
2011 Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Coordinated Entry and Assessment (CEA) for Families with Children Experiencing or at Imminent Risk of Homelessness in King County

Questions, Answers & Corrections As of July 21, 2011- Final

NOTE: See Application Guidelines for detailed overview and application instructions.

The following is a summary of questions and answers admitted during the RFQ Technical Assistance period: June 21- July 21, 2011. The deadline for technical assistance has passed. **No further technical assistance will be provided. All final questions/answers/corrections are now posted.**

For additional information see the HCD website:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/socialservices/Housing/ContractorsAndPartners/ContractorTools/FundApplications/Homeless.aspx>

Posted on July 21, 2011

Corrections/Clarifications

Corrected budget forms with proper header/footers posted on July 11, 2011

Added: Rating Criteria: Proposals will be rated according to criteria in several categories (see table below) with the possibility of a maximum of 100 points based on the responses to questions posed in the Application package.

The scores will be converted to a percentage for the purpose of ranking.

Criteria Category	Possible Points
System Comprehension	5
Agency Capacity/Experience	40
Program Implementation	30
Cultural Competency	15
Budget	10
Maximum Points	100

Due Date Extension: The Due Date for the Application was extended from noon, July 8th, 2011 to noon, July 25th, 2011. Changes and revised documents have been posted on the website to reflect these date changes in the Application Guidelines, the Application form, and the Excel Budget forms. The **only** changes made to these documents were regarding this date

change and the subsequent timeline adjustments for the implementation of the CEA program.

- Revised versions of the Application Guidelines and the Application were posted June 28, 2011.
- Revised Excel Budget forms were posted June 30, 2011.

Questions and Answers

Questions and Answers for RFQ:

As of July 21, 2011

Q: Is it your plan that all the information on housing sites and the services available at those sites will be entered into Safe Harbors by County staff prior to or during the start up phase? That is, do you have an expectation that the Housing Placement Specialist will need to be involved in collecting, entering or vetting the data in any way during start up?

A: King County staff will take the lead in collecting this information initially, including a countywide survey to assess project specific eligibility criteria of housing and service programs for families and gather site specific information such as location, program amenities, etc. This will be sent to agencies during the start-up phase. However, it is the intent that King County staff will work closely with the chosen Lead Agency during the start-up phase and that ongoing maintenance of relevant information will be the responsibility of the Lead Agency.

Q: My question had to do with how much work and time the County will expect of the Housing Placement Specialist during the start-up. We understand this position's role during the on-going phase. Thus, my understanding is that we should plan for his position's involvement during the start-up to review the information and make sure it is clear and to be involved in collecting any additional information required after the survey information is collected.

A: I believe when you write "Housing Placement Specialist" you are referring to the "Housing Placement Coordinator". The Housing Placement Coordinator's position was envisioned to be fairly involved during the start-up phase and as needed, supporting the work of King County staff.

Q: In the narrative it says the Start-up Form is Form 1, but the actual form says Form 3 (also is there not a personnel detail sheet for the start-up phase?). Project Personnel Form is labeled Form 1, but the narrative calls it Form 2 and Form 2 is called Project Revenue and Expense but in the narrative it is called Form 3. Should we just use what is labeled on the actual form?

A: You are correct- apparently there is an error on the page header and what is visible on the computer looks different than what is in the printed versions. Under the current excel document (dated 6/30/11), the correct name of each form is what is identified on the bottom of the page (tab), not what prints at the top of the page. We have fixed this problem on the new version of the forms (dated 7/11/11) and have posted them on the web page. We would advise you download and use the new excel document posted today. In addition, it's always best to be clear in the narrative which form is being

referred to, please also include the titles- such as “Project Start-Up Costs”, “Project Personnel”, or “Project Revenue and Expenses”.

No, there is not a personnel detail sheet included for the start-up phase; you are advised to just include the “total personnel” costs on the budget form and include an explanation (rationale) in the budget narrative.

