

Village of Oak Park

ARPA Community Request Application

1. Project name (if you have more than one project, use a separate impact sheet for each):

Housing Forward, Emergency Shelter

2. Contact Person: Lynda Schueler

Email: lschueler@housingforward.org

Agency Overview:

3. Please describe your agency and your organization's mission and/or operations:

Housing Forward is a homeless and housing service provider founded in Oak Park 30 years ago with a mission to transition people from a housing crisis to housing stability. We prevent homelessness whenever possible, respond to housing crises and stabilize those facing homelessness with permanent housing and services. Our programs are designed to meet people where they are and support them in overcoming the precipitating events that led to their homelessness.

4. For your most recently ended fiscal year, provide the following:

- a. Total revenues \$13,135,848
- b. Total expenses, 12,358,476
- c. Included in total expenses, how much was for salaries/benefits? \$4,404,587
- d. Total ending cash and liquid investments \$2,297,054

5. Are there similar non-profit or private organization that perform essentially the same services as your agency? If so, please list them.

No, Housing Forward is the only agency in Oak Park whose sole mission is to serve those at-risk of homelessness and those who are unsheltered.

Collaboration & Community Partnerships

6. Do you have partners that you are collaborating with to support this program financially or in other ways? Name them and the support you will receive from them.

Housing Forward is partnering the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition to re-engage faith community partners and reimagine emergency shelter in Oak Park post-COVID. Our intention is to establish several 'host' facilities which are supported by area volunteers. We are currently in conversation with Good Shepherd Lutheran and St. Giles. We have broad support from over 30 congregations which are currently providing meals to those at our Interim Housing program at the Write Inn.

Project Narrative:

7. Please describe or attach to this form a description of your proposed program.

For 28 years, Housing Forward operated the PADS Emergency Shelter. This rotating system of shelter for persons experiencing homelessness worked in partnership with area faith communities and operated from mid-September to mid-May, and a Transitional Shelter, June to August. Housing Forward is requesting \$300,000 over two years to support the next iteration of a low-barrier, crisis response shelter program in the community.

The proposed emergency shelter will be limited to 15 beds at "host" facilities led by 2-4 congregations. The shelter will operate at one location for 2-3 nights and then rotate to a new "host" facility, rather than rotating each night like the PADS model. A full-time Shelter Coordinator will organize and oversee the program which will be staffed by volunteers and supplemented by employees when volunteers are not available. The program will offer dinner, breakfast and lunch and overnight sleeping accommodations. Staff will be responsible for all intakes and making connections to Housing Forward's array of programs. Ideally, the new shelter space will have showers for clients to reduce barriers for addressing basic hygiene.

Approach/Impact/Goals

8. How does the proposed initiative address immediate or delayed public health, economic or other community harms resulting from or exacerbated by the Covid-19 public health emergency?
People experiencing homelessness are at risk for infection during community spread of COVID and therefore immediate access to homeless services is critical to a community response. While Housing Forward shifted to a fixed-site facility during COVID, the need for a small decompression community emergency shelter remains. HUD has strongly encouraged communities to not close or exclude people who are having symptoms or test positive for COVID or other public health emergencies within the population. Additional temporary housing and shelter sites that provide appropriate services, supplies, and staffing will greatly reduce community spread. Housing Forward will continue to offer isolation and quarantine rooms at the Write Inn for people who are waiting to be tested, or who know that they were exposed to COVID-19.
9. Describe overall program goals:
 1. Year 1- Re-establish a low-barrier Emergency Shelter in partnership with area faith communities with a goal of achieving 7 days a week
Year 2 – Continue to operate emergency shelter and evaluate Year 1 – sufficiency of bed capacity, nightly bed availability and summer month capacity and determine where adjustments are needed.
 2. Provide overnight Emergency Shelter accommodations (i.e. shelter and meals) for 15 unsheltered people per evening
 3. Expand street outreach presence in Oak Park with one FTE Street Outreach Worker
 4. Create a pathway for individuals and families to Interim Housing and Permanent Housing placement.

Program Eligibility

Strategic Goals

10. Can you describe a link with this proposed program and the Village Board's goals?
The unsheltered population does not have immediate access to shelter since the PADS Emergency Shelter closed under the COVID crisis. The proposed project is directly linked to the Village's goal of 'Addressing Negative Economic Impacts' and Public Health as access to immediate shelter benefits the recipients and the community as a whole.

