



City of Austin
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project

Exhibit C- Scope of Work

I. Introduction

The City of Austin Homeless Strategy Office (HSO) issues this Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify a qualified social service providers with demonstrated experience assisting individuals and families newly experiencing homelessness to resolve their experience quickly.

II. Solicitation Objectives

The objective of this solicitation is to identify applicants with experience and demonstrated capacity to design, implement, and pilot Diversion programs to assist individuals and households with either avoiding or quickly exiting experiences of unsheltered or sheltered homelessness with minimal or no financial assistance.

III. Background

HSO is deeply committed to ending homelessness and has worked with community partners to assemble and coordinate investments across the Homelessness Response System (HRS). An effective HRS implements Diversion programming to quickly end individuals and households' experiences of homelessness. With little-to-no financial assistance, but through a client-driven approach, its goal is to help the person or household find safe alternative housing immediately, rather than entering shelter or experiencing unsheltered homelessness. It is intended to ensure that the homelessness experience is as brief as possible, to prevent unsheltered homelessness, and to avert stays in shelter.

The Austin City Council allocated funding during the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget process to support the “scale up of current programs managed by multiple non-profit partners and provide a city-wide access point of diversion... [and] ask all clients what opportunities exist to quickly resolve the crisis that risks, or has resulted in, their unsheltered homelessness.”

Many other localities, including Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio, utilize Diversion programming to assist families and individuals with avoiding or quickly ending experiences of homelessness. While Austin has several formal and informal diversion initiatives, this solicitation hopes to identify promising Diversion activities.

The awarded program/s will be a part of a demonstration project, that will incorporate an evaluation to test effectiveness and utilize the findings to develop and fund a local Diversion program model. The performance of the program(s) awarded through this solicitation will be evaluated over the contract term for a variety of factors, including effectiveness in resolving situations of homelessness, impact of differing types of assistance, and cost efficiency.



City of Austin
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project

IV. Funding and Timeline

Department: Homeless Strategy Office (HSO)

Services Solicited: Diversion

Total Funding Available: \$446,000 in City of Austin General Fund

Number of Agreements and Contract Term: HSO anticipates up to three agreements starting August 1, 2024. The funds for this program are ongoing funds from the City of Austin General Fund in an amount of \$446,000 annually, with up to 2 renewal options. All future renewal options will be based on future budget availability. Collaborative applications will be considered; however, a lead agency must be identified.

Minimum Amount: Minimum award amount is \$50,000; Applicants may submit a proposal for less than or up to the full amount available.

Awarded programs may be structured as a reimbursable-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. Agencies with an overall operating budget of less than \$1,000,000 may be eligible for one-time, upfront funding for start-up costs to be determined at the time of contract negotiation.

V. Eligible Population

Households experiencing homelessness (HUD categories 1, 2, and 4) and those at-risk of homelessness as defined in Exhibit B. Standard Solicitation Provision and Instructions, Section 1.B. Homeless Services Definitions. Program operators are exempt from documenting City of Austin Social Services eligibility requirements.

VI. Services Solicited and Eligible Costs

The services and eligible costs listed below are types of costs that may be proposed in this application. Applicants may suggest additional eligible costs given the demonstrative nature of this solicitation. All applicants must describe proposed activities in both Form 2 – HSO Proposal and Form 4 – Budget and Narrative, and the activities and costs described in each form must match. Each eligible cost type listed in the two sections below must be listed on separate line items in Form 4 – Budget and Narrative.

- 1) Diversion Services and Assistance** – Diversion Services and Assistance serves households who are at imminent risk of homelessness or who have lost their housing in the last 30 days. The goal of this assistance is to prevent homelessness or help clients end their homelessness as quickly as possible.

Since this solicitation seeks to create a demonstration project, or multiple projects, HSO welcomes applicants to propose projects with iterative and/or creative solutions that balance service delivery quality and performance expectations. As such, HSO will approach



City of Austin
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project

contract negotiations, project implementations, and close-out and evaluation with a collaborative mindset.

