

Spring 2026 Public Comment Summary: Housing

Contents

Spring 2026 Public Comment Summary: Housing Goals	1
Contents.....	1
Introduction	2
Draft Olmstead Plan background	2
Public comment period background	2
Goals included in this report	4
Total number of community input submissions and comments	4
General feedback.....	5
Survey question: Do you think reaching these goals will improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities?	5
Themes from all input	5
Missing goals.....	7
Feedback about individual goals	8
Housing Goal 1: People with disabilities will have access to more accessible housing and housing with deeply affordable rents paired with supportive services.	8
Housing Goal 2: More people with disabilities will receive affordable financing for accessibility updates to their homes.....	11
Data collection goals	13

Introduction

This report shares findings from the spring 2026 public comment period on the draft Olmstead Plan. The public comment period sought feedback about proposed Olmstead Plan goals.

Draft Olmstead Plan background

The first Minnesota Olmstead Plan was adopted in 2015. In 2023, the Olmstead Subcabinet decided it was time for a more comprehensive update. For the plan update, OIO worked with a contractor called the Dendros Group. The Dendros Group brought on people with lived experience of disability as Inclusion Consultants. Inclusion Consultants worked with state agency staff to write goals and strategies for the draft plan.

The draft plan included both measurable goals and data collection goals. Measurable goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Measurable goals are the foundation of an effective Olmstead Plan. Data collection goals represent issues that agencies want to write goals about, but don't have the data to create a measurable goal yet. The draft plan grouped goals into seven topics:

- Crisis services
- Education
- Employment
- Health and safety
- Housing
- Transportation
- Transition

For more information about Olmstead, the 2026 plan drafting process, and to read the draft plan, please visit the OIO website: [MN.gov/olmstead](https://mn.gov/olmstead)

Public comment period background

The Olmstead Implementation Office (OIO) held the public comment period in partnership with the Dendros Group, Inclusion Consultants, and state staff. The public comment period took place in April and May 2026. It included:

- An online survey
- Virtual meetings and individual interviews
- Email comments and submissions from organizations

Online survey

The online survey was available in English, Spanish, Hmong, Somali, and American Sign Language (ASL).

Survey participants could choose which goal topics to share feedback about. They could also choose to give general feedback about topic areas overall, specific feedback about individual goals, or both. The survey was anonymous, and all questions were optional.

Survey questions

The survey asked the following questions about each topic area:

- Do you think reaching these goals will improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities? (multiple choice question)
- Are there any topics or issues you feel are missing from these goals? (comment box question)
- Do you have any general feedback about these goals? (comment box question)

The survey asked the following questions about each individual measurable goal:

- Do you think this is an important question for the lead state agency to address? (multiple choice question)
- This measurable goal is... (multiple choice question)
- Do you have any ideas of other strategies and action steps to reach this goal? (comment box question)
- Do you think reaching this goal will improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities? (multiple choice question)

For data collection goals, the survey asked, “Do you have any feedback about this goal?” with a comment box.

The survey also included optional demographic questions.

Virtual meetings and individual interviews

Dendros Group planned and implemented virtual meetings as part of the public comment period. Inclusion Consultants facilitated the meetings. Dendros held seven meetings, one for each topic in the plan. The meetings were intended to be an accessible alternative to the online survey. Registration was open to the public, and the meetings took place on Zoom.

Facilitators asked the following questions during virtual meetings:

- What would make these goals more effective to improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities?

- What would make these goals more effective to better integrate Minnesotans with disabilities in community life?
- What’s missing from these goals?

Dendros Group also offered individual interviews. The interviews were intended to be an accessible alternative to the survey and virtual meetings. Inclusion Consultants conducted the interviews.

Email comments and submissions from organizations

OIO also received public comments through email. These comments came from individuals and organizations.

