

First Nations Housing Professionals Association

Recruitment & Retention Strategy

Final Report





Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and thank the First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA) and Boreala Management for contributing to this important work.

We would also like to recognize the 49 First Nations who took the time to participate in this initiative. Your perspectives are an invaluable part of this process, and we are grateful to have heard your feedback and learned about your experiences.

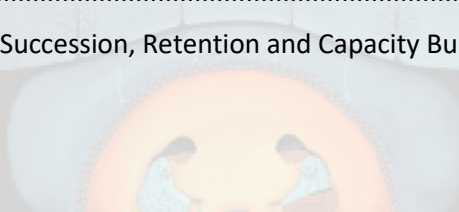




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Lexicon

Term	Definition
Capacity	The internal ability of a department or organization to carry out its functions effectively, based on available staff, skills, resources, and systems.
Co-development	A collaborative approach where two or more individuals or organizations jointly create tools, processes, or knowledge, often across communities or departments.
Critical role	A position whose vacancy would significantly disrupt operations or service delivery, often requiring priority attention in succession planning.
Development plan	A structured roadmap outlining the skills, experiences, and training an employee needs to grow into greater responsibilities or a target role.
Job rotation	A practice where employees temporarily take on different roles or responsibilities to broaden their skills and organizational understanding.
Onboarding	The formal process of integrating a new employee into their role, beginning before their first day and continuing through their first months.
Readiness gap	The difference between an employee's current skills and the competencies required for a target or critical role.
Shadowing	A learning practice where an employee observes a more experienced colleague in their day-to-day work to build knowledge and familiarity with a role.
Staffing ratio	The proportion of staff relative to workload, caseload, or population served, used to assess whether a department is adequately resourced.
Succession planning	A proactive process of identifying and preparing internal candidates to fill key roles when they become vacant.
Successor	An individual identified and developed to take over a specific role, typically a critical one, when it becomes vacant.
Workload assessment	An evaluation of the tasks, responsibilities, and time demands assigned to staff or a department to identify capacity gaps or imbalances.



Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a national study conducted for the First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA) to inform the development of a recruitment and retention strategy for housing staff across First Nations communities in Canada. Drawing on survey responses from 39 participants and 11 in-depth interviews across diverse regions, community sizes, and contexts, the study provides a grounded, experience-based perspective on workforce realities and identifies targeted, actionable recommendations to strengthen housing workforce capacity. All analysis followed OCAP® principles to ensure ethical data handling and community ownership.

Key Findings

1. Structural capacity gaps and unclear role definition

Only a minority (31%) of housing departments align fully with the functional staffing benchmark previously established by FNHPA. Many communities, particularly smaller ones, operate with minimal staffing, often with one or two individuals covering all housing functions. Even in departments that meet baseline structural expectations, staff frequently take on responsibilities beyond their formal roles, including infrastructure, social support, and administrative functions.

Critical gaps were identified in administrative support and tenant relations, both of which are essential for effective day-to-day operations and tenant experience. In parallel, a lack of formal organizational structures and documented roles limits clarity, accountability, and the ability to assess capacity accurately.

2. Workload intensity and hidden complexity of the role

Housing roles extend far beyond technical property management. Staff routinely navigate complex social situations, community dynamics, and enforcement challenges within close-knit environments. These realities significantly increase emotional labour and contribute to burnout.

Overtime is widespread across all community sizes, with smaller communities particularly affected due to limited staff capacity. The findings highlight that staffing ratios alone are insufficient to capture real workload demands, which are heavily influenced by contextual factors such as housing conditions, tenant capacity, and community expectations.

3. Recruitment is informal and housing department's staff functions, roles and responsibilities is not well understood

Recruitment relies heavily on word of mouth, limiting the diversity and reach of candidate pools. While this approach reflects strong community ties, it also contributes to a lack of awareness about housing careers and reinforces misconceptions about the role.

The role itself is difficult to fill due to the breadth of required competencies, which span technical, administrative, and interpersonal domains. Additional barriers include community dynamics, the perceived difficulty of the role, and non-competitive compensation when compared to other sectors.

4. Retention is driven by purpose but challenged by conditions

Housing staff are strongly motivated by their desire to contribute to their communities. This sense of



purpose is the primary factor attracting and retaining employees. However, retention is undermined by workload pressures, emotional demands, limited support, and compensation dissatisfaction.

While salary is not the primary motivator, only a minority of respondents expressed satisfaction with their compensation. Over time, reliance on intrinsic motivation alone is not sustainable and increases the risk of burnout and turnover.

5. Limited succession planning and capacity development

Succession planning is largely informal or absent, creating vulnerabilities when staff leave and leading to loss of institutional knowledge. Many roles are single points of failure, with insufficient backup or cross-training, meaning that only one person know how to do specific tasks.

At the same time, there is a clear desire among staff for professional development. Training needs are focused on strengthening core housing systems (policies, records, program management), with a strong preference for short, practical, and accessible learning formats.

6. Funding instability and systemic constraints

Housing departments rely primarily on federal funding sources, which are often unpredictable, application-based, and administratively burdensome. This limits long-term planning and contributes to reactive operations.

Underfunding is most acute in maintenance, repairs, and staffing, creating compounding pressures on already stretched teams. Additionally, the complexity of navigating funding programs requires capacity that many departments do not have.

Overall Recommendations

1. Staffing ratios should include more context

While existing staffing benchmarks provide a useful baseline, they should be complemented with a broader assessment of community realities. Housing departments should adopt a service-based approach, clearly defining what they are expected to deliver and aligning staffing models accordingly (including the number of staff required, their roles and responsibilities, and team structure).

Key actions include clarifying roles and responsibilities, mapping actual workloads, and using this evidence to advocate for resources.

2. Strengthen foundational organizational structures

Improving recruitment and retention begins with internal clarity. Organizations should prioritize the development of formal organizational charts, job descriptions, and workload visibility tools. This creates a foundation for accountability, efficiency, and strategic planning.

3. Diversify recruitment approaches

Housing departments should expand beyond informal recruitment by leveraging multiple communication channels, including social media, community platforms, and First Nations employment networks.



Job postings should be redesigned to reflect community impact, use inclusive language, and recognize diverse forms of experience. Alternative hiring approaches and realistic job previews can also help attract candidates aligned with the role.

5. Formalize succession planning and knowledge transfer

Succession planning should be introduced as a core organizational practice, starting with the identification of critical roles and potential successors.

Lightweight, practical approaches such as mentoring, cross-training, and documentation can significantly reduce operational risks and support continuity.

6. Invest in targeted training and peer learning networks

Training strategies should prioritize short, practical workshops, mentorship, and cross-community knowledge sharing. These formats align with staff preferences and operational realities, while also reducing isolation and strengthening sector-wide capacity.

7. Enhance support systems and protect staff wellbeing

Organizations should implement concrete mechanisms to support housing staff, including regular check-ins, clear policy backing, and access to mental health resources.

Policies that protect time off and establish boundaries (e.g., disconnection or on-call frameworks) are essential to sustaining workforce wellbeing.

8. Strengthen total compensation and recognition approaches

While salary improvements remain important, organizations should also focus on holistic compensation, including benefits, flexibility, and recognition. Ensuring internal equity and transparency in compensation practices is critical to maintaining trust and fairness.

9. Advocate for more predictable and adequate funding models

At a systemic level, there is a need to improve the predictability, accessibility, and adequacy of funding. Strengthening internal capacity to document needs and build relationships with funders can help, but broader structural changes remain essential to long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight a workforce that is deeply committed, yet structurally constrained. Housing staff across First Nations communities are navigating complex roles with limited resources, often relying on personal dedication to bridge systemic gaps.

Addressing recruitment and retention challenges therefore requires more than isolated interventions. It calls for a coordinated approach that strengthens organizational foundations, builds capacity, supports staff wellbeing, and aligns funding and policy environments with the realities of housing ecosystem.

By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, FNHPA and First Nations communities can take meaningful steps toward building a more supported and sustainable housing workforce.



Introduction

1.1 Background & Context

The First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA) is a national, professional, nonprofit organization that supports individuals working in First Nations housing industry. FNHPA provides education, certification, training, and professional development programs.

As the central hub for professional standards, certification, and support services, FNHPA plays a vital role in strengthening housing capacity within First Nations communities and landscape in general. These efforts help advance the goals of First Nations housing departments on-reserve, ensuring housing staff are well-equipped to serve their communities effectively.

FNHPA recently conducted research to support First Nations housing departments in establishing competitive and consistent compensation practices across housing roles. This research produced tailored job descriptions and salary scale standards for First Nations on-reserve housing, further supporting the establishment of fair, transparent, and market-aligned pay structures for communities.

1.2 Purpose of the Report

To build on this previous research, FNHPA engaged with a consulting firm, Boreala Management, to deepen research findings. In addition, the goal was to develop a housing recruitment and retention strategy that strengthens on-reserve housing departments by creating recruitment, retention, and compensation strategies that reflect the unique cultural, geographic, and economic contexts of First Nations communities across Canada.

1.3 Project Scope

Phase 1: Project Initiation and Design focused on developing a clear understanding of project expectations and establishing a solid methodology. During this phase, research tools such as surveys, interview guides, and questionnaires were designed and finalized. Phase 1 lasted four weeks and included the delivery of key foundational outputs. All Phase 1 structural elements have been compiled into one report, including: the workplan, the timeline, the methodology, the sampling approach & methods, the approach as well as the data instruments (survey and interview questions). For further information, please consult the following document: [Workplan Methodologies.docx](#)

Phase 2: Community Engagement and Data Collection concentrated on gathering all relevant data using the methodology and engagement approach developed during Phase 1. This phase lasted approximately two months. First, an online survey was distributed broadly to capture a wide range of perspectives, yielding 39 responses. Second, 11 in-depth individual interviews were conducted to gather more detailed, qualitative insights from key stakeholders. Together, these two methods provided both breadth and depth of information to inform the analysis.



Phase 3: Analysis, Recommendations, and Final Report focused on analyzing the collected data, developing evidence-based recommendations, and producing the final results, which this specific report focuses on.

2. Methodology

The project applied a **mixed-methods approach** to produce a comprehensive understanding of recruitment and retention issues within First Nations housing departments.

Document & Policy Review

A review of existing resources (FNHPA publications, federal and provincial housing programs, CMHC initiatives, by-laws, organizational charts, and salary structures) provided essential context and identified information gaps for the research to address.

National Survey

The survey gathered standardized data from housing managers and staff representing approximately 40 communities across Canada. Key topics included: (1) roles, responsibilities, and workload, (2) team structure and staffing capacity (3) recruitment pathways and attraction factors (4) retention challenges, burnout, and job satisfaction (5) training access, mentorship, and career development (6) compensation, benefits, and working conditions.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews added depth by exploring: (1) lived experiences of housing staff (2) Local challenges and contextual nuances (3) recruitment and retention stories (4) successful practices or innovative approaches.

Together, the survey and interviews offer both breadth and depth, ensuring the strategy is practical, relevant, and grounded in community experience.

2.1 Research Sampling Approach

A balanced, practical sampling approach ensured meaningful representation across Canada while recognizing the absence of a centralized housing staff directory.

Regional Representation

Sampling targets spanned **10 regions**, adjusted for regional population and number of First Nations communities, ensuring national coverage. Target number of communities to reach were the following for each region:

- BC: target around 10 communities
- Ontario: target around 8 communities
- Quebec: target around 5 communities



- Atlantic Canada: given the small number of First Nations in the Atlantic regions, particularly PEI and Newfoundland, the target was 5 communities across all regions
- Northwest Territories and Yukon: target around 5 communities
- Alberta: target around 5 communities
- Manitoba: target around 6 communities
- Saskatchewan: target around 6 communities

Community Size

Another key component of the sampling approach is community size, which ensured balanced participation from small, medium, and large communities whose staffing needs and operational realities differ significantly and are defined as follows: Small: ≤500 members; Medium: 501–800; Large: >800.

North/South Representation

North/South representation was an essential component of the sampling approach, recognizing that northern and remote First Nations face distinct operational conditions that influence recruitment and retention.

