



**Media Contact:**  
Calandra Corder  
Director of Communications  
and Intergovernmental Relations, HANO  
ccorder@hano.org  
(504) 670-3281

## **For Immediate Release**

### **Housing Authority of New Orleans Honored with Two National Awards of Merit**

**New Orleans, LA, (October 7, 2024)** – The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) was honored to receive two prestigious Awards of Merit at the National Conference and Exhibition of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), which took place in Orlando, Florida, during the week of September 24. The Awards of Merit program was designed to recognize and celebrate agencies from all over the country that have successfully implemented innovative programs and solutions, leading to tangible improvements within their agencies, communities, and the lives of the people they serve.

"These awards symbolize the hard work and commitment of the HANO leadership and staff in consistently providing opportunities for the low-income residents of New Orleans," shared Executive Director Evette Hester. "I am absolutely thrilled that this work has been recognized, and I want to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who made it possible."

The first Award of Merit was presented in the Administrative Innovation category, recognizing HANO's Smiley Face Customer Service Program. The Smiley Face App, located in the Building B lobby, serves as a powerful tool for collecting customer experience feedback, marking a significant stride in HANO's quest to enhance visitor satisfaction and engagement. Clients and visitors are invited to rate their experience on a scale of 1 to 5 on the app. Should their experience fall below expectations, clients have the option to provide their contact information for a follow-up discussion aimed at addressing areas for improvement.

The second Award of Merit was bestowed in the Resident and Client Services category for the adjustments made to HANO's Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) to accommodate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Operational adjustments included the acceptance of electronic documentation, the facilitation of Zoom-based seminars with partners, and collaboration with lender partners to consider clients' ongoing financial situations during the pandemic. These programmatic changes significantly enhanced accessibility for residents seeking homeownership despite the pandemic, resulting in unprecedented success in the program's history, with numerous families successfully completing the homebuying process through closing. Following Hurricane Ida in 2021, the adaptations enabled the HCVP Department to maintain uninterrupted client service through consistent communication via email.

NAHRO is a membership organization of more than 26,000 housing and community development providers and professionals throughout the United States.

###

## **About The Housing Authority of New Orleans**

The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) is focused on providing affordable housing opportunities for low-income residents of the city of New Orleans while laying the foundation for economic sustainability. HANO serves approximately 22,000 low-income families through a combination of their Housing Choice Voucher Program and public housing units. HANO also serves public housing needs for the elderly, disabled, and veterans. Visit [hano.org](http://hano.org) to learn more.