Goals included in this report

- Housing Goal 1: People with disabilities will have access to more accessible housing and housing with deeply affordable rents paired with supportive services.
- Housing Goal 2: More people with disabilities will receive affordable financing for accessibility updates to their homes.
- Housing Data Goal 1: Incarcerated individuals with disabilities will have accessible housing upon release.
- Housing Data Goal 2: More people with disabilities will have safe, accessible, affordable housing of their choice.

Total number of community input submissions and comments

This table shows the number of submissions and comments about housing.

Source	Number of submissions	Number of comments
Survey	44	123
Virtual meeting	19	Not available
Emails and letters	3	12

Notes:

- Submissions from organizations are counted as one respondent.
- The number of comments from virtual meetings is not available.
- Interviews are included in the survey totals.
- The number of survey submissions counts people who answered open-ended questions. Some participants may have only answered multiple-choice questions. For that reason, the number of survey submissions may not match with the number of responses to multiple-choice questions.

General feedback

This section summarizes feedback about the topic overall. Feedback about specific goals is included later in this document.

Survey question: Do you think reaching these goals will improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes, good improvement	21	38.2%
Yes, some improvement	18	32.7%
No improvement	7	12.7%
Unsure	9	16.4%
Total	55	100%

Themes from all input

Accessibility

Accessibility is a major concern for Minnesotans with disabilities. Themes included universal design, access beyond physical accessibility, and enforcement of standards.

- “There is limited recognition that accessibility is not only physical (ramps, layout, Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] compliance), but also communication-based. For Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing individuals, housing safety and stability depends heavily on being able to communicate directly and reliably within their living environment. That includes staff, service providers, emergency systems, and neighbors in supportive housing settings. ... Accessibility is still largely framed as design features and funding incentives rather than mandatory, ongoing compliance with functional communication access requirements.”
- “Require all new construction to meet universal design standards. Do not rely on ADA standards, which are limited with interior residential standards.”
- “Minnesota Housing must move from ‘incentivizing’ accessibility to mandating that 100% of all state-funded new construction is Universally Designed.”
- “The only ‘accessibility’ that is being talked about in these goals, is ‘access’ in terms of physical accessibility alone. It’s important that our housing goals go beyond merely ensuring that more universally designed, affordable housing options are built.”

- “Enforce universal design in the selection process that Minnesota Housing uses in funding new, affordable housing.”
- “Enforce accessibility standards for all contractors and program administrators. Any contractor performing home modifications should be required to meet enforceable accessibility design standards, with regular audits and penalties for noncompliance.”

Affordability

Being able to afford rent or a mortgage is a major concern for disabled Minnesotans. One of the key theme among respondents was the deep need for affordable housing and the waivers that can support this.

- “Reductions to Medicaid and other funding sources are a serious problem now and in the future. The waivers program must be supported.”
- “It is very difficult for a person with disabilities to be able to afford a house. Staffing support for someone who has complex needs is very, very difficult.”
- “Affordability will require different options than are currently available. Boarding houses, tiny homes, campus housing would all be reasonable options to maximize services and maintain affordability.”
- “Providing monetary assistance to disabled people, both for rent and mortgages.”
- “Affordable housing is an absolute crisis in the disability community. Ending HSS put all the weight on waiver case managers to assist and this is outside of scope.”
- “Ensure more people with disabilities can financially afford to live in these accessible housing options in a sustainable way.”

Safety

- “If thousands of disabled Minnesotans are living in vehicles because shelters are inaccessible, the state must stop criminalizing them and instead provide ‘Safe Parking/Support Hubs’ with accessible hygiene and on-site navigators who can bridge them directly into permanent housing without the trauma of a shelter stay.”
- “In my experience, most section 8 and low-income housing is place in areas that are crime ridden. Just last week there were 2 shootings down the street from me. If the state and government cared about creating inclusive communities, they would make sure those with disabilities would live in safe neighborhoods, so we aren't afraid to leave our homes.”
- “Most low income people including myself are living in substandard housing. I cannot move though I keep trying, because I have a crappy (dirty, dusty, moldy) apartment.”
- “...the goals do not address isolation risk as a housing safety issue. For many disabled individuals, especially those who are Deaf or DeafBlind, isolation is a structural risk factor that can directly impact safety, mental health, and independence.”

