

Request for Proposal
Rent Relief Outreach and Assistance
Deadline: Friday, Nov. 19, 2021 @ 3 p.m.

November 10, 2021 - Questions from the virtual informational session

Q: Is there a word count for the proposal?

A: No.

Q: Does RentRelief cover utility assistance?

A: Yes, the program covers utility assistance under the same criteria as rental assistance. Applicants may also apply for security deposit assistance, moving expenses, and there's also a small hotel assistance program. All assistance is applied for in the same application. Vendors would be expected to provide assistance around all of those areas.

Q: Are there restrictions on the population served by this program, including ex-offenders and parolees?

A: There are no restrictions on who vendors should connect with through outreach, but not everyone is eligible. There is no prohibition on assisting people who are ex-offenders. The main thing to remember is this program is for renters, so if you are not a tenant or looking for an apartment, then it would be hard to assist through this program, though not impossible.

Q: Can we propose using funds to purchase any tech, for instance, a tablet and a hotspot for application assistance outside of our office?

A: Yes. If vendors have technology needs, that should be included in their cost and fee structure. This is important to consider as you want to ensure you have the technology needed to serve program applicants.

Q: Can you explain how payment will work? We will describe our fee structure in the proposal, but is there a max reimbursement? Is there a negotiation process? Will this be executed as a cost reimbursement contract?

A: There will be a negotiation process on every contract. Vendors need to propose how much funding they need to do the work. We can provide some funds up front, but the funding is mostly structured as reimbursement. If funds are needed up front, please include that in your proposal.

Q: In the scope of application assistance, will we be required to keep and store information and documents?

A: No. These documents should be submitted with the application and uploaded into the system, but vendors do not need to hold onto them. Vendors will be trained by RentRelief staff on how to access the portal and the different ways to get a document, such as taking a picture of it with a photo, to scan into the application. Once documents are in the application, there are stored there, so vendors do not need to hold onto them.

Q: Will RIHousing send application assistance partners potential applications to assist with applications, or will each partner find applicants and assist them with the applications?

A: Both. We keep a list of partners and their contact information, including phone number and their hours, that we give to applicants when they call the call center. We direct them to that list and make certain recommendations based on what we know about the vendor and the applicant, such as if a certain language is needed. You may also find your own applicants to assist. We expect vendors to assist anyone who comes to them for assistance, even if they are outside of your traditional catchment area or other criteria of those you often serve.

Q: Do you know the minimum and maximum funding amount you might expect to see organizations request?

A: At this time, no. Vendors need to be honest about how much funding they need to do the work, and why that amount is needed.

Q: Will the assignments executed by contractors mostly be at the discretion of RIHousing? Including time and location?

A: If referring to different events for doing application outreach and assistance, then no. RIHousing would like to know about the events, but the events that vendors participate in will not be at our discretion. There could always be the small chance we ask you not to attend an event, but that is very unlikely. We would ask that vendors notify us that they are doing an event so we are aware and can do some promotion. We also like to have one or two RIHousing staff show up at the beginning to help troubleshoot any issues and answer any questions. We can also provide additional training and help, but that will be up to the vendor to decide what they think they need. Regardless of where an event is held, vendors are obligated to assist anyone who comes to them for assistance, even if they do not live in your catchment area or do not fall under the criteria of those you often serve.

Q: Must we be available 24/7 or certain hours?

A: No. You can tell us what hours you will be available and let us know why that is a sufficient period of time. No partners are available 24/7. For example, if you are proposing to only provide services in the evening because you know the population you work with will only be able to come for assistance in the evening because they work during the day, provide that context in your proposal.

Q: Can we limit the area we serve?

A: We prefer that you help anyone who needs assistance.

Q: Is RIHousing part of the Unite Us Network? If yes, would application assistance be routed to us as referrals through that platform?

A: RIHousing is not part of that network, so applications cannot be routed to us through that platform.

Q: Will there be any restrictions as far as how this integrates with larger community organizing work? For example, if we're doing an event, does it need to be strictly focused on outreach for this program?

A: No. You can go anywhere and participate in any event that you think would be useful. Make sure that the RentRelief effort is distinct from other efforts at the event, but anywhere that there may be people who could benefit from the program, you can attend.

Q: For budgeting purposes are organizations allowed to present a full budget including administrative costs or just an outcomes-based budget? Is there a cap in mind for this application?

A: There is no cap, but vendors should justify what they are asking for. The fee structure is up to the vendor to determine based on what makes sense to get the work done.

