



C - RFA SCOPE OF WORK

I. Introduction

The City of Austin (City) seeks applications in response to this Request for Applications (RFA) from qualified social service providers (Applicants) to manage the city-owned domestic violence shelter and provide supportive services, housing assistance and direct client assistance. Applicants must be a domestic violence service provider, with at least two years of experience providing robust and holistic services to survivors of domestic violence, operating a congregate facility (a facility serving more than 5 unrelated persons) to persons who have experienced domestic violence, and demonstrate participation in domestic violence/family violence community planning on the local and/or state level.

II. Background & Purpose of Funding

In 2019, the local [Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care](#) reported that the community has an unmet need of 1,340 additional beds dedicated to survivors of domestic violence. The lack of available domestic violence shelter facilities in Austin is exacerbated by the pandemic. When the COVID-19 pandemic reached Austin in the spring of 2020, national domestic violence service providers had anticipated an increase in demand for domestic violence services due to stay-at-home orders. From April to August of 2020, SAFeline reported a 20 percent increase in calls, chats, and texts to their hotline as compared to the same time period in 2019.

Existing emergency shelter and transitional housing options are limited in several ways, including long waiting lists at transitional housing programs. Some survivors remain in transitional shelter longer than is ideal due to no viable housing opportunities. In the [2018 Texas State Plan: Availability of Services at Texas Family Violence Programs](#), Texas Council on Family Violence reports that 47% of individuals experiencing domestic violence are denied shelter in urban areas due to a lack of shelter space. In March 2020 following stay-at-home orders, that number increased to 90 percent, according to the Texas Council on Family Violence.

According to the Ending Community Homeless Coalition in October 2020, the 24/7 SAFeline had a 25% increase in the number of calls between March and June compared to the same period in 2019. Almost three-fourths of the calls to the line are DV-related, and the increase, the nonprofit says, is “fueled by the fear and stresses of COVID-19.”

In Recommendation 20200417-03C, the Commission on Women stated in April 2020:

“WHEREAS, the effects of the pandemic have amplified adverse impacts on women and girls due to shelter-in-place, job losses, school closures and other circumstances, including:



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Increased health and safety risks for women and children experiencing abuse, domestic violence, sexual violence, sex trafficking and homelessness, with heightened risks for women and children of color, LGBTQ+, disabled, immigrant/refugee status, and foster care or runaway youth; abusers may become more predatory and violent as they experience economic pressures, isolation and stress; many organizations have reduced or eliminated services, resulting in fewer options for victims; in-person visits by advocates have been restricted or suspended, and virtual contact may not be safe or practical; victims are reluctant to contact law enforcement or medical providers for issues unrelated to COVID-19..

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission for Women recommends the following actions be taken by the City to support Austin women and families: Provide adequate safe shelter options and services that address the specific needs of women and children experiencing abuse, domestic violence, sexual violence, sex trafficking and homelessness, in partnership with organizations that provide these programs and services; increase awareness of hotlines and related resources."

To address the unmet needs identified, the City of Austin has purchased a new shelter property to be renovated to serve as a domestic violence shelter. The awarded Applicant will provide guidance and assistance with the renovation of the property, and after the shelter is renovated, will manage the new shelter and provide supportive services, housing and direct client assistance for domestic violence survivors in Austin.

III. Funding and Timeline

\$ 2,100,000 million in total available funding for FY2021:

- \$100,000 in one-time funding for first year minor renovations and operations. The City of Austin will be responsible for the majority of the renovations and preparation for the shelter to open.
- \$2,000,000 in additional renewal options for ongoing operations.

Austin Public Health anticipates awarding one Agreement with a minimum request of \$2,000,000.00 and maximum request up to the full amount of the available funding.

The Agreement will have an effective start date of May 15, 2021, with the requested amount to be spent over a 12-month period. All funding is conditional upon City Council approval of the Budget.