Community Benefit

11. Describe the residents impacted (#, age) and over what duration; Is this program for low-moderate income recipients?
Individuals and families accessing Emergency Shelter are homeless, extremely low-income, and require assistance in meeting their basic human needs: shelter, hunger, and safety. Beyond homelessness, the population is disproportionately impacted by a lack of income, domestic violence, chronic illness, and disabling conditions such as untreated mental health or substance abuse. Historical demographics of the shelter population:
91% are adults; 9% are children
 - 44% of adults have a serious disabling condition (medical, mental illness and/or substance abuse)
 - 12% are survivors of domestic violence
 - 10% are Seniors (62+)
 - 8% are Transition Aged Youth
 - 6% are U.S. Military Veterans

Race Equity Impact

12. What racial/ethnic groups are currently most advantaged and most disadvantaged by the issues this proposal seeks to address?
 - 78% of those served identify their ethnicity as Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino
 - 61% of clients identify their race as Black/African American
 - 19% as White
 - Other - 1% as American Indian/Alaskan Native, 2% as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 1% as Asian and the remaining 16% refused to identify

13. What positive impacts on equality and inclusion, if any, could result from this proposal? What racial/ethnic groups could benefit? Will it reduce disparities or discrimination?

Homelessness and racial disparities are well documented in data and national literature and have been caused by systemic racism and inadequate investments in affordable housing and living wages. While this project does not address systemic issues of poverty, inequities to health care or social injustices, people experiencing homelessness are directly impacted by these deeply harmful to persons of color. Emergency Shelter is a critical component of the homeless services systems. Access to immediate shelter meetings critical access to basic needs and effectively orients those who are unsheltered to permanent housing attainment. Creating immediate emergency shelter solutions in the community will create an equitable response and reduce the perpetual racial disparities experienced by those living on the streets.

Measures & Reporting

14. Do you have program success indicators and progress benchmarks (list them)?

Since 2020:

- 43% of callers seeking Emergency Shelter were diverted from landing in the homeless system by Diversion services and accompanying flexible funding under COVID;
- Unknown exit destinations reduced by 75% and exits from homelessness to housing stability increased 166% due to 1) increased engagement and 2) having a new 24/7 Interim Housing
- 27% increase in available supportive housing units and rental assistance during COVID.

15. How would you describe the impact to the community? How will these impacts be documented and evaluated that you are meeting the intended goals and community benefits? Please provide examples. Unsheltered homelessness remains a persistent issue for those living on the streets in Oak Park. In 2021, prior to entering the Interim Housing program at the Write Inn:

- 41% had spent the previous night in a place not meant for human habitation
- 15% were coming from an institutional setting
- 10% were coming from a doubled-up situation

The community, but particularly the Oak Park police department, the community's two hospitals, the township, public library, and park district, will be positively impacted by having an emergency shelter in which to refer unsheltered individuals and families. Housing Forward will document and evaluate the program's intended goals by using a HUD approved HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) to collect, monitor and track client demographics, service transactions and program outcomes. Housing Forward recently created a Wraparound Services Team, led by a Director of Impact and System Performance, to ensure clients are moving through the agency's system of care from the initial point of access through our Street Outreach Team to being stabilized in one of our many housing programs.

Project Cost

16. Total Project cost: \$444,630 over two years Total ARPA request: \$300,000
17. Provide timetable when funds will be spent: Funds will be spent 12/1/22 to 12/31/24
18. Do you need all the grant funds in one distribution? No

Project Sustainability

19. Do you have a plan to keep this initiative in place once the one-time ARPA funds are used? Please describe.

Housing Forward will advocate for and request funding for sustaining the Emergency Shelter after 2024 through the state's Emergency and Transitional Housing (ETH) fund and through Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding.

Timetable:

20. Provide a comprehensive timeline to implement your proposed program and what is the duration of the program:

October '22 thru December '22 – Engagement of congregations and listening sessions with volunteers; solidifying new shelter model

November '22 – recruitment of Shelter Manager, purchasing supplies (pads, etc.), marketing and related printing

December '22 – one shelter facility secured, 2-3 days per week

January '23 – one shelter secured, 2-3 days per week

February '23 – one shelter facility secured, 2-3 days per week

We hope to operate the program year-round, but this will be dependent on securing sufficient facilities willing to host the program or Housing Forward's ability to secure one-location available year-round.

Other:

21. If you don't receive the funds, what are the impacts and will the program not occur in the future? What would be your plan to get this program running without ARPA assistance?

Housing Forward will not be able to launch this program without seeding from ARPA. Housing Forward has made substantial investments in creating the Interim Housing program and creating new housing during COVID, but we lack sufficient funding to reestablish an Emergency Shelter at this time. We will seek funding from the state of IL, and federal funding – ESG and FEMA in the future.

22. Can your program or a portion of your project wait until January 2023 to coincide with the anticipated next phase of community ARPA requests? What would be lost if this program waited until 2023? Do you have a plan to make up this loss?

The program could wait until January 2023, however, the cold months are upon us and we'd like to begin recruitment of personnel and engagement of the faith community and our volunteer network in the 4th quarter 2022.

A delay will result in a delay in getting a program operational during the coldest months of the year. We do not have an immediate funding to fill the gap in emergency shelter services.

23. Are you requesting ARPA funding from other agencies for this program? Are you requesting ARPA funding from other agencies for other programs?

Housing Forward is currently receiving ARPA funds from Cook County, Town of Cicero and the State of Illinois to support Interim Housing, Rapid Re-Housing, Homeless Prevention and Street Outreach activities.