

**Application deadline: Feb 25, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. CST**

## **Overview**

On December 27, 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 was signed into federal law and included \$25 billion for states, territories and localities to provide direct assistance to renter households that have experienced or are at risk of financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (Minnesota Housing) has received approximately \$290 million of funding to create and operate a new rental assistance program known as the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance program.

The COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance program may be used for rent, utilities and home energy costs (both arrears and prospective within program limits). Eligible applicants include renter households with incomes no more than 80 percent of area median income and have experienced financial hardship through the COVID-19 outbreak and can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Landlords may apply to the program with the consent of the tenant. Homeowners are not eligible for this program.

Minnesota Housing is establishing a centralized intake and application system for households and landlords to submit online or paper applications to request assistance with rent and/or utilities. Minnesota Housing is also establishing centralized application processing and accounts payable.

Through this Request for Proposal (RFP), Minnesota Housing seeks to engage community-based organizations, Tribal governments, and local governments to establish coverage across the state with one or more organizations that can:

1. Create awareness of this resource for households that otherwise may not learn or know about the program, and
2. Help applicants navigate the program requirements and complete and submit online or paper applications for assistance.

## **Estimated Available Funding and Timeline**

Up to \$5 million of funding is anticipated to be available for community-based organizations, Tribal governments, and local governments or a network of organizations to create awareness of this program; implement community outreach and engagement that connects with households that might not learn about or have access to learn about this program; and, to assist applicants to submit complete applications to the central application system.

The selected field partners will not process applications for approval or denial and will not process payments. Application approvals, denials and payment processing will be conducted through a centralized processing entity.

The program is expected to operate through at least December 31, 2021, and may be extended to March 31, 2022, and further in the discretion of Minnesota Housing, depending on funding availability and program performance. In the event additional federal resources are made available for federal Emergency Rental Assistance, additional funds may be made available under this RFP.

Funds will be provided through a cost reimbursement model.

### **Eligible Applicants**

**Eligible applicants will have demonstrated experience working with populations that are least likely to know about and/or able to independently apply for COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance funding.**

**These eligible applicants include:**

- Nonprofit/community-based organizations
- Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) grantees or subgrantees
- COVID-19 Housing Assistance Program administrators
- Federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota
- State judicial districts that have onsite help centers, services centers, or other resources for households dealing with housing crises
- Local units of government (cities, counties, PHAs, HRAs) that operate as a central resource for housing assistance and will have staff perform this work in the field, such as in homes, businesses and/or community centers.

Organizations that are led by People of Color, Indigenous Individuals, and/or Women or structured with staffing to meet the needs of households that otherwise may not learn or know about the program will receive additional points in the application process.

Organizations who are also direct recipients of the Emergency Rental Assistance program are eligible to apply but the application must demonstrate how the services provided will focus on the state funded programming.

The geographic service area of the administrator must include one or more of the following at a minimum:

- The entire state of Minnesota
- One or more Continuum of Care (COC) regions
- One or more Community Action Program (CAP) regions
- One or more metro counties
- One or more judicial districts
- One or more Minnesota Indian Reservations/Communities
- Cities over 85,000 people (Minneapolis, St Paul, Rochester, Bloomington, and Duluth)

## Scope of Work

A scope of work must be included regarding the services that will be provided. Examples of activities include:

- Create program awareness/Market the program
- Provide staff support for households to prepare and submit an application for assistance
- Provide culturally specific marketing and application assistance, as appropriate
- Provide a language plan, including translation services
- Provide multiple communication options to engage and communicate with applicant, including text, telephone, email, mail and in person, as needed
- Communication with other program partners such as other marketing partner, intake partner, central application processing partner, and Minnesota Housing.

Additional costs may include such expenses as:

- Mileage or travel costs to assist participants
- Technology
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Other direct costs associated with administering the program (e.g. financial, program management, data/reporting costs); this amount may not exceed 10% of the subtotal of all other proposed expenses.

**Optional collaboration with AmeriCorps Volunteers:** To increase the capacity of selected applicants, Serve Minnesota has agreed to make AmeriCorps volunteers available to provide application assistance and other support. [Please see full details in this flyer for the program.](#)

## Scoring

The application will be worth 100 points and scored as follows:

<b>Capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of households estimated to be served is feasible and realistic</li><li>• Staffing and administrative capacity is sufficient to deploy the program without compromising other existing programs of the organization</li><li>• Ability to launch services no later than April 15.</li><li>• Ability to provide creative and effective strategies to reach and engage identified populations</li><li>• Ability to work with households experiencing high stress or trauma or who have been discriminated against or marginalized in government systems.</li><li>• Ability to be flexible with the program roles and development</li></ul>	50
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<b>Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to demonstrate culturally appropriate marketing, access, and service to populations systemically impacted by housing instability during COVID 19</li> <li>• Organization is owned or led by People of Color, Indigenous Individuals, and/or Women or is structured with staffing to meet the needs of households that otherwise may not learn or know about the program</li> <li>• Robust language plan is evident and feasible</li> </ul>	30
<b>Budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget is clearly explained in the narrative</li> <li>• How the funds will be managed so that they last for the duration of the grant period</li> <li>• The budget is reasonable</li> </ul>	20

Funding selections will not be solely based on the application score. The review committee will evaluate the application scores in conjunction with the program's strategic priorities to provide statewide coverage and the application's ability to address equity and community need, especially for populations systemically impacted by housing instability during COVID 19.

