

EFSP Phase CARES – Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. I am having trouble accessing the application, where can I find it?**

We are not an existing LRO – how do we apply?

*All application materials are available on the ACAM website at <https://acamweb.org/funding-opportunities/>. There are four documents to download: the competition overview, a cover sheet, the application for funding (fillable PDF), and the program level budget. The competition overview lists the materials required to complete the application. Complete applications should be emailed to efsp@acamweb.org no later than 12pm CDT on Thursday, May 14. **Late applications will not be reviewed.***

- 2. Can I cut and past material into the application document?**

Yes, once you download the application document and open it with a PDF reader, you can copy and paste text into the fillable PDF as needed.

- 3. My answer is longer than what is visible in the text box – will everything I have written be scored?**

Yes, scorers will access the application materials digitally and will be able to view all data entered into the text box by expanding the text box. However, please be as concise as possible while completely answering each question. Be mindful that future applications will impose a character/word limit.

- 4. We noticed a mistake on the Program Budget – are we using the correct document?**

The document that was initially uploaded is a completely functioning budget document meant for Phase CARES. However, labels mentioning Phase 37/38 were inadvertently included. The original document also included a date discrepancy with the application for funding: the correct budget period is June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2021 as the application states. A revised budget document correcting these mistakes was uploaded to the ACAM website on Friday, May 8. If you are already working with the original budget document there is no need to download the new document. The original document has the same functionality; using it will not affect your score in any way. Relatedly, the National Board has not announced the exact spending period for Phase CARES, therefore the dates on the application and budget document remain tentative.

- 5. Does this RFP only include Harris and Fort Bend Counties or does it cover other Houston-area counties?**

ACAM is the coordinating agency for two EFSP jurisdictions: 782800 – Houston/Fort Bend and Harris Counties and 843200 – Waller County. For additional jurisdictions in the Greater Houston region refer to the EFSP website for the appropriate local board contact information.

- 6. We have a summer feeding program in need of \$5,000 worth of funding - would EFSP fund this program?**

Depending on the type of food, a feeding program could qualify under “Served Meals” or “Other

Food.” However, the Local Board has set a minimum application threshold of \$10,000, as well as a minimum award threshold of \$10,000. Organizations are encouraged to apply for more than \$10,000 funding, as the scoring methodology may cause an application for \$10,000 to fall below the award threshold.

7. Since this money comes from the CARES Act does it have to cover COVID-19 response?

There has not been any specific guidance that Phase CARES must relate directly to COVID-19 response. However, the underlying assumption does seem to be that organizations need extra funding to handle increased demand for services. The application for funding contains one question about COVID-19 response to ascertain each organization’s operational capacity in the midst of this crisis (i.e. are they still providing services and in what capacity?).

8. Must an agency provide both food and shelter to qualify for funding?

There are five different funding categories approved by the Local Board: rent/mortgage assistance, utilities assistance, served meals, other food, and mass shelter. Agencies can apply for any combination of these activities but all services must meet the requirements laid out by the EFSP National Board.

9. Can we submit an agency-wide organizational chart or does it only need to cover organizational staffing for EFSP funded programs?

The aim of the request is to understand the organizational structure of funded programs. An overall agency organizational chart will suffice if it demonstrates the organizational structure of funded programs.

10. We have participated in EFSP in the past but we are not involved in the most recent phase – are we still considered an existing LRO?

Organizations that have participated in previous phases of EFSP are considered existing LROs. Please include your existing LRO number on all application materials where requested.

11. Must EFSP funds be used to serve individuals experiencing homelessness or can they be used to serve LMI families at risk of homelessness?

Homelessness is not a requirement for client eligibility. The EFSP National Board only stipulates that assistance go to “needy individuals.”

12. What are the reporting requirements in HMIS related to EFSP Rental and Utility Assistance?

For general HMIS guidance please visit www.homelesshouston.org/hmis-v2. All awarded organizations must follow the user guidelines put in place by the Coalition for the Homeless and complete the basic client intake form for EFSP activities. HMIS entry allows the Local Board to ensure that no duplication of payment occurs within the expenditure categories of rent/mortgage assistance or utility assistance. Multiple LROs may not provide assistance to the same client for the same service. Additionally, the HMIS requirement only applies to Rent/Mortgage Assistance, Utilities Assistance, and Mass Shelter. It does not apply to Served Meals or Other Food.

