COVID-19 RISE Funding

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 5-6-20

**Purpose:** This document provides answers to questions received via email through the RISEFUNDING@austintexas.gov address. If you have any other questions after reviewing this document, please contact APH staff at this email address.

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| Applicant Eligibility/Partnerships/Application Process |
| 1 | **Will COVID-19 RISE funding only be given to organizations who already have contracts with the City of Austin? Are organizations who do not have current contracts with the City of Austin eligible to apply for funding?** | Both organizations who have existing contracts with the City of Austin AND those who do not currently have contracts with the city are eligible to apply for COVID-19 RISE funding. |
| 2 | **Is it possible to submit an application for a smaller amount than the minimum $250,000?**  | Yes, smaller amounts may be considered for small nonprofit organizations with deep community connections who provide services that fall within the scope of work. |
| 3 | **If we partner with another community organization, do both organizations have to register as city vendors?** | Not necessarily. It depends on the relationship and whether one agency is prepared to take the lead and list the other agency/agencies as subgrantees. Keep in mind that subgrantees do not have to be registered vendors, but the lead organization will take responsibility for all monitoring and reporting. A written agreement must be in place with the grantee and any subgrantee |
| 4 | **Is there a deadline for applying?** | May 6 is the application deadline. |
| 5 | **Who will be scoring applications?** | Review and scoring of applications will be done by a panel of City staff. |
| 6 | **Are we limited to a 4-month term or can we apply for a 12-month term?** | These funds are intended to provide immediate relief to those experiencing hardship during this crisis. Proposals should outline methods for using all requested funds in a 4-month term. |
| Types of Assistance/Budget Categories |
| 7 | **If we are providing assistance with just gift cards, do we also need to pick an additional direct relief service? Can we just provide financial assistance and not direct relief?** | No, you do not need to provide an additional direct relief service. Yes, you can choose to only provide one type of service. Note that DFA maximum per household is $1500 for a household of 2 or more, which is less than the Maximum Household Limit. |
| 8 | **Must direct financial assistance be distributed to clients via gift cards, or is providing assistance by checks or bank transfer allowed?** | Direct Financial Assistance can include store gift cards and prepaid Visa/Mastercards. Direct relief assistance can also take the form of checks and ACH transfers paid on behalf of a client, but not given directly to a client. |
| 9 | **In the scope of work (page 2), program services are categorized into two areas - Direct Financial Assistance (DFA) and Direct Relief Assistance (DRA). Household caps are specified for DFA. Do the household caps apply to DRA?** | There is a household maximum limit, and there is a Direct Financial Assistance cap per household. See response to Question 36 for specific breakdowns. |
| 10 | **If we are applying for funding for case management salaries, do we also need to apply for funds for direct financial assistance/direct relief assistance?** | Case management services fall under direct relief assistance in the context of this funding. You do not need to apply for funding in both direct financial and direct relief service categories to be eligible to receive RISE funds. |
| 11 | **Is there any limitations as to what “other” includes under Direct Relief Assistance? Can we purchase masks, thermometers - safety measures etc.,?** | Direct relief assistance can include medical resources for families. Medical safety equipment for staff and service providers or to ensure the safety of staff and clients during interactions can be covered under administrative funds if it is necessary to provide the proposed services. |
| 12 | **Does the COVID-19 RISE Social Service Funding scope of work program services list for "behavioral health services" include funding for residential and outpatient treatment?**  | All proposed services under each heading will be considered provided they strive to serve the target demographics through the types of assistance listed. Please see the Scope of Work pages 2-3 for details.  |
| 13 | **Does direct relief assistance funding pay for rental arrears?**  | Only costs incurred since the approval of RISE funds by City Council can be covered. Rent starting in the month of April can be paid using RISE funds. |
| 14 | **Our organization provides faith-based counseling and case management services. Is there a prohibition on these kinds of services?** | If awarded, your organization must comply with all of the terms and conditions of the standard contract boiler plate, which prohibits City of Austin funding to be used for sectarian or religious practices.“8.29 Political and Sectarian Activity. No portion of the funds received by the Grantee under this Agreement shall be used for any political activity (including, but not limited to, any activity to further the election or defeat of any candidate for public office) or any activity undertaken to influence the passage, defeat, or final content of legislation; or for any sectarian or religious purposes.”The City of Austin funds many religious organizations and those organizations have chosen to separate their religious practices from the programs. For example, one of the organizations currently funded has a chapel service for people in the shelter they run, but attending the service is not a requirement for receiving shelter and prayer is separated from their case management or counseling services. |
| 15 | **Can RISE funds supplement contracts to administer federal block grant funds that are managed by a city department? Or can they only supplement contracts that are funded with City money?** | Regardless of other services provided, RISE funds can be provided to eligible individuals and families for assistance within the scope of work. Please contact your other funders if you have questions about their limitations on using additional funding for supplemental support. |
| Client Eligibility and Documentation |
| 16 | **Who are the populations considered "ineligible for CARES" within the scope of the target populations?** | People ineligible for CARES refers to: Independent Contractors; Self-Employed; Individuals without Social Security numbers; Individuals who don't file income taxes. |
| 17 | **In the "Systems for Collecting and Reporting Program Data" section, can you clarify what information must be collected by the social service provider and what information must be reported to the city”?**  | Found in the Scope of Work at the bottom of page 2 and top of page 3:Client Eligibility Data:-Age, gender, ethnicity, race-Household income, household composition-Proof of residency-Need for assistance-Ineligibility for CARES financial assistanceProgram Data: -Unduplicated clients served-Unduplicated households served-Total amount and type of direct relief services provided per household-Total amount and type of financial assistance provided per household |
| 18 | **Does client data reported to the city by social service providers have to be de-identified?** | Yes, agencies are expected to protect the identities of their clients. |
| 19 | **Can you provide additional clarity about what would constitute "proof of residency"? If a social service provider asked a client to submit a photo of a recent utility bill or lease agreement, etc. when vetting their eligibility for assistance, would that be sufficient?** | Yes, a photo a recent utility bill or lease agreement would be sufficient.  |