- In Ontario, Northern Ontario is defined as the area north of the French River, Lake Nipissing, and the Mattawa River.
- In British Columbia, Northern BC refers to the vast northern half of the province, characterized by lower population density and remote access.
- In Quebec, communities located in the Nord-du-Québec region (north of the 49th parallel) are classified as Northern.
- In Saskatchewan, Northern area is the area within the Northern Saskatchewan Administration District (NSAD).
- In Manitoba, the region in the north of the 60th parallel is considered as the north.
- In Alberta, the north is defined as the region north of Edmonton.
- The Yukon, Atlantic and Northwest Territories are considered Northern regions in their entirety.

Sampling Methods

- **Convenience sampling:** Used all available contact sources such as FNHPA networks, websites, First Nation Profiles, and direct outreach.
- **Snowball sampling:** Encouraged respondents to share the survey link within their networks.
- **Targeted outreach:** Filled gaps where representation is low.



While not statistically random, the approach ensured strong coverage, diversity, and practical feasibility.

2.2 Data Analysis Plan

A structured analysis framework assured consistency, rigor, and cultural safety in the interpretation of survey and interview results.

Data Preparation

All data underwent cleaning, verification, removal of duplicates, and de-identification. Responses were organized by region, role, community size, and North/South status to enable meaningful comparisons.

Quantitative Analysis

Survey results were analyzed using (1) descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, averages). (2) cross-tabulations by region, size, and role (where sample allows), and (3) Indicators related to workload, satisfaction, training, recruitment, and retention.

This provided a national snapshot of workforce conditions.

Qualitative Analysis

Interview notes and open-ended survey responses were analyzed through thematic coding to identify (1) repeated concerns, challenges, and capacity gaps (2) regional or contextual differences, and (3) strengths and promising practices.

Qualitative data helped explain the “why” behind numerical trends.

Integrated Interpretation

A convergent mixed-methods approach combined quantitative trends with qualitative insights, enabling:

- Validation of findings across multiple data sources
- Clear identification of root causes and contextual factors
- Strong, actionable recommendations for FNHPA and communities

All analysis followed OCAP® principles to ensure ethical data handling and community ownership.

2.3 Engagement Approach

The engagement approach was guided by four principles: transparency, accessibility, flexibility, and respect and reciprocity. The approach was structured to support meaningful participation throughout the project.

The pre-engagement phase focused on building awareness and preparing communication tools; the outreach and invitations phase aimed to reach housing staff and managers across all targeted communities through coordinated, multi-channel communication; the data collection phase supported participants in completing the survey and interviews with clear instructions and flexible options; and a



closing-the-loop phase ensured contributions were acknowledged, incentives were delivered, and results were shared with participants.

The approach anticipated and addressed barriers such as community capacity constraints, survey fatigue, holiday timing, and concerns about psychological workplace safety.

2.4 Data Limitation & Consideration

While the survey provides strong directional insight, a few data limitations should be kept in mind. Respondents sometimes described their roles and department structures differently than the position definitions used in FNHPA's earlier research, so even though we standardized titles and groupings as much as possible, some inconsistencies remain. Salary reporting also varied (hourly vs annual, weekly vs biweekly, before vs after tax, and different assumptions about hours per week), so we converted responses to a comparable format using a consistent set of assumptions. In addition, the question on staffing levels was not always answered consistently (especially for full-time vs part-time counts). Several submissions were screened out because they were not housing-related roles. In addition, a small number of participants did not identify their community. Importantly, many of these survey limitations are mitigated by the high-quality qualitative evidence gathered through interviews, which provided richer context, clarified interpretation where survey responses were ambiguous, and helped validate and nuance the patterns observed in the quantitative results.

3. Who We Heard From - Demographic Results

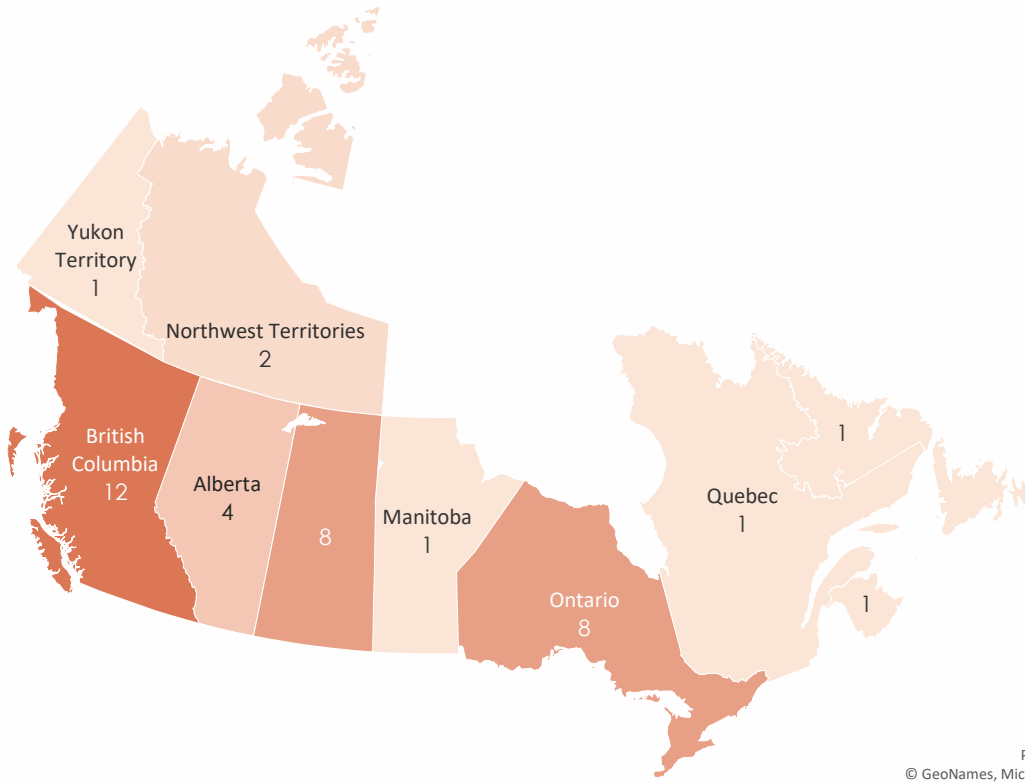
3.1 Survey Demographic Results

39 completed responses were received, below the initial target of 50. Provincial coverage was also uneven, several provinces and territories are represented by only a single response, including Yukon, Manitoba, and Quebec. This limits the ability to draw province-specific conclusions and should be noted as a constraint when interpreting the findings.

That said, the sample holds meaningful strength in two important areas. First, it is well balanced by community size, with roughly one third of respondents representing large communities, one third medium, and one third small allowing for reliable comparisons across size categories. Second, geographic distribution between Northern and Southern communities is approximately equal, which supports meaningful analysis across this dimension. Together, these two balancing factors strengthen the overall integrity of the dataset and allow for confident comparisons across the groupings most central to this research.

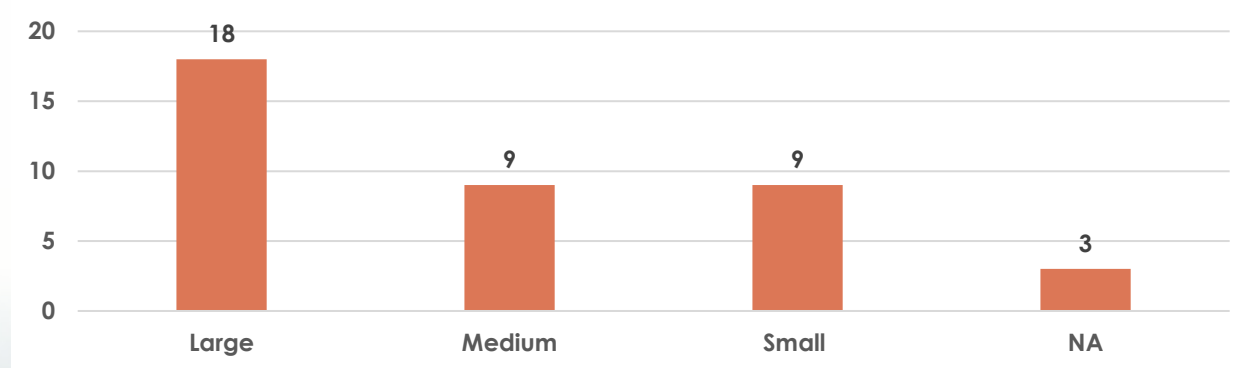
Geographic Coverage (Province, Size and North/South Location) :

Survey Responses by Province

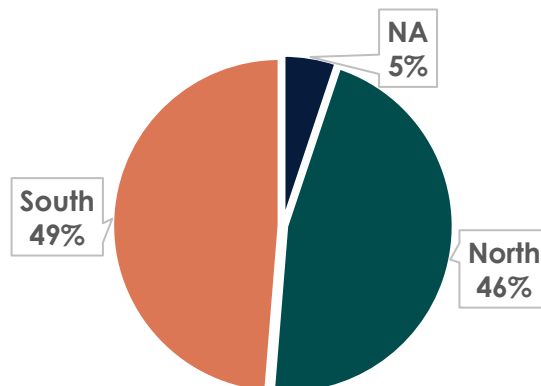


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Survey Responses by Community Size



Survey Responses by Geographical Area



Note: In Ontario, Northern Ontario is defined as the area north of the French River, Lake Nipissing, and the Mattawa River. In British Columbia, Northern BC refers to the vast northern half of the province, characterized by lower population density and remote access.

In Quebec, communities located in the Nord-du-Québec region (north of the 49th parallel) are classified as Northern.

In Saskatchewan, Northern area is the area within the Northern Saskatchewan Administration District (NSAD.)

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The Yukon, Atlantic Canada and Northwest Territories are considered Northern regions in their entirety.

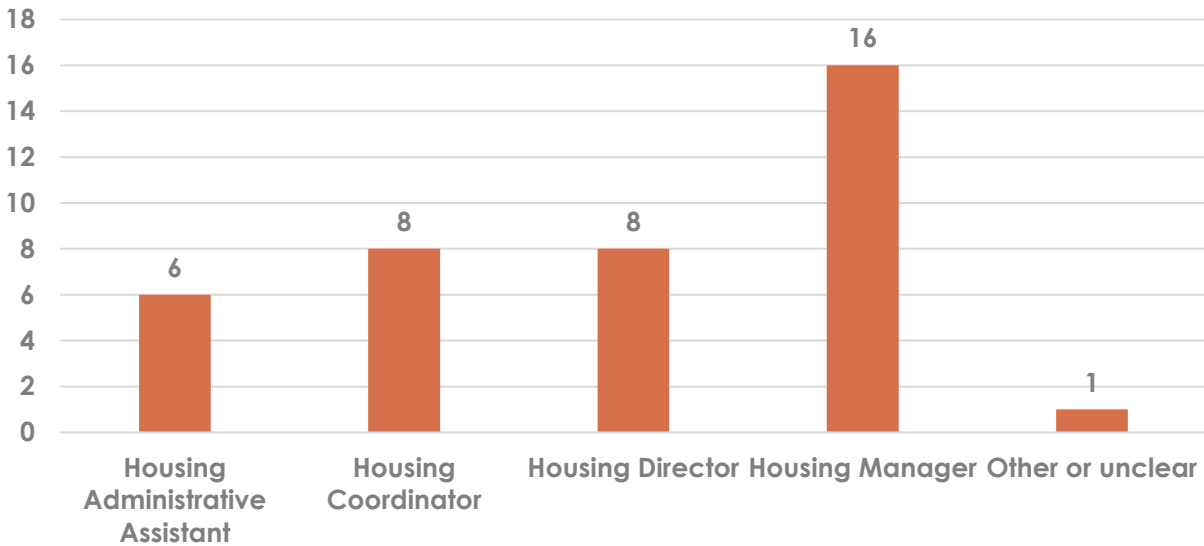
Position Identification and Standardization Methodology:

Respondents were asked to self-identify their position title using an open-text field rather than a predefined list of options. This was an intentional methodological choice. By avoiding strict selections, the survey aimed to capture the full diversity of position titles in use across communities, including emerging or locally defined roles that may not have been reflected in previous research.

For the purpose of analysis, responses were then standardized and grouped into consistent position categories aligned with the labels established in prior research, allowing for meaningful comparison across studies. One notable addition to the classification framework was the inclusion of Housing Director as a distinct position category. Although this role was not formally identified in previous research, the volume of respondents identifying under this title warranted its recognition as a standalone category in the analysis.

