

# Equity in HUD's Learning Agenda

## Framing Paper for a Cityscape Point of Contention

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*The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not represent the official positions or policies of the Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), or the U.S. Government.*

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### Abstract

*Evaluation planning across the federal government is beginning to transform to implement the vision and requirements of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act).<sup>1</sup> Evaluation and evidence building, along with core program activities, also are subject to a recent Executive Order from President Biden that calls for affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity across the federal government.*

*This paper provides context for the colloquy by summarizing the implementation of evidence building and equity initiatives at HUD. The authors are HUD staff who have been substantively engaged in implementing the Evidence Act, including developing HUD's Learning Agenda: Fiscal Years 2022–2026 (HUD PD&R, 2022a), which aligns with HUD's Fiscal Year 2022–2026 Strategic Plan to place evidence building on a strategic footing, and in supporting the development of HUD's Equity Action Plan under the Executive Order.*

## Evidence Building and Learning Agendas

### The Evidence-Based Policy Movement

Federal evaluation policy and approaches toward evidence have evolved over decades. Change in the past 5 years has increasingly emphasized the role of evaluation in building evidence in a way that could be transformative. Several pieces of legislation punctuated the evolution and motivated

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<sup>1</sup> Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018. P.L.:115-435 (01/14/2019). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4174>

the transformation. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) also plays a major role in interpreting relevant legislation and guiding agencies in implementation.

Nearly three decades ago, the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA)<sup>2</sup> established requirements for federal strategic planning and performance planning, management, and reporting. GPRA's emphasis on performance measurement represented an early example of evidence-based policymaking. The GPRA Modernization Act of 2010<sup>3</sup> added requirements for quarterly data-driven performance reviews.

Parallel to the growing role for performance measurement was a growing emphasis on formal program evaluations. In 2002, the Institute of Education Sciences within the U.S. Department of Education established the What Works Clearinghouse, representing an early effort to make policy-relevant evidence more systematically accessible.<sup>4</sup>

Enactment of the Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act in 2016<sup>5</sup> created the bipartisan Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking. Congress charged the Commission with making recommendations to strengthen data infrastructure, rigorous evaluation, and integration of administrative and survey data for evaluation purposes with privacy safeguards. The Commission's recommendations (CEP, 2017) had a strong emphasis on data access, security, and privacy,<sup>6</sup> along with the need for strengthening federal evidence-building capacity and improving planning around evidence-based policymaking needs.

## Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act

The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (Evidence Act) adopted about one-half<sup>7</sup> of the Commission's recommendations and maintained a similarly strong emphasis on data. Key recommendations relating to evidence-building capacity that Congress adopted included the appointment of Evaluation Officers, developing "evidence-building plans" (Learning Agendas), developing annual evaluation plans, and conducting capacity assessments (HUD PD&R, 2022b).

Evaluation, as defined by the Evidence Act, means "an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency."

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<sup>2</sup> Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, P.L.: 103-62. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/senate-bill/20>

<sup>3</sup> GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, P.L." 111-352 (01/04/2011). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/111th-congress/house-bill/2142>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/WhoWeAre>.

<sup>5</sup> Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Act of 2016. P.L.: 114-140 (03/30/2016). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/1831>

<sup>6</sup> The Commission notably limited their use of "evidence" to mean "information produced by statistical activities with a statistical purpose" that is potentially useful when evaluating government programs and policies (CEP 2017, p.8). This narrow definition derives from the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA, 44 U.S.C. 3561(6)), which perhaps regrettably is the same definition used by the Evidence Act. Nevertheless, OMB's Circular A-11 guidance states that evidence in the context of the Federal Performance Framework has a considerably broader definition (OMB 2021, Section 200, p.18) and that many of the Evidence Act's provisions support the Federal Performance Framework (OMB 2021, Section 290.3).

<sup>7</sup> OMB 2021, Section 290.3.

