

Application Deadline: Tuesday, December 7, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. CT

Overview

In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan was signed into federal law and included an additional \$21.5 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) expects to receive approximately \$229 million of additional funding to operate 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), and certain housing stability services. Eligible applicants include renter households with incomes no more than 80% of area median income and that 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. The complete program guide can be found on Minnesota Housing's [website](#).

Minnesota Housing established RentHelpMN for households and landlords to submit online or paper applications to request assistance with rent and/or utilities. Applications continue to be processed through Minnesota Housing's contracted emergency management firm, Witt O'Brien's.

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), Minnesota Housing seeks to continue partnering with organizations (Field Partners) across the state to help applicants navigate the program requirements and complete and submit online or paper applications for assistance. This work will be funded from January 2022 through June 2022 (six months). Field Partners must be willing to receive referrals from 211 and work with Minnesota Housing's contracted processing entity. Existing contracted Field Partners are prioritized in the application process, but this opportunity is open to all eligible organizations.

Estimated Available Funding and Timeline

For this RFP, up to \$2 million of funding is anticipated to be available for organizations to assist RentHelpMN applicants to submit complete applications for assistance. The total funding caps for multiple organizations applying as a collaborative is \$200,000 and the amount for individual organizations is capped at \$100,000. The funding will be for six months of activities.

As in current program operations, 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 Minnesota Housing's contracted centralized application processing and case management vendor.

Grant Contract Agreements awarded under this RFP are expected to begin January 2022 and operate through June 30, 2022 and may be extended at the discretion of Minnesota Housing, depending on funding availability and program performance. In the event additional federal resources are made available to support federal Emergency Rental Assistance, additional funds may be made available under this RFP.

Funds will be provided through a cost reimbursement model based on an approved budget in the same structure as the existing program.

Eligible Applicants

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

Eligible applicants for this RFP include:

- Existing Field Partners with the RentHelpMN program
- 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.

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 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. Required activities include:

- Provide staff support for households to prepare and submit an application for assistance
- Accept referrals from the RentHelpMN call center and case management partners to provide application assistance and maintain open lines of communication
- Provide culturally specific application assistance, as appropriate
- Provide a language plan, including translation services
- Provide multiple communication options to engage and communicate with applicants, including text, telephone, email, mail and in person, as needed

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.

Scoring

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

Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience and past performance as an existing Field Partner • Number of households estimated to be served is feasible and realistic • Staffing and administrative capacity is sufficient to deploy the program without compromising other existing programs of the organization • Ability to take referral calls from 211 or similar call center for RentHelpMN • Ability to provide creative and effective strategies to reach and engage identified populations • Ability to work with households experiencing high stress or trauma or who have been discriminated against or marginalized in government systems • Ability to be flexible with the program roles and development 	50
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Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to demonstrate culturally appropriate marketing, access, and service to populations systemically impacted by housing instability during COVID 19 • 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 • Robust language plan is evident and feasible 	30
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget is clearly explained in the narrative • Clear explanation of how the funds will be managed so that they last for the duration of the grant period • Budget is reasonable 	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 RentHelpMN program or who are unable 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 that 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. Note that the schedule is for illustration purposes only and is subject to change at Minnesota Housing’s sole discretion.

Date	Activity
Tuesday, November 16, 2021	Request for Proposals (RFP) released
Monday, November 22, 2021	RFP webinar at 2:00 p.m. CT
Tuesday, December 7, 2021	RFP applications due by 4:30 p.m. CT
Wednesday, December 15, 2021	Award letters issued

Date	Activity
Monday, December 20, 2021	Due Diligence webinar
Friday, January 7, 2022	Due diligence materials due
January 2022	Contracts begin

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/r8q84r/3B>.

An informational webinar about the Request for Proposals (RFP) and application process will be held on Monday, November 22 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. [Click here](#) to register for this session.

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 organizations 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, which is determined at 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 date noted in the above table/timeline:

- **Grant Contract Agreement**
- **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 of Minnesota, you will need to register 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**
- **Delegated signing authority** specifically outlining the person(s) authorized to execute the Grant Contract Agreement. This could be provided via a board resolution, bylaws, or other organizational documents.

Federal and Contractual Requirements

Entities awarded funding under this RFP will be required to:

- Execute one or more Grant Contract Agreements 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 Agreement.
- Maintain, for a minimum of six years after the Grant Contract Agreement has ended, financial records that document the use of all program funds awarded. 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 Agreement.
- Comply with all affirmative action and non-discrimination requirements noted in the Grant Contract Agreement.
- 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 COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance program, including specific requirements that will be included in Grant Contract Agreements.

Questions?

Questions can be directed to Jessica Deegan, Director of Federal Affairs, Minnesota Housing, at 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 its [website](#). Selections and selection amounts are within the sole discretion of Minnesota Housing.