

Date: July 14, 2020

#17397
8/4/20
SP

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager
From: Reginald J. Johnson, Director
Community Development Department
Subject: COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program Update

This is an update on the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program with Durham County Department of Social Services (DSS) and Legal Aid of North Carolina.

The City through the Community Development Department (CDD), DSS, and Legal Aid have been working very closely to design the new COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance program. One of the goals has been to make the program easier to navigate for applicants, and to adapt it to the COVID-19 environment.

One of the challenges in the past is that applicants have had to schedule an appointment and physically go to DSS to apply for assistance, and on some occasions multiple appointments were required to complete the process. With the new program, the application process will be able to be completed by phone or online. Moreover, in the past, individuals who contacted Legal Aid for legal assistance had to separately contact DSS for rental assistance. Under the new system, both Legal Aid and DSS will be able to do intake for emergency rental assistance. For example, an individual who contacts Legal Aid for legal assistance would work with their Legal Aid contact to complete the application for emergency rental assistance. Legal Aid and DSS have developed a system to share files, which will allow DSS to review applications completed at Legal Aid, determine eligibility and make payments to landlords without the applicant ever having to contact DSS directly.

CDD, DSS and Legal Aid are also making every effort to reduce the paperwork requirements of the new program, within the very real limitations that come with federal funding. For example, the special Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding being used for this program requires that there be a linkage between the COVID-19 emergency and assistance being provided – i.e. that applicants be able to demonstrate that the income loss that precipitated the housing crisis was related to the COVID-19 crisis. Rather than requiring applicants contact prior employers, which could be extremely difficult, they will be able to self-certify that the income loss was COVID-19 related. In addition, applicants will not have to provide any documentation of legal status, as this is not required under federal CDBG rules.

A couple of other changes will make the program easier to navigate. In the past, County emergency assistance programs required that applicants contribute 20% towards any arrears, with the County covering the other 80%, and that applicants be able to demonstrate that they are financially capable of paying the rent going forward in order to qualify for assistance. The new Emergency Rental Assistance program will not have any requirement for copayment or any

specific sustainability requirements, as all the partners agree that current economic conditions are too uncertain to make such requirements viable. In addition, the amount of funding that individuals will be eligible for will be higher – up to \$6,000 for three months of assistance. (There is a downside to this, of course – the higher the limit per household, the fewer people we will be able to serve, but our goal is to do our best to stabilize the people we are able to serve.)

CDD would like to acknowledge the assistance we have received from both DSS and Legal Aid in the design of the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program. The entire amount of funding being provided by the City will be used for emergency rental assistance because DSS is covering its staffing costs out of County resources. Legal Aid is also taking on additional responsibilities for application intake that go beyond the work covered in the City's eviction diversion contract. In light of those generous contributions and a program infrastructure that is already deployed, we are using this framework as another framework would require funding to compensate another vendor as well as require significant time to implement before persons could be assisted.

Please let us know if you have any further questions about the proposed Emergency Rental Assistance program.

New Contract Coversheet				
			Council Approved Funding Authority:	
Contract Information				
Contract #		Contract/Modification Type		City T-I-N 56-6000225
17397		Grant		
Has this Contract or Contract Modification been Reviewed by the City Attorney's Office?				
No				
City Attorney Bypass Justification		Does the Contract require Wet Signature?		
Previously reviewed as an Agenda Item		Yes		
		Does the Contract require Electronic Signature?		
		Yes		
Contract Description (Memo Subject)				
Contract with Durham County for the provision of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance.				
(Who is requesting this contract to be submitted in OnBase)				
Contract Originator				
Melva F. Henry				
Dept. Resource Person (Compliance/Coordinator)			Department	
Sarah Zinn			Community Development	
Contract Amount		Amendment Amount		Revised Contract Amount
\$1,077,601.00				\$1,077,601.00
Funding Information				
Does this Contract Modification exceed the Department Directors signing authority				
Yes				
FISCAL YEAR	ORG CODE	OBJECT CODE	PROJECT CODE	AMOUNT
2020	1940D014	728600	DFSA4	\$1,077,601.00
Vendor Information				
Vendor Name		City Issued Vendor ID	Vendor Address	
Durham County Department of Social Services		68		
General Information				
		EOEA		
Date of Advertising		N/A		
		Amended Contract Days		
City Council Meeting		Procurement Method		
7/23/2020		Exemption		
OnBase Agenda Req. #		Agenda Item #		
14092		22		
Est. Contract Start Date		Est. Contract End Date		
7/1/2020		12/31/2021		
Amend. Contract Start Date		Amend. Contract End Date		
Notes				
Add Comment				
Have you filled out the Contract Execution Request Form?				
Yes				
Approvals:				
Direct Report		Supervisor		Director

 Reply   Delete  Junk  Block ...

RE: DSS CDBG-CV Contract Package - Approval

Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2020 8:09 AM

To: Johnson, Reginald <Reginald.Johnson@durhamnc.gov>

Cc: Pullum, Michael <Michael.Pullum@durhamnc.gov>; Henry, Melva <Melva.Henry@durhamnc.gov>; Weiss, Thais <Thais.Weiss@durhamnc.gov>; Popplewell, Sharlene <Sharlene.Popplewell@durhamnc.gov>

Subject: Fw: DSS CDBG-CV Contract Package - Approval

Hi Reginald,

Please approve the DSS CDBG-CV Emergency Rental Assistance Program contract for entry into OnBase for execution. The contract package can be found here: [FY20 CDBG-CV ERAP DCO DSS](#)

Thanks!

Sarah

From: Pullum, Michael <Michael.Pullum@durhamnc.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2020 12:33 AM

To: Zinn, Sarah <Sarah.Zinn@durhamnc.gov>

Cc: Henry, Melva <Melva.Henry@durhamnc.gov>; Lado, Karen <Karen.Lado@durhamnc.gov>; Popplewell, Sharlene <Sharlene.Popplewell@durhamnc.gov>; Weiss, Thais <Thais.Weiss@durhamnc.gov>

Subject: Re: DSS CDBG-CV Contract Package - Approval

Hi Sarah,

Contract approved for entry into OnBase.

Thanks,

Michael

From: Zinn, Sarah <Sarah.Zinn@durhamnc.gov>

Sent: Monday, August 3, 2020 2:54 PM

To: Pullum, Michael <Michael.Pullum@durhamnc.gov>

Cc: Henry, Melva <Melva.Henry@durhamnc.gov>; Lado, Karen <Karen.Lado@durhamnc.gov>; Popplewell, Sharlene <Sharlene.Popplewell@durhamnc.gov>; Weiss, Thais <Thais.Weiss@durhamnc.gov>

Subject: Re: DSS CDBG-CV Contract Package - Approval

Hi Michael,

Please approve the DSS CDBG-CV contract for entry into OnBase.

Thanks!

Sarah

From: Zinn, Sarah

Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2020 2:20 PM

To: Pullum, Michael <Michael.Pullum@durhamnc.gov>