Questions and Answers for the Solutions to End Homelessness (STEHP) Request for Proposals (RFP)
RFP Application Due Date: 3:00pm – May 29, 2024

Application Process, SFS procedures and Uploads

Q: I attempted to select "Log into SFS and Apply for Grant" but was unable to do so. When I click on the link it takes me to my logged in profile but there is no active bid or grant to work on. I double checked the Vendor Roles and I made sure my profile includes all of the roles. The only other thing I can think of is completing the Prequalification Application before selecting the grant- however I cannot submit this form because the section that says, "State Agency" and "Tax Year End" is red.

A: Please see page 32 of the RFP, third paragraph. This explains how to search for the opportunity in SFS. If that does not work, please contact helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov or (855) 233-8363.

Q: If we are subcontracting with a not-for-profit agency to provide some STEHP services, do they need to be pre-qualified in SFS prior to us submitting the proposal (we are already pre-qualified in SFS)?

A: At the time of application, only the primary applicant submitting the application in SFS needs to be pre-qualified. If an award results, all entities will need to be pre-qualified in order to receive an executed contract.

Q: I went on SFS to download all of the required attachments. Two of them appear to be missing from the portal. One is the Sexual Harassment Prevention Certification and the other is the Non-Collusive Bidding Certification. When will these two documents be made available?

A: All required documents can be found in the Events and Comments section. From Event Details page, scroll down and click the blue link named Events and Comments. All documents may not show on the first screen. Either keep scrolling down or look for the next set of numbers on the right-hand side of the screen where you can click to see the remaining documents.

Q: If one agency currently serves two Continuum of Care's (CoC) under two separate contracts with differing categories of activities in each CoC, are they expected to put in only one application in SFS for both CoC's this round?

Q: On p.3 under Section 1.3, It states the following: "Submit only one application per Agency." Our organization operates emergency shelters in two different geographic regions throughout upstate New York. Can we submit two applications – one for each region? Or are we required to submit only one application that covers both regions?

A: Applicants should submit one application whether serving one CoC or multiple CoCs. Please be aware that the approximate maximum annual dollar limit (page 19 of the RFP), is $300,000 per agency, per CoC served.

Q: What is the answer character limit to the Applicant Questions?

Q: Is there a word or character limit on any section of the application?

Q: In our review of the applicant questions document, the SFS portal, and the RFP, we didn't see any indication of character limits to responses in the Applicant Questions document. Could you please confirm if there is a character limit to applicant responses for this RFP, and if so, what that limit is?

Q: Is there a page length and word count limit on the 35 narrative questions?

Q: Are there any word limits (or ranges) for the questions?

Q: Are there character or word limits to the responses in the Applicant Questions section?

A: While SFS may have a character limit, there is not a character limit to the applicant questions or any other requested information in the RFP. Responses to the applicant questions should be made on the Word document made available through the Events and Comments Section in SFS. Although there is not a character limit, OTDA is expecting concise, direct answers to questions. Scoring is related to quality not quantity. All applicant questions are provided in a word document which can be downloaded from the Events and Comments section in SFS. Each response should be typed directly under the question and saved as a PDF. Upload the entire "Applicant Questions" PDF document on the Event Details page in the Event Questions section. Only PDF format can be viewed by OTDA.

Q: We are just starting to have conversations with non-profit agencies about the STEHP grant. Community Action in our county wants to apply for just the transitional housing portion of the grant and DSS would apply for preventive housing and Independent Living would apply for Rapid Rehousing. Can we all apply separately?

A: Yes, agencies may apply separately.

Q: Do we input annual projection data or a previous year's data into the Living Destinations Chart? If previous, how many years of previous data do we include?

A: The information requested on the Living Destinations chart should be projected numbers of people discharged from the proposed STEHP program for the annual period of time starting October 1, 2024 and ending September 30, 2025.

Q: We are applying for funding to support four programs across two CoC's. Regarding the Living Destinations Chart, should we submit one chart with numbers that reflect totals for all programs or a separate chart for each program?

Q: If we are submitting a 2024 STEHP grant application for services in two different COC's should we be uploading two separate forms for most questions? For example, two living destination charts, two budgets, two sets of Applicant Questions?