The Evidence Act and OMB's annual guidance for budget preparation, strategic planning, and performance management (OMB, 2021; see Part 6) have several key requirements for a federal learning agenda. The law requires the Learning Agenda to be a multi-year, systematic plan for identifying and addressing policy questions relevant to the programs, policies, and regulations of the agency. The Learning Agenda must identify policy-relevant priority questions, identify data needs and analytical methods, identify legal barriers or other challenges to filling the evidence gap, and explain how the agency will go about filling the evidence gap. It should appear as an appendix or separate chapter of, or document referenced and posted along with, the Strategic Plan.

## **Research Roadmap as an Early Learning Agenda**

Before the Evidence Act mandated the development of Learning Agendas, HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R) had been developing "Research Roadmaps," a type of Learning Agenda that was developed through a similar process of stakeholder engagement and included brief proposals for research projects. The process focused on identifying emerging research questions, prioritizing questions that were timely, policy-relevant, and utilized HUD's comparative advantage, and then developing project proposals for a 5-year research agenda. HUD's Research Roadmaps were published in 2013, 2017, and 2020. The 2020 Roadmap included necessary enhancements to serve as HUD's initial Learning Agenda under the Evidence Act.

## **Stakeholder Engagement in Learning Agenda development**

### **Process**

Under the guidance of HUD's Evidence Officer, a PD&R team of Learning Agenda coordinators and a PD&R working group conducted stakeholder outreach and developed the FY 2022–26 Learning Agenda. Engaging stakeholders in identifying research questions that are timely and relevant to support learning for HUD's mission, programs, and policy role is essential to developing a useful Learning Agenda. The Learning Agenda development process, like the process for Research Roadmaps, comprised five steps:

1. Conduct stakeholder outreach to collect suggestions for research questions and data enhancements.
2. Compile and organize research questions and projects.
3. Prioritize research questions and projects.
4. Develop brief project proposals.
5. Develop the Learning Agenda from prioritized research and complementary information required for Learning Agendas.

The outreach to internal and external stakeholders was intended to capture a wide range of views and suggestions. Methods included an email outreach to federal evaluators and policy experts soliciting suggestions in program and policy domains that overlap with HUD's mission; an electronic mailbox devoted to the Learning Agenda<sup>8</sup> that remains open for ongoing suggestions

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<sup>8</sup>Suggestions for research questions and data enhancements may be sent to [HUDLearningAgenda@huduser.gov](mailto:HUDLearningAgenda@huduser.gov).

about important research questions on any HUD-related topic; and listening sessions that were held with HUD program offices, PD&R staff, external federal stakeholders, and people with lived experience involving HUD programs. Listening sessions have repeatedly proven to be the most productive means of generating thoughtful research suggestions, probably because they provide an opportunity for dialogue.<sup>9</sup>

These sources generated hundreds of suggestions from internal and external stakeholders that the Learning Agenda team compiled in a database. The team also recorded the session or medium in which each comment was received but preserved anonymity of the commenters. Research questions were assessed for duplication before being prioritized by PD&R subject matter experts and managers in consultation with internal stakeholders. Brief research project proposals then were developed by PD&R subject matter experts to help provide context for the learning questions and offer concrete ideas for how they could be answered.<sup>10</sup>

### **Stakeholders with lived experience**

In the social sciences, lived experience refers to the formation of a representation of the experiences and choices of a given person and the knowledge and meaning that person gains from these experiences and choices. Lived experience “can produce better quality research by enhancing methodological sensitivity, data accuracy, validity of results, and overall relevance to service users” (Honey et al., 2020). For purposes of supporting a learning organization offering public services to marginalized or underserved communities, capturing a relevant range of lived experience from program participants and eligible non-participants is essential for building evidence to improve program outcomes and, ultimately, cost effectiveness. For such reasons, lived experience can be crucial for evidence building that supports equity objectives.

The listening sessions involving groups with lived experience in HUD programs helped the Learning Agenda team validate the content of certain questions and identified opportunities to supplement other ideas. These changes helped ensure that major themes were properly framed and that complex ideas had appropriate depth. For example, feedback from a group of people with lived experience in HUD’s homeless assistance programs underscored the importance of qualitative data collection in a proposed project on understanding barriers to shelter access among people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

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<sup>9</sup> HUD is considering opportunities to facilitate such sessions more efficiently in the future through the use of technology.

