

# Outreach Advisor Role Creates Access to HOME-ARP Funds

**North Carolina Housing Finance Agency**  
Special Achievement

**HFA Staff Contact**

Madison Lewis

[mlewis@nchfa.com](mailto:mlewis@nchfa.com)

North Carolina Housing Finance Agency  
Outreach Advisor Role Creates Access to HOME-ARP Funds  
Special Achievement

A need for affordable supportive housing exists in all areas of North Carolina, however, it is often a challenge for partners in predominately rural communities, or those not covered by a HOME Consortia, to apply for federal programs because of limited local capacity and development experience.

**Background**

The North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (the Agency) received a \$65,390,346 allocation of HOME American Rescue Plan funds (HOME-ARP) to provide shelter and permanent housing for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. The Agency created the Supportive Housing American Rescue Plan (SHARP) Program to manage and direct these funds.

Based on agency experience, housing needs analysis and public feedback, the Agency allocated up to 5% of the HOME-ARP award to provide geographically targeted technical assistance and increased outreach. To accomplish this goal, the Agency contracted with qualified professionals across the state.

**The Solution to Increasing Access**

The Supportive Housing Development team identified 67 counties—or parts of counties— without HOME Consortia or HOME Participating Jurisdictions (PJ) that were less likely to apply for SHARP funding due to the limited capacity and minimal access to funding resources, which is not reflective of the housing needs in these areas.

To address this need, the Supportive Housing Development team crafted the Outreach Advisor position, whose role was to conduct local community partner outreach and then to provide targeted education and technical assistance to those partners.

The Outreach Advisors shared information about the federal HOME-ARP regulations and specifically, the Agency's SHARP program guidelines. When a local community partner was interested and wanted more information, the Outreach Advisor helped identify a project scope, financial feasibility, a potential housing development team and a project site. To ensure fairness, Outreach Advisors could not help interested partners complete the full SHARP applications, however, if potential applicants needed additional guidance, they were connected with a third-party Housing Development Consultant, who was not funded by the Agency.

A Request for Information was released to collect information from potential partners seeking to act as an Outreach Advisor. After the review process, the Agency successfully contracted with four Outreach Advisors in December 2022 to cover 53 of the 67 identified counties or geographies within the counties without a HOME Consortia or HOME Participating Jurisdiction. The Supportive Housing Development team performed outreach in the remaining 14 counties or geographies.

The Supportive Housing Development team released the SHARP Application and Underwriting Guidelines in February 2023, two months after engaging the Outreach Advisors. The delayed timing gave the contracted Outreach Advisors more than a month to perform their initial research in their assigned counties and geographies, and to meet with the Supportive Housing Development team to ask additional questions and to determine expectations.

North Carolina Housing Finance Agency  
Outreach Advisor Role Creates Access to HOME-ARP Funds  
Special Achievement

**Benefits Achieved**

Cumulatively, the Outreach Advisors contacted more than 130 community partners. In addition to many emails and phone calls, the Outreach Advisors held more than 60 virtual meetings with prospective SHARP applicants. Additional, in-person meetings were held with community partners as needed. Outreach Advisors submitted bi-weekly reports to the Agency, updating the Supportive Housing Development team of their new connections and ongoing engagement. Overall, the Outreach Advisors performed more than 300 hours of work associated with community engagement and technical assistance between January and June 2023.

The Agency received initial submissions of interest for SHARP funding in the Spring of 2023 for 43 projects across North Carolina. Of those 43 submissions, 13 projects, across 12 counties or geographies, received technical assistance from an Outreach Advisor. Of those 43 projects that submitted the initial submissions, 27 of those initial submissions met the threshold to be eligible to submit a full application. Of interest to the Supportive Housing Development team is that of the 27 full applications, 18 full applications originated from Outreach Advisor covered geographies, indicating that the role had a strong impact on partners.

