

## Section E

# RFA SCOPE OF WORK

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### I. Introduction

Austin Public Health seeks qualified social service providers in response to this Request for Applications (RFA) for Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) CARES Act funding to provide housing services to persons experiencing homeless who are impacted by COVID-19. Agencies that have not traditionally been funded to serve homeless, but have experience helping low income persons from communities of color or historically marginalized communities find or stay in housing, administering financial assistance or Rapid Rehousing services are encouraged to submit an application by **September 10, 2020 no later than 12 PM CST.**

### II. Background & Purpose of Funding

The CARES Act was signed on March 27, 2020 to help the nation respond to the coronavirus outbreak. The CARES Act made available an additional \$4 billion in Emergency Solutions Grant CARES Act (ESG-CV) funding to supplement the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 ESG funding provided under the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (Public Law 116-94).

ESG-CV funds are to be used to assist individuals and families who are homeless prevent, prepare for, and respond to negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) by providing connections to permanent housing. Funds will be used to provide Rapid Rehousing, a housing project that provides supports to persons experiencing homelessness to rapidly move into housing. These individuals will be referred through Coordinated Assessment process who are currently residing in the COVID Protective Lodges (ProLodges) or currently residing on the streets and are impacted by COVID-19.

There are two different project types:

- **Housing supportive services.** The selected community partner agencies will provide housing-related support services such as case management, finding housing, helping homeless persons move into housing and supporting them after they are placed in housing to remain stably housed. Austin Public Health is seeking agencies with a strong connection to communities of color and historically marginalized communities to provide these housing-related supportive services to persons residing in the ProLodges and who are living on the street. Previous experience administering homeless services or federal funding is preferred, but not required.
- **Fiscal Agent for housing assistance.** The selected agency will be responsible for administering the housing-related financial assistance for homeless clients who are being served through the community partner agencies providing housing supportive services. The fiscal agent will cut checks in a rapid manner on behalf of clients to landlords, utility companies and others.

**III. Funding and Timeline**

Austin Public Health has \$7,500,000 available in one-time funds. In the event additional funds become available, these funds may be used to support additional awards through this solicitation.

Austin Public Health anticipates awarding multiple Agreements for a minimum of a 12-month term, with a possibility for renewal.

The program design is Rapid Rehousing, and there are two eligible project types - Housing Supportive Services and Fiscal Agent - available with different funding amounts and minimum request amounts.

Project Type	Amount Available	Minimum/Maximum Amount Requested
<b>Housing Supportive Services</b>	<b>Up to \$800,000</b> for Housing Location and Housing Stability <b>Staff</b> costs	Applicants may apply for a minimum request of \$50,000 and a maximum of up to \$400,000 the amount of funding available.  APH anticipates awarding <u>multiple</u> agreements.
<b>Fiscal Agent</b>	<b>Up to \$300,000</b> for <b>Staff</b> costs	APH anticipates awarding <u>one</u> agreement which will include Administration costs and Direct Financial Assistance (amount to be determined up to \$6,400,000). Any other costs for the program including HMIS Licenses, computer costs, and direct financial assistance (rent, utilities, etc.) will be determined at time of contract negotiation.

All funding is conditional upon approval from the Austin City Council. If awarded, Austin Public Health staff will create a contract structured as a reimbursement-based agreement where an agency is reimbursed for expenses within two weeks incurred and paid through the provision of adequate supporting documentation that verifies all expenses.

**IV. Priority Population, Project Description**

**Priority Population - Protective Lodge Client Data**

The information below is a snapshot of clients currently residing within the Protective Lodging (ProLodge) facilities. This information was collected on a single day during July 2020.

In order for individuals to gain access to the ProLodge or the ProLodge waitlist they must either be exiting a COVID Isolation Facility or be medically determined to be of High Risk for COVID-19 and unsheltered.

At the time this information was collected, there were 274 people waiting for ProLodge services, excluded from the information below.

