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**Resident Services Funding and Delivery Models Among Affordable Nonprofits**

The impact of COVID-19 on residential communities underscored the importance of providing resident services and highlighted the need for increasing funding, expanding services offered and providing more flexible delivery models. This NAHMAnalysis examines the [Resident Services Funding and Delivery Models Among Affordable Nonprofits Survey](https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research-areas/working-papers/resident-services-funding-delivery-models-among-affordable-housing), conducted by Mel Miller and in association with Harvard’s Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) and NeighborWorks America network. This includes examining resident services offered, the impact on budgets for providing such services and efforts to improve consistent funding.

**Survey Findings**

Specific resident services provided to tenants of affordable housing owned or managed by non-profits vary but generally include a mix of child development and K-12 education strategies, health and well-being services, workforce development, financial preparedness and tax preparation services, as well as food security services and eviction prevention strategies.[[1]](#footnote-1) Within this context, financial capability services were offered by 93 percent of organizations participating in the survey, followed by health and well-being services (72 percent). Tax preparation was ranked last at 22 percent, followed closely by child development services (24 percent). 55 percent of survey respondents offered resident services to nearly all their properties, while only 15 percent offered resident service to less than half of their properties. However, survey respondents acknowledged through interviews that not all housing-providing organizations offering resident services to all their properties actually offer all properties the same services. Some organizations may only offer specific programs designed to support residents across their portfolio, and general resident service utilization varies greatly depending on location.

The federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic led to improved availability of funding for many organizations, in turn allowing them to better leverage their service delivery models to improve the lives of their residents. “During 2020, services were tailored to what was allowable with stay-at-home orders and school closings with almost all programming virtual. During the first half of 2021, hybrid models were introduced where, in some cases, children were gathered in community rooms to attend school virtually,” responded one organization during a post-survey follow-up interview. Many organizations also stated they rely on their relationships with third-party providers to deliver resident services in some capacity and are seeking to expand those partnerships given appropriate funding. Most of the services provided by organizations participating in the survey “in-house” included eviction prevention strategies, K-12 education services and financial capability services. Tax preparation was cited as the most common area where organizations utilized a third-party partner, with health, well-being, and food services relying on a combination of organizations and third parties to provide services.

**Budgets and Funding Sources**

Many respondents also noted the impact that the temporary COVID-19 relief funding has had on their ability to provide services and cited the availability of recovery funding as the basis for program and budget expansion. This included providing residents with grocery gift cards and pre-made meals, nutrition guides and cooking classes, partnering with local nonprofits to deliver child development and parenting education, hiring new employees and offering expanded resident services across an entire portfolio. Most respondents also acknowledged that the benefits accrued by both residents and housing providing organizations critically underscores the urgent need for strengthening and expanding current funding for the resident services being offered.

Additionally, many organizations spend considerable time and resources determining how best to utilize third-party service providers, while also monitoring and analyzing their service providers. Although evaluating and monitoring brings about a more effective partnership and leads to a better outcome for both the resident and the housing organization, it does take considerable time, expertise and funding. Despite the wide range of benefits brought about by providing resident services, the ability to receive sustained, predictable funding in the near and long-term continues to be a great obstacle for many to overcome. For example, funding for HUD’s Service Coordination Program, which provides funding for service coordinators that serve older adults and persons with disabilities, changes year to year. This not only impacts the amount of grants available, it makes it that much more difficult for an organization to pay for resident services offered.[[2]](#footnote-2) “We know that resident services matter. We know that it works. We know that people are more successful and stay housed longer with resident services…but we don’t know how to pay for them,” stated RUPCO’s Chief Operating Officer Sheila Kilpatrick.

The pandemic brought about a period of increased federal support for various organizations involved in keeping families housed, and it also put a spotlight on the lack of supportive services for low-income families in affordable housing. While justification for increasing supportive services post-COVID-19 has grown nationally, the federal financial supports that were put in place as a result of the pandemic were temporary and remain vulnerable to discontinuation. As Congress and federal government agencies consider how best to invest in housing for low-income families and seniors, affordable housing nonprofit organizations must also determine how best to create and establish sustainable support for the services offered.

**The Need to Establish Consistent Funding**

With Congress having yet to reach agreement on how best to support affordable housing programs, NAHMA continues to advocate for increased funding for affordable housing and rental assistance programs, including dedicated and increased funding sources for supportive services for affordable housing residents. There are currently several bills under consideration by Congress that would, if enacted into law, provide additional assistance and support for resident services:

* **The Affordable Housing Resident Services Act (**[**H.R. 6602**](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6602/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22AFFORDABLE+HOUSING+RESIDENT+SERVICES+ACT%22%2C%22AFFORDABLE%22%2C%22HOUSING%22%2C%22RESIDENT%22%2C%22SERVICES%22%2C%22ACT%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=1)**)**, if passed into law, would create a five-year grant program under HUD to provide yearly funding to affordable housing property owners for resident supportive services. These services include after-school programs, education opportunities for youth and adult residents, mental health and substance abuse treatment, elderly care, financial literacy training and more. Qualified properties would include but not be limited to Project-Based Rental Assistance (including Sec. 202 for the elderly and Sec. 811 for persons with disabilities), rural properties (Sec. 515), Low Income Housing Tax Credit properties and Public Housing Authorities.
* **The Expanding Service Coordinators Act (**[**H.R. 8866**](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/8866/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22expanding+service+coordinator+funding+act%22%2C%22expanding%22%2C%22service%22%2C%22coordinator%22%2C%22funding%22%2C%22act%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=2)**)**, if enacted into law, would make critical investments and reforms to expand the service coordinator programs to serve more people in federally assisted housing. Specifically, the bill would authorize an additional $100 million each year for five years to the Multi-Family Housing Service Coordinator program and a total $45 million each year for five years for the Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency service coordinator program. The bill would also establish a training set aside to improve capacity and retention of service coordinators, extend qualification for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program to service coordinators and direct GAO to report on the availability and work of service coordinators in rural areas.

Looking forward, Congress still needs to reach agreement on a government funding bill for fiscal year 2023, prior to December 16 when current funding expires. NAHMA continues to advocate for increased funding in affordable housing and rental assistance provided through programs at HUD and USDA, including increased support for resident services. Specifically, NAHMA is requesting Congress provide $1.2 billion for Sec. 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly to fund approximately 117,000 units, providing support for existing service-enriched affordable homes for low-income elderly adults. This funding would also support the renewal of approximately 1,600 existing Service Coordinator and Congregate Housing Services grants[[3]](#footnote-3). NAHMA is also requesting Congress to provide committee language or guidance to HUD that the department should also address significant funding delays that are jeopardizing those 1,600 coordinators.

**Conclusion**

The need for providing resident services at the neighborhood and property level is critical for many residents. However, while the justification for providing resident services have grown, not all organizations are able to access funding consistently, which potentially impacts the quantity and quality of services offered. Future research should include tracking current and potential sources of funding, consider the direct impact of budgets on resident service programs, determine if an organization’s location has an impact on resident services, and develop ways to better involve and utilize resident feedback on potential resident service budgets and programs.

1. NeighborWorks 2020 Annual Report <https://annualreport.neighborworks.org> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Service Coordinator Program,” US Department of Housing and Urban Development <https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/mfh/scp/scphome> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/32-2023-RHS.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)