| 20 | **Is the target population for assistance through the RISE Fund residents of the City of Austin and/or Travis County?**  | The target population for is assistance is residents of the City of Austin and/or Travis County and under 200% of FPL at the time of application, impacted by COVID-19, ineligible for CARES Stimulus funding or CARES funding is not enough to cover basic household essentials/bills. |
| 21 | **Would social service providers need to monitor how clients receiving direct financial assistance use the funds awarded?** | Direct financial assistance provided in the form of gift cards does not need to be monitored, however, there should be documentation in an intake form to support the intended purpose of the gifts. |
| 22 | **Is the city only considering funding organizations serving more people as a result of COVID-19 or are they considering funding organizations serving the same people who have greater needs with fewer resources (for our clients and the organization) because of COVID-19?** | RISE funding is intended to expand existing services, which can refer both to serving new people, as well as providing additional assistance to those who are already receiving services from the organization, provided those services fall within the scope of work. |
| 23 | **Are services under this grant limited to low-income, at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level?** | Yes, individuals and families receiving RISE funding should be at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level at the time services are provided.  |
| 24 | **Under "Need for assistance as a result of COVID-19" it lists "ineligible for unemployment" and "applied for unemployment but it will take too long to receive assistance." Are these the only two options?** | This is the target population outlined in the intention of the resolution. If you propose to serve others that need assistance you can specify in the application.  |
| 25 | **Is ineligibility for CARES a requirement to receive assistance?** | Individuals and families receiving RISE funding should be ineligible for CARES or have identified needs that exceed the capacity of CARES funding received. Individuals receiving CARES assistance can qualify for RISE funding if they have immediate necessary expenses that exceed the amount of CARES support received, or if that support will arrive too late to effectively cover immediate necessary expenses. |
| 26 | **How can ineligibility for CARES be documented?** | Ineligibility must be documented during client intake to the best of your agency’s ability to verify that clients fall into a category of ineligible individuals: independent contractors, self-employed, individuals without social security numbers, individuals who don’t file income taxes.  |
| 27 | **For RISE grantees, when allocating Direct Financial Assistance, are there any restrictions for clients who had already or will also be awarded Rapid Rehousing funds?** | Clients receiving other forms of assistance may also be eligible for RISE funding, provided they still meet the RISE target population guidelines. Organizations administering funding from multiple sources should attempt to use other funding and resource options first prior to using RISE funds. |
| 28 | **Is funding limited only to people who need assistance as a result of COVID-19 or who are ineligible for CARES?**  | Any Austin/Travis County resident meeting the eligibility requirements can receive services funded by this opportunity including those who do not identify as needing assistance as a result of COVID or are ineligible for CARES; however, it is expected that services provided through this funding will be designed for and directed to these individuals. |
| 29 | **Are undocumented immigrants eligible for any of the services/resources included in the RISE Fund?** | RISE funding is available to provide direct financial and direct relief assistance to those who fall under the target populations outlined in the Scope of Work, including those who may be ineligible for unemployment and CARES. These populations include individuals who are self-employed, are independent contractors, do not have social security numbers, or do not file income taxes.  |
| 30 | **The RISE Funding application asked for “unduplicated clients and households”. Is this intended to ask about additional clients/ households above the current program numbers or is this question intended to ask how many clients/ households will this additional money support?**  | RISE funding can be applied to reaching additional new eligible clients with existing services or increasing/expanding resources available to current clients who have additional need as a result of COVID-19. Unduplicated clients and households should include recipients of RISE funding through the organization, regardless of which category they fit into. If an agency is already providing the City with an unduplicated client count for a different contract, and clients receive services under both contracts, they should be reported in both unduplicated client counts. Unduplicated counts should be provided by tracking client engagement in services and ensuring that, for example, a client receiving rental assistance and a grocery card or receiving multiple grocery cards on separate occasions is only counted once. Be advised that funds for different contracts must be tracked separately. |
| 31 | **Could you please provide the current income eligibility limits or direct applicants to a resource the City determines to be an accurate representation of the federal poverty level?** | [Please visit https://aspe.hhs.gov/2020-poverty-guidelines for current standards.](https://aspe.hhs.gov/2020-poverty-guidelines) |
| 32 | **If providing assistance to one eligible person living in a household with ineligible people, how would an agency determine income eligibility? Count total family income and family size? Or just the income of the eligible individual as a household of one? Some other method?** | Eligibility is determined at the household level, so households are either eligible or not to receive services under the RISE contract(s). |
| 33 | **Does the City have guidance on the length of time that’s “too long” to receive unemployment assistance?** | No, but organizations receiving RISE funding should plan to exhaust approved funding provided through this agreement within a 4-month term. Individual recipients or households should not exceed appropriate funding caps as outlined in the scope of work, but the organization may distribute multiple awards to a single recipient or household until that cap is reached. |
| 34 | **Will COA accept a text or email from the client as verification that they received the direct relief services?** | Direct relief services completed should be documented on the agency's side. For example, if an agency pays rental assistance directly to a landlord, the agency should retain documentation of the transaction to verify the service has been provided. For direct financial assistance, the agency should take steps to provide secure methods of distributing cards that allow staff to verify receipt of the resources. Please describe in your application any systems you have in place to safeguard resources while promoting the safety of clients and staff. |
| 35 | **If a US citizen is married to an immigrant who does not have a valid SSN and they are filing their taxes jointly and thus not eligible for CARES Act support, are they eligible for RISE support?** | Yes, these families are eligible to receive RISE funding support. |
| 36 | **What are the maximum limits for financial assistance per household?** | **HOUSEHOLD DIRECT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE LIMITS:**Maximum Direct Financial Assistance Limit:* $1200 for an individual (household of 1)
* $1500 for a household of 2 or more

