



Request for Proposals Rental Assistance Support Services

INTRODUCTION

Through this Request for Proposals (“RFP”), the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) seeks to establish a roster of qualified vendors to provide services for Rent Relief RI, the Emergency Rental Assistance program funded by the federal government and administered by RIHousing. Vendors would be engaged on an as needed basis to provide one or more of the below services:

- A. Application Assistance
- B. Outreach
- C. Legal Assistance
- D. Application Processing

It is a priority under this RFP to engage a diverse set of partners to ensure outreach and assistance for Rent Relief RI is provided across a range of populations, language groups, and cultural communities. **RIHousing encourages traditional and non-traditional partners to apply** including: for and non-profits, social service entities, neighborhood organizations, cultural entities representing a variety of populations, places of worship, community groups and organizations who serve as trusted resources of information.

These services are set forth more fully in the Scopes of Work at Attachments A-D.

The program is slated to run through December 2021.

Selected vendors will be engaged for a term of one (1) year, which may be extended for an additional two, one (1) year terms at the sole discretion of RIHousing. As the projects have not yet been identified, vendors selected for RIHousing’s roster will enter into an “on-call” style agreement and will be selected for particular assignments based on expertise, availability and price. There is no guarantee of any level of spending activity to a vendor selected for this roster.

Vendors may bid on one, multiple, or all services listed in this RFP.

INSTRUCTIONS

Electronic submissions of the proposal(s) should be submitted to RIHousing, 44 Washington Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903-1721, Attn: **Deborah Devine** at ddevine@rihousing.com. Proposals should be concise and include all attachments and work samples. Proposals should be presented on business letterhead.



Proposals must be received no later than 3:00 EST p.m. on Monday, March 8 2021. Responses received after this date and time shall not be accepted.

Respondents can respond to one or multiple Scopes of Work; respondents must clearly identify which services they are proposing to provide and detail their capacity and costs to provide those services. Respondents are advised that all submissions (including those not selected for engagement) may be made available to the public on request upon completion of the process and award of a contract(s).

SCOPE OF WORK

Please see the Scopes of Work provided at Attachments A-D.

ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED WITH YOUR PROPOSAL

Please note that failure to provide any information, certification, or document requested in this RFP may cause your submission not to be scored. **A signed copy of the certification letter is required.**

A. General Firm Information

1. Provide a brief description of your firm, including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Name of the principal(s) of the firm.
 - b. Name, telephone number and email address of a representative of the firm authorized to discuss your proposal.

B. Experience and Resources

1. Describe your firm and its capabilities. In particular, support your capacity to perform the Scopes of Work outlined in Attachments A-D (as applicable).

2. Indicate which principals and associates from your firm would be involved in providing services to RIHousing. Provide appropriate background information for each such person and identify his or her responsibilities.

3. Provide references, including a contact name and telephone number for organizations or businesses for whom you have performed similar work **and/or** a paragraph justifying how your firm could perform each task.

Submission
Check List

C. Fee Structure

The cost of services is one of the factors that will be considered in selecting vendors for the Roster List. While the specific services required will vary by project and will be paid based on a scope of work defined by RIHousing and pricing negotiated between the corporation and the vendor, we are requesting information that will allow RIHousing to evaluate the reasonableness of your fees.

Please provide a cost proposal for providing the Scopes of Work in Attachments A-D.

D. Affirmative Action Plan and Minority Owned Business/Women Owned Business

1. RIHousing encourages the participation of persons of color, women, persons with disabilities and members of other federally and State-protected classes. Describe your firm's affirmative action program and activities. Include the number and percentage of members of federally and State-protected classes who are either principals or senior managers in your firm, the number and percentage of members of federally and State-protected classes in your firm who will work on RIHousing's engagement and, if applicable, a copy of your Minority- or Women-Owned Business Enterprise state certification.

2. Discuss any topics not covered in this Request for Proposals that you would like to bring to RIHousing's attention.

E. Certifications

All applicants must respond to and provide documentation as outlined in the Submission Certifications document included at the end of this RFP.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

A selection committee consisting of RIHousing employees (the "Committee") will review all proposals and make a determination based on the following factors:

- Professional capacity ability to undertake the Scope of Work
- Proposed fee structure
- Ability to perform within time and budget constraints
- Evaluation of potential work plans
- Previous work experience and performance with RIHousing, similar organizations or unique ability to undertake the Scope of Work
- Firm minority status and affirmative action program or activities
- Timing of implementation
- Other pertinent information submitted.



RIHousing may invite one or more finalists to make presentations.

In its sole discretion, RIHousing may negotiate with one or more firms who have submitted qualifications to submit more detailed proposals on specific projects as they arise.