This approach balances methodological continuity with previous work while remaining responsive to how communities are defining and evolving their housing roles on the ground.

Survey Responses by Position



3.2 Individual Interviews

All regional targets were met for the individual interviews, with the exception of Quebec. The shortfall in Quebec is attributed to two compounding factors: confirmed participants not attending their scheduled interviews, and the majority of First Nations communities in the province are francophone, which created an additional barrier to engagement given that the project was publicised in English.

The targeted engagement approach, consisting of direct phone outreach to housing departments in band offices, proved highly effective in reaching participants and securing their commitment to a one-hour interview.

Participants to the interviews table:

INDIVIDUAL	PROVINCE	COMMUNITY SIZE	GEOGRAPHIC AREA
1	Ontario	Small	South
2	Ontario	Small	North
3	British Columbia	Small	South
4	British Columbia	Small	South
5	Atlantic (Newfoundland)	Large	North
6	Northwest Territories	Large	North
7	Alberta	Medium	North
8	Saskatchewan	Large	North



9	Saskatchewan	Medium	South
10	Manitoba	Large	South
11	Yukon	Large	North

Findings – Analysis and Recommendations

4. Housing Department Compositions & Core Functions

4.1 Assessment of Current Housing Department Composition

30% of people surveyed indicated that their community has a housing department that fully or partially aligns with the functional benchmark identified in the previous study.

Out of 50 respondents across the survey and individual interviews, 16% demonstrate a structure that fully aligns with the functional benchmark identified in previous research made by FNHPA¹. These communities have layered administration, dedicated maintenance oversight, defined management roles, and tenant relations capacity proportionate to their portfolio size. 14% are moderately aligned but exhibit at least one functional gap. Together, fully and partially compliant communities represent 30% of respondents with portfolios above 100 units.

29% manage portfolios under 100 units, below the functional general rule that is suggested in FNHPA's Resource Requirement Report². Most of these communities are operating with one or two staff members probably covering all housing functions simultaneously often without formal role differentiation.

Several respondents in this group explicitly noted they were alone in their department, or that housing responsibilities were shared with Public Works or other band office functions. While this may be appropriate given portfolio size, it leaves little to no capacity buffer for turnover, growth, or increased service demand.

¹ Previous FNHPA research suggested that "as a general rule, for every 100 units, there should be a staff person / persons designated to each of the housing management and operations functions, including a housing manager, administrative support, maintenance staff, and tenant relations coordinator/service navigator".

First Nations Housing Professionals Association. (n.d.). Resource requirements for the effective management of First Nations on-reserve housing: Final report. FNHPA. https://fnhpa.ca/Library/Research_Reports/FNHPA_Research_-_Resource_Requirements_for_the_Effective_Management_of_First_Nations_On-Reserve_Housing_-_Final_Report_EN.pdf

² Ibid.





Administrative Support and Tenant Relations as the most missing functions

Among the 7 communities flagged as partially compliant, the most common missing function is tenant relations, which was either absent, vacant, or absorbed informally into another role. Administrative support was the second most frequent gap, with several communities relying on a single person to cover both coordination and clerical functions. These findings are coherent with the fact that from the interviews, 63% of participants indicated they would like to add an administrative assistant and a tenants relation coordinator to better meet their staffing demand and handle day-to-day work. In two cases, maintenance was either part-time or shared with Public Works, which is not uncommon, knowing that a maintenance skillset from working in Public Works can be used in the Housing department. If maintenance tasks require specific skills, participants often mentioned that those roles can be covered by external professionals. These gaps are notable because they represent functions directly tied to tenant experience and day-to-day housing operations, areas where understaffing tends to compound over time.

Lack of clarity regarding current organizational chart

35% of survey respondents could not be assessed due to missing responses, unknown unit counts, or an invalid entry. This proportion should be interpreted with caution. As noted in the survey, almost half of respondents indicated in earlier questions that they do not have access to a formal organizational chart, or that their housing function is embedded within a broader department without a clearly defined structure. For some respondents, the absence of a response may reflect not a lack of willingness to share, but a lack of formal documentation to draw from, itself a meaningful indicator of organizational capacity and a potential barrier to accurate self-assessment.

4.2 Role Expansion and Overtime Across Communities

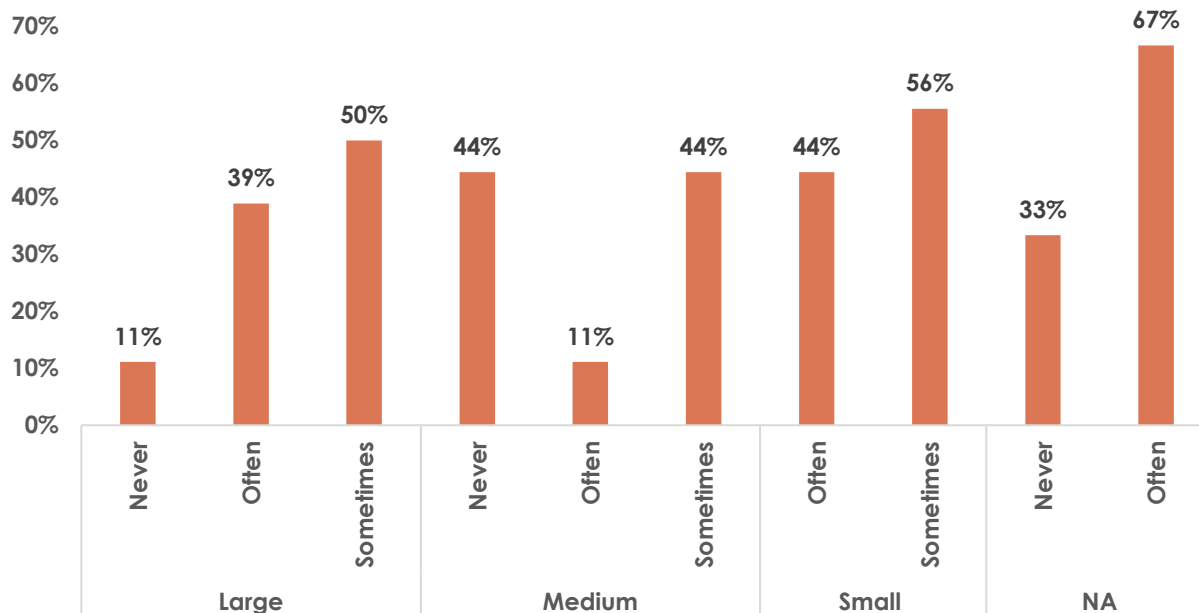
These findings suggest that formal structure alone does not fully capture the reality of housing staff workloads. Even among the 16% of communities that fully meet the FNHPA's Resource Requirements and the 14% that are partially aligned, only 3% of respondents reported never taking on responsibilities beyond their job description, while 33% often do. This includes covering functions such as infrastructure, lands, public works, proposal writing, and vacant roles across the organization. Some have also taken on higher-responsibility work including operational management, tenant crisis support, and legal enforcement, often by default rather than by design. These patterns indicate that staffing benchmarks are most meaningful when paired with an honest assessment of what is required of the staff on a day-to-day basis.

This is further reflected in overtime patterns across community sizes. Large community responses concerning overtime are split between sometimes (50%) and often (39%), with 11% reporting they never work overtime. Medium communities show a similar distribution, with 44% responding that they sometimes work overtime, 44% often do, and 11% never do. Among NA respondents (communities whose size is unknown), overtime is particularly pronounced, with 67% reporting often and 33% never.

Small community respondents were the only group in which all respondents indicated that overtime to some degree was worked, with 44% reporting often and 56% sometimes. This suggests that despite managing smaller portfolios, small community housing staff may face the most consistent overtime

burden, likely reflecting the reality that fewer staff means less ability to absorb workload peaks or distribute responsibilities when capacity is stretched.

Working Overtime By Community Size



Note: "NA" are community size not disclosed.

4.3 Staffing Ratio

The FNHPA's Resource Requirements Report provides a useful baseline for assessing structural alignment. However, findings from both the survey and individual interviews suggest that a single staffing ratio is difficult to apply universally, as real-world capacity needs are shaped by a range of contextual factors that vary significantly from one community to the next. Almost half of respondents in the individual interviews mentioned the following challenges when it comes to housing workplace:

Current Health of Housing Units

The overall condition of a community's housing units is a key determinant of how reactive or proactive a housing department can be. Departments managing a high proportion of aging or deteriorating units face a higher maintenance demand, which adds pressure on staffing capacity regardless of portfolio size. The state of the units therefore influences how many maintenance staff are needed. Therefore, the healthier the housing units, the more these additional pressures are alleviated.

Tenant Capacity and Engagement in Their Home Maintenance

Several interview participants noted active efforts to empower tenants with basic home maintenance knowledge, from mold prevention through proper cleaning habits to minor repairs, to reinforce the sense



of ownership regarding their home. Also, when tenants are equipped and willing to take responsibility for routine upkeep, the volume of requests directed to housing staff decreases, reducing pressure on the housing department. This dynamic has a direct bearing on staffing needs and recognizes systemic factors and their impact on demand. Online resources such as “Keeper of Home” shared by FNHPA can be leveraged to educate community members (especially Youth) on how to take care of their home³.

Community Perception of Housing

How housing is understood within a community has deep historical roots. Research shows that some First Nations community members view housing not as a shared responsibility with government, but as a form of compensation rooted in historical displacement. As noted by the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, “free homes provided by the government are compensation for homes and land left behind” (2023, p. 11). This perception is grounded in mid-20th-century resettlement policies, during which Indigenous families were relocated from their homes with promises of better living conditions but were instead provided only basic shelter at no cost. As a result, housing came to be viewed not as a conventional rental system requiring tenant responsibility, but as a form of restitution owed by the state for the loss of land and housing, shaping ongoing expectations about government responsibility in First Nations communities.⁴ While some participants noted that this perception is gradually shifting, its legacy continues to influence how community members relate to their homes and to the housing department, which contributes to how they are taking care of their home unit. From individual interviews, 36% of respondents mentioned that community members do not understand housing department’s role or program.

Compounding this, housing is still frequently perceived as a social program (in community, but also at a governmental level, which will be explained in the funding section), rather than a property management function. As a result, housing staff often field requests that extend well beyond their mandate, including homelessness situations, interpersonal conflicts between tenants, and personal crises, thereby expanding the effective scope of the role beyond what any staffing ratio would anticipate.

During interviews, some participants agreed that these situations fall within the scope of housing, while others expressed that they should be addressed by public health or by other programs and professionals better equipped to handle them. Complex tenant situations of this nature add a layer of difficulty to the tenant relations function that can, in some cases, add significant and unpredictable pressure on housing departments, pressure that is largely invisible in any structural or ratio-based assessment of staffing adequacy.

4.4 Recommendations

1. Conduct a root cause analysis to better understand the factors impacting staffing ratio, community expectations, and the demand placed on the housing department.

³ First Nations Housing Professionals Association. (n.d.). *Keeper of My Home learning resource*. FNHPA.

⁴ National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association. (2023). *Yanohchhia housing report*. <https://nacca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/YANONHCHIA-FEB-2023-DISTRIBUTION.pdf>



The FNHPA's Resource Requirement Report, offers a valuable foundation for assessing minimum structural adequacy. It provides communities and organizations with a common reference point to evaluate whether a housing department has the basic building blocks in place: someone managing, someone administering, someone maintaining, and someone supporting tenants. However, meeting this ratio does not mean a department is operating at full capacity, nor that it is equipped to deliver housing services effectively given the complexity of its context.

A department with exactly one person per function per 100 units may technically meet the benchmark while remaining critically under-resourced; particularly if those units are in poor condition, if tenants require significant support, if the community is remote, or if staff are regularly absorbing responsibilities well beyond their defined roles.

To move beyond the ratio and assess true operational capacity, communities and housing departments should conduct a root cause analysis. A root cause analysis is a structured approach used to identify the underlying factors that drive observed challenges, rather than focusing only on surface-level indicators such as staffing ratios. It helps distinguish between symptoms (e.g., high workload or service delays) and the systemic conditions that produce them, enabling more accurate and context-specific decision-making.

