



**FY2021 Continuum of Care
Renewal Project Application**

Agencies that apply for funds through the CoC Funding Process must complete an application for each program in E-snaps. In addition, agencies must complete this Renewal Project Application for each program.

This form is due on **October 4, 2021 at Noon** by e-mail to hsc@cityofmadison.com. **Late or incomplete applications will not be considered. Please do not wait until the deadline to submit the application. No grace period will be granted.** If you have questions, please contact Torrie Kopp Mueller, tkoppmueller@cityofmadison.com or call 608-266-6254.

Agencies with more than one CoC project must submit a separate form for EACH project.

Agency Name	Dane County Human Services/Housing Initiatives, Inc.
Project Name	Rental Assistance

Project Contact Name	Brad Hinkfuss
Phone Number	608.620.1751
E-Mail	bhinkfuss@housinginitiatives.org

Funding Request	1,173,514
Proposed # of Units	84
Proposed # of Beds	116

Please answer the following questions:

Project applications will be reviewed based upon adherence to the HUD CoC Program Interim Rule, FY21 CoC NOFA, and FY21 CoC NOFA Policy Priorities, as well as results of the Project Performance Scorecard.

1. Describe the grantee's (and any sub-grantee's) experience in administering this type of program. Describe the qualification of the staff assigned to the proposed program, including their knowledge and experience.

Dane County Department of Human Services (DCDHS) provides a comprehensive array of services and programs to over 65,000 customers in Dane County each year. The department employs almost 700 full-time staff and contracts with purchase-of-services with 139 organizations. It operates an annual budget currently of over \$232,000,000. The Rental Assistance Grant represents just one valuable component within this huge array of public services. It is a critically valuable piece that addresses a particularly vulnerable population: the homeless and mentally ill. This is where Housing Initiatives, Inc. (HII) aligns and partners with DCDHS as a subrecipient of the grant.

Housing Initiatives, Inc. (HII) has a 28-year history of providing permanent supportive housing (PSH) for persons who are homeless and have severe and persistent mental illnesses. This mission speaks directly to multiple

priorities within the Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in Dane County, WI (2016). In short, the funds made available through Rental Assistance directly and exclusively support the homeless and mentally ill. HII achieves this primarily through the 151 units in 33 properties that the agency owns and operates within the City of Madison, scattered throughout the city. Clients are integrated into established neighborhoods at a more personal, non-institutional level. Clients have multiple opportunities to reach and interact with agency staff, who recognize when clients may be experiencing a mental health crisis. This facilitates quick intervention from experienced case worker staff from HII or other partner agencies that provide mental health services.

In more limited cases, clients can also secure housing from private landlords within Dane County. At the time of this application, HII has clients residing in the cities of Madison, Fitchburg, Sun Prairie and Middleton, the village of DeForest and the towns of Madison and Burke. Over the past 10 years, Housing Initiatives has partnered with 50 private landlords using a team approach between Housing Initiatives, landlords and case workers to monitor and intervene with clients as needs arise.

The cornerstone of HII's success is the staff and its experience administering the program and working with the clients they serve:

Bradley Hinkfuss: *Mr. Hinkfuss has led the agency as Executive Director for the past three years. His diverse history includes leading many programs while working at Porchlight, Inc. for 16 years, as well as 2 years at Domestic Abuse Intervention Services, working in urban development in Illinois, and working overseas with the US Peace Corps in the construction of affordable housing. He currently serves as President of the Dane County Homeless Services Consortium.*

Gayle Boushon: *Ms. Boushon serves as the Director of Finance and Business Operations. She has a long history of working in public and private accounting firms. As a CPA with a long history in accounting, she also has extensive experience with the issues particular to non-profit organizations. The fiscal acumen she brings to the table helps HII manage its grants, finances and internal operations very effectively.*

Director of Client Services (Currently hiring): *The timing of this application just so happens to coincide with the hiring process for a new Director of Client Services. The person who just departed this position in September 2021 (Loreen Gage – MS, Human Services), built a solid team of case workers over a two-year period. That team is carrying on with supportive services unabated while HII hires a new services director.*

