

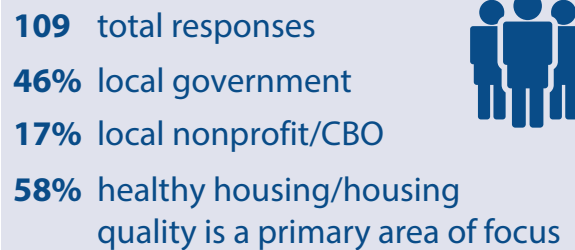
Voices from the Field

Healthy Housing Training and Workforce Development Needs and Opportunities

In April 2024, Healthy Housing Solutions created an opportunity at the Building Performance Association (BPA) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes (HUD OLHCHH) [integrated National Home Performance Conference and Trade Show/National Healthy Homes Conference](#) to solicit input from the field for HUD OLHCHH to consider in developing a plan to prioritize and implement investments in future training activities for the comprehensive healthy homes community. This feedback opportunity represents just one piece of a larger, in-depth project to assess feasible training investments to maximize strategic impact. Key takeaways from the feedback provided are included below.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS.

Most of the 109 respondents represented local government agencies. The next largest group was local nonprofits and CBOS, followed by state government agencies, national nonprofits, contractors, and assessors. Over 9% of respondents identified as “other.” The number one primary area(s) of focus reported was healthy housing/housing quality, followed by activities related to specific outcomes (e.g., asthma and lead exposure), energy/home performance, other housing, and social/economic justice issues. Around 30% also listed “other” as a primary area of focus.



WHO NEEDS HEALTHY HOUSING TRAINING? IF YOU HAD PRIORITIZE THREE GROUPS FOR HUD TO TRAIN, WHO WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

When asked an open-ended question of who needed to be prioritized for additional healthy housing training, responses could generally be grouped into six broad categories: contractors (36), grantees/subgrantees (16), program staff (local and HUD) (13), community stakeholders (12), and elected officials (11).

Contractors, grantees, and subgrantees surfaced as the top three groups to prioritize for HUD training.



WHAT DO YOU WISH THAT HUD UNDERSTOOD ABOUT YOUR WORK, YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR SECTOR, YOUR PARTNERS THAT MIGHT HELP THEM DESIGN BETTER TRAINING?

Recurring themes to this open response cited limited resources, the lack of communication and support from HUD staff, overall infrastructure deficiencies, communities' distrust of government organizations, and the increasing cost of labor as primary drivers hindering their ability to offer services and implement programs effectively.

Further, understanding the demographics and unique characteristics of communities was noted as crucial for designing inclusive and equitable training programs. Participants emphasized the importance of considering factors such as culture, population, and geographic location when addressing training needs.

Selected responses:

- *We always need more funding... diverse funding, with less limitation and more flexibility.*
- *I wish HUD understood that in disadvantaged communities, there [are] years and years of disenfranchisement and neglect that have taken place.*
- *More training to retain workers in nonprofits (please, please help provide better income for employees).*
- *Our families live on the absolute edge physically and mentally, and HUD needs to allow us to help them without shaming them by asking for detailed income and social info over and over.*
- *It would be nice to have facilitated peer group meetings with similar-sized cities around the country to discuss successes and losses.*
- *That training provided was more clear and direct and helped color in some of the gray areas of policies and procedures... not leave so much up to interpretation.*
- *Each geographical area has its own challenges; many trainings seem to focus on the same issues.*



DO YOU KNOW OF ANY EXISTING OR PAST TRAINING THAT YOU FEEL PREPARES PEOPLE WELL FOR HEALTHY HOMES WORK?

Responses to this question focused on trainings related to three main categories: healthy homes technical content, grants administration, and related soft skills. Regarding healthy homes technical content, respondents cited a range of topical areas (e.g., home inspection, energy auditing, lead risk assessor, green retrofits, et cetera) and most frequently noted past National Healthy Homes Training Center courses and trainers (e.g., Healthy Homes Essentials, Kevin Kennedy) as well as the Building Performance Institute trainings/certifications as particular to be helpful to their healthy homes work. From a more administrative perspective, responses included interest in trainings on grants administration and convenings like the HUD National Healthy Homes Conference as key opportunities to learn more about successful management and implementation of the grants. Finally, participants noted a range of “soft skills” that are often required when engaging people in their homes. Trainings on empathy and cultural awareness can be beneficial in preparing the workforce for engaging with people from diverse backgrounds.

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, IS MISSING FROM THE CURRENT TRAINING LANDSCAPE (TOPICS, SECTORS, AUDIENCES, FORMATS, ETC.)?

Primary themes surfaced to this prompt noted needs related to training infrastructure, technical and “soft” content, and peer exchange. Broadly speaking, participants are looking for more adaptable and flexible training programs that (1) accommodate different learning styles and preferences, and (2) allow participants to network and share ideas. Participants expressed needs to enhance their skills and knowledge through additional training and/or resources related to specific healthy homes topics (such as training on credentialing, asbestos, current lead and healthy homes issues, pest management, and zonal dust control) as well as implementation topics (such as obtaining referrals, understanding federal regulations, learning more about alternative funding sources and leverage, and building partnerships). They also noted a need for training that covers working with a variety of audiences and communities, including those in need of language and literacy assistance, clients with medical conditions, rural and immigrant communities, homeowners, and educators. Further, including more opportunity to hear from experienced grantees, engage in roundtable discussions, and/or share specific examples of grantee experiences would be a benefit to any offered training.

FEEDBACK

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HHTraining>

Do you want to contribute your thoughts, ideas, insights, or questions about training needs and opportunities in the field of healthy housing? Click the link above to share your thoughts today!

Selected responses:

- *Grant administration from start to finish in Washington, DC was helpful.*
- *Kevin Kennedy Healthy Home training! I would say having hands-on training is necessary.*
- *At a minimum, I would like to see an update and expansion of the original Healthy Homes Essentials courses HUD offered several years ago.*
- *The HUD annual convention is a good time to meet with others and learn from one another. Glad for the opportunity.*
- *Working in people's homes often requires casework-like skills. Good documentation is important as well as being prepared to engage people. Trainings on empathy and awareness of bias are helpful.*

Selected responses:

- *Radon policy is confusing and no practical straight-forward guidance on how it applies to specific grantees was provided.*
- *More presentations from grantees work.*
- *Health information about lead, how to work with at-risk populations, how to communicate with families and contractors, plain language training.*
- *Networking within the local government.*
- *Online options, training manuals, community advocate training.*
- *I think educating occupants and decisionmakers (utility, govt, etc.) is a missing piece.*
- *So many new grantees feeling lost. Allow experienced grantees to give best practices. Need more roundtable regional discussions.*
- *Training... on different types of funding sources.*
- *How to connect with different partners/sectors.*
- *Who to partner with on workforce development.*

Healthy Housing
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