

Request for Proposals: Innovative Homelessness Prevention Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund

Questions and Responses
June 13, 2023

Question: Could eligible expenses also include mental health and substance use supports/services? Or at least a connection to these services?

Response: Mental Health and substance use treatment and supports/services as well as connection to these services as well as other behavioral health treatment are eligible expenses.

Question: If funding is being provided through SAM.gov, do you know when and how this will be provided – monthly or quarterly reimbursement, prepayment with monthly justification needed, etc.

Response: Funding is not being provided through SAM.gov. However, all subrecipients must be registered with SAM.gov to demonstrate that subrecipients are eligible to receive this federal funding, as these are federal funds allocated to Hamilton County government, then to Strategies to End Homelessness (STEH). STEH will issue subawards to awardees. Subrecipients may submit invoices monthly and no less than quarterly. Funding will be issued on a reimbursement basis. Upon review and approval of invoices, STEH will issue reimbursement to subrecipients within 15 business days.

Question: Do requesting agencies need to be part of the CAP line, and if so, do all individuals/families utilizing funding from this RFP need to go through the CAP line?

Response: Participants who have not been referred through the CAP line may be identified and served by the service provider. Service providers must also consider referrals made to the service provider through the CAP line when capacity allows.

Question: Under rental assistance as an allowable expense, can security deposit, late fees or other affiliated costs be covered? Similar question for utilities, can any fees be covered?

Response: Yes, they can. Eligible services under these categories may include rent, rental arrears, utility costs or arrears (e.g., electricity, gas, water and sewer, trash removal, and energy costs, such as fuel oil, reasonable accrued late fees by the participant, rental security deposits, application or screening fees). Late fees incurred by the service provider are not eligible.

Question: Under moving or miscellaneous costs, would furniture (including services like New Life Furniture) and general household needs (like bedding) be included? I do see dishes, cookware and household supplies, we just weren't sure how far that extends. Are there any guidelines for what would be included or excluded here?

Response: In considering whether a service would be appropriate under this funding, STEH and Hamilton County will assess whether, and the extent to which, there has been an economic harm, such as loss of earnings or revenue, that resulted from the COVID-19 public health emergency and whether, and the extent to which, the use would respond to or address this harm. Funds must be used for new and innovative programming to prevent homelessness. In

their application, potential subrecipients should describe how the services proposed will prevent literal homelessness for populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Question: Would transportation expenses including bus passes, car repair, license fees and other related needs be allowable under employment assistance if deemed necessary for reaching regular employment?

Response: In considering whether a service would be appropriate under this funding, STEH and Hamilton County will assess whether, and the extent to which, there has been an economic harm, such as loss of earnings or revenue, that resulted from the COVID-19 public health emergency and whether, and the extent to which, the use would respond to or address this harm. Funds must be used for new and innovative programming to prevent homelessness. In their application, potential subrecipients should describe how the services proposed will prevent literal homelessness for populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Question: For the period of performance, can you clarify the timeline you're seeking us to cover? Are you asking us to request funding to start 9/1/23 until 8/31/25 with the potential that an additional request could be submitted to extend to 10/31/26 if needed? Or are we expected to submit a request covering 9/1/23 until 10/31/26?

Response: Registrants may apply for up to two years of funding for the period 9/01/2023-8/31/2025, at this time. Project performance and pace of spending will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. If poor performance or underspending is identified by STEH after the initial year in the funding cycle, STEH may recapture and reallocate funding to higher-performing projects that have the capacity to expend reallocated funding. Final funding agreements, including any amendments, must be executed by 12/31/24.

Question: Would funding be able to support the needs of undocumented individuals?

Response: ARPA SLFRF requirements do not specify any restrictions based on immigration status. Documentation of legal residency is not required to be collected or maintained in the participant record to document that the participant is an eligible beneficiary of services.

Question: What type of documentation is needed for proof of COVID impact? Is there a self-attestation form or is other specific proof needed. For someone with long-term unemployment, undocumented employment or someone just reaching the age of employment, is there a way to show proof of need without pre-COVID/during COVID paystubs?

Response: Service providers may presume that a household or population that experienced unemployment, experienced increased food or housing insecurity, or is low- or moderate-income experienced negative economic impacts resulting from the pandemic and may provide services that respond to these impacts. STEH will provide guidance on how to evaluate and document income, including self-certification of income by the participant, if source documentation is not available.

Question: Can one agency apply for multiple programs? If so, would you prefer one application or separate?

Response: An agency may apply for multiple innovative prevention projects through the submission of separate project applications. The required annual minimum request of \$30,000 and maximum request of \$250,000 or 50% of the organization's annual budget, whichever is less, is calculated in aggregate, per agency. Unique projects should be submitted in separate applications so that they can be prioritized for funding as distinct projects.

Question: Is there a funding limit (cap) per household or individual for funds used in a single category or as a whole?

