

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

2015 RFP for Keeping Families Together Pilot Program

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IMPORTANT NOTES DISCUSSED AT THE BIDDERS CONFERENCE

Vouchers available in this RFP through the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) will be twenty-five (25) 15-year Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers. The awardee for this program is expected to have a concrete plan to access 25 affordable housing units in their proposed county (ies) for a 15 year period.

Clarifications to pages 4, 22, and 29 of the RFP:

“Applicants who do not currently own the proposed housing units must attach an agreement or documentation signed by the current owner that includes the number of units that will be made available ~~through a 10~~ for a 15 year period through a memorandum of understanding or master lease, the rental rates for those units, and statement indicating that the agreement is contingent upon award of funding.”

Clarifications to page 7 of the RFP:

“The housing units must meet HUD Housing Quality Standards as set forth in 24 CFR 982.401 and ~~the Housing Quality Standards set forth in N.J.A.C. 5:42-3.1 (2014), and must comply with the cap on the number of project-based assisted units per building as outlined in N.J.A.C. 5:42-5.1 (2014)~~ must comply with Section 8 rules as set forth in 24 CFR and the DCA Administrative Plan.”

“~~Rent-Gross~~ tenant housing cost must be no greater than the ~~Fair Market Rent (FMR)~~ Payment Standard indicated by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Housing Choice Voucher Program.”

~~“The awarded provider will demonstrate that they have identified a landlord(s) that will enter into a memorandum of understanding or master lease to provide a combined total of 25 units for a 15 year period 10–15 year master lease agreement for a combined total of 25 units.”~~

“The design, construction, appearance, physical integrity, and maintenance of the housing units provide an environment that is attractive, safe, sustainable, functional, appropriate for the surrounding community, and conducive to tenants’ stability and community integration. Housing units must pass an initial, and annual, HUD housing quality standards inspection conducted by DCA staff.”

Clarifications to page 8 of the RFP:

~~“The SRAP vouchers Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers dedicated to this program are project-based. As such, they are tied to specific housing units and cannot travel with clients will contain a mobility component which allow households to relocate with assistance, and allow a reissue of a housing subsidy for another household selected to move into the vacated housing unit.”~~

“Consumers will be required to contribute approximately 30% of their adjusted gross income towards the rent.”

~~“Consumers will also be required to register with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and adhere to their resulting Employability Development Plan.”~~

1. Is there a preference for a grant serving 2 counties?

No. Applicants may propose to serve 1 or 2 counties in the Southern Region. One funding award will be granted for the purpose of developing and implementing a Keeping Families Together supportive housing program to serve families in up to two counties in New Jersey. These counties must be within the State’s Southern Region which includes the following counties for the purposes of this RFP: Atlantic; Burlington; Camden; Cape May; Cumberland; Gloucester; and/or Salem.

2. Can I do more than 2 counties?

One funding award will be granted for the purpose of developing and implementing a Keeping Families Together supportive housing program to serve families in up to two counties in New Jersey. These counties must be within the State’s Southern Region which includes the following counties for the purposes of this RFP: Atlantic; Burlington; Camden; Cape May; Cumberland; Gloucester; and/or Salem.

3. Do the counties need to be adjacent?

If an applicant proposes to serve two counties that are not adjacent, the provider should offer a rationale. Providers should be thoughtful about the time and distance traveled by team members and the accessibility of team members to families enrolled in the KFT program.

4. Does DCF have statistics on the density of need by county?

DCF does not currently have statistics on the need for this type of service by county.

5. Who will identify the families in need and how?

CP&P Local Offices in the counties where housing will be located will identify families for the Keeping Families Together program in consultation with the CP&P clinical supports and the awarded provider. Staff in the appropriate CP&P Local Offices will identify families that appear to meet the required indicators of need as outlined in the RFP on page 6-7. Once families are identified, CP&P and the awarded provider are to jointly conference on identified families to determine which are eligible for this program.

6. How long will it take for DCF to make 25 referrals for this program?

DCF cannot guarantee specific timeframes for identifying and referring families to this program. DCF will work with the appropriate CP&P Local Offices to provide technical assistance on identifying the target population and indicators of need. The awarded provider is expected to work in close collaboration with the CP&P Local Offices in the selected county(ies) to identify and case conference eligible families.

