

State Rental Assistance Program: Housing First Initiative Request for Proposals

Introduction:

The NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is seeking proposals to provide permanent housing and supportive services in a Housing First model to at least 500 chronically homeless individuals and/or families who are high utilizers of public systems. This RFP will serve **400 chronically homeless households and 100 homeless veterans**.

Through this RFP, DCA will fund innovative collaborations in communities across the state that will demonstrate how integrated housing and services can end the cycle of homelessness and assist individuals and families in sustaining housing, acquiring income and employment, and improving the quality of their lives. Successful applicants will identify the targeted population of chronically homeless households who are frequent users of at least one public system, describe their plans for outreach and engagement, demonstrate strong experience in working with the targeted populations, and describe plans for data tracking and collection to show the success of the project in increasing housing stability and reducing high usage of public systems. Examples of public systems may include health care, criminal justice, child welfare, or other related systems.

The purpose of this RFP is to identify local partnerships that will serve as incubators for best practices in housing and services for a variety of vulnerable populations. In order to support these approaches, this RFP will award tenant-based vouchers and service funding to at least five organizations that have experience with assisting households in finding housing and providing ongoing supportive services, including but not limited to medical services, mental health, case management, substance abuse treatment and employment training.

Eligible Applicants:

Eligible applicants are nonprofits organizations that have a proven record of successfully providing services and managing permanent supportive housing projects. Service providers must have a minimum of five (5) years of experience in the provision of supportive services. Partnerships and collaborations with local government, hospitals, housing developers, other service providers, and/or other stakeholder organizations are strongly encouraged.

Maximum Number of Vouchers:

The maximum number of vouchers available in the RFP is 500 State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) tenant-based assistance vouchers. The minimum number of vouchers to be awarded per grantee will be 25 SRAP vouchers and the maximum number of vouchers to be awarded per grantee will be 100 SRAP vouchers.

Supportive Services Funding:

The RFP will provide a total of \$250,000 in one-time supportive service funds. Amount awarded per grantee will be based on the number of households to be served. Successful applicants will demonstrate a commitment of additional funding sufficient to provide supports for all households to be served.

Definitions:

Chronically homeless:

(1) A "homeless individual with a disability," as defined in section 401(9) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ([42 U.S.C. 11360\(9\)](#)), who:

(i) Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and

(ii) Has been homeless and living as described in paragraph (1)(i) of this definition continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights of not living as described in paragraph (1)(i). Stays in institutional care facilities for fewer than 90 days will not constitute as a break in homelessness, but rather such stays are included in the 12-month total, as long as the individual was living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility.

(2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility; or

(3) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (1) or (2) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

Homeless veterans: veterans who live in a place not meant for human habitation; the streets or in their car, an emergency shelter, a transitional housing facility or a hotel paid for by a government or charitable organization.

Housing First: As defined by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, Housing First programs share the following elements (<http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/what-is-housing-first>):

- There is a focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain rental housing as quickly as possible and the housing is not time-limited;
- A variety of services are delivered primarily following a housing placement to promote housing stability and individual well-being;
- Such services are time-limited or long-term depending upon individual need; and

- Housing is not contingent on compliance with services – instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and supports that are necessary to help them do so successfully.

Permanent supportive housing: combines rental assistance with supportive services to help homeless individuals achieve housing stability, get connected to health care and other social services, and improve their health and social outcomes.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:

Cover page:

Name of project: _____
Location(s) to be served (individual municipality, county or counties): _____
Number of vouchers requested: _____
Organization name: _____
Street address: _____
Municipality: _____
Contact person: _____
Title: _____
Phone number: _____
Fax number: _____
E-mail address: _____

Statement of need: Describe the project's proposed service area and the targeted population. Using the most current Point in Time Count data, identify how many chronically homeless households and homeless veterans need housing in the service area. Describe utilization of targeted public systems by the population you intend to serve, including describing data used to determine utilization and need.