Response: No, there is not a funding limit per household, but service providers should target interventions that provide stabilization for the greatest number of participants. Applications for funding will be evaluated on the cost effectiveness of the proposed project.

Question: Could these funds be used to pay for first month rent and deposit for people moving out of shelters/streets into PSH?

Response: Eligible participants must be residing in temporary or permanent housing and at-risk of becoming homeless at the time of acceptance into the project. Individuals/households who are already experiencing literal homelessness are not eligible for these homelessness prevention programs.

Question: Is the request being made by an organization the total cost of their proposed project/program or is the request an annual budget for the proposed project/program? For example, is an organization able to request an annual award of \$250,000 per year for the three year period of the grant?

Response: Hamilton County is in the process of amending STEH's funding agreement to allow for the funding restrictions to apply per annual award rather than per agency. In anticipation of this amendment, registrants may apply for up to \$250,000 per year and for two years of funding, for the period 9/01/2023-8/31/2025. Project performance and pace of spending will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. If poor performance or underspending is identified by STEH after the initial year in the funding cycle, STEH may recapture and reallocate funding to higher-performing projects that have the capacity to expend reallocated funding. Final funding agreements, including any amendments must be executed by 12/31/24, requiring that all costs are incurred on or before 10/31/2026.

Question: For organizations that are currently not participating in Coordinated Entry, will Strategies provide access to and support to these organizations in order to allow them to meet this requirement?

Response: STEH will provide access to and support to organizations to allow them to meet this requirement.

Question: If an organization is proposing to use funds for rental assistance to stabilize tenancies for households that are currently housed, are recipients/beneficiaries required to be identified through the Coordinated Entry system? Given that Coordinated Entry is used to match housing opportunities for folks currently experiencing homelessness, is there an alternative mode of selection that will be required for households that are not currently experiencing homelessness?

Response: Participants will not be referred through Coordinated Entry. Eligible participants will be identified by the subrecipients. Subrecipients must also consider referrals made to the service provider through the CAP line when capacity allows. Subrecipients are responsible for assessing project applicants for appropriateness and eligibility for the project.

Question: Does the Central Access Point have a role in the participation of organizations and the selection process for beneficiaries? If so, please explain.

Response: CAP will not place participants directly in subrecipient projects. However, CAP callers who are eligible for services provided by subrecipients will be directed to subrecipient agencies. Service providers must consider referrals made to the service provider through the CAP line when capacity allows. Subrecipients are responsible for assessing project applicants for appropriateness and eligibility for the project.

Question: For organizations that are not currently participating in the Cincinnati/Hamilton County CoC's HMIS system, will Strategies provide access to and support to these organizations in order to allow them to meet this requirement?

Response: STEH will provide access to and support to these organizations to allow them to meet this requirement. Agencies will be subject to the terms and conditions of all local HMIS policies, procedures, partnership agreements, participation fees, etc.

Question: If an organization is currently collecting data in an alternate system, would Strategies allow for a data import into Clarity as opposed to direct data entry into Clarity?

Response: Direct data entry into Clarity HMIS is preferred. STEH will consider requests to participate in the HMIS through API or export/import methods. However, all expenses (including staff time at STEH) incurred by STEH and/or the subrecipient to obtain HMIS data through these methods is the obligation of the subrecipient and not billable to the award.

Question: Would these funds be available for shelter? It seems in some places like it's exclusively for housing, but then in Section M.a, it states that quality of the program plan will be pertaining to "the number of people and households sleeping unsheltered or entering emergency shelters." We are in need of funding for Advocates at our shelter, and more advocates would mean we could serve more people and reduce the number sleeping unsheltered.

Response: Eligible participants must be residing in temporary or permanent housing and at-risk of becoming homeless, as opposed to already being literally homeless, at the time of acceptance into the project. Individuals/households who are experiencing literal homelessness are not eligible for these homelessness prevention programs.

Question: We were wondering if the Digital Literacy eligible cost might fit our Workforce Development program. I didn't know if a broader pre-existing program such as our WFD would fit the narrow requirement of Digital Literacy.

Response: STEH is not familiar with the project referenced in the question and therefore cannot speak to the appropriateness of digital literacy services in the agency's existing programming. Funds must be used for new and innovative programming to prevent homelessness. Funding applications must describe how the services provided will prevent literal homelessness.

Question: Would client care funds – such as Rental Assistance, Utility Fees, etc. – also be eligible to former shelter clients in need of aftercare assistance?

Response: Eligible participants must be residing in temporary or permanent housing and at-risk of becoming homeless at the time of acceptance into the project. Individuals/households who are already experiencing literal homelessness are not eligible for these homelessness prevention programs. People who have experienced homelessness in the past, but are not currently literally homeless, are not excluded from consideration for services provided by these projects.

Question: Since it's Federal dollars, could we charge our de minimis Indirect Cost Rate to the grant?

Response: Subrecipients may elect to use the de minimis rate of 10 percent of the modified total direct costs pursuant to 2 CFR 200.414(f).

