

Item Title: Award of Housing and Homeless Services Funding for the Bridge to Home Program

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners authorizes the County Manager to execute multi-year contracts up to the amount shown with the following agencies for the Bridge to Home: Service Expansion program.

- 1. Salvation Army- \$327,784**
- 2. Triangle Family Services - \$474,140**
- 3. Healing Transitions - \$1,475,679**
- 4. Oak City Cares - \$200,000**
- 5. Urban Ministries - \$480,480**
- 6. Haven House- \$106,131**

Contract awards are subject to the terms and conditions acceptable to the County Attorney.

Item Summary:

Purpose: The Board of Commissioners must approve multi-year contracts.

Background: On October 18th, 2021, the Wake County Board of Commissioners approved the appropriation of \$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 released RFP #21-099 to equip community service providers with a comprehensive, evidence-based service array to meet the dynamic needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness known as the Bridge to Home program.

In August 2022, RFP #21-099 was reopened to expand a second cohort of the Bridge to Home program. The goal of the Bridge to Home program is to ensure Wake County citizens receive the best possible care and end their homeless episode. Eight agencies responded to the Request for Proposals. A selection committee consisting of County and partner staff evaluated proposals. The selection committee recommends the County contract with six of the eight agencies to strengthen the communities housing and homeless services. One proposal was submitted in error. The other proposal did not align with or meet the baseline scoring expectations.

Board Goal: This action supports Community Health and Vitality Goal 6: Prevent homelessness and provide support to County residents experiencing homelessness.

Fiscal Impact: On February 7th, 2022 the Wake County Board of Commissioners approved the award of \$4.7 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding for contracts issued in Cohort 1 of Bridge to Home. Provider contracts from Cohort 2 will use \$3 million of American Rescue Plan Act funding already appropriated in the American Rescue Plan Fund to support homeless service provider capacity. No additional appropriation is required. Contracts will be funded through June 30, 2024. This is a pilot program; no ongoing expenditures are being considered at this time.

Additional Information:

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the significant deficit of homelessness diversion, street outreach, emergency shelter beds, and rapid exit options available to individuals and families in Wake County. The Hotels to Housing (H2H) program highlighted the efficacy of providing a full-service array at the shelter level to increase exits to permanent housing. Within six months, the H2H program permanently housed more than 300 people, representing unprecedented success for the Wake County homeless service system.

Addressing the current deficit in emergency shelter due to COVID-19 requires a two-fold approach:

1. **Increasing Emergency Shelter Capacity:** to allow current shelter and non-shelter homeless service providers to provide additional re-housing assistance by reimbursing costs associated with the use of hotel units as individual temporary shelters; reduce the number of entries into homeless through problem solving conversations and diversion services; and
2. **Reducing a Client's Length of Stay in Homelessness:** to fill critical programmatic gaps, creating a more robust service array, which will ensure that clients have access to in-depth wrap-around services and light touch financial assistance to exit homeless quickly. This Rapid-Exit Approach to moving clients out of the homeless system and into permanent housing, reduces the length of time a client experiences homelessness and increases bed-turnover so that more individuals and families can be served annually; advanced Street Outreach to connect people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to permanent housing as quickly as possible.

Prior to implementing this approach, the Housing Department conducted two community listening sessions with over 100 community members registered. Through these listening sessions, partner agencies shared community priorities, gaps in service, technical assistance needs, and challenges in implementing a low-barrier service model. With this knowledge, Housing crafted the Bridge to Home program to assist agencies in providing enhanced services through a low-barrier model. Over 250 people received services in the first 6 months of operation leading to an increase in permanent housing placements across the homeless system. With the addition of new agencies and expansion of existing agencies,

The Bridge to Home program will fund 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.

The second release of the RFP was designed to offer more service providers the opportunity to adopt the program model and allow for the Cohort 1 agencies to request expansions of their initial award. Eight agencies responded were scored based upon the description of service coordination, data collection practices, demonstration of low barrier service model, and identification of technical assistance needs.

The Selection Committee recommends the County contract with the six listed agencies to strengthen the communities housing and homeless services.

Applicant	Funding Up To	Services Requested to be Funded
Salvation Army	\$327,784	Flexible Spending, Access to Benefits, Transportation, Housing Navigation, Healthcare
Triangle Family Services	\$474,140	Comprehensive Case Management, Healthcare, Flexible Spending, Housing Navigation.
Healing Transitions	\$1,475,679	Flexible Spending, Access to Benefits, Comprehensive Case Management, Healthcare Connection, Transportation
Oak City Cares	\$200,000	Flexible Spending, Case Management, Access to Benefits
Urban Ministries	\$480,480	Comprehensive Case Management, Healthcare Connection, Transportation

Haven House	\$106,131	Flexible Spending, Transportation, Healthcare Connection,
Total Request	\$3,064,214	

Attachments:
None