



Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium HOME-ARP Allocation Plan

Contents

Consultation	3
Organizations Consulted	4
Public Participation	11
Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis	12
Homeless Needs Inventory and Gap Analysis Table	13
Non-Homeless Housing Needs Inventory and Gap Analysis Table	13
HOME-ARP Activities.....	21
Use of HOME-ARP Funding	21
Preferences	22
Limitations in a HOME-ARP rental housing or NCS project	23
HOME-ARP Refinancing Guidelines	23

Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium

HOME-ARP Allocation Plan

REVISED 2023 03 21

Consultation

Describe the consultation process including methods used and dates of consultation:

The Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium engaged in regional and local consultation in an effort to undertake the most thorough consultation process possible. The Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium encouraged input for its consultation process from agencies with significant knowledge of and commitment to providing essential services to vulnerable populations, particularly people experiencing homelessness, within Gaston County. The Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium values input from all agencies and has ensured an inclusive approach was taken to ensure ample opportunity for collaboration and discussion on the HOME-ARP allocation plan. The feedback received overwhelmingly supports the activities that the Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium proposes to undertake with HOME-ARP funding.

Between the period of December 2022 and February 2023 the Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium consulted with stakeholders throughout Gaston County in its development of the HOME-American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) allocation plan. Individuals were engaged through individual individual consultation interviews, a community survey and virtual and in-person focus group forums. Persons were asked to provide input on the needs, service gaps and eligible activities for Gaston County's Qualifying Populations (QP).

As the lead agency for the Gastonia-Gaston Consortium, the City of Gastonia conducted the following outreach efforts to engage the community:

1. Conducted four (4) virtual and two (2) in-person focus group forums with:
 - a. Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of Care
 - b. Gaston County municipalities that are part of the HOME Consortium
 - c. Gaston County agencies non-profit agencies providing services for all Qualifying Populations, church organizations, fair housing organizations, legal aid and other community groups.
 - d. Veteran individuals and families with lived experience
 - e. Homeless individuals and families with lived experience
 - f. Gaston County Government Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Community Support Services Department to include Gaston County Veterans Department of Veterans Affairs, Gaston County Access (transportation), Hope Youth Survivors Network (Domestic Violence) and the Department's Director.

2. Launched a community survey for the period of January 1 – 20, 2023. The survey yielded a total of 412 responses.
3. Conducted individual consultation interviews with community stakeholders that work in some capacity with the Qualifying Populations.

An overview of the HOME-ARP Qualifying Populations and Eligible Activities were presented during the individual consultation interviews.

Organizations Consulted

As a result of the consultation methods outlined above, listed below are the corresponding agencies that participated and provided feedback.

Qualifying Population 1 (QP1)	Qualifying Population 2 (QP2)	Qualifying Population 3 (QP3)	Qualifying Population 4(QP4)	Other Population (OP)
Homeless	At-Risk	Domestic Violence	Veterans	Greatest Risk

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Qualifying Population Served	Method of Consultation	Feedback
ALM Counseling	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Support Services and Production and Preservation of Affordable Housing
ABCCM	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Priority Population: Homeless Greatest Need: Non-Congregate Shelter, and Support Services (Housing Counseling, Case Management)
Bridging the Gap Carolina	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Population priority: At Risk Greatest Need(s) Non-Congregate Shelter and Homeless Prevent and Support Services
Catherine's House	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Group Meeting and WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Support Services (Education, Employment and Financial Assistance)
Development Solutions Group	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Population Priority: Veterans Greatest Need(s): Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing, Non-Congregate Shelter, TBRA Vouchers and Support Services (Job Readiness, Life Skills Training, Case Management)
First ARP Church	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Population Priority: Extremely Low Income and At-Risk Greatest Need(s): Shelter and Support Services

Friendship Christian Church	At-Risk Service Provider Homeless Service Provider	QP1 QP2 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: At-Risk Greatest Need(s): Support Services (Financial Assistance, Job Readiness)
First United Methodist Church Belmont	At-Risk Service Provider Homeless Service Provider	QP1 QP2 OP	Community Survey	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Non-Congregate Shelter and Homeless Prevention and Supportive Services
Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Qualifying Population Served	Method of Consultation	Feedback
Gaston Community Action	At-Risk Service Provider	QP2 OP	In-Person Individual consultation interview	Population Priority: At-Risk Greatest Need(s) Support Services (Financial Assistance) and Preserve and Produce Affordable Housing
Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of Care	Continuum of Care serving the jurisdiction's geographic area	QP1 QP3	WebEx Virtual Group Meeting	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing TBRA Vouchers
Gaston County: Hope Survivor Network	Domestic Violence Provider	QP3	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population priority: DV population with children Greatest Need(s): Preservation and production of Affordable Housing Units and support services (Mental Health/Substance Abuse)
Gaston County Veteran's Council	Veterans Group	QP4	In-Person Individual consultation interview	Population Priority: Homeless Veterans Greatest Need(s): Housing and services
Gaston County Department of Veterans Affairs	Veterans Group	QP4	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: Homeless Veterans Greatest Need(s): Housing and services
Gaston County Mediation Center	Public Agencies that address the needs of all qualifying populations	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A Note(s): Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
Gaston County Schools	Public Agencies that address the needs of all qualifying populations	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	Community Survey	Population Priority: Homeless and At-Risk Greatest Need(s): Non-Congregate Shelter, Support Services, Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing, TBRA Vouchers,
Belmont Housing Authority	Public Housing Agency	QP2 OP	Community Survey	Population Priority: Extremely Low Income Greatest Need(s): Support Services, Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing, Non-Congregate Shelter
Gastonia Housing Authority	Public Housing Agency	QP1 QP2	WebEx Virtual Interview	Population Priority: Homeless and At-Risk

