

**New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
Division of Housing and Community Resources
Office of Eviction Prevention
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL – January 2024
(competitive)
FY24**

A. **Program Name:** Comprehensive Eviction Defense and Diversion (CEDD)

B. **DCA contact:** Dean Dafis, Esq., Director, Office of Eviction Prevention, Dean.Dafis@dca.nj.gov

C. **Purpose of the grant:**

To provide a comprehensive and efficient defense against eviction to at-risk low-income renter households by interconnecting two best practices in eviction prevention – resource navigation and diversion along with expanded access to legal advice or legal representation - into one stronger, more flexible, better coordinated, and immediate wrap-around intervention. Eligible tenants facing or threatened with eviction are paired up with resource navigators for social services support, case management, and immediate problem-solving intervention including flexible direct client financial assistance, and with access to counsel for quality brief legal advice or legal representation.

This RFP represents a renewal of the existing CEDD intervention program for another grant cycle of one year and provides opportunity to further expand on previous efforts and to collect more data about the efficacy of the program. Adjustments have been made to program requirements to better reflect needs, increase program capacity and efficiency, remove barriers, and generally strengthen immediate and collaborative support.

The RFP requirements and scoring criteria of submissions underscore the spirit and intent of this intervention model: housing first, human-centered/people over paper, immediate and flexible, creative, and resourceful problem-solving, coordinated, and collaborative support, diversion over protracted case management, in other words, a complete shift from legacy homelessness prevention models mired in complexity and bureaucracy.

D. **Important Dates:**

Application Due Date: **5:00 pm on February 23, 2024** completed and submitted electronically in SAGE
Award Notification: On or before March 6, 2024

E. **Available Funding:** Up to \$6.7 million is being allocated to the CEDD 2024 program.

Funds are being made available through a competitive Request for Proposals for New Jersey non-profit social services agencies and non-profit legal services providers with experience in eviction prevention, homelessness prevention/diversion, rapid rehousing, relocation, social services support,

case management, landlord-tenant court and tenancy litigation in NJ, and with the capacity to quickly hire and manage staff devoted wholly to this initiative and sufficient capacity to provide immediate and direct client financial assistance, and with the ability to regularly track, report, and submit intervention data inclusive of household demographics and housing / legal outcomes.

While available funding will not fund all the need in eviction prevention and defense, the grant will support the hiring, supervision, and integration of resource navigators throughout the landlord-tenant vicinages in NJ, additional funding by way of flexible direct client financial assistance to be utilized by resource navigators, and access to legal services.

F. Grant Term: February 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025

G. Eligible entities/applicants:

a) New Jersey nonprofit social services organizations experienced in eviction / homelessness prevention and diversion, tenant and landlord targeted outreach, case management, data tracking, reporting and retention, with the capacity to quickly hire and manage resource navigators working full-time on this intervention, and the administrative capacity to quickly process and distribute direct client financial assistance. Requirements include extensive experience and knowledge in the following areas:

- Rental assistance and homelessness prevention programs
- Homelessness prevention; relocation, rapid rehousing
- Landlord-tenant court procedure; NJ tenancy law; landlord-tenant mediation or counseling
- HUD-Certified Housing Counseling services
- Wrap-around case management services
- Crisis intervention
- Board of Social Services, Continuum of Care and other local support programs and providers
- Utility assistance, weatherization assistance, employment assistance, and other support resources
- Diversion
- Harm reduction
- Trauma informed service delivery
- Racial equity practices
- *Housing First* intervention
- Knowledge of and experience in using court databases (i.e. eCourts)
- Comfort in liaising with court personnel, the judiciary, and counsel
- Experience in using HMIS (Homeless Management Information System)

- Processing and issuing payments to clients
- b) New Jersey nonprofit legal services providers experienced in housing matters and in handling cases in landlord-tenant court. Services shall include, and experience is required in, all possible eviction and eviction-like matters, including ejectment actions, administrative actions that threaten housing stability such as Section 8/HCV hearings, the ability to handle appeals, housing authority actions, and habitability defenses or claims.

