

Fall 2011 RFP for Operating Support, Rental Assistance, and Supportive Services (ORS)

Commonly Asked Questions

Applications for this RFP are due by 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 21, 2011

Below is a list of commonly asked questions and responses regarding the Fall 2011 RFP. If you have additional questions that are not found here, please contact:

King County Housing and Community Development

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- **Please Note: There is an updated version of the Fall 2011 Application document (dated August 24, 2011) posted on the King website. We have corrected/updated the following questions:**
 - **B. Project Design**
 - **Question 1**
 - **Corrected details for Re-application and WFF questions**
 - **Question 2**
 - **Corrected details for Re-application and WFF questions**
 - **Question 4**
 - **Corrected details for Re-application and WFF questions**
 - **Question 6**
 - **Corrected details for Re-application and WFF questions**
 - **G. Participation in Safe Harbors Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**
 - **Question 1**
 - **Corrected dates**
 - **Question 3**
 - **Corrected dates**

Tips for Completing Applications

- Fully respond to all questions in the application and applicable budget forms. Be sure that your responses are concise, but provide enough detail for the reviewers to understand your program and services – Don't assume that the reviewers are familiar with your agency or all of its programs.
- Carefully evaluate the needs of the people that you are proposing to serve and be specific about why the service and housing model is needed for the target population.
- If applying for funding for services for five years, be sure to clearly describe how the funding will be used during all five years of the project, including how many people your project will serve and how additional housing units will be secured after households in the initial housing units have stabilized (and no longer need the same level of service support). Likewise, if you are proposing a permanent / non time-limited housing project that will be the "exit plan" for a shelter or transitional housing program, please clearly explain how clients will be identified and the timeframe for when they will be enrolled in the permanent housing project and when all units will be available.

- If you are reapplying for funds (you are eligible to reapply for funds this year if you received combined RFP funding in 2006 and your contract is ending at the end of 2011 or mid-year 2012), you need to be clear as to why services funds are still needed for the households or units of housing that were linked to the 2006 award.
- If you are partnering with a housing provider or landlord to place households in specific housing units, please provide a clear picture of unit turnover and the estimated time that it will take for units to be available for your project participants (all units must be occupied or ready for occupancy by the end of 2012).
- Funding through this RFP is intended to expand the non time-limited housing and service opportunities available for people who are homeless. If you are applying for funds to add capacity to an existing program, there must be evidence showing that the additional funding will increase project service capacity to serve a new population (a more service-intensive population) and/or increase the number of homeless people served or housed.
- Fund sources will be assigned to the projects once they are recommended for awards. Applicants should not request a specific fund source, but identify how much service funding, operating subsidy, and/ or rental assistance is needed through this RFP.

Submitting Applications

Q: Does the “Master Copy” of the application need to be turned in to King County on September 21st or is a “post mark” date sufficient in order to meet the deadline?

A: All application materials (both electronic and paper) must be received by King County no later than 4:00 p.m. on September 21, 2011. Application materials received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Q: When is a partnership letter required?

A: Partnership letters are required when money, housing, or services are committed to the project and without those resources the project would not be successful. For projects serving veterans, please provide a letter of support or a partnership letter from a vets-serving organization stating your intent to partner on this project. General letters of support for the project are not required and we ask that they not be included with the application materials.

Project Design

Q: We currently receive Sound Families services funding for ten units, which are subsidized by King County Housing Authority (KCHA) vouchers. The program began many years ago, and the Sound Families funding is now expiring. Are we eligible to apply for funding in this round to support those units, and maintain those vouchers?

A: Yes. Because the project already has KCHA vouchers attached, you must work with KCHA to inquire about transitioning those vouchers to a non-time limited model. Once you have confirmed that this will work for KCHA, you can begin to design your non-time limited services and housing model, as well as a transition plan for the existing clients. It is expected that a portion of the existing clients will be ready to exit the program, and a smaller portion may need to continue receiving services and housing supports. The project description must show clear evidence that services are still needed by

clients, and explain why they are needed. It will be expected that the service request will be moderate and decrease over time (unless the project serves a very high needs population and/or experiences significant turnover in the units).