Experience: Describe your experience (including the experience of all of the project's partners) in providing assistance in locating housing and voluntary supportive services to chronically homeless persons with disabilities or homeless veterans in a Housing First model. Describe your current involvement with the local County Continuum of Care and with other public systems utilized by the identified target population.

Project description: Provide a detailed narrative describing the proposed project including the following:

1. **Target population/Outreach:** Describe your outreach, engagement, intake and application process, including linkages with drop-in centers, homeless shelters, emergency rooms, jails etc....

2. **Supportive services:** Describe how your project will coordinate supportive services with other resources in the community to maximize the amount of assistance provided to the project's participants. Include letters of commitment, letters of support and memoranda of understanding outlining coordination with other community resources.

Describe how you will assess participants to determine the type of treatment and supportive services that are needed. Describe how you will provide (directly or through

linkage) needed services based on the assessment. Services provided may include but are not limited to the following:

- primary medical care
- substance abuse or mental health counseling
- assistance in securing benefits
- obtaining and maintaining employment
- assistance with housing placement, including locating housing, securing a security deposit, furniture, household items and transportation.

Describe how your project will assist participants to obtain mainstream benefits.

3. **Case management:** Describe your plan for providing effective case management to assist participants to secure and retain housing.
4. **Project team:** Describe the qualifications of the individuals who will be involved in the project. Include an organizational chart showing the lines of responsibility.
5. **Rental units:**
 - a. Describe how your project will recruit and collaborate with landlords and property managers to identify suitable apartments.
 - b. Identify the County, number of units by bedroom size and proposed rents.

Size of Units	# of Units	x	FMR	x	12 Months	=	Total Housing
SRO		x		x	12	=	
0 Bedroom		x		x	12	=	
1 Bedroom		x		x	12	=	
2 Bedrooms		x		x	12	=	
Other _____		x		x	12	=	

6. **Readiness to proceed:** Provide a timeline showing the project’s milestones: outreach, case management, lease-up, delivery of supportive services, etc....
7. **HMIS:** Grantees will be required to report program activities in the State’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) – provide proof that your agency is an active participant in HMIS.

Budget:

Supportive services:

DCA will provide each grantee with \$500 per program participant to help offset the cost of supportive services *for the first year*. Each applicant is required to leverage a minimum of \$11,500 in additional funding for supportive services per program participant.

Supportive Services Budget			
Number of Participants	Estimated Cost of Supportive Services	Amount of Assistance Requested From DCA (\$500/Participant - Year 1 Only)	Amount of Leverage

Leverage: Describe the other sources of funding that your project will utilize in this program. Include letters of commitment identifying the source and amount of these funds.

Describe your plan for the project’s sustainability after the first year, including projected budget and commitment of funding sources.

Anticipated Outcomes:

Identify the project’s anticipated outcomes which should include but are not limited to the following:

1. How many participants will be placed into housing at the 3 month, 6 month and 12 month interval?
2. What percentage of those housed will have retained their housing for 6 months and 12 months?
3. What percent of participants not already enrolled will apply for mainstream benefits, within 6 months of housing placement?
4. What percentage of participants will obtain employment at the 3 month, 6 month and 12 month interval?
5. What percentage of participants, who have been enrolled in the program for at least 6 months, will have reduced their use of the targeted public system?

Other Required Documentation:

1. A copy of the nonprofit’s by-laws and a certification from the IRS that the agency is a 501(c) 3 tax exempt corporation.
2. Copies of the "findings and recommendations section" of the organization’s last 3 years audits.
3. A letter of support from the local Continuum of Care.