Non-profit legal services providers may include non-profit educational institutions with legal housing clinics who may apply individually or in partnership with another entity.

- c) Selected agencies must serve the entire court vicinage. Agencies may partner with other organizations to serve a vicinage, but one will be the lead agency in that service area.

Eligible entities may apply to offer services for one of the two interconnected program components or for both. Eligible entities may apply singularly, in partnership with another entity or as part of a group.

H. Ineligible Entities

- a. Entities listed on the DCA list of High-Risk grantees or, as applicable, current audit submission is overdue
- b. Entities listed on the state Debarment list, located at [Consolidated Debarment Search Results \(state.nj.us\)](https://www.state.nj.us/consolidateddebarmentsearchresults)

I. Eligible households/program participants:

Households in rental dwellings whose gross income is at or below the area median income and who are either facing eviction or threatened with eviction. The expectation is that most clients will have incomes at or below 80% of the area median income.

Eligible tenants may include hotel/motel residents (who would otherwise be protected under NJ's Anti-Eviction Act), tenants without written leases, sublease tenants, undocumented or under documented tenants, voucher program recipients, housing authority tenants.

Income eligibility screening shall be flexible, barrier free. For instance, in some circumstances, a tenant household income self-attestation will suffice in providing immediate problem solving and urgent intervention or diversion.

J. Eligible activities:

The program provides assistance through the following linked components:

- (1) RESOURCE NAVIGATION providing access to safety net services, rental/utility assistance, rehousing/relocation, and flexible direct client financial assistance; and
- (2) ACCESS TO COUNSEL - access to free and quality legal representation or brief legal advice.

K. Ineligible activities:

Activities not specifically approved through this application or subsequently approved in writing by DCA.

L. Requirements of applicants / Scope of Services:

a) Resource Navigation, Case Management, Diversion, Financial Assistance (flexible funds)

Social Service Providers will work with Legal Services Providers assigned to the same vicinage to set up a system of reliable communication and information sharing and joint intake and screening that is acceptable and workable to both entities. Resource Navigator social services providers working with Legal Services Providers assigned in the same geographic vicinity will divert eligible tenants through immediate problem solving and a holistic intervention strategy incorporating *Housing First, Harm Reduction, Trauma-Informed Service Delivery, and Racial Equity* practices in the creation of a housing action plan to stabilize housing and, if possible, move the household toward a permanent housing solution. Grantees will be routinely assessed for their ability to achieve these outcomes rather than on the array of services they have provided.

Flexible direct client financial assistance funds can be used to pay rental arrears and to secure relocation where necessary and possible. Specifically, flexible direct client financial assistance funds may be used for:

- Rental arrears*
- Relocation / rehousing: up to two months of rent for security deposit; utility deposits (up to 2 months for electric and gas); reasonable expenses associated with moving costs and furniture storage fees*
- Court fees: *Marini* bonds (for habitability claims), court costs, landlord fees, as reasonable and legally recoverable
- Urgent remedies: car repair, NJ Transit commuter pass (train, bus), urgent costs associated with past-due utility bill, child-care, medical, work/educational expenses, hotel/motel stays, and other necessary remedy to stave off an emergency and homelessness.

*Flexible direct client financial assistance funds may be used as supplemental rental arrears support to other available rental assistance programs or as the exclusive rental arrears source where necessary, meaning when all other available programs have been screened for and/or

exhausted or because using barrier free and flexible funds would provide an *immediate defense* to eviction, i.e., when the eligible household is facing a lockout immediately or has already been locked out.

*Flexible direct client financial assistance funds may be offered as an immediate or temporary solution until the person secures alternative housing on their own or is rapidly rehoused.

Ineligible flexible direct client financial assistance funds include the following:

- Mortgage costs or other expenses needed by homeowners for fees, taxes, or other costs of refinancing a mortgage
- Construction or rehabilitation
- Food
- Home furnishings
- Pet care
- Entertainment activities
- Cash assistance to program participants
- Discharge planning initiatives
- Aiding renters residing in a property owned by the grantee, sub-grantee or the parent, subsidiary or affiliated organization of the sub-grantee or a Board member
- Renter's or Homeowner's Insurance

Flexible direct client financial assistance funds shall be processed within seven (7) to fourteen (14) days. Their use shall be flexible, barrier free, and immediate in contrast to existing assistance funding sources requiring lengthy documentation and verification.