Choice

- “Department of Human Services (DHS) needs to keep all housing options available, apartment settings, living with true family, live in family residential home, living in a community residential home.”
- “The plan should expand choices for people to choose where they live rather than limit the options. My son is very happy living in a licensed ICF group home as are hundreds or thousands of other individuals. He receives excellent care and is fully engaged in the community.”
- “There should be a continuum of options where people select what's best for that person.”
- “‘Choice’ is referenced, but not operationalized in a way that ensures real access to housing communities where communication is fully functional and not a barrier to daily life.”
- “When funding structures do not reflect actual support needs, providers may be forced to close or restructure placements, reducing available options for individuals who rely on these settings.”
- “A group home, or living at home with family, should not be the only option regardless of where clients are located within the state. I have a couple clients that could be successful in their own small apartment settings with supports to allow them to be successful. Instead, they are stuck in group homes that provide shelter but do not allow them independence.”
- “I think an important goal is people with disabilities being able to live where they choose (like in their own homes) and having their needs met in that setting.”
- “People with more severe disabilities have two choices for housing options. It is either a group home or their own or family home. Group homes are not for everyone and are very restrictive. Most group homes will not accept people with severe cognitive disabilities, especially if they have behavior issues. Their own or a family home is better, but finding care and staffing is extremely limited. And family will not be around forever. There are several additional feasible options. One is to allow and license ‘campus’ or ‘intentional’ communities.”
- “The plan acknowledges the importance of integrated housing but fails to address the severe shortage of accessible, affordable housing paired with appropriate supports. Families are often forced into institutional or unstable living situations due to lack of options. There is also no clear accountability for counties that fail to provide timely housing supports”

Missing goals

Respondents had a number of concerns that they felt the housing goals do not cover. For some people, it is a lack of services and supports. Others expressed the need for better coordination.

- “One issue missing from the housing goals is the importance of maintaining stable one-person Family Residential Services homes as part of Minnesota's integrated housing system. I became a Family Residential Services provider after leaving a career of more than 30 years in order to support a stable one-person placement. After implementation of the flat-rate funding

structure, I was required to accept an additional resident in order to remain financially viable. When providers must change the structure of a home for financial reasons rather than person-centered planning, individuals lose access to housing options that best match their needs.”

- “The housing goals would be elevated by more focus on reducing fragmentation between housing, workforce, transportation, and support stability and support service systems. Long-term housing stability and community integration depend on strong coordination between these systems.”
- “I would like a goal about moving people receiving waived services from provider owned settings (group homes, assisted living) to their own homes/apartments. Between the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) settings rule and MN's waiver reimagine plan, there really needs to be data collection on how we get people out of provider owned settings and into actual community settings.”
- “The plan is missing a goal to provide ‘Non-Congregate Emergency Housing’ (hotel vouchers or individual units) as a standard first-line response, rather than forcing disabled people into inaccessible group environments.”
- “Housing Access Coordination or Housing Stabilization Services should return, at least as a service for people with a waiver case manager or targeted case manager to oversee them.”
- “There are no services available for people with disabilities to find and keep housing who aren't on Medical Assistance (MA) waivers.”

Feedback about individual goals

Housing Goal 1: People with disabilities will have access to more accessible housing and housing with deeply affordable rents paired with supportive services.

Lead agency: Minnesota Housing

Survey questions about Housing Goal 1

Do you think this is an important issue for Minnesota Housing to address?

Response	Count	Percentage
Very important	25	96.1%
Important	0	0%
Not very important	1	3.8%
Not at all	0	0%
Unsure	0	0%

Response	Count	Percentage
Total	26	100%

Housing Goal 1A: This measurable goal is...

