



City of Lowell
Department of Planning and Development

*Written Standards for Provision of Emergency
Solutions Grant Assistance*

May 2012

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ATTACHMENTS

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Overview and Purpose of the Written Standards

In accordance with 24 CFR 91.220(l)(4)(i) and 567.400(e)(1), The City of Lowell's Department of Planning and Development has developed the following written standards for the provision and prioritization of Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding.

The City of Lowell is awarded ESG funds annually from the Department of Housing and Urban Development as part of the Annual Action Plan Process. These funds, which are distributed as part of an annual competitive RFP process, are designed to identify sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, as well as those at risk of homelessness, and provide the services necessary to help those persons quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness.

The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 (HEARTH Act) amended the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, including major revisions to the Emergency Shelter Grants program, now the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program. The HEARTH Act incorporated many of the lessons learned from the implementation of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Recovery Act Program (HPRP) into the new ESG program, including placing a stronger emphasis on homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance.

While still an eligible cost-type under these funds, the new ESG places less of an emphasis on providing shelter operating costs or essential shelter services to subrecipients. In line with HUD's national homelessness policy as outlined in *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, federal programs aimed at ending homelessness have shifted away from providing shelter support and are now geared towards providing stable, permanent housing opportunities for the homeless and at-risk homeless.

Additionally, The City of Lowell's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness: *Partnership for Change: Action Plan to Ending Homelessness*, adopted in July 2008, was used for a guide in developing these standards. The 10-Year Plan provides a broad roadmap to assess the current system of "managing" homelessness and explore the new, more innovative and cost effective "prevention" and "housing first" approaches that are greatly reducing and/or eliminating homelessness in the community.

The new ESG program allows each city and town administering these funds to set priorities based on the individualized needs of the community. These standards serve to outline the specific guidelines and priorities that will be used by the City of Lowell's Department of Planning and Development in awarding and administering ESG funding.

A.) Standard Policies and Procedures for Evaluating Individuals' and Families' Eligibility for Assistance under ESG

The following eligibility criteria must be met in order for an individual or family to be provided with ESG assistance:

- 1) The individual or family must reside within the Lowell City limits, in a Lowell homeless shelter, or be relocated from an outside shelter to Lowell.

- 2) Program participants must meet the definition of homeless or at-risk homeless as spelled out in 24 CFR 576.2:

Homeless means:

(1) An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- (i) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
- (ii) An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); <or>
- (iii) An individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution;

<or>

(2) An individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:

- (i) The primary nighttime residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance;
- (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; <and>
- (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks, *e.g.*, family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, needed to obtain other permanent housing;

<or>

(3) Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:

- (i) Are defined as homeless under section 387 of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5732a), section 637 of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832), section 41403 of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2), section 330(h) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h)), section 3 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012), section 17(b) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b)) or section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a);
- (ii) Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the 60 days immediately preceding the date of application for homeless assistance;
- (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the 60-day period immediately preceding the date of applying for homeless assistance; <and>
- (iv) Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse (including neglect), the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or two or more barriers to employment, which include the lack of a high school degree or General Education Development (GED), illiteracy, low English proficiency, a history of incarceration or detention for criminal activity, and a history of unstable employment;

<or>

(4) Any individual or family who:

- (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence;
- (ii) Has no other residence; <and>
- (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks, *e.g.*, family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, to obtain other permanent housing.

At risk of homelessness means:

(1) An individual or family who:

- (i) Has an annual income below 30 percent of median family income for the area, as determined by HUD; **<and>**
- (ii) Does not have sufficient resources or support networks, *e.g.*, family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place described in paragraph (1) of the “homeless” definition in this section; **<and>**
- (iii) Meets one of the following conditions:
 - (A) Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for homelessness prevention assistance;
 - (B) Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;
 - (C) Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance;
 - (D) Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost of the hotel or motel stay is not paid by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals;
 - (E) Lives in a single-room occupancy or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than two persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than 1.5 persons reside per room, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau;
 - (F) Is exiting a publicly funded institution, or system of care (such as a health-care facility, a mental health facility, foster care or other youth facility, or correction program or institution); **<or>**
 - (G) Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient's approved consolidated plan;

<or>

(2) A child or youth who does not qualify as “homeless” under this section, but qualifies as “homeless” under section 387(3) of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5732a(3)), section 637(11) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832(11)), section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e–2(6)), section 330(h)(5)(A) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h)(5)(A)), section 3(m) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012(m)), or section 17(b)(15) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b)(15));

<or>

(3) A child or youth who does not qualify as “homeless” under this section, but qualifies as “homeless” under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)), and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of that child or youth if living with her or him.

