



Ending Community Homelessness Coalition, Inc.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program
Austin/Travis County

Application Due Date: 5PM, Friday February 23, 2018
Questions and Completed Applications to: Niki Paul, nikipaul@austinecho.org

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide information on the Austin/Travis County Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Request for Proposal.

BACKGROUND

Austin is a community fiercely committed to ending homelessness. Over the past several years, Austin has worked to improve system coordination and redesign system delivery to ensure that when any person experiences homelessness, there is a system in place that can address their needs making homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

Despite this community-wide effort, over 600 unaccompanied youth experienced literal homelessness this past year. The community recognizes a great need to i) improve system coordination among providers and institutions serving youth, ii) ensure there is clear pathway for young people to swiftly access critical services, and iii) increase resources that are dedicated to the specific needs of young people who experience homelessness.

In January 2017, Austin was awarded a transformative demonstration grant by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) called the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). As part of this competitive opportunity, Austin joins nine other communities across the nation to take on the bold task of creating a local coordinated community response to prevent and end homelessness for unaccompanied youth by 2020.¹

As part of this demonstration, the Austin community is charged with implementing a coordinated system strategy that applies both evidence-based practice and a unique opportunity to think “outside the box,” test new programming, and break barriers for young people in housing crisis.

To lead this local effort, the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care lead agency, the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO) collaborated with key informants across the community, including several young adults with lived experience of homelessness, to develop a data-driven plan to accomplish this vision.

The response to this call for local collaboration has been overwhelmingly positive and is a testament to the fierce dedication of the Austin community. Over 100 community members participated across the various planning committees; providing an unprecedented opportunity for local collaboration across youth-dedicated and mainstream agencies. Institutions such as the Texas Department of Family Protective Services, Texas Department of Juvenile Justice, and young leaders with lived experiences of homelessness all played a vital role in this planning effort.

¹ <https://www.hudexchange.info/news/youth-homelessness-demonstration-program-community-selection-announcement/>

YHDP Shared Vision

By 2020, all youth and young adults in Austin and Travis County experiencing homelessness live in a safe and comfortable space, and find community through an interconnected, youth-driven system that is accessible, transparent, efficient, innovative and celebrates all identity and self-expression.

An end to youth homelessness does not mean that youth will never experience a housing crisis again. Instead, it means having a response system in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible, and a quick response with appropriate housing options is available on the rare occasions a youth does experience homelessness.

YHDP Values

Youth Voice: Ensuring the voices of youth and young adults with lived experience root all elements of our plan and its implementation with authentic opportunities for involvement - especially involving young people who are more often marginalized by the dominant culture. Specifically seek input from youth and young adults who identify on the LGBTQA spectrum, have experience in the foster care system, are pregnant or parenting, are immigrant youth, have experience in the juvenile justice system and/or survivors of human trafficking and exploitation. Provide opportunities for on-going involvement for youth and young adults.

Embracing Respect and Change: Be willing to listen and learn through this process and foster a culture that embraces change and iteration and opportunities to improve our system for youth and young adults.

Addressing Disparities: Apply a racial and gender equity lens within the implementation process and actively address implicit bias and racial disparities in Austin/Travis County.

Data-driven decision making: Utilize needs data and use an active performance management framework to drive all decision making, including investment decisions and tracking progress towards outcomes. Use data to target and prioritize assistance to youth with the greatest needs.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS DESCRIPTION

On behalf the Austin/Travis County Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), ECHO is seeking request for proposals from service provider(s) to complete the application process and implement programs as defined by the Austin/Travis County YHDP Community Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness under the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), funded by United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (OSNAP).

ECHO is seeking applicants from eligible organizations to implement three (3) different project types approved by the local YHDP leadership that will address critical resource needs for youth experiencing homelessness in Austin/Travis County. Applicants may apply for each project type in full (opting to operate and manage the full scope and implementation of the project) or for one or more of the project components (specific roles or positions within each project).

If selected, applicant(s) may be asked to serve as the "lead" agency depending upon the outcomes of the RFP. For instance, if multiple entities are selected to administer the project types, one agency may be asked to serve as the project lead and be responsible for managing sub-contracts with the other selected entities.

See Appendix A for detailed information for each project category

Project Types Includes:

- i. *Youth Dedicated Rapid Rehousing "Plus"* for unaccompanied youth aged 18-24 years old with a waiver option for extending eligible program assistance for youth with greater needs up to 36 months of rental assistance
 - o Available Funding Amount: \$2,671,000 (2 Year Term)
- ii. *Transitional Aged Youth (18-24 yo) Housing Navigation Shelter (TH-RRH)* to address the need for crisis housing for Transitional-Aged Youth
 - o Available Funding Amount: \$1,537,000 (2 Year Term)
- iii. *"Deeper" Diversion and Familial Home Supports* to serve any unaccompanied youth under the age of 25 with short-term supportive services to divert from homelessness
 - o Available Funding Amount: \$836,000 (2 Year Term)

**All HUD Funds require at 25% match on all budget items, but for Leasing.*

If selected, each project would be awarded for a minimum of two (2) years with the possibility of renewal through the FY19 HUD Continuum of Care Program competition.

