

Federal Housing Needs Assessment: Data Collection Guide



AMO Webinar Series: HNA Support for Small
Municipalities



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AMO – Data Collection Guide

This document is a quick-reference guide designed to provide municipalities with key data sources for each section of the Federal Housing Needs Assessment.

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Introduction

[Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada \(HICC\)](#) is responsible for advancing national priorities related to housing supply, housing affordability, homelessness reduction, and public infrastructure investment by leading or coordinating major federal programs such as the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF), Community Stream of the Build Communities Strong Fund (formerly the CCBF) and others. A core expectation of many HICC funding programs is that communities use evidence-based planning tools, including a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), to demonstrate local housing gaps and future needs.

This document outlines the methodology, data sources, and relevant notes for completing a federal Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) template.

Section 1: Methodology

This section requires a write-up of the methodology and assumptions used to develop the Housing Needs Assessment, according to the [HICC guidelines](#). This includes an overview of the quantitative and qualitative methods used, as well as instances where data is not available due to limited resources or data collection issues.

Qualitative methodology should provide an overview of public and stakeholder engagements conducted, including who was engaged and the nature of engagements. For *small municipalities*, valid forms of engagement include:

- Public open houses, surveys
- Targeted interviews with service providers (e.g., shelter operators, non-profit housing providers, social services staff), and
- Consultation with Indigenous partners where applicable.

There is no minimum number of engagements required, but the methodology section should clearly describe what was done and who was reached. Additional consideration and methodology should be outlined regarding the quantitative and qualitative methods used for priority populations outlined in Section 4.

Quantitative Methodology should provide an overview of the data sources used for the completion of the Federal HNA. For small municipalities, these will typically include:

- **Statistics Canada Census of Population** ([2006](#), [2011](#), [2016](#), [2021](#)): A nationwide dataset providing standardized, time-series demographic, social, and economic information about Canada’s population down to small geographic areas.
- **CMHC Housing Market Portal**: An online platform on the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation website containing current and historical housing market data indicators such as housing supply, availability and affordability, and forecasts at national, provincial, and local levels.
- **HART Federal HNA Template**: A standardized federal reporting framework developed to guide communities in consistently documenting housing needs, gaps, and priority populations for funding and policy alignment.
- **HART Housing Needs Assessment Tool**: A structured analytical tool that uses local data inputs to quantify housing demand, affordability gaps, and unmet needs across different household types.
- **Local real estate reports**: Market-specific analyses produced by real estate boards or firms that track trends in home prices, sales activity, inventory, and rental conditions.
- **Municipal data, including local and Service Manager or DSSAB data**: Administrative and program data collected by municipalities and service managers that provide localized information on building permits, planning applications, housing supply, waitlists, homelessness, and infrastructure capacity.
- **Curbcut’s Canadian Housing Observatory (launching May 20)**: An initiative to integrate traditional housing data with other metrics of urban sustainability. These include land surface temperatures, bike path accessibility, and “green alleys”. CHO recently received federal funding to expand nation-wide, and will feature user-friendly visualizations, dynamic mapping tools, and educational resources.

Municipalities may also consult additional data sources to supplement the quantitative analysis, including:

- **[IRCC Temporary Foreign Worker Data](#)**: Administrative data published by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that tracks the number, characteristics, source countries, occupations, and locations of temporary foreign workers employed in Canada
- **[Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey](#)**: A monthly household survey that provides timely data on employment, unemployment, labour force participation, and workforce characteristics across Canada and its regions.

Key Resource: HICC Pre-Populated Template

Municipalities with a population of at least 1,000 can request a pre-populated HNA template from HICC, which includes pre-filled data from CMHC and Statistics Canada. This significantly reduces the data collection burden for many sections. To request the pre-populated template, email hna.secretariat-secretariat.ebml@infc.gc.ca. Where pre-populated data appears incorrect or outdated, municipalities should note the discrepancy and substitute more current data where available, clearly documenting the source and rationale.

Highlighted Example: An example of a comprehensive methodology section, highlighted by HICC, is the HNA completed by the [Town of Innisfil](#). Note that Innisfil has a population above 30,000; municipalities under this threshold should expect a proportionately smaller scope of analysis and should not feel that their HNA must replicate the depth of larger community examples.

Section 2: Community Profile and Trends

In this section, community profile and trends are outlined at the population level. This profile begins the housing story through the lenses of the community and household profiles using both qualitative and quantitative data.

