

SECTION 0500
SCOPE OF WORK
SOLICITATION NO. DFA2017MA

Description: Fiscal Agent for Direct Financial Assistance

1.0 introduction

The overall objective for this competitive solicitation is to establish an agreement with one community-based organization to operate as Fiscal Agent for Direct Financial Assistance to manage and distribute the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) direct financial assistance funds for case management clients of the Austin Public Health Department's Neighborhood Centers. The Fiscal Agent will make payments and request reimbursement on a monthly basis from the City.

The City of Austin seeks applications in response to this Request for Applications (RFA) from qualified providers (Applicants) with demonstrated organizational experience and infrastructure to function as a fiscal agent to provide the following services:

- 1) Receive payment requests from Neighborhood Center case managers;
- 2) Verify documentation to ensure appropriate payments with vendors and designated City staff;
- 3) Make timely payments to vendors;
- 4) Make expedited payments to vendors as needed to avoid eviction or disconnect of services
- 5) Track payments made
- 6) Provide expenditure reports, including general ledgers, on a monthly basis; and
- 7) Provide overall accounting for the entire direct client assistance fund
- 8) Ensure confidentiality of all client data collected

The initial term of the contract will be for 9 months, with the total amount available for the direct financial assistance program of \$103,221, including the contractor's operating expenses. There will be two 12-month extension options contingent upon approval by the Texas Department of Community Affairs and/or City Council action and other considerations.

2.0 Background

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) assists local Community Action Agencies (CAA) and other eligible entities serving all 254 Texas counties to provide local essential services to those living in poverty. As the designated "Community Action Agency" for Travis County, the City of Austin is required to provide services and activities that address employment, education, income management, housing, nutrition, emergency services, and/or health services to combat the central causes of poverty. The overall goal is to transition persons out of poverty. With the cost of living in Travis County steadily increasing, many individuals and families struggle to maintain their housing and utilities. For case management clients of the Austin Public Health Department's (APH) Neighborhood Centers, assistance with housing and utility costs can help achieve stability as they work toward transitioning out of poverty.

The intent of CSBG is to promote economic self-sufficiency through the provision of temporary financial assistance, case management, employment support, and/or other services. CSBG is designed to serve low-income families, and individuals, primarily those whose incomes are less than 125% of the Federal Poverty level, in achieving and maintaining self-reliance after this temporary assistance ends.

3.0 Program Services and Delivery Structure

The role of the CSBG Fiscal Agent is one component of the broader CSBG program. Information regarding the broader CSBG program is provided to give applicants additional data about the structure of the case management program through which direct financial assistance will be provided.

The other key components of the CSBG program will entail:

- Neighborhood Center social workers who provide case management services
- Neighborhood Center supervisors and management staff
- Other Neighborhood Center staff such as community workers
- Other City HHSD staff

4.0 Definitions

- 4.1 Social Workers: The role of the Neighborhood Center social workers will be to enroll families and individuals into the case management program, develop service plans, and determine eligibility for direct financial assistance.
- 4.2 Neighborhood Center Supervisors and Management Staff: The role of Neighborhood Center supervisors and management staff will be to provide oversight of the direct financial assistance program, and work with social workers to ensure correct eligibility determination and appropriate use of funds.
- 4.3 Other Neighborhood Center Staff: Other Neighborhood Center staff, such as community workers, may assist Neighborhood Center social workers in identifying appropriate candidates for case management and direct financial assistance.
- 4.4 Direct Financial Assistance: – Payments made on behalf of eligible case management clients to landlords and utility companies using CSBG funds.

5.0 Contractor Responsibilities

- 5.1 The Fiscal Agent shall be responsible for management and distribution of the direct financial assistance funds. The Agent shall make payments to landlords and utility companies on behalf of CSBG clients, after the assistance is approved by Neighborhood Services staff, primarily social workers and their supervisors.
- 5.2 Fiscal Agent shall verify documentation such as W-9 forms, deposit, lease or utility bill amounts in conjunction with the City staff to ensure appropriate payments with vendors and designated City staff.
- 5.3 Fiscal Agent shall make payments to vendors with pay requests processed no more than five business days after receipt.
- 5.4 Fiscal Agent shall make expedited payments to vendors as needed to avoid eviction or disconnect of services for Neighborhood Center clients.
- 5.5 Fiscal Agent shall develop and implement internal controls to ensure immediate corrective action will be taken to address any missed payments or incorrect payments made
- 5.6 Provide expenditure reports, including general ledgers, on a monthly basis by close of business no later than the 10th of the month following the month checks were cut; and provide overall accounting for the entire direct client assistance fund which reflects all expenses charged to the City as Fiscal Agent.
- 5.7 Fiscal Agent shall request reimbursement of all payments made on behalf of CSBG clients and contractor operating expenses on a monthly basis using the Austin Public Health contract database.
- 5.8 Ensure all funds are distributed and CSBG requirements are met by deadlines as agreed with the City

6.0 City Responsibilities

- 6.1 The City will determine eligibility for rent and utility assistance for clients and provide the Fiscal Agent payment requests from Neighborhood Center case managers.
- 6.2 Work closely with the Fiscal Agent staff to process any requests for expedited payments, including pick-up and delivery of payments as necessary to avoid eviction or disconnect of services.
- 6.3 Work with Fiscal Agent staff to verify documentation and payment amounts as needed; receive monthly expenditure reports to monitor and manage the utilization of the direct client assistance funds; identify trends in usage and initiate adjustments that may be warranted to meet program goals.
- 6.4 Provide oversight of staff involved in providing direct financial assistance to clients, and ensure correct eligibility determination and appropriate use of funds.
- 6.5 Submit monthly reports to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to meet grant requirements.
- 6.6 Monitor subcontract to ensure that all City and CSBG requirements are met.

7.0 Eligible Applicants

- a. Any nonprofit or governmental agency that can legally enter into an agreement with the City (as verified by the City Purchasing Office).
 - 1. City policy does not permit entering into an agreement with an entity that owes taxes to the City.
 - 2. The Applicant and its principals may not be currently suspended or debarred from doing business with the Federal Government, as indicated by the United States General Services Administration list of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement and Non-Procurement Programs, the State of Texas, or the City of Austin.
- b. Applicants shall be able to meet the City's insurance requirements for social service agencies. See the insurance requirements in Section 0400 of the RFA.
- c. Applicant's two most recent consecutive audit years:
 - 1. Shall reflect an unqualified and/or unmodified audit opinion
 - 2. Shall not reflect a "Going Concern Uncertainty"
 - 3. Shall not reflect financial management issues unless Applicant can provide evidence that necessary changes have been implemented.
- d. Applicant's Board of Directors shall:
 - 1. Have specific terms delineated by a beginning and ending date
 - 2. Meet in person a minimum of two times per fiscal year
 - 3. Have a process to review program performance, approve budgets, review financial performance and approve audit reports.
- e. Within the last five years, the Applicant shall have a minimum of two years successful experience administering federal contracts and providing the proposed services as a fiscal agent
- f. Applicant shall conduct and maintain documentation of criminal background investigations for all current staff, volunteers, interns or any other individuals involved in administering the direct financial assistance program, such background investigations shall be conducted annually.
- g. Applicant shall meet all Federal and State requirements related to CSBG services. Additional information regarding CSBG, including legislation authorizing the program, may be found at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/resource/community-services-block-grant-statute>.