- 3) Income guidelines: as noted in the definitions above, clients who are at-risk of homelessness must have an income **at or below 30% of the area medium income** to qualify for ESG assistance. Income for clients who are literally homeless must also be documented in case files and must also be at or below 30% of the area medium income to qualify for this assistance.
- 4) The individual or family provided must have at least an initial consultation with a case manager or other authorized representative who can determine the appropriate type of assistance to meet their needs. At this initial consultation, long-term strategies for ensuring stable housing should be covered with the client. HUD encourages ineligible persons be referred to appropriate resources or service providers that can assist them.
- 5) HMIS participation is a mandatory ESG requirement. All clients receiving ESG assistance must be reported in an approved HMIS system.

- 6) All clients receiving ESG assistance must be re-certified as eligible **every three months**. ESG clients receiving more than three months of assistance must have documentation of re-certification of their eligibility for assistance included in their case file.

B.) Policies and Procedures for Coordination among Emergency Shelter Providers, Essential Service Providers, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Service Providers, Other Homelessness Assistance Providers, and Mainstream Service and Housing Providers

In the development and continual refinement of these written standards, Department of Planning and Development staff coordinated with homeless and at-risk homeless service providers in the following ways:

Coordination with the Continuum of Care:

The City's Department of Planning and Development (DPD) is the Lead Entity for the Lowell Continuum of Care (CoC). With oversight from a Community Development Specialist from DPD, nonprofit organizations in Lowell that are members of the CoC are working to provide services to help increase the self-sufficiency of homeless persons and those with issues of mental illness, substance abuse, domestic violence and disabilities that are at-risk of homelessness. The CoC continues to operate a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which has been installed at five homeless provider locations. Data is collected annually to create a Housing Gaps Analysis Chart that is used by the community to determine the unmet need for emergency shelters, transitional housing programs and permanent housing sites for homeless persons. Current Lowell CoC Member Organizations are:

- Alternative House
- Bridgewell, Inc./ Pathfinder
- Community Teamwork, Inc.- Housing Consumer Education Center
- Community Teamwork, Inc.- Shelter Programs
- Crescent House
- House of Hope
- Lowell Housing Authority
- Lowell Transitional Living Center
- The Princeton House
- United Teen Equality Center
- Vinfen

To increase the level of coordination between the CoC and the city's homeless programs, staff responsible for the administration of the ESG program are now attending CoC meetings on a regular basis. Input and data from CoC members has been integrated throughout these Written Standards and was a main point of reference in formulating the prioritization standards outlined in Section C. Direct interactions with CoC service providers has allowed DPD staff to prioritize funding in support of the needs that are not currently being addressed by other federal, state and local funding sources.

Survey for Homeless and At-Risk Homeless Service Providers:

In addition to a higher level of coordination with the CoC, a survey was distributed to homeless and at-risk homeless service providers to solicit feedback from organizations or programs that may not be a part of the CoC. The purpose of this survey was to identify and better understand the most pressing needs of the homeless population in Lowell at present. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying sub-populations of homeless or at-risk homeless individuals that are growing or have disproportionate needs at present. Additionally, service providers were asked to identify areas of need that are not currently being addressed by other federal, state or local funding sources. Feedback from this survey was incorporated into the prioritization standards outlined in Section C.

As a means of keeping these Written Standards current and effective, similar short surveys will be reviewed by the CoC on a regular basis. Surveys should be aimed at identifying new or emerging needs in the homeless or at-risk homeless community.

Outreach to Homeless or At-risk homeless Service providers Outside the Continuum: In order to ensure that the full range of homeless or at-risk homeless individuals and families are being targeted for use of these funds, Department of Planning and Development staff also conducted outreach to homeless and at-risk homeless service providers outside of the Continuum of Care. Targeted focus was given to service providers working with specific populations of clients who are currently not serviced with ESG dollars. Organizations serving veterans, youth, elderly, the mentally disabled and substance abusers were targeted during this outreach process. Outreach activities include surveying these organizations to get a better understanding of the services they provide and the distinct needs of the populations they serve. Outreach also includes informing these organizations of the availability of new rounds of ESG funding.