This information may include past benchmarks, present figures, and current growth rates at a local, regional, and provincial level.

How to Read this Section

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Data Sources and Recommended Approach

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	<i>Provided by HICC</i>	<i>Publicly Available</i>	<i>Municipal Data</i>		
2.1 Policy and Regulatory Context		✓	✓		<p>Municipalities must write a summary of relevant housing policies to demonstrate that the municipality's housing goals and objectives are enabled by the existing federal, provincial, and municipal policy and legislative frameworks. This helps understand how local housing needs align with federal funding objectives.</p> <p>These documents are typically available online and will differ for each municipality.</p>

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	Provided by HICC	Publicly Available	Municipal Data		
					<p>Documents to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Official Plan (and any housing policies therein); • The Zoning By-law; • Any existing Housing Strategy or Affordable Housing Plan; • Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) with housing components; • Any relevant upper-tier or DSSAB housing strategies or master plans; • Provincial legislation such as the Planning Act and relevant provincial policy statements or plans (e.g., the Provincial Policy Statement) should also be referenced where applicable.
2.2 Community Profile	✓				<p>All data is provided in the filled-in template provided by HICC.</p> <p>If you have not yet received your pre-populated template, email hna.secretariat-secretariat.ebml@infoc.gc.ca to request it.</p> <p>If any pre-populated data appears incorrect or does not match your municipality's local knowledge, note the discrepancy, substitute more current data where available, and</p>

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
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					document the source and rationale in your methodology section.
2.3 Population Changes		✓		Statistics Canada Census of Population (2006 , 2011 , 2016 , 2021)	Analysis is conducted on the data from Section 2.2 and may be supplemented with additional data from the Statistics Canada Census of Population.

Section 3: Household Profiles and Economic Characteristics

This section provides a snapshot of the housing profile and economic characteristics of the community, highlighting factors influencing housing demand. In this section, a general overview of income, housing, and economic characteristics of the community are assessed. Understanding this data assists in the observation of the incidence of housing need among different socio-economic groups within the community.

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Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	Provided by HICC	Publicly Available	Municipal Data		
3.1 Household Profiles	✓				
3.2 Household Profiles Context		✓		Statistics Canada Census of Population (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021)	Analysis is conducted on the data from Section 3.1 and may be supplemented with additional data from the Statistics Canada Census of Population.
3.3 Suppression of Household Formation				HART Federal HNA Template	Household suppression refers to individuals or groups who would prefer to live independently, but are unable to do so. This is typically due to housing costs or availability. They often instead

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
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					<p>share accommodation with others (e.g., adult children living with parents, multi-generational households formed out of necessity rather than choice).</p> <p>Measuring suppression helps estimate the “hidden” housing demand that does not show up in current household counts but represents genuine future need.</p> <p>HART provides data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headship rates by age cohort • Estimated household suppression by age cohort
3.4 Economic Conditions	✓				All data is provided in the filled-in template provided by HICC.
3.5 Labour Conditions		✓		Statistics Canada Census of Population (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021)	Analysis is conducted on the data from Section 3.4 and may be supplemented with additional data from the Statistics Canada Census of Population.
3.6 Households in Core Housing Need	✓	✓		HART Housing Needs Assessment Tool	<p>HART provides data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income categories and affordable shelter costs • % of households in core housing need by income category and household size • 2021 affordable housing deficit

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	<i>Provided by HICC</i>	<i>Publicly Available</i>	<i>Municipal Data</i>		
3.7 Additional Data		✓	✓		<p>This is an optional section for municipalities that have access to supplementary local data beyond what is captured in the standard template. Examples of additional data that may be relevant include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local housing surveys or community needs assessments conducted by the municipality or a community organization • Community housing waiting list data (available from the Service Manager / upper-tier municipality), including wait times and household type

Section 4: Priority Groups

There are 12 groups that CMHC defines as priority population groups for affordable homes: groups who face a proportionally far greater housing need than the general population. There is also a 13th group, women-led households and specifically single mothers, implied in the National Housing Strategy which targets 33% (with a minimum of 25%) of funding going to housing for women-led households.