7. Do referrals need to come from within the county where housing is located or can families in any of the 7 identified counties be referred to the program?

At this time, referrals will come from within the county(ies) where housing is located.

8. Can referrals for the program come from sources other than CP&P?

Referrals for this program will come from CP&P. However, if the awarded provider is currently engaged with a CP&P-involved family who appears to meet the indicators of need, the provider may present and conference the case with CP&P.

9. Who has the final decision in terms of program eligibility?

The expectation is that CP&P and the provider would work collaboratively to determine program eligibility including a comprehensive case conference to discuss any concerns or challenges that might be a barrier to participation as well as strengths that could leveraged for a families success. CP&P has final decision to determine program eligibility.

10. What tools and criteria will referral sites be using to assess the stability and fit of families for referral to the program?

A description of the target population and more specifically the indicators of need that will be used to identify families for referral to the program is provided on pages 5-7 of the RFP.

11. Can families continue to participate in the KFT program if their CP&P case is closed?

KFT and CP&P staffs are expected to work collaboratively and communicate regularly to ensure the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of the child(ren) and the overall success of families enrolled in KFT. While it is anticipated that a family's case will not close immediately upon enrollment into the KFT program, the CP&P case does not need to remain open for families to continue their participation in KFT. Expectations are that families will continue to engage in KFT programming after case closure.

12. Are there any exclusions that will cause a family to automatically be denied housing?

Per the DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan for State Fiscal Year 2015, DCA will deny admission of an applicant if any household member is subject to a lifetime registration as a sex offender under a state registration program.

DCA will also screen for drug abuse and other criminal activity, including violent or drug-related criminal activity within the previous 5 years. If a client is denied due to violent or drug-related criminal charges, DCA will allow opportunity to respond and appeal the decision. CP&P and the provider will be expected to assist and support clients during any appeals processes that they may need to go through.

13. Will a family's creditworthiness for tenancy and/or utilities be considered in the screening?

Families' creditworthiness will not be considered during the DCF screening for eligible families or DCA's application for a Section 8 Project-Based Voucher. It is anticipated that many of the client referred to the KFT program will have credit challenges. Successful applicants will develop relationships with landlords or property owners who are willing to approve tenants who have poor credit or prior evictions. The awarded provider will form relationships with landlords and assist tenants in advocating for their entry into housing including advocating for themselves and explaining potential background issues.

The willingness to approve tenants with poor credit or prior evictions should be outlined in a provider's agreement or memorandum of understanding with the landlord or property owner.

14. What if the provider has a master lease, but a criminal background check is still required?

It is anticipated that many of the families identified for this program are likely to have criminal backgrounds. The expectation is that clients will not be turned away due to criminal backgrounds. Successful applicants will develop relationships with landlords or property owners who are willing to approve tenants who have criminal backgrounds. The awarded provider will form relationships with landlords and assist tenants in advocating for their entry into housing including advocating for themselves and explaining potential background issues.

The willingness to approve tenants with criminal backgrounds should be outlined in a provider's agreement or memorandum of understanding with the landlord or property owner.

15. Is homelessness a requirement?

Per the RFP, families must meet at least one of the homelessness or housing instability indicators of need specified on page 6.

16. In my experience, vouchers are often the most valued part of a program. Do you know what the circumstances are with clients' housing or how many are on/eligible for TANF, etc.?

DCF does not have information on how many clients are receiving or are eligible for TANF or other public benefits. Provider staff from the awarded organization will be responsible for assisting the consumer in obtaining employment and/or benefits for which they are eligible. KFT staff should

have capacity to engage families in employment and career planning/goals.

17. Are extended family members, paramours, etc. allowed to live in the unit?

Yes. Providers should ensure all household residents are listed on the lease and will be counted towards the household's adjusted gross income.

The awarded provider should also have a guest policy in compliance with the DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan.

18. Are there specific restrictions on the housing vouchers (i.e. limited to a certain dollar amount, bedrooms or amount of individuals that can live in a unit)?

Information on Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers including rules and restrictions can be found in the DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan at <http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/publications/> or Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations (24 CFR).

