



Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

CoC Number: FL-511

CoC Name: Pensacola/Escambia, Santa Rosa Counties CoC

Challenge Unsheltered Grant

Release Date: December 30, 2024

Application Due Date: January 17, 2025, at 5 P.M. CDT

Applications must be submitted by email to:

grants@openingdoorsnwfl.org

The applicant is responsible for ensuring that their application(s) is submitted before the designated due date and time. Applications submitted after 5:00 p.m. CDT will be returned and will not be considered for review. The timestamp provided by the email system will determine the submission time.

Upon request, this document is available in alternative accessible formats to accommodate various needs.

Introduction

The Challenge Unsheltered Grant is designed to address the issue of unsheltered homelessness through targeted support for individuals and families experiencing this crisis. This funding initiative is established under Specific Appropriation 351 of the 2024 General Appropriations Act and aims to provide both immediate assistance and long-term solutions.

The allocation of these funds is intended to enhance the efforts of the Continuum of Care (CoC) by improving shelter operations, increasing staffing support, and delivering specialized services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment. By facilitating these vital resources, the Challenge Unsheltered Grant endeavors to significantly reduce instances of unsheltered homelessness and ensure that individuals and families have access to the comprehensive support necessary for stabilization and long-term success.

Executive Summary

The Challenge Unsheltered Grant seeks proposals for projects designed to reduce homelessness, promote housing stability, and increase exits to permanent housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The available funding can support projects in four key areas:

- **Integrated Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment**
- **Emergency and Transitional Shelters**
- **Support for Non-Congregate Shelter Operations**
- **Support for Sanctioned Camping Sites**

All applicants are required to demonstrate the capacity to deliver integrated mental health and substance use treatment services as part of their overall program offerings. This will ensure that program participants have access to critical health services alongside their housing stability efforts.

This grant offers significant flexibility, allowing the Lead Agency to determine how best to use the funding to address identified community needs. Using data from the **Longitudinal Statistical Analysis report** and stakeholder feedback, priority areas for funding include improving **exits to permanent housing**, reducing **length of time homeless**, and decreasing **returns to homelessness**. Eligible participants must meet the homeless or imminent risk of homelessness definition at **24 CFR 578.3**, excluding those at risk of homelessness.

Scope of Services

Integrated Mental Health & Substance Use Treatment Services

Applicants must propose a model where mental health and substance use treatment services are embedded within their shelter, housing, or sanctioned campsite program. This can include:

- On-site clinical services such as individual counseling, group therapy, and psychiatric care for residents.
- Access to substance use disorder treatment, including counseling, harm reduction strategies, and medication-assisted treatment (MAT).
- Partnerships with behavioral health specialists who provide on-site services or work directly within the shelter team to integrate care.

The focus should be on co-occurring disorders and ensuring that participants have access to comprehensive support for both housing and mental health needs.

Emergency and Transitional Shelters

All organizations applying for emergency shelter or transitional housing must describe in their proposal and budget narrative how funds will be used. This amendment may provide support in the form of construction, improvement, supply costs, operating costs, staff costs, or other costs as approved.

Support for Non-Congregate Shelters

Organizations applying for non-congregate shelter funds must shelter individuals and/or families in a non-congregate setting. The State Office on Homelessness has defined non-congregate sheltering as accommodations that offer private rooms or units for temporary housing (e.g., motels, hotels, pallet shelters, rental units) with integrated mental health/substance use treatment services for participants.

In addition, organizations may apply for Rapid Rehousing funds that can be used to help people experiencing homelessness move into permanent housing from non-congregate shelters. This intervention includes rental and utility deposit, short-term rent payment assistance, and utility arrears assistance for eligible program participants.

Sanctioned Camping Sites

Applicants proposing sanctioned camping sites must be an approved County homelessness encampment site and be certified by the Department of Children and Families, or the site must be operated by an NGO with the cooperation of local government. This support may take the form of construction, improvement, supply costs, operating costs, staff costs, or other costs as approved.