Priority population groups are:

- Women and children fleeing domestic violence
- Women-led households, especially single mothers
- Seniors 65+
- Young adults aged 18-29
- Indigenous Peoples
- Racialized people
- Recent immigrants, especially refugees
- LGBTQ2S+
- People with physical health or mobility challenges
- People with developmental disabilities
- People dealing with mental health and addictions issues
- Veterans
- People experiencing homelessness

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4.1 Core Housing Need by Priority Population		✓		HART Federal HNA Template	HART provides data on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core Housing Need by Priority Population
4.2 Incidence and Severity of Homelessness		✓	✓		<p>Point-in-Time Counts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented under the Federal <i>Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy</i>, counts are conducted every three (3) years. PiT count data is typically made publicly available through reports to Council. <p>By-Name List:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandated since 2022, local municipalities may contact their service manager for access to this data. This data may also be available online in published reports. <p>While Point-in-Time Counts and By-Name Lists are conducted and maintained at the Service Manager level, certain municipalities provide this information at the local municipal level.</p>

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	Provided by HICC	Publicly Available	Municipal Data		
					If this information is not available at the local municipal level, the federal template encourages municipalities to provide the best available quantitative data supplemented by local qualitative data.
4.3 Local Factors Contributing to Homelessness			✓		This section is typically informed by the upper tier municipality or DSSAB through consultations conducted for the development of Housing and Homelessness Plans.
4.4 Temporary and Emergency Relief Resources			✓		<p>Temporary, emergency, and transitional shelters are the responsibility of Service Managers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This data is typically collected by the Social Services, Housing, or Community Services divisions within upper tier municipalities. • In many cases, this information is also made available on the website of the upper tier municipality. • In some cases, municipalities may also publish updated and/or detailed information regarding temporary and emergency relief resources via reports to council.
4.5 Students, those in Congregate Housing, and			✓	IRCC Temporary Foreign Worker Data	This section is typically answered using the knowledge and expertise of municipal staff, supplemented by qualitative data.

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	<i>Provided by HICC</i>	<i>Publicly Available</i>	<i>Municipal Data</i>		
Temporary Foreign Workers				Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities with post-secondary institutions may have access to enrollment data, the number and cost of student residences, and emerging trends via the post-secondary institution’s website. • Local municipalities may maintain internal data on congregate housing in the building / permits division. • Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) publishes annual data on Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program approvals by province and some sub-provincial geographies, which can provide an indication of TFW volumes in your region • Statistics Canada’s Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides data on non-permanent residents in the labour force at a regional level • Local knowledge from major agricultural employers, food processing facilities, or seasonal industries in the area may be the most reliable source for estimating local TFW housing pressures; this can be captured through community consultation

Section 5: Housing Profile

This section is an overview of the housing profile of the community, highlighting factors influencing housing supply, including the current stock composition and new development trends. Housing supply data is crucial in determining the need for different housing types in a community. Supply data will be compared against demand data to help determine the need for housing.

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Data Sources and Recommended Approach

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
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5.1 Key Trends in Housing Stock		✓	✓	Statistics Canada Census of Population (2006 , 2011 , 2016 , 2021) CMHC Housing Market Portal	This section provides a narrative overview of key trends in the local housing stock and is drawn from the data collected across other sub-sections of Section 5. Key publicly available sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics Canada Census of Population: dwelling type (single-detached, semi-detached, row, apartment), tenure (owned vs. rented), period of construction, and dwelling condition by census year • CMHC Housing Market Portal: housing starts and completions by dwelling type; under-construction

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	Provided by HICC	Publicly Available	Municipal Data		
					<p>units; absorption rates – note that data may be suppressed or unavailable for very small communities (see note under Sections 5.4 and 5.5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal building permit records: number of permits issued by type and year, demolitions, and conversions; typically maintained by the building or planning department
5.2 Employment, Economy, Infrastructure, Transit, Climate, & Migration impacts on Housing	✓	✓	✓	HART Federal HNA Template	<p>HART provides data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of secondary rental units <p>Municipalities may provide data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term rental units. • Note: some municipalities have a short-term rental licensing by-law, enabling a count of licensed short-term rental units.
5.3 Affordable Units Built and Lost		✓		HART Federal HNA Template	<p>HART provides data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of affordable rental units for low- and very low-income households built between 2016 – 2021 • Number of affordable rental units for low- and very low-income households lost between 2016 – 2021 • Net change in affordable rental units for low- and very low-income households between 2016 – 2021
5.4 Change in Average Rents		✓		CMHC Housing Market Portal	<p>CMHC provides data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average rents in the primary rental universe, by unit size, per year

