



**Fiscal Year 2019
Emergency Solutions Grant Program
Request for Proposals**

**Lakewood Community Services Center
Homelessness Prevention Services Program**

Cover Sheet

Organization	Lakewood Community Services Center
Organization Type	Not-For-Profit
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Project/Program Name	Homelessness Prevention Services
Total FY19 Project Budget	\$252,742
FY19 ESG Funding Request	\$125,000

Abstract

LCSC Mission: Lakewood Community Services Center, with its partners, serves the community by providing basic needs assistance and personalized resource and referral services with the goal of empowering each individual to move toward greater self sufficiency.

Program Name: Homelessness Prevention

- **Program Description:** Homelessness Prevention provides case management and cash assistance for rent and/or utilities to Lakewood households at imminent risk of becoming homeless. There is an exhaustive list of eligible services that qualified applicants receive from LCSC licensed social workers:
- **Housing Stability Case Management Services** are provided to all clients. Initially, the LCSC social workers perform a client assessment to determine program eligibility. Housing stability can only be influenced by ongoing individualized services that include counseling, referrals and links to mainstream services and benefits, landlord mediation when needed, the development of an individual case plan with the goal of ensuring permanent, stable housing and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the client's progress toward meeting the goal of maintaining sustainable housing.
- **Housing Search & Placement Services** must be provided by LCSC social workers to all clients who meet the program eligibility guidelines. The important first step is the completion of the Housing Barriers Assessment that helps both LCSC social workers and the client determine a reasonable action plan for locating appropriate housing. The services are dependent on each client's need for support in the search process and his/her capacity to complete a rental application and to understand the terms of a lease. In almost every instance, the client will need help negotiating with the landlord, most often to work out terms that allow the client to remain in current housing after a court-ordered eviction has been filed. This is becoming increasingly important as the stock of affordable housing in Lakewood is shrinking significantly as developers purchase and rehab units and increase rent. Today we often provide additional rental assistance to "sweeten the pot" for a landlord in an effort to keep the client/family housed in the same unit. For clients who want to or are forced to move, the LCSC social worker must make arrangements for an inspection to ensure a prospective rental unit meets HUD's habitability requirements and for landlord repairs should the unit fail inspection. Most moving clients also need assistance – both cash and arrangements with providers – to get utilities either moved to a new apartment or turned on in the case of clients who have a utility shut off. It should be noted that moving a client with a court ordered eviction is becoming increasing difficult as there is no shortage of potential renters, so landlords can be much more selective.
- **Financial Assistance** in the form of security deposits, rent in arrears and utility deposits and payments is available to qualified applicants.
- **Community Need:** YTD August 230 individuals inquired about ESG cash assistance to prevent becoming homeless. Of this number, 225 (98%) individuals actually completed an application packet and 214 (95%) received cash assistance for rent or utilities. This high percentage is because potential applicants fully understand that if they have received cash assistance within a calendar year they will not qualify. YTD August, 72 (34%) individuals who have received cash assistance from LCSC fall into one of HUD's sub-populations. These are individuals at very high risk and include: veterans, the elderly, victims of domestic violence, clients with HIV/AIDS and individuals with a mental health disability. Case management services are critically important to helping this at-risk population to secure and maintain appropriate, affordable housing.
- **Beneficiaries:** In 2019 we anticipate that 300+ individuals will complete the application process and that 250 of these individuals will receive cash assistance if we can stretch the available cash through 12 months. All will be eligible to receive housing stability case management services as described above.

Total Project Budget: \$252,742

ESG Funding Request: \$125,000

Project Narrative

1. Unmet Community Needs & Service Gaps Addressed

Lakewood households are continuing to face significant barriers to stability and sustainability. When HUD mandated that ESG funds could only be accessed by individuals who fall into HUD's Extremely Low Income bracket, which translates to \$14,250 or below for a household of one (this is 30% of the Area Median Income), LCSC staff had an initial concern that this very low income threshold would significantly affect our clients' ability to qualify for assistance. Unfortunately we were very wrong. YTD August 2018, 92% of clients who present at the Center for emergency food have an annual household income that places them in this income category.