C.) Policies and Procedures for Determining and Prioritizing which Eligible Families and Individuals will Receive Homelessness Prevention Assistance and which Eligible Families and Individuals will Receive Rapid Re-Housing Assistance

The resources available to address the needs of homeless and at-risk homeless populations are currently in flux. Federal, state and local programs aimed at assisting these vulnerable populations have recently undergone major changes and are expected to continue to fluctuate in the near future. In reference to the patchwork of various services and resources that are currently available, service providers indicated that HPRP—with its many eligible activities—helped to fill some of the gaps in service. These funds also prevented clients who were ineligible for other service-types from falling through the cracks. Therefore, feedback from homeless and at-risk homeless service providers in the City of Lowell has indicated that ESG funding will best serve the local community if it remains as flexible and open as possible. Lowell has a strong network of providers working with homeless and at-risk homeless populations in the city. Moving forward, DPD staff will continue to work with these service providers to ensure that the ESG program remains effective at addressing the changing needs of the community.

Despite the stressed need to make ESG funding as flexible as possible, several priority areas were identified as a result of coordination with the CoC, feedback from HPRP subrecipients, a survey and

outreach to other homeless or at-risk homeless service providers. This feedback indicated that the following populations should be given priority for funding under the new ESG program:

1. Substance abuse and mental illness remain predominant barriers in combating homelessness in Lowell.
2. A significant number of homeless individuals in Lowell are also victims of domestic violence.
3. In the past year, the city of Lowell has witnessed an increase in the number of youth/ young adults and elderly homeless individuals. These populations both have unique needs that require specialized services.
4. In line with HUD priorities, veterans will also be targeted for use of these funds.

As a result of the obstacles identified above and due to shortages in other resources, funding for extended case management services should be a high priority area for ESG funds. Ideally, in order to maintain stable housing and avoid crisis-situations, clients require on average approximately 18 months of continuous case management to transition to a more stable housing situation. Ideally, 24 months of case management is optimal to give the client the best chance of staying stably housed after services are terminated.

In addition to the specific populations listed above, specific re-occurring barriers were identified in preventing homeless individuals and families from obtaining and maintain stable permanent housing. These barriers include:

1. Lack of a stable sufficient income remains the primary obstacle in securing stable housing for homeless and at-risk populations in Lowell.
2. Unemployment, lack of marketable job skills and the strained economy present a series of significant obstacles to individuals and families who are currently homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Lastly, HUD strongly encourages jurisdictions to target funding toward assisting individuals and families living on the streets and in emergency shelter. Therefore, in accordance with the City of Lowell's 10-Year Plan, individuals who are currently homeless—especially those who have been chronically homeless—should be targeted for use of these funds. Clients who do not have prospects to become stably housed in the near future should not be turned away from ESG assistance. Instead, case managers should work closely with these individuals to identify and overcome key barriers to obtaining permanent stable housing. DPD encourages service providers to communicate with city staff as new or pressing barriers are identified amongst the chronically homeless population so that new strategies for ESG use can be prioritized.

Department of Planning and Development staff will update these priority areas as new trends and patterns in the homeless and at-risk homeless community emerge.

D.) Standards for Determining the Share of Rent and Utilities Costs that Each Program Participant Must Pay, if any, While Receiving Homelessness Prevention or Rapid Re-Housing Assistance

The City of Lowell will not mandate that clients receiving ESG assistance pay a specific portion of their total rent with other sources. However, limits will be placed on the amount of funds that will be made available for direct financial assistance provided through this program. (see Section E for these limits) Whenever possible, ESG direct financial assistance should be provided to cover *only a portion* of the total cost-type; clients should be encouraged to come up with sustainable ways to

supplement this financial assistance. Direct financial assistance can be used to cover the entire cost of rent or utilities *only* in cases where the client has been chronically homeless and does not have any resources or income to supplement the financial assistance.

E.) Standards for Determining How Long a Particular Program Participant will be provided with Financial Assistance and whether and How the Amount of that Assistance will be Adjusted Over Time

All forms of direct financial ESG assistance will be limited to the **12 month fiscal year (July 1-June 30)**. Should an organization receive grants in two fiscal years for the same service type, clients are eligible for extended service **not to exceed a total of 18 months**. All clients receiving direct financial assistance must provide their case manager with a copy of their lease or rental agreement to be kept on file. Rent Reasonableness and Housing Habitability Standard screenings must be conducted *prior* to providing direct financial assistance, must be documented in the case file, and are the responsibility of the sub-grantee. ESG funds used to pay direct assistance must be issued to a third party. In order to qualify for the following forms of assistance, the client cannot already be receiving assistance of the same cost-type from an alternative source. Whenever possible, ESG direct financial assistance should be provided to cover *only a portion* of the total cost-type; clients should be encouraged to come up with sustainable ways to supplement this financial assistance. As a best practice, organizations receiving ESG funds for direct financial assistance should budget their awards to achieve a balance between distributing funds to as many clients as possible while ensuring that the assistance provided to each individual will be sufficient to obtain or maintain stable housing. Additional limitations for specific types of assistance apply and are outlined below.

