



City of Austin
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

Exhibit C- Scope of Work

I. Introduction

The City of Austin (COA) Homeless Strategy Office seeks responses to this Request for Proposals (RFP) from qualified social service providers (Applicants) with demonstrated experience in providing services and distributing information to individuals and households experiencing homelessness.

II. Solicitation Objectives

The objectives of this solicitation are to:

1. Establish and maintain digital and/or phone-based resources to provide up-to-date information to persons at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness to resolve their housing crisis or connect to resources to resolve their housing crisis.
2. Maintain a timely, publicly accessible record of available resources to assist persons with maintaining housing, avoiding experiences of homelessness, and resolving their homelessness.
3. Reduce barriers to access service information and ensure coverage throughout Austin's city limits.

III. Background

The City of Austin 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 crisis response system quickly identifies those experiencing literal homelessness, provides safe temporary shelter and basic needs support, and connects households to appropriate housing and support services to resolve their homelessness.

The Austin City Council allocated funding during the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget process to support the digital delivery of services to persons experiencing homelessness. Councilmember Ryan Alter stated the following when he proposed the budget amendment:

"The City of Austin currently has few options for walk-up homeless navigation services, and what does exist may be both logistically challenging for clients to visit and represent a disproportionate impact on the surrounding neighborhood.... As proposed, funding for a digital service delivery model would be used to enhance current phone-based homeless navigation services to provide digital bus passes or tele-connect with case managers, and to also add kiosks at other locations such as hospitals, rehab facilities, or temporary shelters."

IV. Funding and Timeline

Department: Homeless Strategy Office (HSO)

Services Solicited: Digital Delivery

Total Funding Available: \$1,917,060

- A. \$1,667,060 of City of Austin General Fund
- B. \$250,000 of one-time City of Austin General Fund

Number of Agreements and Contract Term: HSO anticipates awarding one agreement starting August 1, 2024. Proposals must be submitted using the 12-month budget allocation. Collaborative applications will be considered; however, a lead agency must be identified. The first term of the Agreement will be 26-



City of Austin
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

months (August 1, 2024 – September 30, 2026), with four optional renewals for \$833,530 ongoing funding. All future renewal options are to be determined by the City Council.

Awarded programs will be structured as a reimbursable-based agreement, which is an Agreement where an agency is reimbursed for expenses incurred and paid by providing adequate supporting documentation that verifies the expenses.

Leveraging Resources: It is critical to ensure the efficient and flexible use of funds to respond to participants' unique situations and housing needs. Competitive proposals will leverage cash and/or in-kind resources, such as volunteer hours, partnerships with healthcare or mental health providers, or other funding sources to expand services to participants.

In-kind match is the value of any real property, equipment, goods, or services contributed to a program that would have been eligible costs if the recipient/subrecipient was required to pay for such costs with City funds. In-kind and cash match should be categorized in the budget as "Other Funding."

Proposals for this solicitation which identify leveraged resources, cash or in-kind, up to 20% or greater of the proposed budget will score more favorably as outlined in Question 21 of Exhibit H – RFP Evaluation Scoring Rubric Summary.

V. Eligible Populations

Hotline Eligible Populations: Services must be targeted to persons experiencing a housing crisis, including people experiencing homelessness (categories of 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 eligibility requirements, and all Austinites may seek services. The project must assertively market services to populations experiencing a housing crisis.

Diversion Eligible Populations: If incorporated into the proposed program design, diversion services may only be provided to persons meeting the criteria of homelessness categories 1, 2, and 4 as defined in Exhibit B. Standard Solicitation Provision and Instructions, Section 1.B. Homeless Services Definitions.

VI. Services and Eligible Costs

The services and eligible costs listed below are types of costs that may be proposed in this application. Applicants may apply for some or all these types of services. All applicants must describe proposed activities in both the 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 Sections 1-4 must be listed on separate line items in Form 4 – Budget and Narrative.

- 1) Information Services (Required):** Establish and maintain a digital and/or phone-based infrastructure to quickly disseminate essential information and connect participants to services and resources to resolve their housing crisis.



