

CITY OF SOMERVILLE

MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



2025-2026

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Administration of Flex Fund and Somerville Voucher Incentive Program (SomerVIP) Fund

BID NUMBER # 25-Flex-SomerVIP OHS

RFP INFORMATION

Issue Date: Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Application Deadline: 4:30 pm on Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Submit applications to bmoreira@somervillema.gov and eshachter@somervillema.gov

CONTACTS

Bia Moreira, Deputy Director
City of Somerville Office of Housing Stability
Office: 857-270-3929
Email: bmoreira@somervillema.gov

Ellen Shachter, Director
City of Somerville Office of Housing Stability
Office: 617-625-6600 Ext. 2580
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LEGAL NOTICE
City of Somerville
Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD)
Office of Housing Stability (OHS)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS - RFP # 25-Flex-SomerVIP OHS

The City of Somerville Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) invites sealed proposals to administer the Flex Fund and Somerville Voucher Incentive Program (SomerVIP) Fund.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) package for a contract to administer the Flex and SomerVIP Funds will be posted and available for download on the City of Somerville website starting **Wednesday, April 23, 2025** at <https://www.somervillema.gov/OHS/25-Flex-SomerVIP-RFP/>
Print copies are available upon request to Bia Moreira bmoreira@somervillema.gov

Interested parties should email Bia Moreira bmoreira@somervillema.gov and Ellen Shachter, eshachter@somervillema.gov stating their intent to submit a proposal and posing any questions they might have regarding this RFP **using the subject line, "Questions RE: Flex-SomerVIP Funds RFP."** Responses to questions will be shared with all organizations indicating such intent to submit. **The deadline for indicating intent/posing questions is May 5, 2025.**

To be considered for funding, proposers must submit an electronic PDF file containing the proposal package by email to bmoreira@somervillema.gov and eshachter@somervillema.gov
no later than **4:30pm on Wednesday, May 14, 2025**. Please use the **subject line "Proposal in Response to RFP to Administer the Flex and SomerVIP Funds"**

Thomas Galligani, Executive Director,
Somerville Office of Strategic Planning and Community
Development 617- 625-6600 x2531,
tgalligani@somervillema.gov

A. INTRODUCTION

The City of Somerville is seeking proposals from qualified agencies to administer two programs:

- Somerville Voucher Incentive Program (“SomerVIP”)
- Flex Fund (formerly “Flexible Housing Stabilization Assistance Program” or “FHSAP”)

A total of \$200,000 is available. Funds will be split evenly at first, but reallocation between programs is permitted by written agreement of the parties. Up to 15% of the total funds may be used for administrative costs.

As elaborated upon in Appendix B of this document, Flex Fund resources are intended to be used to enhance the housing stability of income-eligible Somerville residents who would otherwise be at risk of displacement from their housing or unable to timely transition from an unstable or unsafe living situation to more appropriate housing, and who, due to eligibility or other constraints or limitations, are unable to timely access other sources of financial assistance needed to achieve such housing stability.

As elaborated upon in Appendix C of this document, SomerVIP resources are intended to be used to provide an incentive payment to a landlord and/or realtor/broker for the purpose of facilitating a first-time lease-up in a Somerville apartment of a Somerville household using a Section 8 or other housing voucher. The program aims to reduce barriers to utilizing rental subsidies with private landlords in Somerville. The SomerVIP helps voucher holders secure new tenancies in Somerville or remain in their current units when a new voucher would otherwise be insufficient to prevent displacement. Tenants do not need to be currently homeless or unstably housed to qualify.

Award determinations for SomerVIP assistance will be made by the administering entity, in accordance with the guidelines spelled out in Appendix C.

B. RFP CONTACT

All inquiries and proposal submissions must be directed to:

- Bia Moreira
Deputy Director, Office of Housing Stability
Email: bmoreira@somervillema.gov
Phone: 857-270-3929
- Ellen Shachter
Director, Office of Housing Stability
Email: eshachter@somervillema.gov
Phone: 617-625-6600 x2580

Any oral communication is considered unofficial and non-binding to the City. After the proposal deadline, applicants should not contact the RFP contact or any other City official or employee regarding their proposal, except to respond to a request by the RFP contact.