Eligible types of direct financial assistance are:

Homelessness Prevention Direct Financial Assistance:

Under the Homelessness Prevention category, direct financial assistance can be made available to clients who are “at-risk” for homelessness, as spelled out in the definition in Section A. Please note that clients can **either** be provided with start-up costs (rental and/or utility arrearages) **<or>** medium term rental subsidies- but **not both**. Also, clients receiving start-up costs (rental and/or utility arrearages) are only eligible for this benefit on a **one-time basis per client per lifetime**.

- **Rental Arrears***: Rental arrears can be covered using ESG funds if and when the provision of these funds will allow clients to stay in their homes or move into a new unit. ESG funds that are provided for this cost-type are only to be made on a **one-time basis per client per lifetime** and **can only cover up to six (6) months of back-rent**. Clients receiving this benefit will not be eligible for medium-term rental subsidies.
- **Utility Arrears***: Utility arrears can be covered using ESG funds if and when paying such arrears will allow clients to stay in their home or move into a new unit. Each eligible client or family can be provided **up to six (6) months of back- utilities** for the purpose of preventing homelessness. This form of assistance is only to be made available on a **one-time basis per client per lifetime**. Clients receiving this benefit will not be eligible for medium-term rental subsidies.

**Please note:* Sub-grantees using ESG funds for payment of a client’s back-rent or back-utilities should negotiate with landlords and utility companies to forgive or reduce the arrearage payments. A 10% reduction is suggested. Staff should document all attempts to reduce arrearages on behalf of the program participant in the case files.

- Short or Medium Term Rental Subsidies: Short or medium term rental subsidies paid by ESG funds should only be used to cover a portion of the client’s total rent. The percentage of rent covered by ESG funds is to be determined by the case manager and should include considerations of the client’s long-term prospects for becoming self-sufficient. Rental subsidies **can only be provided during the fiscal year of the grant (July 1-June 30) UNLESS an organization receives two consecutive ESG grants for the same cost-type, in which case medium term rental subsidies can be provided for up to 18 months.** Clients provided with this type of assistance must be receiving case management services (either through ESG or an alternative homelessness program) and must have a workable plan in place to become self-sufficient once the subsidy benefit expires. This plan is to be documented in the client’s individual case file. When possible, case managers should also work with clients receiving this benefit to develop a plan whereby rental subsidies will decrease as the client prepares to become self-sufficient from this subsidy.

Rapid Re-Housing Programs Direct Financial Assistance:

Under the Rapid Re-housing category, clients who meet the definition for “homeless” as spelled out in Section A above will qualify for the following forms of direct financial assistance. Please note that qualifying individuals and families are only eligible for the following payments on a **one-time basis per client per lifetime**. Also, Rapid Re-Housing Assistance should be targeted towards families or individuals who have strong prospects of remaining stably housed after moving into their new home.

1. First and Last Month’s Rent: **One-time payments not to exceed \$2,500 per client** can be made available using ESG funds to cover first and last month’s rent for eligible individuals or families moving into a new residence. Clients receiving this benefit will not be eligible for medium-term rental subsidies provided under the homelessness prevention category of this funding source.
2. Security Deposits: **One-time payments not to exceed \$1,000 per client** can be provided to cover security deposits for homeless individuals or families moving into a new residence. Clients receiving this benefit will not be eligible for medium-term rental subsidies provided under the homelessness prevention category of this funding source. *Please note:* Security deposits must be returned to the organization when the assisted tenant leaves the unit. Because of this requirement, organizations must maintain accurate records of all security deposits provided to clients. A “good faith effort” must be made to recover program funds upon the departure of the beneficiary from the unit.
3. Moving Costs: **One-time payments not to exceed \$1,000 per client** can be provided to cover moving costs for homeless individuals or families moving into a new residence. Funds may be used for reasonable moving costs, such as truck rental or hiring a moving company. Payments in this category can only be paid to a third-party. Clients receiving this benefit will

not be eligible for medium-term rental subsidies provided under the homelessness prevention category of this funding source.