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	Provided by HICC	Publicly Available	Municipal Data		
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average rents in the primary rental universe, by age of building, per year • Average rents in the primary rental universe, by building size, per year <p>Note on data availability: CMHC rental market survey data is frequently suppressed or unavailable for small communities due to insufficient sample sizes. This is a very common data gap for municipalities with populations under 30,000. If CMHC data is not available for your community, consider the following alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provincial bulletin on average and affordable rental rates, provided at the regional level. • Median asking rents from online listing platforms such as Kijiji or Rentals.ca (document the date and methodology used to sample listings); • Rental rates from local non-profit or co-operative housing providers; or • Qualitative information gathered through community consultation with tenants and landlords. <p>Any data gaps or proxy sources used should be clearly noted in your methodology section.</p>
5.5 Change in Vacancy Rates		✓		CMHC Housing Market Portal	<p>CMHC provides data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacancy rates for rental units in the primary rental universe, by unit size, per year

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	Provided by HICC	Publicly Available	Municipal Data		
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacancy rates for rental units in the primary rental universe, by rent range, per year • Vacancy rates for rental units in the primary rental universe, by age of building, per year <p>Note on data availability: CMHC vacancy rate data is frequently suppressed for small communities where the rental universe is too small to meet survey thresholds. This is expected and should be acknowledged in the methodology section. Where CMHC data is unavailable, municipalities can note the absence of a formal primary rental market and supplement with qualitative information.</p> <p>The following can serve as qualitative indicators of tight vacancy conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from property managers or landlords gathered through consultation, • Anecdotal evidence of low turnover, or • The absence of rental listings in local markets.
5.6 Change in Core Housing Need Trends		✓		Statistics Canada Census of Population (2006 , 2011 , 2016 , 2021)	Analysis is conducted on owner and renter core housing need trends using data from the Statistics Canada Census of Population.

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
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5.7 Non-Market Housing		✓	✓	HART Federal HNA Template	<p>HART provides data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of rental housing units that are subsidized • Number of occupied housing units that are below-market rent in the private market (calculated as housing that is affordable to households earning 80% of Area Median Household Income) • Number of co-operative housing units <p>Service managers are responsible for maintaining data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent supportive housing • Transitional housing • Rent supplement programs <p>Local municipalities are responsible for maintaining data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below-market or affordable housing units
5.8 Affordable and Community Housing Options			✓		<p>This section is typically answered using the knowledge and expertise of municipal staff, including awareness of any additional supportive and accessible housing. Municipalities collect and maintain this data to differing degrees, so this may also be supplemented by qualitative data.</p>
5.9 Housing Trends			✓		<p>Local Real Estate Boards provide data on:</p>

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	Provided by HICC	Publicly Available	Municipal Data		
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average and median home sales prices, by dwelling type, by year <p>Note on data access: Many small municipalities are not served by a local real estate board that publishes public-facing market reports, and individual MLS transaction data typically requires access through a licensed realtor. Where local board data is unavailable, the following alternatives may be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) publishes monthly national and provincial-level statistics at crea.ca; • The Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) publishes provincial market reports; and • The Ontario government’s Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) may provide assessed value trends through your municipal finance or assessment office. <p>Any alternative source used should be documented in the methodology section.</p>

Section 6: Projected Housing Needs and Next Steps

This section aims to project how much and what type of housing is needed to meet the needs of the population in the community in the next ten years. This section projects population trends from the previous 10 years, dividing by income category and target housing costs while considering migration trends.

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Data Sources and Recommended Approach

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	<i>Provided by HICC</i>	<i>Publicly Available</i>	<i>Municipal Data</i>		
6.1 Projection Methodology Guidelines		✓		HART Federal HNA Template	HART provides the projected households by household size and income category required under Table 6.1.1
6.2 Projection Methodology		✓	✓	Statistics Canada Census of Population (2006 , 2011 , 2016 , 2021)	Population and household projections may be developed using the Cohort Survival Projection Method to project historical population trends into future years. The Cohort Survival Projection Method is a simple method for forecasting what the future population will be based upon the survival of the existing population and the births that will occur.

