

FY25 RFP 1 – RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Housing Program Application for CPA Funds

Date of Application October 5th, 2024

A. Agency Information

1. Agency Name and Address:
Somerville Homeless Coalition
1 Davis Square, Somerville, MA 02144
2. Non-profit designation (if applicable): Yes ☒ No ☐
3. Contact name, phone number and email address for program manager:
Gabriela Caruso-Greaves, (617)623-6111 ext. 107, gcaruso@shcinc.org
4. Contact name, phone number and email address for contract manager:
Michael Libby, (617)623-6111 ext. 110, mlibby@shcinc.org
5. Contact name, phone number and email address for invoicing:
Demi LaMonica, (617)623-6111 ext.105, dlamonica@shcinc.org
6. Agency's DUNS # 84-740-8804
7. Agency's Tax ID # 04-2897447

B. Program Information

8. Amount of request (CPA): \$250,000
9. Describe details about the number of households or individuals you intend to serve.

SHC is requesting \$200,000 of tenant based rental assistance funds with \$50,000 of staffing/administrative funds to support the operations of the program. With this amount of funding, SHC anticipates serving 3-4 households, roughly 6 participants total, for 12-24 months each. The number of households and total participants will be adjusted based on tenant rental contributions, unit sizes needed and whether every household needs a full 24 months of assistance. While this is a smaller cohort than in the past, with the steep increase in rental costs in Somerville, this is what is realistic based on the cost per household. With the existing funding that was rolled over from the last contract, SHC will still be able to enroll a "full cohort" of roughly 6 households.

10. Timeframe for performance: July 2025 - June 2028

11. Describe the need within the community for the type of program proposed. List other agencies that may be addressing it. If there are differences between this proposal and the operation of other agencies administering this or a similar program, please note the differences. Is there a gap in funding to meet the need within the community? If so, describe how the amount/size of the gap is determined/measured.

Housing in Somerville has become increasingly unaffordable as the City has grown in recent years. As a result, families facing displacement have very few options to secure affordable housing in the near future. This is where the PASS program is able to immediately step in, keep a family in their home and in their community, and allow that family time to explore a variety of other housing options while providing them with an opportunity to stabilize their finances and resources.

SHC is the main hub in Somerville for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness and on the verge of homelessness. Between a variety of services including a Street Outreach program, Day Shelter (Engagement Center) and the Project SOUP Food Pantry, SHC is able to easily identify households who are in need of the PASS program and will be able to succeed in this unique, time-limited rental assistance environment. SHC has been operating the PASS program for many years. Recently, the Community Action Agency of Somerville has also started administering this program.

12. Describe other sources of funding available for the type of program proposed. Describe the degree to which your agency is leveraging other sources.

The other funding source that can be leveraged to operate a PASS program in the City of Somerville is HOME. SHC has traditionally alternated CPA PASS and HOME PASS cohorts, maximizing the number of households that can be assisted while recognizing that both sources are limited in availability.

SHC also administers a variety of short term rental assistance programs including Emergency Solutions Grant funds and the Flex Funds administered by the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. These resources assist households who need 3-6 months of rental assistance; however, it is not a sufficient source for providing stabilizing assistance for 12-24 months and also doesn't support the same level of intensive case management that allows PASS to be successful.

13. Provide the income level of targeted beneficiary/beneficiaries. See Appendix 2 for Fiscal Year 2025 income limits.

Traditionally, the PASS program has served households within Somerville that are at or below 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). We anticipate that the most households served in this project will also have incomes below 60%; however, if CPA funds are awarded this would allow SHC to serve households up to 100% AMI. The higher AMI amount would allow SHC to serve participants in the moderate income range should they apply and meet all other eligibility criteria. This ensures that PASS resources are available to a wide range of Somerville residents who could be successful in the program.

14. Description of who the program will benefit (veteran population, chronically homeless, fragile elderly, youth aging out of foster care, etc.) and please note the extent to which beneficiaries are Somerville residents):

The PASS program is designed to work with Somerville residents experiencing a housing crisis. These households have limited incomes and do not have the resources to maintain safe and affordable housing. The population that has most benefited from the PASS Program are those who became in danger of losing their housing due to burdensome rental increases and/or losses in income. CPA funds will allow this program to target low/moderate income households that struggle to make ends meet and feel pressure to leave Somerville. By making housing affordable with two years of rental assistance, our goal is to help people living in Somerville to stay in their community where they have established critical supports for themselves and their children.

15. Will your agency provide case management services and quarterly follow-up with clients after assistance is provided using other sources of funding beyond CPA funds? Please describe.