		QP3 QP4 OP		Greatest Need(s): Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing, Support Services
Hannah's House	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Population Priority: At-Risk Greatest Need(s): Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing, TBRA Vouchers, Support Services (Housing Counseling and Case Management)

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Qualifying Population Served	Method of Consultation	Feedback
Help Carolina	Homeless Service Provider	QP1 QP2	In-Person Individual consultation interview and WebEx Virtual Group Meeting	<u>Population priority:</u> Homeless <u>Greatest Need(s)</u> Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS) and Homeless Prevention and Support Services (Case Management, Financial Assistance, Life Skills Training, Job Readiness)
Hessed House	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Non-Congregate Shelter, Production and Preservation of Affordable Housing and Support Services (Case Management, Life Skills Training)
Homeless Focus Group	Persons with lived Experience	N/A	In Person Group Individual consultation interview	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Non-Congregate Shelter and Support Services (Substance Abuse, Legal Services, Financial Assistance, Housing Counseling)
House of Mercy	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: At-Risk Greatest Need(s): Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing
Integrated Care Hickory	At Risk Service Provider Homeless Service Provider	QP1 QP2 OP	WebEx Virtual F Group Meeting	Population: At-Risk and Homeless Greatest Need(s): Support Services and Preservation and Production of affordable housing
Kenneth Falls Ministries	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Preservation and production of affordable housing, TBRA Vouchers
Kintegra	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Support Services (Life Skills Training, Case Management), TBRA Vouchers, Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing
Langston Realty Group	At-Risk Service Provider	QP2 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing. Support Services

Legal Aid of the Southern Piedmont	Legal and Fair Housing	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	Telephone	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A Note(s): Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
---	------------------------	--------------------------------	-----------	--

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Qualifying Population Served	Method of Consultation	Feedback
Veterans Focus Group	Persons with lived experience	QP4	In Person Group Individual consultation interview	Population Priority: Veterans Greatest Need(s): Support Services (Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Legal Services, Job Readiness, Housing Counseling, Financial Assistance, Transportation)
Mount Zion Restoration Church	Homeless Service Provider	QP1 QP2 OP	Community Survey	Population Priority: At-Risk and Homeless Greatest need(s): Support Services (Financial Assistance)
North Carolina Human Relations Commission	Public Agencies that address the needs of all qualifying populations	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A Note(s): Contacted in January 2023 and an Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
Our Neighbors, Inc.	At-Risk Service Provider	QP1 QP2	In-person individual consultation interview and virtual focus group meeting	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Affordable Housing, Support Services and Capacity Building
Partners Behavioral Health Management	Homeless Service Provider (Mental Health Disability)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest need: Support Services Preservation and production of affordable housing
Phoenix Counseling	Homeless Service Provider (Mental Health Disability)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	Community Survey	Population Priority: At-Risk Greatest Need(s): TBRA Vouchers, Support Services (Housing Counseling, Case Management)
Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Qualifying Population Served	Method of Consultation	Feedback
Purpose Anew	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	Community Survey	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Preservation and Production of Affordable

				Housing and Support Services (Housing Counseling)
Regional Housing Partnerships	At- Risk Service Provider	QP1 QP2 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: At-Risk Greatest Need(s): Preservation and production of affordable housing. Support Services
Salvation Army	Homeless Service Provider	QP1	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Greatest Need(s): Support Services and Production and preservation of Affordable Housing
United Way of Gaston County	Homeless Service Provider	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Non-Congregate Shelter, Support Services (Financial Assistance, Case Management, Life Skills Training)
City of Belmont	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
City of Bessemer City	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A Note(s): Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
City of Cherryville	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A Note(s): Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Qualifying Population Served	Method of Consultation	Feedback