<sup>10</sup> Although project proposals are not a required part of Learning Agendas, HUD’s experience with Research Roadmaps has shown that the preliminary thinking about research approaches captured in brief proposals can be beneficial for research planning and funding on an annual basis even if a different approach is ultimately used. The Evidence Act formalized this planning process through the requirement for Annual Evaluation Plans.

## Importance of Centering Equity

### Requirements of the Executive Order

In January 2021, President Biden issued Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.<sup>11</sup> The order stated, “It is therefore the policy of my Administration that the Federal Government should pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. Affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity is the responsibility of the whole of our Government. Because advancing equity requires a systematic approach to embedding fairness in decisionmaking processes, executive departments and agencies (agencies) must recognize and work to redress inequities in their policies and programs that serve as barriers to equal opportunity.”

The Executive Order included these key definitions:

1. The term “equity” means the consistent and systematic, fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as women and girls, Black, Latino, Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.
2. The term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as to geographic communities, that have been systematically denied the full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity.”
3. OMB’s Circular A-11 reinforces the application of the Executive Order to the Learning Agenda and related documents. Section 220.23 of the Circular (OMB, 2021) states that agencies should use a whole of Government approach in advancing equity, apply an equity lens of justice across all policies and programs, and in developing documents including Learning Agendas, should “consult and involve underserved communities, consider how their organizational and decisionmaking processes may not account for certain perspectives, and incorporate leading practices for ongoing equity assessment and affirming efforts.”

### HUD’s Evaluation Policy Statement

HUD’s Evaluation Policy Statement (HUD PD&R, 2021) guides the conduct of all HUD-sponsored evaluations and regulatory impact analyses and the selection of projects, contractors, and staff

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<sup>11</sup> Executive Order 13985 of January 20, 2021, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. Code of Federal Regulations, 86 FR 7009: 7009-7013. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01753/advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government>.

involved in evaluations. The Policy identifies six core principles and practices as fundamental to ensuring high-quality and consistent evaluation results: (1) rigor, (2) relevance, (3) transparency, (4) independence, (5) ethics, and (6) technical innovation.

The Evaluation Policy highlights equity considerations in connection with several of its core principles:

- **Rigor:** understanding and correcting for implicit bias in the formulation of research questions and methods.
- **Relevance:** including stakeholders with lived experience in research prioritization and planning; designing evaluations to better understand structural racism and reveal unequal benefits and harms; collecting and reporting data on underrepresented and underserved communities; engaging studied populations by including their thoughts and perspectives; and disseminating findings in ways that are accessible and useful to stakeholders.
- **Ethics:** conducting evaluations in an ethical manner and safeguarding the dignity, rights, safety, and privacy of participants.

## Structure and Equity Content of HUD's Learning Agenda

In considering the equity implications of HUD's Learning Agenda, it is helpful to consider the Learning Agenda's basic structure and how it seeks to center equity in evidence building.

Modeled after the Research Roadmap, the Learning Agenda (HUD PD&R, 2022a) highlights a set of priority research questions and HUD's approach to answering those questions. These priority questions are organized into 11 policy topics that broadly categorize HUD's portfolio of work. Each topic has a "foundational learning question" meant to capture overarching themes and provide a bridge between policy and research. The policy topics and the foundational learning question identified for each topic are as follows:

1. **Community Development and Place-Based Initiatives:** How can federal policy most effectively support equitable place-building, community development, and quality of life improvements in American communities?
2. **Core Housing Programs:** How can HUD most effectively meet needs for high-quality, rent-assisted housing that supports housing security and economic advancement?
3. **Disaster Recovery, Energy, and Climate Change:** How can federal policy and funding best support disaster recovery, climate resilience, and sustainability and strengthen environmental justice?
4. **Fair Housing:** How can housing discrimination associated with online advertising, social media, and finance be measured, investigated, and prevented?
5. **Homeownership:** How can federal policy make first-time homeownership more accessible to all Americans and more likely to result in housing stability and wealth-building for underserved populations?