C. TIMELINE

Wednesday, April 23, 2025	RFP Released
4:30PM Monday, May 5, 2025	Deadline for Statement of Intent & any Questions Bia Moreira bmoreira@somervillema.gov and Ellen Shachter, eshachter@somervillema.gov
4:30PM Wednesday, May 14, 2025	Proposals Due
Friday, May 23, 2025	Anticipated Award of Grant
July 1, 2025	Grant Agreement Start Date
June 30, 2026, with extensions subject to mutual agreement by the City and Awardee, and subject to future years’ funding/appropriations.	Grant Agreement End Date

D. SCOPE OF WORK

The contracted agency/entity will be responsible for administering the funds available through the SomerVIP and Flex Fund, in collaboration with the OHS, and pursuant to the policies and procedures described herein; provided, however, that said policies and procedures may be periodically updated by the OHS in consultation with the contracted agency/entity. The contracted agency shall perform functions which include the following components. Proposers may suggest alternative methodologies if they believe such methodologies would be more appropriate.

1. Outreach

Conduct outreach to eligible renters and landlords, following a plan developed with OHS and partners.

2. Approval Submission and Documentation

- a. Verify the applicant household's financial and other eligibility for assistance.
- b. Verify that the application includes sufficient information about the type/amount of assistance needed and the reason(s) such assistance is needed.
- c. Verify that the application includes any other required information.

Submit completed applications for Flex Fund assistance to a Panel for a final determination regarding the approval and amount of assistance to be awarded. The contracted agency/entity must maintain records of each decision, including the outcome of panel votes and any accompanying rationale or comments, for auditing purposes.

The PANEL includes staff from OHS, Cambridge & Somerville Legal Services, Community Action Agency of Somerville, Somerville Community Corporation, and Somerville Homeless Coalition.

3. Bi-Monthly Progress Reporting

Submit progress reports every other month, using an OHS-approved template. Reports must separately summarize:

- Flex Fund requests, awards, and denials, and include agreed-upon demographic data, and track housing outcomes.
- SomerVIP Fund awards and denials, agreed-upon demographic data, and housing outcomes

4. Fund Disbursement

Issue initial payments for approved assistance and request reimbursement from the City. Payments are usually made to landlords, realtors, or other third parties. In certain cases—such as when third-party documentation is unavailable or would jeopardize a tenancy—payments may be made to tenants. Required documentation includes:

- a. A copy of the payment and its purpose (e.g., rent, moving expenses, repairs);
- b. Certification that funds are necessary to prevent displacement or support rehousing;
- c. A signed tenant agreement if direct payment is issued;
- d. Record of approval.

Payments should be issued within three business days of approval or as soon as possible.

5. Monthly Invoicing

Submit monthly invoices to OHS for reimbursement of expenses and administrative fees.

6. Program Performance Review

Meet with OHS, upon request, to evaluate the program's performance and suggest improvements.

7. Staffing and Operational Requirements

The agency must designate one or more staff members to carry out the responsibilities outlined in the Scope of Work, with appropriate supervision and access to standard office resources, including phone, internet-connected computer, copier, fax, and mailing services. Staffing levels—and use of in-house or contracted interpretation services—must be sufficient to deliver services in the languages needed to serve the client population effectively.

E. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

To apply for this RFP, you must submit the following:

Section I – Narrative Response (max 10 pages)

- Organization info: name, address, EIN/DUNS, contact
- Proposed implementation plan: staffing, timeline, methods
- Outcomes and performance measures
- Capacity to meet or exceed eligibility and evaluation criteria

Section II - Budget (max 5 pages)

- Budget and rationale
- Job descriptions for grant-related roles
- Additional costs (above and beyond award funds)

Section III – Attachments

- Organizational chart
- Financial policies
- Certificate of Good Standing

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Use 12-point text
- Arial font
- Double spaced
- Number each page of the proposal

F. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

An electronic PDF of the proposal package must be emailed no later than 4:30pm on Wednesday, May 14, 2025 to Bia Moreira bmoreira@somervillema.gov and Ellen Shachter, eshachter@somervillema.gov. Please use the subject line “Proposal in Response to RFP to Administer Flex & SomerVIP Funds.” Timestamps from emails will be used to certify timely submission. It is the sole responsibility of the proposer to ensure that the proposal arrives on time. Late proposals will not be considered.

Hardcopies of the proposal are NOT required, but can be mailed to Bia Moreira, Somerville OHS, 50 Evergreen Ave., Somerville MA 02145 (**in addition to electronic submission**), in a clearly marked envelope that includes the proposer Agency’s Name and Address and the notation “Proposal in Response to RFP to Administer Flex & SomerVIP Funds”.

G. COMPARATIVE CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed and rated using a uniform evaluation tool (below) for quality of answers to the proposal questions. The review team will consist of OHS staff and interested partners without a financial interest in the RFP.