Q: The Application and Guidelines have some reference to HMIS but this is not strongly emphasized. The structure and operations of CEA has been pretty well thought out in planning so far. Is Safe Harbors staff engaged and up to speed? Ready to build the program and train the CEA staff?

A: Yes, Safe Harbors will operate as the data system platform for the CEA program. King County and the City of Seattle Safe Harbors staff are working collaboratively to design and develop the necessary system components to support the CEA program. King County will contract directly with Safe Harbors and will remain the project lead for this component of the CEA program.

Q: Will it matter if an applicant is a Data Integration or Direct Entry agency?

A: No, it does not matter if an applicant is either a Data Integration or Direct Entry agency in Safe Harbors. However, to administer the CEA program, the Lead Agency will need to use Direct Entry, since the CEA program components are being developed in Safe Harbors- HMIS. However, the Lead Agency may still be Data Integration for their other (existing) programs.

Q: At 500 assessments per month, does Safe Harbors have an estimate of how much data entry time this will entail?

A: Essentially, data entry will occur in “real time,” while assessments are being conducted by the Assessment Specialists using laptop computers linked to Safe Harbors. We have estimated approximately 45 minutes per assessment, with five Assessment Specialists conducting an estimated 500 assessments per month (total).

Q: Is the lead agency going to subcontract with Immigrant and Refugee agencies to handle specific needs of immigrants and refugees- such as language translation and cultural competency?

A: The initial plan to address language and cultural barrier issues is to select (through the RFQ process) a Lead Agency that will have experience working with these communities and/or fully explain how they will ensure the needs of families with language and/or cultural barriers are addressed. We emphasize that the Lead Agency must demonstrate in the RFQ multi-cultural competency and bilingual capabilities; and ideally have a diverse staff or a plan to recruit/hire a culturally diverse staff for the CEA program. The Lead Agency will be required to develop and implement an ongoing cultural competency training curriculum. In addition, we ask in the RFQ budget forms, for the applicant to include interpretation and translation material costs.

Q: For those Immigrant and Refugee (I/R) agencies that are trained to provide screenings for clients with language and/or cultural barriers, will these agencies be financially compensated?

A: There will not be direct compensation for the initial screening piece. For most families, screenings will occur through calling 211, who will have trained staff to conduct a brief,

roughly 10 minute phone screening to identify families who are experiencing homelessness or are at imminent risk of homelessness. After meeting, on several occasions, with I/R agencies to discuss the potential barriers Immigrant and Refugee families may have to the proposed design of the CEA program, we made some adjustments to design and have proposed an alternative pathway. I/R agencies will have an opportunity to conduct a face-to-face screening with families (instead of using 211); they may do so, without compensation, once staff has been trained and certified on the screening tool by the CEA lead agency. There will be an ongoing evaluation (feedback) process to determine how this alternative process is working for I/R populations, program staff and the CEA program.

- Q:** What about accompanying clients to appointments (assessments and once they get into housing)? Will I/R agencies be compensated for the language interpretation they do now?
- A:** I/R agencies that are working with a family and would like to accompany the family to their face to face assessment appointment may do so. However, this is only optional and will not be compensated. If language interpreters are needed for families at their assessment appointment, this can be arranged ahead of time and is an expense of the CEA program.
- Q:** What is the County's flexibility with the staffing model?
- A:** The staffing model listed in the Application Guidelines is only the "proposed" staffing model. However, it is consistent with the CEA design model and was used in the development of the budget projections. Any proposed changes the applicant would like to make should be explained fully in the budget narrative section of the application.
- Q:** If there is not capacity in the ongoing work for an additional person, is it possible to have a time-limited position identified in the start up funds to help with the launch, particularly pertaining to the work with Safe Harbors and establishing documentation of eligibility and housing inventory?
- A:** Any proposed changes to the staffing should be explained fully in the budget narrative section of the application. King County will remain the project lead for the Safe Harbors components. In addition, King County staff will take the lead on the initial "program inventory" and are working with Safe Harbors on the inclusion of that data in the system. Ongoing maintenance of the data will be the responsibility of the Lead Agency.
- Q:** Will the lead agency be gathering the eligibility and inventory data or will that be done by another entity?
- A:** King County staff will take the lead on the initial "program inventory" and are working with Safe Harbors on the inclusion of that data in the system. Ongoing maintenance of the data will be the responsibility of the Lead Agency.
- Q:** Will funding for 211's work be included in the \$700,000 available? If yes, have you identified an amount and will it be contracted directly through King County or through the lead agency?
- A:** No- the screening budget is separate from this RFQ and the \$700,000.
- Q:** Will the lead agency participate in the final stages of development of the assessment tool?