Requirements

- a. Applicants must design a program model which identifies, at minimum:
 - i. How eligible participants will be identified and prioritized for services, considering the goals and performance measures of the solicitation.
 - ii. How equality will be factored into service selection and provision.
 - iii. What services participants will receive and the frequency of service selection.
 - iv. How assistance will be distributed to program participants.
- b. Applicants must develop policies and procedures to define when assistance is appropriate to ensure equitable access to assistance for participants who are unlikely to return to homelessness after receiving assistance.
- c. The client must be entered into the program in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) with a distinct project Entry and Exit, and diversion assistance type must be recorded in HMIS as a “Service” transaction.

Eligible Costs

- a. Personnel costs for staff to meet the above requirements and to ensure all staff are trained in diversion best practices.
 - b. Costs necessary to assist an individual with exiting or avoiding homelessness are eligible, so long as costs are eligible under COA Exhibit B.3.
- 2) **Diversion Operations Costs (Optional)** – Providers may utilize funds to support the direct provision of the Diversion services.

Requirements

- a. Applicants may only utilize funds for the express purpose of the direct provision of diversion services and assistance. Funding utilized to support the administrative activities of the project are unallowable under this eligible cost.

Eligible Costs

- a. Equipment such as technology to be utilized by staff for the delivery of services.
 - b. Covering monthly rental amounts for service delivery facilities, proportionally distributed to the contracted activities.
 - c. Mileage or other operational costs necessary for the distribution of services.
- 3) **Administrative Activities (optional)**: The recipient may use up to 15% of its project budget for the payment of administrative costs related to the planning and administration of the project. This does not include staff and overhead costs directly related to carrying out activities or services eligible under costs in item 1 listed above.

Requirements



City of Austin
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project

- a. Program administrators must prepare program budget and schedules, and amendments to those budgets and schedules as needed.
- b. Develop system to manage compliance with the program requirements.
- c. Monitor program activities for progress and compliance with program requirements.
- d. Prepare reports and other documents directly related to the program for submission to the City of Austin.
- e. Managing or supervising persons whose primary responsibility is directly related to the program.

Eligible costs include:

- a. Salaries, wages, and related costs of the recipient's staff, the staff of subrecipients, or other staff engaged in program administration and not in program operations. Amounts included should reflect the percentage of time of each employee that will be dedicated to the administration of this program.
- b. Administrative services performed under third-party contracts or agreements, including general legal services, accounting services, and audit services; and
- c. Other costs for goods and services required for administration of the program, including rental or purchase of equipment, insurance, utilities, office supplies, and rental and maintenance (but not purchase) of office space. Program operations should be included in the operations section of the budget while general administrative costs not specifically related to program operations should be included in this section.

VII. Data Collection and Reporting

Applicants must comply with the following data requirements:

- A. Utilize the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to track and report client information and program services for individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Maintain accurate data sources for persons not experiencing literal homelessness.
- B. Adhere to all requirements of HMIS data submission, Coordinated Entry (CE), Continuum of Care (CoC), and related regulatory requirements. Full information on metric assessment and logic can be found in the [CoC APR and ESG CAPER HMIS Programming Specifications](#).
- C. Adhere to additional data collection or reporting requirements of the awarded program evaluation partner and as approved by the City of Austin's Homeless Strategy Office.

VIII. Performance Outcomes

Awardee will be required to provide quarterly reporting on the following:

- **Output #1:** The minimum number of participants who will be assisted by this program
- **Outcomes #2**
Percentage of Households receiving Diversion services who exit homelessness
Numerator: Number of households exiting to permanent or temporary housing destinations
Denominator: Number of households receiving diversion services



City of Austin
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project

- **Outcomes #3:**
Percentage of Households receiving Diversion services who exit homelessness without financial assistance
Numerator: Number of households exiting to permanent or temporary housing destinations without needing financial assistance
Denominator: Number of households receiving diversion services
- **Outcomes #4**
Percentage of Households receiving Diversion services who exit homelessness positively and do not return to homelessness in the following 12 months
Numerator: Number of households who enroll into an HMIS program for those experiencing homelessness in the following 12 months of positive exit
Denominator: Number of households exiting to permanent or temporary housing destinations