Program Goals

Funded projects must jointly provide a minimum of **130 service units** during the grant period. A unit of service is defined as either:

- **Direct client services** to individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, or

- **Indirect service tasks** performed, include the provision of (1) month of eligible service activities (e.g., acquisition, renovation, new construction, supply costs, operating costs, and staff costs) at a rate of one unit per \$1,235 spent on these activities.

Applicants must describe how they plan to meet this requirement while ensuring flexibility in the delivery of services that best meet the needs of the community.

Funding Available

The Florida State Office on Homelessness approved the activity allocation for the Challenge Unsheltered Grant. The allocation was approved as follows:

Fiscal Year	Unit of Service	Units	Rate	Fiscal Year Total
2024-2025	Eligible Challenge Grant Unsheltered Grant Activities	N/A	N/A	\$393,192.22
Total				\$393,192.22

In addition, the Department requires the Lead Agency to operate this program in a manner consistent with the CoC plan, while including newly proposed projects that mitigate unsheltered homelessness by providing support to homeless individuals and families through eligible Challenge Unsheltered Grant activities.

Through various meetings with community partners and the HB-1365 Subcommittee, Opening Doors staff has revised the budget allocation to ensure CoC priorities and outcomes are successful. The revised budget allocations is as follows:

Activities	Funding Amount	% of Budget	Statutory Limit
Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment	\$117,957.66	30%	
Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Operations	\$117,957.66	30%	
Acquisition and Renovation of Non-Congregate Shelters	\$117,957.66	30%	
Non-Congregate: Rapid Rehousing			
Development of Sanctioned Camping Sites			
Administrative Costs	\$39,319.24	10%	10%
Total	\$393,192.22		

Any Challenge Unsheltered Grant funding and deliverables not utilized by June 30, 2025, will not be reverted or reappropriated. All funds must be spent by the end date of the amendment.

Applicant Eligibility

To apply for the Challenge Unsheltered Grant applicants must meet specific criteria. The following entities are eligible:

- Local Governments
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Continuum of Care (CoC) Organizations

- Housing Providers and Shelter Operators
- Collaborative Partnerships

Additional Requirements

- Applicants must provide services in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties, and to eligible residents of these counties.
- Applicants must demonstrate the ability to manage and administer grant funds responsibly and comply with state and federal regulations.
- Applicants should show how their project will help reduce unsheltered homelessness, including services for mental health, substance abuse, and sheltering.
- All applicants must follow submission procedures, reporting requirements, and timelines.

Ineligible Applicants

- Individuals or for-profit entities are not eligible.
- Organizations with unresolved compliance issues or failure to meet previous funding requirements may be excluded.

Applicants should review the full eligibility criteria and application guidelines to ensure they meet all requirements before submitting their proposal.

Legal Documentation Requirements

Nonprofit organizations applying for state funds must include proof of 501(c)3 status with submission.

Additional formal or legal documentation to prove eligibility, registration, and compliance is as follows:

- Submit Letter of 501(c)3 IRS Determination
- Submit copy of bylaws and articles of incorporation
- Submit proof of active SAM.gov registration
- Submit proof of most recent Florida Department of State Registration (Florida Division of Corporations / Sunbiz)
- Submit proof of most recent FDACS Registration
- List of current Board of Directors and Organizational Structure (including titles)
- Fiscal Year 2021-2023 Form 990
- Proof of General Liability Insurance

Capacity Requirements

- Audited financial statements for the last 3 years (if applicable)
- Detailed project budget demonstrating how grant funds will be allocated and spent
- A detailed grant proposal outlining goals, objectives, and outcomes and a projected timeline for meeting the expected outcomes of the grant (e.g., deliverables).
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Demonstrate its ability to manage and report on state funds, including tracking outcomes and expenditures.
- Letter of Commitment or MOU to meet Match Requirement
- Provide a brief staff description outlining the roles, responsibilities, and their relevant experience.
- Describe financial controls, accounting systems, and processes to manage grant funds to ensure compliance with the defined spend-down schedule.

Exclusions

Any applicant on the excluded parties list (sam.gov) will be considered ineligible for funding.

Applicants on the debarred vendors list of the Florida Department of Management Services will be considered ineligible for funding.