- A:** King County staff is currently working on the initial screening and assessment tools and are developing a process to provide opportunity for feedback and input from the larger stakeholder community.
- Q:** The RFQ mentions a website maintained by the lead agency. Do you have an idea of the type of content you are looking for? Will it be hosted on the KC website or by the lead agency?
- A:** The details of the website are negotiable, and potentially may be new page on the Lead Agency's existing website, however at a minimum; the website should have information on the CEA program so that upon searching family homelessness online, the community's CEA will come up and direct people to an explanation of the CEA process.
- Q:** At what stage of development is the Housing Placement Roster? Will it be located in Safe Harbors?
- A:** The Housing Placement Roster will be developed in conjunction with the assessment tool and program inventory. Yes, it will be located in Safe Harbors and will allow the CEA agency staff to maintain data on active and inactive clients including the ability to search and organize the housing placement roster based on key client characteristics and other factors to be used to assign clients to appropriate housing resources.
- Q:** Bullet number six in the Program Model section of the Application Guidelines refers to case management to develop and implement a housing stability plan. Is that case management function completely distinct from the Assessment Specialist role? The question of case management also arises in the additional responsibility of the Lead Agency to be "responsive to families in crisis." What are the parameters of that responsiveness?
- A:** Assessment Specialists are not "case managers" since their role is only to assess households for housing and service needs. However, they will need to be "responsive to families experiencing crisis"; meaning they should be qualified and have experience working with families who are facing homelessness and understand the stress this causes in order to be effective in interacting with the families and in conducting accurate assessments.
- Q:** The final bullet of the Program Model section says that "Households placed in 'interim housing' programs will remain on the housing placement roster until placement into non-time limited housing." Does that mean that the Lead Agency will have a continuing role in coordinating permanent housing placement after an assessed family has been placed with an agency offering interim housing? If so, how does that compare to the role of the case manager at the interim housing agency?
- A:** No, this does not imply that the role for permanent housing placement is shifting to the CEA agency. It is the intent that under the current system, shelter and transitional housing programs will continue their role in assisting families in securing stable permanent housing. However, there will be (limited) opportunities for permanent housing placement through CEA in the current system (specifically permanent housing with support services). In addition, as our local system aligns to the housing stabilization approach, it is expected that CEA will accommodate these programmatic changes (for example- a referral directly to permanent housing; a referral to interim housing then a referral to rapid re-housing/permanent, etc.).