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ProLodge Snapshot					
Number of Persons	309	Number of Households	261	Number of Children (>18)	0
Age					
18-24	5	25-54	165	<55	138
Demographics					
Race*					
White	164	Black	95	Other	35
Ethnicity					
Non-Hispanic\Non-Latino	237	Hispanic/Latino	55	Data Not Collected/ CL Refused	17
Number of Chronically Homeless Individuals based on Self Report**					
Chronically Homeless	156	Not Chronically Homeless	102		
Percent of Guests who report currently Fleeing Domestic Violence					
11% Express Currently Fleeing DV					
Number of Individual without income at ProLodge Entry****					
129					

\* Data Not Collected for 15 persons

\*\* Data Not Collected for 51 persons

\*\*\* “Chronically Homeless” means individuals with disclosed disabilities and extended histories or frequent occurrences of homelessness

\*\*\*\*Data Not Collected for 60 persons, 31.8% Error Rate for Income Assessment

<u>Program Design</u>	Rapid Re-housing (RRH) is a type of permanent housing that offers supportive services, paired with medium-term rental assistance to help individuals or families experiencing homelessness move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability. Rapid Rehousing eligible activities include identification of housing, Housing Stability Case Management, Financial Assistance and Rental Assistance (see detailed list in Section 5).
<u>Service Duration</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The term of the contract will be 12 months.</li> <li>• It is recommended that projects aim to provide 4 months – 12 months of services (financial assistance and supportive services) using progressive engagement – where financial assistance is catered to client needs and staff check in frequently with clients to determine ongoing needs.</li> <li>• Services and financial assistance can be extended for the remaining months of the Agreement up to the end date.</li> <li>• Projects may provide up to 12 months of financial assistance and/or rental assistance within the 12 months of the project.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects must adhere to policies and procedures established by APH that establish limits on financial and rental assistance and other grant requirements.</li> <li>Projects must consistently apply the limits for all clients who are eligible to receive these services.</li> </ul>
<u>Client Eligibility:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clients must be considered literally homeless or fleeing domestic violence per HUD definition.</li> <li>Homeless status must be documented and entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database.</li> <li>All clients must be referred through the local Coordinated Entry System which assesses households for vulnerability.</li> </ul>
<u>Priority Population</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The purpose of this funding is to support the system response to the COVID crisis and support those who are most impacted by COVID-19.</li> <li>The priority population identified by the community is persons residing in Protective Lodging as the most impacted by COVID-19 and considered high risk by <a href="#">CDC guidelines</a>.</li> <li>Applicants must provide services to all eligible persons without additional eligibility requirements outside of federal funding requirements and local priority for funding persons residing in the ProLodges.</li> </ul>

V. Project Types

There are two project types solicited through this RFA:

1) Housing Supportive Services and 2) Fiscal Agent.

Applicant Type	Purpose and Eligible Activities
<p><b>1) Housing Supportive Services</b></p> <p><b>Available Amount: \$800,000</b></p>	<p>Community Partner Agencies can apply for a minimum of \$50,000 up to \$400,000 for staff to provide housing-related support services such as case management, finding housing and helping homeless persons residing in the COVID Protective Lodges (ProLodges) move into housing and support them after they are placed in housing to remain stably-housed. Agencies will work with persons to find housing and then request financial assistance (see eligible costs below) from the Fiscal Agent. There may be additional funds allocated to the awarded projects for administrative or HMIS-related costs and will be determined during the contract negotiation process.</p> <p>Austin Public Health is seeking agencies who have a strong connection to communities of color and historically marginalized communities, willing to start providing services to persons experiencing homeless. Previous experience administering homeless services or federal funding is preferred, but not required.</p>

