

WITH YOU WHEN IT COUNTS

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:

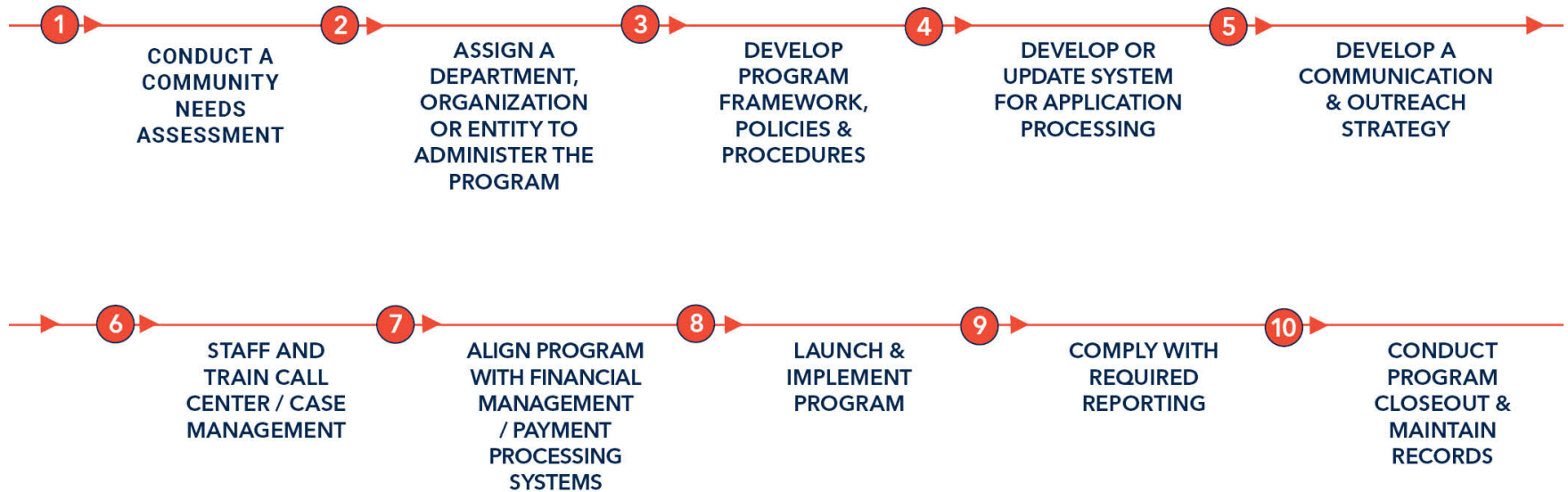
10 STEPS FOR
ADMINISTERING A
SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

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CONDUCT A COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Estimate the need:

- Rental population and characteristics
- Average rents
- Unemployment data
- Data from existing housing assistance programs
- Engage local stakeholders to add depth and ground-truth your understanding

Determine how much of the need has already been met:

- Existing programs
- Support provided, quantity, needs addressed (e.g. caps, rental vs utilities vs other, arrearages, prospective rents, etc.)

Determine the unmet need:

- What is the amount of the unmet need and types of need (e.g. rent, utility, transitional housing, etc.)

Identify who has unmet need:

- Who are the eligible applicants (what is their income, employment status, etc.)

Identify community-based partners and organizations to support communication and outreach

Identify barriers to successful program implementation (language, literacy, digital access, cultural)

ASSIGN A DEPT, ORGANIZATION OR ENTITY TO ADMINISTER PROGRAM

Carefully evaluate your organization's ability to manage a complex federal grant program. Don't be deterred by material weaknesses identified at this stage; these are areas to address during your program's design and development.

Key components to consider when evaluating your organization's capacity and capabilities:

- Existing in-house capacity to build a scalable organization around or ability to outsource while providing management oversight
- Finance systems adequate to expeditiously process payments, track and monitor transactions and support reporting/audit requirements

ASSIGN A DEPT, ORGANIZATION OR ENTITY TO ADMINISTER PROGRAM

Utilizing existing County/City agencies or community-based partners may be a good fit for your organization.

Key components to consider when evaluating potential community or external partners capacity and capabilities:

- Existing agency or community-based organization currently managing affordable housing, homelessness or similar programs/initiatives
- Experience in managing grant-funded programs, especially those involving federal funding
- Scalable organization to meet the size of your projected program
- Ability to bridge the gap to groups at highest risk and/or need
- Ability to address language or cultural barriers

DEVELOP PROGRAM FRAMEWORK, POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Conduct an open and transparent design process.