Flexible direct financial assistance funds are an impactful and powerful resource for CEDD providers in defending against eviction and access to such direct flexible funds further underscores the goal of diversion in this intervention model (in contrast to protracted case management), but they are not meant as another 'rental assistance program' nor to overshadow or substitute creative and resourceful resource navigation.

See section below for Resource Navigator / Social Services agency provider required deliverables.

b) Legal Services

Legal Services Providers will work with Social Service Providers assigned to the same vicinage to set up a system of reliable communication and information sharing and coordinated screening and support that is acceptable to both entities, and will evaluate case information for each admitted tenant, providing further guidance where appropriate and full legal representation, as needed. Legal Services Providers are responsible for coordinating and

providing legal services, screening tenants for legal services, educating tenants about their rights, and tracking case outcomes and court data. Legal services provider attorneys shall attend trials. Eligible tenants may require emergent Order to Show Cause assistance, representation in judgment appeals, in habitability defenses, ejectments, or administrative eviction-like actions. Eligible tenants may require the submission of promissory notes in non-payment of rent or rent increase eviction matters in coordination with their respective resource navigator partners to adjourn matters. See section below for Legal Services Provider required deliverables.

M. Resource Navigator / Social Services Provider deliverables include:

- a. Overseeing the integration and work of resource navigators in their respective vicinages where they will attend landlord-tenant court proceedings and serve as direct and immediate problem-solving case workers experienced and trained in anti-eviction resources and homelessness prevention.
- b. Creating an efficient and bilateral method in sharing necessary intake information with legal partners.
- c. Providing mobile phones and tablets for all resource navigators and CEDD supervisors in order to allow for communications with tenants, supervisors, and DCA staff. These numbers must be shared with DCA and it is expected that resource navigators will be reasonably accessible during business hours.
- d. Outreach to tenants who have received eviction notices based on court listings of new eviction filings.
- e. Being available in person at the courthouse, resource navigators will directly assist eligible households with rental assistance applications, eviction prevention household income self-certifications, access to legal services, mediation or housing counseling, homelessness prevention, relocation or rapid rehousing, housing navigator support, referring households to consumer debt and credit repair services, family support benefit applications, and disability, or healthcare related support, as necessary or appropriate.
- f. Case Management, which includes:
 - Arrangement, coordination, monitoring, and delivery of services to eligible households, including intake, tracking case outcomes (legal and diversion or case management), coordinating eviction docket with court personnel, monthly data reporting, household demographic reporting (demographic tracking including on household size, income, race, ethnicity, gender).*
- g. Resource Navigators will be the main point of contact for the tenant and will initiate referrals to other agencies then monitor eligibility decisions - rather than giving tenants contact information to do so themselves.
- h. Timely submission of Data Collection and Evaluation into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) – within 48 hours of contact - and the grant management database, SAGE.

