



**FY21 Emergency Solutions Grant
Funding Request**

Organization	Lakewood Community Services Center
Organization Type	Not-For-Profit
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Project/Program Name	Homelessness Prevention Assistance
Total FY21 Project Budget	\$226,563
FY21 ESG Funding Request	\$125,000

ABSTRACT

Program Name: Homeless Prevention Services

Homelessness Prevention provides case management and cash assistance for rent and/or utilities to Lakewood households at imminent risk of becoming homeless with the goal of keeping individuals/families stably housed for the longer term.

Housing Stability Case Management Services Housing stability can only be influenced by individualized services that include counseling, referrals/links to mainstream services and benefits, landlord mediation, the development of an individual case plan with the goal of ensuring permanent, stable housing and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of 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 services are dependent on each client's need for support in the search and his/her capacity to complete a rental application and to understand the terms of a lease. Typically, clients need help negotiating with a landlord, most often to work out terms that allow them 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. For clients who want to or are forced to move, social workers undertake the exhaustive process of identifying an affordable/appropriate unit and make arrangements for an inspection to ensure the unit meets HUD's habitability requirements. Most moving clients also need assistance to get utilities either moved to a new apartment or turned on in the case of clients who have a utility shut off. Moving a client with a court ordered eviction is becoming increasingly difficult as there is no shortage of potential renters, allowing landlords to be much more selective and denying those with a poor rental history. More and more multiple dwelling units are being purchased and renovated, which further erodes the number of available affordable units in Lakewood.

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, just 22 households have received ESG cash assistance to prevent becoming homeless. This low number is partially due to the federal eviction moratorium because of COVID-19. Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the 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 or physical disability. Case management services are critically important to helping this at-risk population to secure and maintain appropriate, affordable housing.

Beneficiaries: In 2021 we anticipate that 60 individuals will receive cash assistance (of 100 applications) if we can stretch the available cash through 12 months since we are challenged with the higher per person assistance as rents continue to increase and low rent units are becoming scarcer. All who apply will be eligible to receive housing stability case management services as described above.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

1. Community Needs Addressed

Community Impact: Keeping individuals/families housed in Lakewood has an impact on the individual household as well as on the greater community. Minimizing movement during the pandemic is critical for the wellbeing of these families at imminent risk of eviction. 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 problem during more normal times; remaining stably housed is as important during this period of remote learning.

Much of our success will depend on the availability of affordable rental units in Lakewood and the willingness of landlords to keep tenants with a payment of rent in arrears. Because LCSC has developed successful relationships with so many of the landlords in the city, we have a real advantage when navigating with property owners to work with us to keep their tenants housed.

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, utility assistance programs, etc. that will reduce the cost of housing/living burden; 3. Keep their children in the schools they are currently attending (and at home during remote learning); 4. Provide/maintain access to healthcare/mental health providers; and 5. Establish an ongoing client/case manager relationship that will prevent a recurrent housing issue.

It is important to note that during the COVID-19 pandemic and until there is a universally available vaccine, these critical supports must be provided and monitored remotely.

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 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; and mental health services through a partnership with Murtis Taylor Human Services System. The foundation funding we received to expand the Murtis Taylor behavioral health partnership (now in its seventh year) by adding services and implementing a Care Coordination Model has had to be put on hold due to COVID-19 with the requirement for all services to be provided remotely. This expansion of services remains a goal of LCSC and MTHSS and as soon as we can reopen the Center to clients, it is our plan to move forward with this critical service.

3. Program Design, Uniqueness & Innovation

LCSC is uniquely qualified to provide HUD's eligible services and to offer ongoing counseling and support because our Senior Manager of Client Services is a Licensed Social Worker and Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor III with 22 years' experience, 11 of which have been with LCSC; and our Manager of Client Services is also a Licensed Social Worker who was a Community Psychiatric Support Treatment (CPST) worker and a CPST team leader with Murtis Taylor Human Services System (assigned to Lakewood) for four years before joining LCSC in February 2019. In addition to our own team members, we have mental/behavioral health services in partnership with Murtis Taylor Human Services System to provide therapy and/or case management that often includes housing search. Although we have established good working relationships with Lakewood landlords through years of housing placement activities, we continue to face increasing difficulty in finding landlords willing to accept new renters who are considered high risk because of their eviction history. This coupled with a decreasing number of affordable housing units has made negotiating agreements for the payment of rent in arrears for an existing unit our best – but often expensive - option in most instances. These landlord relationships are also helping us to place individuals who are being displaced due to sales/renovations of their buildings.

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.

4. Target Population(s)

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 \$16,000 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. Although payment of up to three months' rent is allowable, LCSC tries to limit support to security deposit and one month's rent because of the limited funding for cash assistance.

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), or a notice that the dwelling is being sold and the landlord has issued a Notice to Quit;
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 within 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 as needed.

5. Geographic Service Area

ESG Homelessness Prevention assistance is available to residents of Lakewood only.

6. Services Provided & Delivery Strategy

Again, please note that most of these services must be delivered remotely during 2021.

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. Because of the pandemic, LCSC has created an online application process through encrypted application forms accessed on our website. Gathering all required documentation is often an iterative process that requires some considerable staff time to complete. Once the application is completed the LCSC social worker assesses applicants for housing barriers and works with the landlord to confirm that he/she is willing to keep the client when rent in arrears is paid and has the landlord sign a document stating that the Lakewood Municipal Court will be notified to cancel the eviction once payment is made. Currently 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 (with significant help from the LCSC social worker) for a more affordable rental unit if one can be found. This is the point in time when clients must 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 the LCSC screening 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 significant decrease in 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 if there are children under six 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 are 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, which informs an ongoing progress/outcomes report for every client who receives services

7. Outreach Strategy & Efforts

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 Neighborhood Family Practice, Family Resource Coordinators at the City of Lakewood schools, social workers at the Westerly Apartments and at Fedor Manor. Direct referrals are simple and ongoing. Information is available at the Lakewood Public Libraries, all schools, churches, City Hall, etc. and in these organizations' social media. All LCSC services are listed with United Way's 211 First Call for Help.

