

# Bring It Home Minnesota & the Central Role of HRAs

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SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

# Session Description & Purpose

- This year the Minnesota Legislature established a universal housing voucher for eligible households entitled “Bring It Home.” HRAs with HCV will be the primary administrators at the local level once this program is implemented in 2024. This is an interactive session which will help MN NAHRO HRA members understand the scope of the new program, discuss how it will impact member agencies and how in collaboration with HRA members Section Eight Associates can help HRAs stand up the program.
- On June 23, 2023, Shannon Guernsey and Melissa Taphorn held a virtual meeting with over 40 HRA members to provide an overview of the recently passed MN Voucher Rental Assistance program (slides and a copy of the law) resulting from the “Bring it Home” campaign and to answer initial questions about the law as written.
- The hour and half we have in-person today, is to take the next step and have a broad and deep discussion about how HRAs want the BIH voucher program to work, and what you do not want.

# Section Eight Associates, LLC (SEA)

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- Section Eight Associates, LLC (SEA) has consulted with over 45 Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and other entities, by providing guidance and technical assistance in their policies and administration in all aspects of their tenant-based and project-based voucher programs to help them meet their multiple program goals. SEA also provides education and advocacy regarding voucher program reforms and initiatives.

# First Phase

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**First Phase:** To be to bring expertise and knowledge of how this has happened and worked in other jurisdictions around the country, and how MN HRAs need it to play well and align with the federal program. Bring expertise on the federal voucher program as well as knowledge about how it's worked in other jurisdictions, bring that expertise and insights and hopefully, really influence to have that dialogue with Minnesota Housing as they set the program up administratively of how the money is going to flow. SEA to stand alongside MN NAHRO and its HRA member agencies to help educate and advocate about “Bring It Home” (BIH) programs as HRAs have experience and know what it takes to administer these programs.

# Second Phase & Third Phase

- **Second Phase:** In light of when and how the BIH voucher program starts to roll out, to basically provide some sample policies, forms, and key pieces to help any MN NAHRO HRA member agencies who will be administering this program to set this up locally. Reflect where the program has landed in terms of how it's going to be rolled out administratively.
- **Third Phase:** Train MN NAHRO HRA member agencies and provide also kind of maybe guidance of how different size agencies or what it's really looking like or locally to have it. Thinking about how to plan strategically of what HRAs are going to need to stand this program up. This would include guidance and ideas about what could be a future program...maybe it's a memorandum of understanding with a partner agency and HRAs, HRAs partnering on administrative issues and pulling those resources together.

# Things To Consider During Our Discussion

- As we discuss the ways in which you would like to design a state-funded voucher rental assistance program within the confines of the law and the funding provided, please bear in mind the wisdom of balancing costs versus benefits in a manner that you find reasonable and sustainable. “For every action there is a reaction.”
- The “Bring It Home” BIH voucher rental assistance law and corresponding funding is authorized through the end of FY 2027. Presumably, a successful program and a Democrat majority legislature and Democrat Governor will lead to a reauthorized program and continued funding beyond FY 2027. However, we cannot predict the future but we can have discussions based on the law that is in front of us as well as discuss contingencies when productive.
- I designed a tentative organized structure to facilitate our discussion. At the same time, please make sure to not let this tentative structure constrain your bigger picture thinking and to share your thoughts when it seems right. We want to be efficient but also thoughtful.

# MN HRAs' Principles for BIH Voucher Program

1. Keep this streamlined and provide that expertise to the agencies Minnesota housing that is so that HRAs have a streamlined program that aligns with Federal program and leverages it/them, but doesn't cannibalize it/them. Do not add a bunch of additional rules, regulations and IT reporting requirements from the State.
2. Along with the above principle, design a program that is beneficial for HRAs to administer, because what no one wants having all this BIH money and they not spending it to serve eligible families.
3. Assess BIH voucher program performance based on essential outcomes rather than being process-oriented.
4. ....
5. ....

## Possible Ways To Organize Discussion Today Either As Subtopics With Everyone or Separate Working Groups

- **Review Statutory Language of the BIH Law** - We will look at language of the law for questions, comments areas of development for eventual submission to MN Housing well before the program commences.
- **Discuss Lessons Learned from HRAs' Experience with Other Minnesota Housing Programs Like "Bridges"** - From your experience with other Minnesota Housing's programs, what are the big "no no's" / pitfalls, what are the things that worked really well and how do we best achieve HRAs' objectives with the BIH voucher program?
- What are some ways in which this BIH voucher rental assistance program **can interface with other current or future MN authorized and funded programs?**
- What is it going to take in terms of deliverables, processes, meetings, partnerships and with whom, to **advance HRAs' interests in standing up a good program?**
- What are things that you want a **MN NAHRO HRA Working Group** to look at such as forms, processes, etc.?
- **Preparation by HRAs if Applicable** – If/when time allows, what if anything can HRAs prepare for in advance of knowing specifics around Minnesota Housing's implementation of BIH program. If an HRA does not already have a Federal Project-Based Voucher program in place, take basic but essential/required measures to set one up? Other. Should HRAs talk with universities, colleges and foundations about grants or study projects to evaluate BIH program from baseline onwards?