- i. Using creative solutions to expediently prevent a household from eviction.
- j. Processing direct client flexible funds quickly and efficiently, with minimal documentation, to pay necessary arrears to prevent eviction. It is the responsibility of the grantee agency to keep track of flexible fund spending.
- k. Real-time regular reporting in HMIS of services provided, outreach, and case outcomes.
- l. Using the full weight of all the provider agency's resources and any resources available on the federal, state, and local levels.
- m. Maintaining regular communications with the Office of Eviction Prevention.
- n. Notifying the Office of Eviction Prevention of all challenges, concerns, questions, and issues regarding this grant.
- o. Maintaining documentation of real-time outputs and outcomes.
- p. Coordinating with other agencies in eviction and homelessness prevention within the service county and across county lines for households.
- q. Where available, connecting households facing judgments of possession to emergency rental assistance vouchers for rapid rehousing.
- r. Liaising with court staff including the landlord-tenant case management legal specialists and judges at trial.
- s. Liaising with DCA staff and court staff in self-certification database and eviction filing data matching.
- t. Liaising with local government and community organization representatives, such as the Board of Social Services and Continuum of Care, to identify potential resources and connect tenants to all available resources.
- u. Reporting monthly to the Office of Eviction Prevention via the Department's grant management system, SAGE which shall include aggregate data of households served, demographics, case outcomes, and narratives about successes and challenges (number of evictions averted should be included) – see Reporting Requirements section.
- v. Filing quarterly budget expenditure reports to the Office of Eviction Prevention via the Department's grant management system, SAGE.
- w. Real-time regular reporting of eligible household outreach, intervention, and case outcomes, including legal outcomes, into the Homeless Management Information System, HMIS – within 48 to 72 hours of initial contact.
- x. Direct tenant outreach and education through community group relationships at the neighborhood level in assigned geographies.
- y. Incorporation of existing strategic partnerships (i.e., via sub-grantee or affiliates) in prevention and diversion.
- z. Tenant support hotline.
- aa. Administering emergency fund assistance pursuant to flexible funding guidelines.
- bb. Adequate administrative support and managerial oversight. This includes an assigned CEDD supervisor who is available to resource navigators during working hours, tracks flex fund spending and promissory notes, and is authorized to make quick decisions in emergency cases.

cc. PROJECTED SERVICE DELIVERY MINIMUM: Resource navigators will be expected to conduct and record outreach calls/emails to *at least* 50 tenants per month, explaining the available service and sharing some additional information and resources (outreach and education admissions), AND provide case management services to 20-30 newly admitted tenants per month (case management admissions).

N. Legal services deliverables include:

- a. Tenant outreach to educate tenants about their rights, the eviction process, eviction prevention resources including the development of know-your-rights content, access to phone hotline or other direct contact via email or text to answer general inquiries and to refer tenants to counseling and mediation resources, as necessary.
- b. An efficient method to share necessary intake information with social service partners.
- c. Regular reporting of legal outcomes to social service partners for HMIS reporting
- d. Access to counsel available for consult during docket in Zoom breakout rooms or in person at court.
- e. Access to counsel brief legal advice for disputes with landlords that can be resolved quickly (and appropriately), and or where there are no viable defenses and diversion may be more appropriate.
- f. Full quality representation in cases with viable legal defenses including in non-payment and hold-over proceedings, habitability claims, Section 8, HCV disputes and other public assistance related matters that precipitate an eviction filing, illegal lockouts, Orders to Show Cause and eviction appeals, as appropriate or necessary.
- g. Where possible and necessary, eviction filing expungements or dismissals.
- h. Access to e-Courts and court docket two to three weeks in advance.
- i. Notice of program services to tenants.
- j. Intake and prescreening of eligible tenants.
- k. Notice to eligible tenants on the day of court to check in with program legal service provider immediately after receiving Harris instructions by presiding judge, as applicable.
- l. Notice to presiding judge and court clerk of program legal service provider tenant intake check in to ensure against any tenant default.
- m. Entering an appearance in cases going to trial where necessary and securing adjournments in those cases to ensure adequate case preparation.
- n. Adequate staffing to ensure access to counsel either during program special docket or daily docket.
- o. Staff attorney, legal assistant, and trained law clinic student support for case preparation and investigation.
- p. Managing attorney support for oversight, supervision, tracking case outcomes, preparing reports, and working in concert with Resource Navigator / Social Services Provider in required reporting.
- q. Administrative support for data analysis, court documentation, and day-to-day coordination.

- r. Monthly reporting to DCA of number of clients served, outcomes and challenges, and household demographics (via SAGE) – see Reporting Requirements section.
- s. Quarterly reporting to DCA of related expenditures and budget (via SAGE).
- t. PROJECTED SERVICE DELIVERY MINIMUM: 25-50 cases monthly per vicinage. Actual contractual service delivery will reflect the capacity and quality of proposed intervention and service delivery.