6. **Housing Finance and Affordable Housing Supply:** How can federal policy mitigate market constraints in affordable housing production and finance?
7. **Housing and Health:** How can HUD best address the health needs of people in its assisted housing programs and also bring housing assistance to those for whom lack of housing is a major barrier to health?
8. **Indian and Tribal Issues:** How can HUD better respond to housing and development challenges unique to Native American communities and tribal lands?
9. **Self-Sufficiency and Economic Opportunity:** How can housing assistance, including temporary assistance, best support moves to opportunity neighborhoods, human capital development, and increased economic opportunity?
10. **Vulnerable and Special Populations:** How can housing assistance respond more effectively to varied individual needs of people who have barriers to housing stability, and what combination of supports and policies are most effective at preventing evictions, homelessness, and housing insecurity for lower income persons?
11. **Enhanced Data and Methods:** How should HUD improve data, methods, and processes to build capacity for evidence-based policymaking?

The Learning Agenda seeks to support the foundational learning questions with priority research questions, which number more than 100 and are listed in the appendix (exhibit A.1). HUD's Learning Agenda takes the additional, unmandated step of following each priority research question with a brief project proposal that presents a possible approach HUD could take to address the issue, drawing from myriad rigorous research and evidence-building approaches. In addition to forward-looking research questions, the Learning Agenda also identifies key data gaps that HUD could address to further its evidence-building capacity.

HUD developed the Learning Agenda concurrently with its first Equity Assessment under Executive Order 13985.<sup>12</sup> It was through this parallel process that HUD engaged key stakeholders in issue-specific action teams and applied an equity lens to the Learning Agenda, the Program Evaluation Policy, and planned research and evaluation, including Regulatory Impact Analyses and the research priorities highlighted in PD&R's Unsolicited Proposals for Research Partnerships.<sup>13</sup> The Learning Agenda includes research questions and project descriptions, as well as data enhancement priorities, that build on the work of those teams and incorporate a focus on equitable outcomes, implementation, and impacts of HUD programs and policies. This focus is observable, for example, in the foundational learning questions listed previously, where the language of most questions can be read as framing various aspects of equity, equal opportunity, or serving underserved populations. The Learning Agenda team collaborated with HUD's Equity Leadership Committee and Equity Working Group to ensure that the Learning Agenda fully supports the HUD's learning

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<sup>12</sup> Under OMB guidance to federal agencies, Equity Assessments remain internal, pre-deliberative documents at present.

<sup>13</sup> The FY 2021 notice of Authority to Accept Unsolicited Proposals for Research Partnerships is found at [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/spm/gmomgmt/grantsinfo/fundingopps/fy21\\_aauprpn](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/spm/gmomgmt/grantsinfo/fundingopps/fy21_aauprpn).

needs with respect to reversing inequities in federal housing policy and practice and prioritizing equity in all HUD programs.

## **Building On the Learning Agenda**

The proposals, questions, and broader focus areas presented in HUD's Learning Agenda represent a set of possible options for HUD to pursue going forward. HUD's research and evidence-building approach are inherently collaborative, often involving work across offices within HUD, with other Federal Agencies, and with the support of Congress through the appropriations process. As a result, the research questions and data gaps identified in the Learning Agenda may be better understood as stepping stones to a better-informed future rather than a clearly defined prescriptive path for evidence building.

Further emphasizing the contingent role of the Learning Agenda, OMB guidance requires agencies to revisit their Learning Agendas at least annually and update them "as needed to reflect progress toward answering the agency's priority questions, shifting agency priorities, changing contexts within which the agency operates, and emergent needs" (OMB, 2021, Sec. 290.8).

The encompassing nature of the federal equity lens poses challenges for successfully integrating equity into the Learning Agenda. Priority research questions and projects must balance equity evidence building and learning with other evidence-building priorities. For example, if HUD does not definitively know whether a given program has beneficial impacts, either on average or for specific population groups, then there is little basis for confidence that expanding the program's reach or better targeting of underserved populations is a desirable policy goal. In some cases, it may be appropriate to answer the general impact question before addressing whether a program should be administered more equitably, although evaluations frequently can address both issues simultaneously.