City of Gastonia	Public agency. Consulted with Planning, Housing and Community Engagement Departments.	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Priority population: Homeless and At-Risk Greatest Need(s): Non-Congregate Shelter, Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing, Support Services (Case Management), Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS), and affordable housing
City of Lowell	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A Note(s): Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
City of Mount Holly	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A Note(s): Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
Gaston County Government	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Priority Population: Homeless, DV, Veterans and At-Risk Greatest Need(s): Support Services (Case Management, Childcare, Employment Assistance, Mental Health Transportation) and Affordable Housing
Gastonia Police Department	Public Agency serving all qualifying populations	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Focus Group Meeting	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need(s): Homeless support services (case management, financial assistance, legal services, mental health and substance abuse) and Non-Congregate Shelter
Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Qualifying Population Served	Method of Consultation	Feedback
Town of Cramerton	HOME Consortium Member (Local	QP1 QP2 QP3	WebEx Virtual Group Meeting	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A

	Government Agency)	QP4 OP		Note(s): Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
Town of Dallas	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Group Meeting	Need: Support Services
Town of McAdenville	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Virtual Group Meeting	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A Note(s): Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
Town of Ranlo	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Group Meeting	Population Priority: N/A Greatest Need(s): N/A Note(s): Invitation extended to participate in focus group session on 02/01/2023. Response not received and did not participate in session.
Town of Stanley	HOME Consortium Member (Local Government Agency)	QP1 QP2 QP3 QP4 OP	WebEx Group Meeting	Population Priority: Homeless Greatest Need: Support Services. Non-Congregate Shelter, Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing

Summarize feedback received and results of upfront consultation with these entities:

Participants discussed the lack of available housing options for the unsheltered homeless population. Due to the current emergency shelter operating at a fraction of capacity and the increased number of homelessness camps, is supporting evidence that clients still have difficulty locating emergency or temporary housing. Discussion ensued, and each agency voiced agreement that shelter and support services are both immediate needs. Parties agreed that the highest priority for the HOME-ARP funds is a Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS) that would best serve the population need. Feedback included the need to ensure fairness and equity in any housing related projects and activities. The group recommended that the North Carolina Human Relations Commission and Legal Aid of North Carolina provide education and provide guidance related to fair housing practices.

As the lead agency for the Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium, the City of Gastonia provided opportunity for the community to participate in an on-line community survey during the period of January 1 – 20, 2023. The survey link was available on the City of Gastonia website and allowed participants to provide input in the areas of:

- Concerning needs and gaps within the community,

- Identify Qualifying Populations in greatest need of housing and housing-related services, and
- Prioritize the eligible activities for HOME-ARP for Gaston County.
- Of the total 412 participants, 214 or 52% identified the Homeless Qualifying Population as the highest ranking in terms of priority of need for housing and services, followed by 24% identified as Other Qualifying Population of Extremely Low Income individuals and families, 16% for At-Risk Families, 9% in support of Veteran Qualifying Population and 3% identified as Domestic Violence Qualifying Population as a priority.

Survey participants also prioritized the needs within the community based upon eligible activity. Activities were Ranked as follows:

<u>Eligible Activity Category</u>	<u>Rank</u>
• Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing	4.41
• Support Services	4.25
• Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS)	4.15
• Tenant-Based Rental Assistance	4.07

Participants responses noted the need and support of Non-Profit Capacity Building and Operating. Responses received in support of these activities were 67.64% and 79.81% respectively.

Survey Participants also weighed in in the needs and gaps of specific support serves which are noted as follows:

<u>Support Services Type</u>	<u>Rank</u>
• Homeless Prevention Services (to include financial assistance)	3.82
• Housing Counseling	3.35
• Life Skills Training	2.84
• Job Readiness	2.78
• Case Management Services	2.24

Public Participation

Describe the public participation process, including information about and the dates of the public comment period and public hearing(s) held during the development of the plan:

- **Date(s) of public notice: 02/22/2023**
- **Public comment period: start date – 2/22/2023 end date – 3/10/2023**
- **Date(s) of public hearing: 3/9/2023**

The Public Participation Process for HOME-ARP Allocation Plan includes a broad range of activities for the Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium. The primary goal of the public participation process was to provide all citizens with adequate notice, access to, and opportunity to review and comment on the plan for HOME-ARP funding.

Efforts included placing an advertisement in the local newspaper, the Gaston Gazette, on the City of Gastonia website, and placing notices at public recreational facilities and the Gastonia Housing Authority. Notices were also emailed to the Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of

Care, Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium Members, local church organizations and citizens that requested additional details. A public community meeting was held on February 23, 2023, at 6pm at the Adult Recreation Center, 519 W. Franklin Boulevard, Gastonia, NC 28052 and a virtual public hearing was conducted on March 9, 2023 at 12pm. The public hearing provided the public the opportunity to attend virtually on a computer, laptop, or mobile phone. A 15-day public comment period for public review of the draft HOME-ARP Plan began on **February 22, 2023** and extended through **March 10, 2023**.