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Awarded programs may be structured as a reimbursable-based agreement or a deliverables-based agreement, as defined below:

- Reimbursable Agreement- An Agreement where an agency is reimbursed for expenses incurred and paid through the provision of adequate supporting documentation that verifies the expenses.
- Deliverable Agreement- An Agreement where an agency is reimbursed for a report or product that must be delivered to the City by the grantee (or by the Subgrantee to the Grantee) to satisfy contractual requirements. It can include goods or finished works, documentation of services provided or activities undertaken, and/or other related documentation.

IV. Services Solicited

A. City of Austin Client Eligibility Requirements

Client eligibility will generally be survivors of domestic/family violence, including their dependents. Per the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), "Family Violence means an act by a member of family or household against another member of the family or household that: A) is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, or assault, or that is a threat that reasonably places the member in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, or assault, but does not include defensive measures to protect oneself; B) is intended to inflict emotional harm, including an act of emotional abuse."

In addition, individuals fleeing domestic/family violence fall into the Federal HUD Category 4: Fleeing or Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence, which includes any individual or family who: the definition from the federal HUD Category 4 – Fleeing / Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence which includes any individual or family who:

- Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee domestic violence
- Has no other residence, and
- Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing

Per Sections 32.201 and 32.304 of the TAC, minors aged 16-17 are able to obtain shelter, care and counseling at domestic violence shelters without guardian consent, however the grantee must have sufficient insurance coverages and policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety of minors under their care.

For purposes of this funding, household income and residency are not conditions of eligibility. Clients served in this program must be survivors of domestic violence.

Except where confidentiality restrictions conflict with this policy, Agency must maintain a record of client eligibility (e.g. client file or electronic record) that includes documentation of:

- Client intake
- Services provided



B. Shelter Description

- The new domestic violence shelter is a hotel located in the Saint John neighborhood that will be renovated to fit the needs of survivors of domestic violence.
- There are currently 75 rooms with individual full bathrooms. These rooms will serve as units for families and some may be repurposed for offices and for service providers.
- Renovations will update the shelter to add common areas.
- It is anticipated that there will be one large commercial kitchen with several kitchen stations.
- Each room may also have the capacity to include a microwave, small appliances, and refrigerator to provide options for independent meals, dependent on decisions by the City Fire Marshal.

C. Shelter Operations and Facility Maintenance

- The shelter operator will be required to comply with the facility standards, including security guidelines, otherwise conferred to contractors of the Health and Human Services Commission Family Violence Program found in Texas Administration Code governing Family Violence Shelters, Title 1, Part 15, Chapter 379, Subchapter B, [Division 5: Facility, Safety, and Health Requirements](#).
- The awardee will work with Austin Public Health and the Texas Department of Family Services to ensure compliance within six months of award and prior to opening.
- The successful Applicant will work with the City of Austin to oversee the renovations of the shelter, particularly with safety and security requirements and shelter amenities. Renovations of the shelter will be funded by the City of Austin. The City of Austin will refer to the guidelines outlined by “Building Dignity: Design Strategies for Domestic Violence Shelter” that focuses on Empowerment, Security, Reconnection, Parenting and Harmony.
- The shelter operator will be responsible for maintaining the city-owned building.
- APH and the successful Applicant will negotiate the details of the operation and maintenance requirements during contract negotiation.
- The final grant agreement will specify division of maintenance and repair responsibilities between the City of Austin, as owner of the building, and the shelter operator, who will provide day-to-day management.
- For the purposes of this solicitation, the Applicant should plan to allocate funding in their Application budget for maintenance and operations costs of the shelter as a whole.
- The methods for clients to access the shelter will be determined during the negotiation of the contract. The operator will work with law enforcement, local and state experts on family violence, community stakeholders which should include survivors of domestic violence and APH to develop a plan for referrals and client access, which will include a plan for a 24-hour hotline.
- The location of the shelter will be kept confidential to the degree possible.



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- The shelter operator will develop, maintain, and comply with written policies and procedures to promote the safety and security of residents, nonresidents, employees, and volunteers and will adhere to safety standards found in the Texas Administrative Code §379.503 - §379.505.
- The shelter operator will adhere to confidentiality standards found in the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and the Violence Against Women Act.