Framing research questions with an equity-building lens represents an important first step in integrating the federal equity initiative with the evidence-building initiative. To support the next steps, it would be beneficial for PD&R to receive expert counsel about where equity-oriented research methodologies should become a default approach or consideration in research planning and where key methods may have been overlooked. Good program evaluation is a costly endeavor, so ensuring that appropriate research methods are incorporated from the outset is important for using taxpayer resources effectively. For this reason, the authors hope that the following reports in this journal will provide insights and clarity about methodologies that HUD should be considering as a matter of course to help research better advance equity.

For such reasons, the frequent revisiting of the Learning Agenda and incremental enhancements of evidence building and organizational learning appear to set a wise course. Robust engagement of stakeholders in this process of reassessment will almost certainly be beneficial for long-term success.



## Appendix

HUD's *Learning Agenda: Fiscal Year 2022–2026* (HUD PD&R, 2022a) provides the following summary list of the foundational learning questions and priority research questions that support each of the 11 policy topics (exhibit A.1.).

### Exhibit A.1

List of Foundational Learning Questions and Priority Research Questions (1 of 6)

#### Policy Topic Areas, Foundational Learning Questions, and Priority Research Questions

##### Community Development and Place-based Initiatives

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can federal policy most effectively support equitable place-building, community development, and quality of life improvements in American communities?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- What were the outcomes of the Choice Neighborhoods program for both residents and the communities in which it was implemented?
- How effective are CDBG economic development activities across different community types and program approaches?
- To what extent does CDBG investment benefit low- and moderate-income persons and individuals who are members of protected class groups or underserved communities?
- How are CDBG grantees using the Section 108 loan guarantee program to expand access to alternative forms of affordable housing?
- How can HUD support and increase access to healthy environments in communities through the siting of recreation, health clinics, healthy food, and other assets connected to place-based investments?
- Can technical assistance build capacity and improve financial management of distressed local governments?
- How effective are homeowner rehabilitation programs at improving individual quality of life and what effect do they have on neighborhood quality?
- How much affordable housing is created within Opportunity Zones, and what is the broader change in housing affordability in those areas?
- What has been the impact of the HOPE VI Urban Revitalization program over 20 years?
- What are the personal reasons, outcomes, and destinations of households who leave gentrifying neighborhoods? What motivations and perceptions of neighborhood change influence the choices of leavers and stayers?
- What are the housing needs of agricultural workers?

##### Core Housing Programs

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can HUD most effectively meet needs for high-quality, rent-assisted housing that supports housing security and economic advancement?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- What are the best most effective ways of engaging with and attracting landlords to the voucher program?
- What would change if tenant-based rental assistance programs made payments directly to tenants?
- What would it take to modernize and improve accessibility in the assisted housing stock, including public housing and privately-owned multifamily housing?
- How does housing quality affect assisted housing tenure, employment, and quality of life outcomes of public housing and HCV tenants?
- What are the tenant, neighborhood, and PHA outcomes associated with the implementation of Small Area FMRs?
- What are the most effective strategies to reduce barriers to applying for federal housing assistance, especially for individuals who are members of protected class groups or underserved communities?

## Exhibit A.1

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### List of Foundational Learning Questions and Priority Research Questions (2 of 6)

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#### Policy Topic Areas, Foundational Learning Questions, and Priority Research Questions

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##### Core Housing Programs, continued

- What is the pattern and distribution of voucher portability in the Housing Choice Voucher Program?
- How can HUD better support students in post-secondary education who are at risk of housing insecurity and homelessness?
- What are the pros and cons of updating utility allowances through energy consumption modeling rather than relying on actual utility data in multifamily properties?
- How do energy standards affect the long-term viability of RAD conversions?
- How are PHAs implementing the Project-Based Voucher program?
- Is the Project-Based Voucher program benefiting HUD's target populations and do underserved communities have equitable access to the program?
- What are the long-term social and economic outcomes of persons who have exited public and assisted housing?

