**Tenant Stabilization Services: Tenant Rental Assistance, Eviction Prevention & Relocation Services - Notice of Funding Availability**

**NOFA**

## 

## **Applications Due Prior to: 3:00 PM Tuesday, April 21, 2020**

**Issuing Department: Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)**

**1000 East 11th Street, Suite 200**

**Austin, Texas 78702**

**(512) 974-3188**

**Point of Contact (POC)\*: Alan Fish**

**Email Address:** [**alan.fish@austintexas.gov**](mailto:alan.fish@austintexas.gov)

**A Pre-Submittal meeting will be held on Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 1:30 PM at AHFC offices at 1000 East 11th Street, Suite 400A, Austin, Texas 78702.**

**Final Submission: One (1) original, signed application and five (5) copies, including all supporting documents, must be submitted to the AHFC offices, 1000 East 11th Street, Suite 200.**

**All communications concerning this solicitation shall be directed to the POC named above. Any communication other than with the POC will be considered unofficial and non-binding.**

**2020 NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY FOR TENANT STABILIZATION SERVICES**

**Notice of Funding Availability**

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**BACKGROUND and PURPOSE**

The Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) currently seeks solicitations from experienced nonprofit organizations to work in partnership to provide tenant stabilization services. **The main goal of this solicitation is to reduce residential displacement of tenants in Austin.**

With the available funding, AHFC has the objective of implementing evidence-based contracting. Evidence-based contracting requires the rigorous gathering of data to measure impact from funded activities toward the City’s goals. **This data gathering will help AHFC answer specific learning questions and determine the scope and continuation of funding across phases within this funding opportunity, as well as for future funding opportunities.** Service providers under this contract will be required to gather data specified in the ***Reporting Requirements***section of this funding announcement.

Funding for this opportunity is part of a portfolio of strategies to prevent displacement made possible through the City’s Housing Trust Fund (HTF); the City is gathering evidence across interventions to refine impact and increase responsiveness to the changing nature of displacement pressures across neighborhoods in various stages of gentrification. The work of the Housing Trust Fund is aligned with [Austin City Council’s Strategic Direction 2023](https://austinstrategicplan.bloomfire.com/posts/3301043-austin-strategic-direction-2023-final) addressing economic opportunity and affordability.

This work is part of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development’s (NHCD) [Displacement Prevention Strategy](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.austintexas.gov%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Ffiles%2FHousing%2FDisplacement_Mitigation_Strategy_Blueprint_Chapter__002_.pdf&data=02%7C01%7CAlba.Donajhi%40austintexas.gov%7C682d145112aa4a931d7c08d714f18141%7C5c5e19f6a6ab4b45b1d0be4608a9a67f%7C0%7C0%7C637000899794742495&sdata=6mhTafbsiJRIFC8iFX8m%2FdNfPp61jJwGzo%2BGnXHl31M%3D&reserved=0), which incorporates recommendations from the City of Austin’s Anti-Displacement Task Force [Final Recommendations for Action, 2018](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.austintexas.gov%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Ffiles%2FHousing%2FAnti-Displacement_Task_Force_Final_Recommendations_and_Report.pdf&data=02%7C01%7CAlba.Donajhi%40austintexas.gov%7C682d145112aa4a931d7c08d714f18141%7C5c5e19f6a6ab4b45b1d0be4608a9a67f%7C0%7C0%7C637000899794742495&sdata=QJuMlVDtUkMhrxRUkAhtQNkunpmDDjEvwEW3TztIR5E%3D&reserved=0) to address gentrification and to develop strategies for preserving and expanding the supply of affordable housing, supporting small businesses, and preserving the City’s cultural assets. The strategy also incorporated the work of the University of Texas gentrification study [Uprooted](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fsites.utexas.edu%2Fgentrificationproject%2F&data=02%7C01%7CAlba.Donajhi%40austintexas.gov%7C682d145112aa4a931d7c08d714f18141%7C5c5e19f6a6ab4b45b1d0be4608a9a67f%7C0%7C0%7C637000899794752489&sdata=nHW6Erphf9kho9e%2Bpn6hR1qFeI%2F7PiZrUga3dfQpJFI%3D&reserved=0), as well as the [People’s Plan](http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=297599), which recommends strategies to minimize displacement. The Displacement Prevention Strategy is also responsive to the directive to create an implementation plan for the *Strategic Housing Blueprint*, as called for in City Council [Resolutions 20170413-024](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.austintexas.gov%2Fedims%2Fdocument.cfm%3Fid%3D275681&data=02%7C01%7CAlba.Donajhi%40austintexas.gov%7C682d145112aa4a931d7c08d714f18141%7C5c5e19f6a6ab4b45b1d0be4608a9a67f%7C0%7C0%7C637000899794762486&sdata=QCAjIJNU8qOQVga%2BqPr7RtQiaMVD7drJ6ef0EyYt8EQ%3D&reserved=0) and [20170413-025](https://gcc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.austintexas.gov%2Fedims%2Fdocument.cfm%3Fid%3D275682&data=02%7C01%7CAlba.Donajhi%40austintexas.gov%7C682d145112aa4a931d7c08d714f18141%7C5c5e19f6a6ab4b45b1d0be4608a9a67f%7C0%7C0%7C637000899794762486&sdata=qG%2FaE3Y9IHK6r%2FmZsAEXoDIx5fmZM6i0pvbZSoaFP0Q%3D&reserved=0).