- Q:** Given that Prevention is not part of the first stage Coordinated Entry model, what are the criteria for a determination of being “at imminent risk of homelessness?”
- A:** This will be defined/refined during the development of the screening and assessment tools this summer.
- Q:** If a family qualifies for CEA referral under the initial 211 assessment, will 211 personnel be responsible for scheduling the intake appointment? If yes, what system will the Lead Agency be using for making schedule availability known to 211 personnel?
- A:** Yes, once the screening confirms that a family requires a full assessment- due to the fact they are either homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, 211 will schedule an appointment for the family. The scheduling tool will be developed in Safe Harbors.
- Q:** To confirm: In the case of immediate safety concern in a domestic violence situation where a family also qualifies for CEA referral, the initial 211 referral will go to a domestic violence specialist agency that has been trained by the Lead Agency.
- A:** To clarify, families that identify an immediate need for safety and services for domestic violence (including confidential shelter) will continue to be referred to programs through the Day One Program. Families residing in an emergency shelter will have the option to enter CEA through the ‘normal’ route (calling 211) or be screened by trained and certified screeners at the DV shelter program; assessments will then be conducted at either a regular co-location site or the DV shelter site. Families will always have the option to enter CEA through the ‘normal’ process and will not be automatically “screened out” due to domestic violence.
- Q:** When will agencies be able to access the money once they are awarded the contract?
- A:** The goal is to execute the initial start-up contract in early November. The Lead Agency will have the ability to invoice the county for those funds after the contract is executed. The contracts for the ongoing operations will not begin until the CEA program goes “live” with 211 conducting screening, which we estimate will be March 2012.
- Q:** November through February is designated as “start up” on the timeline. When will families in shelter be assessed?
- A:** We are proposing that assessments on families currently residing in emergency shelter programs begin one month prior to the program going live with screening through 211; assessment would be conducted in February and 211 would begin screenings in March.
- Q:** When will the assessment tool be developed?
- A:** King County staff are currently working on the initial screening and assessment tools and are developing a process to provide opportunity for feedback and input from the larger stakeholder community this summer.
- Q:** What kinds of partnerships are needed (as mentioned in the application)?
- A:** The kind of agreement(s) between the lead agency and the referral agencies (for family providers) will be up to the lead agency: MOU, letter of agreement, etc.
- Q:** If family providers are expected to participate in CEA through other funding contracts they have, why would other partnerships be needed?

- A:** Funders are requiring family providers to participate in CEA. The lead agency, however, may want to create partnerships around more programmatic elements. It is not the responsibility of the lead agency to require participation from providers, but the lead agency may want partnership agreements in regards to how referrals are given, received, for on-going communication, etc.
- Q:** Will King County require a certain template if MOUs are used?
- A:** No. This will be up to the Lead Agency.
- Q:** The Lead Agency is expected to use space in other community partner locations. Will this occur through MOUs or assigned by funding?
- A:** The Lead Agency can propose co-locations, but funders will be involved in this process to ensure geographical dispersion and accessibility. There is some flexibility to allow for standing relationships between the Lead Agency and co-location partners, to rent space, or negotiate existing partnerships. We also wanted to maintain some flexibility, because over time and depending on the demand and volume of CEA assessments, we may want to adjust those locations.
- Q:** Are staff salaries during start up reflected in the Year 1 Budget or are they part of the startup costs?
- A:** Everything up to screening new clients through 211 (so also including the time when families currently in shelter are assessed) is part of the start-up budget. There are specific funds available for the start-up of CEA. So salaries up to about March are part of start-up costs. Year 1 salaries start in or about March 1, 2012. Therefore, year 1 operating budget runs from March 2012 to March 2013.
- Q:** What is Safe Harbor's role in this? Does Safe Harbors have the scheduling software? Or are they doing the assessments?
- A:** Safe Harbors will operate as the data system platform for the CEA program. King County and the City of Seattle Safe Harbors staff are working collaboratively to design and develop the necessary system components to support the CEA program, including the scheduling component. King County will contract directly with Safe Harbors and will remain the project lead this element of the project.
- Q:** Will the Lead Agency be entering information into Safe Harbors?
- A:** Assessment staff will enter data directly into Safe Harbors, live. Staff will have lap tops and be able to work in Safe Harbors as they meet with families.
- Q:** Is the Lead Agency responsible for addressing any issues or concerns with Safe Harbors?
- A:** Contracting, funding, and negotiating with Safe Harbors is led by King County and will continue as so, ongoing. King County will work with the Lead Agency to address any concerns or issues as they arise regarding Safe Harbors.
- Q:** Will there be testing to ensure that Safe Harbors is working prior to going live.
- A:** Yes, King County is working with Safe Harbors on the functional requirements of the system, which includes: Gap Analysis and Initial System Configuration; System

Acceptance Walkthrough of Features; and, User Acceptance of Features-System Live and Operational.