Public notices included instructions for requesting reasonable accommodations and translation services for residents with limited English proficiency (LEP). Residents were able to contact the City of Gastonia Housing and Community Engagement Department by phone, TTY or North Carolina Relay Service, email, or postal mail to make requests.

Describe efforts to broaden public participation:

Efforts to broaden public participation included providing regular, intermittent information via the City of Gastonia social media sites to include Facebook and Twitter and contacting news media outlets which developed news stories outlining the process. Information was posted and advertised intermittently from December 2022 through March 2023. Email updates were also submitted to persons who participated in the survey and requested additional information. The Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of Care was also provided with email updates. A notice was also placed in the local newspaper as well as at the Public Housing Authority, local recreation facilities and the public library. The virtual option allowed for greater citizen participation to accommodate varying schedules.

Summarize the comments and recommendations received through the public participation process either in writing, or orally at a public hearing:

None to date

Summarize any comments or recommendations not accepted and state the reasons why:

None to date

Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis

Based upon the 412 responses received as a result of the community survey conducted January 1-20, 2023, 52% of respondents believed the Qualifying Population to consider are homeless individuals and families. Based upon participant responses, there is a gap in the nonprofits' capacity to carry out existing services and the availability of non-profit operating funds. Participants strongly supported the use of HOME-ARP funding for non-profit capacity building and operating costs by 67.64% and 79.81% respectively.

Homeless Needs Inventory and Gap Analysis Table

Homeless													
	Current Inventory					Homeless Population				Gap Analysis			
	Family		Adults Only		Vets	Family HH (at least 1 child)	Adult HH (w/o child)	Vets	Victims of DV	Family		Adults Only	
	# of Beds	# of Units	# of Beds	# of Units	# of Beds					# of Beds	# of Units	# of Beds	# of Units
Emergency Shelter	3	#	107	#	#								
Transitional Housing	10	#	66	#	#								
Permanent Supportive Housing	#	#	127	#	#								
Other Permanent Housing	#	#	74	#	#								
Sheltered Homeless						XX	178	#	#				
Unsheltered Homeless						#	199	#	#				
Current Gap										#	13	27	#

Non-Homeless Housing Needs Inventory and Gap Analysis Table

Non-Homeless			
	Current Inventory	Level of Need	Gap Analysis
	# of Units	# of Households	# of Households
Total Rental Units	34,314		
Rental Units Affordable to HH at 30% AMI (At-Risk of Homelessness)	16,976		
Rental Units Affordable to HH at 50% AMI (Other Populations)	5,575		
0%-30% AMI Renter HH w/ 1 or more severe housing problems (At-Risk of Homelessness)		10,600	
30%-50% AMI Renter HH w/ 1 or more severe housing problems (Other Populations)		24,114	
Current Gaps			12,163

Suggested Data Sources: 1. American Community Survey (ACS). 2. Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)

Describe the size and demographic composition of qualifying populations within the PJ's boundaries:

Homeless as defined in 24 CFR 91.5 (QP1)

The Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of Care is a tri-county continuum. Data for the 2022 Gaston County Point-In Time Count identified 199 unsheltered homeless persons within the county as of January 25, 2022. In comparison to the 2021 Gaston County Point-IN-Time Count which identified 133 unsheltered persons, there was 49.5% increase in the unsheltered population. The racial demographic of the unsheltered population for the 2022 Gaston County Point-In-Time Counts is noted however, 2021 racial demographic data was unavailable.

In 2022, just over half (51%) of those enumerated in the Point-In-Time Count identified as white while just under half (46%) identified as black, African American or African. The remaining 7% identified as either Asian or multi-racial.

Gaston County 2022 Point-In-Time County Racial Demographic	
Race	Number
American Indian, Alaska Native or Indigenous	6
Asian or Asian American	5
Black, African American or African	157
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0
White	193
Multiple Races	16

According to data received from the Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of Care, for the period of 09/30/2021 through 10/01/2022, as reported for the 2022 Emergency Solutions Grant CAPER, a total of 1,908 Persons were served. Of the 1,908 served, 618 persons were chronically homeless with 559 experiencing homelessness for a period greater than 11 days.