19. Are the payment standards available online?

The DCA Payment Standards for 2015 will be posted online to the DCF public notices website at: <http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/notices/>.

20. Does the DCA payment standard cover affordable rent amounts?

Yes. The DCA Payment Standard generally mirrors the HUD Fair Market Rent. The DCA subsidy will be equal to lower of either the gross housing cost (rent + utilities) or the DCA Payment Standard, minus 30% of the household's adjusted gross income.

21. What happens if a client has zero income?

Households will pay 30% of their income towards rent. Therefore, clients with no income will not contribute to their monthly rent. A household reporting no income source must certify this status on a month-to-month basis. The head of household will be required to visit their local DCA field office each month complete the certification until an income source is verified. The provider is expected to work with the family to ensure compliance with DCA certification requirements.

For those families with no income, provider staff from the awarded organization will also assist the consumer in obtaining employment and/or

benefits for which they are eligible. KFT staff should have capacity to engage families in employment and career planning/goals.

22. Will there be accountability for tenants to prove income or employment attempts? If consumers report that they do not have income, how will we verify this?

A household reporting no income source must certify this status on a month-to-month basis. The head of household will be required to visit their local DCA field office each month complete the certification until an income source is verified. The provider is expected to work with the family to ensure compliance with DCA certification requirements.

23. Who will hold the vouchers?

All management and administration of Section 8 Vouchers will be handled by local DCA field office(s). DCA will provide the appropriate housing assistance payment for each family directly to the landlord on a monthly basis.

24. Does DCA still pay if the unit is vacant?

No. DCA will only pay rent on occupied units.

25. Are the Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers eligible to be used in NJ HMFA tax credit developments?

Yes. DCA, as per HUD regulations, can pay no more than any other similar unit in a complex.

26. Are the vouchers project-based or tenant-based?

The available vouchers are Project-Based Section 8 Vouchers with a portability component. Tenants who have been in the program for one year and are in good standing will be eligible for a tenant-based voucher to move on from the program. The Project-Based Section 8 Voucher will stay with the original program unit, and the tenant will be eligible for the next available tenant-based voucher. This is included in the 15 year HAP contract, and is reliant on voucher availability. DCA may implement a 10% cap on the number of families that are allowed to move annually based on resources available.

27. What if a client no longer needs services and is ready to leave the KFT program but is unable to afford housing on their own?

The awarded provider will work with each family to identify and define their service goals and needs, and then assist with obtaining and coordinating services. Services will aim at achieving greater family functioning, child wellbeing, community integration, work readiness and employment, peer support, physical/mental health, socialization, access to concrete supports and public benefits/entitlements, and skills and opportunities that foster increased self-sufficiency and personal responsibility for one's life.

Tenants who have been in the program for one year and are in good standing will be eligible for a tenant-based voucher to move on from the program. The Project-Based Section 8 Voucher will stay with the original program unit, and the tenant will be eligible for the next available tenant-based voucher. This will assist the family in affording housing on their own, and make the program unit available to another family who needs services.

28. Are there required property inspection timelines outside of the initial and annual inspections? If not, can we impose periodic property inspections?

Along with initial and annual inspection, DCA will do a complaint inspection if informed that there is a problem. Families must have a lease, and any scheduled inspections by the landlord (such as a monthly inspection) should be noted in the lease or lease addendum.

The awarded provider should be conducting regular home visits with the families participating in the KFT program and can use these visits as an opportunity to identify any concerns or housekeeping challenges. KFT staff must be viewed by families as a source of support and assistance for routine services and in moments of crisis. Program staff must encourage open communication and cultivate trust and relationships with families. Every interaction with families should be seen as an opportunity to engage families and strengthen the alliance with them. Program staff should have training and competence around non-judgmental communication and engagement skills that can help cultivate strong alliances and relationships with families.

29. What actions would result in termination of the Section 8 subsidy for consumers?

Discretionary and mandatory grounds for termination of assistance are described in the DCA Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative

Plan for State Fiscal Year 2015, which can be found at: <http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/publications/>.

