
2020 COVID CARES Housing Plan (CCHP) Request for Expression of Interest from Qualified Agencies

City of Houston, Houston Housing
Authority and Harris County
Funding Collaborative



Part I. Overview

As a member of The Way Home Continuum of Care (CoC), the City of Houston through its Housing and Community Development Department and Harris County through its Community Services Department are participating in the community’s plan to combat the COVID-19 pandemic for our most vulnerable residents impacted by COVID-19, people experiencing homelessness. This will be accomplished potentially using a combination of, but not limited to: COVID CARES ESG (ESG-CV), COVID CARES CDBG (CDBG-CV), ESG entitlement, CDBG entitlement, HOME Tenant Based Rental Assistance, and CARES Treasury funding.

As the COVID-19 virus pandemic continues to grow, state and local public response systems are implementing several public health strategies to prevent further exposures and slow the spread of the virus. People experiencing homelessness are an especially high-risk population for COVID-19 and infections among that population present specific challenges due to a combination of factors, including but not limited to: having overall poorer health than the general population, living in congregate settings, being an aging population, and having limited ability to follow public health advice and access health care. As communities around the State of Texas work to prevent the spread of COVID-19, special attention is needed to protect people experiencing homelessness – who are particularly vulnerable to the spread of the virus and are at high-risk for experiencing severe symptoms.

The Coalition for the Homeless, in partnership with direct service agencies, coordinates the housing response for The Way Home Continuum of Care, as the lead agency. Due to the urgency of the COVID-19 crisis and the imminent threat to the public health and safety to the homeless population, the Coalition recommends a coordinated and large-scale community homeless housing initiative. Per the CDC and HUD, special, strategic endeavors are required to protect people experiencing homelessness. Housing individuals currently living unsheltered on our streets and in our emergency shelters will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 amongst this highly susceptible population. This COVID CARES Housing Program (CCHP) will do this in several ways:

1. **Bridge to PSH:** Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) “bridge” to permanent supportive housing (PSH) intervention. PSH is an intervention that combines affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of chronically homeless people and other homeless individuals with high barriers. The services are designed to build independent living and tenancy skills and connect people with community-based health care, treatment and employment services.
2. **RRH:** RRH provides short-term, up to 12 months, rental assistance and services. The goals are to help those experiencing literal homelessness obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed. It is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) with the resources and services provided typically tailored to the needs of the person.
3. **Diversion:** Housing-focused problem-solving conversations paired with limited financial assistance offered to persons seeking emergency shelter or residing in emergency shelters. Selected Diversion providers will assist City, County and CFTH partners in creating and scaling this homeless emergency shelter diversion intervention.

All three housing interventions will have the option to include a mental health component. The mental health component will be funded through the CCHP Funding Collaborative, although the provider(s) will be selected through a separate procurement process at a later date.

Part II. Bridge to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

The RRH PSH ‘bridge’ will provide housing navigation, case management, and rental subsidy for up to 24 months for approximately 1,000 persons experiencing literal homelessness. During those 24 months, individuals in the program will be transferred to a PSH slot as those slots become available through natural CoC unit turnover. Currently about 40 PSH slots become available through turnover each month. A PSH slot is defined as an affordable rental housing unit that is linked to a range of support services that enable tenants, especially the chronically homeless, to live independently and participate in community life. Permanent supportive housing units are:

- *Targeted* to families or individuals experiencing chronic homelessness or who qualify for PSH using the CoC’s Coordinated Access System (CAS);
- *Deeply affordable*. Rents are subsidized so that the tenant pays no more than 30% of household income towards rent, even where tenants have extremely limited or no income;
- *Lease-based*. Tenancy is based on a legally enforceable lease or similar form of occupancy agreement, and there are no limits to a person’s length of tenancy as long as they abide by the conditions of the lease or agreement. Leases do not include additional requirements for tenancy beyond the market standards (I.e. drug testing, unannounced access to unit, service participation requirements, curfews, unreasonable restrictions on visitors, and excessive inspections);
- *Supported* by the availability of comprehensive services, with tenant participation being *voluntary*. The tenant has access to services, including, but not limited to: case management, medical, mental health, substance use treatment, employment and life skills counseling, eviction prevention programs, social and recreational events, and tenant advocacy. A lease may not be terminated solely because a tenant chooses not to participate in services; and
- *Managed* through a working partnership that includes ongoing communication between service providers, property owners/managers, and subsidy programs.