Design should reflect the needs of the community within confines of program boundaries.

Work with community stakeholders to mitigate impediments to clear, concise, and streamlined program delivery – stakeholder engagement throughout design helps foster vested interested and champions of the program.

Get the design right at the outset to mitigate future problems:

- Address all federal requirements
- Create specific policies and procedures that address applications, verification, award amounts, and assistance types
- Nail down data collection requirements
- Streamline where possible – reduces administrative burden

DEVELOP OR UPDATE SYSTEM FOR APPLICATION PROCESSING

One of the first and most critical decisions to be made when overseeing your Rental Assistance program is selecting the proper software for managing information. While there is a wide range of software solutions to choose from, ideally the software will include the following features:

- End-to-end workflow from pre-screening through award determination, including document management and retention that maximizes automation
- Highly secure, scalable system that protects sensitive data
- Fraud detection/duplication of benefits avoidance
- Intuitive, adaptable, customer-friendly interface; notifications (email, SMS, chat) for easy communication and expedited processing; progress tracking
- Data extraction for local use
- Full audit trail and audit capabilities
- Robust KPI tracking, reporting, and analytics
- Easy integration with external data sources, legacy systems, and 3rd-party applications for ID validation, payments processing, and other services
- Flexibility to accommodate federal requirements, additional local requirements and any changes as the program evolves (extensions, eligibility criteria adjustments, additional funding, etc.)

DEVELOP COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH STRATEGY

Reduce time spent on applications that will not get funded by developing targeted but concise content that articulates what the program is, who is eligible, how to apply, and what is required:

- Raise applicant “IQ” on program requirements and documents needed
- Clearly define what documentation must be submitted with an application

Know your target audiences:

- Beneficiaries who need rental assistance
- Landlords/utilities whose tenants are behind on bills

Establish collaborative partnerships with community partners trusted by the target audiences:

- Who are trusted entities among those communities?
- What organizations have experience with this work?
- How do those with unmet needs get their information?
- What infrastructure exists to reach and communicate with those communities?

STAFF & TRAIN CALL CENTER / CASE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT TEAM

- Help renters understand eligibility criteria, assistance available and process
- Assist landlords with process and programmatic requirements when applying on behalf of tenants
- High-level screening based on property location and household income
- Provide continued support to renters and landlords until benefit caps are met
- Review program documentation to ensure eligibility
- Considered enhanced TA for landlords with large number of units – these can be great conduits of sharing information with eligible renters

ALIGN PROGRAM WITH FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & PAYMENT PROCESSING SYSTEMS

- Policies, procedures and internal controls to manage Federal funds in compliance with applicable OMB 2 CFR Part 200 requirements
- Authentication method to verify the recipient prior to payment processing
- Integration with County Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System and/or External Payment Processor (bank/ACH)
- Built in validation steps to avoid duplication of payments for the same property and/or household

LAUNCH & IMPLEMENT PROGRAM

- Establish key performance indicators to assess the success of program
- Evaluate initial application intake to determine if adjustments are needed and if need is within budget – may require fine tuning on prioritization if undersubscribed
- Transparency and pro-active communication are **KEYS TO SUCCESS** – regular program briefs help the community feel engaged and informed, avoiding potential constituent affairs complaints
- Remember, the ability to remain agile is instrumental to the success of your program. However, as you modify policies/procedures ensure that you are documenting the ‘what and why’ for audit purposes. It’s easier to represent deviations from established process in the moment based on point of time factors rather than revisiting after the program completion and/or during an audit.

COMPLY WITH REPORTING REQUIREMENTS & DEVELOP MANAGEMENT DASHBOARDS

- Development of functional audience-specific dashboards (senior level, housing specialist, renter household, landlord, etc.)
- Tracking of grant expenditures for administration, direct assistance and other expenditures
- Performance Metrics: Percentage of grant expended
- Creation of compliant data pulls for Federally-mandated quarterly reporting to Treasury OIG through export files
- Ability to “Tell the Story” with more than simply data

CONDUCT PROGRAM CLOSEOUT & MAINTAIN RECORDS

- Ensures conditions and terms of contract have been met
- Verification all reporting requirements have been completed
- All funds reconciled for eligible expenditures and any unspent funds returned
- Monitoring conducted; all concerns and/or findings cleared
- Beneficiary data compiled

QUESTIONS?

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Federal Funding
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Communication



Business &
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