



RAMSEY COUNTY

Grant Services

CDBG Program Year 2024 Solicitation Guide:
Public Services and Programs

Responses must be received no later than: March 15, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.
Late responses will not be considered.

SPECIAL NOTICE:

This is a request for proposals. It does not obligate the County to award a contract or complete the proposed program and the County reserves the right to cancel this Solicitation if it is considered in its best interest.

I. Solicitation Summary and Background

The Ramsey County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (“County”) is accepting applications for the 2024 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Public Services and Programs Solicitation (“Solicitation”) for CDBG eligible activities located within the boundaries of suburban Ramsey County. This Solicitation is offered once per year. Responders request funding for a specific CDBG eligible public service or housing program activity that serves low-to-moderate income residents in suburban Ramsey County. Ramsey County Community and Economic Development (“CED”) staff score and evaluate the proposals and match eligible responders with available funding. Staff will then make funding recommendations to the Ramsey County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) board for final approval on May 7, 2024. Recommended funding awards will become part of Ramsey County’s 2024-2025 CDBG/HOME Annual Action Plan.

This Solicitation document is intended to provide general instructions and information regarding the County’s application and selection process. Additionally, each funding source is subject to specific requirements and limitations that are not set out in detail or modified by this document. See below for more information.

The Solicitation will be published on ZoomGrants from February 15, 2024, through March 15, 2024. Responses to the Solicitation are due at 4:30 p.m. on March 15, 2024 and must be uploaded via the ZoomGrants portal. Responders are responsible to know all requirements that are needed to submit a complete application based on the specific proposed CDBG-eligible activity or application type. County CED staff reserves the right to seek follow-up information if needed after an application is received.

For any ZoomGrants-related questions, responders can search at ZoomGrants University (help.zoomgrants.com), or if extra assistance is needed contact questions@zoomgrants.com.

II. Timeline

DATE DUE	ITEM/ACTIVITY
February 15, 2024	Solicitation Published
February 16, 2024	Host Pre-Solicitation Informational Webinar
March 15, 2024	Solicitation Responses are Due
April 5, 2024	30-day Comment Period Begins
May 6, 2024	Public Hearing/Meeting
May 7, 2024	Consideration of Projects Recommended for Award by HRA Board
July 1, 2024	Anticipated First Date of Program Year 2024
June 30, 2025	Program Year Closes

III. Required Materials

This document outlines steps and considerations for applying to the 2024 CDBG Public Services and Programs Solicitation. The application will be available online and a link will be provided by County CED staff. Applications that DO NOT include all the following specific materials by the applicable deadline will be considered ineligible for further processing:

A. Pass/Fail Requirements

1. **The responder must be a nonprofit or governmental agency.**

AND

2. **Responses must propose an eligible activity or program as outlined below:**

- a. Eligible Activities and Projects (Pass/Fail)

Public services. All programs/activities must benefit low-to-moderate-income residents of suburban Ramsey County or be located or serve suburban Ramsey County. The service or activity must be new or increase the number of residents it will serve compared to last year.

- i. Childcare Services
- ii. Employment and Skills Training
- iii. Food Resources and Services
- iv. Legal Services
- v. Mental Health Services
- vi. Senior Services
- vii. Services for Persons with Disabilities
- viii. Services for Victims of Domestic Violence
- ix. Substance Abuse Services
- x. Transportation Services
- xi. Tenant/Landlord Counseling
- xii. Youth Services

OR,

- b. Owner-occupied/Single-Family Housing Rehabilitation Programs- All programs/activities must benefit low-to-moderate-income residents of suburban Ramsey County or be located in suburban Ramsey County. The program must be new or increase the number of residents it seeks to serve in a year.
 - i. Critical repair or rehabilitation of owner-occupied homes or other single family homes, such as group homes.
 - ii. Loan programs for the rehabilitation of owner-occupied homes or other single family homes, such as group homes.
 - iii. Loan/grant programs for the weatherization and energy efficiency of owner-occupied homes or other single family homes.

B. Submission Content - All required materials and application materials must be sent in by the deadline as listed below.

- a. Responder must submit all required materials in Zoomgrants.
 - i. Project Schedule & Project Narrative
 - ii. Organizational Capacity Worksheet
 - iii. Completed Attachments
 - a. Attachment A
 - b. Attachment B – Acknowledgement Form
 - c. Attachment C- Lobbying Certification
 - d. Subrecipient Risk Assessment Form
 - f. Declarations

IV. Available Resources

A. CDBG

CDBG is a federal entitlement grant that Ramsey County receives annually from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The grant recipient (Ramsey County) and subrecipients (responders awarded CDBG funding) must follow all federal rules and regulations per 24 CFR Part 570 and 2 CFR 200. Ramsey County must use its CDBG funds in suburban Ramsey County. Ramsey County is currently only soliciting applications for public services and owner-occupied housing rehabilitation activities. All activities recommended for a funding award will become a part of Ramsey County's 2024-2025 Annual Action Plan and the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan, as required by HUD.

