



Application for RFP #10054-2021

Community Development Division

Emergency Rental Assistance and Legal Support Services

Submit application to: CDDapplications@cityofmadison.com

Applications are due by **12:00pm on Wednesday August 4, 2021.**

Please limit your proposal and responses to the form provided. Any materials submitted in addition to this application form will not be considered in the evaluation of the proposal. *Do not attempt to unlock or alter this form.*

Applicant Organization:	Tenant Resource Center		
Contact Person:	Robin Sereno		
Address:	1202 Williamson Street Madison, WI 53703		
E-Mail:	robin@tenantresourcecenter.org		
Website:	https://www.tenantresourcecenter.org/	Telephone:	608.257.0006
Federal Tax ID or EIN	39-1360105		
DUNS Number	102264210-0000		
Legal Status:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Liability Company <input type="checkbox"/> General Partnership <input type="checkbox"/> Sole Proprietor <input type="checkbox"/> Unincorporated Association <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		
Tax Exempt Status:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 501 (c)(3) since 1980		

Check which proposed service your organization is intending to provide:

- ☒ Assist eligible applicants through application process, provide outreach and education
- ☒ Evaluate and process completed applications
- ☒ Provide legal support and mediation services as necessary (If interested in providing **only** this service skip to **Program C**)

PART 1: Program Description

Program A: Assist eligible applicants through application process, provide outreach and education (*Administrative costs only*)

1. What Madison neighborhoods and/or vulnerable populations does your organization serve? How will your organization ensure these resources are accessible to those most in need? Be specific (e.g. language capacity, culturally relevant service models, collaboration with other culturally competent community-based organizations, etc.)?

The Tenant Resource Center (TRC) serves all neighborhoods throughout Dane County. We prioritize tenants (based on 20+ years of Dane County court data) so that we can ensure that those at highest risk of eviction are served first. Nearly half of our staff is bi/multilingual with the majority being fluent in Spanish. We currently have staff and active volunteers who speak Arabic, German, Mandarin and French. Additionally, we have direct access to volunteers available to provide translation for clients who speak Khmer, Hmoob/Hmong and a variety of African dialects. Throughout the history of the TRC we have focused on partnering with community groups who have close connections with immigrant populations residing in Dane County, such as Jewish Social Services, Roots4Change, Latino Academy, Centro Hispano, the Hmong Institute and Freedom Inc. We deeply understand that it is crucial to make sure that community members feel comfortable with services available to them and to connect them with community organizations that feel like the best fit for them.

2. What is your organization's experience disbursing and navigating clients through housing-related financial assistance in Madison (e.g. Emergency Rental Assistance, Dane CORE, tenant-based rental subsidies, etc.)?

The Tenant Resource Center has been the primary grantee for emergency assistance funds throughout the pandemic. We created both the Dane County CARES and the Dane CORE program as charged by Dane County (funder). TRC has been the selected provider of Eviction Prevention Coordinated Entry for our community and has disbursed over \$25 million in funding in the past decade (with ~\$21 million of that in the past 15 months). We have been awarded FEMA funds, EHH funds, Federal ERAP funds, and local funds to provide eviction prevention services throughout the years. Additionally, we have been the sole service agency for singles MVP (TBRA - tenant based rental assistance vouchers) since the inception of the program. In summation, we have over 20 years of experience with large dollar amount financial assistance programs particularly those that are (eviction) court involved. This past TRC was required to participate in a federal single audit and we are pleased to report that we passed our first year single audit with zero findings. This is a momentous achievement considering we were operating 1 year post a complete turnover in organizational leadership and in a once in a lifetime community pandemic response effort.

3. Describe the staffing plan for your proposal, including all leadership, direct service and supportive roles (e.g. finance, intake coordinator, etc.). Include job titles, brief job descriptions necessary experience for each staff member, including for staff who need to be hired?

The Eviction Prevention Clinic (EPC) is a fully functional standalone program within the TRC that is well positioned to incorporate these additional services. Currently, there are 2 Program Directors, one who is a licensed social worker and one who assisted in founding the EPC as a result of her experience as a Dane County resident with lived experience of eviction. Our program directors are responsible for program development, staff oversight (including recruitment and retention) as well as fiscal management of the programs that fall under the EPC (mediation, case management, financial assistance, housing navigation, housing counseling). Between both Program Directors they bring 15+ years of experience with housing insecurity and prevention. There are currently 3 dedicated Eviction Prevention Specialists, 1 Mediation Coordinator and 4 trained Mediators. All of these staff members support tenants and landlords throughout the court process including at court. Additionally, we have a team of 6 Housing Counselors (trained in WI tenant-landlord law) to provide education and support for tenants and landlords at any point in the process and 6 Dane CORE Program Specialists who process applications and provide Outreach support throughout the process.