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<p>All funds must be distributed in accordance with 24 CFR 576. The Community Partner Agencies administering Housing Supportive Services are responsible for verifying and documenting client eligibility and eligible financial assistance costs before they request financial assistance to the Fiscal Agent. Both project types are responsible for compliance to policies and procedures defined by Austin Public Health.</p>	
<p><b>Purpose of Funding/Activities:</b></p> <p>To move homeless persons residing at the ProLodges into permanent housing</p> <p>To assist persons who are experiencing literal homelessness and impacted by COVID-19.</p> <p>To provide flexible housing services that will expedite a household’s ability to become self-sufficient through time-limited rental assistance.</p> <p>Maintain client files with required client eligibility as well as financial assistance (rent, utilities, etc) documentation in accordance with federal requirements.</p> <p>Data Entry in HMIS for Housing Supportive Services provided to clients.</p> <p>Use Progressive engagement – where financial assistance is catered to client needs and staff check in frequently with clients to determine ongoing needs</p> <p>Request rent and other housing-related financial assistance from Fiscal Agent.</p> <p>Adhere to program policies and procedures in compliance with 24 CFR 576 outlining Community Partner Agency activities.</p>	<p><b>ESG Eligible Costs:</b></p> <p><b>Housing Search and Placement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assessment of housing barriers, needs, and preferences;</li> <li>○ Development of an action plan for locating housing;</li> <li>○ Housing search;</li> <li>○ Outreach to and negotiation with owners;</li> <li>○ Assistance with submitting rental applications and understanding leases;</li> <li>○ Assessment of housing for compliance with Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) requirements for habitability, lead-based paint, and rent reasonableness;</li> <li>○ Assistance with obtaining utilities and making moving arrangements; and</li> <li>○ Tenant counseling.</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing Stability Case Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Conducting the initial evaluation required under §576.401(a), including verifying and documenting eligibility, for individuals and families applying for homelessness prevention or rapid re-housing assistance;</li> <li>○ Counseling;</li> <li>○ Developing, securing, and coordinating services and obtaining Federal, State, and local benefits;</li> <li>○ Monitoring and evaluating program participant progress;</li> <li>○ Providing information and referrals to other providers;</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Developing an individualized housing and service plan, including planning a path to permanent housing stability; and</li> </ul>
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<p><b>2) Fiscal Agent</b></p> <p><b>Available Amount: \$300,000</b></p>	<p>Agencies seeking to be the fiscal agent will be responsible for the distribution and allocation of financial assistance including rental assistance and housing relocation funds.</p> <p>There may be additional funds allocated to the awarded projects for administrative or HMIS-related costs and will be determined during the contract negotiation process.</p> <p>The fiscal agent is responsible for processing check requests from partner agencies, delivering and cutting checks to landlords, utility companies and other vendors for financial assistance payments related to housing location and stability. All payments must be made in a rapid and efficient manner.</p> <p>All funds must be distributed in accordance with 24 CFR 576. The Fiscal Agent is responsible for verifying eligible costs based on what the community partner agencies provide. Both project types are responsible for compliance to policies and procedures defined by Austin Public Health.</p>	
	<p><b>Purpose of Funding and Activities:</b></p> <p>Administration of housing-related financial assistance and verifying eligible costs</p> <p>Data entry into HMIS for financial assistance provided to clients from Community Partner Agencies</p> <p>Accepts responsibility to ensure ESG funds are properly spent and assuring contractual compliance</p> <p>Adhere to program policies and procedures in compliance with 24 CFR 576 outlining Fiscal Agent activities.</p>	<p><b>ESG Eligible Costs:</b></p> <p>Staff to administer financial assistance</p> <p>Operations costs for staff to report and oversee financial assistance</p> <p>Medium-term rental assistance (4 - 12 months) (ESG-CV)</p> <p>Other Housing-related financial assistance (ESG-CV)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rental Application Fees</li> <li>○ Security Deposit/Last Month's Rent</li> <li>○ Utility Assistance Payments/Deposits</li> <li>○ Utility Arrears</li> <li>○ Rental Arrears (up to 6 months)</li> <li>○ Moving Costs</li> </ul>

