects and 75% of the investment value are located in low-income communities and communities of color.



## Project feature

Through CII, Hennepin County supported the Indigenous Peoples Task Force (IPTF)'s new center for culture, arts and wellness, the Mikwanedun Audisookon project, with an award of \$750,000.

Mikwanedun Audisookon translates to “remember our teachings” in Ojibwe. The new center in the Phillips neighborhood of south Minneapolis will feature a community café and commercial kitchen that will serve food grown in gardens surrounding the building and a new black box theater for youth-led performances.

IPTF programs incorporate the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which honor the following values: love, respect, bravery, truth, honesty, humility, and wisdom.

“Fulfilling those value systems is what makes us Indigenous,” said IPTF executive director Sharon Day. “The new building will be a central place where young people can come and learn what does it mean to be Indigenous.”

“Once completed, this new building won’t be just a building. It will enhance and expand the vital community services that you are already delivering with a special focus on culturally-relevant wellness and arts programming,” said Hennepin County Board Chair Irene Fernando at the groundbreaking celebration. “It’s more than just a project and building. It’s absolutely a commitment in terms of our relationship moving forward.”

# INCOME DOMAIN

## Raise the Baseline — Empowering Families with Guaranteed Income

**Allocation amount: \$2,500,000**

### Project description

The COVID-19 pandemic caused financial insecurity for many low-income workers in Hennepin County, especially residents who are Black, Indigenous and people of color. Hennepin County's Raise the Baseline pilot program developed from a May 2022 county board directive to create a Guaranteed Basic Income pilot to support families in need.

Raise the Baseline empowers families with guaranteed income. The pilot addressed disparities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic through 15 monthly direct payments to eligible residents. Participants decided how to spend the money to meet their families' basic needs. They had the opportunity to opt in to additional supportive services such as home ownership counseling and career coaching.

Departments across Hennepin County partnered to design and implement the pilot. The goal was to use the county's unique understanding of the public assistance ecosystem to pilot a resident-centered program.

Raise the Baseline differed from most public assistance programs, which commonly tie benefits to parameters such as fluctuations in recipients' earned income, and which restrict how recipients can use the money.

This pilot was intended to coexist with other public assistance programs, not replace them. Programs that are not carefully designed risk causing harm to recipients who unexpectedly lose their eligibility or receive a reduction in public assistance benefits on which they depend. It may also not be effective if it simply supplants the benefits a participant had been receiving prior to the pilot.

A pool of potential participants was identified through analysis of benefits enrollments gaps and calculations of who is least at risk for facing a reduction or loss in public assistance benefits.

At the end of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, we invited families to participate if they:

- Received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and did not receive Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- Worked and had incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Applied for Emergency Assistance in the past six months
- Had at least one child younger than five years old

Staff used existing administrative data to send invitations to families already enrolled in county programs, reducing time tax on residents and administrative burden, enabling individualized benefits counseling with participants and streamlining the enrollment process.

Beginning in August 2023, the first of three cohorts of families enrolled in the pilot began receiving monthly payments—\$550 per household increasing by \$100 for each dependent child. Remaining cohorts started receiving payments in September and October 2023. After 12 months of full payments, participants received partial payments for three months as they prepared to exit the program.

The taper-down period and payment amounts tied to household size are unique among similar pilots. These key features of Raise the Baseline aimed to reduce disparities in the pilot's design.

## Project outcomes

The Raise the Baseline pilot concluded in December 2024 with 100% of payments received on time by pilot participants.

174 families with very low income enrolled in Raise the Baseline. The average full monthly payment amount was \$850.

89% percent of pilot participants were Black, Indigenous or people of color.

Program evaluation at various points throughout the pilot has indicated that Raise the Baseline is a person-centered, two-generation approach to administering public assistance. The pilot increased flexibility for participants to meet their families' basic needs.

Key findings from early and mid-point evaluation by our research partner, The Improve Group, revealed overwhelmingly positive participant experiences and outcomes, demonstrating our success meeting program objectives.

- Most families reported spending the monthly funds on housing, food, household expenses, and transportation.
- Raise the Baseline led to an increase in stability through managing debt, improving credit scores, and creating emergency savings.
- Most prevalent responses to the question, "Which of the following has gotten better for you because of Raise the Baseline?"
  - Feelings of stress
  - Ability to get enough food
  - Transportation
  - Housing situation
- Having money for transportation enabled people to get to work, job interviews, and medical appointments.

Throughout all stages of the pilot, Raise the Baseline staff centered the resident in their decisions. As a result of these efforts, participants shared that enrollment was seamless and they had an excellent experience with county staff.

Final evaluation will be completed in 2025.

Raise the Baseline is an example of Hennepin County's commitment to reducing disparities through innovation. We're transforming how residents interact with economic assistance programs—and we aim to apply our learnings to future policy and program decisions.