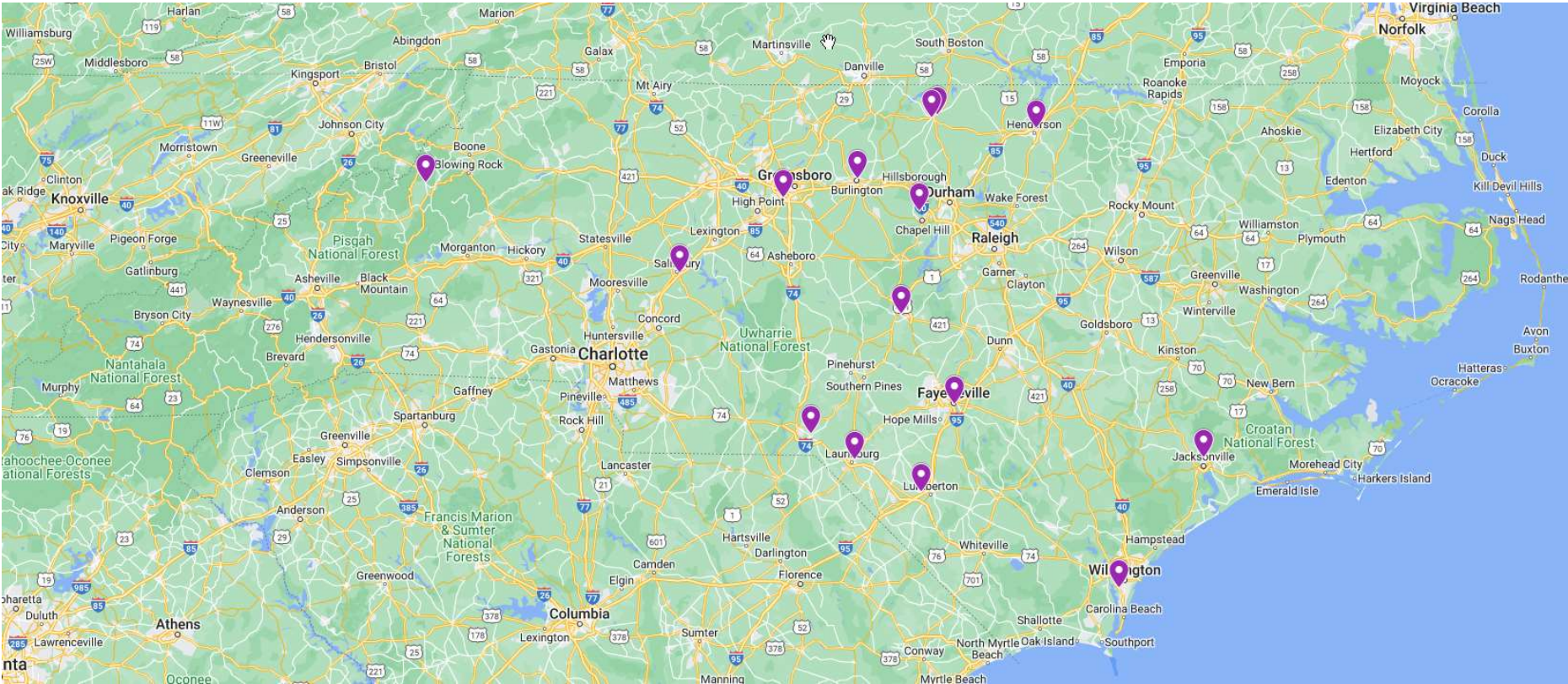
While the Outreach Advisors did not provide direct assistance with the full applications, the early engagement and review of program eligibility helped ensure that the projects that did submit a full application met threshold requirements, creating a more efficient and effective process. To date, the Agency has awarded HOME-ARP funds to 15 SHARP projects, 10 of which developed from an Outreach Advisor covered county or geography.

The benefits of being able to reach the counties or geographies that were less likely to apply for SHARP funding due to the limited capacity and minimal access to funding resources, which is not reflective of the housing needs in these areas, definitely outweighed the costs. The total cost for the Outreach Advisors was \$113,879.38. The Supportive Housing Development team consists of three full time staff overseeing two complementary and mostly state funded programs, in addition to this federal HOME-ARP (SHARP) program. The staffing did not exist for the Supportive Housing Development team to reach all of the less served areas.

