

# DC HOMEOWNER ASSISTANCE FUND (HAF)

Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Report

## Table of Contents

Program Overview .....	3
Community Engagement and Outreach.....	4
Performance Goals.....	5
Methods of Targeting.....	5
Best Practices and Coordination.....	9

## Program Overview

---

To address the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2021 the Federal Government passed the American Rescue Plan. Through that plan, the District of Columbia was awarded \$50,000,000 from the US Treasury for the Homeowner Assistance Fund to aid homeowners who experienced an economic hardship due to the pandemic. The goal of the Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF) is to prevent mortgage delinquencies and defaults, foreclosures, loss of utilities or home energy services, and displacement of homeowners experiencing financial hardship after January 21, 2020. Funds from the HAF may be used for assistance with mortgage payments, homeowner's insurance, utility payments, and other specified purposes. The law prioritizes funds for homeowners who have experienced the greatest hardships, leveraging local and national income indicators to maximize the impact.

The financial assistance program is accessed via a digital portal, <https://haf.dc.gov/>, that serves as a one-stop shop, providing grants to District homeowners impacted by COVID-19 who are struggling with their mortgage payments and other property or housing expenses.

To launch the program, the District of Columbia implemented a pilot program (HAF-Pilot) funded initially with \$3 million of the \$5 million (10%) in HAF funds previously distributed to the District. The HAF-pilot program targeted condominium owner-occupants in Zip Codes 20019, 20020, 20024 and 20032, containing some of the lowest income communities in the city, that have been pre-identified for inclusion and invited to participate in the pilot through DHCD mortgage records. In addition to allowing DHCD to use existing relationships to test program implementation, particularly as it relates to paying condominium associations, research for the HAF plan found households meeting these characteristics to be some of the most immediately at risk of foreclosure in the District. Thus, the HAF-Pilot was a limited enrollment and duration program intended to reach some of the most vulnerable District homeowners in a timely way and provide valuable insight to guide the implementation of the regular HAF program.

Because of the District's budget cycle, the funds were set to be available on October 1, 2021, and the pilot portal was open on that date. Once implemented, based on the success of the pilot program roll out, demand among targeted households, the status of foreclosure actions in the District, and the availability of funds, either from the initial allocation or the full funds being requested in this plan, the Full Program launch was available District wide on June 22, 2022.

## Community Engagement and Outreach

---

1. Did you continue outreach to communities once your HAF Program(s) began? Yes
2. Please quantify the total amount of funds spent on outreach. \$100,760.46
3. You identified the Community-based Organizations listed below in your HAF Participant Plan or a previous report. Please indicate whether or not you have performed outreach to these organizations using the checkboxes in the "Outreach performed" column.

Community-Based Organization	Type	Outreach Performed
	Community Organization	
Central American Resource Center	X	Yes
Greater Washington Urban League	X	Yes
Marshall Heights Community Based Organization	X	Yes
Manna	X	Yes
Latino Economic Development Center	X	Yes
	Provider	
Legal Counsel for the Elderly/AARP	X	Yes
Legal Aid DC	X	Yes
Housing Counseling Services, Inc.	X	Yes
University Legal Services	X	Yes

## Performance Goals

Program Design Element	Goal	Status	Metric Measurement
Mortgage Payment Assistance	200 Assisted Households Year 1	On Track	Full Program Launched 06/22; anticipate meeting this goal in year 1
Mortgage Reinstatement	500 Assisted Households Year 1	On Track	Full Program Launched 06/22; anticipate meeting this goal in year 1
Mortgage Principal Reduction	20 Assisted Households in 2 Years	New Element	Program Element has not yet launched. Anticipated Launch year 2
Interest Rate Reduction	20 Assisted Households in 2 Years	New Element	Program Element has not yet launched. Anticipated Launch year 2
Utility Assistance	500 Assisted Households across 2 Years	New Element	Full Program Launched, 06/22; anticipate meeting this goal across 2 years. Program element not available during Pilot Program
Internet Payment	250 Assisted Households across 2 Years	New Element	Full Program Launched, 06/22; anticipate meeting this goal across 2 years. Program element not available during Pilot Program
HOA/Condo Fees	500 Assisted Households across 2 years	On Track	88 Approved applicants from Pilot, Full Program Launch 06/22; anticipate meeting this goal within 2 years
Homeowner Insurance Payment	50 Assisted Households across 2 years	New Element	Full Program Launched 06/22; anticipate meeting this goal within 2 years
Down Payment Assistance	25 Assisted Households in 2 years	New Element	Program Element not launched. Anticipated Launch year 2