4. Short or Medium Term Rental Subsidies: In cases where clients are re-housed and do not have immediate prospects of becoming self-sufficient, short or medium term rental subsidies may be provided with these funds. Rental subsidies paid by ESG funds should only be used to cover a portion of the client's total rent. The percentage of rent covered by ESG funds is to be determined by the case manager and should include considerations of the client's long-term prospects for becoming self-sufficient. Rental subsidies **can only be provided during the fiscal year of the grant (July 1-June 30) UNLESS an organization receives two consecutive ESG grants for the same cost-type, in which case medium term rental subsidies can be provided for up to 18 months.** Clients provided with this type of assistance must be receiving case management services (either through ESG or an alternative homelessness program) and must have a workable plan in place to become self-sufficient once the subsidy benefit expires. This plan is to be documented in the client's individual case file. When possible, case managers should also work with clients receiving this benefit to develop a plan whereby rental subsidies will decrease as the client prepares to become self-sufficient from this subsidy.

F.) Standards for Determining the Type, Amount, and Duration of Housing Stabilization and/or Housing Relocation Services to Provide a Program Participant

ESG funds can be used to cover costs associated with providing homeless or at-risk homeless clients with housing relocation and stabilization services. Funds in this category will primarily cover case manager salaries. Duration of Housing Stabilization and/or Housing Relocation Services **must be completed by fiscal-year end (June30)**. Sub-grantees that receive ESG grants in consecutive fiscal years may continue to serve clients with these services over the course of two fiscal years, but must limit the duration of this service to **no more than 24 months**.

Eligible types of ESG services include:

Homelessness Prevention Services:

- General Case Management: Funds may be used for clients qualifying as "at-risk" for homelessness for activities for the arrangement, coordination, monitoring, and delivery of services related to meeting the housing needs of program participants and helping them to remain stably housed. Under this category, case managers should work with eligible clients to formulate a long-term plan for maintaining stable housing. Component services and activities may include: counseling; developing, securing, and coordinating services; monitoring and evaluating program participant progress; assuring program participants' rights are protected; developing an individualized housing and service plan, including a path to permanent housing stability subsequent to ESG financial assistance.
- Housing Search and Placement: Clients who meet the definition of "at-risk" for homelessness as outlined in Section A & who due to circumstances outside their control are being forced to relocate qualify for housing search and placement services. Funds may be

used for services or activities designed to assist individuals or families in locating, obtaining, and retaining suitable housing. Component services or activities may include: tenant counseling; assisting individuals and families to understand leases; securing utilities; making moving arrangements; representative payee services concerning rent and utilities; mediation and outreach to property owners related to locating or retaining housing.

Rapid Re-Housing Services:

- General Case Management: Funds may be used for clients qualifying as “homeless” for activities including the arrangement, coordination, monitoring, and delivery of services related to meeting the housing needs of program participants and helping them to obtain permanent, stable housing. Under this category, case managers should work with eligible clients to formulate a long-term plan for maintaining stable housing. Component services and activities may include: counseling; developing, securing, and coordinating services; monitoring and evaluating program participant progress; assuring program participants’ rights are protected; developing an individualized housing and service plan, including a path to permanent housing stability subsequent to ESG financial assistance.
- Housing Search and Placement: Clients who meet the definition of “homeless” as spelled out in Section A qualify for housing search and placement services. Funds may be used for services or activities designed to assist individuals or families in locating and obtaining suitable housing. Component services or activities may include: tenant counseling; assisting individuals and families to understand leases; securing utilities; making moving arrangements; representative payee services concerning rent and utilities; mediation and outreach to property owners related to locating or retaining housing.
- Outreach & Engagement: Funds may be used for services or assistance designed to publicize the availability of programs to make persons who are homeless aware of these and other available services and programs.

Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG)

SUMMARY OF ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES **

Homelessness Prevention Activities	
Direct Financial Assistance	Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent Arrearages • Utility Arrearages • Medium-Term Rental Subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Case Management • Housing Search and Placement

Rapid Re-housing Activities	
Direct Financial Assistance	Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First/Last Months Rent • Security Deposits • Moving Costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Case Management • Housing Search and Placement • Outreach & Engagement

Shelter Expenses*	
Operating Expenses	Essential Services
<i>Includes:</i> Shelter Rent, Maintenance, Insurance, Utilities, and Furnishings	Essential services can address the immediate needs of homeless persons living on the street, in emergency shelter or in transitional housing, and can help enable homeless persons become more independent.

