

COUNTY OF TUSCALOOSA)
STATE OF ALABAMA)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

(A21-0397)

TO: Qualified Firms

FROM: Tuscaloosa County, Alabama

RE: Request for Proposals for Emergency Rental Assistance Program Administration Services

DATE: April 8, 2021

Section 1. Introduction.

This is a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) containing information concerning the above-referenced matter, an abbreviated scope of work, and evaluation items. Firms expressing interest should be fully capable of providing the end results requested.

This is a procurement of professional services as more particularly described herein. This procurement will be conducted in a manner providing full and open competition consistent with the standards of 2 CFR § 200.317-200.327. To wit:

- a. Each firm’s experience and qualifications will be evaluated primarily as they relate to the firm’s ability to provide Emergency Rental Assistance Program Administration Services.

- b. The County will make awards only to responsible firms possessing the ability to perform successfully under the terms and conditions of the procurement. Consideration will be given to such matters as firm integrity, compliance with public policy, record of past performance, and financial and technical resources. The County will require firms to execute a “Disbarment and Suspension Statement” certifying / verifying that the contractor is not suspended or disbarred or otherwise excluded under 2 CFR Section 408.220 of the government-wide non-procurement, disbursement and suspension list. This is a qualifications-based procurement of professional services whereby competitors’ qualifications will be evaluated and the most qualified firm will be selected, subject to negotiation of fair and reasonable compensation.

- c. Written proposals will be reviewed, scored, and rated by a five-member panel of qualified Tuscaloosa County and Tuscaloosa City employees. The panel will be represented by three employees from Tuscaloosa County and two employees from the City of Tuscaloosa. The rating system will consist of a numerical grading system and a pass/fail grading system, as set forth in Section 3. The County may elect to interview any of the responding firms.
- d. The County has exclusive and sole discretion to determine the firm whose services will be most advantageous to the County, and reserves the right to reject all firms.

The purpose of this inquiry is to determine the interest or non-interest and the qualifications of firms in providing the professional services required. A number of firms may be asked to express their interest in regard to these services. Following the receipt of proposals, a certain firm or firms may be selected for further consideration.

Section 2. General Scope of Services

Tuscaloosa County seeks the services of a firm which has the knowledge, experience and expertise to perform the services as requested, generally as follows:

The local community has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic causing economic disruption. Tuscaloosa County is seeking proposals from qualified, licensed, and insured entities to administer the Emergency Rental Assistance Program in accordance with the statutes, Department of Treasury guidelines and regulations, Tuscaloosa County ERAP program policies and procedures, and the Scope of Work outlined in this section. The selected firm must demonstrate it has the capacity to manage a high volume of applications submitted from local residents. The selected firm must also have the capacity to perform required tasks that will involve application intake, eligibility determination, assessments of need for assistance, counseling and case management, payment processing, record-keeping and reporting, and provide training to staff to complete these tasks.

The selected firm will be expected to:

A. Implement the Program

- Set up a call center and have the ability to train staff;
- Create an online and mail-in application process using a template that captures all required information needed to determine eligibility;
- Implement an effective outreach and marketing plan to ensure residents throughout the geographic service area are able to access assistance;
- Conduct initial briefings;

- Conduct intake appointments (remote and in-person) for prospective applicants seeking assistance, including application eligibility screening, income calculation and document verification;
- Assist applicants with submission of documentation;
- Work closely with landlords, utility companies, and other partnering agencies and referral agencies;
- Process reexaminations, including collection and review of required documentation, income calculation, calculation of tenant need;
- Respond to client questions according to applicable regulations and local policies;
- Assist landlords and other entities with the process when submitting applications on behalf of the household;
- Accurately documenting all processes and communications in the appropriate electronic file;
- Have an adequate financial system to process payments expeditiously, track and monitor transactions and meet reporting and auditing requirements;
- Maintain records of transactions and program participants assisted;
- Create and maintain a County funding stream, tracking expenditures, and payment progress;
- Generate and submit weekly progress reports to the County staff that includes, but is not limited to: household demographic information, services rendered, cost of services rendered, number of households served in the County; and the number of tenants served in each municipal jurisdiction and unincorporated area of the County;
- Apply program guidelines when making payments to the landlords, owners, and utility companies on behalf of the eligible household; and
- Submit to routine audits to ensure that all program guidelines are being followed as outlined by federal, state and local government agencies.

B. Determine Household Eligibility

Program funds must be used for rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, utilities and home energy arrears, and other expenses related to housing incurred directly or indirectly due to the pandemic. A portion (10%) of the funds may be used for housing stability services, including case management or other services related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the administration of the program. Program funds must benefit eligible households that meet the following criteria:

- Household income must be at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development;
- At least one individual in each household qualifies for unemployment benefits, or experienced a reduction in income, or has incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due directly or indirectly to the COVID-19 pandemic;

- Can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability which may include:
 - A past due utility/rent notice or an eviction notice;
 - Unsafe or unhealthy living conditions;
 - Any other evidence of such risk as determined by the grantee;
- Households whose income is at or below 50 percent of the AMI or where persons have been unemployed for the 90 days prior to application will be given priority; and
- Households must be checked for duplication of benefits to ensure there is an unmet need.