## Project feature

"It's a beautiful thing, it carried me through Christmas, got my son on his school trip, helped me catch up on bills. I budgeted and mapped out the payment schedule so I'm caught up now and can start saving so when payments stop, I'll have a savings cushion moving forward. I wanted to build my savings back up and this has given me the chance. Right now, I do need to change jobs but I'm interviewing and confident."

– Raise the Baseline participant



## Anti-Hate Initiative

**Allocation amount: \$1,000,000**

### Project description

The Anti-Hate Initiative, funded by Hennepin County with a \$1,000,000 allocation, supports community organizations in addressing hate crimes and bias-related incidents. The initiative focuses on raising awareness, encouraging reporting, improving data collection, and providing resources for impacted communities. Funding supported a program coordinator, the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, and local organizations working to combat hate-based violence.

Throughout the past year, the initiative emphasized education, awareness, community engagement, and capacity building. Funded organizations developed training materials, recruited staff, and provided technical assistance. A key focus was responding to the Israeli Palestinian conflict's impact on Hennepin County, facilitating discussions, and training law enforcement and community members. The Anti-Hate Coalition expanded its reach, bringing in new partners and amplifying awareness efforts through StopHateMN.org.

### Progress outcomes

#### Training and education

- Developed 48 youth-focused curriculum and training materials
- Delivered 668+ hours of community outreach workshops
- Completed the combating hate video project, featuring PSAs on antisemitism, islamophobia and anti-Asian hate. These can be found on the Combating Hate website.
- Hosted monthly Anti-Hate Coalition meetings and an in-person Anti-Hate Convening for providers

#### Community engagement and reporting

- Conducted 800+ hours of discussions and training on hate and bias reporting
- Dedicated 500+ hours to community law enforcement dialogues on bias-motivated incidents
- Spent 840+ hours on awareness campaigns
- 35 new organizations joined the Anti-Hate Coalition in 2024

#### Notable partners and events involving providers supported by the Anti-Hate Initiative

- Reviving Sisterhood hosted Muslim Women's Day at the State Capitol
- RISE Home expanded outreach within the Liberian community
- Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth launched a Youth-led Anti-Hate Campaign and partnered with Osseo Area School District to implement an Identity-Based Harm Response Protocol
- JCA and Reviving Sisterhood were featured in national reports, including the National Conflict Resolution Center's Combating Antisemitism and Islamophobia Conference.

The Anti-Hate Initiative fostered collaboration, increased incident reporting, and expanded educational outreach. One program participant shared, "These initiatives have empowered us to report hate incidents confidently and support victims in our community."

Notably, Jewish Community Action (JCA) and Reviving Sisterhood gained national recognition for their interfaith collaboration. Their efforts produced educational public service announcements (PSAs) addressing antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Asian hate.

The Anti-Hate Initiative has built a strong foundation for combating hate, fostering inclusivity, and strengthening community resilience. Supported by the Anti-Hate Initiative, the participating agencies have created partnerships, refined intervention strategies, and set the stage for long-term impact, all of which will be key to reducing hate-related incidents in Hennepin County.



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## COVID-19-Related Court Backlog

**Allocation amount: \$4,511,066**

### Project description

The Hennepin County Public Defender's Office (HCPD) hopes to use contract positions to divert cases away from attorneys with a disproportionate number of backlogged felony trials. This allows the HCPD to maintain vertical representation while also freeing attorney time to focus on the oldest cases that can only be resolved through a trial. In addition, it provides the office with the flexibility necessary to respond to any increased filings as a result of the Hennepin County Attorney's Office (HCAO) processing its backlog of referred but uncharged cases.

The HCAO hopes to use the contract positions to address the large backlog of charged and uncharged felony cases and address the large and excessive caseloads handled by Hennepin County attorneys. The additional contract positions will allow the office to fill vacancies and hire additional attorneys to meet the demands of the increasing and excessive caseloads handled by attorneys. Additionally, the contract positions will also provide necessary caseload relief by providing additional staff to meet the demands created by the backlog and the increased caseloads.

The work of the HCPD, HCAO, and Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCCR) are all interconnected. Therefore, attempts by the HCAO and HCPD to address the backlog of cases created by the pandemic will directly affect the DOCCR and its caseloads. The DOCCR will use the contract positions to address the backlog and manage the increased workloads created by the attempts of the HCAO and HCPD to address and reduce the backlog of cases created during the pandemic.

### Project outcomes

Starting in September 2021, HCPD coordinated with the Courts, HCAO, and DOCCR to eliminate the backlog in pending cases while safeguarding the rights of criminal defendants. Although a few older cases remain, the backlog, as defined by the Minnesota Supreme Court, has been completely eliminated, and case numbers are now consistently at or below pre-COVID-19 numbers.

