

Department for Children and Families, OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
HOUSING OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM
Notice of Funding & Application
(FFY 2019 / SFY 2020 and FFY 2020 / SFY 2021)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The SFY 2020/21 Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP) Notice of Funding and Application, as well as associated documents, can be found here: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/HOPgrants>

To view a recording of the April 12th webinar hosted by the Office of Economic Opportunity, click here: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/recording/2949923025219371777>

Summary of Important Changes from Prior Years:

- There is no longer a “simplified renewal” option due to the changes in the HOP program.
- As occurred during the last funding notice, applicants apply and are awarded funding for two years (SFY 2020 and SFY 2021), except for General Assistance community investments which will remain a one year award. Each year will be under separate grant agreements. Grantees will have the ability to make minor workplan modifications prior to SFY 2021.
- All agencies who want to receive **Coordinated Entry** funding must apply through the HOP application process. Include staffing detail in your budget and narrative. Some agencies may receive Coordinated Entry funding under a separate grant agreement, may receive Continuum of Care federal funds for Coordinated Entry, and may have additional reporting requirements (HUD Annual Performance Report).
- HOP grantees now must report HOP outcomes to their local Continuum of Care (CoC) once per year instead of twice (Pg. 11).
- **NEW Required Attachment:**
 - **All applicants must submit a Continuum of Care Review Form** (Appendix D). Fillable form (with drop down menu) on website at: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/HOPgrants>.
 - All applications for funding should be coordinated with other partners in the local CoC. We encourage applicants to discuss strategies and approaches with the local CoC to gain feedback and continue to build a seamless system of care. The HOP application process is one opportunity for local CoCs to host these conversations; local CoCs are encouraged to also consider other times and ways during the year when community stakeholders can discuss needs, gaps and strengths within the local housing crisis response system. Applicants are welcome to include Memoranda of Understanding or other documentation for projects that involve partnerships.

- **NEW Definitions of Services** (see pg. 7 of the Notice, revised chart on pg. 9, and revised budget categories):
 - Coordinated Entry – two services: **intake & assessment** services or **housing navigation** (new questions #23 & 24 in application narrative);
 - Homeless Prevention Services: **housing navigation** and **housing retention** services;
 - Rapid Re-housing Services: **housing retention** services (used to be relocation and stabilization).
- Revised Appendix E -Standards for Provision of Assistance (p. 29-35) describes the distinctions between the above services. Please note that Retention Services (pg. 31) require that case managers meet with clients at least once per month and create a post-assistance housing plan.
- Performance measures: Housing navigation and retention services will report on different performance measures for SFY 2020.
- Revised Budget (D) and separate Excel Budget reflect new breakout of services. Please also include other funds being leveraged in the budget.
- Grantees may not use HOP funds as match for other programs without prior approval from OEO.
- Rental Arrears is no longer considered rental assistance. Rental arrears is now considered client financial assistance.
- Revised Narrative questions in Application:
 - #10: Describe the Coordinated Entry (CE) assessment process;
 - #14: Describe Homelessness Prevention intake and assessment. Homelessness Prevention programs are not required to use CE assessment. Applicants who will not use the CE assessment to prioritize or determine assistance must describe their assessment process. As in the past, Rapid Re-housing providers will be required to follow the CE assessment and prioritization policies.
- Innovation Activities (funding category) now includes tenant rights and responsibilities education and financial capability services. It also still includes landlord liaison work. These activities are all key elements of Rapid Re-Housing and Homelessness Prevention programs, but will be funded under innovation for clarity in proposal evaluation and project administration.
- All grantees will be required to use HMIS/Osnum and participate as a partner in Coordinated Entry. Very small organizations may seek to partner with another agency in order to meet HMIS requirements.
- Applicants need not attach program policies and procedures, although OEO may require review and approval of policies and procedures from new projects prior to finalizing awards.
- HOP-funded emergency shelter and transitional housing cannot charge guests rent or fees. If there are savings requirements, please attach the savings policy (pg. 22).

Same as Prior Years, and Important to Remember:

- The Certification of Local Government Approval form (Appendix F) is ONLY needed for new or relocated shelter facilities.
- HMIS license fees will be paid directly by HOP to the Institute for Community Alliances (ICA); applicants can direct questions to ICA.
- HOP does NOT fund property acquisition or mortgage costs (pg. 10).
- Community Action Agencies should break out their budget by each county served.