- Q:** Is the screening tool done by 211 going to be entered into Safe Harbors so assessment staff at the Lead Agency can pick up, at a minimum, the household demographic information?
- A:** The screening function will be in Safe Harbors, however the information is intended to simply understand that there is a housing need and that they qualify for an assessment with the Lead Agency; demographic information will be minimal; contact information will be included for scheduling purposes.
- Q:** Is 211 staff setting appointments for the Lead Agency?
- A:** Yes – except in special circumstances when Immigrant and Refugee organizations and Domestic Violence organizations may schedule appointments directly with the Lead Agency.
- Q:** Will Safe Harbors track what agencies have openings?
- A:** At this time, it is intended that the entire data system platform for CEA will be in Safe Harbors, including the inventory (and availability) of housing resources.
- Q:** If a family comes to a community based organization, should the family be referred to 211? Will the family be referred back to the agency or somewhere else?
- A:** Yes. The family will be referred to 211 and it depends on the match of the agency and family, whether or not they get referred back to the same agency.
- Q:** How does the referral process come down to other community based organizations? Will the funds be collapsed?
- A:** The CEA program will not affect individual program funding for homeless housing services (shelters, transitional housing programs, rental assistance, etc.). These funds will continue to be distributed by public and private funders the same way as they have been to agencies.
- Q:** While a family is on the placement list, what will happen when the family is waiting?
- A:** This new system component is streamlining access for households and enabling the system to match them with housing resources and services that best fit their circumstances and preferences but will not be adding capacity. Families will do what they're currently doing while waiting for services, but will not have to keep calling multiple programs. Families who are already working with community agencies and services can continue to do so. The lead agency is not responsible for case management due to the demand on current resources, but we are looking at ways they may be directed to accessing mainstream benefits and other resources while waiting for housing services.
- Q:** What are the expectations between the first contact families have with the lead agency and while they are on a wait list? Our waitlists already exist. Is there more money available to serve families? Is this waitlist going to be a warehouse for families?
- A:** This is part of a greater systems change. But we are not adding capacity. Other changes we hope to see is how we can serve families better and help them move more quickly

through the system (or through prevention, avoid entry into the system) to ultimately serve more families. While there are not enough resources, we hope to solve part of this issue by using programs more efficiently with better targeting of services. CEA will be our community's first opportunity to know the true need for family homeless services. We will have a community-wide, unduplicated count which will provide real data for advocacy and policy/funding adjustments.

Q: Are shelters included in the placement options?

A: Yes. Current shelter and transitional housing is included.

Q: Will families be required to bring documentation and back ground checks to assessments?

A: Assessment tools are not developed yet. We understand that there are pros/cons of doing background checks at the assessment phase, and while they may be helpful in some cases, there are capacity limitations. So we're not sure at this time.

Q: Can a provider say 'no' or turn away a referred family?

A: There will be agency choice built into the referral protocols but we want to establish guidelines and track the outcomes of referrals to make sure we understand why families are being turned away.

Q: What about those families who are currently on waitlists for agencies? Do all families have to go through CEA or are they grandfathered in.

A: This is something that has yet to be determined, especially as it relates to transitional housing programs.

Q: Some programs fund mandated waitlists for housing. What will those agencies do?

A: We are not aware of whether these are transitional or permanent housing waitlists. We will need to examine this issue more closely. However, there are some standing contracts with permanent housing providers (who also offer services) that include CEA expectations and all future contracts will include this language.

Q: Will there be a common assessment tool or will agency assessments be used given where the family will be referred to?

A: Before CEA goes live, we are planning to assess programs for location, size, their target populations, capacity, services, etc. King County will lead this effort. A common assessment will be used to target families based on this program information, as well as the family's needs and goals.

