AUGUST 29, 2025

Homeless Services | Homelessness Prevention | Building Community Capacity

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Applications Due September 30th at 5 PM

HOUSING & SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT

Summary of RFP

RFP Release Date: August 29, 2025

Applications Due: September 30, 2025, at 5 PM

Applications may be submitted via email or Google Form.

Google Form Submission: https://forms.gle/jkckCo7PkBCCvoUk9

For RFP files, templates, and news visit:
https://openingdoorsnwfl.org/collaboration/
state-unified-competition-2025

There will be an **Informational Meeting** on Wednesday, September 3rd, 2025, from 2 PM – 3:30 PM for applicants to attend with questions. The meeting will take place virtually.

Microsoft TEAMS meeting: Click here to join the meeting
Meeting ID: 247 503 411 135 4
Password: yn2S7TE7

All applications must be submitted using the nonprofit's legal organization name as registered with the state. Applications must be signed by an authorized representative of the organization who has the authority to enter into agreements on behalf of the organization.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the application(s) arrive before the submission due date and time. Applications received after 5 PM will be returned to the applicant and not considered for award.

Introduction & Purpose

This Request for Proposals (RFP) invites applications for funding under two complementary programs: the federal **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)** and Florida's **Challenge Grant**. Both funding sources are administered through Opening Doors Northwest Florida, Inc. on behalf of the Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties Continuum of Care (CoC), with the shared purpose of reducing homelessness, promoting housing stability, and supporting innovative, evidence-based approaches to service delivery. Applicants may apply for one or both funding streams. Proposals should clearly identify which activities are proposed under ESG and/or Challenge Grant, and how these activities align with the priorities outlined in this RFP.

Funding Available

This grant term for this application is 1 year, or the remaining number of months in the FY 2025-2026 contract at the time of award. Applicants must commit to administering the proposed project for the contract term. Applicants may apply for recurring funding each year.

Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)

Available funds per Activity:

Eligible Activities	Available Amount
Street Outreach	$ 37,744.95
Emergency Shelter	$ 66,053.66
Prevention	$ 37,744.95
Rapid Rehousing	$ 28,308.71
HMIS	HMIS requests may not exceed 1.5% of the total subgrant award
Administrative Costs	Administrative costs may not exceed 1% of the total subgrant award

Through this RFP, Opening Doors NWFL seeks to identify community-based organizations with the capacity and experience to deliver effective interventions in the following ESG program areas:

- **Street Outreach:** Engaging individuals and families living in places not meant for human habitation and connecting them with shelter, housing, and critical services.

- **Emergency Shelter:** Providing safe, temporary shelter and supportive services to stabilize households in crisis.

- **Homelessness Prevention:** Assisting individuals and families who are at imminent risk of homelessness to maintain housing through case management, mediation, rental assistance, and supportive services.

- **Rapid Re-Housing:** Helping individuals and families quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing through short-term or medium-term rental assistance and services.

Challenge Grant

Available funds per Activity:

Eligible Activity	Available Amount
Housing Need	$330,469.62
Program Need	$162,117.17
Service Need	$81,058.59
Admin	Administrative costs may not exceed 1.5% of the total subgrant award

The Challenge Grant is a state-funded program designed to support local priorities identified by the Continuum of Care (CoC). As required by Florida Statute §420.622–.628, Challenge Grant funds must be used to implement activities that directly advance the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties CoC Strategic Plan (2025-2028).

Funding Priorities

Performance Outcomes

Applications will be evaluated, in part, on the extent which the project demonstrates alignment with the strategies and priorities outlined in the CoC Strategic Plan. Proposals should clearly describe how activities support these strategies and identify measurable outcomes that contribute to the CoC's overall system performance, such as:

- Reduction in the length of time individuals and families experience homelessness.
- Increase in exits to permanent housing from unsheltered and sheltered settings.
- Maintenance of housing stability, with at least 85–90% of households exiting to permanent housing from ESG-funded programs not returning to homelessness within 12 months.

- Enhancement of access to supportive services that promote housing stability and self-sufficiency.
- Strengthening of coordinated entry and collaboration among community partners.
- Targeted response to populations most impacted by homelessness, including those with the greatest barriers to housing stability.

Innovation and Evidence-based Best Practices

Proposals that emphasize innovative approaches and evidence-based practices are strongly encouraged. Applications that outline clear strategies for improving housing stability, enhancing service delivery, or strengthening community collaboration will be viewed more favorably than those that simply continue existing services without new methods or improvements.

