

**Houston/Harris County Rapid Re-Housing
Collaborative
Financial Intermediary RFP
Guidebook**

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Part I. Overview—Initiative to End Homelessness and the Need for Standardized Service Delivery

As members of the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care (CoC), the City of Houston through its Housing and Community Development Department, Harris County through its Community Services Department, and Fort Bend County through its Community Development Department are committed to the community plan, *The Way Home*, that sets a path to end all homelessness. The *Way Home's* Goal is to build a system in which no one has to be homeless for more than 30 days. In addition, the plan outlines a goal of ending family homelessness by 2020. One of the actions to end family homelessness while simultaneously supporting building a system to end all types of homelessness is to expand the use and effectiveness of rapid re-housing in our CoC. Our CoC has increased use of and enrollments in rapid re-housing funds over the past three years as the CoC has shifted focus to the best interventions to achieve permanent housing. This shift has been in line with both our local plan to end homelessness, *The Way Home*, as well as the Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness, *Opening Doors*.

This expansion includes aligning funds and standardization of service delivery so that funds can be used in the most effective, efficient way while reducing the administrative burden for funders and providers alike. Initial mapping of our homeless response system indicated that homeless individuals and families within our CoC could benefit from as many as 8,100 additional rapid re-housing assisted units. The most recent point in time count identified 5,351 people including about 441 families that are homeless on any given night, either in shelter or on the street. An estimated annualized number based on this data estimates around 8,100 families are homeless and in need of permanent housing every year.

To meet this need, entitlement communities within the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care¹ joined to create the rapid re-housing funders collaborative. This collaborative is transforming the way the Continuum will fund and deliver rapid re-housing services. Rapid re-housing programs have shown that with a modest amount of time-limited assistance, many families can return to housing and be successful tenants. This housing program reduces the length of time households stay in shelter, and minimizes the destructive impacts of housing instability and related stress. The redesign of rapid re-housing for the Houston/Harris County CoC has the potential to reach 1,000 individuals and families and rapidly place them in housing with intensive, short term assistance while linking households to long term stability resources.

¹ The City of Houston, Harris County, Fort Bend County, City of Pasadena

Part II. Using Rapid Re-Housing

Rapid re-housing is an intervention designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid re-housing assistance is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and the resources and services provided are typically tailored to the unique needs of the household. Characteristics of a successful rapid re-housing program include:

- *Targeted services* to households with earning potential but with barriers to housing. This does not include limiting services to households with income, but directs funds to households where the long term earning potential can maintain housing in a market or affordable unit after the assistance has concluded;
- *Housing stabilization case management* where case managers are focused on housing stability for each household first and foremost
- *Housing identification* where navigators have specialized skills in building and maintaining relationships with landlords and understanding the unique housing market
- *Financial Assistance* consisting of temporary rent and associated housing costs that are short (0-3 months) to medium term (3 – 24 months); and
- *Tailored services* which are focused on the individual needs of each family or person rather than individual goals of a program, and are aimed to providing the lightest touch to secure safe, decent housing for each household receiving assistance.

The ultimate goal of rapid re-housing is to help literally homeless individuals and families quickly return to housing stability and remain stably housed. Outcomes for the continuum dictate that at least 80 percent of households that receive assistance will remain housed for at least a year. By redesigning the service delivery model for rapid re-housing, the Houston/Harris County CoC expands the reach of funding across the Continuum while simultaneously providing a simplified, standardized monitoring requirement. This will eliminate the requirement of rules specific to each jurisdiction and will allow service providers to focus on providing quality housing stability case management. The redesigned rapid rehousing program for the CoC is now separated into two separate service delivery components:

1) Financial Assistance – short- to medium- term rental assistance to support homeless households, rental and utility deposits and arrearages, utility payments as needed.

2) Housing Stabilization Case Management – specialized case management that is focused on achieving immediate housing stability and supporting long term

housing stabilization by linking households to targeted and mainstream resources available in the community.

The two program components will be managed by two distinct fiscal intermediaries. These intermediaries will be responsible for distributing, monitoring and reporting on outcomes for all funds expended.

The new housing model will include aligned resources across the Continuum from multiple sources that fund financial assistance and case management. The aligned funding will be distributed among two intermediaries who will then be responsible for the distribution, reporting and monitoring of the assistance to appropriate providers. The goal of this RFP is to select a vendor to manage the distribution of financial assistance portion of rapid re-housing assistance. Funds that support this collaborative are listed below.