**FUNDING AMOUNT and FUNDING TERM**

A total of $250,000 is available for an initial twelve-month program period anticipated to begin in July 2020 with up to two 12-month extension options not to exceed $250,000 per extension option, for a total grant period not to exceed 36-months and total funding not to exceed $750,000 (contingent on AHFC Board approval of funding during future budget processes).

AHFC reserves the right to discontinue funding for any future phase of work and to adjust the funding amount or scope of work based on community needs, awardee’s ability to expend funds in a timely manner or any other factor.

**PROPOSAL CRITERIA**

AHFC is soliciting proposals for the Tenant Stabilization Services. We’re looking for projects that will implement a comprehensive strategy with affordable housing for renters as the platform for neighborhood change. AHFC is seeking to allocate funding in a more equitable way. Proposals should outline how collaborating will use resources as a tool to drive a larger vision for tenant stabilization to build community and prevent displacement, reflected in an equitable program plan.

**Key Components of an Equitable Program Plan**

Service to Clients

* Effective data collection to include demographic information of clients served.
* Appropriate feedback/surveys to track engagement and satisfaction of clients.

Providers

* Demonstrated record of serving communities of color as evidenced through:

1. Ongoing and/or specialized outreach;
2. Data driven results indicating service to communities of color; or
3. Leadership reflective of communities of color.

* Willingness to build technical qualifications of sub-contractors
* Willingness to leverage internal expertise, resources and plans to achieve collective impact on racial equity.

Program Design

* Designed to Understand Populations Served (i.e. drill down to see how contractor(s) served specific populations)
* Contract funds are distributed equitably based on measurements of need of vulnerable populations vs. actual clients served.
* Clear focus centering the people most directly impacted to influence program design and implementation.

Successful proposals will demonstrate how organizations will launch synergistic and innovative partnerships and build capacity of community organizations to successfully deliver services to identified clients. Proposals should show how the contractor and sub-contractor are:

1. Creating access to more sophisticated streams of capital for sub-contractors;
2. Facilitating and/or driving improved delivery of service by working together; and
3. Increasing financial and organizational capacity of the subcontractor(s) through resource pooling (i.e. balance sheets, technology, and talent).

**Successful applications will articulate how collaborating will:**

1. Advance creative models and partnerships to drive capital towards implementing a broader community vision to stabilize renters in Austin;
2. Include providers with demonstrated experience serving people of color;
3. Implement a data-driven equitable framework that reflects holistic strategies to address community member displacement;
4. Deepen impact;
5. Build the capacity of smaller, local organizations by pooling resources and aligning balance sheets, technology, and talent;
6. Improve and continuously measure quantitative and qualitative outcomes to show progress towards goals; and
7. Improve execution and delivery of the solution’s intended impact.

**ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS and GUIDELINES for COLLABORATING**

**ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS as LEAD CONTRACTOR**

To be eligible for this funding, applicants:

1. Must be a non-profit organization with a 501c3 status.
2. Must have experience delivering social services, including rental assistance, eviction assistance (eviction counseling and/or tenant support in eviction proceedings in Texas) and related housing services (i.e. housing navigation, wrap around services to achieve housing stability).
3. Must, within the last five years, have a minimum of two years successful experience working with the proposed target populations and providing the required services to clients.
4. Should not be on the City’s debarment list.
5. Must be registered to do business with the City **prior** to applying. Applicants can register at:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/financeonline/vendor_connection/index.cfm>

*For questions or technical assistance, please call: 512-974-2018*

**ELIGIBLE SUB-CONTRACTORS**

To be eligible for this funding, subcontractors:

1. Must be non-profit organization with a 501c3 status.
2. Should not be on the City’s debarment list.
3. Must be registered to do business with the City **prior** to applying. Applicants can register at:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/financeonline/vendor_connection/index.cfm>

*For questions or technical assistance, please call: 512-974-2018*

**GUIDELINES for COLLABORATING**

1. Applications must consist of a minimum of two, but no more than five organizations.
2. Contractors and subcontractors must be a not-for-profit organization exempt from federal income taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
3. Each application must identify a LEAD organization responsible for coordinating the group’s activities including fiscal administration, reporting, quality control and deliverable management.
4. The application must demonstrate how the unique role of the contractor and the sub-contractor will contribute to the goals and outcomes set forth in the proposal.

AHFC reserves the right to reject any or all applications and to waive any minor informality in any application or solicitation procedure (a minor informality being one that does not affect the competitiveness of the application).

AHFC will score and rank applications. Applications that clearly demonstrate how the Lead Contractor and sub-contractor(s) will collaborate to best serve identified clients will score higher.

**ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES**

**The objective of this solicitation is to reduce residential displacement of tenants in Austin.** This will be done through the provision of **Rental Assistance Services, Eviction-Related Services and Tenant Relocation Services to tenants within the city of Austin who:**

1. Are not yet displaced but may be experiencing trouble paying rent or utilities owed to their landlord, manager or landlord’s agent;
2. May have other back owed fees to their landlord, manager or landlord’s agent (excluding fees associated with damages but includes utilities owed to the landlord, manager or landlord’s agent);
3. May be in an eviction process or facing informal evictions or forced moves;
4. Qualify for tenant relocation assistance based on the Tenant Notification & Relocation Assistance Ordinance (Ordinance No. 20160901-050).

Successful applicants will be responsible for the:

1. Development of Program Design and Delivery
2. Marketing of Available Services
3. Administrating and Managing the day-to-day Contract Activities
4. Provision of Services Reporting
5. Approval of Income-eligible Tenants
6. Ensuring Compliance with Developing and Maintaining all required Files, Documents and Required Reports; and
7. Complying with all applicable federal, state and /or local laws, regulations and ordinances.

Successful applicants must conduct the following administrative and service activities, to meet the funding purpose:

* Tenants may be served under this contract for up to 12 months.
* All organizations servicing this contract must provide a client-centered, holistic approach to services.
* Based upon client needs assessment, organization(s) must link clients to other City-funded or City-operated services and/or appropriate services and/or community to reasonably eliminate impediments to stable housing.
* Each organization must demonstrate ability and willingness to serve clients who have a criminal history, if applicable.

The Lead Contractor will operate as fiscal agent to manage funds and distribute direct financial assistance on behalf of tenants served under this contract**.** The level of direct financial assistance per tenant household should be a maximum of $4,000 in a twelve-month period and may be disbursed at one time or on an ongoing basis, as best suited to the tenant’s situation. This would be determined by the social worker/case manager, or case worker working with the client on Rental Assistance, Eviction Prevention Assistance and/or Tenant Relocation.

**Rental Assistance Services**

As applicable per each tenant’s case, one organization in the partnership must offer case management, direct financial assistance and other wrap around services that will assist households at risk of displacement to maintain housing. These activities may be conducted by the lead organization.

**Eviction Prevention Assistance Services**

*Formal Evictions[[1]](#footnote-1)*

(As applicable per each tenant’s case):

* Income-qualify for financial assistance.
* Employ a lawyer or a non-lawyer advocate to provide tenants with emergency mediation/negotiation with their landlord, manager and/or agent of the landlord on behalf of the tenant to resolve:
  + Eviction filings for formal evictions; and
* Determine parameters of repayment plan to property managers.
* Provide tenants with monetary assistance that they are eligible to receive for their eviction situation.