Q: If I am in the process of applying for housing capital funding this round, should I also submit an application for services and operations funding? If I do not apply this round, how will service and operating funds be earmarked for this capital project when it is ready to open?

A: You should apply for services and operating funds in the calendar year before your project opens. For example: If the units in your project will be ready for clients to move in and receive services in 2012, you should apply for service and operating funds in the Fall 2011 round. If you are not planning to begin leasing units until 2013 or later, your project is not eligible at this time.

When the project is awarded capital funding from King County or the City of Seattle, King County will make a conditional pre-commitment of services and operating funds to fill necessary/ reasonable funding gaps in order for the project to open on time. King County will not commit a dollar amount or fund source at that time. Because of this pre commitment, capital applicants will need to have a clear plan for the services, population to be served, and partners at the time of their capital application. An updated service plan, along with updated service and operating budgets will be submitted to King County by the end of April in the year prior to the building opening. This will give the funders a clearer picture of the gaps and the amount of funds needed for the project to be operational. Then, when the project applies for funds in that fall round, the award amount and fund source will be determined.

Q: I am applying for funds for a Permanent Supportive Housing Project for high need households and there will be nursing staff provided by Public Health of King County through a separate application. Should the nursing staff appear in my budget and should they be listed under a separate fund source?

A: Yes. Since the nursing staff is an integral part of your project, they should appear in the services budget. Please contact Public Health to develop the nursing budget numbers specific to your building and place those costs under fund source #2 or #3. The source of funds should read "Public Health HHOT" and show as not committed. In the narrative section, please explain that Public Health is submitting a separate application for funds to hire nursing staff for this project.

Likewise, if there are other core services for your project (services that are critical to implementing the project) that are provided by another agency, please include those costs in your services budget so that we can see the whole budget picture.

Q: What does rental assistance pay for? Will it cover move-in costs?

A: Rental assistance is funding to help pay a portion of the client's rent in housing. The rent is paid directly to the landlord and the rent may include utility costs. As a result, applicants should confirm whether the landlord pays for utilities or if the client is responsible for the utilities and factor this into the overall rent amount. Rental assistance funding through this RFP is intended to be used for "non-time limited" rental assistance (meaning that the term of the assistance is based on the individual needs of the tenant). Move-in costs are not considered rental assistance. Move-in costs can be requested in the budget (Form 4) as "client assistance."

Q: What is the difference between operating support and rental assistance?

A: Operating support is assistance provided to a non-profit housing provider to pay the costs to run and operate a housing building that is affordable to homeless households with very low incomes. Rental assistance pays for a portion of the client's rent for a housing unit.

Q: What is the difference between operating support and administrative overhead?

A: Operating support is described in the previous answer. Administrative overhead is tied to indirect agency costs associated with implementing the project, such as a percentage of management, administration, office, or other general agency costs. The administrative overhead allowance is capped at 10% of your total request, and should be proposed on form 4 of the budget, in the line titled "Project Administrative Costs".

Q: Can a service provider apply for rental assistance without specific units identified?

A: Yes. Units do not have to be secured at the time of application and can be "scattered site," but there needs to be a clear plan for how the units will be identified in a timely manner. We want to know your experience securing units and/ or whether your organization is participating in the King County Landlord Liaison Project. We will also want to know that you have thought through where the units will be located. All units must be leased by the end of 2012.

Q: Under "Ineligible Activities", what does "shelter related costs" refer to?

A: Funding cannot be used to pay for services or operations for an emergency shelter program. This includes motel stays.

Q: Are clients required to access and utilize supportive services?

A: No, but services must be readily available, funded, and appropriate to the population being served.

Q: Is outreach and engagement an eligible budget item?

A: No, not exclusively. Outreach and engagement activities must only be used for the purpose of enrolling a client and linking them to permanent / non-time limited housing.

Q: Is staff training an eligible budget item?

A: Staff training is an eligible budget item if it is specifically for the staff carrying out the work of this project and the training is critical to them being able to do that work.

Q: If our program provides only case management services to homeless households, but does not provide housing, are we eligible to apply?