Innovation must remain consistent with HUD's ESG program requirements. Here are key resources from the HUD Exchange, United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH):

- Housing-Focused Street Outreach Framework: https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NAEH_Housing-Focused-Street-Outreach-Framework.pdf
- Ending Homelessness Before It Starts: A Federal Homelessness Prevention Framework: https://www.usich.gov/sites/default/files/document/Federal%20Homelessness%20Prevention%20Framework_2.pdf
- The Evidence Behind Approaches that Drive an End to Homelessness: https://www.usich.gov/sites/default/files/document/Evidence-Behind-Approaches-That-End-Homelessness-Brief-2019.pdf
- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Legal Assistance Funding: A Promising Model: https://www.nlada.org/sites/default/files/ESG%202%20Pager%20March%202023%20V2.2.pdf
- Housing Problem-Solving Foundations: Funding HPS: https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Housing-Problem-Solving-Foundations-Funding-HPS.pdf

By encouraging innovation within ESG's eligible activity framework, Opening Doors NWFL seeks to support projects that not only address immediate housing crises but also contribute to long-term solutions that strengthen the community's overall homelessness response system.

Collaborative Partnerships

Applicants are encouraged to cultivate strategic partnerships that enhance collaboration, expand service capacity, and align resources to support the successful implementation of proposed activities. Partnerships should clearly contribute to improving housing stability outcomes and advancing community-wide efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

- Partnerships must be evidenced by formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or Letters of Commitment (LOCs) submitted with the application.
- MOUs/LOCs should clearly describe the role of each partner, specific commitments (such as service delivery, referrals, data sharing, or funding leverage), and duration of the agreement.
- Priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate meaningful collaboration with key community stakeholders, such as:
    - Continuum of Care partners
    - Health care providers (including behavioral health and substance use services)
    - Mainstream benefit agencies
    - Workforce development or employment programs
    - Education providers and child welfare/foster care systems
    - Landlords, housing authorities, and affordable housing developers

Eligible Applicants

Membership in the **Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties CoC** is a prerequisite for applying. Eligible applicants include **public or private nonprofit organizations** that provide services to individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless.

- Private nonprofit organizations must hold current 501(c)3 tax-exempt status and be registered with the State of Florida, Secretary of State, Division of Corporations.
- Eligible organizations may include service providers such as homeless shelters, housing agencies, behavioral health or healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, and other nonprofits engaged in homeless assistance or prevention.
- For-profit entities, individuals, and government agencies (federal, state, or local) are not eligible to apply for subgrant funds under this RFP.

Proposal Requirements and Submission Order

Applicants must submit a complete proposal package in the following order. Incomplete or improperly formatted applications may be deemed non-responsive.

1. Cover Sheet – Use the RFP Submission Checklist to review your application for supporting documentation that must be submitted. Upload a copy of this form to your application. [Add a Link to RFP Submission Checklist]

2. Organizational Capacity and Experience
   Applicants must demonstrate that their organization has the experience and capacity to successfully implement and manage the proposed project. The narrative should include, at a minimum:
   - A description of the organization's history of assessing the needs of and providing services to individuals and households who are low-income and who are experiencing homelessness, formerly homeless, or at risk of homelessness.
   - Evidence of experience operating similar projects, including relevant performance outcome data that illustrates the effectiveness of services provided.
   - Summarize experience managing grants, which may include federal, state, or local government awards; United Way or community foundation allocations; corporate or philanthropic funds; or other subawards that required fiscal and programmatic reporting. Highlight fiscal management practices, reporting experience, and compliance measures that demonstrate organizational capacity.

3. Project Narrative
   Applicants must provide a clear description of the proposed project, including the following elements:
   - Describe the scope of the project and services to be provided. Explain what problem the project seeks to solve and how it connects to permanent housing solutions. Describe how the project integrates with the CoC's Coordinated Entry System and connects clients to mainstream benefits. If the project is an expansion of an existing initiative or will be combined with other funding sources not included in this RFP, specify those resources.
   - Provide details about the demographics of individuals/households to be served, including target household types (e.g., families, single adults, youth) and subpopulations (e.g., survivors of domestic violence, seniors, individuals with behavioral health needs).

4. Strategic Partnerships
   Applicants should describe the collaborative relationships that will support the proposed project and strengthen service delivery. Partnerships should demonstrate how the applicant works with other community stakeholders to provide

comprehensive services, reduce duplication, and improve outcomes for persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

- Identify partner agencies, their roles, and how they contribute to the success of the project (e.g., referrals, service provision, resource sharing, data coordination).
- Explain how partnerships connect the project to the CoC's Coordinated Entry System and to other key systems (healthcare, behavioral health, workforce, education, criminal justice, etc.).
- Applicants are encouraged to include signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or Letters of Commitment (LOCs) from partners. These documents should outline specific contributions and commitments to the project.