YTD August 201, 230 individuals inquired about ESG cash assistance to prevent becoming homeless. Of this number, 225 (98%) individuals actually completed an application packet and 214 (95%) received cash assistance for rent or utilities. This very high number of individuals who got to the application process is due to a couple of factors:

- Clients who have received ESG cash assistance within one year prior to a new need understand that they are not going to be eligible for assistance so do not come in to the Center;
- Clients are screened out during initial telephone inquiries

Conversely, the high percentage of applicants who receive assistance is the result of

- LCSC social workers better qualifying clients at intake before the application process is started
- The number of landlords willing to cancel a court ordered eviction with an agreement with LCSC to pay rent in arrears

HUD mandates that ESG-funded organizations track more than the age/gender/race information of clients receiving assistance. Grantees must now also track those higher-risk individuals that receive assistance. This data resides in ServicePoint, the county's Homeless Management Information System. YTD August 2018, 72 (34%) individuals who have received cash assistance from LCSC fall into one of HUD's sub-populations. It is important to note that HUD requires an *unduplicated* total number, which means LCSC staff inputting into ServicePoint can only select one sub-population classification for each individual served, when in many cases clients present with more than one (an example would be that a veteran with a mental disability counts as only one special need).

It is important to understand that all individuals, whether or not they qualify for cash assistance, are provided case management services including referrals and links to community providers and mainstream benefits and referrals to LCSC's on-site support services and the necessary follow up to ensure services are accessed.

2. Primary Goals & Objectives

The primary goal of ESG Homeless Prevention services is to prevent Lakewood residents who are at imminent risk from becoming homeless through a combination of case management, referrals to mainstream benefits and service providers and cash assistance for rent and/or utilities.

LCSC uses the Progressive Engagement Model, which was introduced when Congress passed the HEARTH (Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing) Act in 2009. While the model is designed for rapid re-housing services for the homeless, it is a valuable approach to serving the complicated needs of individuals and families at imminent risk of becoming homeless. Progressive Engagement's strategy is to begin by offering a small amount of assistance initially, then adding more if needed to help households reach stability. LCSC provides the cash assistance needed for individuals/families to remain housed and adds case management services that address the barriers to sustainability identified during assessment. The model allows LCSC case workers to continually assess and monitor the efficacy of the stability plan and to add more or different links and resources as necessary. For those households who do not qualify for cash assistance, Progressive Engagement still offers a valuable tool to assess barriers and to provide ongoing (and escalating if needed) links and referrals.

An essential component of a progressive engagement approach is its reliance on partnerships that can support an individual's or family's success by providing services that a housing organization may not be able to offer. LCSC has adopted this approach for a number of years and has expanded it significantly as the needs of Lakewood households have grown more complex. In addition to providing emergency food, LCSC provides a menu of on-site services designed to reduce the cost of housing burden and to address issues that are barriers to housing stability. These now include: assistance with food stamp applications; free legal assistance by two Cleveland Bar Association volunteer attorneys; on site mental health services through a partnership with Murtis Taylor Human Services System; and employment services at HireLocal Lakewood provided by The Centers El Barrio (due to launch in October 2018).

3. Program Evaluation (*Data Collection Tools & Outcome Measurement Procedures/Methodology*)

Data Collection Tools

LCSC as an ESG recipient is mandated to enter all client data into the County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) software program, ServicePoint. Client information is entered at intake and assessment and throughout the engagement. Exit data include: date of exit; destination; referrals to benefits; amount of cash assistance. In addition, all clients who receive Homelessness Prevention services are also entered into our own proprietary Access client database which captures demographic information; length of time in our community; source of income; and number of clients with special needs. This information informs the monthly Accomplishment Report LCSC provides to the City of Lakewood for their reporting to HUD.

Outcome Measurement Procedures/Methodology

Because all clients are/or become food pantry clients, LCSC social workers have the opportunity to follow them on a monthly basis to monitor progress/stability/sustainability and to intervene if necessary. We are working with the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services and in particular with their HMIS Administrator, to become a beta site for the Self Sufficiency Outcomes Matrix Module that Bowman Systems has incorporated into ServicePoint v5.2. We are currently working to determine which of the 17 points of measurement are appropriate for our client population and which can be meaningfully tracked.