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##### Disaster Recovery, Energy, and Climate Change

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can federal policy and funding best support disaster recovery, climate resilience, and sustainability and strengthen environmental justice?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- Does HUD need to modify the CDBG-DR allocation process to account for new needs related to climate change?
- How do the impacts, costs, and resulting needs of slow-onset disasters compare with those of declared disasters, and what are implications for slow-onset disaster declarations, recovery aid programs, and HUD allocation formulas?
- What HUD-assisted properties are repeatedly harmed by or at increasing risk of disasters and what is the cost to HUD? What are risks to HUD-assisted and other vulnerable populations?
- What enhancements to disaster-related data collection and data sharing between agencies are needed to improve coordination and accelerated recovery?
- How does the impact of CDBG-DR funding vary across communities, and how do impacts vary with local capacity?
- What are the outcomes of CDBG-DR buyout programs and are these programs administered equitably?
- Where do people go after a disaster?
- What is the optimal level of flood insurance coverage for the FHA single-family mortgage portfolio and how can flood insurance policies maximize coverage?
- Are current building efficiency, safety, and resiliency codes for various types of housing adequate?
- How are climate change risk and disasters affecting mortgage performance, and what are implications of including climate risk in underwriting procedures?

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##### Fair Housing

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can housing discrimination associated with online advertising, social media, and finance be measured, investigated, and prevented?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- To what extent do people of color with disabilities seek redress related to their disability?
  - How can research support HUD and community efforts to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH)?
  - To what extent is there bias in home appraisals and automated valuations, and what are the fair housing implications?
  - Why do comparatively few fair housing complaints relate to the home sales process, and are there ways to identify discriminatory practices such as steering?
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**Exhibit A.1****List of Foundational Learning Questions and Priority Research Questions (3 of 6)****Policy Topic Areas, Foundational Learning Questions, and Priority Research Questions****Fair Housing, continued**

- What do early findings show about the experiences of voucher holders in jurisdictions with local source of income discrimination ordinances?
- Can innovative housing discrimination study methodologies better detect and measure evidence of discrimination in advertised units than in-person paired testing methods?
- Do home seekers with communication-related disabilities experience substantial barriers to information in seeking rental units?
- How are HUD's definitions of 'areas of minority concentration' and Site and Neighborhood Standards shaping the development of new affordable housing?
- What portion of HUD assisted rental housing continues to be non-compliant with applicable federal accessibility requirements, including in entrances and common areas of a building?
- How effective are Fair Housing Initiatives Program agencies in providing fair housing education, outreach, and investigations?

**Homeownership**

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can federal policy make first-time homeownership more accessible to all Americans and more likely to result in housing stability and wealth-building for underserved populations?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- How can equity in mortgage lending best be advanced, especially as algorithmic decisionmaking is becoming more prevalent?
- What have HUD programs done to close the homeownership gap, and what role does homeowner equity play?
- What are FHA's policy options and tradeoffs for advancing shared equity as a federal homeownership strategy?
- Who has benefitted from pandemic forbearance programs?
- What are the implications for the housing finance system of differences in the composition of mortgage-backed securities of GNMA versus those of the housing GSEs and their changes over time?
- To what extent is the GNMA portfolio vulnerable to climate risk?
- How much does student loan debt influence mortgage default risk?
- How effectively does a post-purchase, light-touch homeownership counseling program prepare FHA borrowers for sustainable homeownership?
- What risks and benefits are associated with providing down-payment assistance and other assistance to first-time homebuyers?
- Who is served by PHA-administered homeownership programs and to what extent have assisted households been able to maintain homeownership and build assets?

**Housing Finance and Affordable Housing Supply**

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can federal policy mitigate market constraints in affordable housing production and finance?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- What are the gaps in financing for multifamily housing in America, and under what conditions would an expanded FHA role be likely to support both increasing the supply of multifamily housing, and at preserving and enhancing the supply of naturally occurring affordable housing?
- How is the Housing Trust Fund being used to increase the production of affordable housing?
- What happens to the LIHTC portfolio as communities start to reach the end of the extended use affordability period?
- How would changes to basis boost policies impact patterns of LIHTC development?