5. Performance Outcomes and Evaluation

Applicants must demonstrate how the project will achieve measurable results and align with system-level priorities. The narrative should include:

- For Challenge Grant requests, describe how the project directly advances one or more strategies outlined in the CoC Strategic Plan. Identify the specific plan goals/strategies being addressed.
- For both ESG and Challenge Grant requests, describe the practices and approaches that will be used. Indicate how the project will follow a person-centered, housing-focused approach that promotes dignity and rapid access to permanent solutions. Describe how plans to connect clients to mainstream benefits and supports.
- State anticipated outcomes (housing stability, exits to permanent housing, reductions in length of homelessness, income growth, access to mainstream benefits, etc.). Include quantifiable targets, such as percentages of households expected to achieve each outcome. For example, "85% of households exiting to permanent housing will not return to homelessness within 12 months." This is an acceptable outcome, as it is measurable and client-focused. "Case managers will provide follow-up services to households after program exit." The non-acceptable outcome describes what the agency will do, not what the client will achieve.
- Explain how outcomes will be measured, tracked, and reported, including HMIS participation and data quality strategies.

6. Budget and Budget Narrative (no page limit; must use provided templates)

Applicants must submit a detailed budget and budget narrative using the required templates included in this RFP. The budget must clearly identify all costs associated with the proposed project, broken down by eligible activity category. The budget

narrative should provide a justification for each cost, explaining how the expense is reasonable, necessary, and directly tied to project implementation and client outcomes.

The budget and narrative must include the following elements:
- Itemize proposed costs in accordance with ESG and/or Challenge Grant eligible activity categories (e.g., Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, Homelessness Prevention, Rapid Re-Housing, HMIS). Clearly identify which funding source (ESG or Challenge) will support each activity.
- List all staff positions supported by the grant, the percentage of time devoted to the project, and associated fringe benefits.
- Limited to expenses directly tied to HMIS participation (e.g., staff time for data entry, reporting, training, modest equipment). HMIS requests may not exceed 1.5% of the total subgrant award.
- Limited to general management, oversight, and coordination expenses. Administrative costs may not exceed 1.5% of the total subgrant award.
- Describe other funding sources and in-kind contributions that will support the project. Identify whether funds are secured or pending and explain how they complement ESG/Challenge funds.
- Provide a concise explanation of how each budget line supports program objectives, contributes to performance outcomes, and aligns with eligible activities.

Applicants must ensure that all costs are:

- **Allowable** under ESG or Challenge Grant regulations;

- **Reasonable** and necessary for program delivery; and

- **Allocable** to the proposed project.

7. Required Forms and Certifications
Applicants must include the following forms and certifications in their proposal package. Proposals that do not include required documentation may be deemed non-responsive. Templates for required forms are provided in the Appendix of this RFP.

The required forms and certifications include:

- RFP Submission Checklist signed by the authorized representative of the applicant organization affirming review of required attachments before application submission
- A copy of the IRS letter confirming tax-exempt status
- A copy of nonprofit organization's Articles of Incorporation
- A copy of nonprofit organization's FDACS registration
- For ESG applicants, proof of active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). Applicants may submit proof of an active or pending registration. Documentation of full compliance is required before execution of subgrant agreements.
- Current list of board members, including names, titles, and affiliations (Use Board Member Roster Form).
- Copy of Board Minutes (two most recent meetings)
- List of Key Staff and/or Job Descriptions for Project
- Conflict of Interest Policy (signed and dated)
- Intake Policy / Written Eligibility Procedure
- Copy of Most Recent Single Audit (if applicable – federal ≥ $750k; state ≥ $500k)
- Two Most Recent IRS Form 990s
- Budget Template(s) and Narratives (completed)
- Match Letter(s) of Commitment (on organizational letterhead, signed and dated)
- Letters of Commitment or MOUs for Partnerships (signed and current)

Applicants must sign and date all forms where indicated and include them in the order specified in the Proposal Requirements and Submission Order.

8. Appendices
All required templates and forms are provided in the Appendices of this RFP. Applicants must use the forms provided where indicated. Submissions that do not follow the required formats may be deemed non-responsive.

Compliance & Reporting Requirements

All subrecipients awarded funds under this RFP must comply with federal, state, and local requirements governing the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and the Challenge Grant. Projects must uphold a housing-focused, person-centered, and outcome-oriented

approach that ensures equitable, low-barrier access to services and supports long-term housing stability.

Service Delivery Standards

Projects must operate as low-barrier, client-centered programs that minimize entry restrictions and promote rapid access to safe and stable housing.