A: No. You must have a housing partner or show capacity to administer rental assistance and experience helping clients find and secure units of housing in the private rental market. There must be a non time-limited housing component to the project (where units are made affordable to clients for as long as they need the subsidy).

Q: Can we provide “shallow” subsidies to clients instead of providing a full/deep subsidy.

A: Yes. Please explain your policies for determining the rental subsidy amount for each household and how the amount will be used to stabilize them in non-time limited housing.

Housing Choice Vouchers

Q: Can I apply *only* for Housing Choice Vouchers in this round?

A: No, not specifically. You are asked to specify whether rental assistance is needed for your project. Housing Choice Vouchers may or may not be assigned to your project depending on the specific priorities for the SHA vouchers in this round. There are two other fund sources included in the RFP that can be used for rental assistance.

Budget

Please double check all of the numbers and calculations in your budget to make sure that the information is correct.

There are instructions to the budget forms provided in the first tab of the budget workbook. Please read the instructions before filling out the forms – not all applicants will have to fill out all of the forms.

Please provide explanations about your budget numbers and assumptions in the narrative space provided on each budget form. If you write a lengthy narrative, please be sure to expand the cell and double check the print area, so that all of your narrative response appears when printed (it is fine for your narrative to fill additional pages). If there are unique and special features of your project or if there are reasons why you changed the formulas or didn't provide information in the budget forms, please let the reviewers know in this budget narrative space.

You will find that the budget forms are linked by formulas, so don't worry if numbers automatically appear in forms that you are not required to fill out.

Q: How should I determine the amount of rental assistance that I should apply for?

A: You will be applying for funding to cover the difference between the unit rent amount and the portion of the rent that the client will pay, including utilities if not covered by the landlord (often the client will pay 30 – 50% of their income towards rent.)

If you are applying for rental assistance in units that you have already identified, the rents should not be higher than other rents in the building/ complex. In the case of existing housing, this would be based on previous rent rolls at a minimum. In the case of new housing, a market study can be used to help determine the rents. In either case, other comparable market-rate units in the area and/or the housing authority payment standards may be used to determine the rents.

If you have not determined which units that you want to attach rental assistance to, you should determine what is reasonable in the market for the size of unit that your client will rent. You can use rent.com, other sources of market information, HUD Fair Market Rents, and the housing authority payment standards as general guidelines for reasonable rents for each unit size in the area of the housing or project.

In any case, you should apply for funding for reasonable rent amounts. Ultimately the funders will approve the final rent amount on units prior to contracting.

Q: Is the rental assistance form in the budget only for projects receiving Housing Choice Vouchers?

A: No. All projects applying for rental assistance should fill out the Rental Assistance budget: Form 2. Projects will not know which rental assistance source they are assigned until awards are made.

Q: Can I apply for costs related to implementing the use of the Safe Harbors HMIS for this project?

A: Yes. You can apply for funding to cover some of the costs related to implementing the Safe Harbors HMIS for this project only. For example, you can include a portion of the cost of an administrative staff person or case management staff person who would be responsible for performing data entry and reporting for this project. You should name this staff position and include the expenses in Form 1 of the budget.

Questions as of September 2, 2011

Q: Our program did not receive funds in 2006, but our agency would like to apply for an existing program to meet funding gaps. Is our program eligible to apply for funds to continue services to existing clients?

A: No. Programs must increase capacity to serve a new population or increase the number of homeless people served in order to be eligible for this RFP. The eight projects funded in the 2006 round are the **only** exception to this rule.

Q: Should the Letters of Intent to Partner be addressed to King County?

A: No, please have the Partner Letters addressed to the Executive Director or CEO of your agency.

Q: If it is possible that my application for funds could be considered for funding from WFF, but I am uncertain as to whether or not my program would qualify, should I answer the WFF questions or not? Will either strategy hurt our other funding opportunities through this RFP?

A: If you are applying for a high-need family project, please respond to the WFF-designated application questions. Even if your project is not allocated the WFF funds, you may be eligible for other funds for a project of this type. The review team must fully understand the program you intend to implement.

Q: How do you define chronically homeless families?