A: Applicants should submit one 'Summary of Annual Funding Request', one 'Applicant Questions' document, one 'Annual Budget', one 'Living Destinations Chart' and one 'Rapid Rehousing Programs in the Community' chart with comprehensive information provided for all categories and CoCs in which the applicant proposes to operate services. If the applicant is proposing to serve multiple counties and/or multiple CoCs there must be a 'CoC Letter of Support' from each CoC and should be a 'Local Social Services District Certification of Approval' from each district in which the applicant proposes to operate services.

Q: Section 1.2, Page 2 of the RFP states "The applicant must submit a letter(s) from the local CoC(s) body, using the template provided." Will OTDA also accept letters of support from community partners within the proposed service area(s)?

A: Please submit only the required documents where requested on the Event Details page in the Event Questions section. There is no space in SFS to accept extra documents.

Section 1.4, Page 3 of the RFP states "OTDA intends to support programs which are coordinated with their local CoC." Section 1.9, Page 16 states, "Each STEHP grantee is required to . . . Function as part of a CoC, including participating in its Coordinated Entry process. . . ." Aside from attending CoC meetings and participating in the CoC's Coordinated Entry process, are there specific grantee actions that OTDA intends to mandate related to coordinating with the local CoC?

A: Applicants who are awarded funds are expected to participate to the maximum extent practicable in CoC activities.

Q: On page 18 of the RFP, it states that proposals will be prioritized on the following criteria: (second bullet from bottom): High priority will be awarded to applicants that serve areas which did not receive ESG funds directly from HUD in FFY 2023 – would this high priority group include agencies that received ESG funding that came through HUD to OTDA, and was then distributed to counties?

A: This refers to the ESG funds that HUD allocates annually, not the COVID funding allocated by HUD to OTDA through the one-time ESGCV allocation.

Q: On page 18 in the STEHP priority chart, it listed increasing income as a priority area for Rapid Rehousing. Will programs that currently provide STEHP Rapid Rehousing have this used as a criteria in evaluating future funding for Rapid Rehousing through this RFP?

A: Applications will be scored based on all criteria outlined in the RFP and completeness with which all questions and components are addressed. Applicant Question 22 asks applicants to address the topic of increasing income in Transitional Housing and Rapid Rehousing programs.

Q: Page 3, Section 1.4 states: "OTDA intends to support comprehensive programs that assist individuals living on the streets with outreach services; help maintain and improve the quality of emergency shelters ,transitional housing and drop in centers for homeless individuals and families; help meet the cost of operating such programs; provide comprehensive supportive services aimed at housing stabilization; provide rapid re-housing services; and/or provide supportive services to those at risk of homelessness." Is "comprehensive" meant to imply preference is given to applicants that request funds in all STEHP categories or in more than one category?

Q: Section 1.4, Page 3 of the RFP states "OTDA intends to support comprehensive programs." Does a proposed project that addresses solely the Prevention category (by assisting eligible persons and families with maintaining permanent housing) fall within that intention?

A: An application that requests funding in only one category may be considered comprehensive. In the context of this RFP, comprehensive refers to a proposed program that directly provides supportive services, or provides referrals to supportive services, to assist a person in need become and remain stably housed.

Q: Page 18, Section 1.11 states: "High priority will be awarded to applicants proposing RRH projects that serve areas which do not currently receive HUD CoC or ESG funds granted for the

purposes of RRH." Can a list be created that confirms which CoCs are considered high priority for RRH funds?

A: A list is not provided. Please download the 'Rapid Rehousing Programs in the Community' document, connect with the CoC to get the requested information and complete the document. After the form is completed, save it as a PDF and then upload it on the Event Details page, in the Event Questions section.

Q: How do we access The CoC Homeless Assistance Programs Populations and Subpopulations chart that is on the events details page?

Q: How do we access the CoC Homeless Assistance Programs Housing Inventory Chart on the events page?

A: Both the Homeless Assistance Populations and Housing Inventory Charts should be provided by the applicant based on data publicly available on the HUD Exchange https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-homeless-populations-and-subpopulations-reports/ and generated from your CoC. Consult with your CoC Lead if you are not familiar with these charts.

