The Step Down Pilot Project assists a household’s transition from a site-based permanent supportive housing program to a less intensive, scattered-site option that offers an appropriate level of supportive services. By helping stabilized households exit to more independent housing, Step Down results in cost savings and improved participant well-being, while creating space for households just leaving homelessness and in need of a higher level of services. Step Down was initiated by Minnesota Housing and developed by Hearth Connection, which also administers the project.

Cost Savings
Step Down participants who move into scattered-site housing no longer need the intensive services characteristic of traditional, site-based programs, such as a 24-hour front desk attendant. By eliminating services for participants who no longer need them, Step Down reduces costs to approximately 73% of the costs associated with traditional, site-based supportive housing programs—a savings of over $4,300 per participant per year.

Positive Changes in Participants’ Well-Being
In an evaluation, 100% of Step Down participants reported that they were satisfied with their experience and would recommend it to others. Nearly half of participants saw improvements in a variety of areas in their lives as a result of Step Down, including income levels, access to food, health care coverage, and social connectedness.

Benefits to the Homelessness Response System
While the main purpose of Step Down is to support and improve the lives of participants, the program also offers benefits for the greater homelessness response system in the region. Supportive housing site staff report that Step Down offers affordable housing for people who need it and are ready for it, which is crucial in a tight housing market. In turn, Step Down makes room in supportive housing sites for those in need of more intensive support and services.