Selected Austin/Travis County YHDP project applicant(s) will be required to fulfill the following:

- i. Agree to work with YHPD Technical Assistance and Austin YHDP Team on project design and implementation once awarded including the application submission to OSNAPS office, as approved by the YHDP community plan to achieve the goals and objects as defined by the Coordinated Community Plan within 30 days after project selection announcement. This will include finalizing project scope and proposed budget.

- ii. Continuous Improvement and Evaluation: As part of this RFP, agencies will need to demonstrate their familiarity and experience with continuous improvement processes, as well as their commitment to the flexibility and willingness to adjust course depending upon lessons learned and performance outcomes. Part of this process will include participating in peer learning activities and close coordination with ECHO and the Austin Youth Collective to End Homelessness. Additionally, HUD has awarded a contract to Westat to conduct a four-year evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of the demonstration. Recipients of the grant award are expected to participate in this evaluation.
- iii. Coordinate all program referrals through the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Process as defined by the CoC Written Standards.
- iv. Comply with program requirements as per the Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care Policies and Procedures, HUD Continuum of Care Interim Rule, FY2016 YHDP NOFA and any HUD-approved waivers.
- v. Reporting and Evaluation: Applicants are responsible for complying with all HUD Continuum of Care and YHDP program requirements. In addition, all YHDP projects will be evaluated by a local Data and Evaluations Team. This will be a requirement for all YHDP funded projects.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS): The HMIS is an online database that enables organizations to collect data on the services they provide to people experiencing homelessness. Agencies are required to participate in HMIS and enter participant data per the HMIS data standards and procedures.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

To be considered for this opportunity, full completion and submission of the forms below are required and must be submitted by email to nikipaul@austinecho.org by February 23rd, 2018 at 7PM CST.

The forms are required in the following order and submitted as separate documents:

- i. RFP Coversheet
- ii. RFP Threshold Form
- iii. RFP Proposal Form
- iv. RFP Budget Form
- v. Other Attachments

ADDRESSING REVIEWER BIAS

To reduce the unintentional impacts of bias, we ask respondents **not to include identifying information in the application forms (i.e. agency name), but for when the form specifically asks for the name.** All identifying information will be maintained in the cover letter which will not be shared with reviewers. Applicants will receive a unique identifier, managed by ECHO staff, and not included in the review process.

Submit all completed forms via email to Niki Paul at nikipaul@austinecho.org by 5PM, Friday, February 23, 2018. All the application information and forms must be submitted fully completed for consideration.

A Bidders Conference with YHDP TA representative Sarah Hunter is scheduled for Thursday, February 1, 2018 at 2PM at ECHO Office, 300 E. Highland Mall Blvd, Austin, TX 78752, Suite 200. This is open to any interested candidates.

TIMELINE

- January 25, 2018 RFP Released
- February 1, 2018 Bidders Conference
- February 23, 2018 RFP Due to ECHO
- Feb 26, 2018 RFP Review and Scoring (*tentative date*)
- March 5, 2018 Membership Council Meeting-Final Selection (*tentative date*)
- Proposal Selection will imminently follow

All agency applicants will be informed via email to the identified primary contact if their project was accepted or denied as part of the Austin/Travis County YHDP.

AGENCY ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants for these funds include nonprofit housing and/or supportive services organizations, public housing authorities, or other public agencies.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for funding through this RFP, projects must meet or be prepared to meet the following requirements by June 1, 2018:

- i. Be located and/or provide services in Austin/Travis County geographic area and serve people who are experiencing homelessness;
- ii. Meet the requirements of the FY16 YHDP NOFA;
- iii. Not debarred from receiving federal funds and in good standing with all government and funding contracts;
- iv. Participate in the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS);
- v. Adhere to Housing First practices while serving households experiencing homelessness;
- vi. Align with screening standards for program eligibility requirements; and

Participation in and acceptance of all new program participants through the Austin/Travis County Coordinated Entry process as required.

EVALUATION PROCESS

Threshold Review

All applications will undergo a threshold criteria review. ECHO staff will review proposal packages for eligibility and completeness, and that each project has met the minimum requirements as set forth in this RFP. Incomplete and/or ineligible proposal packages will not receive further review. Project applications that pass the threshold review will be reviewed by an ad hoc application review panel.

RFP Rank and Review Committee

The YHDP Rank and Review Committee will evaluate proposals utilizing the following criteria and will select the highest-scoring valid proposal for each program type. The review panel may be comprised of YHDP Advisory Leadership, Austin Youth Collective members, funding partners, and other individuals knowledgeable about homelessness and housing, the YHDP Coordinated Community Plan, and consistent with the Austin/Travis County CoC conflict of interest policy.

This RFP is competitive. All interested parties must complete the application packet by the deadline to be considered for funding. All completed applications turned in on or before the deadline that meet the agency eligibility requirements will be reviewed and individually scored by members of the review panel.

Applications not meeting requirements of minimum eligibility or application completeness or submitted after the deadline will not receive further consideration.

Multiple proposals may be selected per program type depending on the scale and budget of proposals submitted. If applicable, the YHDP Rank and Review Committee will seek additional information from the applicants to maximize all YHDP project funds.

Final selection will be made by the ECHO Membership Council.

Eligible and complete applications will be rated based on the following criteria based on a total of 200 points:

- Section I. Agency Qualifications and Experience / 90 Points
- Section II. Project Design and Implementation / 90 Points
- Section III. Budget Proposal / 20 Points

If you have any questions, contact Niki Paul at nikipaul@austinecho.org.