13. Is EFSP a restricted federal grant subject to compliance with federal guidelines such as audit requirements?

EFSP funds are restricted to particular funding categories and activities as outlined in the latest [EFSP Manual](#) (beginning at page 65). Additionally, LROs must keep all of required documentation for a period of 3 years after the end of each program period. The EFSP National Board can request the documents at any time. Regarding client eligibility, “in providing assistance under the EFSP, verification of proof of citizenship or qualified alien status of any applicant for assistance is not required.” (p.29)

14. What is the spending period for Phase CARES?

The EFSP National Board has still not officially announced the spending period for Phase CARES. However, they have indicated they will make an announcement soon. The National Board has stated that they will begin issuing payments on June 1.

15. Does the question about grant experience refer to any local grants or just government-related grants? What about PPP?

The question refers to all grant experience, including local non-governmental grants. PPP is considered a loan even if it may function as a grant when forgiven.

16. What is an appropriate range for the funding ask? Is there a maximum award amount?

Historical awards for each phase can be found [here](#). As mentioned above, the Local Board has established both an application and award threshold. Applicants must apply for at least \$10,000 per funding area and no applicants will be awarded less than \$10,000. Organizations are encouraged to apply for more than \$10,000 funding, as the scoring methodology may cause an application for \$10,000 to fall below the award threshold. While the Local Board has established a minimum, no maximum award has been set. Please remember that EFSP is intended to supplement and expand existing programs, not to create new programs or to fully fund existing programs.

17. Are there different applications for Phase CARES and Phase 38?

Yes, the current RFP is only for Phase CARES. An additional RFP for Phase 38 will be released in the coming months.

18. Where can we access the LRO certification form?

LRO certification forms only become available after the Local Board has recommended their funding decisions. The EFSP National Board generates the forms and LROs must sign and return them.

19. How will the allocation be broken up among the funding categories?

Based on the overall jurisdictional allocation and the board established funding priorities stipulated in the competition overview, the correct allocations for each category are as follows: Homelessness Prevention (50%) - \$1,533,006.00; Food (30%) - \$919,803.60; Emergency Shelter (18%) - \$551,882.16.

20. Is an audit required for the RFP or will financial statements be accepted?

As the competition overview stipulates on p.5, an “Agency’s Most Current Audit or Financial Statement” is required for a complete application. However, per the latest EFSP Manual (Phase 35), “LROs must comply with audit requirements. For LROs receiving \$100,000 or more in EFSP funding, the National Board requires an independent annual audit in accordance with Government Auditing Standards. For LROs receiving from \$50,000 to \$99,999, the National Board requires an annual accountant’s review. For newly funded LROs or LROs funded above the amount requiring an audit or review for the first time, the LRO will be eligible to receive funds if it arranges for the audit or review of funds to coincide with the next scheduled annual audit or annual review of its financial affairs.”

21. Does our budget need to match each of the Local Board approved funding priorities?

The funding priorities only govern the Local Board’s allocation methodology. LROs are free to apply for any combination of Local Board-approved EFSP services that are already offered by their organization and do not need to follow the Local Board priorities to complete their application.

22. If awarded EFSP funds, does an agency have to match the exact spending of non-EFSP funds as specified on the program level budget?

The LRO will be expected to maintain the same ratio between EFSP funds and other program funds. For example, the LRO cannot indicate that EFSP is only 15% of their of their overall program expense on their application and then change their budget to make EFSP 50% of their overall program expense. This will be monitored through the quarterly reports. Remember, EFSP is intended to supplement and expand but not fully fund programs.

23. Can you explain the clause about paying one month’s rent under rent/mortgage assistance?

The Local Board expects LROs to provide each client with the full equivalent of one month’s rent based on current fair market rental rates. The full balance should come from EFSP funds alone. Only use non-EFSP funds to provide partial assistance.