City of Austin
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

A. Requirements

- i. Establish and maintain an up-to-date repository of eviction prevention, rental assistance, homelessness prevention, diversion, and crisis response system resources, including emergency shelter access, day resource centers, food pantries, community kitchens, etc., to refer persons at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness.
- ii. Establish and maintain an engagement strategy to actively engage institutions with populations who are highly vulnerable to experiences of homelessness such as hospitals, jails, rehabilitation facilities, and prisons.
- iii. Develop and implement direct referral systems to assist homelessness related referrals from City of Austin's 3-1-1 system. Ensure the 3-1-1 system can provide direct connections to the funded program without participants needing to call another number.
- iv. Develop and implement a direct referral system to assist individuals fleeing domestic violence to SAFE's hotline. Ensure the funded project can provide direct connections to SAFE's hotline without participants needing to call another number.
- v. Develop and implement a direct referral system to assist individuals experiencing a mental health crisis with Integral Care's Psychiatric Emergency Services.
- vi. Ensure staff are trained in safety planning for individuals fleeing domestic violence.
- vii. Ensure persons who qualify will complete the local coordinated entry assessment and referral in accordance with the Austin / Travis County Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Written Standards.
- viii. Attend applicable coordinated entry planning and coordination meetings.

B. Eligible Costs

- i. Personnel Costs for staff coordinating the abovementioned service requirements.
- ii. Training costs to ensure staff comply with the Best Practices and Service Delivery Sections of this RFP.

2) Operations (Required) – Applicants must ensure sufficient and adequate technological and operational infrastructure to ensure information can be collected, maintained, and expediently distributed to stakeholders.

A. Requirements

Must comply with Americans with Disabilities Act.

- i. Hotline must be accessible in a variety of language options, including, but not limited to: Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic, Farsi, Burmese, Nepali, Korean.
- ii. Ensure operation between 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM, or similar hours. After-hours calls must be responded to within 24 hours.
- iii. Maintain an average wait time of 95%, meaning that 95% of calls are answered within 120 seconds.
- iv. Establish a marketing strategy to ensure awareness of services to the target population.

B. Eligible Costs



City of Austin
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

- i. Procurement and maintenance of necessary telecommunications and/or web-based communication equipment or services to meet the above-mentioned operation requirements.
- ii. Costs associated with the leasing and utility payments for space and equipment necessary to carry out the direct services of this RFP.
- iii. Necessary database equipment and technology to ensure distribution of information.
- iv. Materials or services to market project services to targeted populations.
- v. Costs associated with the utilization of the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) system.

3) Diversion Assistance (Optional) – Diversion Assistance is services to assist a person at imminent risk of homelessness in finding other safe and appropriate housing options than shelter. It includes possible one-time financial assistance and an intentional problem-solving conversation to explore and utilize their existing social and informal resources to avoid experiencing homelessness. It can also include services to persons experiencing homelessness to assist them to exit homelessness without the need to enroll in a longer-term homeless assistance program like Rapid Rehousing or Permanent Supportive Housing. Households must meet [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s definition of homelessness](#) to receive assistance as defined in the Section V. Eligible Populations. Persons meeting Category 2 Imminent Risk of Homelessness will be prioritized for assistance. See Exhibit B. Standard Solicitation Provision and Instructions, Section 1.B. Homeless Services Definitions.

A. Requirements

- i. Participants may only receive Diversion Rental Assistance once every 6 months.
- ii. All Diversion participants must participate in a diversion conversation, occurring either with the applicant or other community case management staff, to establish a plan to exit homelessness and avoid near-term experiences of homelessness.
- iii. Applicants must develop policies and procedures to define when assistance is appropriate to ensure equitable assistance for participants who are unlikely to return to homelessness after assistance.
- iv. The client must be entered into the program in HMIS with a distinct project Entry and Exit, and diversion assistance type must be recorded in HMIS as a “Service” transaction

B. Eligible Costs

- i. Personnel costs for staff to meet the above requirements and to ensure all staff are trained in diversion best practices.
- ii. One-time costs necessary to assist an individual with exiting or avoiding homelessness are eligible, so long as costs are eligible under COA Exhibit B.3.

