

Housing Stability and Utility Assistance Program

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Eblen Charities

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Application Form

Question Group

Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

Name of Project.

Housing Stability and Utility Assistance Program

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$300,000.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Assistance to households

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

The Housing Stability and Utility Assistance Program will provide resources to obtain or maintain adequate housing by providing funds for security deposits, initial rent payments or back rent in an effort to eliminate or prevent homelessness or sub-standard living conditions.

Buncombe County and Asheville City have placed increasing the affordable housing inventory as a top priority but the ability to pay the costs of establishing a home is still problematic for many with our high cost of living and low wages.

At the 2021 point-in-time count, 527 people were identified as homeless, down from 547 in 2020. There was an increase however to 116 people identified as un-sheltered, up from 65 the previous year.

80% of evictions are from non-payment of rent. With the overwhelming effects of COVID-19 this statistic is likely to grow even larger. Having funding to assist those in our community that provide the goods and services on which we depend, while they return to work is vital.

Project Plan*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

Housing and Utility Assistance is not new at Eblen. We have administered Emergency Assistance (EA) through Buncombe County Health and Human Services (BCHHS) since 2008 and have offered Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) through Buncombe County Affordable Housing Services as well. For FY 2020-2021 we provided \$194,000 in TBRA for City and County residents through private and public funds.

Additionally we administer both the Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) and Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) through a partnership with BCHHS.

Assistance through the Housing Stability and Utility Assistance Program will be for anyone seeking help. Referrals to the agency come from the entire community with the majority coming from United Way 211 and agencies in the Buncombe Emergency Assistance Coordinating Network (BEACON). These network agencies work closely with underserved communities, households and populations in our area.

Clients will be interviewed by a case worker to determine their needs, eligibility for the program(s) and availability of program funding. Income limit is 200% of the federal poverty level (\$52,400) for a family of four.

Rental assistance provided will be made directly to the vendor who must complete an assistance form certifying continued housing with the requested agency support.

Additional programs from BCHHS will be leveraged to provide energy assistance and /or to establish service when available.

The program can resume as soon as funding is confirmed.

Statement of Need*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

Expedient financial rental assistance is needed in our community for those both directly and indirectly impacted by COVID. Income based rental units are being constructed but the monetary assistance to provide rental deposits to initially secure housing or pay first months rent is vital to many attempting to secure

housing. Once established, these people can afford the monthly expenses with rents based on income but the up front cost are often prohibitive.

Additionally, funds to prevent evictions are needed for those that have established housing. Preventing evictions and possible homelessness of established tenants is vital with no affordable housing inventory in Buncombe County (according to the 2020 Bowen National Research study* commissioned by the City of Asheville). 1851 of the counties 2332 evictions came from the Low Income Renter household sector according to this pre-pandemic study. The pandemic has presented a historic threat to the nation's public health. Keeping people in their homes and out of crowded or congregate settings is a key step in helping to stop the spread of COVID according to the CDC and thus the rationale for the eviction moratorium and the importance of a TBRA program.

With the eviction moratorium ending and private landlords often having difficulty paying their own expenses, hard decisions will be made with regard to maintaining rental inventory or selling properties, thus exacerbating rental inventory availability. If renters are evicted our local homeless crisis will soar with limited alternative rental units available. The majority of the nation's landlords are individual investors. They own about 23 million units nationally, according to the U.S. Census. More than 6 million renter households are behind on rent, also according to available census figures. Statewide the estimate from June 2021 is that 177,000 residents are behind on rent.

Landlords need relief in an effort to maintain the private rental inventory we do have.

Link to COVID-19*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

The public health emergency that is COVID has resulted in economic harm in every community. Lost jobs due to shut downs, childcare and school closures, lost wages due to illness are just a few of the direct impacts. The length of the pandemic has exhausted much of the savings people may have had accumulated and resulted in many past due bills, that even when work is available to return to, will be difficult to recover from.

Indirect impacts are manifesting themselves for everyone in a variety of ways but all basically due to supply chain issues. The consumer price index shows the prices of fruits and vegetables are up almost 3.5% over this time last year and that meat, poultry, fish and eggs are up over 5%. Overall the consumer price index is up over 5% in June of 2021. Everyone is impacted by these price increases, but for low income families or a senior living on a fixed income they can be an even greater challenge.

