



Legislation Text

File #: 21-4386, Version: 1

To: Harris County Commissioners Court

Through: Leah Barton, Managing Director, Office of County Administration

Prepared By: Janet Gonzalez, Sr. Manager, Office of Management and Budget

Subject: COVID-19: Amendment to 2020 CARES Rental Assistance Program Agreement

Project ID (If applicable):

Purpose and Request:

Request by the Office of County Administration to amend the 2020 CARES Rental Assistance Program agreement with BakerRipley to increase the Program Fund and Contractor's Fee and align program guidelines to US Treasury 2021 Emergency Rental Assistance guidelines.

Background and Discussion:

In 2020, the CARES Act established the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), and Harris County received a direct allocation of \$426M. On June 30th, 2020, Commissioners Court established the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to provide rental assistance to low-income Harris County tenants experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19. The 2020 ERAP was administered by BakerRipley, with a final program fund amount of \$30M, and ended on December 31st, 2020.

In January 2021, the US Treasury department established the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program to provide funding to state and local governments to assist eligible renter households impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, funded via the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Commissioners Court established the 2021 Houston-Harris County Emergency Rental Assistance Program on February 9th, 2021, in collaboration with the City of Houston. The program administrators are BakerRipley, Catholic Charities, and the Alliance.

Additional funding was allocated to the ERA program via the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), and subsequently allocated to state and local governments. Harris County received the first 40% of allocated funding and has requested, but not yet received, the remaining 60% of allocated funding.

As of August 18th, 2021, the Houston-Harris County Emergency Rental Assistance Program has received more than 100,000 tenant applications and pledged or paid over \$174M in assistance. BakerRipley is averaging \$1M per week in Harris County rental assistance payments and is on track to expend all contracted ERA funds before the County receives the remaining ARPA ERA funds from Treasury. To maintain program continuity, the Office of County Administration recommends amending the 2020 CARES ERAP agreement with BakerRipley to provide an additional \$4 million in CRF funds for rental assistance and to allow those funds to be utilized under the 2021 ERA program guidelines through December 31, 2021. BakerRipley also has approximately \$600k in recovered funds from the 2020 ERAP program and the proposed amendment will allow them to use any recouped funds to provide rental assistance under the 2021 ERA program guidelines to recent applicants.

Fiscal Impact: Funding for this contract amendment will be fully provided by CRF funds.

Fiscal Summary

Expenditures	FY 20-21	FY 21-22 Projected	Future Years Projected [3 additional years]
Service Impacted: <i>2021 Assistance Program</i>			
Additional Appropriation R		\$4,240,000	
Total Expenditures		<u>\$4,240,000</u>	
Funding Sources			
CARES Coronavirus Relie		\$4,240,000	
Total Sources		<u>\$4,240,000</u>	

Alternatives:

Halting fund distribution would delay aid to families and be disruptive to program operations.

Alignment with Strategic Objective:

This activity is aligned with the strategic objective of securing and deploying emergency funding to support Harris County residents in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attachments:

Contract Amendment to follow.