Department of Housing and Urban Development offering $2 billion in homeless assistance grants

Homelessness is a problem for any community — and the social and financial consequences that stem from a sizable homeless population can impact lifestyles, standards of living and home values.

Well, here's some good news: A program that provides funding to state and local governments through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the purpose of ending homelessness has announced that it's making $2 billion in funds available.

The nuts and bolts

According to its page on the HUD website, the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program "provides funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and State and local governments to quickly re-house homeless individuals and families to minimize trauma and dislocation," among other goals.

Financial grants are offered "through a competitive process" for private nonprofit, state and local organizations that want to build, acquire, rehabilitate or lease buildings "to provide transitional or permanent housing; rental assistance; payment of operating costs; supportive services; re-housing services; payment of administrative costs; and grants for technical assistance," states the website.

Last week, HUD announced that it would make $2 billion in grants available to those private nonprofit, state and local organizations; applications for the funds must be completed by September 28 at 8 p.m. ET on the HUD portal.

The CoC program has the following priorities, according to the funding announcement:

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- Ending homelessness across the board by identifying, engaging and effectively serving “all persons experiencing homelessness.” CoCs should have “a comprehensive outreach strategy in place” and should use data to “determine the characteristics of individuals and families with the highest needs and longest experiences of homelessness” so they can better serve those individuals and families.
- “Creating a systemic response to homelessness” by using “system performance measures,” which might include the average length of homeless episodes, rates of return to homelessness and rates of exit to permanent housing in order to “determine how effectively they are serving people experiencing homelessness.”
- Strategically allocate and use resources with cost, performance and outcome data. “CoCs should review project quality, performance, and cost effectiveness,” HUD said in the announcement. “HUD also encourages CoCs to maximize the use of mainstream and other community-based resources when serving persons experiencing homelessness.”
- “Use a Housing First approach,” which “prioritizes rapid placement and stabilization in permanent housing and does not have service participation requirements or preconditions.” Projects funded by the CoC Program “should help individuals and families move quickly into permanent housing, and the CoC should measure and help projects reduce the length

of time people experience homelessness."

"We know these grants can make a huge difference in ending homelessness" said HUD Secretary Ben Carson in a statement. "HUD continues to forge deep relationships with our local partners to invest in proven programs that are working to reduce the scale of homelessness in their communities."

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