C. Use an Application Process and Grant Management System

The selected firm must develop and utilize an application process that meets statutes and program requirements. In addition, the firm will be expected to:

- Utilize a software system that specializes in application processing and grant management and that will be able to generate the required reports;
- Collect household and other data to include, but not be limited to:
 - Number of applications received for the County, broken down by municipal jurisdiction and the unincorporated area of Tuscaloosa County;
 - Household demographics such as gender, race, and ethnicity;
 - Address of the rental unit;
 - Name, address, social security number, tax identification number or DUNS number, as applicable, for landlord and utility provider;
 - Amount and percentage of monthly rent covered by the program;
 - Amount and percentage of separately-stated utility and home energy costs covered by the program;
 - Total amount of each type of assistance (e.g. rent, rental arrears, utilities, etc.) provided to each household;
 - Amount of outstanding rental arrears for each household;
 - Number of months of rental payments and number of months of utility payments for which assistance is provided; and
 - Household income and number of individuals in the household.

All services shall be provided in accordance with all applicable laws and in a manner consistent with industry best practices.

The County reserves the right, subject to negotiation and agreement, in writing, with the selected firm, to either expand or limit the scope of services as needed.

The selected firm will be required to have sufficient personnel to complete the tasks required by this scope of services. The selected firm will complete the required tasks in a timely and efficient manner. The selected firm would be expected to enter into a contract for services based upon the firm's hourly rates and an agreed-upon not to exceed amount.

Section 3. Firm Qualification and Proposal Requirements

Firms interested in performing the work will be considered on the basis of a proposal containing information submitted in response to this request in a form limited to seven (7) pages in 12-point font or larger of either Times New Roman or Arial. Front and back shall be considered 2 pages.

Proposals are due by close of business on Monday, April 19, 2021.

All proposals should be submitted in 8 ½" x 11" paper size. Each proposal shall be prepared simply and economically, providing straightforward, concise delineation of the firm's capabilities to satisfy the requirements of this RFP. Fancy binding and color displays other than those necessary are highly discouraged.

Provide three (3) bound copies to:

**Tuscaloosa County Commission
ERAP Response
Suite G78
714 Greensboro Avenue
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401**

Or respond by email to: tuscaloosaERAP@tuscco.com

The selected firm or firms must be experienced and qualified to provide the required scope of services. The firm or firms selected must have expertise related to the general Scope of Services set forth in Section 2. The following information must be submitted with the proposal on the date indicated above in the order indicated below:

- a. Recently Completed Projects. Evidence of satisfactory performance of at least three (3) recently completed projects of the type indicated above. Relevant experience will be judged on the basis of the experience of those individuals named to the firm's project team for this project. Provide at least three (3) references. (10 points possible)

- b. Experience and Qualifications. A statement of the firm's qualifications to perform the work and years in business. The statement should include the following:
1. The general experience of the firm. (5 points possible)
 2. The specific experience of the proposed personnel in the fields that the proposed services are requested, their qualifications, years of experience, professional certifications and availability to perform the work and services to be provided. (5 points possible)
 3. A statement of experience and work of similar nature that all the proposed personnel have performed. (5 points possible)
 4. A statement as to whether the firm or any subcontractors are a minority or woman owned business enterprise. (1 point possible)
 5. A statement as to professional standing including any pending controversies outstanding. If none exists, such a statement should be made. (pass/fail)
 6. A list of qualified persons in other disciplines required for the proposed services to be acquired from outside sources, if applicable. (1 point possible)
- c. Please include a very specific statement as to the firm's experience with federal government grants, such as grants from the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Energy and Department of Transportation. (10 points possible)
- d. Please include a statement as to potential general conflicts of interest that would prevent Tuscaloosa County from entering into an agreement with your firm pursuant to this RFP. If none exists, such a statement should be made. (1 point possible)
- e. Firms must demonstrate experience administering this or similar rental assistance programs within Tuscaloosa County or another Alabama city or county. Please include a statement as to this requirement. (5 points possible)

- f. Firm must be licensed and approved for work in the State of Alabama; please include a statement to this effect. (pass/fail)

The County reserves the right to interview a firm or multiple firms as it sees fit. There is no guarantee that a contract award will be made pursuant to this RFP. This RFP may be modified or amended at any time and for any reason, in the discretion of the County.

Indirect costs will not be an allowable administrative cost.

Any questions by the firm related to this RFP should be submitted in writing along with the firm's proposal. In the interest of fairness and in order to maintain impartiality, the County may not respond to questions from individual firms during the RFP process.

END RFP.