## Methods of Targeting

### 1. Please provide an update on your targeting plan including challenges, successes, etc.

The HAF program conducted community outreach, partnerships with housing counseling agencies and legal aid organizations that are aligned with the HAF participant's program design in a manner that is culturally and linguistically relevant to targeted communities. Community Based Organizations (CBOs), foreclosure counseling experts, and legal services advocates were instrumental in application design and implementation.

During the pilot phase, outreach efforts included direct invitations to apply to low-income condo owners that received DC down payment assistance in low-income zip codes. Targeted communication outreach through television, print, and radio interviews expanded ahead of full program implementation.

Additionally, the HAF program was highlighted in a Mayoral Press Conference regarding homeownership opportunities.

A dedicated HAF website provides comprehensive information as well as access to the application portal. Additional pathways to the program include a featured position on [frontdoor.dc.gov](http://frontdoor.dc.gov), the one-stop shop for all DC homeownership resources.

**Specific affirmative efforts to inform, encourage participation of and facilitate access to resources for targeted households include:**

**Successful efforts targeting those making less than 100% AMI:**

The HAF pilot program limited program eligibility to those making 100% AMI or less. Additionally, when the full program rolled out in late June 2020 all program elements required 100% AMI or less, apart from the mortgage reinstatement program element which allows up to 150% AMI. Furthermore, the application review process includes utilizing a fact-based proxy for income eligibility from Qualified Census Tracts.

**Successful efforts targeting individuals facing imminent risk of foreclosure:**

DC instituted a moratorium on foreclosure activities in March 2020; this moratorium continues to protect homeowners who applied to the HAF program by September 30, 2022, while their application is pending approval, pending payment, or is under appeal. Email and text reminders were sent to any applicants who had begun, but not finished, a HAF application reminding them of this deadline. The HAF program continues to be open to all homeowners, but only those who applied by September 30, 2022, are covered by the moratorium.

Furthermore, financial entities issuing foreclosure notices to homeowners are required to include information regarding the HAF program. The HAF website contains a sample notice for use.

The HAF application includes a section asking for foreclosure status; such cases are prioritized in the review process. Additionally, under current DC law housing association/condo foreclosure auction sale can take place as soon as 31 days after notice is issued to the unit owner. Due to the particular vulnerability of this population, condo owners seeking homeowner association assistance are prioritized in the review process.

The HAF program works closely with legal advocates as well as Foreclosure Prevention counselors contracted by the Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking who are present in foreclosure courts to communicate current HAF applicant and vendor status during court proceedings. Additionally, two Real Estate Delinquency Specialists are on the HAF staff to work with servicers and homeowner associations on escalation cases. These staffers also work with Chapter 13 and Chapter 7 bankruptcy trustees on applicants undergoing bankruptcy proceedings while applying to HAF.

### **Successful efforts targeting individuals with limited English proficiency:**

The HAF program specifically targeted individuals with limited English proficiency, limiting linguistic and cultural barriers to participation. All program materials including website, documentation checklists, and application were published in English, Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese, and Korean. Staff with direct applicant interaction through the HAF phone line or intra-application “chat” feature are fluent in both English and Spanish. A dedicated “Language Access” phone line is available for any housing counselor that needs assistance with HAF applicants.

The HAF program’s language access efforts were specifically praised by Legal Services advocates in public forums.

In addition to language translation, the HAF website, documents, and application were also reviewed for “Basic Language” to ensure readability and understanding at a 9th grade level or lower.