To support this analysis, communities and housing departments should consider the following diagnostic questions and ask at least five follow-up "why" questions for each response:

- What is the current condition of the housing stock, and what level of maintenance demand does it generate on a regular basis?
- How do community members perceive their home, and how much responsibility do tenants take for routine upkeep?
- How is housing perceived within the community? As a government entitlement, a social program, or a managed property service? How does that shape the volume and nature of requests directed to staff?
- What is the scope of services the department is expected to provide, formally or informally, and how does that compare to what staff resources are available for delivering those services?
- How accessible is a qualified trades pool, and how much of that coordination burden falls on internal staff?
- What is the current turnover rate, and is there enough staffing depth to absorb the loss of one person without compromising operations?

These questions do not replace the benchmark but rather provide additional context. A housing manager who can answer them is better positioned to advocate for what their department needs, rather than the minimum the ratio requires.

In terms of concrete actions to take, housing managers are encouraged to:

2. Build a Clear Picture of the Current Reality



A housing manager's ability to advocate for their department depends first on their ability to clearly articulate what is happening within it. This means going beyond the organizational chart and understanding the scope of the work in depth.

2.1 Define clear roles and responsibilities.

Roles and responsibilities should be defined in job descriptions and communicated to staff. Partnering with Human Resources, when possible, is helpful to create job descriptions that respect a certain standard of formatting and content. The objective is not to reduce collaboration between employees, rather, clear role definition makes collaboration more intentional and ensures that when staff cover for another, it's understood where the boundaries are between their typical scope and the additional responsibilities they are supporting with.

2.2 Map the actual workload

A practical starting point is to estimate, as a percentage of time, how staff are spending their weeks (a Workload Assessment template can be found in the Appendix). This exercise consistently surfaces the informal labour that falls outside job descriptions: the proposals written after hours, the tenant crisis handled by the housing manager because no one else was available, the administrative tasks that are quietly taken on but not formally assigned, etc.

2.3 Compare the actual state with the desired state

Once a clear picture of roles, responsibilities and workload is established, it should be compared against the functional framework from previous FNHPA research⁵, which identifies the core responsibilities each role in a housing department should carry, including templated job descriptions. Where those functions are split across too few people, or are not taking up the vast majority of the housing manager's time, that is the gap to address.

2.4 Present the service model beyond only the headcount

Rather than requesting headcount, housing managers are better positioned when they present a service model: what the department is responsible for delivering, what it is currently unable to deliver or delivering at a cost to other functions, and what a targeted hire would concretely change. An administrative assistant and a tenant relations coordinator are not peripheral additions; they are what creates the space for the housing manager to fulfill their core mandate, which is why they are the two most consistently identified priority positions. Shifting the conversation from simply requesting more staff to the identified service capacity gaps for the community may help reframe the outcomes.

3. Align the Service Model with the Community's Reality

⁵ First Nations Housing Professionals Association. (n.d.). *Resource requirements for the effective management of First Nations on-reserve housing: Final report*. FNHPA. https://fnhpa.ca/Library/Research_Reports/FNHPA_Research_-_Resource_Requirements_for_the_Effective_Management_of_First_Nations_On-Reserve_Housing_-_Final_Report_EN.pdf



The benchmark is a starting point, but does not represent a ceiling. Even a department that meets the FNHPA's Resource Requirements may remain under-resourced if it has not accounted for the specific conditions shaping demand in its community. Three factors in particular warrant concrete action.

3.1 Document the condition of units in the portfolio.

Housing managers typically have access to this information; where it is not yet formally recorded, the priority should be to begin doing so. A portfolio with a high proportion of aging or deteriorating units generates maintenance demand that exceeds what any standard ratio anticipates. Condition assessments become the evidence base for both staffing requests and capital planning and they are among the most concrete data points a housing manager can bring to council. An asset management software could be utilized to ensure documentation of housing conditions.

3.2 Partner with communications and Council to reshape how housing is understood in the community.

In many First Nations communities, housing has historically been perceived as a government entitlement rather than a shared responsibility; a legacy rooted in how reserves were originally established⁶. Where this perception persists, demands towards the housing departments can be high. Shifting this is a systemic challenge that takes time and cannot rest on the housing department alone. Small, consistent efforts (community updates, tenant communications, dialogue opportunities, etc.) contribute to a long-term shift that ultimately reduces pressure on housing department.

3.3 Launch a tenant education initiative focused on prevention, not reaction.

When tenants are equipped to take responsibility for routine upkeep, the volume of reactive requests directed to housing staff can decrease over time. Investing in tenant education programs (from mold prevention to minor maintenance) prevents renovation and lowers maintenance demands towards the housing department.

5. Attracting the Right People – Recruitment

The survey and interviews sought to understand how housing staff came to their roles, what drew them to the work, and what keeps them there. By understanding these patterns, housing departments can build a more intentional approach to attracting and retaining the right people.

5.1 How Employees Know About Housing Positions

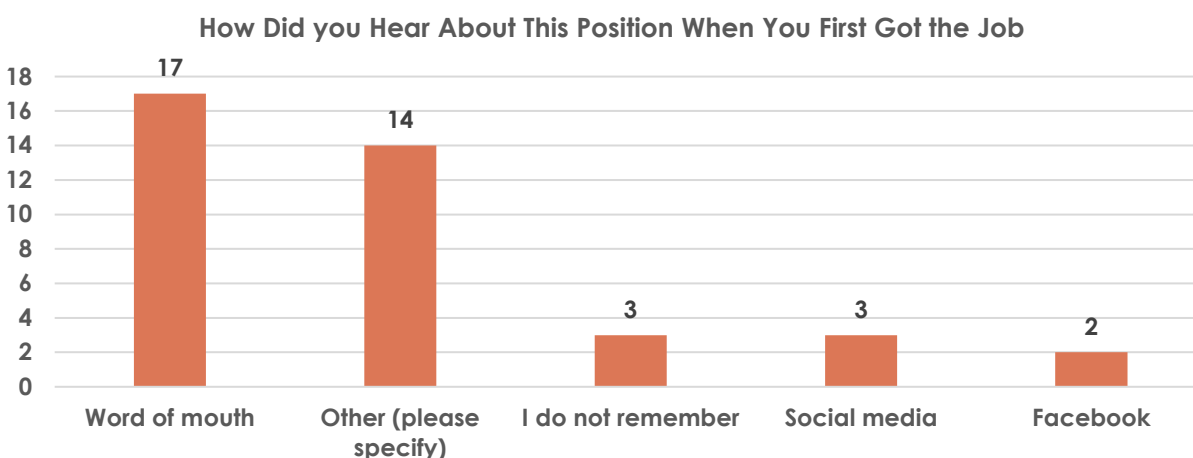
Word of mouth is identified as the main recruitment tool

⁶ National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association. (2023). *Yanonhchia housing report*. <https://nacca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/YANONHCHIA-FEB-2023-DISTRIBUTION.pdf>

The primary recruitment tool for housing staff is word of mouth. Almost half of survey respondents (44%) learned about their position through word of mouth, and an additional 10% were either strongly encouraged to apply or had the role offered to them directly.

This is less surprising when considering that fewer than half of interview participants indicated that HR formally owns the recruitment process or that a structured hiring process exists in their organization. In many communities, hiring happens informally, driven by relationships and proximity rather than deliberate outreach.

Word of mouth can signal that people speak well enough about the work that others are attracted to the role, but it also has a cost. When recruitment flows primarily through personal networks, the department's mandate and scope of work remain poorly understood by the broader community. This was flagged directly by 36% of interview participants, who noted that community members have limited understanding of what the housing department does. A gap that shapes expectations towards the housing department.



5.2 What Attracts Candidates to Housing Role

Across all data sources, what attracts people to housing work and what keeps them there is the opportunity to make a tangible difference in their community

When survey respondents were asked what attracted them to their housing role, the answers were consistent and mission driven. The strongest themes were community connection, relationships, and local knowledge (23%), followed by the desire to help community members and make a difference (21%), and the appeal of seeing tangible outcomes in housing quality and safety (18%). Meaning, purpose, and nation building (13%), variety of work (15%), and opportunities for growth and learning (10%) also featured, with autonomy and work setup cited by a smaller group (8%).

What attracted people to the role also turns out to be what makes it most rewarding. 51% of survey respondents identified helping and supporting community members and 41% mentioned tangible housing



outcomes and safety as the best parts of the job; the same themes that drew them in. Pride, recognition, and accomplishment followed (21%), alongside learning and collaboration (15%)⁷.

Individual interviews reinforced this further. 73% identified community impact as their primary motivator, describing a genuine commitment to improving housing conditions and the lives of the people they serve. Nearly half (45%) pointed to personal and cultural connection; a sense of responsibility rooted in belonging to the community they work for. A smaller but meaningful group (36%) spoke to professional fulfillment: the opportunity to build systems, shape policy, and contribute to something lasting.

Across all data sources, the picture is the same: retention in First Nations housing is mission driven. Intrinsic motivation is strong because the work is meaningful and the connection to community is real. This is a significant asset and one that recruitment efforts should actively reflect.

5.3 Challenges in Attracting Housing Staff

Five main challenges are shaping how difficult recruitment can be, and survey data on what staff find most challenging in their day-to-day work reinforces why the role can be a hard sell.

The skillset required is broad. Raised by 64% of participants, skillset mismatch was the most frequently cited barrier overall. Housing roles demand a rare combination of tenant-facing people skills, technical knowledge of legislation and policy, and in some cases specialized trades awareness. Programs that develop this full profile are rare. However, efforts led by the First Nations National Housing and Infrastructure Council and the First Nations Housing Professionals Association are helping to close this gap, although demand continues to exceed available training capacity. Participants who had found ways to manage this leaned heavily on structured onboarding and internal capacity building; recognizing that the right hire is often someone with the right foundation who can grow into the full scope of the role.

Community dynamics can make enforcement of regulations more tense. 55% of participants noted that the relational fabric of especially small communities creates a specific kind of hiring and retention challenge. When staff know their tenants as neighbours, family members, or friends, enforcing policy can quickly become a source of personal conflict. This dynamic discourages some candidates from applying and contributes to burnout among those who stay. Clear policies and consistent processes were the most commonly mentioned mitigation, as well as Council's support in enforcing difficult policies, reducing the degree to which difficult decisions feel personal rather than procedural.

The job carries a difficult reputation. Raised by 5 out of 11 participants (45%), the historical context of housing creates a reputational weight that makes recruitment challenging even before a posting is written. Participants who had navigated this noted that reframing how housing is presented (focusing on service and impact rather than enforcement) and establishing structured, transparent processes helped shift perceptions over time.

Turnover creates a cycle that is hard to break. 5 out of 11 participants (45%) flagged retention and capacity pressures as a hiring barrier in their own right. High turnover means departments are frequently starting over; re-recruiting, re-onboarding, and absorbing gaps in the interim. Succession planning is rarely

⁷ The total surpasses 100% as respondents were not limited to one answer

formalized, and when a knowledgeable staff member leaves, institutional knowledge often leaves with them. Turnover is itself a symptom of the other challenges described above, but once it takes hold, it becomes a cause of its own creating ripple effect. A section on succession planning is outlined in the Section 6.1 of this report.

Pay does not compete. 3 out of 11 participants (27%) flagged compensation as a meaningful barrier to attract candidates, noting that housing roles rarely match what other industries offer for comparable levels of responsibility. The mitigation strategies mentioned were largely informal (emphasizing non-monetary benefits such as flexible hours, paid lunch, and holidays rather than systemic) and will be better detailed in the Section 6.3 of this report.

5.5 Challenges in Retaining Housing Staff

When asked which part of their role they find most challenging, survey respondents strongly pointed to the human side of the work. Social complexity and member expectations (28%) and tenant issues and enforcement (26%) were the top two responses; the same dynamics that make the role difficult to recruit for in the first place. Workload, time pressure, and delivery burden (21%), administrative demands and systems (21%), funding constraints (18%), and external political pressures (15%) compound the picture further.

This alignment between recruitment barriers and day-to-day challenges is not a coincidence. The breadth of what is asked of housing staff (managing complex tenant situations, enforcing policy within close-knit communities, navigating funding limitations, and keeping up with administrative demands) is rarely visible from the outside, and fully felt only once someone is in the role.

