

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS - Housing Stability Services

Additional Terms, Proposal Requirements, and Evaluation Criteria

1. BACKGROUND

The Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG) has operated the Housing Stabilization Program (HSP) since February 2021 to provide emergency rental and utility assistance for tenants who experienced financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is financed by allocations of federal funding from the U.S. Treasury Department's Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program. As of February 1, 2023, the program has helped more than 6,000 unique households and paid out more than \$42 million in rent and utility assistance. Anticipating the exhaustion of federal ERA funds in 2023, LFUCG is seeking to fund effective and sustainable Housing Stability Services aimed at helping Lexington residents with continued risk of housing instability avoid eviction judgments, identify and maintain housing, and achieve long-term housing stability.

2. PURPOSE

LFUCG is refocusing the HSP to execute a multi-layered eviction prevention strategy for households with an active forcible detainer case in Fayette District Court. Beginning February 1, 2023, the HSP stopped accepting tenant-initiated applications and primarily processes applications initiated by the filing of a Forcible Detainer Complaint in District Court or otherwise referred from District Court. In addition to this and other changes, LFUCG seeks to fund a package of Housing Stability Services primarily using federal ERA funds, with certain eligible services to be paid for using federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. This Request for Proposals is to identify and fund that programming. Housing Stability Services may include, but are not limited to:

- eviction mediation or similar eviction diversion activities,
- expanded access to legal counsel for tenants, including legal services or attorney's fees related to eviction proceedings and maintaining housing stability,
- housing navigation, housing counseling, financial counseling, or other similar case-management related to housing stability,
- housing-related services for survivors of domestic abuse or human trafficking,
- specialized services for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and residents of public housing that support their ability to access or maintain housing,

- rapid payment of rental application fees on behalf of eligible low-income tenants needing to relocate,
- and/or other similar programming that provides support services intended to keep Lexington residents facing a high risk of eviction stably housed.

3. GENERAL PROVISIONS

3.1 Funding

LFUCG intends to award at least \$1,500,000.00 in federal ERA funding for programs that perform any of the Housing Stability Services described in this Request for Proposals. LFUCG also intends to award \$150,000.00 in federal Community Development Block Grant funding specifically for a program that provides rapid payment of rental application fees on behalf of eligible low-income tenants needing to relocate.

The funding period is from the date of award through December 31, 2024. Responders may propose any project period within that time frame, including a shorter period of performance, and may assume that funding agreements will be in place no later than April 1, 2023. Under no circumstances may funds be obligated beyond December 31, 2024.

LFUCG intends to award funds to multiple non-profit agencies and/or multiple projects described within this Request for Proposals and reserves the right to negotiate final award amounts with any successful bidder(s).

Agencies who are awarded ERA funding must comply with 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards and all requirements of the U.S. Treasury Department's Emergency Rental Assistance Program. This includes the requirement for a single audit for any organization that expends more than \$750,000 in federal funds during the fiscal year. See <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/emergency-rental-assistance-program> for more information.

Agencies who are awarded CDBG funding must comply with 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards and all requirements of the federally funded Community Development Block Grant program as administered by LFUCG's Division of Grants and Special Programs. This includes the requirement for a single audit for any organization that expends more than \$750,000 in federal funds during the fiscal year. See <https://www.lexingtonky.gov/consolidated-plan> for more information.

3.2 Proposal Submission

Proposal Deadline – 2 P.M. on Friday, March 10, 2023

In order to be considered, complete proposals must be received by the March 10, 2023, deadline. A proposal must contain all required documents and respond to each of the required project narrative elements described in this Request for Proposals to be complete.

Proposals containing significant omissions of required information will be considered non-responsive and will be removed from the funding process. Significant missing responses to narrative questions constitute an incomplete proposal.

The final decision regarding proposal completeness and penalties will be determined by the Commissioner for Housing Advocacy & Community Development.

3.3 Acceptance/Rejection of Proposals

LFUCG reserves the right to reject any proposals which may be considered irregular, show serious omission, contain unauthorized alteration of form, or are incomplete.

LFUCG reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications in whole or in part, with or without cause, to waive technicalities, to implement scoring penalties, or to accept applications or portions thereof which, in the Urban County Government's judgement, best serve the interests of Urban County Government.

3.4 Requests for Clarification

LFUCG reserves the right to request clarification of information submitted and to request additional information (to clarify the information submitted) of the applicant either orally or in writing. This may include negotiation of funding amounts, outcomes, and other adjustments prior to the execution of a funding award.

3.5 Timeline

LFUCG intends to conduct proposal evaluation immediately following the proposal due date and intends to make funding announcements no later than April 1, 2023. This timeline is subject to change without notice.

No funds may be expended prior to the execution of a funding agreement, and grantees will not be reimbursed for pre-award costs.