General FAQs

1) How does the budget template work?

OEO has provided a detailed sample budget tool in Excel. Please read the instructions tab and modify to meet your needs. Please provide a separate budget (worksheet) for each year (one for the SFY 2020 request, and one for the SFY 2021 request). If an applicant serves multiple counties, please provide a separate budget (worksheet) for each county. Applicants are encouraged to submit budgets in the Excel form. All applicants also need to provide the narrative Budget Justification as described on pages 22-23 of the Notice of Funding & Application.

2) How should applicants indicate different project locations on the cover sheet?

Section II of the Application (page 13 of the Notice of Funding & Application) asks that for numbers 7 & 8, applicants list out each project/location separately for clarity. For example, if you have separate shelters for families and individuals, please attach additional pages to include address, contact, and capacity at each location. Please indicate on each page whether this will be the same for SFY 2020 and SFY 2021 or if you expect it to change.

3) What are the funding priorities for General Assistance (GA) projects this year? Where can I get more information about GA Emergency Housing utilization data and past HOP awards?

Please see page 5 of the Notice to see the funding priorities for General Assistance investments; these projects must specifically seek to decrease reliance on GA motels through new investments. Current projects with GA funding will be considered first. Please find current data (SFY 2017 year-to-date) on GA motel utilization on OEO's website:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/OEO/Docs/HOP-GA-Housing-Data.pdf>

HOP Awards Summaries for current and prior year (including GA) can be found on OEO's website as well: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/oEO/reports>

4) Is there more or less money available this year?

Since the state and federal budget allocations are not yet final, awards will be based on an assumption of level funding in both SFY 2020 and SFY 2021. Projects receiving General Assistance funding will only receive a SFY 2020 award. Please see breakout of expected funds available on page 2 of the Notice of Funding & Application. **The availability of funds in both SFY 2020 and SFY 2021 is contingent on final award notification from HUD and final appropriation by the State legislature.** For organizations awarded two years of funding, there will be an opportunity to update workplans and budgets for SFY 2021 in the spring of 2020.

5) What do we need to do to demonstrate compliance with Coordinated Entry processes and policies?

All applicants are required follow their respective Coordinated Entry processes and policies. Instead of each applicant submitting documentation, **OEO will work with local lead agencies** in the Balance of State to review copies of signed Coordinated Entry Partnership Agreements, as applicable, and with the Chittenden Homeless Alliance Coordinated Entry Committee. Please review the many resources about this topic on the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness website: <http://helpingtohousevt.org/initiatives/coordinated-entry/> and Chittenden Homeless Alliance: <http://www.cchavt.org/c-e-system/>

6) When are staff considered part of shelter “operations” instead of shelter “essential services”?

This depends on the role of the staff person. If they provide intake and assessment, then they would usually be considered to be providing essential services. If they have a purely operational role such as security (awake overnight staff) or housekeeping/food service, then they could be included under operations. Please use the *Narrative/Personnel Worksheet* tab of the budget template to show detail and help make this clear. OEO will make the final determination.

7) What is the Landlord Liaison Practice Framework?

Landlord Liaisons work to create housing opportunities for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Landlord Liaison projects are an eligible use of HOP funds under the Innovation category. Core components include dedicated staffing, housing risk pools, and outreach and recruitment of landlords. Grantees who are awarded funds for a Landlord Liaison project in SFY 2020 will be required to follow the Practice Framework in APPENDIX I, including written agreements with landlords (page 40-41 of the Notice of Funding & Application).

8) What does “10% de minimus” mean?

If the applicant does not have a federally approved Indirect Cost Rate, they are able to request up to 10% of the SUBTOTAL of the grant amount for administrative costs. Please see sample calculation below.

EXAMPLE:

Emergency Shelter Request	\$15,000
HMIS Request	\$1,200
Subtotal Program Request	<u>\$16,200</u>
10% Indirect Rate (de minimus) (= .10 x Subtotal)	<u>\$1,620.0</u>
Total Request	<u>\$17,820.0</u>

9) Can new organizations apply for funding?

Yes, any organization that meets the eligibility criteria (Page 4 of the Notice of Funding & Application) may apply for funding.

Feel free to contact Emily Higgins at emily.higgins@vermont.gov or (802) 241-0930 with further questions.