4) 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



City of Austin
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

project. This does not include staff and overhead costs directly related to carrying out activities or services eligible under costs in items 1-3 listed above.

A. Requirements

- i. Program administrators must prepare program budget and schedules, and amendments to those budgets and schedules as needed.
- ii. Develop system for assuring compliance with the program requirements.
- iii. Monitor program activities for progress and compliance with program requirements.
- iv. Prepare reports and other documents directly related to the program for submission to the City of Austin.
- v. Managing or supervising persons whose primary responsibility with regards to the program include such assignment as those described in Section IV. 1) Operations through 4) General Housing Assistance.

Please note: Administrative costs will not be considered an indirect cost in the budget. All contract expenses will be reimbursable and must be listed in the budget narrative. Awarded agencies will document expenses separately for every claim in the form of a general ledger. For more information about eligible costs see Exhibit E. Standard APH Agreement Boilerplate and Exhibits.

B. Eligible costs include:

- i. 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. In charging costs to this category, the recipient may include the entire salary, wages, and related costs allocated to the program for each person whose primary responsibilities to the program involve program administration assignments, or the proportional share of the salary, wages, and related costs for each person whose job includes but is not limited to the administration of this program. The recipient may only use one of these methods for each fiscal year grant.
- ii. Administrative services performed under third-party contracts or agreements, including general legal services, accounting services, and audit services; and
- iii. 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. Equipment, insurance, utilities, office supplies, or spaces needed for 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.



City of Austin
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

- 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](#).

VIII. Performance Outcomes

On a quarterly basis, the awardee will be required to report the following:

- **Output #1:** Number of informational services calls completed per year
- **Output #2:** Number of informational services calls resulting in successful enrollments to address their needs
- **Outcomes #1:**
Percentage of households experiencing homelessness who complete a first-time coordinated assessment
Numerator: Households completing a coordination assessment
Denominator: Households experiencing homelessness who seek services through the hotline
- **Outcomes #2:**
Percentage of Households at risk of homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness connected to homelessness prevention services
Numerator: Households referred to homelessness prevention, eviction prevention, housing mediation, or other service to avoid an experience of homelessness
Denominator: Households experiencing homelessness who seek services through the hotline
- **Outcomes #3 (only if receiving Diversion funding):**
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
- **Outcomes #4 (only if receiving Diversion funding):**
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
- **Outcomes #5 (only if receiving Diversion funding):**
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

IX. Service Delivery

- 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 staff and the Offeror, will take priority and all other parts of the Written Standards for Program Delivery apply.
- Awarded agencies must ensure practices and 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.



City of Austin
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Applicants must make every effort to ensure participants do not receive duplication of services or assistance from different funding sources.
- 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:

- 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. Application Evaluation

- All proposals submitted 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 XVI 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.
- 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
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

| RFP # 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services | | |
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| 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 Applicant Minimum Qualifications in C - Scope of Work 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 | |
| Section 2: Data Informed Program Management | Performance Measures | 20 points |
| | Data Security & Systems Management | |
| | Quality Improvement & Feedback | |
| Section 3: Experience and Cultural Competence | Agency Experience & Performance | 15 points |
| | Service Delivery Experience | |
| | Cultural Competence & Racial Equity | |
| Section 4: Cost Effectiveness (Form 3) | Program Staffing & Time | 20 points |
| | Livable Wage | |
| | Program Budget & Funding Summary | 10 points |
| | Cost Effectiveness & Number of individuals served/ total budget = Cost Analysis | |
| | | Total: 100 points |



City of Austin
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

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| Form 4: COA Certifications and Disclosures | Applicants must print, sign, scan and upload signed forms. | No points, but Offeror must submit signed form. |
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XII. 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.

XIII. 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.
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.”



City of Austin
Austin Public Health
Homeless Strategy Office
RFP HSO 2024-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services

- 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 2023-001 Digital Housing Crisis Referral and Information Services" 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.