Applications will be rated based on the strength of the proposal -- including overall program description, staffing and supervision plan, tracking and reporting on clients served, coordination with other programs, and readiness to proceed -- as well as the applicant’s organizational experience and capacity. This includes experience successfully managing similar programs and demonstrated capacity to complete timely, accurate, and compliant invoicing, and including a strong track record of meeting contract and reporting requirements.

The City will only award a contract to a responsive and responsible Proposer. Before awarding the contract(s), the City may request additional information from the Proposer to ensure that the Proposer has the resources necessary to perform the required services. The City reserves the right to reject any and all proposals if it determines that the criteria set forth have not been met.

The Comparative Evaluation Criteria set forth in this section of the RFP shall be used to evaluate responsible and responsive proposals. The Comparative Evaluation Criteria are:

Scoring:

- 0 – Did not mention in the proposal or acknowledged organization would not perform this task
- 1 – Referenced in proposal, but did not fully describe or communicate in a clear, reasonable manner
- 2 – Description in proposal met all criteria requested in the question
- 3 – Proposal illustrated in detail the requested information; narrative was thoughtful, well-defined, and logical; and past performance demonstrates success in this area

Description	Score (0-3)
Outreach Plan: Organization has experience conducting outreach to tenants and landlords, particularly those at high risk of displacement or housing instability. Proposal outlines a clear plan to coordinate outreach efforts with OHS and community partners.	
Approval Submission and Documentation: Organization has experience verifying eligibility for housing-related assistance and compiling complete documentation for program approvals. Proposal outlines a clear process for submitting requests and maintaining records in compliance with audit requirements.	
Bi-Monthly Progress Reporting: Organization has experience collecting and reporting program data, including demographic information and housing outcomes. Proposal describes a clear approach for using an OHS-approved reporting template and maintaining consistent reporting practices.	
Fund Disbursement Process: Organization has demonstrated capacity to issue timely payments and maintain documentation of expenditures. Proposal outlines internal processes to ensure funds are disbursed efficiently, with appropriate approvals and safeguards.	
Monthly Invoicing and Financial Administration: Organization has a strong track record of submitting timely, complete, and accurate invoices. Proposal demonstrates administrative capacity to manage funds, track expenditures, and comply with invoicing and reimbursement requirements.	
Program Performance Review and Responsiveness: Organization has experience participating in performance reviews and adapting programs based on feedback. Proposal reflects a willingness to engage with OHS on continuous improvement and program evaluation.	
Staffing and Operational Capacity: Organization has adequate staffing, supervision, and operational infrastructure to implement the program. Proposal demonstrates access to appropriate office resources and the ability to provide services in the languages spoken by the client population.	

APPENDIX B*

Guidelines for the Use of the Flex Fund

The OHS has developed the following guidelines for the Flex Fund. It is the intent of the City that these requirements may be revisited by the City in consultation with the contracted agency/entity during the course of the funding cycle if changes are warranted. The requirements are as follows:

- 1) Eligible applicants who are renters must have income under 100% of Area Median Income (AMI). Eligible applicants who are homeowners seeking mortgage or other related assistance must have income under 140% of AMI. Income shall mean anticipated income that may reflect loss of hours or anticipated loss of hours that will last one or more months. Exceptions can be made by the PANEL in compelling circumstance including but not limited to high out of pocket medical or child care expenses.
- 2) FHSAP funds will only be paid if (1) those applying are not eligible for other state or federal grant stabilization or rehousing funds available through similar programs such as RAFT, Emergency Solutions Grant and Community Preservation Act funds and/or decisions on applications to such other similar programs would be likely to take too long to achieve the housing stability goals for which payment is being requested and/or seeking financial assistance from such other sources is deemed by the PANEL to be inadvisable for other reasons or (2) funds are needed from the FHSAP in addition to those available through other resources described herein.
- 3) There will be a funding cap of \$5,000 paid per family per twelve-month period to prevent displacement or homelessness or to achieve re-housing.
- 4) While fund uses are flexible, funds can only be expended where the Panel determines that but for the requested funding, the family would be at risk of displacement or unable to successfully relocate after housing instability, receipt of a mobile housing voucher or other similar circumstance. The Panel may, but is not required to, condition payment on the degree of sustainability of a tenancy going forward and may require, where reasonably affordable and the applicant has funds available, that the applicant contribute to payment of items described in subparagraph (5) below.
- 5) The person or agency referring the applicant, if any, shall explain in the request for funding what, if any follow-up services they believe are necessary to help the tenant remain housed, and how those services will be supplied (e.g., in-house by the referring provider, or pursuant to a referral from the referring provider). If there is no apparent entity that can perform these tasks, the contracted agency/entity shall seek the assistance of the Panel in developing a suitable plan to ensure access to the necessary stabilization support.
- 6) In cases where an applicant is an active client of the agency that has a representative serving on the PANEL, the representative shall recuse themselves from decision-making related to that applicant's request. This is to ensure fairness, transparency, and to avoid conflicts of interest.
- 7) Allowable uses for the funds include, but shall not be limited to:
 - a. Rental arrears;
 - b. Moving expenses, including first month's rent, last month rent, one-month security deposit, charges by a moving company, moving truck rental fees, truck fees for picking up donated furniture, realtor/broker fees;
 - c. Car repairs where a car is essential to maintaining employment necessary to pay housing costs;
 - d. Unpaid non-rent charges on a tenant rent ledger such as water and sewer, late fees, court costs and attorneys' fees;
 - e. Big chore cleaning/dig-outs where there has been a notice to quit a notice of private conference or similar written notice of the need for significant cleaning/de-cluttering to avoid eviction;