D. Program Services

All Applicants must propose to provide shelter services for families experiencing domestic violence as well as housing location and placement, including but not limited to the following:

- a. Rental Assistance
- b. Utility Assistance
- c. Alternate placement options when shelter housing is not an option that could include hotel stays or rapid rehousing assistance

In addition, the following program services should be provided to shelter residents according to the State of Texas HR Code Chapter 51: [Human Resources Code Chapter 51: Family Violence Centers](#).

- d. Advocacy/Case Management
- e. Children's Services
- f. Therapy/Counseling sessions
- g. Legal Assistance
- h. Collaboration with local law enforcement
- i. Basic needs assistance such as access to emergency medical care, transportation, basic first aid, personal hygiene items, food and clothing
- j. Outreach and Prevention
- k. Peer support for survivors of domestic violence interested in volunteering.
- l. Provide community education relating to family violence
- m. Referrals to other providers for additional services to obtain or maintain self-sufficiency such as workforce development and employment services

E. Principles of Service Delivery

The City of Austin is dedicated to selecting a shelter operator with a strong understanding of the needs of individuals experiencing family violence, homelessness, and a demonstrated history of services provided in a trauma-informed care framework. The environment established by the operator – which includes staffing, survivor participation, and opportunities for feedback – must reflect this service model.



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In terms of shelter operations, the grantee must adhere to the following guidelines and best practices outlined in the Texas Council on Family Violence toolkit, [“In Our Hands: Everyday Trauma-Informed Advocacy”](#) which address the following areas:

1. Trauma-Informed Advocacy and Communication
2. Creating Welcoming Environments
3. Moving from Rule Enforcement To Cooperation
4. Survivor Input: Including survivors in Your Program for Input
5. Culturally-Affirming and Structural-Competence
6. Improving Language Access
7. Supporting staff wellness
8. Guidelines for living and working in the shelter

The shelter program must follow HIPAA guidelines to protect client confidentiality and security of healthcare information. Austin Public Health requires the recipient of the funding to follow the Center for Disease Control Prevention (CDC) and the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\) 6 key principles](#) fundamental to trauma-informed approach including:

1. **Safety:** Throughout the organization, staff and the people they serve, whether children or adults, feel physically and psychologically safe; the physical setting is safe and interpersonal interactions promote a sense of safety. Understanding safety as defined by those served is a high priority.
2. **Confidentiality:** In addition, all Applicants must adhere to the [General Confidentiality Policy Rule 379.613 of the TAC](#) which requires that a family violence shelter have a written general confidentiality policy that provides, at minimum, that all information will be kept confidential, including all personal information and all communications, observations, and information made by and between or about adult and child residents and nonresidents, employees, volunteers, student interns, and board members.

Furthermore, the awarded agency will be responsible for following privacy and confidentiality restrictions from the federal programs (VAWA/FVPSA/VOCA) even if the facility operator is not funded by these sources. Some of these restrictions are:

- Prohibition from entering data into HMIS
 - Prohibition from including identifying information in client files
3. **Written Policy:** The shelter program must have a written policy which provides for security and confidentiality of residents’ location. This policy must include procedures regarding intruders or trespassers, contact with law enforcement, and access to staff or the designated person 24 hours a day.



