

Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI)
NJ Department of Community Affairs

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
November 2021

- A. **Name of grant program:** Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI)
- B. **Purpose of the grant:** This pilot initiative will fund 1-4 community-based agencies to place experienced case workers in each county vicinage in landlord-tenant proceedings. These Resource Navigators will be available to attend eviction proceedings (virtually or in person) and to provide information and linkages to resources that may help tenants prevent eviction. Resource Navigators will provide information about the availability of rental assistance at local, state and federal levels, status of rental assistance applications, the process for filing for eviction protections, benefits available at the federal, local and state level, linkages to legal services and other resources to assist in diverting evictions, and linkages to other intervention supports to households experiencing crisis. Resource Navigators must be trained in anti-eviction resources and programs, including the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs' Eviction Prevention Program (EPP) self-certification and rental assistance process, homelessness prevention assistance, and benefit programs at the federal, state and local levels. Resource Navigators will liaise with landlord-tenant court legal specialists and assignment judges and be familiar with updated court procedure and process.
- C. **Issue:** In the last year, the Department implemented a pilot program – the Access to Counsel and Homelessness Diversion Pilot - expanding access to free and quality legal representation to households with low incomes facing eviction. This pilot program targeted zip codes in just three counties providing legal service coupled with social services support. Expanding tenants' ability to have a lawyer in eviction proceedings has emerged as an anti-eviction best practice defense throughout the country. With this new Diversion pilot program, DCA will build on the strengths of the Access to Counsel's program. The Eviction Diversion Initiative pilot will provide Resource Navigators focused on an immediate problem-solving approach to uncover and connect clients to available supports throughout the state to strengthen financial stability to prevent eviction and afford the costs of rent in the future. For example, when families receive subsidies for energy assistance, day care funding and transportation, a greater percentage of the household income becomes available for the rent.

This type of intensive and collaborative effort provides comprehensive anti-displacement protection and will further elevate NJ's best-practice approaches to preventing eviction. Such an intervention and prevention strategy aligns with and meets the legislative mandate

of P.L. 2021, c. 188, that the new Office of Eviction Prevention serve as a comprehensive hub of eviction prevention assistance, a bridge to other available resources across agencies, and as an incubator in emerging, innovative approaches to sustainable eviction prevention and diversion.

D. Available funding: \$2.5 million for a one (1) year initiative. The grant will fund up to 25 Resource Navigators who will be assigned to vicinages based on volume of eviction-related hearings in each vicinage. While DCA will work with the Administrative Offices of the Courts and individual vicinages to obtain information on tenants with pending eviction cases, Resource Navigators will also be expected to do outreach at the vicinages and in the areas to which they are assigned, to reach as many tenants as possible. The funds are being made available through a competitive Request for Proposals for New Jersey non-profit social services agencies with experience in homelessness diversion or eviction prevention and the capacity to quickly hire and manage new staff devoted wholly to this initiative.

This grant is supported by federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, (ARP) known as Public Law #117-2, dated March 11, 2021.

E. Eligible entities:

New Jersey non-profit social services agencies with demonstrable experience in serving income eligible households in homelessness diversion or eviction prevention and the capacity to quickly hire and manage new case workers devoted wholly to this initiative.

Required extensive experience in homelessness diversion or eviction prevention may include, the services listed below, but applicants do not need to possess all of these skills:

- a. Rental Assistance
- b. Homelessness Prevention
- c. Landlord-tenant court procedure / landlord-tenant counseling
- d. HUD-Certified Housing Counseling services
- e. Wrap-around case management services
- f. Crisis intervention
- g. Local support and services systems such as Board of Social Services, Continuum of Care, etc.
- h. Resources such as childcare, utility assistance, employment assistance, and other resources to assist households

Selected grantees must meet the threshold standards outlined in Section H.

F. Target populations/eligible households: Clients served directly by grantees shall have household incomes at or below 120% of the area median income, with the expectation that most clients will have incomes at or below 80% of the median income.

G. Scope of Services:

1. Available in virtual tech rooms or in person at the courthouse, Resource Navigators will directly assist eligible households with rental assistance applications, eviction protection household income self-certifications, access to legal services, mediation or housing counseling, homelessness prevention, relocation or rapid rehousing, housing navigator support, access to consumer debt and credit repair services, family support benefit applications, and disability, or healthcare related support, as necessary or appropriate.
2. Resource Navigators will connect households facing judgments of possession to emergency rental assistance vouchers for rapid rehousing where available.
3. Resource Navigators will liaise with court staff including the landlord-tenant case management legal specialists for access to the eviction docket and all court proceedings.
4. Resource Navigators will liaise with DCA staff and court staff in self-certification database and eviction filing data matching.
5. Resource Navigators will regularly liaise with local government and community organization representatives, such as the Board of Social Services and Continuum of Care, to identify potential resources and connect tenants with all available resources.
6. Resource Navigators will compile intake and case management data for monthly reporting to the Division of Housing and Community Resources' Office of Eviction Prevention. Monthly reporting will include information about case outcomes and narratives about successes and challenges.
7. Resource Navigators will file quarterly budget expenditure reports to the Division of Housing and Community Resources' Office of Eviction Prevention.

H. Ineligible activities:

Purchase or improvement of land or structures.

