

Open Ended Question Content Analysis

Within the HB854 Survey were several open ended questions that allowed respondents to provide free form text responses. This allowed for respondents to express praise, criticism, suggestions, or other concerns regarding a variety of topics. It also provided the HB854 study with additional qualitative data to examine state-level housing programs and service area needs across the Commonwealth.

Staff members from HousingForward Virginia and Virginia Housing began with a preliminary review of all open-ended responses and then came to consensus on themes that were frequently referenced by respondents. In some cases, responses did not fall into a theme because the response was unrelated to the question or the response specific to a single respondent.

The following provides an overview of the open ended questions that were a part of this analysis and the major themes identified for each.

State-level Housing Program Comments

Respondents were asked to provide additional comments or suggestions on state-level housing programs that their organization uses on a regular basis. One hundred fifty one (151) respondents provided some type of written response to this question.

The following themes appeared frequently throughout responses and in some cases, respondent feedback encompassed multiple themes.

State-level Housing Program Comments and Concerns
General praise: The respondent does not point to a specific program issue or concern, but rather commends DHCD, VH, Virginia, or the status quo of housing/housing programs.
General criticism: The respondent does not point to a specific program issue or concern, but rather finds fault with DHCD, VH, Virginia, or the status quo of housing/housing programs.
Program changes needed: The respondent notes that a program or process requires some kind of alteration in its deployment in order to function more efficiently or effectively. This could include eligibility, program requirements, or administrative changes.
Expansion of programs/funding needed: The respondent indicates that there is need for more of an existing program, either through increased funding and/or increased scale of a program.
Knowledge/Awareness: The respondent specifically refers to an increased need for information on or marketing of programs.
Local opposition to housing: The respondent references challenges with Not-in-my-Backyard sentiments as a challenge to program effectiveness, or as a challenge in general.
Local land use The respondent specifically refers to local land use or zoning issues as an impediment to

housing needs.
Limited capacity/coordination: The respondent refers to competency issues that impact program effectiveness. This could include limited staffing expertise, limited personnel numbers, or limited cooperation between organizations.
Racial equity: The respondent explicitly refers to racial equity or inequities as a major concern in housing.
COVID-19 impact: The respondent refers to COVID-19's impact on service delivery or housing development.
Housing development/supply issue: The respondent refers to some type of housing development pipeline challenge, such as the cost of labor, cost of materials, or land prices, or an issue with the current supply of housing, such as the need for more housing diversity or the preservation of existing housing stock.
Rural housing need: The respondent emphasizes housing needs in non-metropolitan areas of Virginia.
Special population assistance: The respondent refers to the need for new or additional assistance for a particular population, such as seniors, extremely low income households, individuals with serious mental illness, formerly incarcerated, etc.

External and Internal Program Challenges

Respondents were asked to comment on what other external or internal challenges they faced in using state-level programs. While many respondents referred to challenges that were not already listed by the survey, several provided additional context on or re-emphasized challenges already listed. Furthermore, in several cases respondents referenced external challenges as internal challenges, and vice versa. For this reason, we have combined the major themes from external and internal challenges.

Forty-four (44) respondents provided a response to what external challenges they faced, while 48 respondents provided a response to what internal challenges they faced. The following themes appeared frequently throughout responses and in some cases, respondent feedback encompassed multiple themes.

External and Internal Program Challenges
Difficulty Marketing to Clients: The respondent re-emphasized that outreach to clients about programs was a challenge.
Limited support from elected officials: The respondent re-emphasized opposition or conflict with local elected officials in regards to housing development or services.
Limited support from local/regional staff: The respondent re-emphasized that local or regional government was unhelpful in regards to housing development or services.
Citizen opposition: The respondent re-emphasized local resident opposition as a major challenge in housing development or services.