To fully staff this project based on the average number of eviction filings, we need to hire 6.5 - Attorneys, 10 - Paralegals/Legal advocates and 1-2 Social Workers to best support tenants throughout the eviction process in Dane County. We (TRC) have established partnerships with the UW Law School Neighborhood Law Project as well as Legal Action of Wisconsin (currently operating the Eviction Defense Project) and Community Justice Inc. The number of additional staff needed are based on the average amount of eviction filings over the past 20 years in Dane County as well as nationwide, peer-reviewed publications on best practices. With an average caseload of 6.5 court cases a week/attorney (2000 cases per year). The attorneys would provide substantive legal work for tenants and supervision for paraprofessional staff whereas paralegals/legal advocates perform essential but not substantive work to ensure housing stability for tenants enrolled in the program. Paralegals can be delegated any task normally performed by a lawyer, as long as the lawyer supervises the work; this is a huge cost savings measure that allows for attorney caseloads to be increased to meet needs in times of high demand (namely during a crisis, 'move-out' month - August, and other periods of unrest that we see in our community). For example, paralegals can review and organize client files, conduct factual and legal research, prepare documents for legal transactions, draft pleadings and discovery notices, interview clients and witnesses, and assist at closings and trials.

4. Describe the proposed client-level outcomes, including the total number of people to be served, and timeline of services (e.g. 6 months, 12 months).

Once fully funded/staffed we would serve 2000 tenants annually - with a projected rate of 90% housing stability and an annual cost savings of \$8 million dollars in our community.

On average in Dane Co there are 2000 residential eviction filings per year - we know this will be increased over the coming months (possibly year) due to the devastating economic impact of

COVID-19. The degree of increase has not yet been determined. With the staffing level outlined above we are confident that we would meet the demand of 'regular' times in Dane County eviction court. If we were to double the number of filings then we would need to double the amount of staff available. As we have no concrete data to project the amount of need we are working with the data that we have to date. In order to serve 2000 residents involved in eviction court we would require the staffing listed above on an annual basis. The proposed outcomes (based on national figures from other similarly staffed programs) would be an approximate 90% increase in housing stability for represented tenants facing eviction. The cost savings (again based on [national reports](#)) of nearly 7x of what is expended (i.e. funding for services equates to \$1.37 million but the projection of cost savings is nearly \$9 million).

Over the past 20 years there have been numerous reports on how collaborative efforts between attorneys and social workers significantly increase positive outcomes of tenants facing housing insecurity. Through partnership and advocacy there are significant cost savings and increased stability achieved in long-term outcomes. Oftentimes attorneys are overworked and over staffed creating stress and strain when working with clients who are traumatized and under resourced. Similar to Dane County's current JFF (Joining Forces for Families model) creating a legal - medical - social service partnership will only serve to increase positive outcomes through crisis intervention, education and short-term case management combined with legal services. Social workers can be effective teachers and collaborators in what has been termed the "human arts of lawyering". To the extent that most lawyers spend time with clients there is insufficient attention given to the 'art and science' of interpersonal relationships often causing a loss of trust and engagement by the client/tenant. Empathy and insight is an essential part of the client-provider relationship that can be taught and learned; however it is not often a piece that is integrated in legal training. In order to effectuate change (or a successful transaction i.e. settlement) there is a need for parties involved to feel understood and heard. Empathy is a critical part of social work education and an area in which social workers can greatly assist lawyers with trust building resulting in positive outcomes of housing security. A collaborative approach also comports with aspects of "ethics of care" which can be applied to the lawyer-client relationship and to counseling as a way to produce solutions that are more creative and better tailored to clients' 'problems'; it can also be used as a means to problem solving in which an attorney is often pushed to use their role as an expert problem solver which does not truly align with the overall goal of self-advocacy and self-efficacy of a client/tenant. It is critical that there is no impingement on a client/tenant's autonomy as that creates a scenario where there may be reliance as opposed to self-advocacy into the future. A very significant though oft overlooked reason for these collaborative partnerships between legal professionals and social workers is to help share and ease an attorney's workload. Attorneys can spend much of their time trying to resolve non-legal issues that are inextricably intertwined with legal issues. The needs of low-income individuals and families often transcend legal issues. Additionally, these collaborative arrangements can help reduce the stress that lawyers often experience. Not only can social workers assist lawyers to represent clients more effectively (and thereby alleviate some of the burden), but they can also help lawyers deal with their feelings about their clients and their practice which avoids burnout. This is stressful work and no one can effectively operate in a vacuum, in order to best serve clients we must use collaborative efforts in which each party brings forth their additive expertise. All in all, social workers can provide a bevy of needed services in these scenarios (crisis

intervention, psycho-social assessments, advocacy, education, mental health supports, resource connection and more).