Mary Carrasco-Schoer: *Ms. Carrasco-Schoer very recently joined the HII team as Property Manager. Although she is new to the agency, Ms. Carrasco-Schoer brings considerable experience in managing properties and clients that receive Section 8 and Section 42 tax credits. Her business acumen (MBA, BA, Real Estate) is further bolstered by many years of direct supportive service work with vulnerable and recovery populations.*

Additionally, Housing Initiatives has three supportive services staff that collectively serve the Calypso Rd. Housing First project, as well as the broader array of scattered site PSH apartments:

Krishna Reategui-DeWitt (BA, MS – Social Work): *Ms. Reategui brings a master's degree in social work, along with significant work with the Veteran's Administration Homeless Program. Additionally, she has worked in the psychiatric unit of local hospitals.*

Kevin Scott (BS-Psychology): *Mr. Scott comes to HII with several years' experience working in different capacities with Tellurian's Adult Residential Program which focuses on serving clients with co-occurring conditions of mental health and substance abuse.*

Kevin McGettigan (MFA, BA): *Mr. McGettigan has very extensive experience in working in the local mental health recovery system with the Dane County Care Center and Tellurian. As a Certified Peer Specialist and Recovery Coach, his years of experience add depth, expertise and knowledge of local systems to the HII services team.*

Housing Initiatives, Inc. has administered the Rental Assistance program (formerly Shelter-Plus-Care) since 1995. That year, HUD awarded a five-year grant totaling \$917,000 (\$194,200 per year). Of the thirty-nine clients initially housed with that grant, four clients are still housed with Housing Initiatives.

Since then, the program has grown to be funded at \$1,173,514 for the 2021 renewal. The contract in the past has stipulated that the Rental Assistance program provide rental assistance for qualified clients in 84 units. Due to the way Housing Initiatives collects and leverages rental income, as well as improving program stability by housing clients in properties that HII owns and operates, HII has been able to consistently house above and beyond the HUD contract requirements. In fact, for the previously completed program year the program served 176 clients - at 134% of the unit utilization rates and at 130% of the bed utilization rates.

The Rental Assistance grant is a Continuum of Care program and is subject to HEARTH Act regulations. Housing Initiatives has administered the program for over 26 years, is in good standing with the Department of Housing and Urban Development with no unresolved issues or conditions.

2. Please describe how your project takes proactive steps to minimize or overcome barriers to housing retention.

HII has four FTE case workers on staff who work directly with any and all clients to support them in whatever it takes to retain their housing. This starts on day one, when clients who were literally homeless the day before meet with the property manager and a case worker to prepare to move in to their new PSH apartment. Identifying potential issues at the time of move-in helps case workers devise service plans tailored to the unique needs of each individual. Based on individualized plans, HII staff work to build broader support networks around any client in need.

As part of their service approach, HII staff receive training to achieve accreditation to work with clients to register for additional services through Dane County Comprehensive Community Services (CCS). This opens another avenue for service provision by HII staff and many other agencies and service workers utilizing the CCS system.

In 2019, HII increased service worker staffing to four FTE positions for the first time. This staffing increase dramatically improved supportive service provision at all housing locations. The agency adheres to a Housing First approach, and supportive service staff employ a harm reduction model in providing client services. In doing so, they offer multiple options to help clients retain housing and improve their situation. Examples include direct support for emergent needs, personal service plans, flexible repayment plans, payee arrangements, and application to other community resources. The staff also engages in ongoing professional training, and actively collaborate with the broader Dane County and Madison homeless services network.

The extent of collaboration and networking with other supportive services agencies cannot be overstated. In particular, our supportive service staff work to build relationships with other support agencies in a never-ending quest to provide more targeted and effective services for HII clients. These services include supports such as in-home health care needs, AODA treatment, education, mental health care, crisis intervention, elder abuse support, domestic violence survivor support, probation & parole collaboration, and many more. With clients fresh out of homelessness – oftentimes for several years – and compounded with severe mental illness, it truly takes a collective effort to stabilize them and build long-term solutions.

3. In your last operating year:

a. How many households exited the program?

