



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**21-2545

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**Agenda Item Number:** 17.

**Agenda Date:** 5/13/2021

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** Neighborhood and Housing Services

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Verónica R. Soto, FAICP, Director

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** All Council Districts

**SUBJECT:** Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with The Health Collaborative for the Emergency Housing Assistance Program

### **SUMMARY:**

Consideration of a recommendation awarding up to \$400,000 in Federal Emergency Rental Assistance funding.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

On April 23, 2020, City Council approved the creation of the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP). The program has had four distinct phases and the budget has grown from the initial \$25.6 million allocation to the current budget of \$133.6 million. The program provides eligible applicants rental or mortgage assistance and utility assistance to individuals and families impacted by COVID-19. The program provides financial assistance to families at 80% or below the Area Median Income (AMI) who are dealing with a financial hardship because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD) has provided more than \$81.1 million in relief to over 31,310 families as of April 1, 2021. NHSD previously contracted with five local agencies (Domesticas Unidas, SAGE, Catholic Charities, TRLA, and Sacred Heart Church) to conduct outreach and application intake for EHAP under Phase 2 of the program. These contracts were a valuable resource for outreach and enrolling more participants in EHAP.

### **ISSUE:**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become evident that some of the families who apply to the City for assistance have additional needs not limited to housing assistance.

NHSD received a proposal from The Health Collaborative (THC), a local non-profit that provides health and wellness services to Bexar County residents, to assist NHSD with EHAP. As a subcontractor of NHSD, the agency will collaborate with other agencies to be a central point of outreach, application intake and resource sharing in the community.

The program goal will be to enhance EHAP services with local agencies and to expand outreach and services to the most vulnerable populations in San Antonio. This will be accomplished through a “Train the Trainer” approach where subject matter experts from the City will train staff at THC on application intake for EHAP. The outcome is expected to be that THC will become knowledgeable on the EHAP process and train their existing community organizations and other grassroots organizations referred to them by the City. Using this collaborative method, it is anticipated up to 8,000 more San Antonio residents will receive application assistance and be referred to other agencies should they have additional human service needs. THC will provide community organizations such as Domesticas Unidas, COPS/Metro, SAGE, and other non-profits with project management guidance to carry out EHAP services.

The contract will provide for the provision of professional services for a total estimated amount of \$400,000 for a period beginning May 2021 through September 30, 2021. This includes an \$80,000 administrative cost to administer the program and \$320,000 for the various community agencies to provide client assistance for up to 8,000 (\$40.00 per client) San Antonio residents. Funding for this agreement has been budgeted from the Federal funds received for Phase Four of the Emergency Rental Assistance program. On February 18, 2021, City Council approved NHSD to develop an application assistance program for those families that lack access to a computer or need assistance gathering the necessary documentation for program eligibility. Residents that call the EHAP call center for application assistance will be assigned an application assistant for completing the online application who will be their point of contact throughout the process. This contract enables this portion of the work to be enabled in order to reach those with digital divide issues and other access barriers.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

An alternative to awarding funding to the Health Collaborative would be to reject the recommendation; however, the recommended proposal meets the established need and is in line with the Council approval for phase 4 of EHAP. In addition, any other alternative would delay the timely assistance to community applicants facing housing instability and timely commitment and expenditure of these funds.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This ordinance awards up to \$400,000 in entitlement funding for the period of March 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021. This item will not have an impact on the General Fund Budget.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval to contract for up to \$400,000 in Federal Emergency Rental Assistance funding to The Health Collaborative to provide these much-needed services.