3.6 Questions From Potential Applicants

Potential applicants may submit questions about this Request for Proposals no later than 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 22, 2023. Questions must be submitted via IonWave at: <https://lexingtonky.ionwave.net>. Answers to all questions submitted will be posted online via IonWave on Friday, February 24, 2023, or as soon thereafter as is practicable for review by all potential applicants.

3.7 Evaluation Process

Proposals will be evaluated by a neutral panel selected by the Commissioner for Housing Advocacy & Community Development, all of whom will have no affiliation with any applicant.

Scoring criteria are outlined in Section 5.0 Evaluation.

3.8 Selection

The highest scoring proposals as determined by the panel will be recommended for funding and contacted to negotiate a funding agreement. Should no agreement be reached, the next highest scoring applicants will be contacted.

3.9 Reporting

The funded project(s) will be required to submit monthly financial and programmatic reports, as well as any reports or other information necessary for LFUCG to meet its own federal reporting requirements.

Failure to submit complete reports on time will delay processing of grant payments and affect the grantee's competitiveness for any future funding opportunities with LFUCG. Funds will be paid on a reimbursement basis and project will be required to submit monthly invoices with detailed accounting of expenditures reflecting compliance with 2 CFR 200. This includes, but is not limited to, timesheets for staff; bids, quotes, invoices and receipts for purchases; copies of any contracts for services; and additional information as required by LFUCG for compliance with federal regulations.

4. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must submit the proposal via LFUCG's Procurement Software at <https://lexingtonky.ionwave.net/>. Adherence to the proposal format by all applicants will ensure a fair evaluation of each proposals' ability to meet the needs of LFUCG. Proposals not following the prescribed format will be deemed non-responsive.

A complete proposal contains each of the following components:

4.1 A one-page cover sheet containing:

- a. Organization/lead applicant's name,
- b. Organization/lead applicant's address,
- c. Authorized representative's name,
- d. Authorized representative's email address and phone number,
- e. Title of the proposed project, and
- f. A brief summary of the proposed project (250 words or less).

4.2 A project narrative describing the proposed scope of work and addressing each of the evaluation criteria described in Section 5.0 of this Request for Proposals. The project narrative should utilize the following format:

- a. Project narrative should not exceed 20 pages (cover sheet and attachments, such as other forms/certifications included in this Request for Proposals and/or general marketing material, work samples, or mock-up materials, do not count toward this page limit).
- b. All pages, text, and/or images should be formatted and sized so the PDF file containing the project narrative is readily capable of being printed on standard 8½" by 11" white copy paper with no less than a ½" margin on any side.
- c. Section 1: Experience, Qualifications, and Organizational Capacity
- d. Section 2: Project Design and Operation – Scope of Work
- e. Section 3: Desired Outcomes and Performance Measures
- f. Section 4: Proposed Project Schedule
- g. Section 5: Proposed Line-Item Budget and Budget Narrative

4.3 Attachments

- a. All forms, information, and/or certifications included in this Request for Proposals must be completed and submitted as attachments to the project narrative described above.

- b. Additional attachments, such as general marketing material, work samples, or mock-up materials, may be submitted as attachments to the project narrative. Applicants are asked to limit the number of additional attachments to only those necessary to demonstrate capability relevant to the proposed project. Additional attachments are optional, not required.
- c. All pages of complete submission should be numbered in the bottom right corner.
- d. All pages of attachments, text, and/or images should be formatted and sized so the PDF file submitted is readily capable of being printed on standard 8½” by 11” white copy paper with no less than a ½” margin on any side.

5. EVALUATION

Proposals will be evaluated and negotiated in accordance with the evaluation criteria described below.

5.1 Experience, Qualifications, and Organizational Capacity (10 points)

Responses should:

- a. Describe the responding organization’s mission and how it aligns with the goals of the Housing Stabilization Program and the purpose of this Request for Proposals.
- b. Describe the organization’s experience in areas of eviction prevention, rent assistance, or other housing stability services.
- c. Identify key personnel to be assigned to this project and provide evidence of their professional credentials and expertise.
- d. Provide specific examples of the organization’s experience administering federal funds, either directly or as a sub-recipient.
- e. Provide specific examples of new or existing partnerships/collaborations that will be leveraged to operate a successful project.
- f. Describe in detail a proposed staffing plan, including each staff member’s anticipated role and/or function in the project. (Applicants may use dedicated FTEs or divide staff members’ time between this and other activities, as long as all time charged to this project is clearly documented by activity recorded on timesheets that must be provided to LFUCG).