In early 2022, DOCCR received pandemic response funding to assist the Courts, HCAO, and HCPD to reduce the court backlog because of the COVID-19 pandemic. DOCCR staff provide vital reports, criminal history, and sentencing guidance to our court partners to assist in fair and equitable sentencing practices. The funding allowed DOCCR to be an effective and efficient partner in the effort to eliminate the court backlog.

## Project feature

HCPD used the funding to contract with attorneys and support staff to reduce attorney caseloads, freeing them up to devote time to resolving or trying older cases. During the 3+ years of the project, HCPD contract attorneys handled 2,138 adult cases and 386 juvenile cases. In addition, contractors covered 331 half-day juvenile calendars.

HCAO used the funding to pay for staff time from attorneys and paralegals across our Adult Prosecution, Community Prosecution, and Youth Prosecution divisions. One primary benefit of the added staff capacity was the ability to expedite case processing. Expedited case processing can be meaningful for 1) reducing the amount of time victims of crimes have to wait until they know the resolution of a case, 2) mitigating some of the unintended collateral consequences of system involvement for people who have been alleged to have committed crimes, and 3) more quickly connecting people who have been found to have committed crimes to opportunities for accountability and intervention. HCAO data on motor vehicle theft cases received from law enforcement illustrates how the time between case submission and charging decision changed compared to early in the grant period:

### Time to Charging Decision for Motor Vehicle Theft Cases Received by HCAO, 2022 vs. 2024

Percent of motor vehicle theft cases received by HCAO where a charging decision was made:

Year	within 3 days		within 10 days	
	2022	2024	2022	2024
Juvenile Cases	37%	54%	47%	65%
Adult Cases	65%	69%	70%	74%

In addition to allowing for expedited processing, added staff capacity has been important for reducing HCAO staff caseload sizes. Smaller caseloads help contribute to the HCAO's strategic priorities around staff health and well-being; recruitment and retention of mission-driven staff; and excellence, effectiveness, and integrity in all of HCAO's work.

In April 2022, DOCCR's Adult Pre-Adjudication Service (APAS) onboarded and trained one Correction Unit Supervisor and seven probation officers using pandemic response funds to assist with the court backlog. These probation offices completed Criminal Record Summary, Guideline Worksheet, and complex Pre-Sentence Investigation (PSI) reports to assist judges and attorneys with sentencing decisions. Additionally, probation officers complete risk needs assessments, and process felony and DWI cases ordered to probation when a PSI is not requested before sentencing.



## Violence Prevention

**Allocation amount: \$12,500,000**

### Project description

In June 2021, the Hennepin County Board authorized \$5 million for efforts intended to prevent, reduce, and mitigate gun violence in communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The initial \$5 million was allocated for short-term efforts focused on getting resources into the community for violence interruption and intervention strategies, and for wraparound support services utilizing providers that had capacity and programming ready to provide immediate services. In March 2022, the county board authorized an additional \$5 million to support continued and new programming, and a final \$2.5 million was added in third quarter of 2023.

Hennepin County is committed to reducing community and gun violence through a holistic approach that identifies drivers of the violence, addresses risk and protective factors, and adopts evidence-informed policies and programs and effective strategies that improve outcomes for communities impacted by community violence, with particular focus on young people.

All of the programming falls within one of the three pillars of the Community Violence Prevention framework developed by the Centers for Disease Control: 1) Creating protective environments, 2) Connecting young people to caring adults and activities, and 3) Strengthening young people's skills.

### Project outcomes

Initially, reduction, mitigation, and prevention of gun violence was critical to helping disproportionately impacted communities. Current efforts have taken a holistic, preventative and population-based approach to identifying cost-effective strategies that break the cycles of all forms of violence. Long-term planning and program implementation aligns with countywide efforts focused on reducing disparities, strengthening climate mitigation, and improving resiliency.

Our current providers, using a multi-agency approach that includes local city government agencies and community leaders, have aligned to form a community violence prevention ecosystem that prevents violence and supports community safety. This ecosystem provides the structure for violence prevention that will support the work into the future.

The process in determining data measurements has continued to evolve from need identification / distribution of funding to program design / measurement customization. Current data is consistently collected, relevant to community violence prevention, and aligns with national practices.

Below are 2024 data:

- 820 community events
- 17,500+ youth served
- 42,000+ hours of direct service
- 15,253 neighborhood patrol hours
- 18,574 direct intervention contacts made
- 646 events de-escalated involving 3,155 people

# OTHER/DOMAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

## Countywide HVAC COVID-19 Response

**Allocation amount: \$5,000,000**

### Project description

As a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and based on recommended best practices for providing safe buildings to the public per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), Hennepin County made improvements to the ventilation system in its facilities to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The Countywide HVAC COVID-19 Response project informed and supported countywide efforts to maintain a safe level of ventilation while also reducing energy use and improving operational efficiency.

Project funding was used to study and implement needed improvements to building heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), and control systems in county facilities. Priority was given to 24/7 facilities such as correctional institutions, plus other key buildings serving residents like the Hennepin County Government Center and libraries.