Sub-Section	Data Source			Links	Notes
	Provided by HICC	Publicly Available	Municipal Data		
					<p>Projections may be benchmarked against existing population projections for the municipality, service area, or by applying the same methodology and assumptions developed for province-wide population and household projections.</p> <p>Statistics Canada provides historical data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Births (Male and Female) • Survival Rate • Net Migration • Household type and tenure
6.3 Population and Households Projections		✓	✓	<p>Statistics Canada Census of Population (2006, 2011, 2016, 2021)</p>	<p>Statistics Canada provides historical data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of households • Average/median household age • Household tenure • Household size • Dwellings by size and type • Household income <p>This data may be developed into population and household projections using the cohort survival projection methodology, applied to the average number of people per household by tenure, type, size, and age.</p> <p>Municipalities typically collect local data on the number of draft approved lots.</p>

Section 7: Use of Housing Needs Assessments in Long-Term Planning

This section is typically completed by municipal staff through interdepartmental coordination across relevant divisions. The Federal HNA template encourages increased collaboration across these departments to enable the coordination of housing needs with long-term planning, asset management, and other dimensions municipal services. Considerations for completing this section include:

- Opportunities for collaboration and coordination between the identification of housing need, affordable housing delivery, infrastructure planning, land-use planning, and asset management.
 - How are HNA findings shared across departments to inform decision making?
 - Are housing needs regularly considered in capital and infrastructure planning, or budget prioritization exercises?
 - Are there existing interdepartmental working groups or committees that could be leveraged or strengthened?
 - Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined for advancing housing-enabling infrastructure?
- Existing and upcoming affordable housing strategies, asset management plans, zoning by-law amendments, and Official Plan reviews.
 - How could current or upcoming plans reference or utilize the HNA findings?
 - Can housing needs identified in the HNA inform growth management, intensification targets, or land-use designations?
 - Are upcoming reviews or amendments opportunities to implement policy responses to identified housing gaps?
- Affordable housing projects 'in the pipeline' that require additional servicing, funding, or land-use changes to move forward.
 - What is needed to move these projects forward?

- How could documenting these constraints strengthen business cases or funding applications?
- Existing infrastructure and servicing constraints that may be preventing housing delivery; these may indicate an opportunity to leverage funding for housing-enabling infrastructure.
 - When determining infrastructure constraints on housing delivery, municipalities can consider the role of housing-enabling infrastructure, such as water, sewer, and wastewater capacity, as well as transportation, social, and community infrastructure.
 - Are infrastructure constraints disproportionately affecting affordable or higher-density housing forms?
 - Have servicing limitations resulted in delayed approvals, reduced unit counts, or lost development opportunities for housing?
- Are there shovel-ready or near-term infrastructure projects that could unlock housing delivery? Connections between specific housing gaps (i.e., the need for denser dwelling forms, supportive housing, affordable housing for students that is near public transit) and the corresponding land-use planning and infrastructure needs to facilitate housing delivery.
 - What land-use changes are required to support the housing types identified as gaps? What role do lower and upper tier municipalities play in facilitating these changes?
 - Are there opportunities to coordinate infrastructure delivery with upper tier municipalities?
 - Is the required infrastructure, servicing and community services being considered or provided to support housing need? Infrastructure gaps identified by the HNA should align with project prioritization.
 - Where are mismatches occurring between designated land use and available servicing?
 - Are there opportunities to co-locate housing with existing or planned infrastructure and services?
- Linkages between the HNA findings and the municipality's Asset Management Plan (AMP). Municipalities are required to maintain AMPs that address all infrastructure (including housing-enabling and housing-

preserving¹) and annual costs for the next 10 years. Where housing gaps identified in the HNA are linked to infrastructure deficiencies (e.g., water and wastewater capacity constraining residential development), documenting this connection in Section 7 strengthens both the HNA and future infrastructure funding applications.

- How are growth-related housing needs reflected in asset lifecycle and capital investment planning?
- Do AMP assumptions about growth align with the scale and location of housing need identified in the HNA?
- How can the existing AMP align with and leverage funding for housing-enabling and housing-preserving infrastructure corresponding with the identified servicing gaps and housing need?
- Are there opportunities for future AMPs to incorporate HNA findings in support of long-term planning for housing needs?
- Which asset classes are most critical to addressing identified housing gaps?
- Opportunities to use the HNA to support federal funding applications. Infrastructure gaps identified in this section, particularly those that are preventing or limiting housing delivery, can be directly connected to project selection and reporting under the Community stream of the Build Communities Strong Fund and the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund (CHIF).

¹ See the Glossary of Terms for fulsome definitions.