4. Intended Outcomes/Community Impact

100% of the clients who apply for ESG Homelessness Prevention assistance will receive case management services; based on YTD 2018 statistics, we anticipate that in 2019 a high percentage of applicants will receive cash assistance in the form of rent/deposit/utility assistance; of these, our target is to have 100 remain stably housed for a period of one year.

Keeping individuals/families housed in Lakewood has an impact on the household as well as on the greater community as a whole. Client families are much better served while remaining in their own homes and in their home community. Keeping families stably housed has an overall impact on the stability of an apartment building/multi-family home and the other residents living in them and expands to the neighborhood. The social network that is formed among families who are neighbors is important to the family, the neighborhood and the city.

Keeping children in their current homes/schools can have an impact on absenteeism and social and behavioral problems. The effect of housing instability can impact an entire classroom as student mobility often negatively affects teachers' ability to teach effectively.

Much of our success will depend on the availability of affordable rental units in Lakewood and the willingness of landlords to keep tenants with payment of rent in arrears. As previously stated, this is becoming more of an issue each year. To cite an example: LCSC has had 15 of its clients housed in an affordable building on Hilliard since 2014; this building was recently purchased by a management company for refurbishment with the rent for a 1-bedroom unit increased from \$525 to \$725 and a 2-bedroom unit from \$650 to \$800-\$1,000. Every one of these clients came to LCSC for rehousing assistance. The good news is that these tenants were given Notices to Quit, so they did not have court ordered evictions on their records. The challenge is to find safe, appropriate housing in Lakewood for individuals whose income limits their affordable rent to around \$550 - \$600. Our solution has been to do everything we can to keep tenants facing evictions housed in their current units.

Because of the relationships we have developed with landlords and because we can respond to clients' needs for assistance very quickly – often in less than a week – we have been able to get landlords their owed rent in time for them to cancel the eviction hearing with the City of Lakewood Municipal Court so that there is no eviction record for a client receiving ESG assistance. Tenants remain housed and there is no interruption of revenue to the landlord.

Our responsibility is to do everything possible to **keep** families stably housed. Providing Lakewood families at imminent risk of becoming homeless with seamless access to LCSC's case managers is essential to client outcomes and to ensure that families in crisis: 1. Maintain safe and affordable housing so that they can be sustainable; 2. Access supportive services and benefits, jobs programs, utility assistance programs, etc. that will reduce the cost of housing/living burden; 3. Keep their children in the schools they are currently attending; 4. Provide/maintain access to healthcare/mental health providers; 5. Establish an ongoing client/case manager relationship that will prevent a recurrent housing issue.

5. Target Population(s) & Outreach Efforts to Potential Beneficiaries

As an Emergency Solutions Grant-funded program, Homeless Prevention assistance is available to Lakewood residents of extremely low income (no higher than 30% of the Area Median Income, which equates to a maximum of \$14,250 per year for a single person household). Successful applicants must prove that they have sufficient income to remain stable after one-time cash assistance in the form of utility assistance for a shut-off; rent in arrears for households with a court-ordered eviction (if they opt to stay in current housing and landlord agrees); security deposit and up to three months' rent if remaining in current housing is not possible.

Community outreach efforts are similar to those for all programs and services offered at LCSC. The LCSC social workers have ongoing relationships with staff at the City of Lakewood Division of Youth and Division on Aging, with North Coast Health, Family Resource Coordinators at the City of Lakewood schools, social workers at the Westerly Apartments and at Fedor Manor and with the City of Lakewood Municipal Court. Direct referrals are simple and ongoing and include referrals from landlords with whom we have worked in the past. Brochures are available at the Lakewood Public Libraries, all schools, churches, City Hall, etc. and all LCSC services are listed with United Way's 211 First Call for Help.