The ultimate goal of PSH is to help vulnerable tenants maintain long-term housing stability, be good neighbors, and improve the quality of their lives.

The PSH bridge includes the following key activities and may be funded using the following funding streams:

- **Rental Subsidy:** CARES Emergency Solutions Grant funding.
- **Case Management:** using CARES Emergency Solutions Grant & Community Development Block Grant funding.
- **Housing Navigation and Location Services:** CARES Emergency Solutions Grant & Community Development Block Grant funding.

Part III. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)

The RRH program will provide housing navigation, case management, and rental subsidy for up to 12 months for approximately 1,700 persons experiencing homelessness due to COVID-19.

- *Targeted* to families or individuals experiencing literal homelessness and who qualify for RRH using the CoC's CAS;
- *Deeply affordable*. Rents are subsidized & scaled so that the tenant pays no more than he/she can afford towards rent. In cases where the tenant has zero income, no tenant portion is paid;
- *Lease-based*. Tenancy is based on a legally enforceable lease or similar form of occupancy agreement. Assistance may be provided for up to 12 months. Leases do not include additional requirements for tenancy beyond the market standards. (I.e. drug testing, unannounced access to unit, service participation requirements, curfews, unreasonable restrictions on visitors, and excessive inspections);
- *Supported* by the availability of comprehensive services, with tenant participation being *voluntary*. The tenant may have access to services, including, but not limited to: case management, medical, mental health, substance use treatment, employment and life skills counseling, eviction prevention programs, social and recreational events, and tenant advocacy. A lease may not be terminated solely because a tenant chooses not to participate in services; and
- *Managed* through a working partnership that includes ongoing communication between service providers, property owners/managers, and subsidy programs.

The ultimate goal of RRH is to help tenants transition to and ultimately maintain long-term housing stability, be good neighbors, and improve the quality of their lives.

The RRH program will include the following activities and maybe funded by the following:

- **Rental Subsidy:** CARES Emergency Solutions Grant funding as well as HOME funding.
- **Case Management:** CARES Emergency Solutions Grant & Community Development Block Grant funding.
- **Housing Navigation and Location Services:** CARES Emergency Solutions Grant & Community Development Block Grant funding.

Part IV. Diversion

Diversion is a strategy that helps people experiencing a housing crisis quickly identify and access safe alternatives to emergency shelter. Diversion strategies can include: engaging in creative problem-solving conversations with clients; connecting clients with community resources and family supports; providing housing search and placement services; and securing flexible financial assistance to help people resolve their immediate housing crisis.

These strategies have a significant impact on a community's crisis response system, because they can reduce new entries into homelessness, cut down on shelter wait lists, decrease demand for limited shelter beds, have a lower intervention cost than RRH or PSH, and target more intensive homelessness interventions to those with higher needs.

The diversion program will provide an individually tailored service plan for a rapid resolution (diversion) to prevent approximately 2,000 persons from entering the homeless response system.

Assistance may be financial for up to 3 months or may include family mediation to solve an immediate housing crisis.

- *Targeted* to families or individuals who are presenting for shelter at an entry point to the homeless response system (i.e. shelter or intake line);
- *Managed* through a working partnership that includes ongoing communication between service providers, property owners/managers, and subsidy programs.

The diversion program will include the following key activities and may be funded by the following:

- **Rental Subsidy: City of Houston and Harris County** will provide support using CARES Emergency Solutions Grant funding.
- **Case Management: City of Houston and Harris County** will provide support using CARES Emergency Solutions Grant & Community Development Block Grant funding.