With its efforts to protect the health and wellness of staff and residents who work in and visit county facilities, Hennepin County achieves its core value of People First. Furthermore, these improvements demonstrate the county's commitment to act boldly in the stewardship of our resources and environment.

### Project outcomes

Throughout the reporting period, work on the Countywide HVAC COVID-19 Response project took place in four areas as follows:

Northern Air Corporation conducted an evaluation of the filter banks and system capacities. This work included inspecting the filter banks for all county-operated buildings to assure no air leakage, therefore reducing any bypass of potentially contaminated air. In addition, each air handling unit was evaluated for required air capacity due to the increased resistance of higher-rated filters, and an assessment of needed corrective actions was completed. Several buildings required additional testing to confirm results, and implementation of corrective actions was completed in the third quarter of 2024.

A Request for Proposal was issued for a consultant to study all county buildings to verify compliance with the new ASHRAE Standard 241 Control of Infectious Aerosols and to create Building Readiness Plans. A revised Request for Proposal was subsequently issued to study a large subset of the county's library facilities, focusing on verifying the clean air compliance at each facility and excluding the creation of Building Readiness Plans until evaluations were completed. Proposals were received and the work authorization was executed early 2024. The final report for Phase 1 was delivered June 2024, and all remaining work as a result of this study was completed by the end of 2024.

In addition, COVID-19-related upgrades were included as part of the larger Hennepin County Government Center (HCGC) HVAC renovation project. While work continues on the renovation project, the pandemic response-related work that was part of the larger HCGC HVAC renovation project was completed in 2023, which expended a large portion of the grant funding. In addition, the results from the ASHRAE 241 study have been applied to this project. These upgrades have been critical to the effective control of airborne contaminants in a building that accommodates a significant amount of public business, including Minnesota District Court functions and other resident-facing services.

Finally, Hennepin County shifted to using MERV 13 or higher filters in the air handling units of county facilities, which has been effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19 via the HVAC system. A total of 7,346 filters were ordered, received, and invoiced by June 30, 2024.

## Key performance indicators

- 7,346 filters ordered, received and invoiced
- Pandemic response-related work on the HCGC HVAC project completed
- Final report for Phase 1 of the ASHRAE 241 library compliance study delivered
- Evaluation of the filter banks and system capacities and implementation of corrective actions under the contract with Northern Air Corporation completed

Following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) recommended best practices for providing safe buildings to the public, Hennepin County used pandemic response funding to make improvements to the HVAC system in its facilities. The outcome of this project is an enhanced ability for Facility Services staff to maintain an appropriate level of ventilation while also maximizing operational efficiency and reducing energy use. By providing safe buildings, Hennepin County is protecting the health and wellness of staff and residents.

# OTHER/DOMAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

## Digital Experience

**Allocation amount: \$5,700,000**

### Project description

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Hennepin County transitioned to online services to meet residents' needs as physical locations closed. This shift highlighted the need for a consistently positive digital experience, prompting the county to build on initial changes and enhance digital service delivery. This project uses funding to sustain and advance digital transformation through a scalable, repeatable model.

The Digital Experience Department (DX) leads this effort, partnering with Communications and IT departments. The model aims to meet residents' varying digital needs by integrating key business, technology, and engagement partners. Funding will also support digital content, user experience, and web infrastructure improvements, addressing technical debt and continuous enhancement.

DX, adopting an agile mindset, manages rapid change, assesses long-term staffing and resource needs, and prioritizes digital initiatives to meet the needs and expectations of users. These efforts promote digital equity and engagement for Hennepin County residents.

### Project outcomes

This final report reflects the work supporting the DX three strategic directions at each of the community, organization, and department levels:

- Drive an equitable and inclusive digital experience for Hennepin County community members
- Build and foster a culture of User Experience (UX) across Hennepin County
- Establish DX structures, processes, and culture founded in our values

Two to three project outcomes are highlighted in each strategic direction section.

#### **Drive an equitable and inclusive digital experience for Hennepin County community members**

Hennepin County adopted a digital accessibility policy in January 2022. The digital accessibility policy underscores the county's commitment to making digital content and products usable for everyone, regardless of ability. The policy communicates digital accessibility expectations of awareness and directs individuals to account for accessibility in their work. An accessibility statement is included in the footer of all pages on the county's public-facing website, making the county's commitment to accessible experiences transparent to the public.

The Sheriff's Office website redesign project used a user-centered, and mobile- and content-first approach. The project team focused on user research and plain language to ensure the website is easy to navigate and uses language that users find comfortable.

The DX model launched the HennepinCounty.gov project. The HennepinCounty.gov project is the next iteration of the county's primary website and digital service delivery platform for residents. The new site will launch from a more secure top-level .gov domain and feature a reimagined, user-centered design and content strategy, improved search, translation options, and reflect new county branding.