6. Services Provided & Delivery Strategy

HUD's Homelessness Prevention Assistance program has an exhaustive list of eligible services that are provided to individuals/families (see Attachment C). Every client who is referred to LCSC for services and/or who expresses a need for homelessness prevention assistance has an initial assessment meeting with an LCSC social worker, unless the social worker knows that a particular client has received ESG assistance within the last year. During the initial meeting it is not unusual for a client to be missing one or more documents required (eviction notice, proof of income, etc.), which means there is often a second assessment meeting before a client can even be given an application packet to complete. Once a client returns a completed application packet, he/she is assessed for housing barriers and the LCSC social worker begins what can be the very time-consuming process of verifying employment; confirming that the landlord is willing to keep this particular client when the rent in arrears is paid and that the landlord will contact the Lakewood Municipal Court to cancel the eviction once payment is made. At this time the social worker also looks at the client's other household expenses (utilities, car payment, medical insurance, child support, etc.) to determine if the household income is sufficient to cover rent and expenses going forward. If it is determined that the household income is insufficient, the client is given the option to search for a more affordable rental unit if one can be found. This is the point in time when clients have to be advised that they do not qualify for assistance if they cannot/will not move and/or if they cannot reduce any cost of living expenses.

It is only after these initial activities that the action plan and housing search (if moving is the only option) begin in earnest. Currently, significant hurdles that face many clients (and the successful housing placement services delivered by the LCSC social workers) are housing vouchers (Housing First and EDEN), poor rental history and/or the increasingly limited availability of affordable housing. Lakewood landlords are reluctant to take vouchers because of the inspections required and the length of time before the housing agency makes the first rental payment. Poor rental histories eliminate almost all clients because landlords have so many individuals seeking rental units in Lakewood. The housing search for clients who for whatever reason cannot stay in their current units has become very labor-intensive because there is about a four-week period of time from receipt of the court-ordered eviction to the actual red tag eviction date in which to find and secure a new unit (all of which require a habitability inspection and repairs if necessary before a check can be cut). We are now facing the additional barrier of a landlord's refusal to remediate lead in the home or to meet other HUD habitability standards because there are often multiple rental prospects whose tenancy would not require an inspection and any expenses for these repairs.

The development of a case management plan, referrals and links to mainstream benefits and services, and the determination of any additional services with the goal of housing stability start at this point for clients who qualify for assistance and for whom LCSC can secure appropriate housing or for clients who can remain in a current unit. Clients who receive services are monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure they are stably housed and receiving the services they need to become sustainable. Throughout the entire engagement, all client activity is entered into the HMIS software in compliance with HUD's program requirements.

7. Program Design (*emphasize uniqueness and/or innovation*)

LCSC is uniquely qualified to provide HUD's eligible services and to offer ongoing counseling and support because we have: mental/behavioral health services in partnership with Murtis Taylor Human Services System on site daily and will launch HireLocal Lakewood in partnership with The Centers El Barrio in October. Through over 10 years of providing homelessness prevention programs and programs for literally homeless Lakewood residents, LCSC has established a network of Lakewood landlords willing to work with us to keep clients housed. We continue to face increasing difficulty in finding landlords willing to accept new renters who are considered high risk because of their eviction(s). This coupled with a decreasing number of affordable housing units makes paying rent in arrears our best client option in most instances.

Most clients who receive ESG assistance for homelessness prevention take advantage of the emergency food provided through our pantry every 30 days. We continue to work with participating families as needs arise and arrange for face-to-face meetings when the client family comes into the Center for food. Clients who do not qualify for ESG-funded Housing Stability and Case Management Services and Housing Search and Placement Services do receive ongoing services from LCSC, but these are funded by CDBG and/or foundation dollars.

8. Client Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to receive ESG Homelessness Prevention assistance, a client:

1. Must be a current Lakewood resident with a court-ordered eviction or utility shut-off notice (when maintaining utilities is a condition of the lease);
2. Must agree to remain in Lakewood if moving to a new unit is the only rental option;
3. Must meet HUD's Extremely Low Income guidelines (at or below 30% of the Area Median Income);
4. Cannot have received ESG assistance with one year of the date of the new application;
5. Must have proof of sufficient income to remain stably housed after one-time assistance;
6. Must be willing to work with an LCSC case manager to develop a stability plan;
7. Must be willing to access support services and/or mainstream benefits.

9. Unduplicated Clients to be Served (January 1 – December 31, 2019)

Please distinguish between clients evaluated for eligibility and those receiving services.

We anticipate that in 2019, a total of 300 individuals will get to the application process; 250 in approximately 80 households will receive cash assistance in the form of rent or utilities. All clients who inquire about assistance can receive case management services.