IX. Service Delivery

- a. Awardees are strongly recommended to comply with the [Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care \(CoC\) Written Standards for Program Delivery](#), as approved by the Homelessness Response System Leadership Council. Where the finalized Program Work Statement conflicts with the Written Standards for Program Delivery, the Program Work Statement, finalized between HSO and the Applicant, will take priority and all other parts of the Written Standards for Program Delivery apply.
- b. Awarded agencies must ensure services are provided following evidence-based practices such as Trauma-Informed Care, Harm Reduction, and Motivational Interviewing. Applicants should detail how these practices will be incorporated into their proposed program model.
- c. The City of Austin is dedicated to selecting crisis response providers with a strong understanding of the needs of individuals and households experiencing homelessness and a demonstrated history of client-centered care and culturally competent service delivery.
- d. Language assistance, written and verbally, must be available to all individuals with limited English proficiency and/or other communication needs, at no cost to them, to facilitate timely access to all services.
- e. Applicants must ensure service delivery and enrollment follow the City of Austin’s Anti-discrimination Ordinance, Chapter 5-1 Housing Discrimination, and federal Fair Housing regulations.
- f. Applicants must make every effort to ensure participants do not receive duplication of services or assistance from different funding sources.
- g. The City of Austin recommends Applicants pay a livable and competitive wage to all staff working on the program. Please consult a reputable data source for minimum wage data, such as MIT’s Living Wage calculator, at livingwage.mit.edu

X. Best Practices

All supportive services programs are encouraged to incorporate the following best practices:



City of Austin
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project

- Incorporating Perspectives from People with Lived Experience: The City of Austin is committed to addressing the disproportionate impacts of homelessness and poverty on marginalized communities. All recipients of HSO funding are expected to design programs with input from individuals with lived expertise and ensure equitable access and outcomes in program performance.
- Competencies for Working with People who are Homeless: The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has put forth needed competencies in the areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes which are necessary to provide effective services for individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness. A full description of competencies, theoretical frameworks and corresponding practices can be found [on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\) website](#).

XI. Additional Resources

Applicants must consider Diversion best practices in the design of their projects:

- “Diversion.” National Alliance to End Homelessness, April 10, 2020. <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/diversionexplainer/> .
- “From Our Federal Partners: Housing Problem-Solving with Prevention, Diversion, and Rapid Exit Strategies”, HUD Exchange, July 19, 2019. <https://www.hudexchange.info/news/from-our-federal-partners-housing-problem-solving-with-prevention-diversion-and-rapid-exit-strategies/> .
- “Shelter Diversion: A Best Practice to Prevent Homelessness.” Strategies to End Homelessness, March 27, 2024. <https://www.strategiestoendhomelessness.org/shelter-diversion-a-best-practice-to-prevent-homelessness/> .

XII. Application Evaluation

All submitted proposals will be reviewed to ensure they meet a minimum standard, known as a threshold review, before being included in the full evaluation process. The minimum standard is described in Section XIII of this Scope of Work.

Proposals meeting the minimum requirements will be evaluated according to the established criteria. The criteria are the objective standards that the evaluation team will use to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. City of Austin reserves the right to review and evaluate all applications based on other factors such as City of Austin monitoring findings, corrective action plans, desk reviews or other reviews.

A total of 100 points may be awarded to each proposal. Points will be awarded based on an evaluation of whether a proposed program aligns with the goals of this RFP and how well each response answers the questions of the application. Any question that is not answered will result in an application receiving zero points for that question.