In the last operating year, 9 households left the program

b. Why did the households exit? (i.e. one was terminated from the program & one moved into subsidized housing & one was evicted):

- **4 left of their own volition for permanent, independent housing**
- **3 transferred within the CoC to partner agencies**
- **2 died**

c. If the participant(s) was evicted, please list the reason?

No clients were evicted during the past program year

d. Did the program attempt an agency transfer for any of the leavers? If so, what was the outcome?
Yes, there were 3 transfers of clients to other partner agencies. Of those, 1 maintained housing with the target agency and is still housed; 1 left the partner agencies of their own volition after several months; 1 was terminated and exited from the program after several months. Although we do not maintain active contact with these past clients, it is our understanding that they remain connected with supportive services through other agencies and are seeking new housing options.

e. How many new households entered the program?

Eight (8) clients entered the program in the last operating year.

f. How many transfers were accepted into the program?

There were no transfers into the program in the last operating year. All additional clients were new entries through the Coordinated Entry process.

4. Was the program found to be in non-compliance with the Written Standards by the CoC from September 1, 2019-Present? If yes, describe the nature of the issue and how the issue has been addressed.

No, the Rental Assistance program was not found to be in non-compliance with the Written Standards at any point from 2019 to the present.

5. Describe your agency's efforts to improve service quality and outcomes for the program. Please include how you solicit and incorporate feedback from program participants.

Over the past two years, HII has engaged in much more assertive outreach with all clients. This is done primarily through the supportive service staff reaching out to all clients to ascertain their well-being and potential need for new or different services. The start of the pandemic created the ideal setting to adopt this approach since our staff were temporarily restricted from meeting directly with clients in person, inside. HII also sent out multiple direct mailings to all clients to communicate information about the pandemic and HII support services. In addition, the Property Manager now sends out much more regular direct correspondence to update clients concerning their compliance standing, upcoming renewals, and any other matter of concern. The agency also maintains regular office hours with ample opportunity for clients to call, drop in, or make an appointment to meet with staff to discuss any issue. Collectively, these multiple avenues for soliciting and receiving feedback have resulted in the agency having much closer relationships with all clients. Ultimately this helps tremendously with service quality and outcomes since HII staff are learning about needs and problems proactively when they can still devise strategies to address them.

6. What percentage of staff members working for this program identify as Black, Indigenous or a Person of Color? (Info only, to be scored in FY22)

For the last program year, 11% (1 of 9) staff members identified as Black.

7. How does this program work against systematic racism and other structures of oppression? (Info only, to be scored in FY22)

HII takes systemic racism and other forms of oppression very seriously. This is evident on the front end by the adoption and prominent display of policies embodied in the agency Affirmative Marketing and Tenant Selection Plan. This directive is carried out in part with our partner agencies, such as the Institute for Community Alliances that runs the Coordinated Entry program. HII is committed to taking new clients directly from Coordinated Entry or the Veterans Administration irrespective of race, nationality, or other protected classes. The agency is committed to taking new clients as they arrive, irrespective of personal attributes. To some degree the agency relies on the good efforts of its partners in selecting those clients.

At a systemic level, HII staff participate within the CoC to identify and address system-wide issues that may be furthering systemic racism, and then working with other partner agencies to meaningfully address those concerns. One such issue became apparent in the past year when a data analysis showed that a disproportionately low

number of Black people were being housed relative to the total number of Black people within the Coordinated Entry system. This resulted in a focused group to explore and adopt a different means of evaluating and making decisions about housing placements.

Internally, HII staff have engaged in all-staff meetings in which the staff discussed ways in which existing practices might have unintended racist effects and implications. Having such open discussions has been helpful in keeping the issue at the forefront of staff perspectives. It has also resulted in staff seeking out specific in-service training to help build best practices and an understanding of how racism potentially impacts clients by virtue of agency policies & practices. This is an ongoing training issue for HII.