Q: Can you explain the legal services component?

A: The legal services component is to represent tenants in court if they have an eviction, or to help mediate with their landlord around legal issues and payment of rent. These services would typically be provided by lawyers or trained mediators.

Q: Can there be additional time to submit the application?

A: The reason there is a short turnaround is because we are hearing communities saying they need more support. The proposal does not need to be long or formal, it just needs to provide the information requested.

Q: Will there be coordination of outreach efforts by RIHousing or another vendor?

A: Once there is a roster of vendors, we will work to make sure there is not too much overlap between services. There may be partnering opportunities between different groups. RIHousing may be at certain events and we may ask certain vendors to attend. We are still working out exactly how that coordination will work.

Q: Will each outreach vendor need to develop their own outreach materials, or will there be common materials in multiple languages developed by RIHousing or another vendor?

A: RIHousing has materials. If you think something is missing, we can work to develop it, but all vendors should be using the same RIHousing-provided materials. If you think an additional language is needed, or if something is unclear, please let us know and we can do translations or make changes. If groups have language translation abilities, let us know, as the external firms we use can take some time.

Q: Can we apply for 2 RFPs? For example, application service and outreach. If so, is it ONE RFP response with both components or TWO?

A: You can apply for one or more tasks. Clearly state which tasks you are applying for in your proposal.

Q: Will we have the ability to check status of people who have applied? Or only RIHousing staff can do that?

A: It will depend on what the contract looks like and the vendor's technological capabilities. If you feel this is a core component of the service you want to provide, please be clear in your proposal that you would be looking for this access. Those able to access applications require a different training, and the contract would have privacy requirements included. While this could be possible if requested as part of your proposal, it is not guaranteed.

Q: I'm part of a community organization that doesn't have any formal bank accounts, we're not a non-profit or anything. Can you pay to a personal bank account/cash app?

A: Payment is made by check issued in the name of the person/entity that matches the tax ID number for the business. Depending on how the business was formed, that could be an individual person or the entity itself.

Q: Could a nonprofit be a fiscal agent, would that be allowed?

A: Yes

Q: Can we add cost for printing materials, or will you be providing that?

A: If vendors want to do their own printing, indicate that in your proposal. If you would like RIHousing to provide the printing, note that.

Q: Can we include social media costs and mailing costs as part of our community outreach process? For example, we would look to have live radio shows in Spanish.

A: Whatever it will cost vendors to provide services, please include that. If there's a fee or cost that you need covered, make sure that it is included in the proposal.

Q: Are there any changes happening on the back end to improve the rent relief application itself?

A: We have changed the application significantly, so it is much easier than it was. We are open to changing it again if that will help, but we still need to meet federal requirements.

Q: If there's any other questions not answered, who should we contact?

A: You can email chunsinger@rihousing.com. The question and answer will be posted on this Q&A so all interested parties have the benefit of the same information.

Q: Is this a 12 month grant? What are the timeline expectations? How much time should the budget cover?

A: Every contract through this program has a 30 day out -- for both the vendor and RIHousing. If we no longer need the service a vendor is providing, we will give 30 days' notice. We will contract quarterly, and after those 4 months we will discuss if both the vendor and RIHousing wants to continue. The budget should be proposed for a monthly or a four-month period.

Q: Is the reporting quarterly?

A: Monthly. We typically ask that you track the number of people that you help. For example, how many phone calls answered, how many applications filled out, how many completed etc. Reporting should not be a barrier -- it's mostly providing numbers on activities.

Q: Is there any timeline for the Homeownership Assistance Fund?

A: We are waiting on Treasury to approve the program, which we believe will happen soon. There will be an RFP coming out to partner on that program, and we will hold a similar informational session like this one.

Q: Do collaborative arrangements have to be formally in place before the deadline date? Subcontracts, for example.

A: No. If you have an agreement with an entity to be a subcontractor, have them submit a letter or their contact information as a participating partner so if we contact them, they will be aware.

Q: Are applications coming in equally throughout the state, or are there areas where more outreach is needed?

A: Most are from the urban core, Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, Woonsocket, but the [dashboard](#) provides information on where other applications are coming in. If you look at the dashboard and feel certain areas need additional outreach, please note that in your proposal.

Q: Is there an application to complete as part of the RFP?

A: No, just follow the information requested in the RFP. It can be in any format that provides the information. You do not need to provide organizational budgets unless you wish to do so to support your application.