Budget

Q: Page 19 of the RFP states: "If there are additional proposals which qualify for funding, no one agency will be awarded more than approximately $300,000 with the exception of those agencies serving more than one CoC, (as evidenced by the CoC Letters of Support which must accompany the application). Agencies serving more than one CoC may be awarded up to approximately $300,000 for each CoC served." Does this imply that organizations serving only one CoC have an annual award ceiling of $300,000?

Q: What is the monetary cap on applying for these funds?

Q: Section 1.7, Page 13 of the RFP states "OTDA will ensure that, at minimum, the amount of ESG that would have been directly allocated to the County of Orange ($148,060 for Federal Funding Year 2022) will be made available to agencies serving an eligible population residing in the County of Orange. If applying for Orange County, would it be correct to apply for a total of $448,060 ($300,000 max per county plus amount mentioned on page 13, section 1.7 that outlines an additional $148,060)?

Q: For the STEHP RFP, is the maximum total award $300,000 over three years, or is $300,000 the maximum ANNUAL award? Thank you.

Q: Good afternoon. I may be missing this somewhere, but I am looking to apply for the STEHP RFP and I do not see a dollar amount on the award we can ask up to. I do see no more than $300k will be awarded to a particular agency unless the agency serves multiple CoC's. If indeed, it is a maximum of $300k, is that per year or for 3 years?

Q: What is the funding maximum an organization can apply to for Prevention Services?

Q: What is the is average/maximum annual budget request allowed?

Q: If $300,000 is the max, if another agency hypothetically took on STEHP services in (another County within the same CoC), each county would then be able to apply for $300,000?

A: As outlined in Section 1.11 of the RFP, if there are additional proposals which qualify for funding, no one agency will be awarded more than approximately $300,000 annually with the exception of those agencies serving more than one CoC, (as evidenced by the CoC Letters of Support which must accompany the application). Agencies serving more than one CoC may be awarded up to approximately

$300,000 for each CoC served. An agency should submit one application in SFS for all proposed STEHP services even if multiple CoCs are proposed to be served. An agency may be awarded up to approximately $300,000 per year, per CoC for any combination of STEHP categories/services. Multiple agencies within a CoC may apply for STEHP funds. The budget developed for this application should be based on expenses for one year.

Q: What percentage of the budget may be used for staff salaries? Is there a cap?

A: There is no established minimum or maximum percentage that should be allocated to salaries.

Q: Can a current STEHP provider propose a budget that includes expected rate increases for current subcontractors?

Q: Can agencies budget for cost of living increases for staff positions over the five year contract period?

Q: Can we apply to increase the wages of shelter staff? For example, if we want to increase the wages of our Resident Assistants by $2/hour to ensure they are receiving a living wage, is that an eligible expense? If so, how do we include that in the budget?

 A: The budget submitted with this application should be based on expenses for one year. If an award results, agencies will be able to negotiate annual budgets based on the awarded amount. The contract term that may result from this application is for a three-year period, with additional periods possible. Awardees should not expect the annual awarded amount to increase after the first year.

Administrative Expenses

Q: RE Administrative expenses, inclusive of indirect rates of up to 5%. Our agency has a federally approved indirect rate of 10.3%. Will we be able to claim 10.3% if we provide OTDA with documentation of our approved rate?

A: Five Percent (5%) of any resulting award may be used towards administrative expenses. Federally-approved Indirect Cost Rate documentation should be sufficient to claim 5% of the awarded total.

Q: We understand that any administrative time dedicated to this contract needs to be categorized as administrative and counts towards the 5% allowable rate. Our Program Director's time is dedicated largely to direct programmatic operations, with a very small portion dedicated to administrative work. For the purposes of this RFP, can we allocate their administrative work as in-kind (supported by other funding sources), and then charge the full FTE dedicated to this contract as a programmatic expense?

A: Salary for direct services related to programming should appear on the Salary line. Only the time and effort directly related to performing work on this grant can be charged, and it must be verified and certified when claiming.

Shelter Category

Q: Under the Solutions to End Homelessness Program RFP, would the Emergency Shelters category include domestic violence shelters?

A: Expenses for domestic violence shelters are eligible in the Shelter category.