At Risk of Homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 91.5 (QP2)

“At risk of homelessness” is defined by HUD as individuals or families who:

- 1) Have an annual income below 30 percent of median family income.
- 2) At risk of Homelessness, as defined in 24 CFR 91.5 At risk of homelessness:
 - a. An individual or family who:
 - i. Has an annual income below 30 percent of median family income for the area, as determined by HUD;
 - ii. Does not have sufficient resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith based or other social networks, immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place described in paragraph (1) of the “Homeless” definition in this section; and
 - iii. Meets one of the following conditions:

1. Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for homelessness prevention assistance;
 2. Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;
 3. Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance; (D) Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost of the hotel or motel stay is not paid by charitable organizations or by federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals;
 4. Lives in a single-room occupancy or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than two persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than 1.5 people per room, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau;
 5. Is exiting a publicly funded institution, or system of care (such as a health-care facility, a mental health facility, foster care or other youth facility, or correction program or institution); or (G) Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient's approved consolidated plan;
- 3) A child or youth who does not qualify as "homeless" under this section, but qualifies as "homeless" under section 387(3) of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5732a(3)), section 637(11) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832(11)), section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2(6)), section 330(h)(5)(A) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h)(5)(A)), section 3(l) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012(l)), or section 17(b)(15) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b)(15)); or
- 4) A child or youth who does not qualify as "homeless" under this section but qualifies as "homeless" under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)), and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of that child or youth if living with her or him. Do not have sufficient support networks or resources to prevent them from becoming homeless. or
- a. (3) Live in unstable conditions as demonstrated by frequent moves or living in another's home due to hardship.

For the Homeless Qualifying Population youth, the Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of Care did not have data available for this population segment. 2015-2019 CHAS data concerning households ranging from 0-50% of AMI shows that 22,550 renter households are cost burdened, and of the same population group, 12,725 have at least 1 housing problem.

Characteristics attributed to housing instability and increased risk of homelessness include households with less than 30% AMI and were cost burdened where housing costs consumed more than 50% of the income. Data from the Community Development Block Grant-Coronavirus (CDBG-CV), supports this statistic with 40 low-income households at 50% of the

AMI that required assistance. This data subset is a sampling of the population within Gaston County that require assistance.

Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking, as defined by HUD in the Notice (QP3)

Data reported by the NC Department of Administration Council for Women and Youth Involvement for the period of July 2021–June 2022 75,556 persons experiencing domestic violence in North Carolina received in-person or remote services. Out of the 75,556 persons served, 9,575 or 12.7% sought shelter services. Of those persons served, 31,693 were White, 22,216 were Black, and 14,917 were of an Unknown Race. The most common services provided were Referral for 109,329 persons and Counseling 106,343 persons. Size and demographic data for dating violence, sexual violence, stalking or human trafficking is not available.

Other populations requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness and other populations at greatest risk of housing instability, as defined by HUD in the Notice (QP4) Veterans and Greatest Risk

Of the 230,856 Gaston County population for 2021, 4.9% or 11,391 were living in poverty. In 2023 Gaston County ranked 12th in the state for renter evictions, and with 3,114 Gaston County families that faced eviction. Cost burdened households for Gaston County were 28% or 24,114 households. Demographic data for the Qualifying Population of Domestic Violence to include data violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking is not available.

The North Carolina Housing Coalition released its Housing Needs Report by county for 2023. In Gaston County, 28% or 24,114 households were cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of household income on housing-related costs. Fair Market Rents for the area are \$1,333 monthly. Of the total 29,080 renters in Gaston County, 13,238 or 47% of renters have difficulty affording their homes. Gaston County also ranks 12th in the state for evictions with 3,114. Data from Eviction Lab (<https://evictionlab.org>) supports this finding noting that there are 13 evictions filings per date for a 15.8% filing rate. This rate is higher than the national average of 7.97%.

North Carolina Housing Coalition also noted similar findings in regard to homeowners. 19% or 10,876 Households have difficulty affording their homes. Data and demographic information for the Qualifying Population of Veterans and those persons at greatest risk is not available.

2015-2019 CHAS data indicates Gaston County has 14,900 households earning below 30% of the area median family income. Of those extremely low-income households, 58% or 8,695 persons are renter households. The percentage of cost-burdened renters at or below 30% is almost 28%. Data wasn't available as to the size/demographics of those persons who are homeless but are temporarily housed with emergency funds.

Identify and consider the current resources available to assist qualifying populations, including congregate and non-congregate shelter units, supportive services, TBRA, and affordable and permanent supportive rental housing (Optional):

The City of Gastonia serves as the lead agency for the Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium. As of 2022 and listed as the 13th largest city within North Carolina, Gastonia's population is well in excess of 81,000. Gaston County encompasses both rural and urban landscapes and jurisdictions with a population that exceeds 230,000.

During 2022, the Gastonia Housing Authority has increased the number of Section 8 and Elderly housing vouchers from 1806 to 1843. In 2022 there are still 200 vouchers not used due to issues of

housing availability. There are not enough housing units available to meet the need. Current housing inventory data notes there is a gap in available rental housing when compared to need.

Gaston County Schools offers free and reduced lunch services to qualifying populations that are school-aged. In addition, the school system also offers lunch services throughout the summer at various school sites.

The Salvation Army is the sole emergency shelter for Gaston County. The facility currently operates in a reduced capacity and provides emergency housing for homeless individuals. Catherine's House is located in Belmont, NC and offers temporary accommodations for women and women with children.