(continued)

*In the grant agreement, Appendix A will be the Scope of Services

- g. Payment of housekeeping service to preserve the tenancy of a person with disabilities (or a person over age 60 with health or medical conditions that prevent them from adequately maintaining their housing) for up to six months, where out-of-pocket payment is unaffordable (rent plus utilities plus housekeeping would exceed 40% of net income). The referring agency must agree to assist applicant with applying for ongoing housekeeping services through Mass Ability or other agency that provides housekeeping services for people with disabilities or seniors with limiting medical/health conditions;
- h. Work authorization renewal if needed to continue working and to remain housed;
- i. Mortgage arrears where homeowner has received a notice of intended foreclosure, and the homeowner is working with a mortgage foreclosure prevention agency or agrees to work with a mortgage foreclosure prevention agency to the extent that such services are identified and available;
- j. Damage to an apartment caused by (1) someone other than the persons currently living in the household; or (2) a person in the household who is disabled and after the incident relating to the damages has engaged in or agrees to engage in appropriate treatment and/or services; or (3) payment is necessary to avoid eviction or achieve rehousing;
- k. Prospective rent to address what is anticipated to be a short-term lack of funds caused by such factors as temporary health emergency, loss of employment but strong work history, etc. and/or where gap funding is needed until applicant obtains a housing subsidy or access to affordable housing AND there is a reasonable likelihood of obtaining such a housing subsidy or access to affordable housing or access to another source of rental assistance before the gap funding ends;
- l. Utility arrears where there is a shut off notice or, in the absence of a shut off notice, no other source of assistance for curing arrears is available and the agency has assisted with applications for utility discount and enrollment in applicable arrearage management programs. This provision can be changed by mutual agreement of the City of Somerville and the agency selected to administer the Flex Fund, provided that the change is in writing. This change will not require an amendment of this contract; and/or
- m. Other costs as determined by the Panel necessary to retain housing stability or to assist with rehousing.

APPENDIX C

Guidelines for the Use of Somerville Voucher Incentive Program (SomerVIP) Funds

The OHS has developed guidelines for the SomerVIP. It is the intent of the City that these requirements can be revisited by the City in consultation with the contracted agency/entity during the funding cycle if changes are warranted. The requirements are as follows:

1. Incentives in the following amounts shall be available to assist a tenant with (1) a first time lease up with a landlord which allows them to relocate and/or ******(2) a first time voucher-assisted lease up in place where lease up is not otherwise possible. These incentives shall include:
 - a. Landlord incentive payment of \$2,000 for a one or two bedroom lease-up;
 - b. Landlord incentive payment of \$2,500 for a three or more bedroom lease-up;
 - c. If no realtor payment is necessary for lease-up, an additional landlord incentive of \$1,000 for a one or two bedroom apartment and \$1,250 for at unit with three or more bedrooms;
 - d. Payment required by realtor for lease-up of up to one month's rent;
 - e. Additional realtor incentive of \$500 for lease-up;
 - f. Reimbursement of up to \$500 to pay for repairs necessary to pass inspection prerequisite to voucher use.
2. Funds will be allocated on a first come first serve basis. A commitment of funds will not be made until a Request for Tenancy Approval form and related Section 8 documents are signed. Funds will only be PAID if the unit is approved and leases for the unit and a HAP contract are signed.
3. Funds will only be available to Somerville residents leasing up in units within the City of Somerville.

****/ a first-time lease arrangement means a lease arrangement between a voucher-holding household and the owner of that unit, provided that said owner has not leased said unit to a voucher-holding tenant for at least three years, and provided further that the City and the entity administering the SomerVIP Fund may, by mutual agreement, amend the definition of a first-time lease arrangement if such amendment proves necessary and appropriate.**