Q: Our 20-bed domestic violence shelter provides short-term shelter for up to 60 days. From reading the STEHP RFP, I could not tell if this type of emergency shelter is eligible for funding, or if this RFP only covers very short-term shelters such as drop-in centers or overnight shelters.

A: As outlined in Section 1.6 B., expenses related to operating and providing supportive services in warming centers, drop-in centers and overnight shelters to persons or families defined as homeless according to the Homeless Definition on page 4 of the RFP are eligible. This includes the domestic violence population and short-term shelters.

Q: Is the OTDA STEHP funding available to current shelter providers, meaning are they eligible for this funding to propose housing services otherwise not funded already in this procurement? I don't see anything in the materials that would exclude a current shelter but wasn't sure if we were missing something.

A: Shelter services for existing shelters are eligible under STEHP.

Q: Could we consolidate our funding application to encompass both our existing 21-bed homeless adult women's shelter, currently supported by STEHP funding, and our newly established second shelter site, which accommodates 63 beds for adult women, under our agency's "Homeless Shelter Services" program, following approval from NYS OTDA Shelter Oversight & Compliance and the County DSS?

A: Applicants should submit one application for all requested STEHP services. Multiple sites may be included on one application.

Q: We also just were informed by OTDA that our local DSS will not support our process to become a certified adult shelter. We need to know if we can still apply for STEHP without this designation.

A: Current certification of a shelter is not a pre-requisite to apply for STEHP funds. Shelter providers are encouraged to work with their DSS and OTDA's Division of Shelter Oversight and Compliance to become certified. Applicants not pursing certification should thoroughly explain why.

Transitional Housing

Q: The RFP states that rent associated with TH programs is eligible. We own the building we use as the housing for our program. As such we pay a mortgage. Would our monthly mortgage payment be considered an eligible expense?

A: No, mortgage payments for Transitional Housing properties are not eligible as stated on page 8 of the RFP.

Q: RFP states that any rental assistance funds are only applicable to RRH and Prevention. Is it possible to include this expense in a Transitional Housing application?

A: If space is rented by the agency for the purpose of providing Transitional Housing to eligible participants, STEHP can cover the cost of renting the property. STEHP does not cover 'participant's portion' of rent owed to the agency if the agency charges the rent to the participants.

Q: For the Transitional Housing category, does the housing need to be supervised?

A: The goal of STEHP is to assist individuals and families experiencing homelessness with supportive services during their experience of homelessness. A Transitional Housing program does not need to provide 24-hour supervision, but applicants should explain how unsupervised sites address the goal of providing supportive services and ensuring housing stability while in the program and at discharge.

Q: Can it be scattered site housing?

A: Yes, the scattered site Transitional Housing model may be supported with STEHP funds.

Q: In addition, what is the timeline on how much support we can provide to individuals in transitional housing?

A: Generally speaking, Transitional Housing may be utilized by participants for a maximum of 18-24 months.

Rapid Rehousing and Prevention Categories

Q: Legal Services to participants are listed as ineligible. This is a change from past rounds. Are we able to subcontract with Legal Services agencies to provide those services?

A: No, the SFY 2025 New York State budget has appropriated funds to provide legal services and representation to the same population that is STEHP-eligible, therefore those types of services under STEHP would be duplicative.

Q: Can Homeless Prevention or Rapid Rehousing funds be used to pay for rental housing managed by the awardee?

A: Prevention and Rapid Rehousing funds cannot be used to pay for the participant's portion of rental assistance in housing managed or owned by the awardee.

Q: Regarding "rapid rehousing" and "prevention" efforts on RFP pages 10 & 11, "financial and rental assistance for program participants to live in applicant's own housing stock" is noted as an ineligible expense. As a non-profit developer, we have multiple housing portfolios which are under various LLC's and are each separate private entities. Would we be eligible as the LLC's are separate legal entities within the organization?

A: As stated you would not be eligible. The intent of providing rental assistance under Rapid Rehousing and Prevention is to support tenants who have no other resources and who need short-term and medium-term assistance (a maximum of two year's worth, if they continue to qualify). STEHP does not offer permanent subsidies.

Q: How often do we need to recertify income eligibility for Prevention Services?