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4. Trustworthiness and Transparency: Organizational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency with the goal of building and maintaining trust with clients and family members, among staff, and others involved in the organization.
5. Peer Support: Peer support and mutual self-help are key vehicles for establishing safety and hope, building trust, enhancing collaboration, and utilizing their stories and lived experience to promote recovery and healing. The term “Peers” refers to individuals with lived experiences of trauma, or in the case of children this may be family members of children who have experienced traumatic events and are key caregivers in their recovery. Peers have also been referred to as “trauma survivors.”
6. Collaboration and Mutuality: Importance is placed on partnering and leveling of power differences between staff and clients and among organizational staff from clerical and housekeeping personnel, to professional staff to administrators, demonstrating that healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making. The organization recognizes that everyone has a role to play in a trauma-informed approach. As one expert stated, “one does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic.”
7. Empowerment, Voice and Choice: Throughout the organization and among the clients served, individuals’ strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon. The organization fosters a belief in the primacy of the people served, in resilience, and in the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to heal and promote recovery from trauma. The organization understands that the experience of trauma may be a unifying aspect in the lives of those who run the organization, who provide the services, and/or who come to the organization for assistance and support. As such, operations, workforce development and services are organized to foster empowerment for staff and clients alike. Organizations understand the importance of power differentials and ways in which clients, historically, have been diminished in voice and choice and are often recipients of coercive treatment. Clients are supported in shared decision-making, choice, and goal setting to determine the plan of action they need to heal and move forward. They are supported in cultivating self-advocacy skills. Staff are facilitators of recovery rather than controllers of recovery. Staff are empowered to do their work as well as possible by adequate organizational support. This is a parallel process as staff need to feel safe, as much as people receiving services.
8. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues: The organization actively moves past cultural stereotypes and biases (e.g. based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender identity, geography, etc.); offers, access to gender responsive services; leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections; incorporates policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic and cultural needs of individuals served; and recognizes and addresses historical trauma.



V. Application Evaluation

A total of 100 points may be awarded to the application with an additional ten bonus points available for a potential of 110 total evaluation points. All applications will be evaluated as to how the proposed program aligns with the goals of this RFA and whether each question has been adequately addressed.

RFA #003 Domestic Violence Shelter and Services 2021 NPS Evaluation Rubric		
Form 1:	Offer Sheet - Applicants must print, sign, scan and upload signed forms.	No points, but Applicant must submit signed form
Form 2: RFA Application		
Part 1: Fiscal and Administrative Capacity		
Section 1	Threshold Review Form in Partnergrants (Form 1)	No points awarded, but Applicant must pass threshold defined in Applicant Minimum Qualifications below to advance to submittal of their Final Application
Section 2	Organizational Information (Form 3)	No points awarded. This is for informational purposes only.
Part II. Scored Application (Form 3)		
Section 1 Experience and Cultural Competence	Shelter Experience Services Experience Performance Racial Equity CLAS Standards	10 points 10 points 5 points 12 points 3 points 40 points total
Section III: Program Design	Shelter Op and Facility Maint. Shelter Guidelines Program Services Service Delivery Principles Metrics	8 points 7 points 8 points 7 points 5 points 35 points total
Section IV: Data Informed Program Management	Data	10 points total
Section V: Cost Effectiveness	Staffing Form 3: Budget and Cost Effectiveness	10 points 5 points 15 points total
		Total: 100 Points
Section VII: BONUS	Questions A-D	10 points



Healthy Service Delivery		
		Total possible points: 110 points
Form 4:	COA Certifications and Disclosures- Applicants must print, sign, scan and upload signed forms.	No points, but Applicant must submit signed form

VI. Applicant Minimum Qualifications

Applicants must demonstrate

- That the Agency is a domestic violence service provider, with two-years of experience providing robust and holistic services to survivors of domestic violence, operating a congregate facility (a facility serving more than 5 unrelated persons) to persons who are fleeing domestic violence, and demonstrate participation in domestic violence/family violence community planning on the local and/or state level.
- Ability to meet all the Texas Administrative Code requirements governing Family Violence Shelters [Division 5: Facility, Safety, and Health Requirements](#) within the first six months of contract award.

All agencies applying for funding must:

- Be a non-profit organization able to conduct business in the State of Texas
- Have submitted all applicable tax returns to the IRS and the State of Texas (e.g. Form 990 or 900-EZ and state and federal payroll tax filings)
- Be eligible to contract and not debarred from contracting, according to SAM.gov and City Debarment information
- Be current in its payment of Federal and State payroll taxes
- Not owe past due taxes to the City
- Have the ability to meet Austin Public Health’s Social Services Insurance Requirements
- Have an active Board of Directors that meets regularly and reviews program performance, financial performance, and annually approves the agency budget

VII. Application Format and Submission Requirements

The Application must be submitted in Partnergrants: [Partnergrants database](#).

Responses should be included for each question.