Services must be trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and outcome-oriented, with an emphasis on reducing the length of homelessness, increasing permanent housing placements, and supporting long-term housing stability.

All programs must participate in the CoC's Coordinated Entry System, ensuring fair, transparent, and efficient access to housing and services.

Family Separation under ESG-funded programs must not deny assistance or require families to separate based on age, gender, or family composition. Families must be served together unless separation is required for documented health/safety reasons or by law.

Programs must comply with CoC Written Standards for service delivery, eligibility, prioritization, and termination of assistance.

Conflict of Interest

Subrecipients must comply with federal and state conflict of interest requirements. No employee, officer, or agent may participate in grant activities if a real or apparent conflict of interest exists. No person with decision-making authority may benefit financially from the award of ESG or Challenge Grant funds. Organizations must maintain a written conflict of interest policy and disclose potential conflicts to the lead agency/CoC.

Match Requirements

- **Emergency Solutions Grant**: Subrecipients must provide a dollar-for-dollar (100%) match equal to the amount of ESG funds awarded. Match may be cash or in-kind (donated goods, services, or volunteer time) in accordance with HUD regulations.
- **Challenge Grant**: Subrecipients must provide a minimum 25% match of the amount of Challenge Grant funds awarded. Match may be cash or in-kind contributions and must be documented with signed letters of commitment on organizational letterhead.
- **All Match**: Contributions must be verifiable, properly valued, documented, and reported. Failure to maintain adequate match can result in repayment of grant funds.

Financial Management & Audit Requirements

Subrecipients must maintain accounting and financial management systems in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200 (Uniform Guidance) and applicable state requirements.

- Federal Audit Requirement (ESG): Any subrecipient expending $750,000 or more in federal awards during their fiscal year must undergo a Single Audit in accordance with the Uniform Guidance.
- State Audit Requirement (Challenge Grant): Any subrecipient expending $500,000 or more in state financial assistance during their fiscal year must comply with the Florida Single Audit Act (Section 215.97, Florida Statutes) and provide a financial audit conducted by an independent auditor.

Subrecipients expending less than these thresholds must submit their most recent independent audit, reviewed financial statements, or equivalent documentation of financial accountability.

All costs charged to ESG or Challenge Grant funds must be allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the approved project budget, and expenditures must be supported by appropriate documentation.

Nondiscrimination & Equal Access

Subrecipients must comply with all applicable civil rights requirements, including the Fair Housing Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and HUD's Equal Access Rule.

Programs must not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, familial status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.

Subrecipients must ensure meaningful access for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) and accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

Recordkeeping & Confidentiality

Subrecipients must retain program and financial records for a minimum of seven (7) years after grant closeout.

Client records must be maintained in a confidential manner and protected in accordance with federal and state law.

Programs serving survivors of domestic violence must comply with special federal confidentiality requirements and use a comparable database instead of HMIS.

Data Collection & Reporting

Subrecipients must participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), unless they serve a population prohibited from HMIS participation (e.g., domestic violence survivors).

Awarded applicants will be required to submit monthly reports to the CoC Lead Agency using reporting tools designated by the DCF (State Office on Homelessness). These reports will cover financial expenditures, match contributions, and performance outcomes.

Outcomes must include, at minimum:

- Reductions in the length of time persons remain homeless
- Increases in exits to permanent housing
- Reductions in returns to homelessness within 12 months
- Increases in income and access to mainstream benefits

Subrecipients must cooperate with monitoring, desk reviews, and site visits conducted by the CoC, lead agency, HUD, or DCF.

Other Federal & State Compliance Standards

- **Environmental Review (ESG only):** Any project involving rehabilitation, renovation, or conversion of a building must comply with HUD environmental review requirements (24 CFR Part 58). See Appendix __ for more information regarding the ESG Activities and Environmental Review Requirements.
- **Faith-Based Organizations:** May apply but must comply with federal requirements prohibiting the use of funds for inherently religious activities.
- **Subcontracting:** Subrecipients must directly administer ESG- and Challenge-funded activities. Subcontracting of grant funds is prohibited. Partnerships should be formalized through MOUs or Letters of Commitment, not subcontracts.
- **Termination & Grievance Policies:** Subrecipients must have written termination and grievance procedures consistent with ESG/Challenge regulations, ensuring due process protections.
- **Procurement Standards:** Subrecipients must follow procurement standards under 2 CFR Part 200 when purchasing goods or services with grant funds.

Submission Information

Submission Information

All proposals must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the requirements outlined in this RFP. Incomplete proposals, submitted late, or not formatted correctly, may be deemed non-responsive and will not be reviewed.