## **Build and foster a culture of User Experience (UX) across Hennepin County**

DX contracted with WeCo, a local vendor and digital accessibility expert, to support various digital accessibility services. WeCo built a digital accessibility training program, WeCo Learning, for county employees. WeCo Learning provides a self-paced, role-specific online training experience. This is a critical resource for all employees who are responsible for creating and maintaining digital content. DX also contracted with WeCo to provide accessibility audits, training, consultations, and assistive technology user testing to all areas within the county.

DX convened a multi-disciplinary team including Data Compliance and IT Architecture teams to create guidance for a login method for external digital products. This guidance is a decision-making tool to determine if authentication, or login, is needed for a technological solution or application. While most web visitors can access county information and complete transactions without logging in, there are instances when a user login is necessary. The county's Technology Policy Committee endorsed this new guidance for implementation. The guidance is available in the design system: External logins | Design System.

DX won two Golden GovIT awards in 2022. The first, the collaborative award, recognizes the DX Model and its partner teams. The DX Model demonstrates the effective and collaborative nature of three distinct teams working together across three different departments to create a consistently positive digital experience for users. The second, the service award, recognizes digital service automation, or virtual chat agent. DX worked closely with development and business teams in Resident Services to design, build, test, and produce a scalable chat bot with which residents can engage 24/7.

## **Establish DX structures, processes, and culture founded in our values**

DX successfully converted all temporary positions to a permanently funded complement of 23 roles. In addition to becoming fully staffed, DX was recognized as an official department in Hennepin County.

DX followed a continuous improvement cycle to bring UX and customer experience (CX) disciplines together, to improve the user's full-service journey when interacting with the county. Critical elements of this work include journey mapping and continuous user research and applied learnings.

## **Project feature**

The Hennepin County Design System combines four distinct artifacts (pattern and component library, web standards, writing guide, and branding guide) into a single, publicly available resource and provides standards and guidance for design, development, and content. The design system is grounded in user research, usability best practices, and accessibility. Having a design system supports the county's expansion of services residents can access online. The Design System was recognized with a Golden GovIT award in 2024.

# OTHER/DOMAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

## Engagement Services

**Allocation amount: \$3,180,000**

### Project description

The Engagement Services project has increased and enhanced engagement staffing, services, and programs as part of the county's ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response. With a focus on disparity reduction, these efforts have demonstrated the county's commitment to residents along with providing internal capacity to advance systems and practices while sustaining community relationships. Services include the Trusted Messenger Program, Community Engagement Roster Program, translation, engagement vans, healing circles / community building, and materials distribution.

### Project outcomes

#### Trusted Messengers

The Trusted Messenger program is a unique partnership built on trust and provides an opportunity for long-term sustainable relationships with community partners. Trusted Messengers represent the diverse cultural groups and geographic areas in Hennepin County that have experienced the starkest disparities. The most effective messengers are experts and trusted leaders in their communities.

During this project, Hennepin County has contracted with 20-36 organizations and built long-term partnerships and trust. The work revolved around education and preventing the spread of COVID-19. This work helped ensure that individuals and families were engaged and had accurate and timely information, and participated in vaccination and booster community pods.

#### Community Engagement Roster Program

Hennepin County created a roster of community engagement organizations who provide outreach and consulting services. County staff can use the roster to award community engagement contracts for projects.

The benefits for this roster program:

Organizations can apply anytime on the program's [hennepin.us](https://www.hennepin.us) page. Organizations self-identify areas of expertise, populations served, languages spoken, and county districts served.

- Easier and faster contracting process
- Less time negotiating legal terms and reduced insurance requirements
- Staff can more easily find an organization by specialty

Since the launch of this program in 2022, Hennepin County has contracted with hundreds of organizations to work with county initiatives and projects. The program remains active with 300+ individuals / organizations.

#### Translations

Hennepin County recognizes that providing information in multiple languages is responsive to the diversity of residents and communities and is essential to successful service delivery and disparity reduction. The goal is to achieve sustainability, alignment, and consistency in translation services across our organization, as well as meaningful communication and engagement with our residents and communities. This project established a translation committee work group to finalize the translation policy for countywide use.

### **Engagement van**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when many Hennepin County facilities and other public facilities were shut down, the engagement vans provided a vital resource for Hennepin County staff to directly engage residents within their own communities. The goal of the engagement motor pool is to conduct outreach and engagement with Hennepin County residents on county programs and initiatives while hearing community priorities, concerns, and opportunities for growth and partnerships. With a primary focus on outreach to low-income and communities of color, the three engagement vans continue to be a vital approach to engaging county residents.

- Engagement vans were reserved more than 509 times by Hennepin County engagement staff directly engaging over 13,000 Hennepin residents
- Established systems for Hennepin County staff to reserve the vans
- Vans were stocked with personal protective equipment masks, hand sanitizers, other Hennepin County promotional items, program information, and resources.
- The Ford E-van won a Special Vehicle award from NAFA, a national fleet management association. Quote from the award letter: "What particularly impressed us, neat as the vehicle itself is with its special outfitting, is that the County uses this for community outreach."