8. Community Partnerships & Stakeholders

LCSC works with all the community partners indicated in the Outreach Strategy above. In addition to these local partners, LCSC also works with CMHA and EDEN for clients with housing vouchers, other members of the Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care, Murtis Taylor Human Services System and other mental/behavioral health providers, hospital systems (and in particular, MetroHealth), the AIDS Taskforce, and the Veterans Administration.

9. Staffing (add rows as necessary)

Title	Hours/Week Devoted to Program	% ESG Funded	Qualifications & Responsibilities
Senior Manager, Client Services	9	34%	LSW, CDC III, intake, assessment, application review/information verification, landlord negotiation, housing search and placement, HMIS and Access database entry
Manager, Client Services	9	34%	LSW, intake, assessment, application review/information verification, landlord negotiation, housing search and placement, HMIS and Access database entry
Executive Director	4	47%	Program oversight, HMIS review, reporting to the City of Lakewood and to the Office of Homeless Services, program fundraising

10. Implementation Schedule (add rows as necessary) This does not apply to Homelessness Prevention. This program is ongoing.

11. Projected Beneficiaries (January 1 – December 31, 2021)

	Persons	Households
Total Unduplicated Persons & Households to be Served	60	27
Unduplicated Very-Low Income* Persons & Households to be Served	60	27

*<30% Area Median Income

12. Program Evaluation

(data collection & analysis, 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, Clarity. Client information is entered at intake and assessment and throughout the engagement to create a progress report for each client. Exit data include date of exit; destination; referrals to benefits; amount of cash assistance. In addition, all clients who receive Emergency Shelter 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: Client services are also entered into the County's HMIS system, Clarity. This software tracks length of time receiving shelter services; services received (from LCSC and from other community providers); and objectives at entry and exit points. This software was recently introduced by the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County of Homeless Services, so we have not been able to determine what outcomes reporting capacity the system has. We will begin to look at this in 2021.

FY21 PROGRAM BUDGET

1. Expenses

Expense Category	ESG Funding Request	Agency Matching Funds	Other Matching Funds	Total
Housing Stability Case Management Services				
Staff Salaries	\$20,063		\$27,140	\$47,203
Fringe Benefits	5,216		7,055	12,271
Housing Search & Placement Services				
Staff Salaries	8,402		28,020	36,422
Fringe Benefits	2,203		7,285	9,488
Short-Term Rental Assistance	70,000			70,000
Financial Assistance	8,000			8,000
Inspections (Habitability & Lead)	600	600		1,200
LCSC Program Oversight/Administration				
Staff Salaries	6,017	2,168	5,000	13,185
Fringe Benefits	662	460		1,122
HMIS				
Staff/Administration	3,837		1,500	5,337
Hardware, Equipment, Software		2,000		2,000
Training		325		325
LCSC Occupancy				
Rent		6,300		6,300
Utilities/Phone		1,875		1,875
Insurance - Property		165		165
Insurance - Liability		3,500		3,500
Cleaning Service		720		720
Equipment (Lease/Maintenance)		2,000		2,000
Supplies/Printing/Copying		350		350
Encryption Software – Website Forms		600		600
Mileage – Housing Search @.57.5/mile		500		500
Financial Consultant		4,000		4,000
Volunteer Support (@\$24.60/hr)		0*		0*
Total	\$125,000	\$25,563	\$76,000	\$226,563

*HUD allows in-kind value of volunteer support to be considered part of the required matching funds. Prior to the pandemic, LCSC had a total of 1,144 volunteer hours each year in support of this program (4 hours Mon – Friday plus an additional 2 hours on Wed evening). LCSC does not anticipate being open to clients in 2021, therefore we cannot use the \$28,142 in in-kind support to match the ESG request. Dan Wyman will request a waiver from HUD.

2. Funding Sources

Source	Requested	Committed	Total
FY20-FY21 ESG Carry Forward (<i>est</i>)			0
Other (Non-ESG) Federal			
State/County Government			
Private Sector (<i>Foundations, etc...</i>)	\$35,000	\$41,000	\$76,000
Earned Revenue			
<i>Agency Matching Funds</i>		25,563	25,563
<i>FY21 ESG Request</i>	\$125,000		125,000
Totals	\$160,000	\$66,563	\$226,563

FY21 BUDGET NARRATIVE

1. Describe how City of Lakewood ESG funds be utilized to support the proposed program.

The City of Lakewood ESG funds will be used as follows:

- Partial support 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)
- Partial salary relief for program oversight
- Partial salary relief for staff and Executive Director's HMIS data entry
- Cash assistance for rent
- Cash assistance for utilities, motel vouchers
- Salary support for City of Lakewood Human Services staff member for HUD-mandated habitability inspections of properties

2. Describe how the proposed program would function if it does not receive full amount of requested funding.

This program is essential to the health, safety, and stability of low-income Lakewood residents. If LCSC does not receive full HUS support for the program, we would continue to focus on raising foundation/donor gifts.

3. Describe the agency's efforts to develop/leverage other sources of funding to support the proposed program.

LCSC has secured \$41,000 in foundation funding and has a current request out to Community West Foundation. In addition, LCSC has committed over \$25,000 in agency funds.