Always:

* Review the Notice to Vacate and evaluate whether proper notice was given.
* Meet with tenants to gather and organize relevant documents and identify relevant facts to present in court.
* Be intimately acquainted with both the eviction process and the local Justice of the Peace Courts.
* Provide counseling services and direct tenant support in court eviction hearings at Texas Justice Courts.
* Prepare tenants for what to expect during the court hearing. Accompany tenants to their eviction hearing and assist them in navigating the hearing and understanding the outcome.
* Share informational materials to educate tenants on: tenant rights and responsibilities; landlord, property manager and/or agent of the landlord expectations and responsibilities; effective communication skills; budget and planning for housing expenses; maintenance do’s and don’ts; safety and pests; and other appropriate information as may be needed.

In addition, if a loss of home does occur for the tenant, the tenant must be assisted in finding a new residence.

*Informal Evictions and Other Forced Moves*[[2]](#footnote-2)

(As applicable per each tenant’s case)

* Income-qualify for financial assistance.
* Employ a lawyer or a non-lawyer advocate to provide tenants with emergency mediation/negotiation with their landlord, manager and/or agent of the landlord on behalf of the tenant to resolve:
  + Informal emergencies such as enforcement of right to repairs, illegal eviction, lockout, utility shut-off, or improper seizure of personal property and/or other informal evictions that could produce displacement; and
* Determine parameters of repayment plan to property managers.
* Provide tenants with monetary assistance that they are eligible to receive for their eviction situation.
* Always share informational materials to educate tenants on: tenant rights and responsibilities; landlord, manager and/or agent of the landlord expectations and responsibilities; effective communication skills; budget and planning for housing expenses; maintenance do’s and don’ts; safety and pests; and others.

In addition, if a loss of home does occur for the tenant, the tenant must be assisted in finding a new residence.

**Landlord, Property Management, and/or Agent of Landlord Outreach Services**

* Based on properties identified by the City with greater history of formal evictions or potential for evictions to occur, develop necessary materials to educate landlords, property managers and/or agents of the landlord on ways to prevent eviction, and work to educate landlords, property managers and/or agents on eviction prevention prior to the initiation of eviction proceedings.
* Coordinate with property managers to generate referrals of tenants at-risk of eviction.

**Tenant Relocation**

As applicable for each tenant’s case, financial tenant relocation assistance may be used for reasonable relocation and moving expenses for multifamily or mobile home tenants, per the Tenant Notification & Relocation Assistance Ordinance (Ordinance No. 20160901-050) and program rules, including the following activities:

* Application fees and deposits for replacement housing;
* Security deposit at replacement housing;
* First month's rent at replacement housing;
* Rental of moving truck and movers;
* Reimbursement for moving materials such as boxes, moving pads;
* Outstanding utility debt or rental debt;
* Utility connection or disconnection fees or deposits, where these cannot be waived; and
* Costs specific to moving mobile homes, including: (i) Relocation of a mobile home, (ii) Storage of items while the home is being transported, (iii) Mobile home park fees, and (iv) Site preparation (including preparing a pad, utility connections, skirting).

**TARGET POPULATION and ELIGIBLE TENANTS**

Research indicates that there are five primary indicators of vulnerability to displacement[[3]](#footnote-3) including:

1. Low income households (Household Income)
2. People of color (Race and Ethnicity)
3. Head of household without a bachelor’s degree or higher (Education)
4. Families with children in poverty (Household composition); and
5. Renters (Housing Status)

The target population for this solicitation are residents of Austin who have low to moderate income, and:

* Are not yet displaced but may be experiencing trouble paying rent or utilities owed to their landlord, manager or landlord’s agent;
* May have other back owed fees to their landlord, manager or landlord’s agent (excluding fees associated with damages but includes utilities owed to the landlord, manager or landlord’s agent);
* May be in an eviction process or facing informal evictions or forced moves;
* Qualify for tenant relocation assistance based on the Tenant Notification & Relocation Assistance Ordinance (Ordinance No. 20160901-050).