### **Healing circles / community building**

Hennepin County continues to address the health and well-being of communities through healing sessions, circles, and workshops. The Healing Circle Program came after the social unrest of the 2020 pandemic and the killings of George Floyd and Daunte Wright. A need was identified to hold space with communities to come together and heal. The healing circles were focused on these priority populations: African American, Asian American, Latino, American Indian, and youth. The healing circles provide opportunities for the county to work with community healers and facilitators to address trauma experienced by community members as well as the disparities caused by systemic racism. Since 2021, we have hosted 40 healing circles with the community. Staff also found an opportunity to partner with other jurisdictions to host the National Day of Racial Healing for government agency staff and community members.

### **Materials distribution**

With the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a need to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the community-based organizations to give to the residents that were in need. Over the span of 2021 – 2024, Hennepin County has worked with and delivered PPEs (hand sanitizers, masks, etc.) to over 140 community-based organizations. The goal of the materials distribution was to provide PPEs to residents to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Since March of 2021, Outreach and Community Supports has distributed more than 1 million masks to 140+ community organizations and 3,822 COVID-19 test kits.

# OTHER/DOMAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

## Enterprise Integrated Data

**Allocation amount: \$3,000,000**

### Project description

The Enterprise Integrated Data System aimed to integrate data from across county systems to discover summary insights that enable the county to better respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, reduce disparities, and support key strategic initiatives. The project included four key components: integrated data infrastructure, summary analytics, governance and security, and data use.

The integrated data infrastructure entailed the development of the technical infrastructure required to integrate county data and modernize county data systems safely and securely. This work leveraged modern data infrastructure tools to bring county data together effectively and iteratively to meaningfully create summary reports and analytics.

Summary analytics entailed the development of a variety of summary reports that provide ongoing holistic insights into county services. Analyses focused on the county's ability to rapidly respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative impacts; how residents navigate(d) county services across lines of business; the impact of county services on the well-being of residents, and county disparity reduction efforts, among others.

The governance and security component entailed the development of a robust and transparent governance structure that supports the development of strategic data insights while ensuring data security, privacy, and the ethical use of data. This work was done in coordination with existing data governance activities including the county's responsible authorities, legal counsel, and IT and data security staff.

Lastly, this effort included a framework for data use that is intended to provide support for how the summary data insights created from this system can be used for effective decision making.

### Project outcomes

The key performance indicators (KPIs) for this project included: Total volume of data incorporated (1.4 TB), an evolving set of quality assurance metrics related to data quality and fidelity with established definitions (see below), the number of analytics projects utilizing this system (15), the number of days it takes for a project to go through the governance process (44), and the number of report views as a proxy for utilization (574 in prior six months). The data quality metrics formed the basis of DataOps practices and monitored basic quality metrics (completeness, expected ranges, etc.) and success rates of pipelines and other data processes. These KPIs serve to guide the ongoing work of the project and point towards some of the key outcomes this effort achieved.

The overarching aim of this effort was to create summary insights that informed key strategic initiatives. This can be measured indirectly via the utilization of the summary reports created. Summary insights created from this system were used by over 200 county leaders and senior staff and viewed nearly 3,000 times. The impact on decision making related to these efforts, however, is the most important outcome. In general, feedback from staff illustrates the ways these insights are being used to design and drive new approaches to coordinated services, identify opportunities to mitigate disparities, and simply help better understand and tell the story of how county services function holistically. For example, an analysis of those experiencing opioid abuse helped drive improved collaboration across Health and Human Services programs, emergency shelter, and the Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation. Summary insights led to improved outreach and integration points to improve coordination across these services. Summary insights related to who the county serves have helped to illustrate that disparities exist across the entire county (i.e., they do not just exist in the cities) and have helped county leaders tell the story of the breadth and depth of county services.

In addition, this effort has also advanced the county's technical capabilities. Work on the integrated data infrastructure components was one of the county's first forays into cloud-based approaches to analytics. A substantial body of lessons learned related to establishing a lakehouse architecture, data modeling, utilizing graph databases, entity resolution, and DataOps (to name a few) have resulted from this effort. These lessons are already being leveraged by other parts of the county and are helping to modernize legacy systems and support the continuous improvement of others. These improvements are expected to further enable the creation of new insights in more timely ways that help to drive key county strategies.

Similarly, the governance and security components of this project have resulted in a robust governance process that is tightly aligned with the county's responsible authorities and legal counsel that helps ensure data privacy, security, and alignment with county priorities. This process has already been used as a model for managing other strategic initiatives. Improved alignment with legal counsel and responsible authorities has helped to streamline internal practices related to data governance. These benefits also help the county to both better safeguard and utilize its data.