Q: We are applying in the Prevention category. In this category recertification of income happens every 90 days only up until a client is exited?

A: Income eligibility must be recertified every three months for participants receiving continued Prevention assistance.

Q: Does participant income refer to gross income?

A: Yes.

Q: If the income of participants receiving Prevention assistance rises above 30% of Area Medium Income (AMI) after the 3 months recertification period, but their case remains open, are participants permitted to stay in the program until their case is closed? If not, is there a specified length of time during which they may continue to receive assistance before they must exit the program?

A: If a Prevention participant's income is determined to be above 30% AMI at any three-month recertification interval, a discharge plan should be enacted.

Q: We are applying in the Prevention category. A client is "exited" once the threat of homelessness is removed and our program deems the family stable? Is there any other criteria for exiting? This is not exactly about discharge or termination but about a date for data entry.

A: If an award results from this application, data entry requirements should be discussed with your OTDA program manager and HMIS Administrator.

Q: Section 1.8, Page 14 of the RFP states "Rapid Re-housing and Prevention permanent housing must be within Fair Market Rent (FMR)." Are we correct that if we distribute rental arrears only, the unit must be below FMR?

A: When paying rental arrears only, the unit does not have to be determined to be within FMR. There are other instances when the unit does not have to be determined to be within FMR; if only providing housing stability case management, and/or financial assistance according to the definition on page 29 of the RFP. The unit must be within FMR and considered 'Rent Reasonable' when providing short-term or medium-term rental assistance as defined by regulation 576.106 (a) (1) and (2).

Q: Can habitability inspections for prevention participants be conducted virtually?

A: Habitability inspections for Rapid Rehousing and Prevention units must comply with regulation 576.403 (c 1-6) minimum standards for permanent housing.

Q: On page 14 of the RFP, it states that in Rapid Rehousing and Homeless Prevention programs, housing stability case management services should not exceed 30 days from the time period that the program participant is seeking permanent housing. Does this mean there is the expectation that the program is expected to assist the household to find housing within 30 days?

A: Yes, the goal is to find or maintain permanent housing within 30 days as per regulation 576.105 (b) 2.

Q: If we opt to discontinue our receipt of Rapid Rehousing (RRH) funds from STEHP after five years and solely apply for funding to sustain our 84-bed homeless shelters, could this decision potentially impact our STEHP application negatively? Additionally, we've observed an uptick in RRH units in our area over recent years, and we currently administer the local DSS Rental Supplement Program, serving 40 households with funding.

A: It is permissible to apply solely for the Shelter category. Applications will be scored based on all criteria outlined in the RFP and completeness with which all questions and components are addressed.

STEHP Requirements

Q: Can HMIS expenses be reimbursed through the STEHP contract.

A: Yes, HMIS related expenses can be reimbursed through the STEHP contract as contractors will be required to enter program participant information into an HMIS system, report certain data to OTDA and HUD, and share data with OTDA's data warehouse

Q: We are applying in the Prevention category, follow up happens after a client is exited?

A: Six-month follow-up data is required for any participant who exited to permanent housing. The definition of six-month follow-up appears on page 31 of the RFP:

Q: Does the sub recipient and the recipient need to list OTDA as the additionally insured on their insurance (adding to contract).

A: Proof of insurance is not required to apply for this application. Should an award be received, contractors and subcontractors will be required to provide proof of Worker's Compensation and Disability Insurance.

Q: Section 1.9 Program Requirement, Page 16 of the RFP states "Each STEHP grantee is required to: Keep documentation about persons found ineligible" and additionally the HUD ESG Regulations (§ 576.500 Recordkeeping and reporting requirements.) § 576.500 (d) Determinations of ineligibility. For each individual and family determined ineligible to receive Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) assistance, the record must include documentation of the reason for that determination." What is the required documentation for ineligibility (would a note in the grantee's case management system explaining the reason why an individual or family was determined ineligible suffice)?

A: For each individual and family determined ineligible to receive STEHP assistance, the record must include documentation of the reason for that determination and could be recorded in the contractor's case management system.