Submittal Requirements:

1. Applicants must submit **five hard copies** of their proposal to the following address:
SRAP Housing First RFP
NJ Department of Community Affairs
Division of Housing and Community Resources
PO Box 051
Trenton, NJ 08625-0051
2. E-mail one additional copy to: Lisa.downes@dca.nj.gov

Submission Schedule:

RFP issued: April 7, 2016

Technical assistance workshop: April 25, 2016 (10-12, room 129)

RFP due date: May 27, 2016

Announcement of awards: July 5, 2016

RFP Scoring:

Statement of Need (5 points)

Experience (30 points)

Project Description: (20 points)

Budget/Leveraging: (20 points)

Outcomes: (15 points)

CoC Support Letters: (10 points)

**HOUSING FIRST RFP
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

LEVERAGING

1. Has the leveraging of \$19,500 in social services fees been reduced?
 - Yes, effective April 25, 2016, DCA reduced the minimum leverage to \$11,500.
2. Does the leveraging of \$11,500 per participant have to be provided by an outside funding source?
 - The funds would have to come from a non DCA funding source (your agency's funds, another grant etc....)
3. Can we use existing program funds?
 - Yes, if the program has available funding to assist the program participants; please note that the leveraged funds must directly benefit the program participants.

DCA's SUPPORTIVE SERVICE MATCH

1. Can the \$500 that DCA is going to provide to help cover the supportive services for each SRAP participant, be used for case managers' salaries?
 - Yes, you can use the funds to pay the hourly fee of case management - for example - if each participant will receive 15 hours of case management in year 1 and the case manager earns \$30 per hour - you can charge the grant \$450 per participant - you would just need to maintain a log of the hours.
2. Is DCA going to provide on-going social service dollars?
 - No, DCA's funds will only cover the first 500 participants during their first year.
3. Can the matching funds be used for operating funds to support the facility?
 - No, the funds must be used for direct support services to the program's participants.
4. Can these funds be used for transportation to take the participants to and from doctor's visits, Board of Social Services etc...?
 - Yes, you can bill for mileage, the cost of cab fare or other public transportation to take the participant to and from medical care, employment, child care, etc...

APPLICATIONS

1. Can a county submit more than one application?
 - Yes, however DCA strongly encourages innovative partnerships between providers. It is possible to submit for both veterans and chronically homeless in one application as long as the total does not exceed 100.
 - A county may choose to submit different applications based on the target population and public system utilized (emergency rooms, child welfare and criminal justice).
2. When will DCA announce the awards?
 - DCA anticipates announcing awards on July 5, 2016.

AWARDS

1. What happens after an award is made?
 - The selected agency will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with DCA.
 - They will receive a complete application package and given instructions on how to proceed.
2. Is there any required reporting?
 - Yes, DCA will require updates at 3 month, 6 month and 12 month intervals on the following outcomes:
 - i. Number of participants placed in housing at 3 months, 6 months and 12 months
 - ii. Percentage who retained housing for 6 months and 12 months
 - iii. Percent of who will apply for mainstream benefits
 - iv. Percent who will obtain employment at 3 months, 6 months and 12 months
 - v. Percentage of participants enrolled in the program who have reduced their use of targeted public system

LEASE-UP

1. When do you anticipate lease-up to occur?
 - October or November
2. What is the process?
 - Applicant meets income guidelines and passes the criminal background check
 - Applicant is scheduled for a briefing at the local Field Office.

1. During the briefing, the program requirements are explained and the individual is issued a voucher and commences housing search.
 2. When the applicant locates a suitable unit, they will have the landlord submit a Request for Tenancy Approval to the Field Office who will ensure that the gross rent meets rent reasonableness and does not exceed the payment standard.
 3. A Housing Quality Standards inspection will be scheduled; if the unit passes the inspection, the applicant will be given permission to move in on a specified date.
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6. Does the program provide a security deposit?
 - Yes
 7. What is the term of the voucher?
 - A minimum of 5 years; if the participant is permanently disabled – they will receive an unlimited term voucher.
 8. What happens if a SRAP participant does not want to continue receiving social services; does the agency get a new voucher?
 - No, housing is not contingent on the participants' compliance with services; so the household will maintain their voucher. The initiative has a finite number of 500 vouchers; no additional vouchers will be issued.
 9. If a participant is evicted and terminated from the program in the first year, can the agency get a new voucher?
 - Yes.
 10. What happens if I can't find enough chronically homeless, can I assist homeless households?
 - No.