Administrative burden: The respondent re-emphasized that program administration was burdensome, through such things as paperwork, compliance requirements, etc.
Program guidelines too restrictive: The respondent re-emphasized the need for program guidelines to be more flexible in terms of
Insufficient/complicated guidance: The respondent re-emphasized that sufficient program guidance was lacking or overly complicated.
Landlord issues: The respondent referred to a concern for landlord compliance, or stated a need for greater incentive/engagement with landlords.
Knowledge/Awareness: The respondent noted that they lacked sufficient information on programs or awareness of what programs existed to.
Limited funding: The respondent referred to the lack of or restrictive funding as a challenge in housing program delivery.
Housing Development/Supply Issue: The respondent refers to some type of housing development pipeline challenge, such as the cost of labor, cost of materials, or land prices, or an issue with the current supply of housing, such as the need for more housing diversity or the preservation of existing housing stock.
Rural Housing Need: The respondent emphasizes housing needs in non-metropolitan areas of Virginia.
Limited Internal Capacity: The respondent refers to internal competency issues that impact program effectiveness. This could include limited staffing expertise or limited personnel numbers.
Limited External Capacity: The respondent refers to external competency issues that impact program effectiveness. This could include limited service provider expertise or contractor availability.

State-level Resources to Address Racial Inequities

Respondents were asked, “What state-level resources or support do you feel your organization needs to address racial gaps in housing within your service area?” In total, 198 respondents provided feedback to this question.

The following major themes were identified in regards to what state-level resources or supports can help address racial gaps in housing throughout the Commonwealth. These themes appeared frequently throughout responses and in some cases, respondent feedback encompassed multiple themes.

State-level Resources to Address Racial Inequities
Expansion of programs/funding: The respondent stated that the expansion of an existing program through scale or funding (including grants) would be helpful.
Creation of new programs: The respondent proposed a new program be developed to address racial inequities.

Addressing barriers: The respondent referred to the need to mitigate obstacles to housing, whether through homeownership, rental, or shelter. This could include financial barriers (e.g. credit, student loan debt, etc.) or eligibility barriers (e.g., criminal backgrounds, etc.).
Marketing/Outreach: The respondent called for greater or better engagement with communities to inform individuals of programs or help individuals access programs.
Internal capacity training/support: The respondent stated that organizations would benefit from racial equity training or support to address racial equity within their organization or through their service delivery.
Data/Knowledge: The respondent requested more and/or better data on racial disparities or more information on the causes and effects of racial disparities in housing to residents, communities, and localities.
Impact/Goal tracking: The respondent stated that they wanted administrators to track the positive and/or negative effects of programs.
Local land use: The respondent specifically referred to local land use/zoning as an impediment to addressing racial gaps in housing.
Homeownership: The respondent specifically referred to homeownership as a path to addressing racial inequity.
Workforce/Economic development: The respondent referred to programs to address incomes through increased wages, education, local economic development, workforce training, etc.
Nothing additional: The respondent was satisfied with existing resources or did not see racial inequity as an issue.
Uncertain: The respondent was uncertain on what resources or support would be needed to address racial inequities in their area.

COVID impact

Respondents were asked to provide any other comments about COVID-19's impact on housing needs in their community that were not addressed in the survey. One hundred (100) respondents provided feedback to this question.

Major themes ranged in their focus,, from comments about impact on programs to non-housing related concerns, These themes appeared frequently throughout responses and in some cases, respondent feedback encompassed multiple themes.

COVID-19 impact
Funding: The respondent noted a need for increased funding or more flexible funding to respond to COVID-19 impacts.
Successful policy/program interventions: The respondent referred to the ability of a policy or program to successfully mitigate COVID-19 impacts.