The last component of this project was the development of a framework for data-informed decision making that has been built into an enterprise data-literacy program. This work has played an important role in helping staff across the county to more effectively use data. Data literacy materials and online resources have been accessed over 16,000 times by county staff. Data literacy programs and events have reached more than 800 staff, the majority of whom have attended multiple events, with feedback that is overwhelmingly positive. One participant's feedback sums up the impact this work is having.

"These sessions and the data literary work in general has really helped to demystify data. In the past I felt intimidated by it but now that part of my job is working with it and presenting it to stakeholders, I look forward to these workshops and roundtable discussions as a way to boost my confidence. When I see other staff able to successfully work with it, it makes me think that so can I."

Ultimately, the Enterprise Integrated Data System is helping to derive new summary insights about how county services function across department boundaries. Early insights are helping to create a better understanding of what's possible with data and helping to advance new strategies to provide more effective and coordinated services that reduce disparities and help the county achieve its goals.

# OTHER/DOMAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

## Information Technology

**Allocation amount: \$10,000,000**

### Project description

The IT Department will partner with all business lines to develop and deliver solutions to technology needs resulting from the pandemic. By engaging with each line of business, IT is identifying numerous applications and technology solutions that will significantly advance the county's ability to deliver services digitally. Funds will support IT work in four areas:

#### **Improving the design and execution of health, public health, and relief programs**

Improvements include modernizing systems, automating manual transactions, and gathering and using data to make informed decisions to support public health and relief programs.

#### **Modernizing hardware and software**

Future Ready Hennepin includes working and delivering services remotely. IT seeks to ensure staff will have the necessary technology to work in any approved county location and residents will be served by upgraded hardware for new or updated service offerings and provided with additional technology for public use. A modernized technology infrastructure allows for greater agility and faster innovation.

#### **Protecting our critical infrastructure**

To help protect county and resident data, IT will need to ensure our hardware and software is as up to date and secure as possible.

#### **Modernizing business processes**

IT created new solutions to connect residents with health care and services during the pandemic. These solutions and the relief programs they support now need to be operationalized and improved so Hennepin County can continue to dedicate resources to provide care to impacted persons, improve health outcomes for residents and build a healthier environment for all.

### Project outcomes

Twenty-six projects have used pandemic response funds.

#### **Public Works**

Pandemic response funds were used to enhance Hennepin County's traffic video management system, establish a key valet for motor pool vehicles, and replace construction survey equipment. Additional work was done to modernize the system used by Public Works for environmental health, hazardous waste, waste reduction and recycling food waste inspection and licensing functions. This system includes a civic portal, streamlined workflows, and enhanced data sharing. Funds were also used to purchase and install digital signage at the drop-off facilities in Brooklyn Park and Bloomington and for enhanced fleet telematics.

#### **Human Services**

Enhanced foster care referral system enhancements for initial placement matches with family whenever possible, and in family foster care when relatives are not available. Children and Family Services has prioritized stability for children and youth. Delivered kiosk solutions for residents. Completed a proof of concept to modernize Human Services interfaces to state systems, replacing BlueZone scripts that the Eligibility Supports area uses to automate various functions pertaining to the state's MAXIS mainframe.

## **Law, Safety and Justice**

Enhancements to workforce management system used by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office. Investment with FUSUS for a common operating platform that works across all camera and software manufacturers to integrate county-owned and municipal video. The system also provides seamless integration of body-worn and in-car video. Initial implementation for jail management and guardian RFID tools to automate identification and tracking.

## **Resident Services**

Both the Examiner of Titles and Service Centers departments completed significant backfile conversion efforts to make paper real estate and vital records documents digitally available and indexed.

## **Operations**

Facility Services upgraded hardware in collaborative work centers to enhance hybrid workforce and service delivery capabilities. This includes new Teams and video conferencing equipment. Online material was made more accessible by reviewing ADA website requirements and providing training. Significant progress was made in backfile conversions to reduce offsite storage costs and make records more accessible to both the public and county employees. These efforts support decision making, data integrations, remote working, and resident services. IT made investments in firewall updates and modernization and migration to Azure for secure, cost-effective, and environmentally responsibility provision of services. Central Services invested in modernizing equipment to respond to pandemic-related and other special printing and mailing needs. Digital lockers were purchased to provide both residents and employees an alternative delivery method to in-person transactions. APEX invested in Oracle Guided Learning to improve productivity.

# OTHER/DOMAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

## Information Technology: Community Connectivity

**Allocation amount: \$4,000,000**

### Project description

The IT Community Connectivity project aims to meet the growing need for high-speed broadband by establishing secure, reliable, and redundant high-speed broadband connections to county facilities and equipment. The project partners with the State of Minnesota, the Metropolitan Council, cities and school districts within Hennepin County, and other public agencies to share fiber assets and provide mutual benefits. This project supports critical public service program needs such as 911 dispatch, libraries, human services and public health regionalization and data redundancy. The project works closely with the Public Works line of business to leverage existing fiber infrastructure for traffic management programs, and to share fiber planning, funding, and maintenance services. This project is the backbone that provides the foundation for future expansion of the county's fiber infrastructure.

