

SMASS Information Session

July 18, 2024

Q&A

Presentation slides, questions and answers are being shared with all who registered for the information session via email and placed on the [MMC website](#). Please note that questions and responses have been edited for clarity.

1. *Can you clarify the requirement “At least 51% of the requested funding needs to be used to serve new arrivals”?*
 - a. “New Arrivals” in this context is defined as, and used interchangeably with, asylum seekers. Therefore, at least 51% of the funding requested must be allocated for services for New Arrivals. Additionally, up to 49% of the funding requested can be used to support other individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
2. *Are you excluding parolees?*
 - a. An asylum seeker / New Arrival, in this context, is being defined as “an individual who crossed the Mexico/U.S. border on or after August 1, 2022, with the intent to stay permanently, and who does not possess any permanent or interim U.S. legal status (which does not include being in parole status), such as legal permanent residency, a student or work visa, etc.” Per this definition, individuals on parole status are eligible to be considered New Arrivals.
3. *What is the definition of experiencing homelessness or people that are at risk of experiencing homelessness?*
 - a. The widely accepted definition of people experiencing homelessness are people who are residing in, or whose nighttime shelter is in, someplace not meant for human habitation (e.g., parks, vehicles, etc.). Those at risk of homelessness are people earning 30% or less of the area median income. We recognize that there are various definitions of “homelessness” and being “at risk of homelessness” across programs and therefore, can be flexible on that definition if you can provide justification or a definition that your municipality or CBO uses.
4. *Is this program only for Cook County or for other areas outside of Chicago?*
 - a. The program is statewide; any municipality or CBO outside of Chicago is eligible. CBOs will need to provide a letter of support from the local municipality where services will be provided to be considered for funding.
5. *Are community-based organizations based in Chicago not eligible to apply?*
 - a. Chicago based organizations are not eligible to apply for funding unless they are seeking to provide services outside of Chicago. In that case, they would be eligible to apply with a letter of support from the local municipality where services will be provided.
6. *Can CBOs applying as the lead applicant for an SMASS grant receive letters of support from county governments, or do they need to be from municipalities?*
 - a. CBO applicants must receive a letter of support from the local municipality or municipalities (city, town, or village) where services will be provided.

7. *What if a CBO can't secure a letter of support from a local municipality? Would those applications be considered?*
 - a. Unfortunately, it is a requirement that CBOs include a letter of support from the local municipality where services will be provided since this grant funding was allocated to support municipalities.
8. *Can a municipality apply without CBOs?*
 - a. A municipality that has the experience and capacity to provide the eligible service(s) proposed is not required to have CBO partner.
9. *Are agencies with a primary mission to address homelessness that do not possess any immigration experience eligible to be a vendor or a subrecipient?*
 - a. Yes, if you have a vendor or a partner that has a very specific role in your program that does not require providing immigration-related services to New Arrivals, they can be a program partner or vendor. Various types of agencies can be eligible, as long as the application is able to demonstrate their role in the proposed model, how they are equipped to perform that role with cultural / linguistic competency, and how that role supports overall program goals.
10. *Can organizations hire subcontractors (e.g., mental health experts to lead mental health workshops)?*
 - a. Yes, you can hire a subcontractor, or you could also provide grant funding to a partner that has the expertise and is able to provide those services.
11. *Do we have to apply for all the eligible services?*
 - a. No, you do not have to apply for all of the eligible services.
12. *Is there guidance for emergency housing assistance?*
 - a. **Rental Assistance Guidance**
Required: Funds can only be used to offset costs for rent in State fiscal year 2025.
Required: Can only be used to directly fund rental costs (i.e., other moving-related costs like security deposits are not eligible).
Recommended: Pair with wraparound services to enable long term housing stability (e.g., workforce development, ESL, etc.), whether funded through SMASS or through other funding.
Recommended: Prioritize for and, if possible, limit to, those who have not previously received rental assistance.
13. *Can legal services include non-immigration legal services such as eviction orders?*
 - a. Yes, legal services can include eviction support services.
14. *Are there shelter expense categories that would not be eligible? Are non-congregate shelter expenditures eligible?*
 - a. While we cannot support capital improvements on sites, no other shelter standup and operation expense categories have been excluded. As part of the application, we ask that you provide details on which populations you intend to serve (e.g., families, single males, single females) and they ways in which they will be supported. Applications for housing in non-congregate settings will be considered based on a holistic review including the number of people served, funding amount requested, program model.

15. *Are there maximum award amounts per organization?*

- a. There's no maximum award amount. The award amounts will be based on available funding, the number of successful applicants, and funding amounts requested.

16. *Are grant administration costs for the lead applicant eligible?*

The grant funds are restricted to the direct provision of services to New Arrivals and people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Costs for the lead applicants staff to provide service coordination such as meetings of program partners to work through program implementation, time spent by your staff for phone calls, checking in on reporting numbers, etc. can be submitted in the budget proposal for the lead applicant. However, we are not able to provide funding for grant administration.

17. *What are the reporting requirements for this grant? Is there a narrative component of the monthly reporting, or just the number, per metric each month?*

- a. The budget and scope templates submitted as part of the application then become the reporting documents you'll use to report to us month-to-month. There is an opportunity for you to send us additional information such as a narrative if it's helpful – however, this is not required.

18. *Is there a requirement to track if a client has received services in FY 24 and exclude them from assistance in FY 25, observing possible duplication of benefits?*

- a. For all eligible services, with the exception of rental assistance, there's no need to track if someone has been provided a service before. If they meet the definition of the population being served by this grant and are still in need of that service, they are eligible to receive services. Homelessness is a chronic issue, and so there is generally an expectation that people may need services over time.

19. *If clients are receiving services through an Illinois Welcoming Center as well, are they able to be reported to this grant program also?*

You are only required to report the number of eligible services you provide using SMASS grant funds. If you have several funding streams that you are using to provide a service, report the number of people served based on the percentage of funding provided by SMASS. For example, if food is being provided using multiple funding streams, report to SMASS only the proportion of the total number of people served that matches the proportion of SMASS funding for food service. For a person receiving translation or legal services support through an Illinois Welcoming Center and food service support via SMASS, you would only report and request reimbursement for the food service support. Services provided through Illinois Welcoming Centers grant funding cannot also be reported to and submitted to the SMASS grant for reimbursement.

20. *Is there a possibility that no funding will be available for applications submitted on August 5th?*

- a. It is possible but is dependent on the number of applications received and the amount of funding requested. The sooner you can apply the better. But it is best to submit a strong application rather than to rush to submit earlier.