10. Program Staff

Job Title	Hours/Week Devoted to Program	% ESG Funded	Brief Summary of Responsibilities
Senior Manager, Client Services	15	60%	Intake, assessment, review of applications/verification of information, landlord negotiation, housing search and placement, HMIS and Access data entry
Social Worker	14	60%	Intake, assessment, review of applications/verification of information, landlord negotiation, housing search and placement, HMIS and Access data entry
Executive Director	8.5	60%	Overall program oversight, landlord negotiations as needed, implementation of ServicePoint Self Sufficiency Matrix, reporting to the City of Lakewood, program fundraising

11. Implementation Schedule

Homelessness Prevention and its associated services are available to eligible clients year round. An implementation schedule with a completion deadline is not applicable to this program because we cannot reliably predict when a client will apply, whether or not the household is eligible, and how long the housing search and placement activities will take.

In the past we have not seen many evictions either during the first and last months of the year as landlords have been reluctant to evict during the holiday season; YTD 2018 applications have been approximately the same each month, with the exception of an unexplained hike in March and August. Utility companies have been extremely aggressive with shut offs during 2018; we assume this will continue in 2019. Predicting an implementation schedule with any reasonable accuracy is next to impossible.

Program Budget

Expenditures

Expense Category	ESG Funding Request	Agency Matching Funds	Other Matching Funds	Total
Housing Stability Case Management Services				
Staff Salaries	\$16,912		\$45,000	\$61,912
Fringe Benefits	2,485		6,615	9,100
Housing Search & Placement Services				
Staff Salaries	11,275		12,800	24,075
Fringe Benefits	1,656		1,617	3,273
Short-Term Rental Assistance	66,102			66,102
Financial Assistance	10,760			10,760
Inspections (Habitability & Lead)	800			800
LCSC Program Oversight/Administration				
Staff Salary	7,170	8,280		15,450
Fringe Benefits	840	970		1,810
HMIS				
Staff/Administration	4,000	1,000		5,000
Hardware, Equipment, Software		1,500		1,500
Training		250		250
LCSC Occupancy				
Rent		6,300		6,300
Utilities/Phone		1,800		1,800
Insurance - Property		150		150
Insurance - Liability		3,850		3,850
Cleaning Service		1,140		1,140
Equipment (lease)		500		500
Supplies/Printing/Copying		1,200		1,200
Mileage – Housing Search and Placement		500		500
Finance Consultant	3,000	250		3,250
Volunteer Support (@ \$15/hr)		9,020		9,020
Other: FY 18 Carry forward Estimate			25,000	25,000
Other:				
Total	\$125,000	\$36,710	\$91,032	\$252,742

Revenue Sources

Source	Requested	Committed	Total
FY18-19 ESG Carry Forward <i>(Est)</i>		\$25,000	\$25,000
Other (Non-ESG) Federal			
State/County Government			
Private Sector <i>(Foundations, etc...)</i>		66,032	66,032
Earned Revenue			
Other: Agency Matching Funds		27,690	27,690
Other: Volunteer Support @ \$15/hr		9,020	9,020
FY19 ESG Request	125,000		125,000
Totals	\$125,000	\$127,742	\$252,742
<i>Include letters from all sources of already committed funds.</i>			

Budget Narrative: Briefly describe how ESG funds will be utilized.

ESG funds for Homelessness Prevention can be separated into the following areas of support:

- \$32,328 will be used for case managers' salaries/fringe benefits for the delivery of essential services and for housing search and placement, which is an exhaustive list of services that LCSC social workers provide to Lakewood families (see Exhibit C)
- \$12,010 provides salary relief for program oversight and also HMIS data entry by social workers and executive director and by LCSC executive director, including beta test of ServicePoint v5.2
- \$66,102 provides cash assistance for rent
- \$10,760 provides cash assistance for utilities, motel vouchers
- \$800 supports salary of City of Lakewood Human Services staff member for HUD-mandated habitability inspections of properties
- \$3,000 covers salary of LCSC accountant firm for preparation of monthly/annual reports to City of Lakewood and for issuing checks to landlords/utility companies

Total: \$125,000