O. Required Trainings:

Each grantee agrees that staff will participate in all mandatory trainings and meetings. Trainings and meetings are to increase understanding of eviction diversion and of the specific intervention expectations of CEDD 2024 and its interplay with other aspects of case management and as part of a larger housing problem-solving approach to preventing homelessness. Before launch of the program, direct staff, supervisors, and leadership staff must agree to participate in a full day training session which will include elements of the following:

- a. Eviction Prevention and Diversion
- b. Reporting, including the use of the Homelessness Management Information System database (HMIS) and SAGE
- c. Harm reduction and Trauma informed service
- d. Landlord collaborations and landlord-tenant legal training
- e. Housing First
- f. Racial equity practice
- g. Available resources presentation

P. Threshold screening:

Applicants that do not meet these minimum standards will not be considered:

- **Valid registrations:**

- ✓ A SAMs registration noting that entity is not in a 'Debt Offset' status for owing funds to the federal government. www.sam.gov
- ✓ An active State Vendor number, as listed on NJStart.gov or NJ Division of Purchase and Property (state.nj.us).
- ✓ Not Listed on the State Debarment list, located at www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/treas/revenue/debarsearch.pl.
- ✓ An active account or exemption at the NJ Charities Registrations website at [Search For A Charity · Basic Portal \(state.nj.us\)](#)

- Applicants will comprehensively provide:

- ✓ a staffing organizational chart, new and current staffing capacities, case worker / legal services professional experience
- ✓ expected budget expenditures ✓ geographic vicinage capacity

- Applicants will clearly define and establish reasonable budgets in case worker/ legal services salaries, expenses related to the purchase of necessary technology, and administrative costs

Q. Qualifications required for applicant staff:

- 1) Resource Navigator provider staff must have completed or will schedule training through New Jersey Housing Mortgage and Finance Agency on the use of the HMIS database.
- 2) Resource Navigator provider staff must have demonstrated experience and knowledge of available resources at the local, state, and federal levels. Resumes for those who are working as resource navigators must be submitted as part of the application process, as well as a clear job description for positions to be filled.
- 3) Legal Services providers must have at least one year experience in landlord-tenant court in NJ.

R. Application Process:

Proposals must be submitted via SAGE @<http://dcasage.intelligrants.com> and must include the following information:

- A. Agency Description (services provided, contact information, Board of Directors)
- B. Proposed Program Description including process map of services (from referral to joint screening or intake to discharge)
- C. Program Objectives
- D. Scope of Services
- E. Contact Information
- F. Program Components
- G. Proposed Program Service Areas
- H. Program Personnel Listing and resumes of ALL staff who will be connected to the CEDD program
- I. Proposed Program Budget - **Administrative costs are limited to a maximum of 10% of the total grant award** (sample below)

Sample Budget: Comprehensive Eviction Defense and Diversion Program (\$520,000)	
Category	Amount
<i>Administrative (10%)</i>	\$52,000
Salaries	

Fringe	
Space Costs	
Operating	
Audit	
Other	
<i>Program (90%)</i>	\$468,000
Personnel	
Staff Salary (2 Full Time Resource Navigators)	\$100,000.00
Fringe (35%)	\$35,000.00
Operational Expenses	
Mobile Phones/Tablets for Resource Navigators	\$1000.00
Flexible Funds	\$327,000
NJ HMIS	\$2000.00
Laptops/Ipads for RNs	\$1000.00
Transportation	\$2000.00

Required Application Attachments:

- Signed Application Cover Page
- Organizational Chart
- By-Laws
- Board Meeting Schedule
- Tri-partite Board of Compliance Certification
- Certification Regarding Debarment and Suspension
- Certification Regarding Lobbying
- SAM.gov Certification
- IRS Determination Letter, if applicable

- Partnership Listing and a list of services provided through such partnerships
- Staffing organizational chart
- Partnership listing
- Consultant and/or subgrantee relationships

S. Reporting Requirements:

Grantees must submit to monthly performance reports in SAGE throughout the grant period, regular and updated reporting in HMIS, and quarterly reporting of expenditures in SAGE via the submission of an FSR (Financial Status Report).