More information on retention will be detailed in the Section 6.3 on wellbeing and support towards housing staff.

5.6 Recommendations

1. Increase Visibility and Diversify Recruitment Channels

1.1 *Expand where positions are posted*

Relying on word of mouth to fill housing positions limits recruitment to existing networks and restricts the visibility of roles that are often complex, essential, and under-recognized outside the community. To broaden reach, housing departments should actively diversify where positions are posted, including community radio, social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok), physical postings in community spaces, band office bulletin boards, and First Nations employment services. Some organizations also use short videos on social media to show what the role entails in practice, which can help potential applicants better understand the work and feel more confident applying.

1.2 *Rethink job descriptions:*



Job descriptions are often the first impression candidates have of a position. Rather than presenting long lists of technical requirements, effective job postings should function as an invitation to apply. They should include community context, use plain language (such as "you will help families find and keep safe housing" instead of "facilitate housing placement and tenancy stabilization), and clearly communicate the purpose and impact of the role. They should also explicitly recognize that lived experience, community involvement, caregiving, and traditional knowledge are relevant and valuable forms of qualification.

1.3 Use inclusive language

Beyond where positions are posted and how they are framed, the language used in job postings directly shapes who feels encouraged or discouraged to apply. Job descriptions should avoid unnecessarily restrictive or exclusionary requirements and instead emphasize transferable skills and diverse forms of experience. This includes explicitly recognizing that traditional knowledge and lived experience are valid qualifications alongside formal education and technical training⁸.

1.4 Support candidates through the process

Improving recruitment also requires supporting candidates through each stage of the hiring process. This can include providing resources such as resume-building assistance, clear explanations of role expectations, and interview preparation support. These measures help

1.5 Consider alternative interview formats

To further improve accessibility, housing departments may also consider alternative interview approaches that move beyond strictly western-style hiring processes. For example, offering deferred interviews—where candidates have time (e.g., 24 hours) to reflect on questions and refine their responses—can provide a more equitable opportunity for thoughtful and accurate responses, particularly for candidates who may not perform well under traditional interview pressure.

2. Invest in Succession Planning

Succession planning is an organizational strategy that helps housing departments identify critical roles, assess vacancy risks, develop internal talent, and ensure continuity before a vacancy occurs. It is a proactive way to protect knowledge and promote talent continuity. In practice, it starts with identifying the core competencies required for each key role, then assessing potential internal candidates against those competencies to surface gaps and levels of readiness. From there, targeted training and mentorship can be put in place so that when transitions happen, the department's preparations are already underway. This will further be detailed in the next section.

3. Improve the local reputation of housing departments

Shifting the perception of housing can require intentional communication efforts that highlight the value of well-maintained homes and the pride that can come with caring for them. This could take shape in small but visible ways, such as:

- Inviting students for shadowing and internship opportunities within the Housing Department

⁸ Insights from the Talent Advisory Committee informed this recommendation



- Celebrating housing milestones (new builds, renovations) with the community
- Sharing success stories of completed projects through community communications
- Using social media to highlight the impact and pride of housing work
- Partnering with schools to introduce housing careers early
- Reframing housing messaging around community wellbeing rather than enforcement or frustration

The goal is to reframe housing not as a source of frustration, but as a cornerstone of community wellbeing and in doing so, make careers in housing something young community members can see themselves pursuing.

4. Hire for foundation, train for the full scope

The ideal housing candidate is exceptionally rare. The role demands technical knowledge of construction, maintenance, and housing programs; fluency in policy, legislation, and funding frameworks; and the interpersonal capacity to manage tenant relationships that can involve conflict, crisis, addiction, homelessness, and deeply personal circumstances. Few candidates will arrive with all of this. A realistic and sustainable approach would be the following:

4.1 Prioritize core competencies in hiring

The ideal housing candidate is exceptionally rare. The role requires a combination of technical knowledge (construction, maintenance, housing programs), understanding of policy and funding frameworks, and strong interpersonal skills to navigate complex tenant situations involving conflict, crisis, or vulnerability. Rather than searching for fully candidates that tick all the boxes, departments should prioritize competencies that are hardest to develop such as judgment, communication, and relationship-building during the selection process, while treating technical and policy knowledge as areas where training can effectively fill gaps.

4.2 Develop role-specific onboarding plans

A sustainable approach to staffing relies on structured onboarding (the formal process of integrating a new employee into their role), which ideally begins before their first day with access to key documents, contacts, and expectations. Housing departments should work with Human Resources, where possible, to develop onboarding plans tailored to the specific demands of each role. Concretely, a structured plan might look like:

- Before day one: share key documents, introduce main contacts, and set clear expectations
- First weeks: shadow experienced colleagues and observe day-to-day operations
- First month: gradually take on independent tasks with mentorship support
- End of first month and beyond: own specific responsibilities with regular check-ins and ongoing feedback



These plans help ensure that new hires build the technical, administrative, and contextual knowledge required to perform effectively over time.

4.3 Connect new hires to peer support networks

Given the complexity and often isolating nature of housing roles, connecting new hires with mentors or peers in other communities is critical. These relationships can accelerate learning, provide practical guidance, and reduce the sense of isolation that can come with stepping into a demanding role with limited local support.

6. Keeping and Growing Talent – Succession, Retention and Capacity Building

The unique requirements of housing staff and especially housing managers have been detailed, as well as the recruitment challenges in recruiting housing staff. Logically, facing these challenges, efforts should be put towards capacity building and succession planning. This next section focuses on these two elements, along with wellbeing and other organizational mechanisms that could better support employees in general, but also specifically housing staff.

6.1 Succession Planning

Succession planning, when present, is informal. Making it a priority can be the first step away from reactivity.

Succession planning and capacity building go hand-in-hand. Succession planning ensures that when key roles become vacant, the organization has already identified someone ready to step into the role (or has a plan to recruit externally) while capacity building develops the skills and leadership abilities of existing staff so they are ready when those moments arise.

Among individual interview responses, 64% mentioned that there is no clear replacement identified and no formal succession plan, while another 36% indicated that knowledge is transferred informally through mentoring and knowledge sharing. Among those individuals, many noted that they are considering retiring soon and want to ensure succession is well prepared. Notably, no participant mentioned a formal succession planning program being in place in their organization.

When asked if their role was adequately covered when they were away (on leave or absent), 44% of survey respondents answered “No”, 33% answered “Yes” and 23% answered “Sometimes”. This means that even at the most immediate level, succession and knowledge transfer are not consistently in place. This suggests that the absence of succession planning is not just a strategic oversight, but a current and ongoing vulnerability for many organizations.

When asked in more detail about the reasons why their role was not adequately covered during absences, the most common response was that work simply piles up and only urgent items get handled (19%), followed by a single point of failure due to insufficient staff to backfill and coverage that exists but remains informal or limited to certain tasks (16% each). Respondents also pointed to the specialized and broad



nature of their role, a lack of cross-training, and the fact that they often get contacted anyway because issues escalate to them regardless of their absence (13% each).

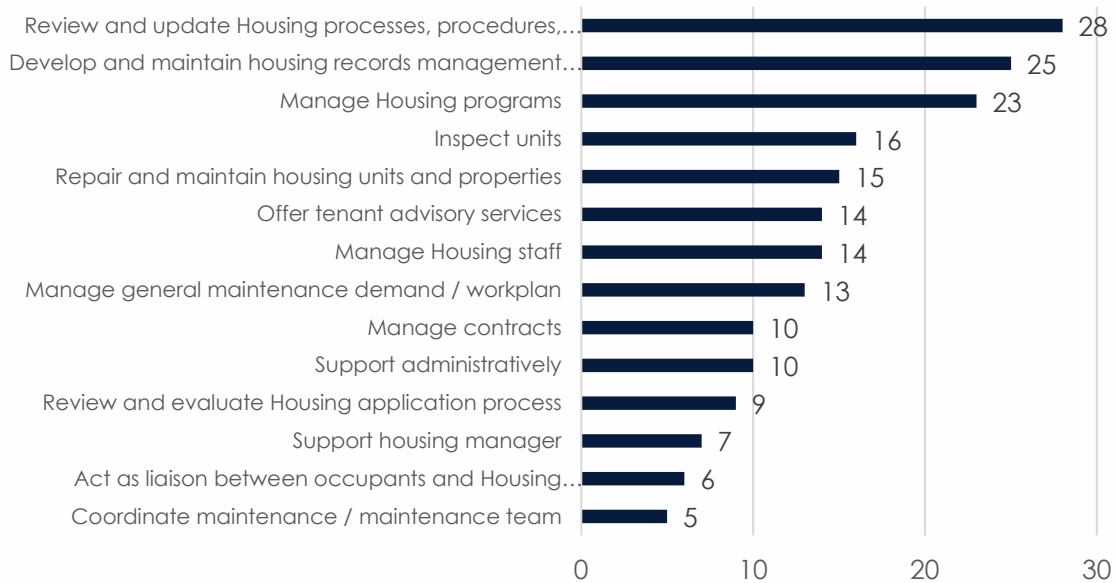
Succession planning is a proactive measure, and it is therefore not surprising that it remains largely unimplemented. Organizations in First Nations communities face challenges that are numerous and growing rapidly, leaving them primarily in reactive mode. Implementing succession planning also requires a degree of organizational stability that is difficult to achieve when nearly half of survey respondents report high turnover in housing. Additional barriers identified include the lack of formal education pathways for housing roles, and the fear among some staff of being replaced if they share their knowledge.

6.2 Training and Capacity Building

From the survey responses, almost 70% of participants indicated that they feel confident or very confident in the skills required for their roles, yet, 59% of them indicated that more training would make them feel more confident in their role. Those two results can coexist; the first one captures overall confidence in one's current ability to perform, while the second reflects areas where staff see opportunity for growth. A respondent can feel confident in their role today while still wanting to develop further and this is precisely what the data suggests. When asked what would make them feel more confident in their role, participants identified more trainings, support and clearer policies and guidelines which will further be developed in the Section 6.3.

When asked which skills they would like to strengthen most, participants identified Review and update housing processes, procedures and policies, Develop and maintain housing records management system and Manage Housing Programs. This means that housing staff want to strengthen their skills on what can be seen as the structure of housing, meaning the foundational systems that govern how housing work gets done; the policies, records, and programs that sit beneath the day-to-day work.

Which skills do you feel you need to strengthen the most?



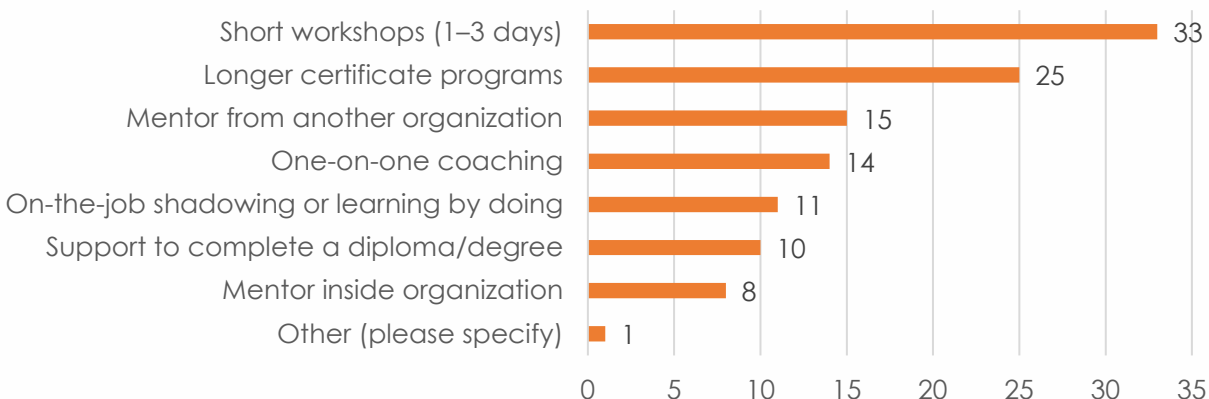
Note: Total exceeds 39 as respondents could select more than one answer

When asked about preferred development opportunities, short workshops (1–3 days) were by far the most popular choice (85%), followed by longer certificate programs (64%) and mentorship from another organization (38%). One-on-one coaching (36%), on-the-job shadowing (28%), support to complete a diploma or degree (26%), and internal mentorship (21%) were also selected.⁹

These preferences stand in notable contrast to how respondents acquired their skills. Primarily these methods were through on-the-job learning (44%), previous experience (36%), and informal knowledge transfer (18%). This gap suggests that while the current model of skill acquisition has been largely accidental and unstructured, staff are clearly asking for something more intentional.