Household Maximum Assistance Limit:* $1,200 per adult in the household
* $500 per minor dependent in the household

For a total of:

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| **RISE Funding Household Maximum Assistance Limits** |
| **Household Size** | **Household Maximum** |
| 1 | $1200 |
| 2 | $2400  |
| 3 | $2900  |
| 4 | $3500 |
| 5+ | $5000 |

Definition of HouseholdA household may or may not be inclusive of everyone that lives with you. A household is typically defined as the group of people you would file taxes with (example: tax filer, spouse, and dependents). If you do not file taxes together, you are generally not considered within the same household. Dependents can only be those claimed on your taxes as a tax dependent.Clients can define who is part of their household and who is not. Examples* If a household consists of 1 adult individual, the household would be eligible for a maximum of $1200 ($1200 x 1 adult = $1200)
* If a household consists of 2 adult individuals, the household would be eligible for a maximum of $2400 ($1200 x 2 adults = $2400)
* If a household consists of 1 adult individual and 2 minor children, the household would be eligible for a maximum of $2200 ($1200 x 1 adult = $1200, $500 x 2 minor children = $1000; $1200 + $1000 = $2200).
* If a household consists of 2 adult individuals and 2 minor children, the household would be eligible for a maximum of $3400 ($1200 x 2 adults = $2400, $500 x 2 minor children = $1000; $2400 + $1000 = $3400).
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| **Information for Awarded Agencies** |
| 37 | Per the Program Work Statement, “Regardless of denomination, maximum allowable for each type of gift card is $500 for Store Gift Cards and $1,000 for Pre-Paid Debit or Credit Cards.” – Can you give multiple gift cards (at/below the max denomination) so long as the individual/household remains below the Maximum Limits for financial assistance? | Maximum Direct Financial Assistance Limit:* $1200 for an individual (household of 1)
* $1500 for a household of 2 or more

Household Maximum Assistance Limit:* $1,200 per adult in the household
* $500 per minor dependent in the household

For a total of:

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| 38 | What is a household for the purposes of this funding? | Allow the client to define their household and make sure that they know that just because they live with people (out of convenience/necessity) those people do not necessarily need to be considered their household. Questions to ask clients to help answer this question themselves: do they/would they file taxes with these individuals? Do they share bills and expenses? Do they consider them to be a household?  |
| 39 | What auto insurance is required when case managers are delivering gift cards to clients? | If no client transportation is provided but autos are used within the scope of work, and there are no agency-owned vehicles, evidence of Personal Auto Policy coverage from each person using their auto may be provided. |
| 40 | We do not have a contract with the City. How long will it take for us to get our first payment? | You will have to register your agency with Vendor Registration/Austin Finance Online. It will take some time for that registration to be processed, so the first payment may have to be sent via US mail. After your agency is set up with the ACH deposit, the payments will be sent via direct deposit. |
|  | Can we use our administrative funds to pay for the additional insurance required to contract with the City of Austin? | Yes you may use RISE funds in the administrative funding category. |