A: For WFF, this is a family, consisting of at least 1 adult and 1 child under the age of 18, without a fixed, permanent residence and multiple episodes of homelessness. The family would also have multiple barriers to self-sufficiency which may include: chronic health or mental health barriers, multiple encounters with the criminal justice system, and/or CPS involvement.

Q: If my program meets the needs to receive funding through Washington Families Fund, what kinds of things should I keep in mind when writing my proposal?

A: There should be a clear demonstration of having sufficient matching funds for eligible activities. This is a case where it may be a good idea to include caveats in the budget narrative.

Q: Can I apply for clinical staff, or build them into my project budget as a part of expanding services?

A: King County funds cannot be used to pay for clinical staff, but other fund sources may be used for this purpose (United Way and Building Changes).

Q: With numerous fund sources, requirements, and homeless definitions included in this RFP, how should an agency submit the most competitive application for funding (navigating the various fund sources without writing a confusing application)?

A: We acknowledge this RFP is complex, but we expect an agency to submit an application that clearly describes the program the agency wants to implement. We view the agency to be the expert on the program plan being proposed. While it is true that you may be applying with certain funds in mind, the review team and funder staff will ultimately be responsible for matching requests to funding sources if your program is funded. Please focus on clearly and concisely describing your program and need for funds. You can also include some caveats in the budget narrative or proposal to strengthen your application by exhibiting.

Q: Can you state the difference between the terms ‘client assistance,’ ‘rental assistance’ and ‘homelessness prevention?’

A: Client assistance can include security deposits, moving assistance, furnishings, or utility assistance. Rental assistance is a direct payment to the landlord for a portion of the client’s rent in non-time limited housing. When writing your application, you should think of these activities separately and budget for them separately.
Homelessness prevention includes services or financial assistance for a client who is currently housed. Homelessness prevention activities, also described as eviction prevention, are ineligible for this RFP.

Q: Are there any vouchers available for South King County?

A: No, not through this RFP.

Q: Is staff available for further assistance?

A: Yes, staff is available for Technical Assistance until noon on Wednesday, September 14th. See contact information in the Application Guidelines.

Q: Is providing rental assistance to homeless individuals for market rate housing/private market apartments considered creating “additional homeless housing units using rental assistance and service funds” (in line with the NOFA Common Funding Priorities)?

A: Yes.

Q: In the King County definition of “Homeless” is includes someone who “does not have decent and safe shelter or sufficient funds to purchase a place to stay”. Does this include people who are residing with friends or family and have no income? If so, are these people considered homeless and living on the streets, shelter or transitional housing?

A: Yes. This population is included, but there must be proof of imminent housing loss (for example, a letter from the leaseholder stating that the client must leave). On the application cover sheet, question 6.b., please check the box for “Homeless households living in transitional housing” and add “ – doubled up with friends/family”. Check any other boxes that apply to the population you intend to serve.

Q: Does the \$10,000-12,000 per unit per year calculation apply to rental assistance projects?

A: No, that figure was developed for capital projects serving the chronically homeless population. For a project proposing services and rental assistance in the private rental market, the per unit cost may be higher or lower depending on the type of units and services package.

Q: In Question 1 of the Project Design section, where should I describe overhead, supervisory, and administrative staff?

A: When describing your project budget, the overhead/supervisory/administrative support can be included in the services description briefly. When you complete the budget forms, all the staffing costs should be listed on Form 1 (whether case management or not), and the overhead costs should be listed on Form 4 by line item.

Questions as of September 12, 2011

Q: I am applying for rental and utility assistance for a scattered site private rental market program, but when I include utilities payments in the Tenant Payment section on Form 2, it reduces my rental assistance request. Where should I be requesting utilities assistance for clients?

A: For a scattered site rental assistance program, it is best to request utilities assistance in the “Client Assistance” line (row 12) on Form 4.

Q: Does this funding source require that a tenant pay rent? And if so, must this be calculated into the program revenue in the budget?

A: We do require that tenants contribute some portion of their income to the rent payment, and this must be included in any program policies developed for your program. It would be best if you could estimate the tenant contribution based on your experience with this population, though we realize this is just an estimate.