⁹ The total surpasses 100% as respondents were not limited to one answer.

What types of development opportunities interest you most?



Note: Other: remote learning towards certification

The main barriers to learning and developing skills identified by survey respondents is the lack of time and workload, identified by more than half of the respondents (56%), followed by limited training opportunities (36%) limited support, approval or direction (21%) and limited resources or remoteness (15%)¹⁰.

Taken together, these findings point to a workforce that is competent but eager to grow, and that has largely built its expertise through experience rather than structured support. Staff know what they need (technical housing skills, clearer guidelines, and accessible training formats like short workshops and certificate programs) but face real barriers in getting there, particularly time, workload, and limited opportunities.

6.3 Wellbeing and Overall Support

Supporting housing staff means creating space for connection and standing behind difficult decisions.

As detailed throughout this report, working in a housing department in a First Nations community comes with its own distinct challenges. To offset these challenges, this research also explored what housing staff need and value when it comes to support and wellbeing. The objective of this section is to equip organizations with concrete insights to better support their staff.

From individual interviews, 64% of respondents mentioned that they feel like their supervisors and leadership generally understand the challenges that they face, thanks to, amongst other, communication mechanisms (weekly meetings, and open communication already existing making it easier for staff members to open up on their challenges). As for colleagues, it's more mixed. Depending on the position

¹⁰ The total surpasses 100% as respondents were not limited to one answer.



and department, it is not consistently expressed that colleagues understand housing's role, program and challenge.

When asked how their colleagues and supervisors can better support them in their role, participants mentioned better knowledge sharing mechanisms, empathy towards understanding for the emotional load that they are facing in regard to tenant-facing reality and more authority, transparency and involvement in decision-making (18% each). Additionally, the two main answers were more regular check-ins and day-to-day communication, and a stronger backing for policy enforcement and consistent application (27% each). Notably, respondents who felt their supervisor understood their challenges largely attributed this to having consistent touchpoint meetings (weekly or biweekly), suggesting that structured communication is not just appreciated but directly shapes how supported staff feel.

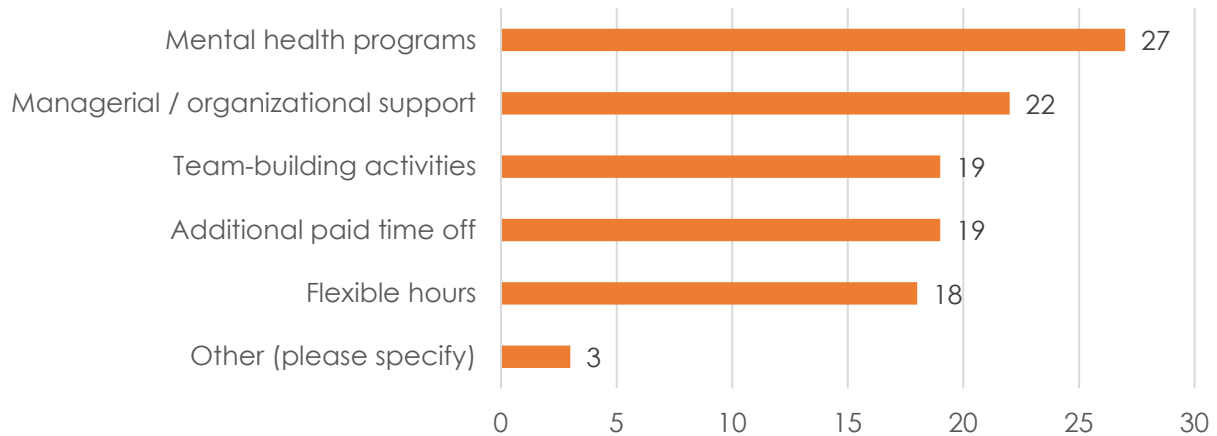
Concerning the enforcement of policies and regulations that have been put in place, respondents shared that difficult decisions often result, such as denials, waitlists and evictions. In close communities, this can present more challenging dynamics and tensions, particularly involving potential conflicts of interest, or multiple collaborators such as housing committees, Chief and Council, or other departments. These challenges can contribute to certain negative perceptions associated with housing departments, exacerbating recruitment challenges.

Taking care of housing staff means offering mental help programs, supporting them and respecting time off.

Finally, when asked for the type of Wellness support that they value the most, 69% of survey respondents identified mental health programs and 56% identified managerial and organizational support¹¹. From the interviews, time off was identified as the most valued element of their compensation package, cited by 69% of respondents, more than salary itself, coming second (64%). Time off serves as a critical mental health buffer, allowing staff to decompress and disconnect from work that is emotionally demanding and rarely contained to office hours. This is reinforced by the fact that 31% of respondents indicated a clear need for boundaries between work and personal life specifically the ability to close their phone and be unreachable outside of working hours. In communities where housing staff are often known personally by tenants, the line between work and life can blur quickly, making protected time off necessary.

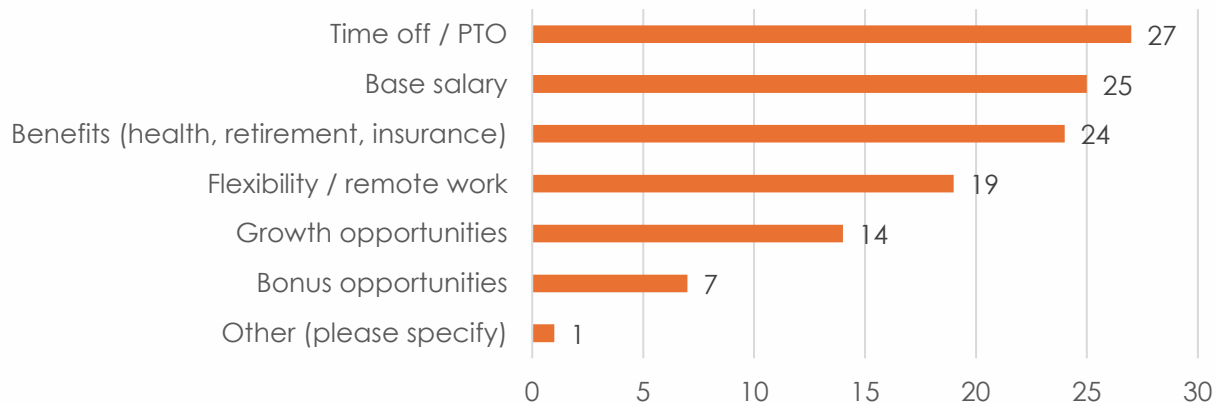
¹¹ The total surpasses 100% as respondents were not limited to one answer.

Which types of wellness support would be most valuable?



Note: “Other” included having the opportunity to work from home, better benefits (e.g. covering for therapy).

Which aspects of your compensation package matter the most to you?



Note: Total exceeds 39 as respondents could select up to 3 options.

6.4 Salary

When participants were asked what their salary was, the vast majority of them answered in the range that was previously identified by FNHPA research¹², or higher. Note that these findings should be interpreted with caution, as they do not take into consideration years of experience or the educational

¹² First Nations Housing Professionals Association. (n.d.). *Standards for job description and compensation (salary grids) development for First Nations on-reserve housing: Preliminary review*. FNHPA. https://fnhpa.ca/Library/Research_Reports/FNHPA_JD_and_Salary_Report_-_Final.pdf

backgrounds of participants. However, it is encouraging to notice that in general, the minimum of salary and maximum of salary that was collected are above what has previously been collected.

Position	Min Salary	of Max Salary	of Average Salary	Max and Min Reference off from FNHPA 2023 research ¹³
Housing Admin Assistant	\$ 33,735	\$ 57,000	\$ 45,023	[\$ 29, 250 - \$ 60,938]
Housing Coordinator	\$ 47,500	\$ 81,900	\$ 66,494	[\$ 36, 563 - \$69, 849]
Housing Director	\$ 37,500	\$120,000	\$ 77,288	NA
Housing Manager	\$ 40,000	\$ 130,000	\$ 76,462	[\$ 44, 031 - \$ 123, 513]

Note: Salaries were adjusted to be all annual. When an hourly salary was given, the calculation was done based on a 37.5-hour work week

Interestingly, when comparing salaries across regions, compensation levels are relatively consistent. Housing Directors and Coordinators earn comparable salaries in both the North and South.

Administrative Assistants show a modest regional gap (\$46,150 in the North vs. \$41,945 in the South). The most pronounced difference is at the Housing Manager level, where Northern communities pay an average of \$79,808 compared to \$70,440 in the South. It could be expected that Northern communities would offer higher compensation overall, given the higher cost of living and remote regional factors that typically apply. Yet that premium appears inconsistently across positions.

Overall, the grand average across all positions and regions sits at \$68,714. While these figures provide a useful reference point, it is important to note that salary alone does not capture the full compensation picture, and the gap between what housing roles pay and what comparable positions in municipalities or government offer remains a meaningful recruitment barrier regardless of region.

Position for Each Demographic Area	Average of Salary
North	\$ 73, 415
Housing Administrative Assistant	\$ 46,150
Housing Coordinator	\$ 67,133
Housing Director	\$ 77, 375
Housing Manager	\$ 79, 808

¹³ Ibid.





South	\$ 64,187
Housing Administrative Assistant	\$ 41, 945
Housing Coordinator	\$ 66, 110
Housing Director	\$ 77, 115
Housing Manager	\$ 70, 440
Grand Total	\$ 68, 714

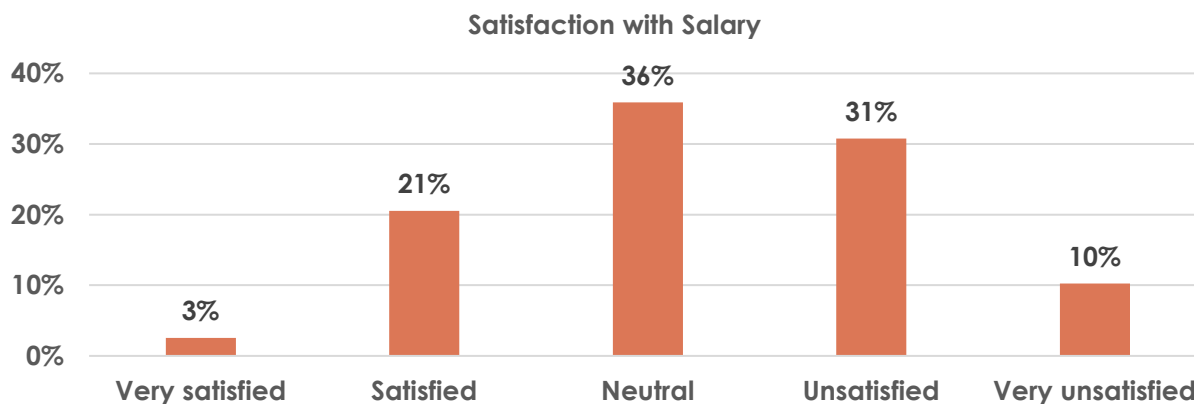
Only 24% of Housing Staff are satisfied with their salary

Even if 27% of respondents identified compensation as a barrier to recruit, it is important to mention that if salary is indeed a barrier to recruit, it does not necessarily mean that it is a reason why people leave. This distinction is well-documented in the employee motivation and retention broader literature (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959; Pink, 2009).

As it has been described, housing staff are greatly motivated by intrinsic factors. The primary reason for applying is to help the community, and the most rewarding aspect of the work is that same sense of contribution and impact. The high neutral score (36%) regarding salary satisfaction may reflect that, for this population, compensation is simply not the primary lens through which they evaluate their work experience. When purpose and meaning are strong, salary becomes less central to how people assess their overall satisfaction.

As for the 41% who express dissatisfaction with their salary, it is possible that intrinsic motivation is actively compensating for this frustration. This aligns with motivation theories like Herzberg's, which argue that factors like salary primarily prevent dissatisfaction when adequate, while intrinsic factors such as purpose, impact, and meaningful work are what truly drive engagement and satisfaction. Given that housing staff appear to be strongly motivated by exactly these intrinsic factors, this may explain why salary dissatisfaction has not translated into broader disengagement (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959).

