

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Administration of Renter & Homeowner Assistance Program

RFP Issue Date:

June 4, 2020

Submittal Due Date:

3:15 PM, Thursday, June 18, 2020



Department of Urban & Economic Development

Brian Thomas, AICP - Commissioner

Utica City Hall

1 Kennedy Plaza

Utica, NY 13502

I. INTRODUCTION

In response to the worldwide Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19), the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), Public Law 116-136 was adopted and authorized on March 27, 2020. As a result, the US Department of Housing and Community Development (HUD) awarded the City of Utica \$1,510,166 in Community Development Block Grant-Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. Additionally, the City was awarded \$743,966 in Emergency Solutions Grant – Coronavirus (ESG-CV) funds. Additional funding through the CARES Act may be awarded to the City, though no formal announcements have been made.

As a result of significant consultation with various housing and human service providers throughout the community, including the Mohawk Valley Housing & Homeless Coalition (the region's Continuum of Care), assisting tenants and homeowners that were living paycheck-to-paycheck just prior to the pandemic outbreak in the Greater Utica area was cited as one of the most pressing needs. As such, the City of Utica allocated over 40% of its CARES Act funding to rent and mortgage relief.

At this time, the City of Utica seeks a qualified and experienced organization(s) to administer several programs to assist both tenants and homeowners within the City of Utica whose decrease or outright loss of income during the pandemic has prevented them from paying their rent or mortgage.

II. PROJECT OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented rise in unemployment since March. Persons with low- and moderate-income are less likely to have savings or access to other types of financial support to see them through such a sudden and significant loss of income. Although there is a temporary statewide moratorium on evictions, payment for past-due rents will come due upon the expiration of the Governor's Executive Order (anticipated as soon as August 2020). The City anticipates that many households may be unable to obtain gainful employment for the foreseeable future, leaving them unable to pay past-due rent or mortgage payments quickly enough to avoid eviction or foreclosure.

At this time, the City seeks a Program Administrator(s) with expert understanding of the housing needs of low- and moderate-income households in the City of Utica who face financial hardship and either eviction or potential foreclosure as a result of COVID-19. The goal is to maintain housing stability of Utica families and households and entire neighborhoods, by extension. This Request for Proposals (RFP) is intended to identify and secure a contract with an organization or multiple organizations who demonstrate experience, commitment, and the capacity to carry out a Rental Assistance Program and Mortgage Assistance Program. The successful organization(s) must be able to administer such program(s) in strict compliance with all applicable rules and regulations of federal Community Development Block Grant and Emergency Solutions Grants along with the CARES Act. This program will only offer services to persons residing within the incorporated boundaries of Utica.

Current guidance from the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) allows for up to three (3) months of rental/mortgage housing assistance for eligible households, barring any future waivers of such regulations by HUD as a result of the pandemic. Potential applicant organizations to this RFP must have experience working with low- to moderate-income households; evaluating financial need; and ability to connect recipients to supportive services such as case management, financial planning and coaching and special needs housing resources and providers.

In order to provide assistance to as many City tenants and homeowners as possible, the City has developed plans for the ESG-CV and CDBG-CV funds; both plans can be found on the City’s webpage (www.cityofutica.com) and are titled as Substantial Amendments. As of the release date of this RFP, the City has a grant agreement in place with HUD for the ESG-CV funds and expects to formally submit its CDBG-CV Substantial Amendment to HUD by Wednesday, June 10th. The plan includes four (4) different activities that address tenants, homeowners and varying income limits; the table below further describes each of the individual activities.

ACTIVITY	BUDGET	SOURCE	NAT’L OBJ.
Rent Relief Program - assist tenants with a family income less than 50% of area median income with up to three months' rent, including arrears; payment to be made directly to landlords	330,000	ESG-CV	
Rent Relief Program - assist tenants with a family income between 50% and 80% of area median income with up to three months' rent, including arrears; payment to be made directly to landlords	250,000	CDBG-CV	Low/Mod Housing
Mortgage Relief Program - assist low- and moderate-income homeowners (up to 80% of area median income) with payment of up to three months' mortgage, including arrears; payment to be made directly to financing institutions	200,000	CDBG-CV	Low/Mod Housing
Mortgage Relief Program - assist moderate-income homeowners (up to 120% of area median income) with payment of up to three months' mortgage, including arrears; payment to be made directly to financing institutions	175,000	CDBG-CV	Urgent Need

The City’s preference is for one (1) single organization to manage and administer all four (4) proposed activities. Respondents interested in managing and administering fewer than all four (4) proposed activities must make that clear within their proposal response and identify which of the four (4) proposed activities is the subject of their proposal.

The term of the contract will begin immediately upon selection of an organization(s) and will expire on July 3, 2022. Given the changing dynamics of COVID-19 and the necessary public health and governmental response, it is expected that the recipient(s) of this contract be flexible with regard to program design and execution.

III. SCOPE OF WORK

The successful respondent(s) to this RFP will be expected to administer these programs on behalf of the City of Utica from initial program development through project close-out and all steps in between, including, at a minimum, but not limited to the following:

Initial program development – the Program Administrator(s) will meet with relevant staff members of the City’s Department of Urban & Economic Development, including the Section 8 office, to develop the parameters by which the various programs will operate.