I. Threshold screening – applicants that do not meet these minimum standards will not be considered:

1. Active SAGE account with the Department on or before November 30, 2021.
2. Not listed on the DCA list of High-Risk grantees and, as applicable, the current audit submission is not overdue.
3. Valid registrations:
 - a. A SAMs registration noting that entity is not in a 'Debt Offset' status for owing funds to the federal government. www.sam.gov

b. An active State Vendor number, as listed on NJStart.gov or [NJ Division of Purchase and Property \(state.nj.us\)](http://NJDivisionofPurchaseandProperty.state.nj.us).

c. Not Listed on the State Debarment list, located at www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/treas/revenue/debsearch.pl.

d. An active account or exemption at the NJ Charities Registrations website at [Search For A Charity · Basic Portal \(state.nj.us\)](http://SearchForACharityBasicPortal.state.nj.us)

4. Applicants will comprehensively provide a staffing organizational chart, new & current staffing capacities, case worker professional experience, expected budget expenditures, and geographic vicinage capacity.

5. Applicants will clearly define and establish reasonable budgets in case worker salaries, expenses related to the purchase of necessary technology, and administrative costs.

J. **Grant Term:** 12 months

K. Application Process:

All applications must be emailed to: **Dean Dafis:** dean.dafis@dca.nj.gov

Approved applicants will be required to transfer all application data to DCA's electronic grants system, known as SAGE.

Applications must include the following information:

- Agency Description
- Proposed Program Descriptions
- Program Objectives
- Scope of Services
- Contact Information
- Program Components
- Proposed Program Service Areas
- Program Personnel Listing and resumes of key staff
- Staffing organizational chart
- Consultant Listing
- Proposed Program Budget

Required Application Attachments:

- Certification Regarding Debarment and Suspension
- Certification Regarding Lobbying
- Resolution from grantee board
- Copy of SAM.gov Certification
- Partnership Listing and a list of the services provided through such partnerships
- Signed Application Cover Page
- Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation

Administrative costs are limited to a maximum of 15% of the total grant award.

L. Review Criteria

The Office of Eviction Prevention will review and evaluate applications based on a **100-point system**. Applications are scored as follows:

1. **Demonstration of Sufficient Capacity** to undertake proposal – **50 points**
 - a. Demonstration of length of experience in case management and knowledge of eviction, landlord-tenant law, and homelessness prevention and family assistance programs across local, state and federal agencies
 - b. Demonstration of regional or statewide level work in area of proposed activities
 - c. Detailed list of proposed case management methods
 - d. Demonstration of hiring and staffing readiness and case management capacity
 - e. Demonstration of data tracking and reporting ability or experience

Marginal Response 1-5 Points	Acceptable Response Maximum 35 Points	Excellent Response Maximum 50 Points
The applicant’s response was incomplete, lacks clarity and does not provide assurance as to their ability to perform the work proposed.	The applicant’s response was clear, thorough and provides reasonable assurance as to their capacity to perform the work proposed.	The applicant’s response provides significant assurance as to their capacity to perform the work proposed – the answers provided demonstrate a high level of expertise and capability.

2. **Ability to implement** the proposal in an effective and timely manner – **35 points**
 - a. Clear description of the activities proposed and how they will be implemented
 - b. Description of similar programs delivered in the recent past
 - c. Examples of agency capacity that will permit such implementation

Marginal Response 1-5 Points	Acceptable Response Maximum 20 Points	Excellent Response Maximum 35 Points
The applicant’s response was incomplete and did not provide a clear description of activities	The applicant’s response provided a clear description of project activities and how the proposed activities will help improve leasing. Timeline seemed reasonable.	The applicant’s response provided a clear, detailed description of project activities and how the proposed activities will help improve leasing. Timeline seemed reasonable.

3. Budget

a. Proposed costs are eligible, reasonable and clearly defined – **15 points**

Marginal Response 1-5 Points	Acceptable Response Maximum 10 Points	Excellent Response Maximum 15 Points
The applicant's response was incomplete and did not provide a clear description of the budget.	The applicant's response provided a clear description of the budget. Budget items were eligible, and reasonable.	The applicant's response provided a clear description of the budget. Budget items were eligible, reasonable and substantiated by narrative.

M. Reporting requirements:

1. Grant recipients are required to provide monthly performance reports into SAGE and participate in weekly status meetings with DCA staff. Electronic reporting will be required according to the following schedule:

<u>Period</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
01/01/2022 – 01/31/2022	02/28/2022
02/01/2022 – 02/28/2022	03/31/2022
03/01/2022 – 03/31/2022	04/30/2022
04/01/2022 – 04/30/2022	05/30/2022
05/01/2022 – 05/30/2022	06/30/2022
06/01/2022 – 06/30/2022	07/31/2022
07/01/2022 – 07/31/2022	08/31/2022
08/01/2022 – 08/31/2022	09/30/2022
09/01/2022 – 09/31/2022	10/31/2022
10/01/2022 – 10/31/2022	11/31/2022
11/01/2022 – 11/31/2022	12/31/2022
12/01/2022 – 12/31/2022.	01/01/2023

2. Grant recipients are required to submit quarterly budget expenditure reports into SAGE according to the following schedule:

<u>Period</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
01/01/2022 – 03/31/2022	04/30/2022
04/01/2022 – 06/30/2022	07/31/2022
07/01/2022 – 09/30/2022	10/31/2022
10/01/2022 – 12/31/2022	01/31/2023

3. Grant recipients are required to track and report into SAGE the following at a minimum:

- All activities performed and outcomes
- Basic household demographic information (i.e., address, zip code, county of residence, household size, race or ethnicity and primary language.)

4. Grant recipients are required to participate in weekly virtual meetings with DCA to touch base about the progress of these activities.

N. Technical Assistance Session:

Applicants MUST participate in the technical assistance webinar that will be scheduled.

O. Deadline: Applications must be submitted by **November 30, 2021.**

P. Date by which applicants shall be notified: On or about **December 10, 2021.**

Applicants with questions about this RFP may email Dean Dafis in the Office of Eviction Prevention in the Division of Housing and Community Resources at dean.dafis@dca.nj.gov