Part V. General Eligibility Criteria and Funding Areas

Applicants must meet the minimum general eligibility criteria described below:

- Organizations must not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, race, color, creed, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or Veteran's discharge status.
- Applicants must agree to use the CoC's CAS as the *sole referral source* for each program component. The CAS is the central access and referral point for all homeless individuals seeking housing in Houston & Harris County. This system will identify the most appropriate housing options while also prioritizing the most vulnerable individuals for placement into permanent housing. The system will then maintain a steady flow of referrals to all available housing options. To ensure these individuals have appropriate access to the program components, a project may need to modify its entrance criteria or use reasonable accommodation to admit tenants who would otherwise not be able to apply. By agreeing to use the coordinated access system as the sole referral source, applicants agree to make reasonable accommodation to accept the referrals.
- Applicants must agree to operate projects under the "Housing First" model, meaning prospective tenants are not required to agree to participate in services prior to entering the housing nor can service participation be a requirement of tenancy. Tenants can be required to adhere to a standard market lease, and their tenancy should be supported by *eviction prevention strategies*, including the engagement of services as appropriate.
- Multiple organizations may apply as a collaborative or joint venture; however, a lead entity must be designated.
- Organizations must be able to demonstrate capacity to start operations within 30 days of contract award.
- Organizations must have adequate financial capacity to perform proposed operations on a reimbursement basis
- Organizations must submit reports and invoices in a timely manner.

Summary of Funding Areas

Funding Jurisdiction	Activity	Estimated Funding Amounts (projected)
City of Houston	Rental Subsidy RRH	\$12,673,793
	Case Management RRH, Diversion	\$6,362,455
	Housing Navigation & Location Services	\$1,205,867
Harris County	Rental Subsidy Diversion RRH Bridge to PSH	\$10,400,000
	Case Management RRH Bridge	\$4,900,000
	Housing Navigation & Location Services	\$1,800,000

PART VI. Application Submission Requirements

The City of Houston & Harris County, as units of local government, reserve the right to reject any and/or all proposals, reserve the right to waive any formalities or irregularities in the proposal or evaluation process, and reserve the right to award contract(s) in the best interest of the City of Houston & Harris County.

Application Process

Applications from this Request for Expression of Interest (REI) from Qualified Agencies will be accepted on a rolling basis until all City of Houston and Harris County CARES Act funding is allocated. The first round of funding decisions will be based on applications submitted by **July 10, 2020**. CCHP partners will announce preliminary funding recommendations on July 17, 2020 for all complete applications submitted by July 10, 2020. Agencies funded as a result of this first round of CCHP REI funding are expected to execute contracts with City and/or County partners on an expedited basis and begin program operations no later than September 1, 2020. Future funding cycles and recommendations will be announced at a later date.

Respondents shall submit a complete REI application to all CCHP partners. The REI application, including all attachments, should be addressed to all CCHP partners in a single transmittal. The single email transmittal must be addressed to the following entities:

City of Houston: HCDPublicServices@houstontx.gov

Harris County: rfp@csd.hctx.net

Coalition for the Homeless: Application@homelesshouston.org

Application Format

Respondents must provide a written narrative response to the following:

1. **Organizational Expertise.** No more than 2 pages.
 - a. Describe your agency's experience in the past two years providing services to persons who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness
 - b. Describe ability to mobilize and implement operations quickly to meet urgent needs including onboarding of staff to provide services.
 - c. Describe the overall staffing plan to accomplish activities in the proposed program, including project leadership, reporting responsibilities, and daily program operations.
 - d. Describe any formal or informal coordination, partnerships, or collaborations with other organizations proposed in this application.
 - e. Will the proposed program use subrecipients and/or subcontractors? If yes, please list each partner agency, describe their role as either a subrecipient or contractor, describe what services and the frequency of services that will be offered by the partner agency, and provide a brief description of the partner agency's experience providing homelessness services. Resource: [Using Contractors in the ESG and CoC Programs](#).
 - f. Describe the organization's ability to collect data electronically and your agency's plan to participate in HMIS, Coordinated Access.

2. **Supportive Services.** No more than 2 pages.
 - a. Describe the target population(s) that the proposed program will serve.
 - b. Describe the essential supportive services provided to the target population.
 - c. Describe your agency's prior experience operating Diversion, RRH, or PSH.
 - d. Describe your agency's prior experience working with private landlords.
 - e. Describe how your proposed project will meet the needs of our community funding priorities and supports the community in responding to the COVID-19 crisis.
 - f. Describe any barriers or challenges the priority population(s) may encounter accessing services and the strategies used to mitigate identified barriers.
 - g. Describe how your proposed approach ensures equal access and nondiscrimination. Describe how racial disparities will be identified and strategies to advance racial equity.