Successful efforts targeting members of a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society:

The HAF program made affirmative efforts to inform and facilitated access to the HAF program resources among specific communities by training all divisions of the Mayor’s Office of Community Affairs. Each Office received a hands-on tutorial on the HAF application, enabling them to assist targeted constituencies in application intake. This includes:

- Office on African Affairs
- Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs
- Office on Fathers, Men and Boys
- Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Affairs
- Office of Religious Affairs
- Office on African American Affairs
- Office on Caribbean Community Affairs
- Office on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing
- Office on Latino Affairs
- Office of Nightlife and Culture
- Office on Returning Citizen Affairs
- Office of Veterans Affairs
- Office on Women’s Policy and Initiatives

Representatives of the HAF program have also participated in the Mayor’s Black Homeownership Task Force promoting the program.

Furthermore, the program allows applicants to self-attest to their status as socially disadvantaged. The attestation contains the definition of “socially disadvantaged” and lists non-White and Hispanic races and ethnicities and disability categories prevalent within DC that have historically been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society. It also has a free response option for the applicant to identify additional qualifying characteristics within their household.

**Successful efforts targeting individuals with disabilities:**

The innovative HAF application enables applicants to take pictures and upload documents directly from their phone or tablet, limiting the need to travel or conduct in-person intake sessions. Additionally, all housing counseling can be conducted virtually or in-person, eliminating barriers to access for individuals with disabilities or concerned about COVID exposure.

**Successful efforts encouraging participation in housing counseling and legal services:**

All applicants are encouraged to seek housing counseling services through HUD-certified CBOs. At the end of the HAF application, each applicant is allowed to self-select one of eight HUD-certified counseling entities participating in the HAF program. If the applicant does not select a CBO, one is assigned to them. Each CBO makes multiple outreach efforts to the applicant to try to set up a housing counseling session.

Counseling sessions are recommended to all applicants but are required for some applicants, as identified in the HAF plan. These criteria are as follows:

- Their monthly mortgage expenses are 50% more than their income AND they have pre- COVID arrearages, OR
- The household is making a second request for HAF assistance

Housing counseling services are also available to assist in application intake and follow up documentation assistance virtually and in-person.

The HAF program coordinates with legal services organizations through case referrals and dedicated training for HAF staff and housing counselors on the DC-specific foreclosure process and relevant legislative changes to ensure accuracy and awareness in communication to District homeowners.

**HAF Participant Targeting Challenges:**

DC's HAF application is currently online-only, creating a potential challenge for applicants with limited technical proficiency and/or internet access. Specific steps have been taken to address this challenge:

- Ensuring the application can be filled out by a "representative" working with the applicant, including advocates and family members. Applicants are directed to Housing Counseling Community Based Organizations who offer virtual and in-person application assistance.
- Promoting Tech 101 Workshops managed by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer at DC Public Libraries to increase technical proficiency and access to government programs
- Staffing a dedicated HAF phone line as well as chat feature within the application. These features operated with extended business hours in the weeks prior to the September 30, 2022 foreclosure moratorium deadline

**2. Is the targeting plan put forth in the HAF Plan achieving the desired results? Yes**



## Best Practices and Coordination

---

1. **Have you coordinated with any of these agencies? (FHA, VA, USDA, GSE's, State or Local Agencies that hold mortgage portfolios) Local Agencies that hold mortgage portfolios)?**

Yes. The HAF program has coordinated with the DC Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking on identifying servicers registered in the District to conduct targeted outreach for those with large mortgage portfolios as well as servicers with portfolios that are substantially delinquent.

2. **Have you coordinated with servicers?**

Yes. DC has coordinated with servicers on program participation including signing Collaborative Servicer Agreements, registration in the DC Vendor Registration system and secure file transfer of the Common Data File (CDF). The program has implemented the revised version of the CDF and is actively exchanging records with registered servicers. Initial outreach for servicer participation in the DC HAF program occurs immediately once an application has been reviewed. Unresponsive servicers are followed up with directly and contact information is gathered in the NCSHA HAF Forum. Two Real Estate Delinquency Specialists work with servicers on escalated cases and to troubleshoot file transfer issues.