A. Partnergrants Registration

Since APH is only accepting applications in Partnergrants, all Applicants must do the following to get registered in Partnergrants:

1. Confirm that their organization is a registered vendor with the City of Austin.



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- To find the City of Austin Vendor Number please visit [Austin Finance Online](#) and search for the organization's legal name.
 - To register to become a potential City of Austin vendor, go to [Austin Finance Online](#) to register.
2. Be a registered user in the Partnergrants system. The applications will be submitted through this web-based system.
 3. [To register, visit Partnergrants](#) and click on "Register Here."

Note that the organization's City of Austin Vendor number is required to complete registration in Partnergrants.

B. Submissions Instructions

ALL DOCUMENTS MUST BE UPLOADED INTO PARTNERGRANTS. NO PAPER COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED.

1) Threshold Review Instructions

- The first part of the application is to submit a threshold review by **March 4, 2021 at 3 PM CST.**
- The threshold form is in Partnergrants and all documents required will be uploaded in Partnergrants by the due date.
- Please note, Partnergrants will not accept any documents with a name that includes characters other than letters and numbers.

2) Final Application Instructions

- 1) **Total word limit in Form 2 RFA Application is 12,000 words which includes the questions. Applications that exceed 12,000 words will not be considered.**
- 2) Word automatically counts the number of words in a document and displays it in the status bar at the bottom of the screen. There are about 5800 words in Form 2-RFA Application, and this is included in the 12,000 word limit.
- 3) Applicants must use this template for the Application and cannot submit an application that does not include the questions and narrative.
- 4) All questions are **boxed and highlighted in green** in Part 2: Application Questions. Editing is restricted in the document except in the answer boxes. For each question, please provide a response or write N/A for not applicable in the boxes provided. It is preferable to be repetitive rather than to leave sections incomplete.
- 5) If using this document, Applicants must type answers into the section that says "Click or tap here to enter text" after each question or in the required tables.
- 6) If compiling responses in a separate document, Applicants must include all questions and narrative before their answer so the Application appears the



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same as the provided template.

- 7) If compiling responses in a separate document, clearly label each question and number, use size 11 Calibri font, double-space the document, use 1" margins on 8 ½ x 11" white paper without page scaling.
- 8) The following documents will not count towards the total word count:
 - a. Attachments submitted to answer a question like policies and procedures, staff positions, letters of support, etc.
 - b. Attachments 1-Offer Sheet, 3-Program Budget and Funding Summary section, 4- COA Certifications

C. Required documents

The following must be completed and submitted in Partnergrants.

FORM NUMBER	TITLE	Requires Applicant Response DUE DATE
1	OFFER SHEET	March 25, 2021 Uploaded into Partnergrants
2	RFA APPLICATION	
3	PROGRAM BUDGET AND FUNDING SUMMARY	
4	COA CERTIFICATIONS AND DISCLOSURES	
A	THRESHOLD REVIEW FORM	FILL OUT DIRECTLY IN PARTNERGRANTS BY March 4, 2021

VIII. Additional Information

- A. Proposal Acceptance Period: All applications shall remain valid until award, negotiation, and execution of contracts as directed by the Austin City Council.
- B. Proprietary Information: All materials submitted to the City become public property and are subject to the Texas Open Records Act upon receipt. If an Applicant does not desire proprietary information in the proposal to be disclosed, each page must be identified and marked proprietary at time of submittal. The City will, to the extent allowed by law, endeavor to protect such information from disclosure. The final decision as to what information must be disclosed, however, lies with the Texas Attorney General. Failure to identify proprietary information will result in all unmarked sections being deemed non-proprietary and available upon public request.
- C. Exceptions: Be advised that exceptions to any portion of the Solicitation may jeopardize acceptance of the application.
- D. Application Preparation Costs: All costs directly or indirectly related to the preparation of a response to the RFA or any oral presentation required to supplement or clarify an application that may be required by the City shall be the sole responsibility of the Applicant.
- E. Agreement Adjustments: The City of Austin reserves the right to adjust the Agreement amount or scope of work over the contract period based on community needs, Applicant's



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ability to expend funds in a timely manner or any other factor. When the City determines adjustments need to be made, the City will provide at least a 90-day notice to the Grantee.