Having funds available to assist both families and individuals with back rent/mortgage and/or utility assistance when no other federal funding is available is vital to the stability of those in our community that struggle the most. One national energy assistance organization estimates that between 15% and 20% of utility customers are 60+ days behind on gas and electric bills and June figures estimate 177,000 state residents are behind on rent.

Population Served*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

The population to be served will be residents of Buncombe County with a household income that falls below 200% of poverty.

For utility assistance we will provide what is needed to restore or maintain the service.

Rental assistance will be provided to establish or maintain housing to support equitable outcomes for those most impacted.

A minimum of 200 people will be assisted with funding from the Recovery Funds. A maximum amount of \$2,500 will be distributed for rental assistance from Recovery funds. If additional monies are required to maintain stability, community partners will be collaborated with to leverage additional funds.

Results*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

The impact of the project will provide for the stability of households.

The project will allow for the continuation of utilities needed to run a home.

The project will allow for the establishment of permanent housing of chronically homeless families or individuals.

Evaluation*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

Data will be collected by personal interviews with an experienced caseworker and verified by provided documentation or collaborative resources.

Analysis and quality assurance measures will be demonstrated by the completion of an application with appropriate calculations for percent of poverty determinations. Additionally, verification of termination of utility services will be verified by direct contact and documentation from the respective provider.

Tracking information will be collected in a proprietary client data base and financial records will be maintained in office accounting software. (QuickBooks)

Equity Impact*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

One of the unique impacts of the pandemic is the way it's impacting women; though men are more likely to die of COVID, the pandemic's toll on employment is heavier for women. In the US, unemployment has intensified the most for the personal care and food service occupations, where women predominate. Additionally women of all colors were impacted because of the restrictions on service jobs, and the closure of schools and daycare.

Less-educated workers, and those whose jobs can't be done from home, have faced higher unemployment as a result of the pandemic regardless of gender or color.

Additionally, many seniors work part time jobs to make ends meet. These positions are often front line workers and were often eliminated or forfeited due to the great risk for contracting COVID. Compounded by this loss of income is the increase in local property values for our longtime residents who own their homes. While for many this is a positive thing but seniors on a fixed income it means more from the budget in the higher taxes and insurance.

This program through its scope of services and ability to leverage other program funding allows for the maintenance and stabilization of households for all populations and household compositions.

Project Partners*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

No sub contractors will be used for the project.

Key partners will be relied on for client referrals and joint crisis funding resolution. Community involvement and collaboration is key to the successful, equitable stabilization of the most impacted populations. They include but are not limited to Buncombe County Schools, Asheville City Schools, BCHHS, Community Action Opportunities, and the United Way 211.

Capacity*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

The staff of Eblen has more than 75 years combined experience providing assistance clients during a time of crisis or need. The staff have experience in Adult Services, Medicare, Medicaid, LIEAP, CIP and Emergency Assistance.

For FY 2020-2021 we administered 2.3 million dollars in assistance through more than 6,800 applications.

The staff will incorporate the Housing Stability and Utility Assistance Program into their client interviews to ensure we have met as many of the individual or family needs as possible.

Budget*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Recovery Funds Budget to submit.xlsx

Special Considerations*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

For 30 years, Eblen Charities has provided assistance to our neighbors in need during some of the worst times of their lives. We accomplish this with a small staff, an army of volunteers, and this community's support and involvement.

The past 18 months have been difficult for all of us, but for some more than others. During this time we have seen a dramatic increase in families that have never sought assistance prior to the shutdown. Our records show an increase of more than 500 families sought assistance for the first time. As we move towards normalcy, it is vital that we remember those in our community without many resources or opportunities. We know that there were challenges prior to COVID and there will be challenges long after for many in our area.

At Eblen we strive to help in anyway possible, even if it is just with information regarding other area assistance. If we all work toward the common goal of healing, and all do what part we can, our community will come through this pandemic and be better for it.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Recovery Funds Budget to submit.xlsx

List expenses here			\$	-		
List expenses here			\$	-		
List expenses here			\$	-		
List expenses here			\$	-		
List expenses here			\$	-		
List expenses here			\$	-		
			Total	\$ 1,576,500.00		