## Exhibit A.1

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### List of Foundational Learning Questions and Priority Research Questions (4 of 6)

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#### Policy Topic Areas, Foundational Learning Questions, and Priority Research Questions

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##### Housing Finance and Affordable Housing Supply, continued

- What do housing subsidies buy?
- How do zoning, subdivision regulations, procedural processes, and local land use conditions affect housing supply, and what regulatory reforms are most effective at matching housing supply to demand in a way that promotes inclusive communities?
- To what extent do land use policies and other regulatory factors drive differences in rents and production of affordable rental units?
- How successful have laws aimed at increasing duplexes, Accessory Dwelling Units, and other low-density, infill housing typologies been at creating new housing supply?
- What is the potential for alternative models for housing affordability?
- Can affordable housing and manufactured homes promote wealth building?
- What is the impact of Davis-Bacon wage requirements on the cost of housing development, project quality, and worker wages?
- To what extent can modular or other off-site construction methods produce affordable, accessible rental units, and how does the affordability of off-site methods compare with that of site-built housing?

##### Housing and Health

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can HUD best address the health needs of people in its assisted housing programs and also bring housing assistance to those for whom lack of housing is a major barrier to health?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- What are the most significant problems with indoor air quality in HUD-assisted housing? What are cost-effective ways to influence positive changes in indoor air quality?
- Which program designs for deploying Integrated Pest Management in public and assisted housing are most cost-effective and manageable?
- How can HUD reduce the incidence of elevated blood lead levels among children of families in the Housing Choice Voucher program?
- How well do HUD's homeless assistance programs meet the health needs of young children and their parents?
- What home visiting model would most successfully promote health or other beneficial outcomes for families with children in public housing, assisted multifamily properties, or emergency shelters?
- What are the most significant health disparities affecting HUD-assisted households? To what extent do health challenges represent opportunities for cost-effective coordination of healthcare services with housing assistance?
- How prevalent is receipt of Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) among HUD-assisted households?
- What accessibility features and design standards are recommended when building or rehabilitating housing for the elderly to support residents' ability to age in place?

##### Indian and Tribal Issues

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can HUD better respond to housing and development challenges unique to Native American communities and tribal lands?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- What is the impact of the Indian Housing Block Grant competitive grant program for housing in tribal areas?
  - What are the distinct impacts and challenges of climate change in tribal communities, and what are implications for housing and community development?
  - What are the most effective disaster preparedness recovery, mitigation, and adaptation strategies undertaken by tribal communities, including pandemic response?
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**Exhibit A.1**

## List of Foundational Learning Questions and Priority Research Questions (5 of 6)

**Policy Topic Areas, Foundational Learning Questions, and Priority Research Questions****Indian and Tribal Issues, continued**

- How are crisis response approaches to prevent and end homelessness different in tribal areas?
- What is the feasibility of developing local sources of building components and materials in tribal areas to reduce housing construction costs?

**Self-sufficiency and Economic Opportunity**

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can housing assistance, including temporary assistance, best support moves to opportunity neighborhoods, human capital development, and increased economic opportunity?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- What additional approaches can encourage asset building among HUD assisted households?
- What is the unmet need for childcare among HUD-assisted households with children?
- What effect does improved access to affordable childcare have on the employment outcomes of parents/guardians and on the developmental outcomes of children?
- What proportion of public housing residents employed under Section 3 requirements receive training or certifications to improve their long-term employment prospects?
- How many HUD-assisted tenants receive services from other federal programs focused on labor market outcomes?
- Are there service delivery models evaluated in the research literature that could improve self-sufficiency outcomes for HUD-assisted households?
- What are the costs and benefits of making broadband internet services a reimbursable expense for providers of HUD-assisted housing?
- What is the policy value of implementing rent payment reporting to credit bureaus, and what are the equity tradeoffs for households in HUD-assisted housing?