The Salvation Army has also partnered with Gaston County government and community organizations that offer homeless support services in one location. Organizations collaborate to provide services for a two-hour period twice weekly at the Salvation Army. Services are for Medicaid applications, referrals for mental health, healthcare, housing assistance and food. This action allows for greater accessibility of services in one location. This service is available for those persons experiencing homelessness.

Bountiful Blessings Food Pantry is managed by Mount Zion Restoration Church located in Gastonia North Carolina and works in conjunction with Second Harvest Food Bank. The ministry offers food bank services on Thursday of each week. Other area food bank services include Gastonia Street Ministry, Greater Gaston Baptist Association, and Crisis Assistance Ministries. Crisis Assistance Ministries also offers financial services with rent Services are geared toward those persons at-risk of homelessness and those of greatest risk of homelessness.

Gaston County Survivors Network offers housing and support services for persons experiencing domestic violence victims. Veterans Services of Gaston County assists with survivor benefits, and education. Services are accessible Monday –Friday my appointment.

Housing Repair assistance is available within Gaston County. Gaston County Government offers Urgent Repair funds to assist qualifying low-income homeowners with emergency housing repairs and a housing rehabilitation program to assist with more extensive housing repairs. The City of Gastonia offers assistance to qualifying low-income homeowners residing within the corporate limits of Gastonia with housing repairs.

The City of Gastonia also operates a utility assistance program for extremely low-income individuals. The program provides a monthly credit for a period of up to 12 months and is available to eligible utility account holders. The credit is applied only toward the electric portion of the utility bill.

When considering the availability of affordable housing in Gaston County, the current inventory is 22,551 for persons in the 0-50% AMI whereas persons within the same AMI needing affordable housing is 34,714. This data supports that there is a gap or need of affordable housing for more than 12,163 persons and families within the 0-50% AMI.

Describe the unmet housing and service needs of qualifying populations:

Homeless as defined in 24 CFR 91.5

Since 2022 the Salvation Army has operated at a fraction of its capacity, and to date has not resumed full service. According to the 2022 Housing Inventory Count for Gaston County, there was a cumulative total of 388 beds for Emergency Shelter, Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Re-Housing and Transitional Housing in Gaston County.

The 2022 Gaston County Point-In-Time Count identified 199 unsheltered homeless persons as compared to 2021 Point-In-Time Count identified 133 unsheltered homeless persons, a 49.5 % increase from the prior year.

The available beds for the Salvation Army has decreased each year since 2019. Reasons for the decrease in number of beds include administrative changes, shelter being designated as high barrier and implications of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Coronavirus epidemic had a substantial impact on the number of available beds at the emergency shelter. To limit its impacts, the number of available shelter beds were decreased to allow for social distancing and the safety of shelter residents and staff. Since March 2020 shelter has not resume the full use of all available beds. When comparing available beds for 2019 versus 2022, there is a reduction of well over 69%. A summary of available beds and utilization percentage for 2019 through 2022 are as listed below.

Program Year	Emergency Shelter	Total Beds	Utilization %
2022	Salvation Army	29	100%
2021	Salvation Army	47	32%
2020	Salvation Army	94	39%
2019	Salvation Army	94	81%

At Risk of Homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 91.5

Persons on a fixed income, persons with disabilities and other chronic health issues, substance abuse, mental health, poor credit history, and persons with a record of criminal history all have barriers that put them at risk of homelessness. These persons require supportive services to help maintain housing stability. Examples of supportive services include housing counseling, financial assistance, and counseling as well as employment services.

The table, **Non-Homeless Housing Needs Inventory and Gap Analysis Table**, as outlined on page 13 references data from the 2015-2019 data from the Community Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS). Affordable housing inventory for households at 30 and 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) totals 22,251 while the need for housing amongst this same demographic is 34,714 resulting in a gap of available units of 12,163. Of the renter households at 30% of AMI and below, 6,875 have at least 1 housing problem. Renter households in the 30-50% range of AMI experiencing at least 1 of the 4 household problems is 3,840.

This data was supported by Gaston County's 2-1-1 Call Center Data for the period of February 2022 through February 2023 as noted below:

- 1) 5,554 citizen requests for services to include housing assistance, food insecurity, healthcare, utility assistance, and more.
- 2) 3,267 citizen calls received at the call center.

A further review of data revealed that 153,306 calls were received with requests totaling 294,323 for the following categories of assistance requests:

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE
Housing and Shelter	51.1%
Food	3.7%
Utilities	18.5%
Healthcare & COVID-19	4.3%
Mental Health & Addictions	2.0%
Employment and Income	6.3%
Clothing and Household	2.1%
Childcare and Parenting	<1%
Government and Legal	4.3%
Transportation Assistance	1.3%
Education	<1%
Disaster	<1%
Other	5.8%
Total of all requests	100%

Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking, as defined by HUD in the Notice

2022 Domestic Violence (DV) data was obtained for Gaston County for Domestic Violence survivors. It should be noted that specific resources for the subpopulation of the Qualifying Population to include those fleeing or attempting to flee, dating violence, sexual assault, and trafficking were not available for support.

