

Flexible Rent Spending Pilot: A Lift Up and Out of Homelessness

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Introduction

- Flexible Rent Spending Pilot utilizes ARPA Funding
- The ARPA funds originated as part of the Peoria City/County Health Equity Fund that identified housing as key priority.
- Focus is on the social determinants of health
- Pilot program with detailed data tracking to track success or areas for improvement
- Designed in collaboration with the Health Department, CoC, and the City.

Gap Analysis for Program Design

- Gap analysis showed those not eligible for PSH or RRH are not receiving many services outside of sheltercare.
- Provided a resource guide for income-based housing, but shelter staff did not have capacity for housing navigation.
 - Client to staff ratio of 75 to 1
- Funding available did not have flexibility to solve multiple barriers for households.

Target Population & Service Provision

- Households Must be on the By-Name List through Coordinated Entry.
- Must score too low on CE to be eligible for other CoC housing assistance.
- Must have a documented and sustainable source of income to be able to maintain housing.
- Housing First Model of Service
- Case management and housing search assistance provided to all households.
- Some households are housed quickly due to fewer barriers.
- Utilization of the current HMIS Continuum system-wide prioritization scores for eligibility determination

Program Budget

- Program budget is for two years with possible extension of funds into year three.
- Administration is 1.2 FTE and other costs such as HMIS and internal grant management software.

Component	Budget	Expended Thus Far	Remaining
Administration	\$226,074.31	\$34,976.93	\$191,097.38
Programming	\$710,000	\$69,633.04	\$640,336.96
Total	\$936,134.31	\$104,609.97	\$831,524.34

Allowable Expenses

- The flexible funding up to \$5,000 per household allows other expenses as needed by including:
 - Deposit
 - First/last month rent
 - Double Deposit
 - Landlord Bonus (equal to one month rent)

Additional Expenses

- Examples of other allowable expenses:
 - Application Fees
 - Utility Arrears
 - Moving Expenses
 - Basic furniture
 - Household Supplies
 - Expenses for required documents
 - Other debt
 - Items to remove additional barriers
 - Other items as approved by department director

Program Process

- Prior to contacting client, will reach out to current shelter for additional status information beyond HMIS notes.
- Rescreen client for eligibility.
- Determine housing needs and eligibility and complete the housing navigation process.
- Provide direct payments from the City to vendors.

Continued Case Management

- After client is housed, case manager continues with monthly follow up with client.
- Provide additional assistance to formerly chronically homeless to ensure rent is paid monthly.
- Program can provide additional assistance with unexpected issues as needed.
- Can go over the \$5,000 limit with department head approval on case by case basis.

Ongoing Communication

- Monthly support groups for participants held at the library.
- Participation opportunities on CoC committees such as lived experience committee.
- Sharing data and success stories with funders and CoC.

Landlord Relationships

- Program not possible without building relationships with landlords and property managers.
- Created relationships with variety of property types including small landlords, property management companies, LLCs, and income-based housing representatives.

Program Logistics

Staffing

- One full time staff person is dedicated to just this program with another staff member spending about 20% of their time providing guidance and assistance.
- Supervised by Community Development Grants Manager who oversees other HUD funding.

Grant Management

- Utilizes both HMIS and internal grant management system Neighborly to track participants, upload documents, track budget per participant and overall, and create monthly reporting forms.

Program Success Thus Far

- 15 families housed thus far
 - Varying housing composition and housing types
- All eligible chronically homeless households housed
- 10 families currently searching for housing or on appropriate housing waiting lists
- 56 households screened for eligibility, including those listed as housed above

Program Success Thus Far (Cont.)

- Barriers encountered most often:
 - Past due utility bills
 - Lack of birth certificates for income-based housing applications
 - Undocumented sources of income
 - Additional income needed to support housing outside of subsidized housing, which have waitlists.

Average Length of Time Homeless Across All CoC Programs

Length of Time Homeless	City Flex Rent Program	RRH	PSH	Total
Less than 1 month	9	26	12	47
1-6 months	30	57	74	161
7-12 months	10	46	56	112
1-2 years	7	16	48	71
2+ years	3	16	51	70
Total	59	161	241	461

Success Story

- 70+ year old female in shelter for 3.5 years
- Income source was social security \$1,345/month
- Did not have funds for deposit or first months rent
- Program was able to get her housed within 45 days, just 5 weeks from intake to move-in
- Successfully housed and taking classes through local community college
- Proud to have her own place to call home

Success Story: Audio



Lessons Learned

- Creating move-in checklists make things less overwhelming for clients
- Chronically homeless individuals will require additional time and attention, especially when rent is due.
- If habit does not impact housing, it is not a priority to address prior to being housed.
- Housing choice is still key part of the program.
- Some older affordable units will have higher utility costs that need to be considered for ongoing affordability.
- The flexible budget is key component, especially with larger families as program was designed for the list that is mainly for singles and couples.

Lessons Learned (Continued)

- Brainstorm as often as possible with shelter staff and other providers, especially about needs outside of housing.
- The lower CE score does not necessarily mean a lack of trauma or stability.
- Even though a household in shelter reports income, they may not have cash on hand for any expenses.
- Money is spent on survival items such as outside food, temporary lodging to escape the congregate shelter, and other activities.

Interested?

How to Get Started

- Evaluate the need in your community
 - Most have a shortage in housing that is affordable, flexible to meet the needs of those we serve with housing barriers, and of quality
 - Talk with your local Continuum and hear where their gaps in services lie
- Identify funding and key partners
- Be willing to adapt to the individual needs of clients and additional lessons learned
- Know what you want to track as clients continue in their 12-month lease from the beginning.

Supplemental Documents Available

- Policy and Procedure Draft
- Budget Outline
- Slides



Questions?