By this Request for Proposals, RIHousing has not committed itself to undertake the work set forth. RIHousing reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to rebid the original or amended scope of services and to enter into negotiations with one or more respondents. RIHousing reserves the right to make those decisions after receipt of responses. RIHousing's decision on these matters is final.

For additional information contact:

Deborah Devine

ddevine@rihousing.com

Revised: February 2021



Scope of Work A: Application Assistance

RIHousing seeks to engage a firm(s) to provide application assistance services to tenants and landlords for the Rent Relief RI rental assistance program.

Selected organizations will:

- Providing direct one-on-one assistance (virtual and in-person) to tenants and landlords to help them apply to the program;
- Facilitate the completion of applications and successful uploading of documents, and assist in obtaining application verification documents as needed;
- Assist in navigating the online application portal and ensuring applicants understand the necessary documents and information required;
- Answer applicant questions and provide support to tenants who do not have internet access or the ability to upload documents;
- Act as contact person for people who have unreliable means of communication (lack of consistent access to phone or email, homeless, etc.)
- Have the technological and infrastructure capacity to offer access to the online portal to applicants and ensure all tenants and landlords have equal access to the online application;
- Answer questions from applicants and direct them to Rent Relief RI call center and website for further information as necessary;
- Assist with setting up an online account in the Rent Relief RI online application portal and with setting up applicant email addresses if needed;
- Provide follow up to tenants and landlords as needed;
- Have bilingual accommodation to convey eligibility requirements and assist persons with limited English proficiency during the application process;
- Participate in trainings by RIHousing staff on eligibility requirements, including income calculations, the online application portal and the application process;
- Collaborate with RIHousing staff through regularly scheduled calls and progress meetings;
- Submit reports of activities to RIHousing and elevate questions requiring additional input from RIHousing staff.

Respondents should indicate which languages staff are fluent in, partnerships that enable communication in different languages, or other ways in which it will be achieved. Respondents should identify any special accommodations available to assist persons with limited English proficiency and/or physical impairments during the Rent Relief RI application process. For in-person assistance, respondents should confirm that their offices meet ADA accessibility requirements and identify the geographic area they serve as well as proximity to public transportation.



Selected vendors will be required to use Rent Relief RI's technology platform, participate in required training and obtain proficiency in the use of the online application portal. Firms must have more than one person trained to ensure there are no gaps in service and have the ability to scan and upload documents, assist applicants struggling with technology, help obtain documents from employers and others to demonstrate applicant eligibility.



Scope of Work B: Outreach

RIHousing seeks to engage a firm(s) to provide outreach services to tenants and landlords for the Rent Relief RI rental assistance program. Outreach and public education efforts will be crucial in the successful implementation of Rent Relief RI to ensure that eligible Rhode Islanders understand the assistance available to them and how to enroll. RIHousing is committed to ensuring that all Rhode Islanders are aware of the program and its' eligibility requirements and have the support needed to apply. We are seeking partners to develop and execute outreach efforts for both landlords and tenants that reach:

- the general public;
- all geographic areas of the state;
- traditionally underserved and difficult to reach communities;
- those individuals whose primary language is not English;
- those with disabilities, and
- populations that may face barriers to accessing programs.

Selected organizations will:

- Design an outreach plan that includes how you will address the needs of vulnerable and underserved populations, including the needs of specific at-risk racial and ethnic groups and persons with disabilities;
- Identify, engage, and refer Rhode Island tenants and landlords to the Rent Relief RI website application assistance providers as needed;
- Conduct outreach and community engagement activities to share information about Rent Relief RI and its potential benefits to eligible tenants and landlords;
- Use a variety of modes/methods and outreach techniques (in-person, online, direct mail, flyering, tabling, conducting presentations, and one-on-ones) to disseminate program information;
- Focus on geographic areas and populations that are historically underserved/difficult to reach and/or represent populations with barriers to access;
- Reach proposed populations in a culturally competent manner;
- Identify and establish on-site locations where people who might not typically frequent social service organizations would gather (court house, tax preparation centers, farmers markets, churches, community centers etc.).
- Describe how outreach activities and campaigns will be coordinated with appropriate state and local level entities.
- Submit reports to RIHousing, or a designated vendor, describing the progress made, populations reached and challenges faced while providing these services.

We welcome feedback on alternative models, such as subcontractor arrangements, in which an applicant engages another group to host outreach staff, as well as proven online



organizing strategies that could reasonably be expected to achieve the intended outreach targets. Respondents should identify where and how outreach services will be provided and strategies and tactics the organization will execute to reach eligible populations.

Proposals should detail which areas and communities the organization will focus on, how it intends to raise awareness, the ways in which messaging will be delivered (flyers, social media, website posts, other online platforms, organizational newsletters, community meetings and workshops, etc.) and how efforts will be measured.