Timeline

Date	Time	Information
Thursday, December 19, 2024	9 AM CDT	Grant Application Informational Meeting Microsoft Teams Meeting Join on your computer, mobile app, or room device Join the meeting now Meeting ID: 284 316 689 747 Passcode: Eo2KK2FK
Monday, December 30, 2024		Request for Project Applications Released
Wednesday, January 17, 2025	5 PM CDT	Submission Deadline for Project Applications
Wednesday, January 22, 2025	1 PM CDT	Performance Evaluation and Ranking Committee
Tuesday, January 28, 2025	5 PM CDT	Notice of Conditional Selection or Non-Selection for All Project Applicants. All awards are pending CoC Board Approval.

Funding Guidelines

Administrative Costs

Under **Section 420.622(4)(d), Florida Statutes**, homelessness assistance grant providers are limited to using **no more than 10%** of their total grant funds for **administrative costs**, with the rest directed toward the direct provision of services to individuals experiencing homelessness.

All subcontractors will receive **no more than 2%** of their total grant funds for administrative costs.

Opening Doors Northwest Florida, Inc. reserves the right to assign administrative costs to subcontractors based on their specific scope of work and assigned responsibilities. These costs will be distributed according to the subcontractor's role in program management and their direct involvement in administrative tasks, ensuring alignment with the overall administrative budget available. Subcontractors will only be reimbursed for administrative expenses if such provisions are clearly specified in their contracts and adhere to the budget allocation set by the Lead Agency.

Cost Reimbursement

The Challenge Unsheltered Grant is a cost reimbursement grant. All subcontractors will be on a cost-reimbursement basis and will be required to submit back-up documentation for eligible expenses incurred.

Match

Applicants must provide a 25% match of the total requested funding through cash or in-kind contributions. This match must support Challenge Unsheltered project participants and be documented by a written commitment or MOU, with appropriate recordkeeping. **Proof of match must be submitted with the project application.** Match funds for this project cannot be used to match another project, and no duplication is allowed.

Conflict of Interest

Applicants must comply with both state and federal conflict of interest regulations when receiving state funds through a contract that includes federal pass-through funding. Under Florida law, contractors must disclose any financial interests that could conflict with their responsibilities under the contract and ensure that no personal or financial interests influence decisions or actions. Any individual with a conflict must recuse themselves from relevant decisions. In addition, federal regulations (2 CFR Part 200) require contractors to have written policies for identifying, disclosing, and managing conflicts of interest. These policies must be followed throughout the term of the contract, and any potential conflicts must be promptly disclosed to the state and federal agencies involved. Contractors and officials engaged in procurement or contract management must act impartially and fairly. Failure to comply with these conflict-of-interest requirements may result in contract termination, financial penalties, or legal consequences.

Applicants must submit their conflict-of-interest policies upon contract execution and ensure ongoing compliance throughout the contract's duration.

HMIS Participation and Coordinated Entry Requirements

As a condition of funding, all selected projects are required to actively participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to ensure comprehensive tracking and reporting of program participants. This participation is crucial for maintaining a centralized, accurate, and consistent data collection process across the continuum of care.

Specifically, funded projects must:

1. **Enroll 100% of Program Participants in HMIS:** All individuals served by the project must be enrolled in HMIS, ensuring that accurate, up-to-date information is available for monitoring, service coordination, and reporting. This data collection is essential for tracking participant outcomes, identifying service gaps, and supporting data-driven decision-making across the homelessness system.
2. **Accept Referrals through Coordinated Entry:** Funded projects must accept participant referrals made through the Coordinated Entry system, which streamlines access to available services and resources. This ensures that individuals are connected to appropriate services based on their specific needs and vulnerabilities, fostering an integrated approach to care.
3. **Send Referrals via Coordinated Entry:** In addition to accepting referrals, funded projects must also contribute to the Coordinated Entry process by referring participants to other appropriate programs or services as necessary. This reciprocal referral process promotes a seamless, coordinated system of care that increases the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for participants.

Participation in both HMIS and Coordinated Entry is a critical component of the overall effort to improve service delivery, ensure equitable access to resources, and enhance the effectiveness of homelessness prevention and intervention strategies. All grantees must demonstrate their ability and commitment to these requirements as part of their program's operational standards.