Q: I would like to propose a program to serve homeless single adults, and another program to serve homeless families. Should I submit two applications or combine them into one application?

A: It is our preference that you submit one application for your non-time limited housing program. If you want to serve different populations, and can make this work with one program model, please submit a single proposal that reflects a program plan to serve the different populations proposed. If

it is too complicated to merge the two programs, you are allowed to submit two separate applications.

Q: Is the due date 4:00 p.m. September 21, 2011?

A: Yes. In the NOFA document published earlier in the summer, a tentative due date was listed. We changed this date when we finalized the RFP documents, and the official deadline is 4:00 p.m. on September 21, 2011.

Q: I am applying for a scattered site rental assistance project and am having problems with the 2011 budget forms. What should I do?

A: We have now posted separate budget sheets (from 2010) for agencies applying for scattered site rental assistance programs. Projects applying for any type of scattered site rental assistance should utilize the 2010 budget forms, which are now posted online. The 2011 budget forms do not properly calculate the rental assistance request in Form 4 (Total Budget). Because scattered site rental assistance projects do not complete Form 3 (Operating Pro Forma), the formulas in Form 4 totaled to a negative funding request, which is incorrect.

The 2010 budget forms will properly calculate the rental assistance request in Form 4. If you are applying for a services and scattered site rental assistance project, please complete budget forms 1, 2, and 4. You do not need to complete the forms for operating expenses (3 and 5).

If you have already adjusted the 2011 forms to accommodate your rental assistance proposal, you may submit the adjusted budget as is.

In summary:

- Projects applying for any type of scattered site rental assistance should utilize the 2010 budget forms
- Projects applying for services and/or operating expenses (including capital projects) should utilize the 2011 budget forms

Q: When we are calculating the 10% administrative allowance, should we consider all costs of the project?

A: Yes. Service personnel and housing costs should be combined to calculate the 10% allowance for administrative expenses. Please just make a note in the budget narrative if you encounter any problems with the spreadsheet formulas that you cannot resolve on your own.

Questions as of September 15, 2011

Q: For the High Need Families project, do we need to include rental subsidies in the \$800,000 request, or can we request additional funds?

A: The rental subsidies are not already dedicated to the High Need Families project in 2011. Please develop a project budget to provide services and housing to high need families, and request funds as you see fit. You are not required to cover the services and housing expenses with \$800,000, and can request additional funds.

Q: Can the High Need Family project be administered anywhere in King County, including Seattle?

A: Yes. The High Need Family project can be administered anywhere in King County, including Seattle.

Q: We are having problems matching the total budget from the budget forms with the total budget on the application cover page. There is no line on the application cover page for client assistance or agency overhead expenses. Where should I account for these costs?

A: Please ensure that the total budget figure on the budget forms matches with the total budget figure on the application cover page. To remedy this on the application cover page, you can either incorporate the client assistance and agency overhead costs in that total budget figure (without having a separate line item), or you can add a separate line item titled “Agency Overhead/Other” so you can show the sum of these costs.

Q: Will agencies that don’t currently participate in HMIS be penalized for this?

A: No, agencies will not be penalized for not participating in HMIS in the past. Points will be assessed for that question based on your narrative response – indicating your willingness and ability to participate HMIS, and your past experience with data collection and analysis. Please include as many details as you can for your plan to participate in HMIS if your agency is awarded funds. Review the narrative description on Question G.1. for more information on how to respond. It is expected that newly funded programs will be set up in HMIS within two months of their contract start date.

Q: Question B.6. in the application refers to programs working with individuals with chemical dependency issues. Are programs required to work with this population?

A: No, it is not required that you work with individuals who are chemically dependent. In this question, we ask that you describe your case management model and philosophy – how you work to engage with clients who may not be “housing ready”, and how you would bring those clients into housing and services.

Q: Do you want the applicant to complete a budget for one year or five years?

A: Please read the instructions on tab 1 of the budget forms. Primarily, you are submitting an annual budget in the budget forms, and the 5-year budget will automatically calculate on Form 4 (Total Budget). On the application cover page, please submit information for the 1-year budget request.