Response	Count	Percentage
Too high	1	4%
Just right	1	4%
Too low	18	72%
Not sure	5	20%
Total	25	100%

Housing Goal 1B: This measurable goal is...

Response	Count	Percentage
Too high	2	8%
Just right	2	8%
Too low	18	72%
Not sure	3	12%
Total	25	100%

Do you think reaching Housing Goal 1 will improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes, good improvement	11	45.8%
Yes, some improvement	9	37.5%
No improvement	3	12.5%
Not sure	1	4.2%
Total	12	100%

Themes from all input about Housing Goal 1

Supports and services are important but have to be done right.

Several survey respondents commented on the importance of services and supports in housing. Some mentioned that system navigation is a particular support need, while others were wary of services being tied to housing units.

- “One of the supports will need to be assisting clients in completing paperwork to keep their funding in place.”
- “Additional strategies should include stronger coordination between housing systems, workforce systems, staffing agencies, and community-based providers to support long-term housing stability and successful community integration.”
- “I am wary of tying supports/services to particular housing units (because people should be able to move and still maintain services) ...”
- “Minnesota Housing must establish a strategy to streamline the coordination between Minnesota Housing and Department of Human Services (DHS) to create a ‘Single-Application Housing Portal.’ Disabled Minnesotans should not have to navigate four different agency waitlists (Metro HRA, County HRA, DHS Bridges, and Section 8) just to find a place to sleep.”
- “Choice is a myth when housing is ‘paired with services’ in a way that prevents the tenant from firing their provider.”

Other participants stressed the importance of having services in languages other than English.

Participants from the Somali Parents Autism Network (SPAN) suggested the following ideas:

- “Require that all Minnesota Housing-financed properties provide tenant-facing documents — applications, leases, accessibility request forms, notices, lease violation letters — in the most common languages spoken in the property’s region, including Somali.”
- “Fund Somali-speaking housing navigators in regions with significant Somali populations, including the Twin Cities, St. Cloud, Rochester, and Willmar.”
- “Track and publicly report fair housing complaints and lease terminations by language and ethnicity, so the state can detect patterns of language-related housing loss.”
- “Increase investment in culturally appropriate housing navigation services to support immigrant and underserved families in securing and maintaining stable housing.”

Affordability is a top concern.

Many respondents expressed that there needs to be a balance between accessible and affordable housing. Both are important and you cannot have one without the other.

- “More creativity in funding models to not only create more accessible units but also to make them affordable.”

- “Building units is useless if disabled people cannot afford the rent. The ‘Deeply Affordable’ units mentioned in the goal are often still out of reach for those on fixed SSDI/SSI incomes.”
- “We shouldn’t prioritize affordable housing at the expense of accessible housing.”

Housing Goal 2: More people with disabilities will receive affordable financing for accessibility updates to their homes.

Lead agency: Minnesota Housing

Survey questions about Housing Goal 2

Do you think this is an important issue for Minnesota Housing to address?

Response	Count	Percentage
Very important	22	84.6%
Important	2	7.7%
Not very important	1	3.8%
Not at all	0	0%
Unsure	1	3.8%
Total	26	100%

This measurable goal is...

Response	Count	Percentage
Too high	0	0%
Just right	5	20.8%
Too low	9	37.5%
Not sure	10	41.7%
Total	24	100%

Do you think reaching Housing Goal 2 will improve the lives of Minnesotans with disabilities?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes, good improvement	10	41.7%
Yes, some improvement	10	41.7%
No improvement	1	4.2%

Response	Count	Percentage
Not sure	3	12.5%
Total	12	100%

Themes from all input about Housing Goal 2

Program funding needs clarity.

Respondents were clear that accessibility upgrades are important for staying in one's home. Comments covered a number of concerns, including affordability, rentals vs. owned property, and simplifying program access.