General Terms and Conditions Governing Performance

Liability Insurance

All awarded applicants will be required to maintain **general liability insurance** with a minimum coverage of **\$1,000,000**. This insurance must cover potential risks related to the funded project. Additionally, the applicant must list the **Opening Doors NWFL** as an **additional insured** on the policy to ensure coverage extends to the Provider in the event of a claim. Opening Doors NWFL reserves the right to request **additional insurance** or higher coverage limits depending on the nature of the project or program, and applicants may be required to adjust their insurance

coverage accordingly. Proof of insurance will be required before funds are disbursed, and continued coverage must be maintained throughout the duration of the project.

Civil Rights Requirements

All applicants for Florida State funds must comply with various Civil Rights requirements to ensure equal access and non-discriminatory practices in their programs and services. These include adherence to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, as well as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Additionally, applicants must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which ensures accessibility and prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities, and the Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992, which provides broad protections against discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations within Florida.

By applying for state funds, applicants commit to ensuring that no person is excluded, denied services, or treated unfairly due to race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or other protected characteristics. This includes making reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities and ensuring that all individuals have equal opportunities to participate in funded programs.

Accessibility Requirements

All applicants for Florida State funds must comply with both Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These federal laws prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities and require that programs and services be accessible to all, including those with physical, sensory, or mental impairments. Specifically, applicants must ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to services, activities, and facilities. This may involve providing reasonable accommodation such as accessible facilities, assistive technology, sign language interpreters, or alternative formats for written materials. By applying for state funds, applicants agree to make the necessary adjustments to ensure full inclusion and participation of individuals with disabilities in the program.

Application Evaluation and Selection

Threshold Requirements

Applications will be carefully pre-qualified by the Lead Agency staff to verify that they do not contain any incurable deficiencies, as outlined below. Should the Lead Agency find that the threshold requirements are not met, the project application will be respectfully declined, and the applicant will receive formal notification in writing. If the application and applicant meet the eligibility criteria, the application will advance to the subsequent stages of the Application Review, Scoring, and Conditional Selection Process.

Incurable Deficiencies

- Ineligibility of the applicant.
- Ineligibility of the project and/or project does not align with funding priorities.
- Missing required documentation.
- Incomplete or incorrect forms (e.g., budget narratives and form signatures)
- Noncompliance with State or Federal legal or regulatory requirements
- Unallowable costs or insufficient justification of budget
- Late application submission
- Poor financial standing
- Outstanding legal or regulatory issues

Application Evaluation, Scoring, and Conditional Selection Process

Threshold Requirements

	Category	Pass/Fail
1	Providing services in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties, and to residents who are eligible under the criteria established for these counties	
2	Submitted Letter of 501(c)3 IRS Determination	
3	Submitted proper registration with Florida Division of Corporation and Sam.gov	
4	Submitted a copy of fiscal year 2021 – 2023 Form 990	
5	Submitted a copy of audited financial statements for the last 3 years	
6	Demonstrate financial capacity to manage and report on State funds	
7	Demonstrate administrative capacity to participate in HMIS and Coordinated Entry.	

Scoring Tool

	Category	Total Points	Score
	Organizational Capacity	20	
	Past Performance / Transferable Experience and Skills	15	
	Financial Stability	15	
	Project Design and Goals	20	
	Impact and Outcomes	20	
	Community Engagement and Partnerships	10	
	TOTAL SCORED POINTS	100	

Notice of Conditional Selection Decision

Opening Doors staff will provide written notice regarding the conditional selection decision to each applicant by Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 5 PM CDT. The selection may include a single or multiple awardees for full or partial funding. All awards are pending approval of the CoC Board.

Post-Award Requirements

Opening Doors NWFL will award a grant for each application that is approved, that meets the application requirements of this RFP and based on the information submitted in the application, required attachments, and any additional information acquired during evaluation. As a condition of receiving a contract agreement, the applicant must be able to operate on a reimbursement basis, where the applicant will need to cover all project costs upfront before submitting a request for payment; any necessary changes to the application documents might be needed before the contract is finalized, and applicants should carefully review the contract details to confirm they can meet all conditions, including potential increased insurance needs and financial audits.