Respondents should indicate which languages messaging will be available in and whether the organization has staff or members that are fluent in those languages, partnerships that enable communication in different languages, or other ways in which it will be achieved. Respondents should provide details on how the organization will meet outreach goals, strategies and tactics the organization will execute to reach eligible populations, and the staffing structure in place to successfully implement outreach activities.



Scope of Work C: Legal Assistance

RIHousing seeks to engage a firm(s) to provide legal assistance services to tenants and landlords for the Rent Relief RI rental assistance program.

Selected organizations will:

- Have attorneys licensed to practice law in the State of Rhode Island;
- Have experience serving tenants and/or landlords with housing-related issues;
- Have significant experience in representing residential tenants as a tenant's advocate;
- Provide tenant-landlord legal assistance including representation in court, negotiations with landlords, advice on how to navigate eviction proceedings and issues that arise with landlords that could lead to evictions;
- Understand eligibility requirements for the program and provide advice and guidance to tenants experiencing housing instability that could benefit from legal counsel;
- Understand protections provided to tenants and landlords under the CARES Act.

RIHousing is open to a variety of scenarios in the provision of services, including proposals structured as cost for services per client, cost per period of time, and others. Please identify various scenarios and associated costs in your proposal. Also identify any limits to the number of clients your firm could serve for any period of time.

Respondents should indicate whether the organization has staff or members that are fluent in multiple languages, partnerships that enable communication in different languages, or other ways in which it will be achieved.



Scope of Work D: Application Processing

RIHousing seeks to engage a firm(s) to provide application assistance services to tenants and landlords for the Rent Relief RI rental assistance program.

Selected organizations will:

- Provide mid-level program administration for Rent Relief RI;
- Be familiar with federal funding requirements and procedures and develop knowledge of Rent Relief RI program and requirements;
- Be assigned applications submitted by individuals and partners to review, and verify that all required documentation has been provided and that applications meet all eligibility criteria;
- Review submitted applications and ensure all required supporting documentation is provided including but not limited to landlord and tenant proof of identification, proof of tenant income, rental lease, and agreement signed by landlord and tenant;
- Provide initial determination for approval and communicate with applicants and/or community partners if action is required on their part to provide additional information and supplemental documents;
- Determine status of applications as complete/eligible or incomplete/ineligible application;
- Maintain accurate records of each applicant interaction with specific information recorded in the online application portal and promptly respond to applicant's inquiries on statuses;
- Participate in trainings by RIHousing staff on eligibility requirements, including income calculations, the online application portal and the application process;
- Collaborate with RIHousing staff through regularly scheduled calls and progress meetings;
- Regularly report to RIHousing and elevate questions requiring additional input from RIHousing staff;
- Perform regular quality control of application review process.

Respondents should indicate which languages staff are fluent in, partnerships that enable communication in different languages, or other ways in which it will be achieved.

An adequate level of staffing that can respond to applicant questions via phone and email or other proposed and approved platforms must be maintained throughout the duration of the contract.

Selected vendors will be required to use Rent Relief RI's technology platform, participate in required training and obtain proficiency in use of the online application portal. Firms must have more than one person trained to ensure there are no gaps in service and have



the ability to scan and upload documents, assist applicants struggling with technology, help obtain documents from employers and others.

RFP/RFQ Title: _____

Respondent Name: _____



RIHousing
Requests for Proposals/Requests for Qualifications
Submission Certifications

Please respond to **all** items below, include any additional information in the space provided or as an attachment as needed, and return along with your RFP submission. Ensure any additional pages refer to the appropriate item by name (ie. "Conflict of Interest," "Major State Decision Maker," etc).

EXPERIENCE AND RESOURCES

1. Identify any conflict of interest that may arise as a result of business activities or ventures by your firm and associates of your firm, employees, or subcontractors as a result of any individual's status as a member of the board of directors of any organization likely to interact with RIHousing. **If none, check below.**

None

Describe how your firm will handle actual and or potential conflicts of interest (*please include in your proposal or attach a sheet with this information*).

