

Coronavirus Relief Funds for Housing & Homelessness
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
[Adapted from a May 22 document by the VHCB]

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 laid bare the fragility of the state's emergency shelters and underlying lack of affordable housing. There is broad alignment within the housing community on the need, at this unique moment in time, to rebuild the emergency-to-permanent housing system and the necessary actions and funding. Roughly 1,600 households (2,000 individuals and families, including 300 children) are currently in motels and temporary locations and will soon be displaced as the economy reopens. They cannot return to crowded shelters and overflow facilities.

Due to the pandemic, many Vermont tenants have seen a loss or reduction of income and are unable or struggling to pay rent. As a result, landlords across the state are not receiving full rental payments necessary to cover the costs of building ownership and upkeep. Rental arrearage assistance is needed to prevent a wave of evictions and potential increase in homelessness when the current eviction moratorium ends.

Total cost in Coronavirus Relief Funds is \$96.15 million (including foreclosure assistance, \$102.15M).

THE PROPOSALS

\$42 M for a Rental Housing Stabilization Fund

Proposed by the Administration as part of the economic recovery package

Up to 3 months of emergency rental assistance and rental arrearage payments to property owners suffering from non-payment of rent, to prevent tenant evictions and prevent an increase in family homelessness. Vermont Legal Aid and the Vermont Apartment Owners' Association put forth a proposal that increases the duration of assistance and scope of the Administration's proposal and details programmatic guidelines. They propose that the Vermont State Housing Authority administer the \$42 million fund statewide. The Administration originally indicated it would be introducing a phase 2 recovery proposal for \$90 million in foreclosure assistance, but is now proposing an additional \$6 million for mortgage foreclosure prevention and assistance.

\$8 M for a Re-Housing Recovery Fund

Proposed by the Administration as part of the economic recovery package

Emergency housing rehab grants and forgivable loans to make up to 250 units of existing housing available to re-house homeless families experiencing homelessness. Targeted to existing substandard privately-owned rental properties. Ongoing funding for services would be required for some families.

\$35.4 to Secure Housing in High Need Areas

Proposed by the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

\$21.7 M for capital grants to housing non-profits to secure and rehab 200 new units. Provide safe shelter and facilitate transitions to permanent housing for homeless with priority on families with

children. Based on AHS data and actual project potential. Targeted to areas with high need and a lack of available units. Services and rental subsidies will be required for these households. If they cannot be funded through AHS, VHCB would use an additional \$14.4 M to pre-capitalize project reserves to cover subsidies, future capital expenses and services for 5 years making the total \$35.4 M.

\$3.5 M for Housing First Services

Proposed by Pathways Vermont

Expand Housing First to cover the state, including the counties not currently served and increasing capacity in counties where it is already established. Helps 200 additional Vermont families find existing housing. Pathways estimates needing \$2.5 million for Housing First services and an additional \$1 million in rental subsidies to maintain housing for the new population. Ongoing funding would be required.

\$1.5 M for Emergency Shelters

Estimated by VHCB

Capital improvements to enhance safety to comply with VDH Guidance and capacity for increased #s of homeless.

\$550,000 for Legal Services to Prevent Evictions and Foreclosures

Proposed by Vermont Legal Aid

Increase staffing and capacity through the end of the year to provide legal services to help homeless Vermonters secure housing and prevent low-income renters and homeowners from losing housing.

\$400,000 to Establish a Statewide Rental Housing Registry

Proposed by the Rental Housing Advisory Board

Using information from the Landlord Certificates filed with the Tax Department, as well as other available sources, create a statewide publicly accessible data base of all rental housing in Vermont. Knowing where all the rental housing is in the state could have helped house some of the 2,000 homeless Vermonters living in motels during the pandemic.

\$4.8 million to Create New Housing in Mobile Home Parks

Proposed by the Housing Foundation, Inc.

Rapidly deploy up to 47 two-bedroom manufactured housing units into existing vacancies HFI has in seven different communities scattered around the state.