1. Number of 911 Emergency DV calls for police service	6,567
2. Number of DV calls for police response	568 cases
3. Number of persons residing in DV shelters	327
4. Number of DV intakes for Hope United Survivors Network	696

According to 2022 Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Housing Inventory County data, Gaston County's DV Shelter had a total of 6 family rooms to house survivors and their children. In the event the shelter is at capacity, shelter administration has some flexibility to utilize hotel rooms to house additional individuals and families.

When considering the 2022 total persons seeking assistance at 327 in comparison to the facility's capability to assist at a maximum of 8 families, there is a substantial need and gap in current facility availability.

Data from the Emergency Solutions Grant managed by the Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of Care for 2021 showed that services were provided for 1,320 persons experience domestic violence history and 230 persons fleeing domestic and increase from the prior year, 2020 services for 888 persons with domestic violence history and 212 persons fleeing domestic violence. No information was available for the subset populations of persons experiencing dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking.

Other populations requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness and other populations at greatest risk of housing instability as defined by HUD in the Notice

American Community Survey 5-Year estimate for data for 2021 indicates that there are a total of 12,097 veterans residing in Gaston County. 11,459 are male and 638 female. The population rate of veterans for Gaston County is 6.8% in alignment with the state average of 7.6 %.

Data from the Emergency Solutions Grant managed by the Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of Care showed that during the period of COVID during years 2020 and 2021 a total of 364 persons received emergency housing services through Permanent Supportive Housing or Rapid Rehousing.

Identify any gaps within the current shelter and housing inventory as well as the service delivery system:

Since March 2020, the current emergency shelter continues to operate at a fraction of its capacity. Since 2019, the local emergency shelter has experience a decline in the number of beds available.

Program Year	Unsheltered Population (Based on the Point-In-Time Count for Gaston County)	Number of Emergency Shelter Beds Available (Based upon the Housing Inventory Count for Gaston County)	Service Gap
2022	199	29	170
2021	133	47	86

In a comparison of the service gap data from 2021 to 2022, the service gap increased from 86 persons to 170 persons for an increase of 51%. For the same period, the number of emergency shelter beds decreased from 47 to 29 for a 61%.

Missing resources as noted during the consultation process from service providers of homeless, at-risk of homelessness, domestic violence and other populations cited permanent, affordable housing and support services, specifically financial assistance and case management to be areas of concern. Many respondents to the community survey and focus group sessions also revealed that there is a limited availability of permanent affordable housing options for those persons experiencing homelessness, at-risk of homelessness, domestic violence victims and other qualifying populations. There is equal concern regarding the limited accessibility of emergency shelter opportunities and transitional housing.

Available community resources are scattered throughout the service area presenting an issue for most persons in need of the resources. Issues range from Qualifying Populations have little to no knowledge of the available resources or methods on how to procure the needed resources. This information indicates the need for case management, additional system navigation to connect persons within Qualifying Populations to available resources.

Identify priority needs for qualifying populations:

Based upon the consultation process, priority needs include the addition of a Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS). Community partners indicated that there are extremely long waiting lists for the limited shelter options within the Gastonia-Gaston Consortium area. Many respondents to the individual consultation interviews revealed that there is a limited availability of permanent affordable housing options for those persons experiencing homelessness, at-risk of homelessness, domestic violence victims and other qualifying populations. There is equal concern regarding the limited availability of emergency shelter opportunities and transitional housing.

Explain how the PJ determined the level of need and gaps in the PJ’s shelter and housing inventory and service delivery systems based on the data presented in the plan:

The PJ assessed Community input and reviewed the data sources provided to determine the needs and gaps for proposed activities.

HOME-ARP Activities

Describe the method(s) that will be used for soliciting applications for funding and/or selecting developers, service providers, subrecipients and/or contractors:

As the lead agency of the Gastonia-Gaston Consortium, the City of Gastonia will solicit applications for funding through a competitive Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) or Request for Proposals (RFP) to eligible participants and interested parties. The NOFA will announce the availability of HOME-ARP funds and explain the eligible housing activities and corresponding qualifying populations that can be served through those activities. Interested parties can submit applications by identifying a project that addresses eligible uses and populations as outlined in the NOFA. Detailed information for funding availabilities will be found on the City of Gastonia website <https://www.cityofgastonia.com>.

Describe whether the PJ will administer eligible activities directly:

While it is not the intent of the City of Gastonia as lead agency for the Gastonia-Gaston Consortium to administer program activities, it may elect to do so in the event of limited viable management options for activities deemed vital to community need.