30. What happens if a tenant doesn't pay their portion of the rent?

The awarded provider is responsible for providing ongoing housing stability support to increase the families' ability to maintain their household and finances and uphold the terms of the lease and the terms of their Section 8 Voucher. Examples of ongoing housing support services include life skills and financial literacy training, understanding of tenant rights and responsibilities, prevention of lease violations, active communication and mediation of conflicts with landlords, etc.

If a tenant does not pay his or her portion of the rent, the tenant would be subject to the terms of the lease. However, the awarded provider will be expected to maintain ongoing communication with landlords or property management staff to mediate conflicts and advocate for tenants. If a tenant is behind on rent, KFT should work with tenants to create a rent repayment plan and ensure they have the necessary support to fulfill its terms.

31. Is the consumer responsible for damage or issues that go on within the home during their lease?

Yes. If a tenant damages a unit beyond the normal wear and tear and cannot afford to fix the damages, the awarded provider can work with the client to establish a payment plan if feasible or utilize specific assistance to client funds to address payment issues in the interest of maintaining landlord relationships and housing stability.

32. Who will own the furniture or furnishings purchased for the units?

Furniture or other furnishings purchased for a family through the one-time furnishing funds or provided through donation will become the property of that family. When using the specific assistance to clients funding provided by DCF, the awarded provider and family will to shop together to purchase furnishings for the unit. Clients should take the lead in identifying how these funds will be spent to furnish their new home. Providers should be seen as a source of support and should assist families with identifying and prioritizing their needs, maximizing use of these funds (e.g., developing relationships with furniture stores, negotiating discounts, etc.) and obtaining furnishings to meet their basic needs.

33. Who owns the security deposit?

DCF funds for specific assistance to clients may be used to provide a one-time security deposit to clients. Security deposits paid for with DCF funds should ultimately be returned to the provider. If a client remains in the KFT program but travels to a new project-based unit, the returned security deposit can be reused for the new unit. Once a client leaves the KFT program, the security deposit should be returned to the provider. Exceptions may be made depending on client need and should be conferred with DCF.

34. Is there a safety holding period for properties if a parent is placed out of the home for treatment, incarceration, etc.? What about when children are placed out of the home for a period of time?

Section 8 can pay for a unit, providing the tenant is already on the program and is expected to return, for up to 90 days if the tenant is not in the unit due to medical treatment. When a tenant moves in it will be expected that all family members be in the unit as quickly as possible. For cases of reunification, children must be reunified within no more than 60 days of the move in date.

35. Should agencies put utilities in their name or client's names?

Utilities should be in the tenant's name.

36. What happens if a client leaves the program?

The assisted household must notify the program and the owner of their unit, in writing, before the household moves out of an assisted unit. If a household moves from their assisted housing without giving proper notice and occupies housing that has not passed the housing quality standards inspection, and is therefore not eligible for housing assistance, the tenant would be responsible for the full rent payment.

Tenants who have been in the program for one year and are in good standing will be eligible for a tenant-based voucher to move on from the program. The Project-Based Section 8 Voucher will stay with the original program unit, and the tenant will be eligible for the next available tenant-based voucher. This will assist the family in affording housing on their own, and make the program unit available to another family who needs services.

37. What is the preference between having either a master lease or an agreement (i.e., MOU) with a property owner?

Applicants must demonstrate an ability to secure units for referred families for a 15 year period. Applicants may choose to do so by demonstrating proof of relationships with a network of private landlords, through a master lease, or through site control. Families must have leases rights and responsibilities of tenancy.

Successful applicants will develop relationships with landlords or property owners who are willing to approve tenants who have poor credit, criminal background, and/or prior evictions. The awarded provider will form relationships with landlords and assist tenants in advocating for their entry into housing including advocating for themselves and explaining potential background issues.

The willingness to approve tenants with poor credit, criminal background, and/or prior evictions should be outlined in a provider's agreement or memorandum of understanding with the landlord or property owner.

38. Will all 25 units be required to be in HMIS?

No. The provider will not be required to report into HMIS.

39. Is there a preference for bedroom sizes?

DCF anticipates that the majority of referred families will need 2 and 3 bedroom units. However, there may be situations in which a smaller unit (e.g., single parent with baby or infant) or larger unit (e.g., large family size) size is warranted.