2. Identify any material litigation, administrative proceedings or investigations in which your firm is currently involved. Identify any material litigation, administrative proceedings or investigations, to which your firm or any of its principals, partners, associates, subcontractors or support staff was a party, that has been finally adjudicated or settled within the past two (2) years. **If none, check below.**

None

CERTIFICATIONS

1. RIHousing insists upon full compliance with Chapter 27 of Title 17 of the Rhode Island General Laws, Reporting of Political Contributions by State Vendors. This law requires State Vendors entering into contracts to provide services to an agency such as RIHousing, for the aggregate sum of \$5,000 or more, to file an affidavit with the State Board of Elections concerning reportable political contributions. The affidavit must state whether the State Vendor (and any related parties as defined in the law) has, within 24 months preceding the date of the contract, contributed an aggregate amount in excess of \$250 within a calendar year to any general officer, any candidate for general office, or any political party. **Please acknowledge your understanding of this in your RFP response.**

RFP/RFQ Title: _____

Respondent Name: _____

2. Does any Rhode Island “Major State Decision-maker,” as defined below, or the spouse or dependent child of such person, hold (i) a ten percent or greater equity interest, or (ii) a Five Thousand Dollar or greater cash interest in this business?

For purposes of this question, “Major State Decision-maker” means:

(i) All general officers; and all executive or administrative head or heads of any state executive agency enumerated in § 42-6-1 as well as the executive or administrative head or heads of state quasi-public corporations, whether appointed or serving as an employee. The phrase “executive or administrative head or heads” shall include anyone serving in the positions of director, executive director, deputy director, assistant director, executive counsel or chief of staff;

(ii) All members of the general assembly and the executive or administrative head or heads of a state legislative agency, whether appointed or serving as an employee. The phrase “executive or administrative head or heads” shall include anyone serving in the positions of director, executive director, deputy director, assistant director, executive counsel or chief of staff;

(iii) All members of the state judiciary and all state magistrates and the executive or administrative head or heads of a state judicial agency, whether appointed or serving as an employee. The phrase “executive or administrative head or heads” shall include anyone serving in the positions of director, executive director, deputy director, assistant director, executive counsel, chief of staff or state court administrator.

If your answer is “Yes,” please identify the Major State Decision-maker, specify the nature of their ownership interest, and provide a copy of the annual financial disclosure required to be filed with the Rhode Island Ethics Commission pursuant to R.I.G.L. §§36-14-16, 17 and 18. If your answer is “No,” check the box below.

Yes (provide additional information as noted above)

No

3. In the course of providing goods or services to RIHousing, the selected respondent may receive certain personal information specific to RIHousing customer(s) including, without limitation, customer names and addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, dates of birth, loan numbers, account numbers, social security numbers, driver’s license or identification card numbers, employment and income information, photographic likenesses, tax returns, or other personal or financial information (hereinafter collectively referred to as the “Personal Information”). The maintenance of the Personal Information in strict confidence and the confinement of its use to RIHousing are of vital importance to RIHousing. **Please certify below that in the event your firm is selected:**

(i) any Personal Information disclosed to your firm by RIHousing or which your firm acquires as a result of its services hereunder will be regarded by your firm as

RFP/RFQ Title: _____
Respondent Name: _____

confidential, and shall not be copied or disclosed to any third party, unless RIHousing has given its prior written consent thereto; and

(ii) your firm agrees to take all reasonable measures to (a) ensure the security and confidentiality of the Personal Information, (b) protect against any anticipated threats or hazards to the security or integrity of the Personal Information, and (c) maintain reasonable security procedures and practices appropriate to your firm's size, the nature of the Personal Information, and the purpose for which the Personal Information was collected in order to protect the Personal Information from unauthorized access, use, modification, destruction or disclosure; and

(iii) when discarding the Personal Information, destroying it in a commercially reasonable manner such that no third party can view or recreate the information, electronically or otherwise.

These provisions, which implement the requirements of the Rhode Island Identity Theft Protection Act, R.I.G.L. § 11-49.2 et seq., will also be incorporated into the final contract with the selected respondent(s). In addition, if selected, your firm may be requested to provide a copy of its information security plan.

I certify that in the event our firm is selected, we will comply with the Personal Information and Security guidelines noted above.

4. **Certification from your president, chairman or CEO** certifying that (i) no member of your firm has made inquiries or contacts with respect to this Request for Proposals other than in an email or written communication to **Debbie Devine, RIHousing (ddevine@rihousing.com)** seeking clarification on the Scope of Work set forth in this proposal, from the date of this RFP through the date of your proposal, (ii) no member of your firm will make any such inquiry or contact until after March 8, 2021, (iii) all information in your proposal is true and correct to the best of her/his knowledge, (iv) no member of your firm gave anything of monetary value or promise of future employment to a RIHousing employee or Commissioner, or a relative of the same, based on any understanding that such person's action or judgment will be influenced and (v) your firm is in full compliance with Chapter 27 of Title 17 of the Rhode Island General Laws, Reporting of Political Contributions by State Vendors.

I certify that no member of our firm has made any such inquiries or contacts.

President, Chairman or CEO (*print*): _____

Signature: _____

Company Name: _____

Complete Form, Print, Sign and Include any attachments as necessary.