Use of HOME-ARP Funding

	Funding Amount	Percent of the Grant	Statutory Limit
Supportive Services	\$ 200,000		
Acquisition and Development of Non-Congregate Shelters	\$ 2,200,111		
Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	\$		
Development of Affordable Rental Housing	\$		
Non-Profit Operating	\$ 75,000	2.63%	5%
Non-Profit Capacity Building	\$ 125,000	4.39%	5%
Administration and Planning	\$ 250,000	8.77%	15%
Total HOME ARP Allocation	\$ 2,850,111		

Describe how the PJ will distribute HOME-ARP funds in accordance with its priority needs identified in its needs assessment and gap analysis:

1. Supportive Services Open to all Qualifying Populations.

Based upon community participants' responses to the survey, priority was noted support services. To cover populations, proposed funding for this category is 7.02% or \$200,000 of the grant.

2. Non-Congregate Shelters: Activity will include acquisition and rehabilitation or construction which is contingent upon the market. The activity will prioritize the Homeless Qualifying Population. Referrals will be added to project waitlist. Due to the emergency shelter's capacity limited to a low number and the doubling of the population of those experiencing homelessness, the majority of funds will be allocated to provide safe and accessible shelter. This option will allow prove beneficial and assist a larger number of individuals and families. Due to rising real estate costs and supply chain issues, acquisition and rehabilitation costs are anticipated to be significant. Due to this factor, the largest portion of the grant \$2,200,111 or 77.19 % will be used for this activity.
3. Non-Profit Capacity Building: This category was ranked by more than 67% of survey participants as being significant to include in the plan. Capacity Building helps agencies develop the skills and training necessary for staff to carry out eligible activities. The statutory limit for this category is limited to 5% of the total grant funds. To allow for more funding to assist the Qualifying Populations, this activity category was limited to 4.39% or \$125,000 of the grant.
4. Non-Profit Operating: This category was ranked by almost 80% of survey participants as being significant to include in the plan. The statutory limit for this category is limited to 5% of the total grant funds. To allow for more funding to assist the Qualifying Populations, this activity category was limited to 2.63% or \$75,000 of the grant.
5. Administration and Planning: Administration and Planning are a large part of ensuring that grant activities are carried out effectively. \$250,000 or 8.77% of the grant will be used for this activity.

Describe how the characteristics of the shelter and housing inventory, service delivery system, and the needs identified in the gap analysis provided a rationale for the plan to fund eligible activities:

The needs and gaps assessment revealed a substantial increase in the unsheltered homeless population from 2021 to 2022, the limited availability of beds as identified by the G-L-C Continuum of Care 2022 Housing Inventory Count, and the current Emergency Shelter performing as a high-barrier shelter operating in a reduced capacity. This assessment revealed the need for a Non-Congregate Shelter, Support Services and Operating and Capacity Building for Non-Profit Agencies.

Preferences

Identify whether the PJ intends to give preference to one or more qualifying populations or a subpopulation within one or more qualifying populations for any eligible activity or project:

1. For the Acquisition, Rehabilitation or Construction of a Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS), the PJ will use a is using a preference for the Qualifying Homeless Population and will use

a project waitlist for referral methods. All qualifying populations will be provided access to referral.

2. Support Services will not have a preference and will be open to all Qualifying Populations by means of an activity waitlist.
3. Tenant-Based Rental Assistance is not applicable. There are no plans to administer this activity.
4. Preservation and Production of Affordable Housing is not applicable. There are no plans to construct, acquire or refinance affordable housing.

If a preference was identified, explain how the use of a preference or method of prioritization will address the unmet need or gap in benefits and services received by individuals and families in the qualifying population or subpopulation of qualifying population, consistent with the PJ's needs assessment and gap analysis:

The Gastonia-Gaston HOME Consortium has established a prioritization procedure for Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS). This procedure will provide a preference for Qualified Populations (QPs) who are homeless. This prioritization procedure is designed to ensure that the NCS is delivering its services to those who are most in need. This eligible activity will use a project waitlist.

With the limited availability of emergency shelter facilities, the increase of the unsheltered homeless population and the limited owners that will accept vouchers, the method of prioritization for the NCS will be established. A preference will be provided for the homeless qualifying population for entry into Non-Congregate Shelter and will be prioritized above other Qualifying Populations. This option will allow for more shelter opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness and address the current unmet need. The facility will be available to all Qualifying Populations however, the Homeless Qualifying Population will be given priority.

Limitations in a HOME-ARP rental housing or NCS project

Not Applicable: The Gastonia-Gaston Consortium does not intend to set limitations in HOME-ARP rental housing or Non-Congregate Shelter (NCS) Projects.

HOME-ARP Refinancing Guidelines

Not Applicable: The Gastonia-Gaston Consortium does not intend to use HOME-ARP funds to refinance existing debt secured by multifamily rental housing.