Eligibility for the various service activities follows below.

**Rental Assistance and Eviction Prevention Assistance Services Eligibility**

* Meet the definition of tenant under Section 92.001 or 94.001 of the Texas Property Code, and
* Tenant must have a household income at or below 80% Median Family Income (MFI);
* Tenant must have a “lease” as defined under Section 92.001 or 94.001 of the Texas Property Code,
* The tenant’s place of residence must be within the municipal limits of Austin. This includes an area that has been annexed by the municipality for limited purposes; or is in the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the municipality.

**Tenant Relocation Services Eligibility:**

* Tenants must reside at the property on the date that notice is issued per the ordinance.
* For tenants in multifamily developments: households must be at or below 70% median family income (MFI).
* For tenants in mobile home parks: households must be at or below 80% MFI.
* Collaborate with Austin Public Health on any City or city external funding opportunities that may be of benefit to pursue based on impact from these dollars.

When determining tenant prioritization, please consider data provided in Appendix 1.

**REPORTING REQUIREMENTS and** **MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**

AHFC will require periodic reports, fiscal and outcomes oriented, at 6-month intervals and a final report at the end of the funding period. The lead applicant organization will be required to keep a comprehensive file (digital) for clients that includes tenant pre and post surveys.

The final report, to be submitted at the end of the grant period, should meet the objectives outlined in the Background and Purpose section of this Notification of Funds Available. The final report must include:

* A description of how funds supported the organization in meeting the purpose of the contract.
* Key learnings, primarily data driven findings, that will inform the appropriate mix of services to mitigate displacement of renters.
* A final contract budget synopsis that shows how grant dollars were expended.
* A budget synopsis for the close out of the contract.

The City requires all awarded agencies to maintain a complete and current record of tenant eligibility throughout the entire grant agreement period (e.g. tenant file or electronic record).

**EVALUATION FACTORS**

Applications received will be reviewed and scored on a competitive basis. To be considered, applications must meet the criteria in the Eligible Applicants section. Applications will be evaluated on responses by City staff and subject matter experts as deemed appropriate by AHFC. Completing the application does not guarantee funding.

**APPLICATIONS NOT RECEIVED PRIOR TO THE DATE AND TIME SET FORTH ABOVE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR CONSIDERATION.**

**SPECIAL NOTES - APPENDIX 1**

Links to articles describing characteristics of people more likely to be displaced/evicted

* Rental Insecurity: The Threat of Evictions to America’s Renters

<https://www.apartmentlist.com/rentonomics/rental-insecurity-the-threat-of-evictions-to-americas-renters/>

* How We Undercounted Evictions by Asking The Wrong Questions

<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-we-undercounted-evictions-by-asking-the-wrong-questions/>

* Who gets evicted? Assessing individual, neighborhood, and network factors

<https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondgershenson.ssr_.2016.pdf>

* Uprooted: Residential Displacement in Austin’s Gentrifying Neighborhoods and What Can Be Done About It

<https://sites.utexas.edu/gentrificationproject/files/2019/10/AustinUprooted.pdf>

* Central Texas Fair Housing Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing, Section 3

<http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Housing/DRAFT_Central_TX_AI_March_2019_Section_Three.pdf>

* Poor Black Women Are Evicted at Alarming Rates, Setting Off a Chain of Hardship

<https://www.macfound.org/media/files/HHM_-_Poor_Black_Women_Are_Evicted_at_Alarming_Rates.pdf>

* Systematic review of psychosocial factors associated with evictions

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/hsc.12619>

1. Forced Displacement from Rental Housing: Prevalence and Neighborhood Consequences, Matthew Desmond & Tracey Shollenberger

   <https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mdesmond/files/desmondshollenberger.demography.2015.pdf>. Formal evictions result from an official eviction being filed with the County. An informal eviction includes when a landlord simply tells a family to leave or changes the locks. Other forced moves result from landlord foreclosure or building condemnation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ibd. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Uprooted: Residential Displacement in Austin’s Gentrifying Neighborhoods and What Can Be Done About It: https://sites.utexas.edu/gentrificationproject/files/2019/10/AustinUprooted.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)