- **City of Houston** – pass through funds for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and Homeless Housing and Services Program (HHSP) will support both financial assistance and case management bucket for funding.
- **Harris County** – pass through funds for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) will support both financial assistance and case management pools for funding.
- **Fort Bend County** – pass through funds for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) will support the financial assistance pool.
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** – Continuum of Care Grant Program Funds will support the financial assistance pool for funding.

The collaborative envisions a system where rapid re-housing is distributed through two intermediaries for the primary funding activities of rapid re-housing: case management/housing search and financial assistance. Each of these intermediaries will fund vendors that may include, but are not limited to case management agencies or housing inspectors as well as interface directly with the coordinated assessment and placement system to ensure that appropriate placements are made into rapid re-housing. The process and standards for providing rapid re-housing assistance across the continuum are included in the Rapid Re-Housing Business Rules and the Homeless Solutions Standards for the Provision of Assistance, both are included as attachments to this RFP. The general responsibilities of the financial assistance intermediary are described below. Details of capacity expectations for the fiscal intermediary are highlighted in the RFP.

- **Financial Assistance Intermediary (FAI)** – will be responsible for the management, distribution and reporting for all financial assistance available through the rapid re-housing collaborative. The FAI will have the responsibility of selecting the best funding source to provide assistance to individual households based on information provided from case management vendors under the case

management intermediary. Further, the FAI will be responsible for developing and managing the system by which financial assistance is distributed. By directing all financial assistance funds through a single intermediary, the burden of determining the most appropriate and eligible source for the type of financial assistance will be placed on the FAI rather than the case manager. This responsibility will allow for one entity to manage the total available funds for financial assistance, estimated at about \$3 million for PY 2015.

Part III. General Eligibility Criteria and Funding Sources

In addition to meeting the specific requirements detailed in each application, applicants must meet the minimum general eligibility criteria described below before submitting an application for consideration:

- Funding is available to local government agencies or housing authorities located within the Houston/Harris County CoC.
- The issuers of this RFP, City of Houston, Harris County and Ft Bend County, reserve the right to accept or reject any and all proposals received. In addition, these jurisdictions reserve the right to negotiate with all qualifying organizations or to cancel in whole or in part an application if deemed in the best interest of the jurisdiction as it relates to its Consolidated Plan; federal, state or local regulations; and or the availability of funding. Organizations may participate in negotiations and resubmit any proposed expenses, technicality, or other revisions of their proposal as requested by these jurisdictions.
- The standards in OMB Circular A-110, Subpart C, provide that no employee, officer, or agent shall participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by Federal funds if a real or apparent conflict of interest would be involved. Such a conflict would arise when an employee, officer, or agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein, has a financial or other interest in the firm selected for an award. All organizations must complete and submit the Conflict of Interest Disclosure forms of the application to document any perceived or actual conflict of interest.
- Funding will be provided to the awarded organization on a reimbursement basis only. The means that funds will be available to the organization after it has paid for the eligible project costs; however, no costs incurred prior to contract approval may be reimbursed. Organization are required to provide documentation that they will have at least three months of working capital or have an open line of credit through a financial institution to cover project costs. Future funding through donations, capital campaigns or other grant sources are not considered working capital.
- Pursuant to TX Local Government Code 262.0276, all applicants' taxes must be current to be eligible for funding.
 - 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. Single sex housing is not eligible to receive funding under this RFP.

- Applicants must agree to use the Coordinated Access system as the sole placement and referral source for households seeking rapid re-housing assistance. In addition, applicants must be prepared to create a communications plan with the Coordinated Access System and Case Management Intermediary to ensure that placement and services for homeless households reflect the actual services provided within the continuum. The Coordinated Access System is the central access and referral point for all homeless individuals seeking housing in Houston. This system will prioritize literally homeless individuals and families who do not need long term supports but that could benefit from short term intervention and supports so that the household can achieve long term housing stability. The system will maintain the flow of referrals to case management providers based on availability of resources.
- Applicants must agree to ensure the lowest barrier services are provided by vendors so that households seeking assistance are provided with minimum assistance to achieve stability and linked to appropriate mainstream resources as necessary.
- Applicants must have at least 25% matched resources to contribute to the program. Match will be scored as part of the budget, with the scale indicated below

Match Amount	Points Awarded
0 – 24 %	Ineligible
25 – 49 %	5 points
50 – 75 %	10 points
75 – 100 %	15 points
>100%	20 points

Eligible match includes cash and in-kind resources dedicated to the project. This may include funding from other state, local and federal sources or privately secured sources. Any matching resources must be in accordance with the regulations guiding the Emergency Solutions Grants as noted in 24 CFR 576.201.