Program B: Evaluate and process completed applications (*only complete if interested in providing this service.*)

1. Describe the history of effective organizational and fiscal management of federal funds, including understanding of 2CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”, please identify staff positions and job experience responsible for fiscal management and reporting.

As mentioned in A2. The TRC has undergone a federal single audit (previously known as the OMB Circular A-133 audit) and in our first year had zero findings. Both our Executive Director, Robin Sereno, and our Finance Director, Matt Kozlowski have significant experience in successfully managing multi-million dollar budgets in both the nonprofit and for-profit sectors; a combined 30 years of experience in successful oversight of federal funds. As Finance Director, Matt is primarily responsible for ensuring that the TRC meets all of our fiscal responsibilities including ensuring the financial health of the TRC by administering all necessary accounting operations to meet our legal requirements. He is well versed in both day-to-day functions and larger picture financial activities (revenue reports, accounts receivable/payable, budgeting, risk management, policy implementation and process improvement). Additionally, TRC has developed and maintained systems for ensuring reasonable allocations of expenses consistent with federal requirements.

2. Describe how your agency monitors and verifies the accuracy and sufficiency of its billing system to assure all claims made are proper and that adjustment is sought when issues are identified.

TRC utilizes a cost allocation plan and monthly cost allocation process that drives the organization’s grant billing procedures. This system ensures that the same costs can’t be billed to multiple grants (or cost centers) at the same time and coincides with monthly reconciliation of billings. In this process, if adjustments have been made to cost allocations following the closing date of a month, adjustments are made to reconcile the year-to-date expenses against the billing totals for each grant. Monthly billing materials are generated by the Finance Director and are submitted to the Executive Director for review and approval. The Board of Directors receives a monthly report of billing activities and subsequently provides oversight of financial activities on a monthly basis.

3. Describe staff experience with Federal Funds allocated through the United States Department of the Treasury pursuant to Title V, Section 501 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 that has been funding source for Emergency Rental Assistance programs. Please include training plan for new hires to learn about federal requirements.

TRC has administered the Dane CORE program since February of this year. Our application systems are built with staff use and training geared toward ensuring compliance with funding requirements at each step of the process. This ensures that each system can be adjusted in real time as additional FAQs, regulations, or other requirements are added to various funding streams for our programs.

Additionally, our staff undergo rigorous training followed by on-the-job shadowing of work duties and subsequent monitoring and oversight for our programs.

4. If additional staff required than described above please add detail of staff needed to evaluate applications and process payments. Include job titles, brief job descriptions necessary experience for each staff member, including for staff who need to be hired and timeline for hiring?

All positions involved with this program are described above or in the subsequent section. The timeline for each position is as follows:

Housing Attorney - TRC will contract for these services from existing housing attorneys within other community organizations, local law firms, or legal clinics. This allows for these services to begin without delay.

Social Worker - TRC currently employs licensed social workers and is in the process of hiring additional licensed staff. These services should be available without delay with additional capacity as the program grows over time.

Paralegal - TRC will contract for these services from existing housing attorneys within other community organizations, local law firms, or legal clinics. This allows for these services to begin without delay.

Administrative Staff - TRC currently employs administrative staff and is in the process of hiring additional admin staff as needed. These functions should be available without delay with additional capacity as the program grows over time.

Outreach Staff - TRC currently employs trained staff for outreach and resource navigation functions.

Program C: Provide legal support and mediation services as necessary (*only complete if interested in providing these services.*)

1. Describe the project for which funding is being requested. Include project details, the need addressed by the project, and the populations to be served.

The expansion of the Eviction Prevention Clinic will increase services by adding legal services and supports to increase effectiveness of eviction diversion programming. The primary need being addressed is providing legal services throughout the community for tenants regardless of immigration status. TRC will serve as the point of entry as we are the first to interact with tenants experiencing eviction within Dane County (due to our currently funded services). We will expand current services to include intake for any client with an eviction filing who is seeking legal services. The majority of clients that we interact with are moderate to extreme low income. Legal representation is a well-documented intervention that increases housing security exponentially and further reduces the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission. [Research](#) demonstrates that fully represented tenants win or settle their cases 96% of the time. Tenants with full representation are two times as likely to stay in their current homes or were able to get twice as much time to relocate, without an eviction judgement and are four times less likely to need emergency shelter services. Clients who are unrepresented face outcomes that can result in displacement 78% of the time. Currently, we are seeing eviction judgements by default (no representation and a tenant not

showing up for court) at a rate of 21%. Studies show that with legal representation this figure moves into single digits. Additionally, by adding housing navigation services into the mix of work (for those needing to relocate) we project a success rate of >98% of households not needing to utilize emergency shelter services or entering into doubled up situations there by reducing risk of COVID transmission.

