

EFSP Phase 38 – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where can I find the application?

*All application materials are available on the ACAM website at <https://acamweb.org/funding-opportunities/>. There are four documents to download: the competition overview (amended), a cover sheet, the PDF application for funding, and the program level budget. There are also additional supporting documents that provide more information about the program and eligibility. 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 December 4, 2020. **Late applications will not be reviewed.***

2. How much money was released for Phase 38 for our region? How much EFSP funding does ACAM expect to receive?

Per the Competition Overview: The EFSP National Board has announced a national allocation of \$125 million for EFSP Phase 38 (compare to \$120 million for Phase 37). However, they have not yet announced regional allocations. Based on the National Board's posted funding formula criteria, the Local Board (LB) expects a regional allocation similar to Phase 37, approx. \$2.1M.

3. We noticed that the Program Budget is a protected document and some of the required cells are locked – can we get an unlocked document?

We have upload an updated, unlocked version of the Program Budget to <https://acamweb.org/funding-vendor-opportunities/> and apologize for any inconvenience.

4. Instead of using the provided fillable PDF application form, can I create and submit a Word document?

No. Please use the provided materials and follow all instructions as you would with any other funding request. The LB has created the application materials to facilitate a quick, efficient scoring process and any deviation introduces unnecessary delays.

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

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

6. When will this recording be available? Will the presentation be available for us to review?

The RFP Conference recording and the FAQs will be made available on Friday, November 20.

7. We do not provide rent assistance or shelter service but we do provide food services. Can we apply for EFSP funding?

EFSP Phase 38 includes funding for Other Food, Served Meals, Mass Shelter, Rent/Mortgage

Assistance, and Utilities Assistance. You can apply for any mixture of those funding categories to supplement and expand your current programs, including food programs. You need not be a shelter/housing provider to apply.

8. Must EFSP Phase 38 cover COVID-19 response?

EFSP Phase 38 is not related to COVID-19 response but can certainly be used to assist COVID-affected clients.

9. In Phase 38, what are the client eligibility requirements for rent, utility, or food assistance? I recall that Phase CARES might have been different.

The only eligibility criteria set by the EFSP National Board is that EFSP must serve “needy individuals” without discrimination or religious compulsion. Since the LB has not set any additional eligibility criteria, each LRO can set their own criteria. (Please see the Phase 35 manual for additional guidance, especially regarding discrimination.) Phase CARES did have additional eligibility requirements related to COVID-affectedness but that does not apply to the normal phase allocations.

10. I understand that food assistance (gift cards) does not have to be entered into HMIS. Is that correct?

Only mass shelter, rent/mortgage assistance, and utilities assistance must be entered into HMIS.

11. It is my understanding that the LB has allocated 18% of the funds toward mass shelter. Is this a similar percentage to what was allocated last year?

Yes. The LB established the current funding priorities for Phase 37. The same percentages were allocated for Phase CARES but funds were ultimately shifted from mass shelter to rent/mortgage due to limited requests for mass shelter.

12. Regarding rent payments, is the requirement to pay the full month’s rent new?

Do you want us to pay actual rent, but not above FMR? Do we only pay up to FMR?

What do you mean “only EFSP funding?”

Can other amounts of rent be paid with EFSP CARES funding?

What if the client owes less than one month’s rent?

The LB has required LROs to provide service equivalent to one month’s rent since Phase 37. With Phase CARES, the LB clarified that the full one month’s amount must come exclusively from EFSP funds. The 2020 LB Handbook further clarified that LROs should only pay up to the current FMR rate but can use additional funding sources to cover anything above FMR. For more information, please refer to the Phase 38 Competition Overview section entitled “Rent/Mortgage Assistance,” the 2020 LB Handbook, and Question 13 below.

13. If we have a client who has been out of work since March due to COVID and has 8 months of rent arrears, we would be able to cover their March 2020 rent only if we have additional funding to cover the additional 7 months of arrears, correct? Can we combine multiple phases of EFSP?

EFSP service only covers up to 1 month’s rent and must ensure the continuation of housing for 30 days. You may combine multiple phases of EFSP (37, CARES, & 38) to pay up to 3 months of

arrears as long as the client has not already been served in those phases by any LRO and will remain housed for 30 days after service. If a client has a larger delinquency (e.g., 8 months' rent) you may cover 1-3 months' rent with EFSP as explained above and use other funding sources to pay the additional balance. The requirement that the client remain housed for 30 days post-service remains in effect. Alternatively, if you do not have additional funding to pay off the entire delinquency, you could negotiate with the landlord to prevent an eviction through partial payment (1-3 months of EFSP) as long as they ensure the client will remain housed for 30 days post-service. For additional information please see the EFSP Sample Rent/Mortgage Documentation form provided on the EFSP web portal and the Rent/Mortgage Quick Reference Guide.

14. When we have a small amount remaining on the grant and we are supposed to pay one month's rent, what do you suggest?

In that scenario, please contact ACAM to discuss possible options.

15. Can a client receive multiple types of EFSP service during a single phase or can they only receive one type of assistance?

Yes, clients may receive multiple types of EFSP service during a phase. They may receive both rent/mortgage assistance and utility assistance. There are also no restrictions on the number of times or frequency clients may receive mass shelter, served meals, and other food. However, they can only receive rent/mortgage and utility assistance once per phase.

16. Is January 1, 2020 really the correct start date for the Phase 38 spending period?

The EFSP National Board has announced that Phase 38 will run concurrently with Phase 37. The spending period runs from January 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021.