Estimated of Funding Availability

Funding Source	Funds Available
City of Houston Housing and Community Development	\$ 645,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Assistance• Program Administration
Harris County Community Services Department	\$110,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Assistance• Program Administration
Fort Bend County Community Development	\$ 63,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Assistance• Program Administration

*Subject to change based on available funding and approval

Application Submission Process

Applicants must submit three signed (in blue ink) originals and three copies as well as an electronic copy on disk or jump drive to the City of Houston Department of Housing and Community Development, 601 Sawyer, 4th Floor, Houston, TX 77007 by no later than **3 PM CDT on Tuesday, October 28, 2014**. The electronic copy should include: 1) a PDF format of the application with each section and appendix bookmarked and 2) the Budget form in Excel format.

Late applications will not be accepted. Applicants must complete and sign the Cover Sheet and/or Offeror's note for each funding source listed above for consideration as an eligible applicant to this request.

The three funding jurisdictions will host a bidder's conference on Wednesday, October 15 at 10 am at the City of Houston Office of Housing and Community Development located at 601 Sawyer. The conference will be held in the first floor conference room and is strongly suggested for any interested parties to attend, as well as bonus points will be awarded for attendance. At the conference, applicants may sign up for technical assistance through Tuesday, October 21 with Concetta Scerbo at cscerbo@homelesshouston.org. After this date, there will be a blackout period between the proposers and the jurisdictions until close of the request for proposals on Tuesday, October 28, 2014.

Part IV. RFP Components and Details

Section A – Goals and Objectives	0 Points (Bonus)
Section B – Applicant information	5 Points
Section C – Organizational Information	25 Points
Section D – Project Information	40 Points
Section E – Budget	30 Points

Section A – Goals and Objectives

This section describes the goals of the Rapid Re-Housing Program overall and how the design fits into the overall system. It also describes the objectives of the Financial Assistance Intermediary. Applicants' responding to this RFP should respond to the questions presented in the proposal with these objectives in mind. Bonus points will be given to applicants who attend the Bidder's Conference on October 15.

Section B – Applicant information

This section should include current contact information for the leadership and financial decision makers for the organization. It should also include contact information for the individual who can answer questions specifically to the responses provided in this RFP. The section for organizational budget should be for the entire organization rather than any subsidiary or departmental budget that may be carrying out the program tasks as outlined in this RFP.

Section C – Organizational Information

The organizational information should detail the mission of the organization and how it aligns with the goals of this RFP. Applicants should include any experience, either of the organization or key staff that will be involved in carrying out the tasks identified in the proposal have experience with similar projects.

The applicant should refer to the Business Rules for an outline of organizational duties and overview of staff capacity required to present a successful proposal. Details of process and specific duties of the financial assistance intermediary are outlined in the roles and responsibilities section.

Because the intermediary will be managing the distribution of local and federal funds with unique target populations and service area requirements, the applicant must articulate the ability of the organization and its distribution system to determine the best resource for each individual household. Any experience with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), or the Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care (CoC) should be articulated as the organization selected as the intermediary will interface with each of these entities.

Section D – Project Information

The intermediary could be managing up to 300 separate households at any one time and must indicate the capacity to issue and adjust monthly payments. The financial management system that the intermediary uses to distribute funds should be robust enough to manage and report on multiple layers of eligibility and availability. The intermediary must have the staff capacity to ensure that regular communications are maintained with the case management intermediary, coordinated access system and the CoC lead agency to ensure that the program is progressing toward continuum-wide outcomes as well as provide reports to the multiple funding agencies.

Part V. Contract Process and Timeline

Selection and Contract Process

Applicants will be selected through a joint evaluation and selection process and each agency will hold an individual contract with the selected intermediaries. HUD and the Comptroller General of the United States, or their authorized representatives, in addition to each contracting agency jurisdiction have the right to access awardee and subrecipient program records. Contracts will be single year with an option for renewal based on progress toward outcomes measures outlined in the contract.

Minimum outcomes for rapid re-housing are included below:

Outcome: Households will secure and maintain appropriate, affordable permanent housing.

Progress Indicators*:

- 80% of housed households will remain housed after one year.
- 20% of all participants have newly secured employment income.
- 56% of participants obtain mainstream benefits.
- 660 households will receive rapid re-housing assistance

*Subject to change per the Rapid Re-Housing Collaborative

Timeline

Publish RFP	September 30, 2014
Bidder's conference – 601 Sawyer	October 15, 2014
RFP due	October 28, 2014
Publish Awarded Agencies	November 12, 2014
Contract period begins	March 1, 2015