Q: Will there be consistent requirements between housing programs? For example, will there be requirements for program participation?

A: CEA is starting in our current system, but we are also going through a greater systems change. The assessment/snapshot of agencies will be looking at current requirements and shifting with the system. We will also be looking at what are funding requirements versus program requirements as part of the greater system change.

Q: Is there a specific agency budget (size threshold) to qualify for the CEA contract?

- A:** No. There are application questions regarding the agency capacity that are evaluated by the responses, but no set thresholds.
- Q:** Are there set aside funds for interpreters?
- A:** The proposed budget should include those costs.
- Q:** Does that include interpretation for sign language?
- A:** Yes
- Q:** What can be done to ensure quality interpretation so translating is done correctly?
- A:** We are not dictating the interpreter services provided by the Lead Agency. However, they must have a plan for addressing cultural competency and the language needs of clients. There will be plans for ongoing discussions and feedback, and perhaps targeted feedback to ensure quality customer service, to include translation.
- Q:** Some housing programs (transitional) have their own tailored applications. Will assessment specialists have standard applications or tailor to programs?
- A:** We will be conducting the survey for program criteria and strive to make targeted placement based on a standardized assessment. The assessment is not a service plan.
- Q:** Will the lead agency manage the placement roster in Safe Harbors? Is the roster going to be a separate structure in Safe Harbors or will it link to the existing program's system?
- A:** Yes, the placement roster will be a new feature of the Safe Harbors CEA data system; it will be tied to data collected on the assessment tool.
- Q:** When does the family "handoff" occur in Safe Harbors? When the family is referred or at time of entry?
- A:** There will be a status function for family at the CEA level regarding placement. Since the intent of CEA is placement into permanent housing, it will track the ongoing status of the family.
- Q:** Will private market housing, like the units Landlord Liaison Project access, be registered in CEA.
- A:** No, at this time, CEA will only include transitional housing, shelters, rapid re-housing, transition-in-place, permanent housing with services, etc. (homeless housing with services). Perhaps in the future there may be an opportunity to expand the type of housing resources included. System wide there are other opportunities to coordinate a variety of housing resources, for example, the Housing Locator program that is being developed and will operate as a centralized affordable housing resource.
- Q:** Will there be designated levels for families and organizations?
- A:** The final framework for "designating levels" for families and programs has not been determined; not sure if there will be a tiering system per se or if the system will be organized in such a way as to identify the housing barriers and individual client needs/strengths. However, the system will have the ability to match families with the appropriate housing resources and services that best fit their circumstances and preferences.

- Q:** Is there a way for non-public funded programs to be involved?
- A:** We will be doing outreach to these programs, but we know there aren't the same incentives involved for their participation.
- Q:** How will a family move off the roster if the goal of the Housing Placement Roster is to track families until they move into permanent housing?
- A:** Once a family gains permanent housing, the family will move off the roster.
- Q:** Is there any room in CEA for families that start in prevention who become homeless?
- A:** They would likely come into CEA for assessment. We will continue to have conversations with prevention programs and plan to add prevention services into the CEA system in a later phase. We expect, in the interim, that there will be ongoing dialogue between prevention programs and CEA system.
- Q:** Do we have to include the application questions in the responses?
- A:** It is recommended that you include the question because it is easier to review. We recommend using an outline form.
- Q:** Are there any threshold requirements? Are there any reasons that an applicant would be automatically turned away?
- A:** No (except for failing to meet the submission deadline requirements).
- Q:** Is the review panel the same or different from the other panels used in past funding processes?
- A:** We are creating a new panel for the review of this application; however some panelist may have participated on review panels with the County in the past.
- Q:** Will Domestic Violence and Immigrant/Refugee providers have a different role? Is there money attached?
- A:** No, they will not have a different role per se in the general CEA system, except for the option to conduct screenings for assessments to their clients with barriers to accessing 211.