



System-wide Diversion RFP

1. Background Information

The Dallas and Collin Counties All-Neighbors Coalition has set goals for effectively ending Veteran homelessness, and significantly reducing chronic unsheltered, youth, and family homelessness. Our community has implemented core strategies to enhance our ability to provide immediate access to low barrier permanent housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. To continue making progress toward these goals, the All Neighbors Coalition has made it a top priority to scale Diversion across the homeless response system over the next two years. This intervention intends to both increase available space in shelters so more people can come inside, while helping newly unhoused people rapidly resolve their housing crisis.

2. General Overview

The All-Neighbors Coalition is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to fund agencies to deliver the Systemwide Diversion Initiative. Eligible agencies are those representing high-volume Coordinated Access System (CAS) Access Points or agencies located in underserved areas within the Dallas and Collin Counties Continuum of Care (CoC), which is **defined in the next section.**

The goal of the Diversion Initiative is to end an individual or family's experience of homelessness as quickly as possible while empowering them to regain stability. The emphasis is on securing safe, appropriate options in community rather than an emergency shelter stay, whenever possible. This limits the trauma of homelessness while supporting the availability of limited shelter beds for those most in need. The All-Neighbors Coalitions' Diversion Workgroup piloted and evaluated Diversion interventions, and applied lessons learned to develop a standardized Diversion Program Model that aligns to best practice and guides implementation.

3. Key Terms

Below are definitions for key terms used throughout the RFP.

- a. **Coordinated Access System (CAS):** CAS, is a community response to end homelessness that accounts for the diversity of needs of people experiencing homelessness and urgently responds to these needs with housing solutions. CAS has an easily accessible set of Access Points equipped to effectively

- assess the needs of individuals, match people to an intervention to end their experience of homelessness and rehouse them as quickly possible.
- b. **High-Volume Access Point:** A High-Volume Access Point is an already established CAS Access Point that has a history of assessing at least 100 households per year.
 - c. **Underserved Area:** As a result of an equity audit, the All Neighbors Coalition's CAS Workgroup has identified geographic areas within the Continuum of Care (CoC) where there are no or very limited CAS Access Points as compared to the number of people experiencing homelessness that were residing in these locations during the most recent Point in Time (PIT) Count. Those areas include a 10-mile radius of the following zip codes: 75069 (McKinney), 75006 (Carrollton), 75061 (Irving), 75040 (Garland), 75050 (Grand Prairie), 75217 (Balch Springs), 75216 (South Oak Cliff), 75232 (South Dallas)
 - d. **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS):** HMIS, is a local information technology system used to collect data from service providers serving individuals or households experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
 - e. **Flex Fund:** The Flex Fund pays for minor but impactful fees that can end a person's homelessness. It is a funding source for singular costs that stand in the way of clients obtaining housing.
 - f. **Housing Problem Solving:** Housing Problem Solving (HPS) is a creative, strengths-based conversation that helps people explore all possible pathways to resolve their current housing crisis without needing ongoing shelter or a housing resource from the homelessness response system. An HPS resolution is achieved when a household has been safely diverted or rapidly exited from the homelessness response system.

4. Systemwide Diversion Program Model

Diversion is an intensive, short term service intervention that targets individuals and families at the front door of the homeless response system who have just lost their housing. Drawing on creative problem solving and participants' strengths, Diversion helps households quickly identify immediate housing solutions, and when necessary, connect to services and financial assistance. The goal is to help participants avoid entering shelter or experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and to ensure the experience of homelessness is as brief as possible.

The Initiative is structured in alignment with the All Neighbors Coalition's standardized Diversion Program Model which is outlined [here](#).

5. Funding Available

The Systemwide Diversion RFP combines \$2.1 million annually in Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding from two CoC Program Projects, * as well as private funding raised for the All Neighbors Coalition Flex Fund.

The anticipated grant term will be 1 year starting February 1, 2024, with an option for ongoing renewal.

Housing Forward anticipates awarding up to 11 FTE under this RFP. Each agency will submit a budget proposal with their application using the template provided in the below section, which outlines the funding parameters for each budget line item.

*Funding availability is contingent on final execution of the CoC Program Grants with HUD.

6. Systemwide Diversion Initiative Award Parameters

The Systemwide Diversion Initiative provides funding for both supportive services and flexible financial assistance.

Supportive Services:

Housing Forward seeks applications from agencies to deliver Diversion services. Diversion staff are funded to work at [Coordinated Access System \(CAS\)](#) Access Points. There are two distinct Diversion roles agencies can apply for through this RFP.

Role Description and Responsibilities.