*Under the new Emergency Solutions Grant program, a cap has been placed on the amount of funds that can be used for shelter operating costs. Furthermore, in accordance with federal strategies on ending homelessness and the City of Lowell's 10-Year Plan, priority for ESG funding will be given to activities related to preventing homelessness and rapidly re-housing individuals who are currently homeless.

**Please note: if an organization identifies a pressing or emerging need amongst the homeless or at-risk homeless community in Lowell that can be addressed via an eligible use of ESG funds not included above, Department of Planning and Development staff are willing to consider such projects for funding under a special projects category.

Documentation Requirements for All Clients Receiving ESG Assistance

All clients receiving ESG assistance must have the following documentation included in their case file:

1. Documentation of Homeless or At-risk Homeless Status
2. Documentation of income (when possible, if not- self declaration of income forms will suffice)
3. In the form of case notes, evidence of *at least* an initial consultation with a case manager including a needs assessment and formulation of a long-term plan for housing stability.
4. At Program Entry- HMIS Intake form
5. At Program Exit- HMIS Exit form
6. For clients receiving 3 or months of service: 3 Month Re-certification of Eligibility form

Additional Documentation Requirements by Activity-type

Direct Financial Assistance: All clients provided with ESG assistance in the form of direct financial support (i.e., first last months rent, security deposits, moving costs, rental arrearages, utility arrearages or medium-term rental subsidies) must have the following documentation included in their case file:

1. Lease or Rental Agreement
2. Rent Reasonableness Checklist
3. Housing Habitability Standards Checklist

Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services: All clients receiving Housing Relocation and Stabilization Services (i.e., General Case Management, Housing Search and Placement, Outreach and Engagement) must have case files with detailed case notes indicating the developments and progress made as a result of the ESG-funded services.

Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG)
SELF-DECLARATION OF HOMELESS STATUS

ESG Applicant Name: _____

- Household without dependent children (complete one form for each adult in the household)
 - Household with dependent children (complete one form for household)
- Number of persons in the household: _____

This is to certify that the above named individual or household is currently homeless or at-risk of homelessness, based on the following and other indicated information and the signed declaration by the applicant.

Check only one:

- I [and my children] currently qualify as “homeless” as spelled out in the definition below.
- I [and my children] currently qualify as “at-risk homeless” as spelled out in the definition below.

I certify that the information above and any other information I have provided in applying for ESG assistance is true, accurate and complete.

ESG Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

ESG Staff Certification

I understand that third-party verification is the preferred method of certifying homelessness or risk for homelessness for an individual who is applying for ESG assistance. I understand self declaration is only permitted when I have attempted to but cannot obtain third party verification.

Documentation of attempt made for third-party verification:

ESG Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

Definitions

Homeless means:

(1) An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- (i) An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
- (ii) An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); **<or>**
- (iii) An individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution;

<or>

(2) An individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:

- (i) The primary nighttime residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance;
- (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; **<and>**
- (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks, *e.g.*, family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, needed to obtain other permanent housing;

<or>

(3) Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:

- (i) Are defined as homeless under section 387 of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5732a), section 637 of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832), section 41403 of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2), section 330(h) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h)), section 3 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012), section 17(b) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b)) or section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a);
- (ii) Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the 60 days immediately preceding the date of application for homeless assistance;
- (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the 60-day period immediately preceding the date of applying for homeless assistance; **<and>**
- (iv) Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse (including neglect), the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or two or more barriers to employment, which include the lack of a high school degree or General Education Development (GED), illiteracy, low English proficiency, a history of incarceration or detention for criminal activity, and a history of unstable employment;

<or>

(4) Any individual or family who:

- (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence;
- (ii) Has no other residence; **<and>**
- (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks, *e.g.*, family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, to obtain other permanent housing.