17. Since Phase 38 is running concurrently with Phase 37/Phase CARES, how can we apply for shelter and food services (i.e. mass shelter and meals served) if these activities are already being funded via Phase 37 funds and are charged at a per diem rate? Can EFSP funds be used to extend other EFSP funds?

You may apply for additional funding in mass shelter and served meals as long as the funds are used to serve clients on other dates. For example, an LRO may use Phase 37 funds for served meals to pay for congregate meals from 4/15/2020 to 6/15/2020, Phase CARES funds from 8/05/2020 to 10/05/2020, and Phase 38 funds from 1/20/2021 to 3/01/2021.

18. Will program targets be scaled when the funding request is scaled in the scoring/allocation process?

Yes. All program targets will be scaled to match award amounts.

19. Were we given the scoring on our last application? Will we be told if our application goes below 70%?

The Local Board has not automatically shared LRO application scores in past phases. However, any LRO that does not receive funding may request an explanation from the LB, including their application score and constructive feedback.

20. In the Local Board Handbook it states that financial information scores up to 25 pts. Is this based on % of EFSP funds or number of service units (combined or EFSP service units)?

The score for "Financial Information" is derived from the percentage of EFSP to non-EFSP expenditures and the LROs audit/financial statement information.

21. How is the percentage EFSP in the Program Budget (column H) scored? Is there a particular minimum or maximum target you are looking for? If there is a target percentage, are you looking at the individual category % calculations or the total % calculation?

Because EFSP is intended to supplement and extend existing programs, LROs that demonstrate lower percentages of EFSP to non-EFSP expenditures will receive a higher score. While the score ultimately pertains to the total percentage of EFSP to non-EFSP expenditures, the individual funding category percentages determine the total percentage.

22. In the Program Budget the non-EFSP service unit costs and EFSP service unit costs are linked. The required EFSP service unit cost for rent/mortgage assistance is higher than our normal non-EFSP service unit cost. If we insert the appropriate value to comply with the EFSP rent/mortgage requirements, are we communicating that we have the ability to pay that amount of rent outside of EFSP?

No. The non-EFSP service units and service unit costs are not individually considered in the scoring process but are instead used to calculate the total non-EFSP expenditure for each funding category. The LB will not monitor or set any expectations around your non-EFSP service units or service unit costs. However, the LB does ask LROs to report on non-EFSP expenditures in each funding category in order to monitor the percentage of EFSP to non-EFSP expenditures.

23. Our LRO could serve 100 clients with \$500 of non-EFSP rent and then help those 100 clients with an additional \$500 EFSP rent giving them a full month rent in total. We would only be asking for EFSP rent funds equal to 50% of non-EFSP funds and helping 100 clients. Alternatively, we could serve 50 clients with \$1000 of non-EFSP rent and then help an additional 100 clients with \$1000 EFSP rent giving them a full month rent in total. We would be asking for EFSP rent funds equal to 66.67% of non-EFSP funds but helping 150 clients. Which scores better?

A) Please refer to Question 12 above. The LB has determined that all EFSP rent/mortgage payments must be equivalent to one month's rent and must use EFSP funds exclusively to pay the full month's rent up to the current Fair Market Rental (FMR) rate for the unit. Therefore, the first scenario is ineligible under current LB rules since the LRO would not be paying the full month's rent up to FMR exclusively with EFSP funds.

B) Please refer to Question 21 above: lower percentages of EFSP to non-EFSP expenditures will receive a higher score.

24. Will we have to submit separate reports for each phase even though they are concurrent?

Yes. Previously the National Board has required separate reports for concurrent phases.

25. How will the awards be distributed?

The National Board distributes awards in two payments, one after awards are confirmed and one after the LRO submits an interim report and second payment request. For returning LROs all payments are made electronically. For first-time LROs, the initial payment is may via check.

26. Our organization is currently using EFSP funds to assist one category of clients. Can we expand our services to include another category of clients?

Yes. EFSP is intended to supplement and expand existing programs and adding new client categories fits that intention. However, EFSP is not intended to create completely new programs or add services not previously offered.

27. If we're not applying for homelessness prevention, do we have to fulfill requirement of having previously homeless on our staff or board?

Yes. The LB is still looking for client involvement in your services and program design and may include volunteer involvement. Please explain how clients are involved in any programs. If you do not have client involvement, please explain why not.

28. Should the program budget extend back to January 1, 2020 or start now and extend to May 31, 2021?

Since the spending period runs from January 1, 2020 to May 31, 2021 your budget may extend backwards to cover the full spending period. However, you may create the budget with your expected service plan in mind. If you do not intend to use EFSP as reimbursement for previous eligible expenses, you do not necessarily need to create a budget that extends backwards.

29. Can we average our range of rental assistance based on FMR for the "amount of unit cost?" Should we average the cost of 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom – use that average for FMR?

*Yes. Please create your request considering your current average unit cost and household size for non-EFSP service **and** the current FMR rates. The intention of the LB is that your program targets, funding amount, and service plan account for the one months' service requirement.*

30. Do you have a cutoff level of non-EFSP service units in your scoring rubric?

No.

31. For clarification - home-delivered meals are considered "other food," whereas served meals are in a community center style setting?

The "Served Meals" category is used for congregate meals and uses a per meal rate. The "Other Food" category includes expenditures for food pantries, eligible food cards/coupons/vouchers, and other eligible food expenditures. Some LROs do use this funding category for Meals on Wheels. Please consult the Served Meals and Other Food Quick Reference Guides for more information.

32. When submitting the application should we include our current HMIS report that displays our current number served for the EFSP Phase CARES or will you all be able to access that on your own?

There is no reason to submit any HMIS reports with your application.