**VI. Applicant Minimum Qualifications**

**All applicants must meet the threshold qualification before for funding considerations.**

- Applicant shall be a non-profit authorized to operate in Texas.
- Applicant must have submitted all applicable tax returns to the IRS and the State of Texas (e.g. Form 990 or 900-EZ and state and federal payroll tax filings); submitted all required payroll taxes; and does not owe past due taxes to the City.
- Applicant shall be eligible to legally contract with the City of Austin and not debarred from contracting according to SAM.gov and City Debarment information.
- The Applicant and its principals may not be currently suspended or debarred from doing business with the Federal Government, as indicated by the United States General Services Administration list of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement and Non-Procurement Programs, the State of Texas, or the City of Austin.
- Applicant shall have the ability to meet Austin Public Health’s Social Services Insurance Requirements (reference D – Supplemental Purchase Provisions).
- Applicant must have an active Board of Directors that meets regularly and reviews program performance, financial performance, and annually approves the agency budget.
- Applicant shall have proven experience complying with local, state and federal funding requirements, including programmatic and demographic reporting, segregation of funds, client de-duplication, etc.
- Applicant shall have a minimum of two (2) years established, successful experience providing services or financial assistance, including housing assistance or other financial assistance such as bus passes and gift cards, to low-income individuals
- Applicant shall have proven experience reporting to and complying with requirements from funders. . Previous experience administering homeless services or federal funding is preferred, but not required.

**VII. Evaluation Factors**

**Racial Equity**

All Applicants must demonstrate alignment with advancing equitable outcomes. The proposed program implementation strategy must:

- Work to advance racial equity in the community and within the agency culture.
- Utilize demographics and performance measures on racial/ethnic disparities to guide the work of the program
- Host or participate in training events dedicated to improving equitable outcomes.

**Housing Supportive Services Evaluation Factors**

Programs must:

- Have capacity to start the project quickly and efficiently
- Have administrative infrastructure to comply with fiscal and compliance requirements
- Have strong connection to communities of color and historically marginalized communities

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- Use the homeless database – Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) - to track client services and performance metrics. It is not required that agencies must already be using HMIS, just that they are willing to train and have staff capacity to use the database.
- Establish feedback and quality improvement systems for clients, landlords, and other partners
- Develop clear protocols on targeting financial assistance and achieving optimal leverage of other community programs/services
- Have experience providing Case management, housing location, housing stability case management or other services to assist homeless and/or low-income individuals experiencing a housing crisis.

### **Fiscal Agent Evaluation Factors**

Programs must:

- Have experience providing financial assistance to low income individuals including issuing checks to landlords, utilities, and other entities on behalf of clients.
- Provide sufficient administrative infrastructure to comply with fiscal and compliance requirements.
- Be able to disperse payments quickly to landlords (within 2 business days of complete and eligible application)
- Provide training to contracted service providers on processes to request financial support
- Establish feedback and quality improvement systems for community partner agencies, landlords, and other partners
- Develop user-friendly processes for partner service providers to submit requests and documentation for assistance

All Applicants will be evaluated on a case by case basis. Consideration will be given to Applicants:

- Preferred experience providing Emergency Solutions Grant or other federally funded financial assistance.
- With the capacity to start the administration of the funds immediately and efficiently
- Preferred experience collaborating with other agencies in a fiscal agent or lead role.

## **VIII. Evaluation of Applications**

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

Applications meeting the minimum requirements for threshold review will be evaluated according to the established criteria. The criteria are the objective standards that the Evaluation Team will use to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the applications. A total of 100 points may be awarded to the application. All applications will be evaluated as to how the proposed program aligns with the goals of this RFA and whether each question has been adequately addressed.



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**Evaluation Team:**

An Evaluation Team, consisting of subject matter experts from the City of Austin, the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO), and the Austin Homeless Advisory Council, will be designated to evaluate applications submitted in response to this RFA. The contents of all submitted applications will be shared with the Evaluation Team. Only applications found to be complete will be reviewed, and scored using the scoring outlined in the table. The Evaluation Team will submit the rankings of all applications to a Leadership team made of leaders from the partner organizations. The final selection of a successful respondent is at the discretion of the Leadership Team and will be responsible for presenting the selected finalists and award recommendations to The Austin/Travis County COVID-19 Response Project Management Team (PMT). The PMT will approve the final funding award determinations.