- "I would like to see programs like the Arc's microgrants for housing expanded so that people who need relatively inexpensive home mods can just get the money and not have to go through a loan process."
- "A mix of grants and low-burden financing would better match the goal of accessibility."
- "This should also apply to landlords who rent to people who have disabilities to pay for renovations to their units to help them to stay in the community."
- "Minnesota should continue expanding accessibility financing while simplifying access to these programs and improving outreach to communities that may not be aware of available resources."
- "A major barrier to using these loans is that many contractors refuse to work with state-funded programs because the payment timelines are too slow and the administrative requirements are too heavy. Minnesota Housing should not just 'explore loan products,' they must create a 'Certified Accessibility Contractor Network.'"
- "A strategy should be to create 'ABLE-Linked Homeownership Grants,' where funds saved in an ABLE account are matched by MHFA, specifically for accessibility-related downpayments, bypassing asset-limit penalties."
- "...establish defined, standardized financing pathways that are automatically available to eligible households, especially at the point of home purchase or diagnosis of disability-related need."
- "I am disappointed that there is no mention of accessibility updates (beyond just universal design) being funded for rentals."
- "Make these loans into grants on a sliding fee scale. Those who can afford loans get loans. Those who cannot are granted the necessary resource."
- "Flexibility in defining what is a persons 'own home' and how that can be applied when individuals with disabilities often have to move due to affordability issues."

What defines accessible?

Other respondents expressed concerns about what would qualify as accessible under this program.

- “Include people with lived experience in the design and implementation! Don't wait until after to ‘check-in’ with people with disabilities after the fact.”
- “...enforce accessibility standards for all contractors and program administrators. Any contractor performing home modifications should be required to meet enforceable accessibility design standards, with regular audits and penalties for noncompliance.”

Data collection goals

Housing Data Goal 1: Incarcerated individuals with disabilities will have accessible housing upon release.

Lead agency: Department of Corrections (DOC)

Supporting agencies: Department of Human Services (DHS) and Minnesota Housing

Feedback about Housing Data Goal 1

What defines accessible? What housing supports are offered?

Respondents needed clarity around how this goal defined accessibility and supports.

- “Who will determine if the housing is accessible? DOC? The person? The housing provider?”
- “What would the housing supports be? Would this be akin to the previous Housing Stabilization Services? Or is this intended to be ongoing service and support needs related to their disability?”
- “...define ‘accessible housing’ in functional terms, not administrative terms. It should include communication access, physical accessibility, and necessary supports aligned with disability needs, not just general Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance assumptions.”
- “I would also like a goal on tracking the accessibility of halfway houses, step-down units, and other post-incarceration/diversionary programs.”

Housing Data Goal 2: More people with disabilities will have safe, accessible, affordable housing of their choice.

Lead agencies: Metropolitan Council (MetC), Minnesota Housing, DHS

Feedback about Housing Data Goal 2

- “... gathering this data is a good start but we already know that options for safe, accessible, affordable housing are extremely limited and only going to be further limited with the elimination of waiver funding for adaptations to provider-controlled homes.”
- “The Metropolitan Council (MetC) must track how many disabled individuals receive a Section 8 or Housing Support voucher but are forced to return it because they cannot find an accessible, ADA-compliant unit within the 60- or 90-day search window.”
- “... this goal prioritizes measuring experience and satisfaction without establishing enforceable standards for what ‘safe, accessible, affordable housing’ actually requires in practice. Satisfaction data is useful, but it is not a substitute for compliance, enforcement, or minimum housing conditions.”
- “There needs to be more communication to people who have disabilities - maybe through a case manager - who can tell them what sort of programs offer financial rent assistance.”
- “The data development goal is inconsistent or unclear citing two processes and seven bulleted activities. ... What are the two processes and how do these seven strategies fit within them? Here, especially, timelines would be helpful and increase accountability.”