

STATE HOUSING AGENCIES AS EXEMPLARS IN PROMOTING HOME MODIFICATIONS

Earlier Study

This is a case study, conducted in 1999-2000, of 15 state housing agencies in 12 states. It was a follow-up study to a 1997-1998 survey of 99 state housing finance and housing and community development agencies, to which 73 agencies responded about their efforts in home modifications (HMs). The 1997-1998 survey complemented other studies assessing the role of State Units on Aging, the Technology Act Programs and State Rehabilitation Agencies in increasing the availability of HMs and assistive technology.

In brief, we found that 63% of all housing agencies fund HMs, but with small percentages of their total budgets; less than half rated HMs as an important priority; over half indicated that their staff are somewhat knowledgeable about HMs. These findings led us to conduct our study of a select group of the 73 agencies that responded to the earlier survey.

Case Study of Exemplars

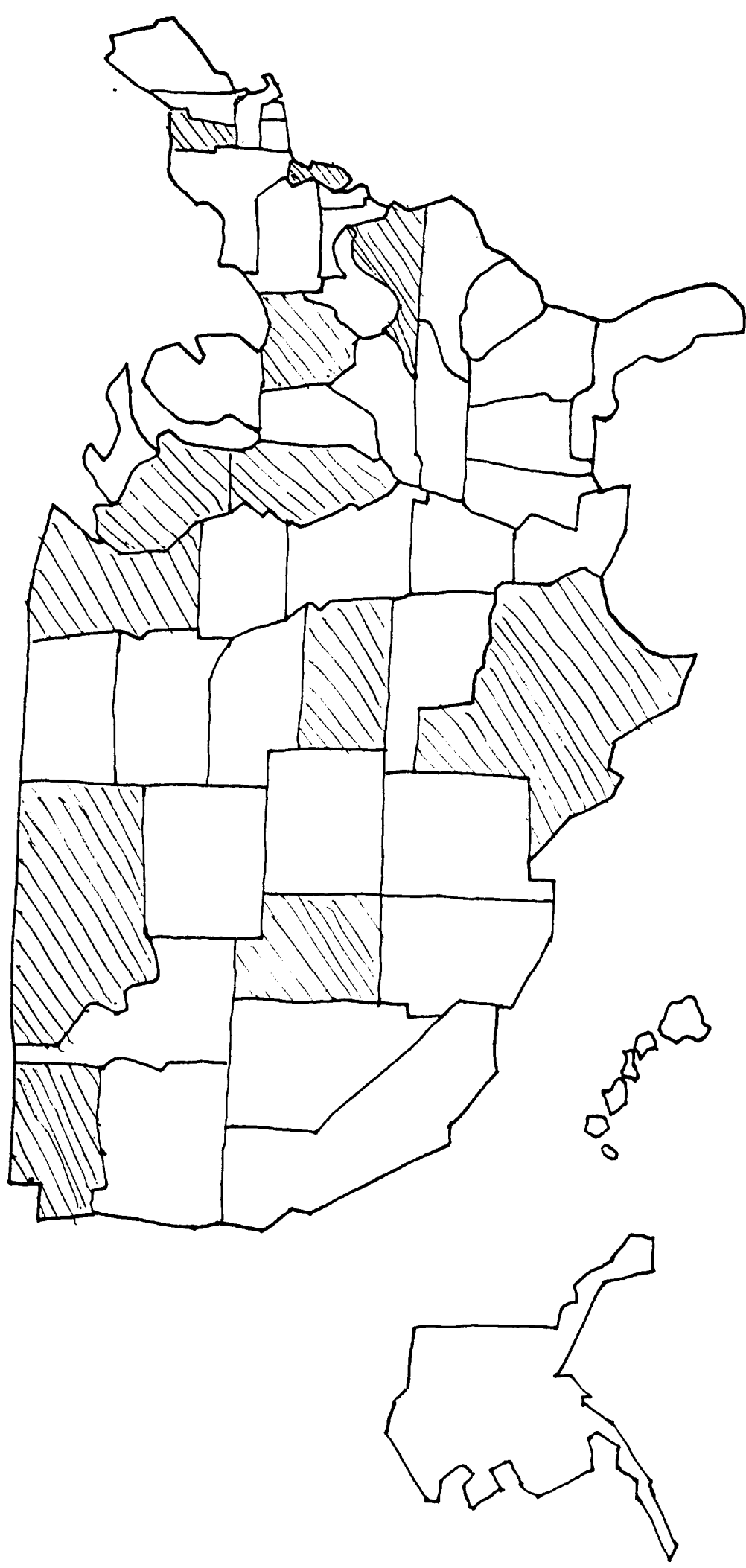
A total of 22 agencies in 16 states were selected according to the following criteria: issue salience of HM to the agency, collaboration mechanisms, agency capacity (expertise and knowledge) and awareness of other state HM efforts. We also sought to ensure some diversity (geographic, single and double-agency states) among the sample. We assumed that exemplars would