5.2 Project Design and Operation – Scope of Work (40 Points)

Responses should:

- a. Clearly indicate which of the following Housing Stability Services the applicant is proposing to provide:
 - eviction mediation or similar eviction diversion activities,
 - expanded access to legal counsel for tenants, including legal services or attorney's fees related to eviction proceedings and maintaining housing stability,
 - housing navigation, housing counseling, financial counseling, or other similar case-management related to housing stability,
 - housing-related services for survivors of domestic abuse or human trafficking,
 - specialized services for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and residents of public housing that support their ability to access or maintain housing,
 - rapid payment of rental application fees on behalf of eligible low-income tenants needing to relocate,
 - and/or other similar programming that provides support services intended to keep Lexington residents facing a high risk of eviction stably housed.
- b. Describe in detail how the applicant plans to provide the proposed Housing Stability Services.
- c. Identify the specific population the applicant intends to serve (e.g., all tenants in eviction court, only tenants in eviction court with no current income, etc.), including any anticipated limits on the applicant's ability to serve any otherwise eligible Lexington resident due to organizational policy, legal requirements, or funding restrictions other than those required by the federal government for projects utilizing ERA/CDBG funds.
- d. Describe how the proposed project aligns with the US Treasury Department's promising practices for building housing stability infrastructure, as described at <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/emergency-rental-assistance-program/promising-practices/housing-stability>.

- e. Explain how the applicant plans to braid its proposed project with existing housing stability resources in Lexington or new housing stability resources provided by other applicants who are awarded funding, including any expected partnerships or collaborations with other programs, co-applicants, existing Housing Stabilization Program partner agencies, or other housing stability service providers.
- f. Describe how the applicant's proposal would support households in circumstances where financial assistance to pay rent is either not available or does not sustainably ensure housing stability.
- g. Describe how the applicant's proposal would address the disproportionate impact of evictions and housing instability on historically marginalized populations, and explain how the applicant would effectively reach populations that have a historically negative association with systems such as courts.
- h. Describe how the applicant would engage with landlords to encourage collaboration and participation in the Housing Stabilization Program rather than pursue eviction.
- i. Identify and describe any anticipated software or other technology needs other than use of the Housing Stabilization Program's Neighborly portal.

5.3 Desired Outcomes and Performance Measures (20 Points)

Responses should:

- a. Propose specific, measurable objectives—to be incorporated into the applicant's funding agreement following negotiation of any award—that reflect how the project will measure results.
- b. Include objectives that are aimed specifically at measuring the impact of the applicant's project on tenant households served, rather than simply measuring the number of tenant households served.
- c. Describe at a high level the data points and anticipated collection method required to facilitate the applicant's proposed performance measurements.
- d. Describe any other measures, methodology, or activities that will be used to evaluate project outcomes.

5.4 Proposed Project Schedule (10 Points)

Responses should:

- a. Clearly identify the applicant's proposed period of performance, with an end date no later than December 31, 2024.
- b. Assume funding agreements will be in place by April 1, 2023, and provide a chronological listing of action steps required during project implementation and operation, including anticipated start and finish dates and responsible parties.
- c. Include collaborative planning phase during project implementation to finalize project design, align project objectives and activities with LFUCG and other HSP partners, obtain sign-off from LFUCG of project policies and procedures, and address any technology needs prior to project launch. Applicants should expect this phase to begin immediately following execution of funding agreements and to proceed rapidly.
- d. Identify any actions or other deliverables the applicant expects to require of LFUCG staff including meetings, convening of stakeholders, collection and sharing of data, updates or enhancements to the Housing Stabilization Program's Neighborly portal, etc.

5.5 Proposed Line-Item Budget and Budget Narrative (20 Points)

Responses should:

- a. Provide a line item budget and budget narrative, with sufficient detail to demonstrate the necessity and reasonableness of proposed expenses.
- b. If the applicant is proposing to provide more than one category of Housing Stability Services as described in Section 5.2(a), clearly identify which proposed expenses or proportion of proposed expenses are attributable to each category of Housing Stability Services.
- c. For each category listed below, identify the amount of funding requested, and if applicable, the amount to be provided through other resources, existing programs, or funding sources to support the applicant's proposed project:
 - Personnel – Identify each position allocated to the grant, role in the project and percentage of FTE allocated.
 - Fringe Benefits – Include the organization's fringe benefit rate or show how fringe benefit costs were calculated for the proposed personnel expenses.

- Equipment – Clearly identify one-time expenses versus ongoing expenses.
 - Travel – Describe any anticipated local travel expenses and mileage reimbursement rate. If out-of-area travel is proposed, identify its purpose and relevance to the program.
 - Contractual – Describe any expenses associated with providing Housing Stability Services or other client-facing services for which the applicant intends to contract with another entity.
 - Operating Expenses – Break down costs associated with supplies, office space, contracts for non-client-facing services, and any other expected expenses associated with the operation of the project. For each item, describe the expected expense and provide a brief justification of the amount requested. Specifically identify and describe in detail any expected expenses associated with software or technology other than the Housing Stabilization Program’s Neighborly portal.
- d. If the applicant’s proposal includes providing rapid payment of rental application fees on behalf of eligible low-income tenants needing to relocate, the applicant’s proposed budget for this service should reflect an expected award and expenditure of \$150,000.00 in CDBG funding, with at least 90% of funds to be spent on payment of application fees on behalf of tenants and no more than 10% of funds to be spent on administrative expenses.