### Project outcomes

The Community Connectivity project has completed requisitions and purchases for the entire allocation:

- \$1.0 million to accelerate plans to connect county facilities to fiber
- \$617,880 for installation of fiber optic infrastructure along Lake Street from France Avenue to the Mississippi River. Metropolitan Council is managing the design, procurement, and installation of fiber along this corridor as part for the broader Metro Transit METRO B Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. Once completed, the county will hold ownership of the trunk line fiber infrastructure and will lease strands back to Metro Transit for BRT operations at no cost.
- \$344,552 for materials, including fiber cable, to add to stock for future and ongoing projects
- \$3.0 million with Public Works to increase fiber connections and expand the Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS). This includes:
- \$523,325 spent for Server Infrastructure for the Video Management System (VMS) for the Traffic Management Center (TMC)
- \$2,364,526 spent to add over 25 miles of fiber to connect 35 intersections
- \$108,909 for purchase of wireless modem equipment for traffic signals not connected to county fiber (14 intersections)

# OTHER/DOMAIN INFRASTRUCTURE

## Voter Participation

**Allocation amount: \$3,312,000**

### Project description

The Elections Department focused on engaging voters to increase participation and upgrading election equipment to increase operation efficiency and better serve voters.

The Elections Department upgraded poll book hardware, which was critical to the county's ability to maintain useability of the poll book system and directly impacts the county's ability to administer accurate and secure elections. The Elections Department replaced the central ballot scanners with new upgraded models. This upgrade continues to ensure the department can effectively manage the increase in absentee voting. The new models feature hardware upgrades that improve efficiency of ballot processing, ultimately supporting timely results reporting despite the increased volume of absentee ballots.

The Elections Department supported a countywide voter registration campaign and an absentee voting education campaign, building on the successful absentee voter outreach campaign that was conducted in 2020. The Department took a two-prong approach to engaging voters, contracting with local community organizations, and building a robust voter outreach media campaign.

Since 2021, the contracted community organizations engaged in a variety of outreach activities to engage voters, including producing translated educational materials and videos, developing staff trainings, educating community members about expanded voter eligibility, hosting candidate forums, and registering voters. Organizations skillfully engaged communities with historically low voter turnout. The Elections Department hosted orientations for each cohort of contracted organizations and provided support through regular check-ins and communications.

Hennepin County Elections worked closely with the Communications Department to conduct a media campaign focusing on voter registration, expanded voter eligibility awareness, and preparing voters for upcoming elections. Through this partnership, the Elections Department was able to send Hennepin County residents direct mailings with important election information, conduct strategic social media campaigns, update graphics and educational materials, translate outreach handouts, do television and radio segments about upcoming elections, and conduct a photoshoot to revitalize outreach content. The Elections Department worked with an advertisement agency in 2023 and 2024 to place advertisements on multiple media channels including Facebook, Instagram, NextDoor, Twitch, Snapchat, Google, and YouTube.

### Project outcomes

Through the Voter Participation project, Hennepin County Elections worked to increase public knowledge of the election process, develop and translate educational materials, reach voters through targeted media campaigns, and train and support community organizations. This work has helped to build public trust and respect in the election process.

Hennepin County Elections hosted and attended over 150 voter outreach events ahead of the November 2024 general election. These events included accessible voting machine demonstrations, translated TV interviews, voter registration drives, and community fairs. Hennepin County Elections reached an estimated 3,000 people through in-person outreach events. Voter turnout in Hennepin County for the November 2024 general election was nearly 82%, which is 5% higher than the statewide voter turnout for this election.

Hennepin County Elections developed, updated, and translated 30 voter engagement educational handouts during this project. Handouts were printed, posted on the Elections Department website, and shared with partner organizations. Educational materials were translated in Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Oromo, and Russian. The Elections Department also translated business cards into Braille.

From March 2021 to December 2024, the Voter Participation project’s targeted media campaign had an estimated 19.6 million impressions. These media campaigns focused on voter education, voter registration, and encouraging voter participation.

Hennepin County Elections contracted with 75 community organizations to do voter engagement work during the Voter Participation project. These contracted organizations used community and culturally-relevant outreach tactics to engage an estimated 1.5 million people from 2021 to 2024.

## Project feature

“Bringing these resources to people, where they are at, helped people feel seen and sent the message that their vote matters.”

– Catholic Charities Twin Cities, 2024 voter engagement contract organization

“Your contribution inspires us to work even more to help the Lao community members and bring Voter Education to our community. Your belief in our cause strengthens us. Again, thank you for your support in making a difference for a better world for everyone.”

– United Senior Lao American Association, 2024 voter engagement contract organization



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