The monthly performance reports in SAGE for this program will include the following:

- number of all household admissions for the month (outreach & education and case management) per vicinage
- number of all discharges for the month per vicinage
- housing outcomes of all admissions for the month per vicinage
- legal outcomes of all admissions for the month
- amount of flex funds used for the month per vicinage

T. Review Criteria

The Office of Eviction Prevention will review and evaluate applications based on a **100-point grading system**. Applications are scored as follows:

1. **Demonstration of sufficient capacity to undertake and effectively implement proposal – up to 50 points**

Applications clearly demonstrating greater and more efficient capacities in administration and intervention, including in hiring/staffing, intake/screening, direct client financial assistance, real-time data entry, tracking and reporting, and in immediate problem-solving strategies will be graded higher in terms of capacity and effectiveness. The following criteria will be used to determine *Sufficient capacity and effectiveness*:

- a.) Demonstration of length of experience in anti-eviction work, homelessness diversion, eviction prevention, landlord-tenant court/tenancy, family assistance programs across local, state, and federal agencies, and in all current homelessness/eviction prevention programs or resources local, state, or federal (i.e., HPP, HPRP, HCV, ESG, EHV, SRAP, ERAP/EPP, Sec 8).
- b.) Demonstration of existing regional or statewide level work in area of proposed activities.
- c.) Demonstration of hiring and staffing readiness for immediate program engagement and of capacity to quickly hire and onboard additional staffing solely devoted to this

intervention. An immediate launch capacity is preferred in this program and demonstrated capacity to meet the needs of eligible tenants in multiple geographies.

d.) Detailed description of proposed diversion, case management, and legal defense methods. For resource navigators, a heavier output on diversion where possible is preferred over prolonged enrolled client length of stays in case management.

e.) Detailed description of service delivery projections. Applicants who can demonstrate capacity and ability to go beyond minimum service delivery requirements will score higher in application evaluation. Include the information you will communicate to outreach/education admissions.

f.) Demonstration and description of proposed service delivery process – a detailed process map - which includes information about screening methods, sample intake forms, information about mediation or intervention methods, the number of client engagements from screening to discharge, the process flow of services provided from screening to discharge, and legal advice/ legal representation performance data in provider existing or similar program intervention. Simpler, less bureaucratic, or administratively burdened screening and intervention methods will score better in application evaluation.

g.) Demonstration of administrative capacity to oversee the program, to aggregate data about it, and to process, track, and distribute direct client financial assistance **within seven (7) to fourteen (14) days**. Include the procedures you will use for writing and tracking promissory notes.

h.) Understanding of the importance and value of data tracking in a statewide program, and demonstration.

i.) Demonstration of the ability to complete data reporting within 48-72 hours of contact.

j.) Demonstration of proposed geographic capacity including information about strategically leveraging partnerships or affiliations to meet geographic capacity.

2. **Ability to implement the proposal in a timely manner – up to 15 points**

Timeliness will be evaluated in:

- a.) agency hiring, staffing, and onboarding
- b.) intake/screening in clients and processing paperwork
- c.) client outreach and intervention
- d.) client financial assistance processing
- e.) real-time data tracking and reporting

3. **Clear and reasonable budget proposal – 25 points**

A reasonable budget is one in which proposed costs are eligible, specific, and clearly defined. The budget should be tailored to the needs of this intervention, including full time resource navigators who will be paid a minimum annual salary of \$60,000 plus benefits. Please note: There will be no exceptions made for the salary/benefits requirement.

4. Sample Presentation – 10 points

Applicants agree to make presentations about the program at community or other events open to the public where people at risk of eviction and/or landlords are present. Applicants are required to submit a sample presentation that includes the following:

- a.) Name of agency and program
- b.) Description of program intervention or defense strategies including information about methods
- c.) Process map of program service delivery (from referral to discharge)
- d.) Identification of relevant partnerships and other programs to which clients might be referred
- e.) Contact information

Applicants with questions about this RFP may email Dean Dafis, Esq., Director of the Office of Eviction Prevention in the Division of Housing and Community Resources at dean.dafis@dca.nj.gov.