

## Program Design

- Please explain how the sources of data listed in the section on Homeowner Needs informed the Program Design Elements included in your plan. *Sources of data were received from lending institutions in the Territory and represented the financial ramifications caused by COVID on the economy. Based on the data received, Program Design Elements were established to ensure that the HAF plan will meet the needs of the most vulnerable homeowners.*
- Will there be a method in your HAF program, early in the process of engaging with a household, to evaluate immediate threats to the housing stability of applicants, which may need to be addressed under an expedited or prioritized timeline (e.g. HOA liens, tax delinquencies, utility shut off)? Evaluations of each applicant file will be conducted to determine prioritization of need. Staff will review and assess applicants to ensure that socially disadvantaged individuals, homeowners with federally funded loans, and low-income homeowners are assisted first. Priority will include those persons facing imminent foreclosure and those requiring mortgage reinstatement. To assess immediate assistance, the HAF application will include questions requesting information on whether the household is facing threat of displacement from their home within the next 30 days. In addition, if imminent risk is established, the program will safeguard against foreclosure as the application is prioritized and processed.
- Please confirm your exclusion of loans secured by manufactured housing and explain what steps you have taken to assess the needs of homeowners with such loans. Please summarize any community feedback or data on which you have based this decision. *Due to the Territory's location in a high-risk hurricane as well as seismic zone, and the resulting local building codes, manufactured homes are not typically found in the Territory. In addition, because of the Territory's isolated geographic location, the cost of shipping a manufactured unit and then modifying it to meet local codes negates interest in a manufactured homes. In the event that someone does have a unit, they would not be excluded from receiving assistance.*
- Please describe how your program will utilize housing counselors or legal services to assist homeowners in evaluating loss mitigation options available for their mortgage. Your descriptions should include:
  - whether your program will connect homeowners with housing counseling or legal services early in the process. *The Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority employs HUD Certified Housing Counselors, who will assist homeowners in evaluating their loss mitigation alternatives. These counselors are full time employees who currently provide housing counseling and educational services to all residents of the Territory. Through the HAF Program, these counselors will be utilized to provide immediate services to delinquent homeowners. Although all applications will be processed, a priority system will be established to ensure that applicants requiring urgent assistance will be prioritized. An evaluation of each file will be completed and correspondence with the lending institution will be explored to confirm mortgage arrearage and applicant's current financial status.*

- the role housing counseling or legal services providers will play in supporting homeowners' efforts at engaging in loss mitigation. *The HUD certified housing counselors will play a vital role in this process. Applicants will receive loss mitigation services to determine best options. These services will include evaluation of mortgage arrearage, financial assessment of the applicant, and recommended solutions. Loss mitigation counseling will assist the delinquent homeowners throughout the process.*
- How will your program leverage resources available through a loss mitigation process to benefit eligible homeowners and how will your program avoid using HAF funds in ways that duplicate relief that available loss mitigation options might provide? *The VIHFA's HUD Certified Housing Counselors will provide loss mitigation counseling to homeowners in default. These services will be provided through the Authority's Homeownership Division. There are no programs or funds available to pay assistance on the clients' behalf. For many of these clients who have fallen behind, resolutions such as refinancing are not workable to them. Assistance from the HAF will restore them to current payment schedules.*
- Please explain what steps, if any, your program will take to assist the homeowner in determining whether a HAF-resolution will result in a sustainable monthly payment? *The Authority's HUD certified counselors will assist in the evaluation of each homeowner. In addition, the Homeownership Staff have extensive experience in prequalification of first-time home buyers and familiarity with the use of ratios to ensure affordability. This knowledge is essential in calculating the sustainable monthly payments for each applicant.*
- Are you anticipating increased winter home energy costs and their potential impact on the homeowners that HAF will serve? *The US Virgin Islands is located in the tropical region of the Caribbean and does not experience seasonal weather.*
- Your programs set \$25,000 as the maximum amount of assistance per homeowner. Please explain how you determined this amount will be sufficient to resolve housing-related delinquencies and whether the cap will be sufficient in areas with higher housing costs? *The maximum amount allotted was determined based on the average monthly mortgage payments of low-income and SDI homeowners and the assumption that the typical client may require assistance for up to 18 months.*

## Performance Goals

- Please explain how you intend to communicate your progress towards performance to the public. *Performance updates will be disseminated via social media, radio and advertisements to inform the public of the plan's progression and the Authority's goals.*
- Please indicate which three metrics will serve as the best indicators of the success of your program. *The best indicators of the program's success will include quantifiable measures. These include number of homeowners saved from foreclosure, number of homeowners with payment assistance that reflect affordable ratios, and number homeowners with modifications assistance to*
- Please indicate whether you intend to disaggregate metrics by income, race, gender, etc. *Metric will be disaggregated by at minimum income and race, despite the Territory being a majority-minority community.*
- Please consider including as an additional metric the number of homeowners assisted/foreclosures prevented solely through counseling or legal services without payment of HAF funds to resolve the homeowner's defaults or delinquencies. *The VIHFA Housing Counseling staff will utilize the CounselorMax Client Management System to track all homeowners assisted. This system will document all clients irrespective of HAF funding/payments and document the counseling outcome.*

## Readiness

- Please provide the most recent available information about your program's readiness, including staffing, contractors, etc. *The VIHFA will employ its HUD Certified Counselors and Homeownership Division Staff to evaluate the HAF applications and provide counseling services.*
- Is your program prepared to launch upon approval and, if not, by what date will you be ready to launch following approval? *The VIHFA anticipates launching the Territory's HAF program in April 2022.*
- Please provide updated information about your progress in spending the initial 10% payment from your jurisdiction's full allocation and the status of any pilot assistance already offered or made available to homeowners. *The Territory of the US Virgin Islands has received the initial 10% allotment; however, these monies have not yet been dispersed to VIHFA and are currently in the Department of Finance's coffers.*