CDBG funds used for public services activities may only be used for new or expanded services that serve low-to-moderate income (LMI) residents. LMI is defined as households whose incomes are at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI). Ramsey County's CDBG funds may only serve residents of suburban Ramsey County. Suburban Ramsey County includes all communities in the county, except the City of Saint Paul. Eligible communities include Arden Hills, Falcon Heights, Gem Lake, Lauderdale, Little Canada, Maplewood, Mounds View, New Brighton, North Oaks, North Saint Paul, Roseville, Saint Anthony, Shoreview, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township.

HUD income limits for the Minneapolis-Saint Paul-Bloomington area can be found here: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2022/2022summary.odn>

All income limits are subject to change and are expected to change prior to the release of program year funds.

CDBG funds, by statute, may not be used to replace other governmental sources of funds. The expanded services may not have been previously funded with local, state or federal funds within the last 12 months. Awarded funds will be on a reimbursement basis based on a per client cost for each LMI-eligible client served.

A public service must report the number of unduplicated people it will assist. HUD defines “persons” in their federal reporting system as equal to an individual and “households” as equal to all household members. Reporting documents provided by Ramsey County staff will advise if persons or all households’ members should be reported in the total count of new clients served. Do not count a person/household more than once through the program year. HUD will use the beneficiary data provided to measure the program/activities success. At the program/activities end, the application will be compared to the final accomplishment data supplied. If there is a noticeable discrepancy between the application information and the final accomplishment information, you may be required to submit written clarification.

Per-client cost should include reasonable and allowable overhead costs and combined salaries/benefits that will be charged for each LMI eligible client served. The per-client cost base should reflect a fair share of indirect costs in reasonable relation to the benefits received from those costs. Indirect costs cannot exceed the federal allowable de minimus rate unless the responder has a pre-negotiated indirect cost rate with the federal government.

Funds will generally be available upon completion of all regulatory requirements for use of federal funds, including, but not limited to, completion of a HUD Environmental Review. If awarded, funds may be reimbursed from the effective date of a contract but will not be disbursed to the awardee until the grant written agreement is executed by both parties. Generally, funds will become available in July/August 2024, but this is dependent on the passage of the federal congressional budget and the approval of Ramsey County’s 2024-2025 Annual Action Plan by HUD. Delays may occur in this process.

Responders recommended for funding will enter a CDBG Subrecipient Agreement with the Ramsey County HRA. These agreements generally have a term of one-year and follow HUD’s federal fiscal year from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

v. Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria:

- A. Project Narrative
- B. Organizational capacity
- C. Strategic and selection priorities
- D. Project budget

A. Project Narrative

- Project schedule and description, as well as responses to ZoomGrants questions will be used for scoring in this section.

1. Whether the proposed service, program or activity meets a national objective as defined by 24 CFR 570.

2. Whether the proposed service, program or activity serves a demonstrated need in the service area defined by the responder.
 - a. The responder clearly describes the proposed program, service or activity.
3. Whether the proposed number of persons served is reasonable per the requested amount of funding.
 - a. The responder defines eligibility of the persons the program, service or activity will serve.
 - b. The responder can describe how it will meet reporting requirements, including requirements on income and unduplicated beneficiary data.
4. Whether the responder seeks to leverage county funding with other funding sources to ensure the sustainability of the proposed program, service, or activity.
5. Whether the responder has general support from the local municipality or community that it seeks to serve.
6. Whether proposal considers the possibility of a partial award and how that would affect cost and proposed number of persons served.

B. Organizational Capacity

In addition to demonstrating project and financial reasonableness and feasibility, projects should demonstrate and satisfy the following capacity criteria in their application:

Organizational Capacity Worksheet as well as responses to Zoomgrants questions will be used for scoring in this section.

1. The responder's related program experience operating services similar to the new/expanded services proposed in the application;
2. Whether the responder has successfully completed similar programs, services or activities or is partnering with other organizations that have successfully completed similar activities;
 - a. Responder has demonstrated experience in timely data collection, reporting and invoicing, and;
3. Whether the responder has strong current and expected ongoing capacity to complete the proposed program, service, or activity, as well as other programs that the responder is currently managing.