In short, the needs addressed will be legal services (representation and advocacy), mediation, housing navigation, housing counseling and financial assistance through our Eviction Prevention Clinic in connection with Dane CORE 2.0. The population served will be exclusively eviction court involved households who are at moderate to extreme low income.

2. Describe the agency's experience in administering this type of program. Describe the qualification of the staff assigned to the proposed program, including their knowledge and experience.

The TRC has been the sole provider of eviction court services for more than two decades and housing counseling for over 40 years. We are the 'go-to' source of education for attorneys, service providers, tenants, landlords and property owners on everything there is to understand about Wisconsin tenants-landlord law. Through our staff and volunteers we have hundreds of years of combined experience in education and administration of these programs. We have attorneys, judges, mediators, urban planners, financial experts, therapists, social workers, developers, housing counselors, and more among our volunteers and staff. More recently we made the shift to be the sole provider of emergency rental assistance for the entirety of Dane County throughout the pandemic. To date, we have disbursed over \$21 million in emergency rental assistance into Dane County throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We are well suited to continue to serve in this role with the shift to focus all of our energy back to court involved services as that is where we are best equipped to ensure housing stability in the stage that occurs right before homelessness.

3. What Madison vulnerable populations does your organization serve? How will your organization ensure these resources are accessible to those most in need? Be specific (e.g. language capacity, culturally relevant service models, collaboration with other culturally competent community-based organizations, etc)?

The Tenant Resource Center (TRC) serves all neighborhoods throughout Dane County. We prioritize tenants (based on 20+ years of Dane County court data) so that we can ensure that those at highest risk of eviction are served first. Nearly half of our staff is bi/multilingual with the majority being fluent in Spanish. We currently have staff and active volunteers who speak Arabic, German, Mandarin and French. Additionally, we have direct access to volunteers available to provide translation for clients who speak Khmer, Hmoob/Hmong and a variety of African dialects. Throughout the history of the TRC we have focused on partnering with community groups who have close connections with immigrant populations residing in Dane County such as Jewish Social Services, Roots4Change, Latino Academy, Centro Hispano, the Hmong Institute and Freedom Inc. We deeply understand that it is crucial to make sure that community members feel comfortable with services available to them and to connect them with community organizations that feel like the best fit for them.

PART 2: Project Budget

BUDGET EXPENDITURES	TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	AMOUNT OF CITY \$ REQUESTED	AMOUNT OF NON-CITY REVENUE	SOURCE OF NON CITY FUNDED PORTION
A. Personnel Costs (Complete Personnel chart below)				
1. Salaries/Wages (show detail below)	\$375,000.00	\$375,000.00	\$0.00	
2. Fringe Benefits and Payroll Taxes	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$0.00	
B. Program/Operations Costs				
1. Program supplies and equipment	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	
2. Office Supplies	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	
3. Marketing	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	
4. Rent/Utilities/Telephone	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	
5. Other (explain*)	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	
C. Direct Rental Assistance				
1. Rental Assistance	\$5,000,000.00	\$5,000,000.00	\$0.00	
2. Other (explain*):	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
D. TOTAL (A + B + C)	\$5,470,000.00	\$5,470,000.00	\$0.00	

*Explanation of "Other" expenses:

Other Program/Operating Costs include general operating costs such as insurance costs, staff training costs, and other affiliated costs that don't clearly match the labels above.

PART 3: Personnel Chart

Identify and describe the role of key staff positions and affiliate partners who would become directly responsible for the various aspects of the contract, if awarded. For each position, please note if duties will be provided by a current staff position (no additional FTE), a new position, or expanded hours for a current staff position (additional FTE) in the hiring plan column.

Title of Staff Position	Hiring Plan (Current, New, or Expanded)	Expected hours to be spent in this project per week	Proposed Hourly Wage	Role With This Project
Housing Attorney	1.0 FTE	40	\$33.65	Described Above
Social Worker	1.0 FTE	40	\$26.00	Described Above
Paralegal	2.0 FTE	80	\$22.22	Described Above
Admin staff	2.0 FTE	80	\$22.22	Described Above
Outreach staff	2.0 FTE - 50% funded by this program	80	\$22.22	Described Above
Mediation	Not funded by this program	15		
Finance Director	Not funded by this program	10		