## Future Conversations With Your Colleagues in Other States With State Rental Assistance Programs

- Research studies have demonstrated the value of voucher programs as a tool for providing more housing stability for households with low or highly variable incomes; lowering rent burdens; reducing overcrowding, evictions/displacement and homelessness, increased food security, improved education and employment/earnings outcomes, school attendance, housing quality, housing ability, increasing housing supply, etc. In addition, vouchers have been linked to improvements in health and neighborhood satisfaction for participating households. The average monthly cost to support families with a voucher is substantially less than the cost for families in emergency shelter.
- We can provide Minnesota Housing with strategies and program designs/feature that have shown to improve the voucher program's effectiveness, including supports targeted at helping tenants lease-up, as well as broader interventions aimed at mitigating rent costs and controlling costs over time.
- A number of states, including Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Colorado and Virginia have enacted state-funded voucher programs. If you are interested, we can schedule virtual meetings and have structured conversations around specific topics with your colleagues in these states to help further inform MN NAHRO HRA members in your program designs and approaches with Minnesota Housing, partnering agencies, etc.

# Further Communication & Collaboration

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- MN HRA Working Group
- MN HRAs provide/submit lists of questions, comments, recommendations, in an organized fashion
- Establish information sharing vehicles (e.g. Dropbox, e-mail, etc.)
- Deliverables
- **First Phase:** ...To have that dialogue with Minnesota Housing as they set the program up administratively of how the money is going to flow. SEA to stand alongside MN NAHRO and its HRA member agencies to help educate and advocate about “Bring It Home” (BIH) programs as HRAs have experience and know what it takes to administer these programs.

## Section Eight Associates, LLC (SEA)

### Let's Discuss Possible Next Steps

SEA welcomes the opportunity to discuss the services that we provide.

Three voucher program service areas SEA provides which are pertinent to today's discussion include:

- 1) (exception) payment standard analysis and setting;**
- 2) starting and/or expanding a Project-Based Voucher program; and**
- 3) applying for HUD's 14 news slots under the Moving-to-Work demonstration.**

**We provide a free consultation up to an hour with you and your staff, during which PHAs and SEA can discuss their voucher program and our services.** An overview of the kind of work SEA provides to PHA clients is at: [https://www.dropbox.com/sc/li/qm59io7ybzchqiztr9mb/Section-Eight-Associates-Range-of-Services\\_09042023.pdf?rlkey=5718gp5zc89fvkpikg790y26s&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sc/li/qm59io7ybzchqiztr9mb/Section-Eight-Associates-Range-of-Services_09042023.pdf?rlkey=5718gp5zc89fvkpikg790y26s&dl=0)

SEA is also available for conferences, either in-person or virtually.

## Section Eight Associates, LLC (SEA)

### Jonathan Zimmerman, Member-Manager

As Member-Manager at Section 8 Associates, LLC, I have consulted with over 45 Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and other entities, in all aspects of their tenant-based and project-based voucher programs to help them meet their multiple program goals, including utilization. Among other things, I provide technical assistance to assist PHAs to start, manage and/or expand all aspects of their project-based voucher programs.

Prior to founding Section 8 Associates with Dianne Hovdestad, former Deputy Director of the Sioux Falls Housing & Redevelopment Commission, I worked on Federally-funded rental housing assistance programs since 1989. I worked at three PHAs, including the Houston Housing Authority as a Senior Policy Advisor, Leased Housing Manager at Community Teamwork, Inc. (Lowell, MA) and Program Representative at the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership. I worked as a Senior Policy Advisor at the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA), a Policy Analyst at the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), and as an Analyst at Abt Associates which is a public policy and administration research firm.

### Jonathan Zimmerman, Member-Manager

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## Section Eight Associates, LLC (SEA)

### **Dianne Hovdestad, Member-Manager**

Employed by Sioux Falls Housing & Redevelopment Commission 44 years; serving as Deputy Director for 25 years. Have experience in administering the following HUD rental assistance programs: Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, Moderate Rehabilitation and Project-based programs, Public Housing, HOME Tenant-based Rental Assistance, Continuum of Care Permanent Supportive and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA). Also have experience in managing affordable housing prosperities funded by local government, State Housing Trust Fund, HOME and Low Income Housing Tax Credit programs.

Have served in leadership positions in the affordable housing industry including on the state, regional and national levels. Also was a member of the Expert and Technical Assistance Group for the Section 8 Administrative Fee Study conducted by Abt Associates completed in 2015.

### **Dianne Hovdestad, Member-Manager**

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