C. Strategic and Selection Priorities

The County seeks to address racial equity and ethnic-based disparities where all residents can experience fair outcomes including the highest level of health, wellbeing, and opportunities for advancement and growth. Please review the Ramsey County Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan, the Equitable Development Framework, and the 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan, which describe the County's priorities and planning goals.

1. Attachment A as well as responses to Zoomgrants questions will be used for scoring in this section.

When determining funding awards, the County prioritizes proposals that best meet the County's priorities and planning goals. This could include geographic distribution of projects.

D. Project Budget

Whether the proposed costs of the service, program or activity is deemed reasonable and includes sufficient funding for direct services costs, administration, and other indirect costs.

Project Schedule and Narrative as well as responses to Zoomgrants questions will be used for scoring in this section.

1. The responder is able to describe how it determines unit cost of service or cost per person served.
2. The funding request considers cost effectiveness in its application and administrative costs do not exceed 20% of the requested amount.
3. The responder is able to describe any increases or decreases in program costs, as well as any other funding changes over the last two years.

VI. Application Review and Evaluation

Applications will be reviewed by a review panel consisting of county staff. Projects will be reviewed with the following criteria and scoring:

A. Minimum selection criteria: Pass/fail criteria met (as described above). Projects that do not meet the pass/fail requirements will not be scored.

B. Applications will be reviewed for pass/fail requirements before moving on to evaluation and scoring. Selected projects will be scored based on the following criteria:

2. Project Narrative (up to 30 points)
3. Organizational Capacity: (up to 25 points)
3. Alignment with the County's Strategic and Selection Priorities: (up to 30 points)
4. Project Budget: (up to 15 points)

VI. Solicitation Terms

A. Competition in Responding

The County desires open and fair competition. Questions from responders regarding any of the requirements of the Solicitation must be submitted in writing to the county contact listed in the Solicitation before the due date and time. If changes are made, the County will issue an addendum.

Any evidence of collusion among responders in any form designed to defeat competitive responses will be reported to the necessary authorities for investigation and appropriate action.

B. Addenda to the Solicitation

Changes to the Solicitation will be made by addendum and posted in the same manner as the original Solicitation. Any addenda issued will become part of the Solicitation.

C. Responder's right to edit, submit, resubmit and/or cancel or withdraw its response

A responder may edit, submit, resubmit and/or cancel or withdraw its response at any time before the response due date. Requests should be submitted in writing via e-mail to the solicitation contact.

D. Responses will not be returned

Upon submission, responses will not be returned.

E. Rights Reserved

The County reserves the right to:

1. Reject any and all responses received;
2. Waive or modify any informalities, irregularities, or inconsistencies in the responses received;
3. Negotiate with the highest scoring Responder(s);
4. Terminate negotiations and select the next response providing the best value for the County;
5. Short list the highest scoring Responders;
6. Require Responders to conduct presentations, demonstrations, or submit samples.
7. Interview key personnel or references;
8. Request a best and final offer from one or more Responders; and
9. The County reserves the right to request additional information.

F. Public disclosure of response documents

All materials submitted in response to this Solicitation will become property of the County. During the evaluation process, all information concerning the responses submitted will remain private or nonpublic and will not be disclosed to anyone whose official duties do not require such knowledge. Responses are private or nonpublic data until the completion of the evaluation process as defined by Minn. Stat. § 13.591. The completion of the evaluation process is defined as the County having completed negotiating a contract with the selected contractor(s). The County will notify all responders in writing of the evaluation results.

G. Trade secret information

Responders must not submit trade secret material as part of their response, as defined by Minn. Stat. § 13.37. The County does not consider cost or prices to be trade secret material, as defined by Minn. Stat. § 13.37. A Responder may present and discuss trade secret information during an interview or demonstration with the County, if applicable.

In the event trade secret data are submitted, Responders must defend any action seeking release of data it believes to be trade secret, and indemnify and hold harmless the County, its agents, and employees, from any judgments awarded against the County in favor of the party requesting the data, and any and all costs connected with that defense.

VII. Gather your materials and apply by the deadline in ZoomGrants

- A. The solicitation will be published on ZoomGrants from February 15, 2024, through March 15, 2024. Responses to the solicitation are due by 4:30 p.m. on March 15, 2024.
- B. Responders are responsible to know all requirements that are needed to submit a complete application based on the specific housing proposal and financing or application type.
- C. County CED staff reserves the right to seek follow-up information if needed after an application is received.

Signatures

All application materials must be signed wherever required and applicable.

Questions:

Please contact Kim Hansen and Max Holdhusen at askCED@co.ramsey.mn.us