3. **Project Information.** No more than 2 page.
 - a. Describe the scope of the project, including the number of households that will be served annually, the program services and financial assistance that will be offered to address housing and supportive service needs.
 - b. Describe the best/promising practices the agency will utilize within the program design to administer services and successfully meet program and system outcomes.
 - c. Describe annual outcomes the project expects to accomplish throughout the grant period.
 - d. Describe how program services and/or other resources within your agency will be used to quickly reduce housing barriers and quickly engage participants in successfully maintaining housing stability.

- e. Describe how your project will achieve geographic dispersion and client choice in offering housing placements throughout the greater Houston metropolitan area, inclusive of portions of Harris County that are outside of City of Houston.
 - f. Describe the project timeline for program start-up, hiring staff, and achieving fully operational status.
4. **Financial Analysis.** No More than 1 page (not including the required budget page)
- a. Completed Budget Form must be attached to the Proposer’s application. The Budget Form does not count toward the Financial Analysis page limit.
 - b. Proposer’s most recent audit and/or financial statement must be attached to the Proposer’s application (does not count toward page limit).
 - c. Provide any budget assumptions Proposer used to create the budget.
 - d. Describe the plan for proposed approach to ensure the project is cost effective, while taking into consideration appropriateness for the intended project type.
 - e. Describe any other funding which will be utilized by the applicant to support participants receiving services in the proposed project.

Part VII. Application Selection Criteria

Applications passing threshold requirements will be reviewed and scored by a panel of CCHP personnel. Should applications meeting minimum threshold exceed available funding, eligible applications will be retained regardless of date of submission until such time that additional funding is available in sufficient amounts to fund the applications, or a subsequent REI is released.

Maximum Total Score = 100 Points:
 Organizational Expertise (25 Points)
 Supportive Services (25 Points)
 Project Information (25 Points)
 Financial Analysis (25 Points)

Organizational Expertise and Capacity to Implement (maximum 25 points)

1. Applicants’ prior experience with providing rental assistance and case management
2. Qualifications and experience of proposed staff and strength of the staffing and implementation plan. The City & County reserve the right to refuse funding to a project if prior experience with the City & County was unfavorable.
3. Availability of third-party sources of funding
4. Overall financial condition and the applicant’s ability to fund potential cost overruns or other costs not anticipated in the project budget
5. Experience using government funds
6. Provide copies of the last single audit and 990 filed

Supportive Services (maximum 25 points)

1. Applicant’s prior experience in operating PSH, RRH, or Diversion
2. Quality, intensity, scope and appropriateness of services which the Applicant will provide the residents.

Project Information (maximum 25 points)

1. A defined scope of work
2. Timeline for project implementation

Financial Analysis (maximum 25 points)

1. Budget of proposed staffing and services
2. Organization Audit and/or Financial Statements

Budget Form

Payroll and Personnel Expenses				
Salary and Wages		FTEs	Salary	Total Expense
	Supervision			
	Case Managers			
	Navigators			
	Support staff			
Fringe Benefits (provide detail)				
	FICA			
	Workers Comp			
	Insurance			
	Retirement			
	Other			
Costs related to the provision of services				
	Space costs			
	Utilities			
	Telephone/communications/postage delivery			
	Office expenses			
	Local travel			
	Equipment and Furniture			
	Supplies and materials			
Sub-total Personnel Costs				
Other Than Personnel Costs				
Rental Assistance Expenses				
unit type	FMR	# of units	Annual cost	
0-BR				
1-BR				
2-BR				
3-BR				
4-BR				
5-BR				
Rental Assistance Total				
Other Financial Assistance				
	Rental application fees			
	Utilities and Utility Deposits			
	Moving Costs			
	Security deposits			
Sub-total Other Financial Assistance				
Sub-total expenses				
Administrative Costs (NTE 10% of funds requested)				
TOTAL FUNDING REQUESTED				