8. How is this program and its practices culturally responsive to the population(s) who participate? (Info only, to be scored in FY22)

This program is culturally responsive to the participating populations by taking a highly individualized approach to each client. Since all clients at HII present with histories of chronic homelessness and severe mental health conditions, staff have developed an approach of building service and interaction plans with clients that are relationship-based, and that consider the mental health, physical health, trauma, cultural disposition, and behavioral history of each client. Cultural responsiveness is an integral component of this approach. Even so, staff are committed to making this an issue of ongoing training and policy development. They will continue to seek out training and educational opportunities, and look for ways to better integrate those practices into an approach that already strives to be culturally responsive.

Alignment with Housing First Principles

1) Please attach your agency and/or project written policies or procedures that **clearly demonstrate participants are NOT SCREENED OUT based on the following criteria**, and indicate the document and page number where the panel can find each provision.

Please Note: if a policy or procedure applies to all CoC-funded projects or agency-wide, you may submit one copy per agency. If you have different policies or procedures for different projects or project types, submit one copy of each relevant policy and specify to which project or projects each one applies.

	Name of Document/File	Page Number	Name of Project(s) (or "All Projects")
Having too little or no income	Housing Initiatives Handbook for Tenants and Clients	13	All Projects
Active, or history of, substance use or a substance use disorder	Housing Initiatives Handbook for Tenants and Clients	13	All Projects
Having a criminal record *	Housing Initiatives Handbook for Tenants and Clients	13	All Projects
History of domestic violence (e.g., lack of a protective order, period of separation from abuser, or law enforcement involvement)	Housing Initiatives Handbook for Tenants and Clients	13	All Projects

*1A) Please note if there are specific criminal records the program denies for, what they are and the reason for denial.

- 2) Please attach your agency and/or project written policies or procedures that **clearly demonstrate participants are NOT TERMINATED from the program for the following reasons**, and indicate the document and page number where the panel can find each provision.

Please Note: if a policy or procedure applies to all CoC-funded projects or agency-wide, you may submit one copy per agency. If you have different policies or procedures for different projects or project types, submit one copy of each relevant policy and specify which project or projects each one applies to.

	Name of Document/File	Page Number	Name of Project(s) (or "All Projects")
Failure to participate in supportive services	Housing Initiatives Handbook for Tenants and Clients	13	All Projects
Failure to make progress on a service plan	Housing Initiatives Handbook for Tenants and Clients	14	All Projects
Loss of income or failure to improve income	Housing Initiatives Handbook for Tenants and Clients	14	All Projects
Being a victim of domestic violence	Housing Initiatives Handbook for Tenants and Clients	14	All Projects

Please provide any information that will give context to any areas project scored low on for performance.

This application scored low in only one area of the CoC Project Performance Scorecard, which was the "# of Core Committee meetings agency represented at in the last 12 months." This is simply attendance at one subset of meetings, Core Committee, within the CoC. As an applicant, Dane County only attended 3 out of 15 such meetings in the past 12 months. This resulted in a -10 as part of the overall score for Dane County and the Rental Assistance Program.

We request that the review committee members view this omission and the associated scoring penalty in context. We recognize that Core Committee is an integral group within the CoC and that continued attendance and participation is important. However, during the 12 months in question Dane County underwent a significant restructuring and reassignment of staff when the Department of Housing Access and Affordability was newly created. This led to staffing changes, with new people assuming new roles. There was the inevitable loss of some information in the transition. The low attendance for the 12 months in question was not intentional disregard, it was a transitional oversight. Attendance was also the result of diminished staff capacity in the HAA Division due to the division's lead role in the community's COVID-19 pandemic response. In past years, Dane County has consistently been a regular presence at Core Committee meetings, and even chaired those meetings at times.

Meanwhile, HII staff were solidly represented at Core Committee meeting throughout this same time period (14 of 15 meetings). It was even a HII staff member who co-chaired Core Committee through much of this time. Given that Dane County and HII have a long history of working cooperatively on the Rental Assistance Project, the interests of the project were solidly represented. Furthermore, Dane County staff had already stepped up to consistent participation at Core Committee before the Performance Scorecard was even released. Dane County staff are committed to regular attendance and active participation moving forward. Given the past commitment, explanation for uncharacteristically low attendance temporarily, and commitment to future involvement, we request that the review committee members not allow this single scoring metric to weigh too heavily on an otherwise excellent program.