Submission

- Applicants may complete and upload all required documents via the Google Form link provided:
  https://forms.gle/jkckCo7PkBCCvoUk9

- Ensure that all sections are completed and required documents are attached before final submission.

- Applicants will receive an automated confirmation once the form is submitted.

Submission Deadline

- **All proposals must be received no later than Tuesday, September 30, 2025, at 5:00 PM.**

- Late submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances.

- Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals early to avoid last-minute technical issues.

Review and Selection Process

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP will undergo a multi-step review and evaluation process to ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency. The review process consists of a **Pre-Review for Minimum Threshold Requirements**, a determination of **Fatal Flaws**, and a full **Scoring and Selection Process** for proposals that advance to the CoC Leadership Council for vote.

Pre-Review: Minimum Threshold Requirements

Upon submission, proposals will be reviewed by staff to ensure they meet minimum compliance requirements before being forwarded for scoring. To advance, proposals must demonstrate the following:

- Submitted by the stated deadline and in the required format (PDF via email or uploaded via Google Form).

- Organized in the required order and accompanied by a completed Application Checklist.

- Signed by an authorized representative of the applicant organization.

- Applicant is an **eligible entity** (public or private nonprofit organization) with current 501(c)(3) status and active registration with the Florida Division of Corporations (Sunbiz).

- For ESG applicants: Active registration in **SAM.gov** with a valid UEI number.

- Proposal includes all required forms and certifications.

- Proposed budget is balanced, within funding limits, and adheres to caps (e.g., Administration ≤ 1.5%, HMIS ≤ 1.5%).

- Proposal demonstrates the required match commitment (100% for ESG; 25% for Challenge).

Only proposals meeting all threshold requirements will move forward to the scoring stage.

Fatal Flaws (Automatic Disqualification)

The following will result in immediate disqualification of an application from further consideration:

- Proposal received **after the submission deadline**.

- Proposal missing required signatures from an authorized representative.

- Applicant not eligible (e.g., not a nonprofit, inactive 501(c)(3), not registered with Sunbiz for ESG, or FDACS for Challenge).

- Proposal includes **ineligible activities or costs** (e.g., internet payment assistance, lobbying).

- Failure to provide documentation of the required match commitment.

- Budget exceeds allowable caps for Administration or HMIS.

Fatal flaw determinations are final and not subject to appeal.

Scoring and Selection Application

Proposals that meet threshold requirements will be forwarded to the **Project Review and Ranking Committee** for full evaluation. This committee, appointed by the CoC, will review, score, and rank proposals using the published scoring rubric included in this RFP.

Evaluation criteria will include, but are not limited to:

- Alignment with CoC Strategic Plan and HUD ESG priorities.

- Incorporation of evidence-based or innovative practices in project design.

- Organizational capacity and demonstrated past performance.

- Strength and quality of strategic partnerships.

- Measurable outcomes and evaluation plan.

- Reasonableness and cost-effectiveness of the budget.

- Compliance with ESG and/or Challenge Grant requirements.

The Project Review and Ranking Committee will prepare funding recommendations based on scores, available resources, and identified system needs. Final funding determinations will be approved by the CoC Leadership Council and, where applicable, submitted to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) for final approval on the subcontractor list by the CoC Lead Agency.

2025 Request for Proposals Timeline

Date	Time	Task
August 29th, 2025	5:00 PM	Opening Doors Released Request for Applications for Emergency Solutions Grant and Challenge Grant.
September 3rd, 2025	2:00 – 3:30 PM	Pre-Application Meeting (This meeting is optional, but recommended.) **Microsoft TEAMS meeting** Join on your computer, mobile app, or room device. Click here to join the meeting Meeting ID: 247 503 411 135 4 Password: yn2S7TE7
September 8th, 2025	5:00 PM	Deadline to Submit Written Questions
September 11th, 2025	5:00 PM	FAQ/Responses to Questions Published Posted on website; emailed to list.
September 30th, 2025	5:00 PM	Proposal Submission Deadline ~4.5 weeks after release. No late submissions.
October 1st, 2025	5:00 PM	Administrative Review of Proposals
October 2nd – 6th, 2025	8:00 AM	Evaluation and scoring of eligible proposals by Selection Committee. *Committee Discussion on 10/6 @ 3 PM*
October 7, 2025	11:00 AM	Leadership Council votes on Selection Committee recommendations.
October 7, 2025	5:00 PM	Applicant notifications sent
October 8th – 10th, 2025	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Appeals period
October 13, 2025	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Final awards publicly posted and contracts issued to awarded applicants.