40. Is DCF expecting providers to state how many 2 bedroom and 3 unit bedrooms will be available in their applications?

Yes.

41. Can a portion of the \$140,000 for specific assistance to clients be used to make a unit accessible?

DCF will work with providers on a case by case basis to meet needs in this area.

42. Should providers identify apartments that are already accessible?

No, this is not necessary. If units are accessible, providers are free to note this in their application.

43. Are there any rules regarding pets?

Clients will need to refer to their specific lease for restrictions regarding pets. DCA and DCF will not pay any additional fees for having pets in the unit.

44. When does the grant start and end?

The grant will start following an award and negotiation of the contract. Continuation funding is contingent upon the availability of funds in future fiscal years and the Grantee's performance under the provisions of this RFP and the resulting Contract.

45. If it is for more than one year do I have to do a renewal each year?

Yes. Continuation funding is contingent upon the availability of funds in future fiscal years and the Grantee's performance under the provisions of this RFP and the resulting Contract.

46. Will the provider have a contract with DCF and DCA?

Yes. The provider will establish a contract with DCF for case management, supportive services, and specific assistance to client funding. The provider will also establish a 15-year project-based housing assistance payment (HAP) contract with DCA for the Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers. The 15-year HAP contract will begin when the first unit in the project is filled.

47. What happens when the 15 year contract for the Section 8 vouchers ends?

DCA can extend the contract on an annual basis once the 15-year contract has ended. If the contract is not extended or renewed, DCA will provide existing tenants with a tenant-based Section 8 Voucher.

48. Are programs allowed to bill Medicaid for services which are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement (e.g., therapy)? Thus allowing higher level of service provision.

Yes.

49. Is there a cap on administrative costs?

Bookkeeping costs and/or reasonable indirect costs are allowed and can be charged to the service dollars for this project.

50. Are there funds available for one-time start-up costs?

Additional start-up funds are not available. Reasonable operational start-up costs (one-time) are permitted, and all start-up costs (one-time) must be funded with accruals from the funding available for case management and supportive housing services. Applicants may not propose to use accruals from the funding available for specific client assistance. Applicants must provide a justification and detailed summary of anticipated start-up costs in order to begin program operations.

51. Does there need to be a separate budget for one-time start-up costs?

The completed budget proposal must include a detailed summary of and justification for any one-time operational start-up costs. These costs should be reflected on a separate schedule but cannot exceed the funding amount listed in this RFP.

52. Can a provider have a budget line for apartment maintenance?

It is anticipated that apartment maintenance will be included in the unit rent.

53. Are vehicles allowed as part of the budget?

Vehicles may be included in the budget as a one-time start-up cost. Reasonable operational start-up costs (one-time) are permitted, and all start-up costs (one-time) must be funded with accruals from the funding available for case management and supportive housing services. Applicants may not propose to use accruals from the funding available for specific client assistance. Applicants must provide a justification and detailed summary of anticipated start-up costs in order to begin program operations.

54. Are there restrictions on page limit, font size, margins, etc.?

The narrative portion of the proposal should be double-spaced with margins of 1 inch on the top and bottom and 1½ inches on the left and right. The font may be no smaller than 12 points and should be either Arial or Times New Roman. There is a 25 page limitation for the narrative portion of the grant application. A one (1) point reduction per page will be administered to proposals exceeding the page limit requirements. Five (5) points will be deducted for each missing document. If the deductions total 20 points or more, the proposal shall be rejected as non-responsive. The narrative must be organized appropriately and address the key concepts outlined in the RFP. Annex B budget pages, and attachments do not count towards the narrative page limit.

Proposals may be fastened by a heavy-duty binder clip. Do not submit proposals in loose-leaf binders, plastic sleeves or folders or staples.

55. Are the cover sheet and table of contents included in the 25 page limit?

No.

56. Is the budget narrative included in the 25 page limit?

Yes.

57. What is a logic model, and is it mandatory?

The logic model is mandatory and should be attached as an appendix. The logic model should demonstrate how the proposed inputs and activities of the proposed project will lead to the intended short- and long-term outcomes. A sample logic model has been provided on the DCF public notices website at: <http://nj.gov/dcf/providers/notices/>.