Question: Under Section G Eligible Expenses, the first bullet point is "Not be available to eligible families through other resources." Could you elaborate on that? Does this mean that we could not serve an ARPA family if they were also eligible for CoC or ESG dollars?

Response: This does not mean that agencies could not serve an ARPA family if they were also eligible for CoC or ESG dollars. However, because the CoC and ESG programs generally serve persons who are already literally homeless in the Cincinnati/Hamilton County CoC, it is unlikely that a household would be eligible for both the CoC/ESG and ARPA SLFRF programming. This statement is included to communicate that the federal assistance cannot duplicate the benefits provided or available to households by other sources, and that ARPA SLFRF funding is intended to serve a separate at-risk population, not the same population served with CoC/ESG funding. Project applications should be for new and innovative programming that is not already available to eligible households through other resources.

Question: Do eligible beneficiaries include households located within Hamilton County that are also located within the Cincinnati city boundaries?

Response: Households must be residents of the jurisdiction to which ARPA SLFRF funding was awarded. Residents may be temporarily or permanently housed anywhere within Hamilton County, Ohio, including within the City of Cincinnati.

Question: Will the participant have to be in permanent housing, or can they be in shelter or be seeking aftercare services to prevent them from coming into shelter.

Response: Eligible participants must be residing in temporary or permanent housing and at-risk of becoming homeless at the time of acceptance into the project. Individuals/households who are already experiencing literal homelessness are not eligible for these homelessness prevention programs. People who have experienced homelessness in the past, but are not currently literally homeless, are not excluded from consideration for services provided by these projects.

Question: Individuals who are leaving shelter and not attached to a program needs assistance with Housing, moving, storage and utility cost, can this funding be used for this?

Response: Eligible participants must be residing in temporary or permanent housing and at-risk of becoming homeless at the time of acceptance into the project. Individuals/households who are already experiencing literal homelessness are not eligible for these homelessness prevention programs.

Question: Section C: Will there be monthly or quarterly spending thresholds to meet? If not meeting spending thresholds it mentions program subject to funds being recouped and reallocated. Who would the funds be reallocated to? Another program that is awarded through this RFP?

Response: Project performance and pace of spending will be evaluated on an ongoing basis, with spending thresholds to be determined. If poor performance or underspending is identified by STEH after the initial year in the funding cycle, STEH may recapture funding and reallocate funding to higher-performing projects that have the capacity to expend reallocated funding. If funding is recaptured, it must be reallocated to a project funded through this RFP.

Question: Section E: Does the program have to be a Rental/Housing Program like PSH or RRH or can it be a Services Only Program?

Response: ARPA SLFRF does not generally categorize eligible activities by the components referred to in the question. However, innovative homelessness prevention projects are not required to provide any type of specific financial assistance. Applications must clearly describe how programming will prevent literal homelessness of the households served.

Question: Section E: Are all program enrollments required to enter through the Coordinated Entry System or can some program enrollments be designated for general community inquiries

Response: Participants will not be referred through Coordinated Entry and may be identified and served by the subrecipient. CAP/CE will not place participants directly in subrecipient projects. However, CAP callers who are eligible for services provided by subrecipients will be directed to subrecipient agencies, and subrecipients must also consider households directed to the service provider through the CAP line when capacity allows.

Question: Section G: Is this for Families only? It mentions Families when speaking of eligible expenses. (Is this an oversight and single/individuals are eligible too?)

Response: Eligible households include single individuals and families.

Question: Section G: Are furniture and household set up items eligible expenses? Are incentives to clients eligible expenses (i.e. food gift cards, gas gift cards, phones/electronics for telehealth appointments)?

Response: In considering whether a service would be appropriate under this funding, STEH and Hamilton County will assess whether, and the extent to which, there has been an economic harm, such as loss of earnings or revenue, that resulted from the COVID-19 public health emergency and whether, and the extent to which, the use would respond to or address this harm. Funds must be used for new and innovative programming to prevent homelessness. In their application, potential subrecipients should describe how the services proposed will prevent literal homelessness for populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Question: Is \$250K the maximum to ask over the entire 3 year grant term or each year of the 3 year grant term?

Response: Hamilton County is in the process of amending STEH's funding agreement to allow for the funding restrictions to apply per annual award amount rather than per agency. In anticipation of this amendment, registrants may apply for up to \$250,000 of funding per year over two years, for the period 9/01/2023-8/31/2025.

Question: Section 0: Should it say "Final Funding agreements will be issued on December 31, 2023 and not 2024 since the start of the grant term is 9/1/23

Response: ARPA SLFRF regulations requires that final funding agreements, including any amendments or reallocations must be executed by 12/31/24, requiring that all costs are incurred on or before 10/31/2026. STEH will issue initial funding agreements for up to a two-year term for the period 9/01/2023-8/31/2025. If poor performance or underspending is identified by STEH after the initial year in the funding cycle, STEH may recapture and reallocate funding to higher-performing projects that have the capacity to expend reallocated funding.