That said, this dynamic should not be mistaken for a sustainable or acceptable situation. 41% of dissatisfaction is a high score that can not be ignored. Relying on mission alone to absorb compensation frustration places an unfair burden on employees' personal levels of motivation. Over time, unresolved dissatisfaction with pay can quietly erode even the strongest sense of purpose, leading to burnout, resentment, and eventually turnover. There is also a fairness dimension to consider: employees who dedicate themselves to community impact shall feel that their compensation reflects the value of that contribution.



6.5 Recommendations

The previous section highlighted a few recurring themes worth carrying into recommendations.

Formalize succession planning. Staff are aware of its importance, which is itself a good foundation. There is an opportunity to formalize what is already understood, and in doing so, begin to shift organizations out of the reactive mode that currently shapes how staffing gaps get filled.

Offer diverse training opportunities for specific needs. Staff are asking for targeted support on the foundational architecture of housing work: policies, records management, and program oversight, with a preference towards short workshops when it comes to the type of training that is preferred.

Build support system for staff The types of support that matters most to housing staff are associated with three main areas: consistent application of procedure, regular communication with their colleagues, and access to mental health support.

Compensate fairly and broadly. Fewer than one in four staff report being satisfied with their pay, even if when staff talk about what they value most in their compensation, the responses generally prioritize fringe benefits over base salary. Within benefits, time off and mental health support come as most cited.

The following section addresses recommendations to those highlights more in detail:

1. Formalize succession planning

Succession planning is an organizational strategy that helps housing departments identify critical roles, assess vacancy risks, develop internal talent, and ensure continuity before a vacancy occurs. It is a good step to take to move towards proactivity. 36% of organizations already have an informal way of planning succession, mainly expressed through managers voluntarily training potential successors. This is a strong starting point. Succession planning does not require starting from scratch. Organizations that have already begun transferring knowledge are on the right track and can build on what they have. For those looking to take that further, or for organizations that are just beginning, a practical high-level roadmap is included in the Appendix. It can be applied within the housing department alone, but works best as an organization-

wide effort, supported by HR. When succession planning is shared across departments and backed by leadership, it is far more likely to be sustainable.

2. Offer diverse training opportunities

Housing staff want to grow, as nearly 60% indicated that more training would increase their confidence, and they are clear about what works: short, accessible, practical learning opportunities that do not require them to step away from already demanding roles for extended periods. Short workshops of one to three days are by far the preferred format and should anchor any training strategy. Certificate programs are also valued where scheduling and resources allow.

Mentorship, peer coaching, and co-development between housing managers across communities are all viable capacity-building options and they tend to cost very little to facilitate. Beyond skill-building, these lateral connections across organizations and communities also help address the professional isolation that many housing staff experience. Provincial and national First Nations housing networks, intergovernmental programs, and sectoral partnerships are also worth exploring as potential sources of training, and knowledge exchange.

Training Opportunities : Cost vs. Difficulty to implement

		Difficulty to implement		
		Easy	Medium	Hard
Cost	Low	Co-development One-on-one coaching On-the-job shadowing Lunch and Learn	Cross-community mentorship Remote / online certification	
	Medium	Short workshops (1–3 days)	Remote / online certification Certificate programs Job rotation within the organization	
	High		Diploma or degree support	Conferences

3. Build support system for staff:

3.1 Enforce policies consistently and back staff on difficult decisions.

Ensuring that housing policies are applied systematically and consistently, with clear backing from leadership, removes the burden of individual judgment calls from staff and reduces the risk of perceived



favoritism. When staff know that decisions are grounded in policy and supported by the organization, difficult conversations become more manageable.

3.2 Establish regular check-ins.

Regular touchpoints between housing staff and their supervisors, such as biweekly check-ins, are a simple but meaningful way to maintain open communication and catch issues before they escalate. The data from this research suggests that staff who have consistent access to their manager feel meaningfully more supported, making this one of the lowest-effort, highest-return actions an organization can take.

3.3 Protect time outside of work hours.

Where possible, a formal disconnection policy sets clear expectations for after-hours availability. Where the nature of the work makes full disconnection unrealistic, a compensated on-call policy is a practical alternative that acknowledges the demands of the role while ensuring staff are fairly recognized for time worked outside regular hours.¹⁴

4. Compensate fairly and broadly

Salary data collected through this research provides a useful starting point, but the sample size and scope of this study are not sufficient for robust benchmarking. More targeted benchmarking work remains needed to capture the full range of variables at play across regions, community sizes, and experience levels. In the meantime, organizations can take meaningful steps internally:

4.1 Invest in targeted salary benchmarking.

Current data provides a useful starting point but is insufficient for robust benchmarking. More targeted work is needed across regions, community sizes, and experience levels to give organizations a reliable basis for setting competitive salaries.

4.2 Establish clear internal salary policies.

At minimum, clear organizational wide salary policies should be in place to ensure equity across roles, transparency in compensation decisions, and consistency based on experience and responsibilities. These are foundational practices regardless of where salaries sit relative to external benchmarks.

4.3 Invest in benefits.

What the data makes clear is that salary, while important, is not the primary driver of compensation satisfaction for housing staff. Benefits also matter, and within benefits, paid time off and access to mental health support, including therapy coverage, stand out as the most valued elements of a compensation package. Organizations looking for high-impact, targeted investments in staff wellbeing should prioritize these areas.

¹⁴ Example of disconnection policies can be found easily online by typing "Bill 27 Ontario policy Example" for Ontario or "Bill C-69 right to disconnect policy example" for BC.

7. Equitable Funding Models

Federal funding dominates, but comes with significant instability

ISC/CIRNAC and CMHC are the two pillars of housing funding, cited by 73% and 64% of interview respondents respectively. ISC/CIRNAC funding covers a range of needs (capacity, salaries, renovations, and broader housing programs), while CMHC funding is largely proposal-based, tied to specific programs like RAP/RRAP, repair initiatives, and mortgage support. 45% respondents also mentioned additional external sources beyond these two, including programs like the Rapid Housing Initiative, FedNor, Canada Builds, Climate Change Canada, and regional housing bodies, suggesting that housing departments are actively piecing together funding from multiple streams to fill gaps, but showing the diversity of possible fundings. Own-source revenue and tenant-linked funding (rental income, IBA agreements, replacement reserves, social assistance flows) was mentioned by 27% of respondents.

The predictability problem

Despite the range of sources available, 73%, matching the share who cited ISC/CIRNAC as a key source, flagged low predictability as a core challenge. Annual application cycles, budget cuts, long delays, denials without explanation, and political uncertainty all contribute to a funding environment that is difficult to plan around. Compounding this, the application process itself requires dedicated capacity that many housing departments simply don't have, however, many organizations offer support and funding application is often identified as a skill that is learned on the job.

Underfunding is widespread

When asked whether parts of housing are underfunded, the answer was affirmative nearly across the board, with maintenance, repairs, and renovations emerging as the clearest pressure point, cited by 6 respondents (55%). Funding in this area was described as insufficient for anything beyond band-aid fixes, leaving a growing backlog of deferred work that compounds over time.

Beyond maintenance, underfunding was flagged across several interconnected areas: staffing capacity and wages (18%), housing supply and new builds (18%), and specific operational roles such as housing inspectors and operations and maintenance allocations (18%). Two respondents (18%) offered a broader assessment: that funding is simply low across the board, without pointing to a single area¹⁵.

Direct relationships with funders as a key navigation tool

When asked whether they have the information needed to demonstrate real housing needs to funders, 36% of respondents said their documentation is solid and the same share credited close relationships with knowledgeable contacts (CMHC representatives, RAP reps, peer networks) as central to their ability to navigate funding. In other words, for those who feel equipped, it is often as much about who they know as what they have documented.

¹⁵ Total above 100% as respondents answered could fall into more than one category.



Where it gets harder is in going beyond the well-known programs. The main funding sources (ISC/CIRNAC, CMHC) are generally familiar, but 27% described the broader landscape as complex or unclear, still learning what's available or uncertain about less visible opportunities. Capacity compounds this: 27% flagged that staffing limitations, reporting burdens, and tight deadlines make it difficult to follow through even when funding is identified.

Structural constraints add another layer for some communities in specific areas (First Nations not on reserve), facing administrative walls as they fall into cracks of admissibility criteria for funding. Even if some documentation on funding is available online, having direct contact with representatives helps navigate the different opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Build strong relationships with CMHC, ISC and other funders

Given that 36% of housing departments rely on personal relationships with funders as their primary way of navigating funding opportunities, proactively investing in these relationships is a practical and high-value strategy. Regular communication with CMHC and ISC representatives helps departments stay informed of upcoming opportunities, understand application expectations, and improve overall knowledge and confidence around funding planning and application.

2. Create a resource to identify and fill application forms

With funding accessibility heavily dependent on individual knowledge and personal contacts, housing departments would benefit from a dedicated resource, whether a shared tracker, reference guide, or a designated position, responsible for researching and coordinating funding opportunities and consolidating available sources, deadlines, and application requirements. This resource could also serve other departments such as lands and management, maximizing its value across the organization, reducing reliance on any one person's network, and supporting continuity when staff turn over.





Concluding Remarks

In a perfect world, housing staff would need more funding, and tenant accountability toward the care of their homes.

The last question of the interview, a more open one, was the following “if you had a magic wand, what would you fix in your work”. The breakdown of the answers reinforces various subjects covered throughout this report, addressing technical elements and systemic issues.

The most popular responses were regarding funding and tenant responsibility and housing stewardship. More precisely, more funding was identified as it is often considered as the main barrier to offer good housing programs. The mention of “pay” was related to the pay of the participants, but also salaries for additional positions. Improving housing processes was detailed as having clearer funding criteria and feedback when funding is not offered.

Other participants mentioned that their main wish would be regarding tenant accountability and capacity to pay rent. This has a double effect – first, it offers the opportunity for the housing department to not be reactive and spend a lot of time trying to collect rent, which leads sometimes to difficult situations, but also to show funders that community members do pay mortgages, which incites lenders to build more house and offer more mortgages.

Staffing capacity came up as a related concern; the wish for more hands and stronger skills to reduce the burnout and turnover that quietly destabilize housing teams is concerning for many. Governance and decision-making support were another recurring theme: respondents wanted clearer policies, more consistent enforcement, and better backing from Council, echoing what was raised throughout the report. Finally, housing supply and infrastructure constraints, including land availability, were flagged as structural limits that no amount of internal effort can fully overcome without broader investment and political will.

If you had a magic wand, what would you fix in your work?	Count ¹⁶
Funding, pay, and resourcing (including funding applications)	4
Tenant responsibilities and housing stewardship (rent payment, awareness, caring for homes)	4
Staffing capacity and skills to reduce burnout and turnover	3
Governance, policy, and decision-making support (Council backing, equitable enforcement, consultation)	3
Housing supply and infrastructure constraints (including land issues)	2

¹⁶ Total count exceeds 11 as respondents answered could fall into more than one category.