1. **CAS Assessors:** CAS Assessors serve as the “front door” of the CAS system, providing CAS assessments virtually and in person. Assessors can be mobile, to meet clients where they are (at unsheltered or sheltered locations), or they can be located at a physical location where people experiencing homelessness seek services. CAS Assessors are often the first point of contact for people in crisis. Assessors engage in housing problem-solving conversations with people experiencing homelessness, conduct CAS assessments, and serve as the main point of contact for clients throughout the CAS process. Responsibilities include but are not limited to:
 - a. Engaging in client-led housing problem-solving conversations
 - b. Providing initial screening to determine homeless status and immediate needs
 - c. Completing the CAS Program Enrollment in HMIS
 - d. Uploading existing and relevant critical documents to HMIS, providing referrals and services to obtain any missing critical documents
 - e. Providing solution-focused crisis intervention and provide relevant connections to community-based support
 - f. Completing flex-fund requests to facilitate financial assistance disbursement

- g. Providing warm connection to Diversion Case Manager when household needs short-term case management to successfully resolve their housing crisis
- h. Completing quality, complete, and timely HMIS data

2. **Diversion Case Managers:** Diversion Case Managers work with individual households to explore and pursue immediate housing solutions. Each case manager will provide housing-focused support to a caseload of approximately 30 households per month.

Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- a. Negotiating a return to previous housing
- b. Housing search assistance to relocate into a new housing unit
- c. Mediation with family, friends, or landlords to preserve existing housing
- d. Completing flex-fund requests to facilitate financial assistance disbursement
- e. Completing accurate, timely, and complete HMIS data including program enrollments, case notes, and services
- f. Providing short-term case management to resolve household’s housing crisis

The table below outlines the staff roles and award parameters for each category.

Role	Award Parameters
CAS Assessor	Housing Forward will award: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 FTE for general CAS Access points • 1 FTE for a Youth-specific Access Point. An Access Point at a new location will be prioritized for funding. A minimum of 1 FTE will be awarded to each agency.
Diversion Case Manager	Housing Forward will award: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 FTE for existing, high-volume CAS Access Points (as defined in Section 3) • 2 FTE for new CAS Access Points in underserved areas (as defined in Section 3) • 2 FTE for an Access Point whose populations served includes families with children or/and survivors of domestic violence Each High-Volume Access Point awarded must have at least two FTE dedicated to providing Diversion Case Management. Therefore, applicants must either apply for 2 FTE through this RFP or utilize a combination of new and existing staff.

	A minimum of 1 FTE will be awarded to each agency.
--	--

Financial Assistance:

Agencies delivering Diversion interventions also have access to financial assistance for Diversion clients through the Flex Fund. By design, this funding is meant to be flexible to meet the unique needs of each household. Eligible costs include a variety of expenditures that are directly related to removing barriers to housing for Diversion clients. This includes the cost of:

- Rental Assistance for up to 3 months
- Credit repair costs
- Transportation or car repairs
- Rental arrears or utility costs
- Move-in costs, security deposits, furniture, moving costs, etc.

Financial assistance will not be awarded directly to agencies. CAS Assessors and Diversion Case Managers will draw down funds through the existing Flex Fund payment process. Housing Forward will approve and provide payment directly to vendor, or through agency reimbursement.

7. Applicant Requirements

Diversion is designed to immediately address the needs of someone who has become homeless and is seeking assistance from the homeless response system. As such these funds are to provide Diversion at the front door of the homeless response system, which is at a designated Access Points for the Coordinated Access System (CAS). Eligible applicants include the following:

- Agencies representing an existing, high-volume CAS Access Point, or an agency located in an underserved area (as defined in Section 3) that agrees to work with Housing Forward to become an Access Point for the system within 30 days of the award.
- Agencies that agree to:
 - Deliver services in alignment with CoC Housing First principles.
 - Fully participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
 - Deliver services in accordance with the All Neighbors Coalition [Diversion Program Model](#).
 - Participate in regular coordination and case conference meetings with other Systemwide Diversion staff.
 - Attend required annual training to include topics such as, but not limited to, HMIS, CAS, Housing Problem Solving, and Housing First Essentials.
- Agencies must meet the following financial management thresholds:

- Agencies must have the ability to execute a cost reimbursable contract.
- Agencies must have completed an independent audit or a review of certified financial statements within the last 18 months.

8. Selection Criteria

Applications containing all required items and submitted by the deadline will be reviewed and scored based on the selection criteria outlined in the Systemwide Diversion Scorecard which can be found [here](#).

Selection Criteria	Total Points
Agency Experience	20
Financial Management Capacity	20
Program Design	30
Promoting Equity and Inclusion	30
TOTAL	100

9. Submission Instructions

All applicants must attend a mandatory RFP information session on November 8, 2023. Register for the virtual RFP information session [here](#).

Applications are submitted through AmpliFund which is linked [here](#).

Applications must be submitted along with all supporting documentation no later than 9 PM CST on November 21, 2023.

Please reach out to amber.austin@housingforwardntx.org if you have questions.