Proposals will be evaluated in four phases:

- 1) Minimum submission requirements reviewed by APH staff including checking for required documents; signatures and reviewing the content of the Section 1. Preliminary Questions.
- 2) Main application reviewed by Evaluation Team
- 3) Application rankings submitted to Leadership for award decisions
- 4) Final approval by Project Management Team

<b>Section A:</b> Offer Sheet Required	Applicants must print, sign, scan and upload signed forms.	No points, but Applicant must submit Offer Sheet in order to submit RFA
<b>Section F:</b> RFA Application		
Section I: Preliminary Questions	Questions 1-10	No points, but Applicant must pass threshold defined in <a href="#">Applicant Minimum Qualifications</a> to be evaluated
Section II: Program Services, Experience and Administration	Questions 1 - 8	20 points
Section III: Priority Population	Questions 9-11	20 points
Section IV: Data Management, Reporting and Performance Standards	Questions 12-17	20 points
Section V: Racial Equity	Question 18-20	20 points
Section VI: Project Staffing and Budget	Questions 21-25	20 points
Total: 100 Points		
Section VII: BONUS Advisory Council Section	Questions 28-30	15 points

**IX Application Format and Submission Requirements**

ALL DOCUMENTS MUST BE UPLOADED INTO PARTNERGRANTS. NO PAPER COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED.

**Section F. Application Instructions:**

- 1) **Total word limit in the RFA Application is 8,500 words which includes the questions. Applications that exceed 8,500 words will not be considered.**
- 2) Word automatically counts the number of words in a document and displays it in the status bar at the bottom of the screen. There are about 3,200 words in F-RFA Application, and this is included in the **8,500** word limit.
- 3) Applicants must use this template for the Application and cannot submit an application that does not include the questions and narrative.
- 4) All questions are boxed and highlighted in green in **Section F. Application**. Editing is restricted in the document except in the answer boxes. For each question, please provide a response or write N/A for not applicable in the boxes provided. It is preferable to be repetitive rather than to leave sections incomplete.
- 5) If using this document, Applicants must type answers into the section that says “Click or tap here to enter text” after each question or in the required tables and select items from the drop-down menus as well as check off any checkboxes with required attachments.
- 6) If compiling responses in a separate document:
  - a. Applicants must include all questions and narrative before their answer, so the Application appears the same as the provided template.
  - b. Make sure to include the exact wording of the drop-down menus.
  - c. Clearly label each question and number, use size 11 Calibri font, double-space the document, use 1” margins on 8 ½ x 11” white paper without page scaling.
- 7) The following documents will not count towards the total word count:
  - a. Attachments submitted to answer a question like staff positions, etc.
  - b. Attachment G. Project Budget Forms
  - c. Attachments A, H, I, J

**Required documents:** The following documents must be submitted in this RFA.

Note: For the RFA Application, the following information must be submitted:

Section No.	Item/Document	Instructions	How to Submit
A	Offer Sheet	Review, sign and scan signed document	Upload into PartnerGrants
F	RFA Application	Complete in Word template provided Save as a PDF	Upload into PartnerGrants as well as any Application Attachments

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G	Equal Employment/ Fair Housing Office Non-Discrimination Certification	Review, sign and scan signed document	Upload into PartnerGrants
H	Non-Suspension or Debarment Certification	Review, sign and scan signed document	Upload into PartnerGrants
I	Non-Collusion Non-Conflict Anti-Lobbying	Review, sign and scan signed document	Upload into PartnerGrants

**X. Additional Information**

Proposal Acceptance Period: All applications shall remain valid until award, negotiation, and execution of contracts as by appropriate governing entities.

ESG-CV funds are subject to approval from HUD.

Proprietary Information: All materials submitted to the City become public property and are subject to the Texas Open Records Act upon receipt. If an Applicant does not desire proprietary information in the proposal to be disclosed, each page must be identified and marked proprietary at time of submission. The City will, to the extent allowed by law, endeavor to protect such information from disclosure. The final decision as to what information must be disclosed, however, lies with the Texas Attorney General. Failure to identify proprietary information will result in all unmarked sections being deemed non-proprietary and available upon public request.

Exceptions: Be advised that exceptions to any portion of the Solicitation may jeopardize acceptance of the application.

Application Preparation Costs: All costs directly or indirectly related to the preparation of a response to the RFA or any oral presentation required to supplement or clarify an application that may be required by the City shall be the sole responsibility of the Applicant.

Agreement Adjustments: The City of Austin reserves the right to adjust the Agreement amount or scope of work over the contract period based on community needs, Applicant’s ability to expend funds in a timely manner or any other factor. When the City determines adjustments need to be made, the City will provide at least a 90-day notice to the Grantee.