Summary of Recommendations and Responsibilities

Staffing Model Ratios

Recommendation 1: Make a root cause analysis to better understand the factors impacting staffing ratio, community expectations and what affects demands towards housing department

Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<p>Conduct Root Cause Analysis to better understand factors influencing staffing ratio.</p> <p>Root cause analysis helps distinguish between symptoms (e.g., high workload or service delays) and the systemic conditions that produce them, allowing for more accurate and context-specific decision-making. To support this analysis, communities and housing departments should consider the following diagnostic questions and ask at least five follow-up “why” questions for each response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the condition of the housing stock and what maintenance demand does it generate? • How much responsibility do tenants take for routine upkeep? • How is housing perceived within the community, and how does this influence demand on staff? • What is the gap between expected services and available staff resources? • How accessible is a qualified pool of tradespeople? • Is there enough staffing depth to absorb turnover without disrupting operations? 	<p>Housing Manager, Leadership,</p>	<p>Housing Manager</p>	<p>FNHPA, HR</p>





Recommendation 2: Build a clear picture of the current reality			
Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<p><i>2.1 Define Roles and responsibilities</i></p> <p>Create clear job description and communicate to staff</p>	HR	Housing Manager	FNHPA
<p><i>2.2 Map actual workload</i></p> <p>Estimate, as a percentage of time, how staff are spending their weeks using a Workload Assessment (template can be found in the Appendix)</p>	Housing Manager	Housing Manager	FNHPA
<p><i>2.3 Compare actual vs desired state</i></p> <p>Once a clear picture of roles, responsibilities and workload is established, it should be compared against the functional framework from previous FNHPA research¹⁷, which identifies the core responsibilities that each role in a housing department should carry</p>	Housing Manager	Housing Manager	FNHPA
<p><i>2.4 Present a service model</i></p> <p>Going beyond requesting an additional employee, summarize what the department delivers, what it cannot, and how a targeted hire (based on specific based on specific roles and responsibilities) would address the gaps</p>	Housing Manager	Housing Manager	FNHPA

Attracting the Right People

Recommendation 1: Increase Visibility and Diversify Recruitment Channels			
Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<p><i>1.1 Expand where positions are posted</i></p> <p>Advertise opportunities through the radio, socials (Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, including short videos),</p>	HR	HR	Housing Manager



posting in community spaces and First Nations employment services, etc.			
<p><i>1.2 Rethink job descriptions:</i></p> <p>Present job descriptions as an invitation to apply. Including community context, plain language, and clearly communicate the purpose and impact of the role.</p>	HR	HR	Housing Manager, FNHPA
<p><i>1.2 Use inclusive language</i></p> <p>Avoid unnecessarily restrictive or exclusionary requirements and instead emphasize transferable skills and diverse forms of experience. This includes explicitly recognizing that traditional knowledge and lived experience are valid qualifications alongside formal education and technical training</p>	HR	HR	FNHPA
<p><i>1.3 Support candidates through the process</i></p> <p>Support candidates through each stage of the hiring process. This can include providing resources such as resume-building assistance, clear explanations of role expectations, and interview preparation support.</p>	HR, Housing Manager	HR	-
<p><i>1.4 Consider alternative interview formats</i></p> <p>Consider alternative interview approaches that move beyond strictly western-style hiring processes. For example, offering deferred interviews where candidates have time (e.g., 24 hours) to reflect on questions and refine their responses</p>	HR, Housing Manager	HR	-





Recommendation 2: Invest in Succession Planning by identifying critical roles, assess vacancy risks, develop internal talent, and ensure continuity before a vacancy occurs.

Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<i>Please refer to the appendix for a high-level step-by-step succession planning approach</i>	HR	HR	Housing Manager

Recommendation 3: Improve the local reputation of housing departments

Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<p>Shift the perception of housing with intentional communication efforts that highlight the value of well-maintained homes and the pride that can come with caring for them. This could take shape in small but visible ways, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting students for shadowing and internship opportunities within the Housing Department • Celebrating housing milestones (new builds, renovations) with the community • Sharing success stories of completed projects through community communications • Using social media to highlight the impact and pride of housing work • Partnering with schools to introduce housing careers early • Reframing housing messaging around community wellbeing rather than enforcement or frustration 	Housing Manager	Housing Manager, Communications	FNHPA





Recommendation 4: Hire for foundation, train for the full scope

Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<p><i>4.1 Prioritize core competencies in hiring</i></p> <p>Rather than searching for fully formed candidates, departments should prioritize competencies that are hardest to develop such as judgment, communication, and relationship-building during the selection process, while treating technical and policy knowledge as areas where training can effectively fill gaps.</p>	Housing Manager	Housing Manager	FNHPA, HR,
<p><i>4.2 Develop role-specific onboarding plans</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First weeks: shadow experienced colleagues and observe day-to-day operations • First month: gradually take on independent tasks with mentorship support • End of first month and beyond: own specific responsibilities with regular check-ins and ongoing feedback 	Housing Manager	Housing Manager	HR
<p><i>4.3 Connect new hires to peer support networks</i></p> <p>Connecting new hires with mentors or peers in other communities is critical. These relationships can accelerate learning, provide practical guidance, and reduce the sense of isolation</p>	Housing Manager	Housing Manager	FNHPA





Keeping and Growing Talent – Succession, Retention and Capacity Building

Recommendation 1: Formalize succession planning			
Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<i>Please refer to the appendix for a high-level step-by-step succession planning approach</i>	HR	HR	Housing Manager

Recommendation 2: Offer diverse training opportunities			
Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
Housing staff prefer short, practical learning opportunities particularly one-to-three day workshops that fit within demanding schedules. Certificate programs, mentorship, peer coaching, and cross-community collaboration among housing managers are also valuable, low-cost option	Housing Manager	Housing Manager	HR FNHPA

Recommendation 3: Build support system for staff			
Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<p><i>3.1 Enforce policies consistently and back staff on difficult decisions.</i></p> <p>Clear, leadership-backed policies reduce the burden on staff by ensuring decisions are consistent and grounded in established guidelines rather than individual judgment, making difficult conversations easier to navigate.</p>	Leadership	Leadership	-
<p><i>3.2 Establish regular check-ins</i></p> <p>Regular touchpoints between housing staff and their supervisors, such as biweekly check-ins, are a simple but meaningful way to maintain open communication and catch issues before they escalate.</p>	Leadership	Leadership	-
<p><i>3.3 Protect time outside of work hours.</i></p> <p>Create a formal disconnection policy that clear</p>	HR	Leadership	-





expectations for after-hours availability. Where the nature of the work makes full disconnection unrealistic, a compensated on-call policy is a practical alternative that acknowledges the demands of the role			
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Recommendation 4: Compensate fairly and broadly

Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<p><i>4.1 Invest in targeted salary benchmarking.</i></p> <p>More targeted work is needed across regions, community sizes, and experience levels to give organizations a reliable basis for setting competitive salaries.</p>	FNHPA	-	-
<p><i>4.2 Establish clear internal salary policies.</i></p> <p>At minimum, clear organizational wide salary policies should be in place to ensure equity across roles, transparency in compensation decisions, and consistency based on experience and responsibilities. These are foundational practices regardless of where salaries sit relative to external benchmarks.</p>	HR	HR	-
<p><i>4.3 Invest in benefits.</i></p> <p>Prioritize paid time off and access to mental health support, including therapy coverage, which stand out as the most valued elements of a compensation package.</p>	HR	HR	-

Equitable Funding Models

Recommendation 1: Nurture relationships with main funders

Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify your main CMHC and ISC contacts Schedule regular check-ins to stay informed of upcoming opportunities 	Housing Manager	Housing Manager	Contact person from



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in information sessions, consultations, and funding calls • Document key contacts and insights for continuity 			funding entities
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Recommendation 2: When possible, create a resource focused on funding applications

Step	Responsible	Accountable	Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess capacity to determine whether a shared tool or a dedicated position is more feasible • If a tool: build a tracker consolidating funding sources, deadlines, and requirements • If a position: define the role scope, including support to other departments (lands, management) • Centralize and share the resource across relevant departments • Update regularly to reflect new funding opportunities and changes 	Housing Manager	Housing Manager	HR, FNHPA

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Appendix

Appendix A – Workload Assessment Template

Workload Assessment

To be completed jointly by the employee and their supervisor

Employee name

Role / Position

Supervisor name

Date

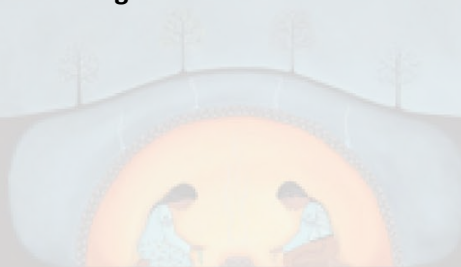
1. Current tasks and time allocation

List the main tasks and responsibilities that make up this role, how often they occur, and the approximate time spent on each per week.

Task / responsibility	Frequency	Est. time per week	Notes

2. Priorities and bottlenecks

What are the top 3 priorities in this role right now?





What is slowing things down or creating the most friction?

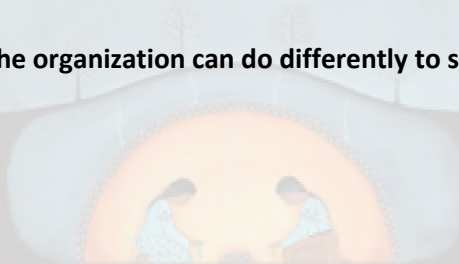
3. Workload volume and capacity

Area	Assessment	Comments
Overall workload level	Too high / About right / Manageable	
Capacity to take on new tasks	Yes / Partially / No	
Tasks causing most stress or delay	<i>Please specify...</i>	
Tasks that could be delegated or dropped	<i>Please specify...</i>	

4. Support needed

What would help most to manage this workload more effectively?

Is there anything leadership or the organization can do differently to support you?





Empty rectangular box for notes or additional information.

Agreed next steps (to be completed together)

Empty rectangular box for agreed next steps.

Appendix B – High Level Succession Planning Roadmap

#	Step	What it involves
1	Identify critical roles	Pinpoint 5–10 roles where a vacancy would cause damage to the organization. Normally, those roles are the ones that: require specialized knowledge difficult to find, are single points of failure (only one person knows how to do it) or directly impact the community.
2	Assess vacancy risk	For each critical role, rate likelihood of vacancy (flight risk, burnout, retirement) and impact severity. Build a simple risk matrix to prioritize.
3	Map role requirements	Document the key competencies, decisions, and relationships needed to succeed in each role.
4	Identify potential successors	Look internally for people who are ready now or could be ready in 12–24 months. Base your decision on performance, motivation and capacity to learn the skills required by the position.
5	Assess readiness gaps	Compare each candidate against role requirements. A simple skill gap assessment per person will do (what is required for the position vs what is the employee’s competencies) .
6	Build lightweight development plans	Stretch assignments, shadowing, cross-training, mentoring. Keep plans simple enough to survive daily chaos — not a binder that will get shelved.
7	Start knowledge transfer now	For the highest-risk roles, don't wait for a successor to be ready. Document processes, record walkthroughs, share key relationships and access today.
8	Secure leadership buy-in	Frame this as business continuity, not an HR exercise. Build a simple review rhythm — at minimum twice a year, and after every major departure.





Appendix C – High Level Salary Determination & Salary Policy Roadmap

#	Step	What it involves
1	Define and document all roles	Before setting any salary, every position needs a clear job description outlining responsibilities, required skills, and scope of work.
2	Establish a job evaluation framework	Group roles by level of complexity, responsibility, and required expertise. This creates an internal hierarchy of positions that allows for fair comparison across the organization; not just within housing, but across all departments.
3	Establish a decision-making process	Define who has authority to make salary decisions, what approval is required, and how exceptions are handled. A transparent and consistent process is the backbone of procedural equity. Staff need to trust that decisions are made the same way for everyone.
4	Gather external market data	Collect salary data for comparable roles in similar organizations other First Nations communities, municipal governments, or the non-profit sector. Use this as a reference point, not a strict benchmark, given the variability in community contexts. FNHPA and regional housing bodies may be useful sources.
5	Set salary ranges per role	Based on the job evaluation and market data, define a minimum, midpoint, and maximum salary for each role or role level. Ranges allow flexibility for experience and tenure while keeping compensation within a fair and defensible structure.
6	Define criteria for placement within a range	Clearly document what determines where an individual sits within a salary range (years of experience, education, specific certifications, or demonstrated competencies.) This ensures individual equity and removes ambiguity from hiring and promotion decisions.
7	Establish a decision-making process	Define who has authority to make salary decisions, what approval is required, and how exceptions are handled. A transparent and consistent process is the backbone of procedural equity. Staff need to trust that decisions are made the same way for everyone.
8	Define the total compensation package	Document all elements of compensation beyond salary; benefits, paid time off, mental health support, flexibility, and any other perks. Given that housing staff rank benefits above salary in importance, this step is as critical as setting the base pay itself.
9	Communicate the policy clearly	A salary policy only works if staff understand it. Share the framework with employees — not necessarily every individual's salary, but how ranges are structured, what factors influence placement, and how decisions are made. Transparency builds trust.



10	Plan for regular reviews	Compensation should be reviewed at a set cadence — at minimum annually to account for changes in cost of living, market shifts, and internal role evolution. Build this review into the HR calendar so it happens consistently, not only when a problem arises.
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