SHC is committed to ensuring that the PASS program is successful, which includes offering case management supports to program participants. SHC utilizes a progressive engagement model which is client focused and allows an individual to determine what level of support they would like to receive. SHC's role is to encourage, provide resources and be available to meet the needs of the clients, on their terms. Given the web of funding sources that are utilized by many households in Somerville who may qualify for the PASS program, various funding sources are available to support the case management component of the project separate from the staff time spent administering the PASS program.

Program Impacts

16. Describe the program's performance objectives, and how outcomes of the program will be measured and tracked:

Outcomes for the PASS program are measured by our success in preventing households from falling into homelessness, moving them out of homelessness, and/or our ability to assist participants in maintaining affordable housing. We utilize Vesta, a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), to track all of our participants' progress in meeting milestones and achieving outcomes. This system tracks various demographic information, details on household benefits, income and special needs and also allows SHC to run customized reporting to analyze the program's performance.

17. Note if your agency has previously been funded by the Trust and, if yes, a concise summary of the number of residents served in the prior fiscal year and the impact of the program:

SHC has been funded numerous times by the Trust. A snapshot of assistance provided in FY24 is below.

CPA PASS Program - 5 households served, total of 11 individuals

One household moved on into Permanent Supportive Housing and two households were able to sustain their rent independently with their increased income.

Leasing Differential - 11 households served, total of 16 individuals (total of 11 units)

Households were able to remain in their Permanent Supportive Housing units and SHC was able to sustain the rental payments above and beyond the HUD funding provided and limitations of local Fair Market Rents.

SAHTF Flex Funds - 96 households served, total of 212 individuals
\$650,454.86 in client funds approved between mid February 2024 and the end of June 2024 to stabilize households in place or assist in relocating to prevent homelessness.

Tenancy Stabilization Program - 15 households served, total of 36 individuals
\$44,007.90 in client funds approved during the fiscal year.

Financial Information

18. Please attach a complete program budget and include the status of all funding sources (note any funds pending or already received) and all sources and uses and the amount of funds that will be leveraged.

Attached. Other sources that will be used to support activities are either privately fundraised dollars or case management funding from other homelessness prevention programs for which the clients qualify and are receiving services from.

19. Describe whether the proposed activity will be carried out with or without any other funding from the Trust.

We are committed to operating the PASS program because we recognize that homeless prevention is integral in mitigating the adverse effects of the affordable housing crisis in Somerville. While SHC relies on its strong partnership with the City of Somerville and its Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) to operate PASS, the agency is continuously making efforts to locate alternative streams of funding, including utilizing Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Rapid Rehousing/Prevention funds from the City of Somerville and the Commonwealth, to ensure sustainability of programs similar to PASS. The challenge is that these other sources typically have more restrictive timelines (ie. maximum of 6 months assistance) or do not have the financial resources to operate longer term programs that require 1-2 years of rental subsidies.

20. If the agency has operated this program in the past, what is the average amount that each tenant contributes to their rent?

This figure changes drastically from household to household. The current PASS tenant selection plan allows for households of varying situations to qualify for the program. We typically see households from two different streams. The first are households who have income and will be increasing their income, allowing them to afford their housing after assistance ends (these households tend to contribute more per month. The second are households who are highly likely to receive a subsidized housing offer during their PASS enrollment (ie. approved for emergency housing through SHA, etc.) where PASS provides an important bridge. These households tend to have much lower income and therefore contributions are limited.

While there are no currently enrolled CPA PASS clients, SHC does have four households enrolled in our HOME funded PASS program. The average monthly contribution of these households is currently \$898.00 per month.

21. If the agency has operated this program in the past, what proportion of clients served were tenants in market-rate housing? What percentage of clients served were tenants in affordable housing?

One of the challenges of the PASS program is identifying units for clients to lease up with their PASS vouchers. This is not only challenging due to limited payment standards, but also due to landlord discrimination of those with rental vouchers. As such, SHC has had a lot of success with placing PASS participants in affordable housing through partners such as Kent Street and Somerville Community Corporation. This also provides a more accessible pathway to affordability to the client post PASS assistance as the unit they are living in will retain a certain level of affordability even without the voucher. Of the 9 households served between CPA and HOME PASS in the past year, 5 were in affordable units and 4 were in market rate units.

22. If the agency has a current contract to operate this program, what is the current balance on the contract. Provide a time frame for when you anticipate the remainder of the funds will be spent down, and what is the basis for your expectation. How many households do you expect to serve with the balance?