- * Identify HMs as a high priority
- * Strengthen and expand HM funding options
- * Have and develop HM expertise
- * Maintain an awareness of statewide HM activity
- * Align with other HM interests in a formal network or joint programs

After initial discussions, agencies in 4 states declined to participate. Thus, the resulting sample consisted of 15 agencies in 12 states.

Agencies were sent a questionnaire of 39 open-ended and closed-ended items. Data were collected by telephone interviews, lasting from 1/5 to 2 hours. One-third of the interviews were conducted with more than one housing agency staff member.

STATE EXEMPLARS IN HOME MODIFICATIONS

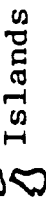


○ Guam

○ Puerto Rico



○ Virgin Islands



Major Highlights

FUNDING: SOURCES:

75% HAVE A BROAD ARRAY OF FUNDING SOURCES FOR HM, BUT HMs COMPETE WITH OTHER, HIGHER PRIORITY HOUSING NEEDS/OPTIONS

47% OF ALL AGENCIES HAVE FOUR OR MORE FUNDING SOURCES FOR HMs

PRIMARY FUNDING SOURCES ARE THE HUD HOME AND CDBG PROGRAMS

53% USE STATE FUNDING OF VARIOUS KINDS; 40% HAVE HOUSING TRUST FUNDS

AGENCY HM BUDGET:

* ONLY 47% COULD ESTIMATE THE PROPORTION OF THEIR AGENCY BUDGET FOR HM

* ON AVERAGE, 7.5% OF HOUSING AGENCY BUDGETS ARE ALLOCATED TO HMs (USUALLY PART OF REHABILITATION AND REPAIR)

* THREE AGENCIES (KANSAS AND HFAs IN MINNESOTA AND MONTANA) EARMARK HM FUNDS, PRIMARILY FOR ACCESSIBILITY

OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT FOR HMs

ONE-THIRD SUPPORT HMs VIA NON-FUNDING MECHANISMS:

* TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

* PARTICIPATION IN TASK FORCES

* TRAINING

BARRIERS TO AGENCY HM ACTIVITY

* INADEQUATE FUNDING, COMPETING HOUSING DEMANDS

* PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY LIMITATIONS (e.g., CDBG: NO NON-PROFITS)

* DEVELOPER, LANDLORD RESISTANCE

* LACK OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, DEMAND

AGENCY HM PRIORITY
LEVELS OF PRIORITY:

- * 73% RATE HMs AS VERY IMPORTANT OR IMPORTANT
- * 20% RATE HMs AS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
- * 26% RATE HMs AS SOMEWHAT/NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT

AGENCIES GIVING A LOW PRIORITY TO HM TEND TO HAVE

- * LOWER LEVELS OF HM ACTIVITY
- * FEWER NUMBERS OF FUNDING SOURCES
- * LOWER SELF-RATING OF STAFF EXPERTISE

AGENCY CAPACITY IN HM
KNOWLEDGE:

- * 40% RATED THEMSELVES AS HAVING EXPERTISE IN HM
- * 54% OF AGENCIES WITH A HIGH HM PRIORITY GAVE THEMSELVES HIGH MARKS IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HMs

HANDLING HM REQUESTS:

- * REFERRALS TO OTHER AGENCIES: 60%
- * SOME PROVISION OF HM-SPECIFIC INFORMATION: 26%
- * PROVISION OF HM COUNSELING: 20%

AGENCY HM KNOWLEDGE NEEDS:

- * INFORMATION ABOUT HM STANDARDS
- * CONSUMER RESOURCES TO BUILD AWARENESS
- * NEED BILINGUAL MATERIALS
- * TRAINING COURSES/WORKSHOPS
- * "BEST PRACTICES" MODELS OF HM SERVICE DELIVERY
- * MODELS OF STATE HOUSING AGENCY HM PROGRAMS

OUTREACH:

- * TWO-THIRDS REPORT HM REQUESTS ARE STEADY-STATE/GROWING
- * CUSTOMARY OUTREACH TO CONSUMERS: TELEPHONE CALLS, WEB-PAGE, BROCHURES
- * CUSTOMARY OUTREACH TO PROFESSIONALS: THE HOUSING PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS, WORKSHOPS, WEB-PAGE

COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

THREE TYPES:

- * INFORMATION EXCHANGE
- * JOINT PROGRAMS: 60%
- * FORMAL NETWORK (ON-GOING TASK FORCE): 47%

AGENCY CHALLENGES

AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY:

- * NEED FOR HM HAS NOT BEEN IDENTIFIED
- * PUBLIC HAS NOT IDENTIFIED HM AS IMPORTANT ISSUE; WITHOUT PUBLIC DEMAND, AGENCIES CANNOT DEVELOP FUNDING
- * PUBLIC DOES NOT KNOW ABOUT EXISTING HM RESOURCES
- * LACK OF AGENCY INFORMATION ABOUT OTHER IN-STATE HM PROGRAMS AND SERVICES PREVENTS AGENCIES FROM DEVELOPING EXPERTISE

LACK OF LEGISLATORS' UNDERSTANDING ABOUT HM MEANS THEY ARE LESS LIKELY TO ENACT POLICIES AND PROVIDE PERMANENT FUNDING

AGENCY ROLES: OFTEN NOT PERMITTED TO SERVE AS ADVOCATES

LINKAGES:

- * LACK OF SERVICE COORDINATION
- * NO LEAD ENTITY TO COORDINATE VARIOUS AGENCIES WITH HM ACTIVITY

CHALLENGES TO FUNDING:

- * MARKET POWER IS USUALLY DETERMINING FACTOR IN HOW AGENCY STRUCTURES ITS RESOURCES

* DEVELOPERS PERCEIVE NO FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR HM, SEE HUD REQUIREMENTS AS LIMITING & RIGID; LESS LIKELY TO APPLY

OVERALL THEMES:

* LACK OF DEFINED NEED AND DEMAND LEADS TO INSUFFICIENT HM RESOURCES

* LACK OF COORDINATION LEADS TO LOCAL LEVEL HM DELIVERY PROBLEMS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this group of housing agencies rates HMs as a high priority, which lays the basis for relatively higher levels of activity, compared to all housing agencies

This group of exemplary housing agencies has found innovative ways to fund and support home modifications (HMs)

Housing trust funds or earmarked funds are approaches that should be explored by other state housing agencies to finance HMs

Housing agencies are unlikely to fund HMs

- except as they are a part of general housing repair and rehabilitation
- unless there is a significant public demand, which is articulated through the Consolidated Plan process
- unless their state legislators are convinced by advocates for the disabled and the elderly about the importance of environmental adaptations for accessibility, safety and improved functioning and self-care

This group of housing agencies demonstrated an insufficient level of expertise in HMs

Housing agencies should develop higher levels of HM knowledge and **use them** to

- forge partnerships/coalitions/task forces with other state agency stakeholders to increase the availability of HMs
- provide information and counseling to consumers
- provide information to developers about the value of universal design and HMs

Housing agencies should continue and enhance their joint program efforts that promote HMs

Housing agencies need to improve their knowledge of other state policies and programs that affect the delivery of HMs, such as the Technology Assistance Programs (TAPs) and the Centers for Independent Living

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