**Vulnerable and Special Populations**

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How can housing assistance respond more effectively to varied individual needs of people who have barriers to housing stability, and what combination of supports and policies are most effective at preventing evictions, homelessness, and housing insecurity for lower income persons?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- How did PHAs and Continuum of Care groups (CoCs) partner to administer their allocation of Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) and what were the outcomes of tenants who leased up with an EHV?
- To what extent did the Emergency Rental Assistance Program prevent evictions and homelessness in the short-term, did it have lasting effects on housing stability, and could it serve as a model for future HUD programs?
- How were eviction and foreclosure moratoria implemented during the pandemic, and what lessons does that experience have for the future?
- How are HUD grantees implementing the Eviction Prevention Services program?
- What have been the challenges and outcomes associated with implementing pandemic-related programs to prevent and end homelessness?
- What are the barriers people experiencing unsheltered homelessness face when trying to access the shelter system, and what can shelter providers do to address these barriers?
- What kinds of homelessness prevention and diversion strategies are communities employing, and which strategies are most effective at resolving homelessness and preventing returns to homelessness?
- For what portion of people experiencing homelessness is Rapid Rehousing the right resource, and what will the optimal program structure and duration be in different housing markets?
- What strategies best support formerly homeless tenants who wish to "Move-On" from Permanent Supportive Housing?

## Exhibit A.1

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### List of Foundational Learning Questions and Priority Research Questions (6 of 6)

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#### Policy Topic Areas, Foundational Learning Questions, and Priority Research Questions

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##### Vulnerable and Special Populations, continued

- What are the long-term outcomes of the Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities program?
- Are Mainstream, Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) vouchers an effective intervention for individuals with disabilities experiencing homelessness?
- What are the costs and preparation necessary for older adults to age in place successfully in public and assisted housing?
- How well are housing protections provided under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) assisting victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking achieve housing stability?

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##### Enhanced Data and Methods

**Foundational Learning Question:** *How should HUD improve data, methods, and processes to build capacity for evidence-based policymaking?*

**Priority Research Questions:**

- How can HUD capture 'positive' and 'negative' outcomes and motivations for exit by assisted tenants?
- What data linkages should HUD invest in as permanent, regular linkages and what data linkages can remain as ad-hoc efforts?
- Could HUD link IRS, HUD, and Census records to add to the evidence base on the effects of housing assistance on tenants' employment, income, and earnings?
- What can HUD learn about mortality outcomes through data linkages with the Census Bureau?
- Are there components of HUD's administrative data collection that do not yield sufficiently complete and/or high quality data for effective policymaking? How can these deficiencies be addressed?
- Which data currently collected on paper forms would support useful policy analysis and performance assessment if digitized in accessible and searchable form?
- Are there data sources that HUD maintains internally that could be made public while protecting privacy?
- How do REAC physical inspection results for the HUD stock compare with occupant-reported data from the American Housing Survey and the American Healthy Homes Survey?
- What would be the policy value of creating a national evictions database, including how the database could inform policy to advance housing stability?
- What can we learn from the American Housing Survey about how renter and homeowner decisions are changing in response to climate change?
- As HUD works to test and validate the American Housing Survey Housing Insecurity module, are there examples or test cases worthy of research for how a housing insecurity index might be applied?
- What do the next generation surveys on lead hazards and healthy homes tell us?
- How could HUD cost-effectively capture data on energy expenditures and energy consumption of public and assisted housing developments?
- Which drivers of customer experience most frequently hinder satisfaction and trust for specific program services?

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*CDBG = Community Development Block Grant program. Census = U.S. Census Bureau. DR = disaster recovery. FHA = Federal Housing Administration. FMR = fair market rent. GNMA = Ginnie Mae, or the Government National Mortgage Association. GSE = government-sponsored enterprise. HCV = housing choice voucher. HOPE VI = Program for Revitalization of Severely Distressed Public Housing (Office of Public and Indian Housing program). IRS = Internal Revenue Service. LIHTC = Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. PHA = public housing agency. RAD = Rental Assistance Demonstration. REAC = Real Estate Assessment Center.*

*Source: HUD Learning Agenda: Fiscal Years 2022–2026 [https://www.huduser.gov/portal/about/pdr\\_learningagenda.html](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/about/pdr_learningagenda.html)*

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