Deferred/Delayed programs: The respondent referred to programs or service delivery being halted temporarily due to COVID-19.
Staff/Volunteer reduction: The respondent referred to a decrease in staffing or volunteer activity due to COVID-19.
Housing supply/development issue: The respondent referred to a negative impact on housing supply or the development pipeline due to COVID-19 (e.g., supply chain issues, rising materials costs, lack of vacancies, lack of inventory, etc.).
Long-term needs/opportunities: The respondent stated that COVID-19 revealed a long-term need
Client needs/concerns: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for specific client resources such as technology/internet access or education on health services, financial aid, etc.
Economic concerns: The respondent expressed general worry or unease about COVID-19 impacts on the economy or jobs writ large.
Homelessness: The respondent expressed a concern for persons experiencing homelessness during or post-COVID-19.
Eviction moratorium: The respondent referred to the eviction moratorium, whether a concern for its impact on housing during the pandemic or a concern for evictions post-COVID-19.
No major impact/Unsure: The respondent expressed little to no impact from COVID-19 or was uncertain on how COVID-19 has impacted housing needs.

Service area needs

Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments about housing needs in their service area. In total, 207 respondents provided feedback on housing needs within their service area.

The following themes appeared frequently throughout responses and in some cases, respondent feedback encompassed multiple themes. Respondent feedback covered a wide range of topic areas. In order to provide a comprehensive summary of these areas, we have broken down themes into four major categories: 1) general needs, 2) policy issues, 3) program issues, and 4) specific needs or concerns. Within each major category are more specific themes.

Service Area Needs
1) General housing need or concern: Respondent expressed a general concern for an aspect of affordable housing development or service provision.
Lack of inventory/supply: The respondent referred to issues with housing supply or inventory (e.g., availability, diversity, etc.).
High rental housing costs: The respondent referred to the high cost of renting in their service area.

High homeownership costs: The respondent referred to the high cost to own a home in their service area.
Housing development issue: The respondent referred an issue in the housing development pipeline. This could include high costs of materials, labor shortages, land availability, etc.
Location of affordable housing: The respondent expressed a need to address the location of affordable housing (i.e., locating affordable housing in high opportunity areas, close to transit and employment, etc.).
Housing quality issue: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for housing rehabilitation, repair, or any other housing improvement issue.
Household energy efficiency/utilities: The respondent referred to or expressed a concern for household energy consumption or utility burdens accrued by households.
2) Policy issues: Respondent expressed a concern for an aspect of housing policy in Virginia.
Rental/leasing barriers: The respondent referred to tenant challenges experienced in attempting to rent a home in Virginia (e.g., eligibility, background checks, etc.).
NIMBY/political challenges: The respondent referred to opposition from local residents or elected officials in regards to affordable housing.
Local land use: The respondent referred to local land use/zoning as a barrier to affordable housing.
Education: The respondent referred to a need for increased education on the benefits of affordable housing, affordable housing programs, etc.
Homeownership barriers: The respondent expressed a need to address obstacles to homeownership. This could include student loan debt, credit issues, down payment assistance, homeownership counseling, etc.
3) Program issues: Respondent expressed concern or comment on housing programs in Virginia.
Administrative burden: The respondent emphasized that program administration was burdensome, through such things as paperwork, compliance requirements, etc.
Expansion of programs/funding: The respondent expressed a need for the expansion of an existing program through scale or funding (including grants).
Program shortfalls/barriers: The respondent criticized a program or referred to a barrier that they experienced in utilizing a program.
4) Specific housing needs or concerns: Respondent expressed an explicit concern for a specific housing sector, population, geography, or issue.
Rural housing: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for housing in non-metro areas of Virginia.
Senior housing: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for the aging population and their housing needs in Virginia.
Special needs populations: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for a special needs population in Virginia (e.g., persons with disabilities, persons with serious mental illness, formerly incarcerated, etc.).

Transitional/supportive/rapid re-housing: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing needs in Virginia.

Homelessness: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for persons experiencing homelessness in Virginia.

Manufactured housing: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for manufactured housing or manufactured home residents in Virginia.

Student housing: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for student housing needs or the impact of student housing in their service area.

COVID-19: The respondent referred to COVID-19 and its impacts on housing or their clients.

Racial equity/disparities: The respondent referred to or expressed concern for racial disparities in their service area, or they expressed a desire to address racial disparities.