

Item Title: Appropriation to Increase Bridge to Home Awards

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners appropriates a one-time transfer of \$600,000 from the Behavioral Health fund balance to the Housing Affordability and Community Revitalization Department in the FY2026 General Fund.

Item Summary:

Purpose: The Board of Commissioners approves all fund increases. In accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the Board of Commissioners must approve all amendments that increase the budget for a fund.

Background: Bridge to Home is a program designed to help people quickly transition from homelessness into permanent housing. It brings together proven housing strategies and provides funding to nonprofit organizations, enabling them to deliver effective support services.

For fiscal year 2026, the initial pilot funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) transitioned to County funds. In April 2025, RFP #25-051 was released. Eighteen agencies representing twenty-nine applications totaling more than \$12 million in funding were received. A selection committee evaluated each proposal, awarding eleven agencies over \$3.08 million to continue existing Bridge to Home programming. This one-time allocation of \$600,000 is intended to support the agencies that have been awarded funding, helping them maintain essential services during the shift from temporary federal pandemic funding to a more stable, long-term funding model.

Strategic Plan: This action supports Community Health and Wellbeing Goal 2: By 2029, make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring by reducing the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness by 10% from 2024 levels.

Fiscal Impact: This one-time funding allocation to support this initiative comes from the Behavioral Health fund balance and will be appropriated in the Housing Department of the General Fund.

Additional Information:

On October 18th, 2021, the Wake County Board of Commissioners appropriated \$10.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to increase homeless service provider capacity. In December 2021, the Housing Affordability and Community Revitalization (Housing) Department launched the Bridge to Home program to equip

community service providers with funding to support a comprehensive, evidence-based service array with the goal of moving as many individuals as possible out of homelessness and into stable, long-term housing.

The Bridge to Home program funds the following services:

1. Comprehensive Case Management which is housing-focused with a staff to client ratio of no more than 1:25 and requires minimum weekly interactions, service plans with housing goals, and referrals to appropriate resources.
2. Flexible Financial Assistance to reduce housing barriers and support a wide array of paths to permanent housing.
3. Housing Navigation through dedicated staff who collaborate with the Landlord Engagement Unit (LEU) and support clients through the housing search, application, and lease signing process.
4. Access to Benefits through staff who support clients through the application process and acquiring documents for mainstream benefits like Social Security or Disability or to further the housing search process.
5. Health Care Connections with healthcare services such as tele-med and tele-psych, prescription payment assistance, and referrals to behavioral health providers.
6. Transportation with options offered at no cost to the client and minimal restrictions.
7. Permanent Home Furnishings which are offered to clients upon exiting homelessness into permanent housing at no cost to the client.

Bridge to Home has demonstrated unprecedented impact in serving people experiencing homelessness more effectively, efficiently, and empathetically. In the 2024 fiscal year, Bridge to Home agencies provided over 6,900 separate services and exited 1,583 clients to permanent housing. In the final year of the ARPA pilot, twelve agencies provided \$4.7 million, resulting in 5,808 service transactions.

With the sunset of ARPA funds at the end of fiscal year 2025, the Board of Commissioners approved a budget increase of \$2.35 million for fiscal year 2026 to contract with local non-profit partners for homeless services. This funding was combined with existing County funds previously awarded to homeless services agencies in partnership with the City of Raleigh. The total budget, exceeding \$3 million, was incorporated into the permanent funding model for Bridge to Home.

With the proven success of this program, Wake County released RFP #25-051 to allow agencies to continue services in our community. Eighteen agencies responded and were scored based upon the description of service coordination, data collection practices, demonstration of low barrier service model, and identification of technical assistance needs. Together, the agencies requested \$12,081,536 in funding. Of those, eleven agencies were awarded partial funding with a combined allocation of \$3,083,979, though

all individual awards were lower than in previous year contracts.

The decreased County funding, combined with several economic factors, has impacted local non-profits' ability to continue to provide services at previous levels. Additionally, rising service needs are outpacing program capacity. This additional, one-time funding will ensure Bridge to Home agencies can continue meeting community needs effectively while transitioning to a long-term, post-pandemic funding climate. The following agencies have demonstrated a need for additional funding to support continued services: Women's Center, Healing Transitions, Urban Ministries, Green Chair, and Housing for Students Today (HOST).

Attachments:

1. Budget Memo – FY2026 Human Services