### Equity

This funding opportunity is intended to identify and serve persons who are least likely to know about the CERA program or be able to navigate the application process without assistance. In addition, applicants are strongly encouraged to implement specific strategies that promote staffing and program models representative of and responsive to the populations to be served, particularly those households overrepresented among people experiencing housing instability. Specific groups are overrepresented include African Americans, American Indians, persons with disabilities, veterans and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning/queer (LGBTQ) persons.

A language plan, including translation services, will also be a required element of the scope of work.

### Application Timeline

This application is anticipated to follow the timeline below.

Date	Activity
Thursday, February 18, 2021	Request for Proposals (RFP) released
Monday, February 22, 2021	<a href="#">RFP webinar</a> at 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 25, 2020	RFP applications due by 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 10, 2021	Award letters issued
Thursday, March 11, 2021	<a href="#">Due Diligence webinar</a>
Wednesday, March 17, 2021	Due diligence materials due

Date	Activity
Thursday, March 18, 2021	Contracts begin

The schedule is for illustration purposes only and is subject to change.

An informational webinar about the Request for Proposals and application process will be held on **Monday, February 22 from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.** [Click here to register.](#)

Applications must be submitted using the online tool. To complete the application and receive additional submission directions for all required documents, visit <http://www.cvent.com/d/2jq0fx/3B>.

**All the following documents must be submitted:**

- ☐ [Application with Signature Page](#)
- ☐ [Affirmative Action Certification](#) (certificate and additional documentation if required)
- ☐ [Program Budget](#)
- ☐ Applicant Current Financial Information: Non-governmental organization applying for \$25,000 or more must supply the following financial documentation depending on the organization's total gross revenue (refer to table below):

Documentation	Total Gross Revenue
Board-review Financial Statements	Under \$50,000 (or not in existence long enough to have completed IRS Form 990 or an audit)
IRS Form 990 and Aging Schedule	\$50,000-\$750,000
Certified Financial Audit	Over \$750,000

**NOTE:** Submitted applications are considered final; late and incomplete applications may not be considered unless the omission is deemed immaterial in Minnesota Housing's sole discretion. Minnesota Housing may request additional information for clarification. The applicant will be responsible for all costs incurred related to applying for this RFP.

Per the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, responses submitted by an applicant are private or nonpublic until the responses are opened. Once the responses are opened, the name and address of the applicant and the amount requested is public. All other data in a response is private or nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process. After an awarding agency has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data in the responses is public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in Section 13.37. A statement by an applicant that the response is copyrighted

or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the response.

**NOTE:** Minnesota Housing will require the following due diligence items from selected applicants by the due diligence due dates noted above:

- **Grant Contract**
- **Revised program budget**
- **Work Plan**
- **Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Authorization Form**
  - If you are a new grantee or if you have a change to your banking information, you must submit an [EFT form](#) allowing direct deposit of funds to your organization's financial institution.
  - If you have not registered as a vendor with the State, this will need to be completed prior to completing the EFT form. Go to the [Vendor Registration Link](#) to complete this process.
  - Once the form is completed, provide your vendor number to us and send in a copy of your [W-9](#) so that payments will not be delayed.
- **DUNS number**
- **Contact information for your organizations' Authorized Contract Signer**

#### **Federal and Contractual Requirements**

Entities awarded funding under this RFP will be required to:

- Execute one or more Grant Contracts with Minnesota Housing outlining the scope of services to be provided. The selected applicants may also be responsible for completing proposal revisions or other exhibits that will become attachments to the Grant Contract.
- Maintain financial records that document the use of all program funds awarded for a minimum of six years after the Grant Contract has ended. Minnesota Housing, at its sole discretion, may request to review the accounting and documentation of such records at a site visit or at other times.
- Complete and submit by the required due dates, all monthly invoices and final reports using a template provided and, in a manner, determined by Minnesota Housing.
- Have a written conflict of interest policy and take necessary steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest. All suspected, disclosed, or discovered conflicts of interest must be reported to Minnesota Housing in a timely manner.
- Comply with applicable contracting and bidding requirements noted in the Grant Contract.
- Comply with all affirmative action and non-discrimination requirements noted in the Grant

Contract.

- Comply with Minn. Stat. §201.162 by providing voter registration services for employees and for the public serviced by the grantee.
- Comply with all applicable state statutes, rules and policies.
- Comply with all federal requirements and guidance that applies to the federal Emergency Rental Assistance program, including specific requirements that will be included in Grant Contracts.

## Questions

Questions can be directed to the designated point of contact for this RFP:

Jessica Deegan, Director of Federal Affairs, [CERA.MHFA@state.mn.us](mailto:CERA.MHFA@state.mn.us)

No other personnel are authorized to respond to questions from potential applicants. All questions and answers will be posted on [Minnesota Housing's website](#).

This RFP is expressly conditioned on the receipt of resources for these purposes and requirements are subject to change if needed to comply with federal requirements that apply to the federal Emergency Rental Assistance program. Minnesota Housing reserves the right to withdraw or modify this RFP for any reason and will post updates on our [website](#). Selections, and selection amounts, are within the sole discretion of Minnesota Housing.