SHC had a CPA PASS contract that ended on June 30, 2024. In November of 2023, SHC requested that any unexpended funds be rolled over into a new 3 year contract. Based on the households assisted, it was anticipated that there would be enough funding remaining to support 1-2 new households for up to 24 months if the funds were put into a new contract period. The Trust approved this request so SHC currently has \$97,671.14 (\$83,468.62 client funds; \$14,202.52 admin funds) in a new CPA PASS Contract. With this new request, SHC would be to enroll an entire CPA PASS cohort for a full 24 months of assistance.

Organizational Capacity

23. Experience and capacity of the agency and staff – please describe staff available to work on the project (and note if staff need to be hired) and describe any similar successful programs operated by the agency and how they relate to other programmatic activities. Does your agency have adequate staffing to manage the program's administrative requirements?

The key staff members involved in achieving the goals and outcomes set out in this proposal are our Director of Stabilization, Jessica Saravia, our Homelessness Prevention Program Manager, Gabriela Caruso-Greaves, and our Homelessness Prevention Case Manager, Lila Panico. The team will be supported by our Director of Programs, Brielle Calderan.

While both Jessica and Lila are new to SHC, we are confident that they will be able to operate the PASS program with the extensive structure that has been established over the past few years by Gabriela and Brielle. SHC has invested a significant amount of time in building out the application and approval process for the PASS program. Additionally, the Director of Stabilization role is a new position to our leadership team that was conceptualized with the goal of increasing our capacity around case management support and effective interventions to lead to client self sufficiency.

SHC has sufficient staffing to operate this program and will be able to provide case management in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

24. Is your agency monitored by HUD or another funder for housing programs?

Yes ☒ No ☐

25. If yes, has the monitoring resulted in any currently open findings?

Yes ☐ No ☒

26. Does your agency agree to in person monitoring by OSPCD staff when/if possible?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Compliance with Requirements for Use of Funds

27. Does your agency agree to share completed client application documents with the Housing Division? These documents will include those used to establish eligibility for each client according to program requirements, and to those used to determine the sustainability of each client's tenancy after assistance is provided.

Yes ☒ No ☐

Does your agency agree to administer the program in accordance with Trust guidelines, and if necessary, agree to work with OSPCD Housing to implement any new guidance or to ensure uniformity?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Does your agency agree to in person monitoring by OSPCD staff when/if possible?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Furthering the City of Somerville's Housing Plans and Objectives

28. Explain how the proposed activities/project addresses a need and/or strategy in City of Somerville's 5 Year Consolidated Plan (Can be viewed online at www.somervillema.gov).

Our Homeless Prevention program directly addresses many of the goals outlined within the proposed Somerville Consolidated Plan (2024-2028)- specifically goal #6 of Mitigating and Ending Homelessness through homelessness prevention and goal #5 of Supporting Vulnerable Populations. Our program provides critical services to the City's low and moderate income residents, particularly the homeless and at-risk of homelessness population. We serve a heterogeneous population, including those within the immigrant community, and we provide services to low and fixed income seniors, the disabled, a diversity of races and ethnicities, victims of domestic violence and many other clients with varying demographic characteristics.

Rapid Response helps families avoid homelessness through a combination of outreach, financial assistance, connections to education and employment resources, health services and other basic necessities. This is accomplished through one-on-one case management meetings and targeted referrals to mainstream resources. SHC provides opportunities for households to maximize income via connections to education and work training opportunities that help them fulfill their educational and employment goals. Our staff also helps households secure and maintain affordable housing via individual personal skills and support network development.

29. Explain how the proposed activities/project addresses a Goal or Action Step in the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan (Can be viewed online at www.somervillema.gov).

The PASS project advances several Housing Goals outlined in the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan. Within the goal of Increasing the Proportion of Affordable Housing, the plan outlines the importance of "creating and maintaining programs that allow people of low- and middle-incomes to live in Somerville". This is exactly what the PASS program does as it not only provides an immediate solution to remain in Somerville but it also provides support and resources for households to increase their income and identify other housing opportunities within the city that will allow them to be stabilized in their community long term, decreasing the prevalence of displacement.

CPA PASS - Program Budget				
July 2025 - June 2028 (3 year term to accommodate for the application/lease up timeline for 2 year vouchers)				
Description	Total Expense	CPA PASS Request	Other Sources	Notes
Tenant Based Rental Assistance	\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00	\$0.00	
Director of Stabilization (0.06 FTE)	\$10,620.00	\$10,620.00	\$0.00	
Program Manager (.13 FTE)	\$16,520.00	\$16,520.00	\$0.00	
Case Manager/Administrator (0.3 FTE)	\$54,880.38	\$12,860.00	\$42,020.38	Case management time supported by other eviction prevention grants and private fundraising
Administration	\$14,426.39	\$10,000.00	\$4,426.39	Administrative expenses supported by private fundraising
	\$296,446.77	\$250,000.00	\$46,446.77	