At risk of homelessness means:

(1) An individual or family who:

- (i) Has an annual income below 30 percent of median family income for the area, as determined by HUD;
<and>
- (ii) Does not have sufficient resources or support networks, *e.g.*, family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place described in paragraph (1) of the “homeless” definition in this section; <and>
- (iii) Meets one of the following conditions:
 - (A) Has moved because of economic reasons two or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for homelessness prevention assistance;
 - (B) Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship;
 - (C) Has been notified in writing that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance;
 - (D) Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost of the hotel or motel stay is not paid by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals;
 - (E) Lives in a single-room occupancy or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than two persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than 1.5 persons reside per room, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau;
 - (F) Is exiting a publicly funded institution, or system of care (such as a health-care facility, a mental health facility, foster care or other youth facility, or correction program or institution); <or>
 - (G) Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient's approved consolidated plan;

<or>

(2) A child or youth who does not qualify as “homeless” under this section, but qualifies as “homeless” under section 387(3) of the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5732a(3)), section 637(11) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832(11)), section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e–2(6)), section 330(h)(5)(A) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h)(5)(A)), section 3(m) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012(m)), or section 17(b)(15) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b)(15));

<or>

(3) A child or youth who does not qualify as “homeless” under this section, but qualifies as “homeless” under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)), and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of that child or youth if living with her or him.

Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG)

SELF-DECLARATION OF INCOME

ESG Applicant Name: _____

This is to certify the income status for the above named individual. Income includes but is not limited to:

- The full amount of gross income earned before taxes and deductions.
- The net income earned from the operation of a business, i.e., total revenue minus business operating expenses. This also includes any withdrawals of cash from the business or profession for your personal use.
- Monthly interest and dividend income credited to an applicant's bank account and available for use.
- The monthly payment amount received from Social Security, annuities, retirement funds, pensions, disability and other similar types of periodic payments.
- Any monthly payments in lieu of earnings, such as unemployment, disability compensation, SSI, SSDI, and worker's compensation.
- Monthly income from government agencies excluding amounts designated for shelter, and utilities, WIC, food stamps, and childcare.
- Alimony, child support and foster care payments received from organizations or from persons not residing in the dwelling.
- All basic pay, special day and allowances of a member of the Armed Forces excluding special pay for exposure to hostile fire.

Check only one box and complete only that section

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that I currently receive the following income:

Source: _____ Amount: _____ Frequency: _____
Source: _____ Amount: _____ Frequency: _____
Source: _____ Amount: _____ Frequency: _____

ESG Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that I do not have any income from any source at this time.

ESG Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

ESG Staff Verification

I understand that third-party verification is the preferred method of certifying income for ESG assistance. I understand self declaration is only permitted when I have attempted to but cannot obtain third party verification.

Documentation of attempt made for third-party verification:

ESG Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG) 3-MONTH RE-CERTIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY

ESG Client Name: _____

Today's Date: _____

How many total months of service has the client received to date? _____

(Note: count all ESG service types- including all forms for financial assistance and case management)

HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

Has any of the client's contact information changed in the past three months? Yes No (If yes, please provide updated information below)

CURRENT STREET ADDRESS: _____ APT. #: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

Has the Client's household composition changed since program entry? Yes No (If yes, please provide updated information below)

TOTAL # OF PEOPLE IN THE HOUSEHOLD: _____

OF ADULTS IN THE HOUSEHOLD: _____

OF CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 18 CURRENTLY RESIDING IN THE HOUSEHOLD: _____

HOMELESSNESS STATUS INFORMATION

Have there been any changes to the client's homelessness status in the past three months? Yes No (If yes, please complete a new & updated *ESG Self Declaration of Homeless Status Form* and attach to this form.)

INCOME INFORMATION

Have there been any changes to the client's income in the past three months? Yes No (If yes, please complete a new & updated *ESG Income Declaration Form* and attach to this form.)

OTHER CHANGES TO CLIENT STATUS THAT RELATE TO ESG ELIGIBILITY

Please use the space below to discuss any additional changes to the client's status that have occurred over the past three months as it relates to eligibility for ESG services:

ESG STAFF VERIFICATION

I understand that third-party verification is the preferred method of certifying eligibility for ESG assistance. I understand self declaration is only permitted when I have attempted to but cannot obtain third party verification. To the best of my knowledge, all of the above information is true.

ESG Staff Signature: _____

Date: _____

Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG)

HOUSING HABITABILITY STANDARDS INSPECTION CHECKLIST

ESG Applicant Name: _____

About this Tool

These standards apply only when a program participant is receiving financial assistance and moving into a new (different) unit. Inspections must be conducted upon initial occupancy and then on an annual basis for the term of ESG assistance.

The habitability standards are different from the Housing Quality Standards (HQS) used for other HUD programs. Because the HQS criteria are more stringent than the habitability standards, a grantee could use either standard. In contrast to HQS inspections, the habitability standards do not require a certified inspector. As such, ESG program staff could conduct the inspections, using a form such as this one to document compliance.

