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2023 RES-186

**AWARDING CONTRACT TO URBAN TRIAGE INCORPORATED
FOR A DOUBLED UP HOUSING PILOT
DCDHS – HAA DIVISION**

This Dane County Department of Human Services (DCDHS) Housing Access and Affordability (HAA) project is funded with the County’s allocation of emergency rental assistance funds (ERA 2) authorized in the 2021 American Rescue Plan. Therefore, this resolution follows the format outlined in 2021 RES-013.

Justification

Authorizing Law: In March of 2021, the federal government authorized the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan (ARP) stimulus bill authorizing additional funding to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic across multiple areas of need.

The act included funding for Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA 2). Dane County received an initial allocation of \$12.5 million and has received additional allocations since the original law was passed. Dane County has partnered with agencies to distribute ERA assistance through various programs, most notably through the Dane CORE 2.0 rental assistance collaboration.

In 2022, Dane County was approved for a reallocation of an additional \$27 million in ERA 2 from the United States Treasury. The funds were reallocated from the State of Wisconsin’s ERA 2 allocation, and granted to Dane County with the support of the State of Wisconsin.

On October 19, 2022 the Dane County Board approved legislation to accept the \$27 million. The resolution included the Dane County Department of Human Services’ (DCDHS) Housing Access and Affordability Division’s plan for the funds (HAA), which included planned investments in housing stability services.

Additionally, in the fall of 2021, the Dane County Board authorized a resolution creating a project position in the HAA Division to focus on program and policy development to address doubled-up homelessness in Dane County. Doubled-up homelessness is a term used to describe individuals living in the home of another individual or self-paying in a hotel/motel to avoid spending a night on the street or in a local shelter program after losing permanent housing due to eviction, economic hardship or other crises.

The position was filled in January of 2022, and the staff person has been working collaboratively with community advocates, providers, and people with lived experience on a number of project tasks related to furthering understanding and support for doubled-up households, including a housing pilot program.

As a result of this work, Dane County seeks to invest more than \$1,697,786 million in two, two-year pilot programs targeting doubled up households. The pilot seeks to support up to 60 households total between two programs over two years. The main focus of funding will be households with minor children. Households enrolled in the program will receive housing navigation, case management, as well as direct financial assistance for security deposits, rent, utilities and arrears for 12 months.

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The DCDHS HAA Division seeks approval to award a contract Urban Triage, Inc. to administer one of the doubled-up housing pilot programs. The contract totals \$966,519 (\$235,519 in program administration and \$677,000 in direct assistance to households). The contract term would be October 1, 2023 – September 30th, 2025. The program has the potential to serve 32 households. Urban Triage was selected to administer the program via a competitive RFP process.

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: A 2019 Census data report estimated that as many as 5,627 individuals in Dane County were living in Doubled Up housing situations. At the same time, data from local public schools revealed that 1,627 students had reported doubling up or hotel staying.

These households have incomes that fall at or below the poverty threshold and are considered to be severely cost burdened. Doubled Up households are not only cost burdened, but present with significant challenges to securing rental units such as eviction records, justice involvement, lack of income, disabilities or other mental health and medical needs, as well as rental histories which do not meet traditional landlord screening criteria. The COVID-19 crisis only exacerbated preexisting housing barriers. Agencies reported more doubling up among program participants due to increased post-Pandemic evictions.

Assisted households must not have a lease in their own name, or be named on the lease of another household; the household must have at least one minor child aged 17 and below in the applicant household; and the household’s income may not exceed 80% AMI in Dane County.

The program prioritizes high-need, high-risk households through use of an assessment which screens for individuals most likely to enter street or shelter homelessness.

Duplication of Funding/Existing Partnerships and Programs: The funding is not duplicative with other efforts, as duplication of effort is not allowed per federal regulations.

Currently, there is no designated County-funded program exclusively for doubled up households that provides direct financial assistance, housing navigation and case management. This program is also unique in that it entails a metrics reporting and data tracking system. This information will improve the understanding of the local need and how to more appropriately structure interventions within the homeless service system. Additionally, this program will increase awareness of doubled up homelessness and how households can connect to services.

Guidelines: The federal government has passed detailed guidelines for the emergency rental assistance funds authorized in the American Rescue Plan. For eligibility purposes, grantees must only consider household income for 2020 or confirmation of the monthly income that the household is receiving at the time of application, as determined by the Treasury Secretary.

Up to 18 months of rental assistance can be provided per eligible household. If a household was assisted in the past with ERA-funded programs, they may still receive assistance through the doubled up pilot, for no more than a combined total of 18 months.

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Households are eligible for assistance if one or more individual(s) has qualified for unemployment benefits, has experienced a reduction in household income, has incurred significant costs, and/or has experienced other financial hardship due directly or indirectly to the COVID-19 pandemic, and where one or more individual can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability (a past due utility or rent notice or an eviction notice, unsafe or unhealthy living conditions; or any other evidence of such risk as determined by the grantee.)

Per federal guidelines, households that make 50% area median income (AMI) and below and in which one or more member(s) is unemployed and has been unemployed for longer than 90 days must be prioritized among applicants.

The grantee must ensure recipients of emergency rental assistance funding do not receive duplicate assistance from other federally funded rental assistance programs.

Per federal guidelines, landlords or owners may apply on behalf of tenants meeting the eligibility requirements if the tenant cosigns the application, the landlord provides the necessary documentation to the tenant, and the payments are used to pay the tenant's rental obligation to the owner.

All ERA 2 funding must be spent by September 30, 2025.

Expected Outcomes and Data Collection

Per the federal guidelines, information that must be collected by the grantee includes the number of eligible households that received assistance, the acceptance rate of applicants for assistance, the type of assistance provided to each eligible household, the average amount of funding provided per eligible household, the household income level based on 0-30, 31-50, 51-80% AMI, the average number of monthly rental payments that were received, and demographics of the primary recipient (race, gender, ethnicity per HUD definition).

Per the federal government, the information collected by the grantee must be reported to the US Treasury on a quarterly basis to maintain ERA 2 compliance. This information will be shared quarterly with the Dane County Board of Supervisors per 2021 RES-013.

In addition to federal reporting requirements, DCDHS has included elements to track zip codes, domestic violence, justice involvement, past homeless service encounters, disability status, and income increases while in the program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County Board approves a contract in the amount of \$966,519 with Urban Triage Incorporated and authorizes the County Executive and County Clerk to execute the contract documents, and authorizes the Controller to issue checks for payment of contract invoices.

<u>Vendor</u>	<u>Contract Amount</u>
Urban Triage Incorporated	\$966,519

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that unspent funds for the programs from 2023 be carried forward for expenditure in 2024 and 2025.

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155 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the County Board requests quarterly reports be
156 shared with the members of the County Board, and that the Health and Human Needs
157 Committee review the reports on a quarterly basis and discuss how the information
158 presented addresses anticipated program outcomes.