City of Austin
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project

RFP # 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project			
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: RFP Proposal			
Part I: Fiscal and Administrative Capacity	Agency Information and Minimum Requirements	No points awarded, but Applicant must pass threshold defined in Section XIII. Applicant Minimum Qualifications in below this table.	
Section	Category	Maximum Points Eligible	
Part II: Scored Proposal	Program Summary	35 points	
Section 1: Program Design	Clients Served Program Requirements Service Delivery & Best Practices Service Coordination		
Section 2: Data Informed Program Management	Performance Measures Data Security & Systems Management Quality Improvement & Feedback		20 points
Section 3: Experience and Cultural Competence	Agency Experience & Performance Service Delivery Experience Cultural Competence & Racial Equity		15 points
Section 4: Cost Effectiveness (Form 3)	Program Staffing & Time Livable Wage Program Budget & Funding Summary		20 points
	Cost Effectiveness & Number of individuals served/ total budget = Cost Analysis	10 points	
		Total: 100 points	
Form 4: COA Certifications and Disclosures	Applicants must print, sign, scan and upload signed forms.	No points, but Offeror must submit signed form.	



City of Austin
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project

XIII. Applicant Minimum Qualifications

- a. Agencies, board of directors, or leadership staff submitting a proposal must have a minimum of two years of established, successful experience providing services.
- b. Agency must be a non-profit organization, quasi-governmental entity, or otherwise qualified social service provider (including for-profit) able to conduct business in the State of Texas, and legally contract with the City of Austin.
- c. Agency must have submitted all applicable tax returns to the IRS and the State of Texas (e.g., Form 990 or 990-EZ and state and federal payroll tax filings).
- d. Agency must be current in its payment of Federal and State payroll taxes.
- e. Agency must be eligible to contract and are not debarred from contracting with the City of Austin, State of Texas, and Federal government, according to SAM.gov, and State and City Debarment information.
- f. Agency cannot owe past due taxes to the City.
- g. Agency must have the ability to meet the Homeless Strategy Office’s standard agreement terms and conditions, which includes Social Services Insurance Requirements.
- h. Agency must have an active Board of Directors that meets regularly and reviews program performance, financial performance, and annually approves the agency budget. The Board of Directors shall have a strong commitment to fundraising to ensure well-funded, sustainable programs and operations.

The City of Austin reserves the right to review and evaluate all applications based on other factors such as City of Austin monitoring findings, corrective action plans, desk reviews or other reviews.

XIV. Application Format and Submission Requirements

Exhibit B: Solicitation Provisions, and Instructions for all requirements.

The Application must be submitted in the [PartnerGrants database](#). No late submissions will be accepted. Responses should be included for each question; points will not be awarded for blank, off-topic responses or responses that do not answer the question.

Please note: Name your uploaded documents with letters and numbers **ONLY**. To reduce possible submission and/or review delays, please ensure any attached file from your local drive **DOES NOT** contain any special characters, such as dashes, exclamation marks, etc. **ONLY** letters and numbers are acceptable.

Applicant Initial Steps: Registration

1. Confirm your organization is a registered vendor with the City of Austin.
 - 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.



City of Austin
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project

2. Be a registered user in the [PartnerGrants database](#). The proposals will be submitted through this web-based system.
 - [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.

Applicant Initial Steps: Pre-Application

3. Complete an Annual Agency Threshold Application in the [PartnerGrants database](#) prior to submitting an Intent to Apply. If you have completed this application on or after May 9, 2023, and received approval, you can advance to the next step.
 - This form must be submitted once per 12 months and remains valid for all competitions closing within that time period. The threshold application will be reviewed by HSO staff and the agency will be notified once approved.
 - Once logged into [PartnerGrants database](#), click on “Opportunity” then click “Annual Agency Threshold Application-Applicants for Funding Start Here” to complete a new threshold application.
 - Submit one per agency per 12-months and note the submission date for future use.
4. Complete an **Intent to Apply form** for each proposal the offeror plans to submit by the due date identified in Form 1 – Offer Sheet.
 - Once logged into PartnerGrants, click on “Opportunity” then click “**RFP HSO 2024-002 Homelessness Diversion Demonstration Project**” and complete an Intent to Apply form including a Threshold Certification verifying completion of Step 3 above.
 - Applicants may submit more than one Intent to Apply form and must submit a unique Intent to Apply form for each proposal per the guidelines of the RFP.