Instructions: Mark each statement as 'A' for approved or 'D' for deficient. The property must meet all standards in order to be approved. A copy of this checklist should be placed in the client file.

Approved or Deficient	Element
	1. <i>Structure and materials:</i> The structures must be structurally sound so as not to pose any threat to the health and safety of the occupants and so as to protect the residents from hazards.
	2. <i>Access:</i> The housing must be accessible and capable of being utilized without unauthorized use of other private properties. Structures must provide alternate means of egress in case of fire.
	3. <i>Space and security:</i> Each resident must be afforded adequate space and security for themselves and their belongings. Each resident must be provided with an acceptable place to sleep.
	4. <i>Interior air quality:</i> Every room or space must be provided with natural or mechanical ventilation. Structures must be free of pollutants in the air at levels that threaten the health of residents.
	5. <i>Water Supply:</i> The water supply must be free from contamination.
	6. <i>Sanitary Facilities:</i> Residents must have access to sufficient sanitary facilities that are in proper operating condition, may be used in privacy, and are adequate for personal cleanliness and the disposal of human waste.
	7. <i>Thermal environment:</i> The housing must have adequate heating and/or cooling facilities in proper operating condition.

	8. <i>Illumination and electricity:</i> The housing must have adequate natural or artificial illumination to permit normal indoor activities and to support the health and safety of residents. Sufficient electrical sources must be provided to permit use of essential electrical appliances while assuring safety from fire.
	9. <i>Food preparation and refuse disposal:</i> All food preparation areas must contain suitable space and equipment to store, prepare, and serve food in a sanitary manner.
	10. <i>Sanitary condition:</i> The housing and any equipment must be maintained in sanitary condition.
	11. <i>Fire safety:</i> Both conditions below must be met to meet this standard. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Each unit must include at least one battery-operated or hard-wired smoke detector, in proper working condition, on each occupied level of the unit. Smoke detectors must be located, to the extent practicable, in a hallway adjacent to a bedroom. If the unit is occupied by hearing-impaired persons, smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for hearing-impaired persons in each bedroom occupied by a hearing-impaired person. b. The public areas of all housing must be equipped with a sufficient number, but not less than one for each area, of battery-operated or hard-wired smoke detectors. Public areas include, but are not limited to, laundry rooms, day care centers, hallways, stairwells, and other common areas.

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I certify that I am not a HUD certified inspector and I have evaluated the property located at the address below to the best of my ability and find the following:

- Property meets all of the above standards.
- Property does not meet all of the above standards.

Therefore, I make the following determination:

- Property is approved.
- Property is not approved.

Case Name: _____			
Street Address: _____			
Apartment: _____	City: _____	State: _____	Zip: _____
Evaluator's Signature: _____		Date: _____	
Please Print. Name: _____			
Exec. Dir. Initial: _____			

Emergency Solutions Grant Program (ESG)
RENT REASONABLENESS INSPECTION CHECKLIST

ESG Applicant Name: _____

Checklist/Certification

	Proposed Unit	UNIT #1	UNIT #2	UNIT #3
ADDRESS				
NUMBER OF BEDROOMS				
SQUARE FEET				
TYPE OF UNIT/CONSTRUCTION				
HOUSING CONDITION				
LOCATION/ACCESSIBILITY				
AMENITIES				
UNIT:				
SITE:				
NEIGHBORHOOD:				
AGE IN YEARS				
UTILITIES (TYPE)				
UNIT RENT				
UTILITY ALLOWANCE				
GROSS RENT				
HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE?				

CERTIFICATION:

RENT REASONABLENESS

Based upon a comparison with rents for comparable units, I have determined that the proposed rent for the unit [] is / [] is not reasonable.

NAME:	SIGNATURE:	DATE:
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Notes on Determining Rent Reasonableness

HUD's standard for rent reasonableness means that the total rent charged for a unit must be reasonable in relation to the rents being charged during the same period for comparable units in the private, unassisted market and must not be in excess of rents being charged by the owner during the same period for comparable non-luxury unassisted units.

Determination criteria:

- Location
- Quality
- Size
- Type
- Age of unit
- Amenities, housing services, maintenance, and utilities provided by the owner

Comparing rents:

- Market study
- Reviewing comparable units advertised for rent
- Note from property owner verifying comparability of charged rents to other units owned