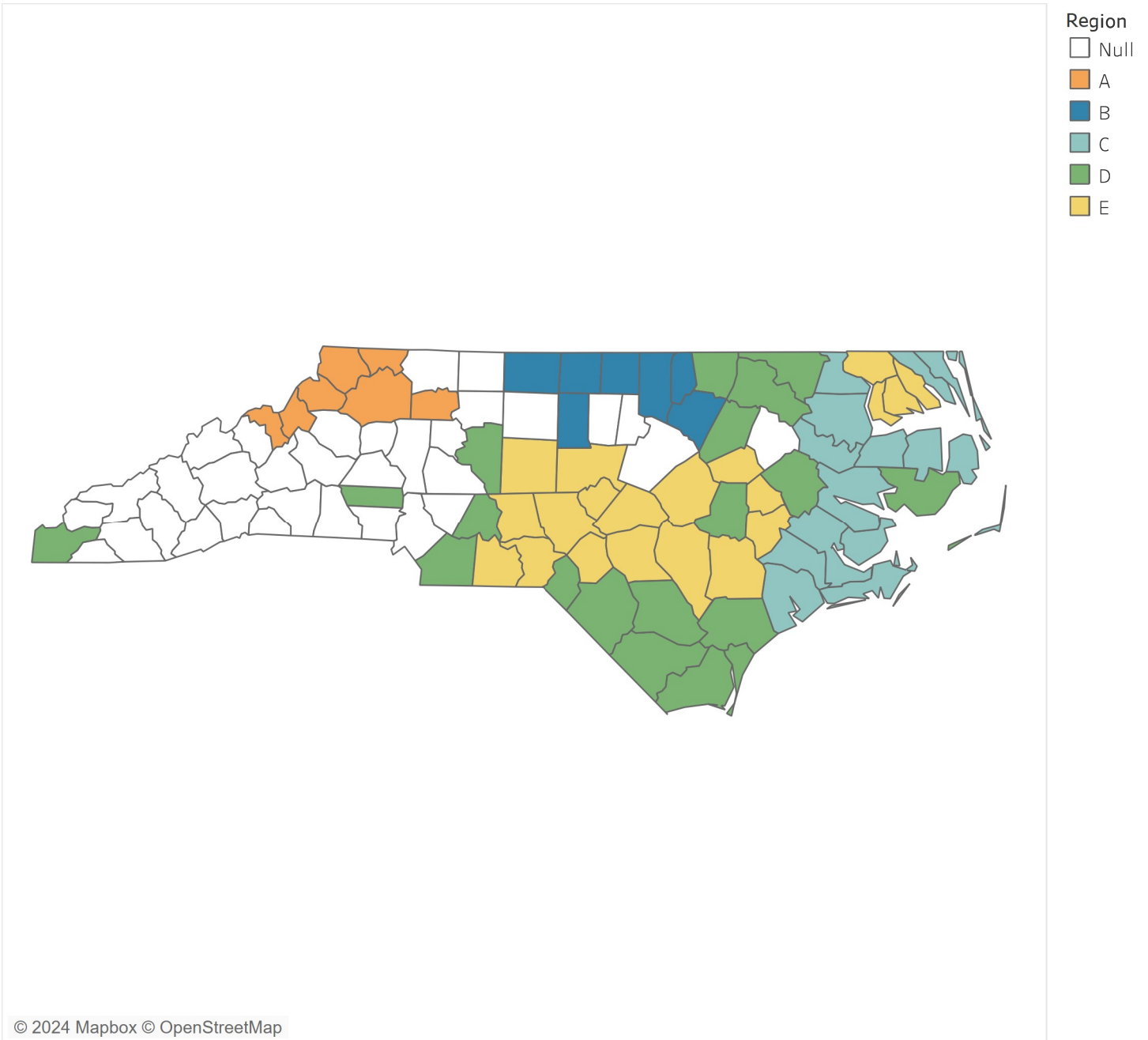
Throughout the application and award process, the Agency received positive feedback from community partners who worked with the Outreach Advisors. The extensive and direct outreach performed by the Outreach Advisors increased awareness of agency programs and funding opportunities to potential partners over 67 counties or geographies in North Carolina. An Outreach Advisor success white paper has subsequently been published and located here: [\*Insights into Rural Affordable Housing Development\*](#)

Overall, the intended goal was achieved since the outcome is now known that 10 of the awarded 15 SHARP projects emanated from an Outreach Advisor covered county or geography.

# Projects Awarded HOME-ARP Funds



# Outreach Advisor and NCHFA Covered Areas



Map based on Longitude (generated) and Latitude (generated). Color shows details about Region. Details are shown for Countyname.