Outreach and marketing – the Program Administrator(s) will develop a marketing and outreach plan aimed at trying to reach as many eligible participants as possible. The City of Utica will assist, to the

extent possible, with the various media platforms currently at its disposal, including Mayor Palmieri's Facebook page and Twitter account, the weekly *City Limits* television program, the marquee sign at the intersection of the Memorial Parkway and Oneida Street, the City's webpage (www.cityofutica.com), etc.

Development of all client intake materials – the Program Administrator(s) will be responsible for the development, distribution, storage and maintenance of all client intake materials (i.e., application, financial hardship questionnaire, arrears documentation, etc.).

Client management – the Program Administrator(s) will be responsible to work with all clients in a manner consistent with current CDC guidelines with the understanding that some low- to moderate-income clients may not have an ability to meet virtually or by telephone.

Project management – the Program Administrator(s) will be responsible for ensuring that all available funding is properly and appropriately awarded to eligible recipients in an expeditious manner. Staff of the Program Administrator(s) will review all completed and accepted applications, make necessary awards, coordinate payment with appropriate City staff and address any issues that arise throughout the course of each casefile.

Project close-out – the Program Administrator(s) will be responsible for ensuring that each file is appropriately closed-out. Program files shall be stored in accordance with all applicable federal recordkeeping rules and regulations.

For each of the tasks listed above, respondents should address within their proposals the manner by which they plan to address the multilingual nature of the low- to moderate-income population of the City of Utica.

IV. INQUIRIES

Inquiries about this Request For Proposals shall be directed to:

City of Utica
Department of Urban & Economic Development
Attn: Brian Thomas, AICP – Commissioner of Urban & Economic Development
One Kennedy Plaza
Utica, New York 13502
315-792-0185 (office) or 315-534-0399 (cell)
bthomas@cityofutica.com

All inquiries shall be made directly to the contact above; any attempts to make inquiries of any other City of Utica personnel will not receive a response.

V. ESTIMATED SCHEDULE

Request For Proposals Issue Date	Thursday, June 4, 2020
Proposal Submission Deadline	Thursday, June 18, 2020 at 3:15 PM
Notification of Selection	Friday, June 26, 2020
Contract Award	Wednesday, July 8, 2020
Expiration of Funds	June 3, 2022

VI. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals shall include, at a minimum, the following elements:

- Project Approach
- Work Plan
- Fee Proposal
- Staff Organization Chart
- Prior Experience

The Project Approach shall clearly describe the respondent's approach to this particular project. Included in the project approach shall be a discussion of the distribution of the workload amongst the staff and why each staff member is appropriate for the assigned task, why each task is necessary and how the City of Utica will benefit.

The Scope of Work described above shall constitute a minimum level of effort. Respondents are free to expand, rearrange and or modify the scope of work based on an understanding of the best approach to this project. The Work Plan shall be a chronological discussion of the process by which the respondent proposes to carry out the project.

The Fee Proposal shall be presented as an hourly rate for each of the individual scope of work elements, estimating the level of effort in hours and fee expected for each element. The total fee shall be a sum of the individual fees for each scope of work element and shall be a fixed fee with all reimbursable expenses estimated and included in the fee proposal. The City of Utica reserves the right to modify and or select appropriate tasks and sub-tasks which shall be performed under this contract.

The organization chart shall depict (on one page) the project management structure and explain how the staff is organized to respond to the City's needs. The organization chart shall also explicitly show the principle point(s) of contact.

Prior experience shall include brief summaries of past projects similar in size and scope to the proposed project. A brief description of the completed work plan shall also be included, along with a name and telephone number of one reference for each individual project.

One (1) bound copy of the proposal and one (1) flash drive containing a digital copy of the full proposal in PDF format are to be submitted to the following address:

City of Utica
Board of Contract & Supply
Utica City Hall
One Kennedy Plaza
Utica, New York 13502

Proposals are to be received by 3:15 PM local time on Thursday, June 18, 2020. Clearly mark the submittal package with the title of this RFP and the name of the responding agency or organization. Only those responses received prior to the date and time indicated above will be considered; all other responses will be returned unopened. After the submission date and time specified above, responses

must remain firm for a period of sixty (60) days. All proposals become the property of the City of Utica upon submission and will not be returned.

VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals should emphasize an approach to this project based on the agency's strong background and extensive expertise in addressing housing issues in the Greater Utica area and specifically within the City of Utica.

The selection of a consultant for this effort will be based upon the following criteria:

- Demonstrated ability to perform the proposed scope of work based on the following:
 - A minimum of three references for projects of similar size and scope including name, address, phone, description of the project;
 - An appropriate staffing plan for the project;
- Ability to fully expend all allocated funds within the time frame outlined in this RFP;
- The proposed fee as compared with the overall project budget. Respondents must break down each task in the Scope and assign a detail of cost for the action including administrative costs and reimbursable expenses.
- Quality and clarity of the proposal and a demonstrated understanding of the project objectives.