Q: Section 1.6, Page 12 of the RFP contains a chart that states under Prevention that "Financial and rental assistance related to maintaining permanent housing, such as moving or storage fees, rental arrears when no other source is available to pay" (a) Concerning the exhaustion requirement, is DSS assistance the sole source of funding that OTDA expects tenants to exhaust first before a person or family can be considered for STEHP rental arrears? If not, what other funding sources does OTDA expect tenants to exhaust first? (b) What documentation, if any, must a grantee collect and maintain on file as evidence of exhaustion? For example, must a DSS denial letter be collected and maintained?

A: The Legal Services for Eviction Prevention and Housing Stability funds, along with DSS assistance, and any other form of available rental assistance should be utilized to the maximum extent practicable to prevent a household from becoming homeless.

Q: According to HUD regulations 576.400 d. on page 27, "Each ESG-funded program or project within a Continuum of Care's area must use the (Coordinated Entry) system. Then, on page 28, 2 (1) the regulations state that, "If the Recipient is a State: The recipient must establish and consistently apply, or require that its subrecipients establish and apply written standards for providing ESG assistance. With respect to HUD regulations and OTDA guidance, In the STEHP RFP, Rapid Rehousing programs are expected to be involved with Coordinated Entry to the maximum degree "practicable." Our questions are: Do we have to follow the HUD guidelines and the only referrals that can be accepted have to come through Coordinated Entry? Is completion of a Coordinated Entry Assessment and referral by the CoC a requirement to participation in STEHP? Or do we follow OTDA STEHP Guidelines and work with Coordinated Entry to the maximum degree practicable? Would OTDA consider maximum degree practicable to be accepting Coordinated Entry referrals from CoC on an ongoing basis but also taking referrals from the emergency shelter and others who refused to complete a coordinated entry assessment but meet the criteria for literally homeless?

A: If an award results from this application, the applicant is expected to participate to the maximum extent practicable in the CoC's process and procedures for Coordinated Entry. Participants who refuse to participate in HMIS data collection or Coordinated Entry may still be served.

Q: Regarding the question: Applicant question 24. Explain requirements or expectations you have for participants while in the program. Are we permitted to have requirements, such as sustainability, attending budgeting workshops, etc.

A: Generally speaking, programs have some expectations for participants. STEHP endeavors to support programs that offer services on Housing First principles. Excessive demands and requirements that appear to present barriers to services are discouraged.

MWBE requirements

Q: Are we required to submit MWBE forms 4937 and 4938 contained in the RFP package but not listed in Upload 10 in SFS – in SFS, it only requests Forms 4976, 4970, and 4934.

A: All applicants should complete MWBE forms 4976, 4970 and 4934. If an award results from this application, the proposed contract will be evaluated for MWBE discretionary expenses such as supplies, contractual relationships with for-profit businesses and equipment. At that time, forms 4937 (Utilization Plan) and 4938 (Supplier Letter of Intent) would be completed, if necessary. Only 4976, 4970 and 4934 must be uploaded in PDF format as part of the STEHP application.

Q: MWBE – what budget lines and items will be considered for the MWBE discretionary spending calculation?

A: Should an award result, a proposed contract will be evaluated for all possible discretionary expenses. Generally speaking, any item or service which can be procured on the open market is subject to being added to the discretionary total.

Q: Can the Program Director sign the MWBE 4937 Utilization Plan, as was permitted in previous STEHP RFPs? Or, does this document need to be signed by an authorized agency signatory?

A: Form 4937 is not required to be completed to submit an application. Should an award result, and if the proposed contract contains MWBE discretionary funds, the person that signs the Utilization Plan should be the person that oversees, and is responsible for, meeting the established goals.

Q: Does the sub recipient fall under the MWBE requirements, would like to commit to the nonprofit, who is already providing warming center services with a contract to manage the lease and the staff who will work at a low barrier emergency shelter.

A: If an award results from this application, any discretionary expenses in a contract (such as supplies, equipment, items or services that can be purchased on the open market) would be subject to the MWBE requirement of spending 30% of that discretionary total using certified MWBE vendors.

Q: Regarding OTDA document 4934 on page 53 ("Staffing Plan"), if the staff who will be carrying out the work associated with this project are being provided completely in-kind and there will be no budgeted staff, correct we do not have to list in-kind on the required staffing plan?

A: Correct.