

Questions & Answers Family Stability Program Grant

Questions and answers regarding United Way of Central Maryland's FY2021-22 Family Stability Program Grant are listed below in three sections.

- **Part A: Family Stability Programmatic Questions posed at United Way of Central Maryland's Grant Information Session on November 9, 2020.**
- **Part B: Request for Proposal Questions posed at United Way of Central Maryland's Grant Information Session on November 9, 2020.**
- **Part C: Questions submitted via e-mail to grantquestions@uwcm.org – through Monday, November 9, 2020 @ 5:00 p.m.**

PART A: Questions Related to the Family Stability Program Overview

- 1. Is there a certain portion of the caseload that should be in each tier? How many of the 30 clients per tier?**

Please see the *Family Stability Program Overview*, page 3.

Programs should aim to serve 10 clients in each tier per year. While it may not be possible to achieve a precise balance of 10 clients in each tier, programs are encouraged to try to balance the caseload as best they can.

- 2. Are the financial amounts in Tier 2 and 3 the maximum amount of client assistance a family can receive? For example, Tier 3 clients cannot receive any more than \$1,350?**

No. These are recommended amounts not maximum or fixed amounts. Programs may spend more than the recommended amounts on a household, but this will mean that there will be less client assistance available for other households in the caseload. Likewise, spending less than the recommended amount on a household will enable programs to spend more on other households in the caseload. As with any client assistance initiative, programs will need to work within the confines of their budgets to meet the diverse range of client needs.

- 3. Would households that are already being helped because of COVID with food, medications and such, be Tier 1?**

No. Client already receiving services would need to be enrolled in the program, undergo intake procedures, and be evaluated using the Self Sufficiency Matrix in order to be considered Tier 1.

- 4. When you refer to assisting those who are "behind on bills" can those bills include childcare expenses?**

Not exclusively. In order to be eligible for the program, clients must be substantially behind on bills related to housing such as rent, mortgage and utilities, but they may be behind on other

bills as well. For example, a family \$200 behind on rent and \$300 behind on childcare is eligible for the program. Financial assistance could be used to help pay for both rent and childcare.

5. Are the financial restrictions per tier only related to the funds under the United Way grant?

Yes. Households can be assisted with funds over and above those from the United Way grant. For example, \$1,350 is a guideline for what we would expect a tier 3 household would need in assistance. If your organization has additional, non-United Way funds to contribute to more assistance, certainly, you may contribute those funds as you see fit.

6. Are there expectations for how the required matching funds will be used in the budget?

Matching funds can be used for client assistance or case management. If you can acquire funds that can be used for client assistance for the program, that can be your match. Alternatively, if you can acquire funds that can cover case management expenses, then that can be used for your match.

7. How many families need to be enrolled in the second half of FY21? Is it half the total caseload (i.e. 15 families)?

Yes. We expect 15 families to be served for the 6-month period spanning January 1, 2021 – June 30, 2021.

8. Does the case manager need to determine at intake what tier a client is in (tier 1, 2, or 3)? If the clients' needs change, can their tier change? For example, if they present as tier 1 initially, but then need more support and should be moved to a tier 2 or 3. Or can the person's tier be determined later (such as when they are ready to exit)?

Case managers should assign a tier at intake, and the tier can be changed as the client's engagement with the program evolves. A final determination of the client's tier will need to be made at program exit. For example, a client presenting with a limited set of needs at program entrance may be assigned to Tier 1, but case management may reveal that the household's needs are greater than first thought, causing them to be reassigned to Tier 2 or 3.

9. Is the case management requirement still to meet with families twice a month, regardless of the tier? Can you especially clarify this for Tier 2?

Yes. Case managers should meet with clients at least twice a month regardless of what tier they are in, but many clients will need more than 2 meetings per month. Please note that guidelines for case management within tiers do not vary based on the number of meetings per month but rather the target number of months of case management provided. The target for Tier 1 clients is 1 to 3 months; Tier 2, 4-6 months; and Tier 3, 7-9 months.

Generally speaking, it should be noted that programs are allowed to further specify and define the distinctions between the tiers of their caseloads. UWCM has provided guidance and recommendations for what the tiers should look like given national best practices. In essence, this model behooves programs to take into account that the intensity of needs among

households in the caseload are different. A subset of clients will require a great deal of time and significant financial resources (Tier 3); some will require only a light touch (Tier 1); and some will be somewhere in between (Tier 2).

10. What if a family needs more than \$1,350?

Please see Question #2 and #5. Programs can provide more than \$1,350 to a single household, but this will leave less for other households in the caseload. Programs can also leverage funds from other sources outside of United Way.

11. If different organizations in the same county apply, can they each focus on different tiers?

No. Each organization should have a “mixed bucket” of clients, including tier 1, 2 and 3 clients.

12. What are the guidelines or best practices for screening a client for tier 1, 2, or 3?

Please refer to the *Family Stability Program Overview*, page 3 for guidelines for each tier.

13. Is \$650 the maximum amount of financial assistance a family can receive in Tier 2?

Please see question #2 and #5.

14. \$650 seems like a very low amount (less than a month of rent). It seems that someone would have to be barely behind on their bills at all to qualify for Tier 2 (ex: a couple weeks behind on their rent, or 2-3 months on BGE). Can you clarify what type of situations someone would be in to qualify for Tier 2?

This amount is designed to be reflective of half-a month or rent or a month BGE/Utility Bills. The idea is that the program would have the money to pay some of these things, but that the program manager would really focus on helping the clients improve their capacity to meet these debt obligations and would help the client shop for additional assistance that would fill in some of the gaps.

One of the goals of this model is that programs can serve clients who are “further upstream,” meaning clients who have begun to experience problems related to self-sufficiency but who have not yet reached a crisis point. For example, a Tier 2 client may have just lost their job and may not yet be so far behind that they are facing eviction.

15. Historically, has it been difficult to find/secure Tier 1 participants?

No. Most of the current Family Stability programs have been serving Tier 1 families but not enrolling/reporting them. Most programs report that they have been serving between 10-15 clients in this tier already per year, but they have not been enrolled because they did not require financial assistance and/or did not have an eviction notice in hand. The revised program model is intended to track these services and outcomes.

16. How is a family determined to be capable of self-sufficiency?

The Arizona Self Sufficiency Matrix described on Page 2 of the *Family Stability Program Overview* tracks 19 core domains. Family Stability Programs focus on 5 of those domains to

determine if a family is on-track to being self-sufficient or successfully exited from the program. These are: Income, Employment, Children's Education, Food and Housing.

17. How does the presence of substance abuse or mental illness affect eligibility?

A client having a history of substance abuse and/or mental illness should not directly be a barrier to program eligibility. While we do ask about it on the Arizona Self Sufficiency Matrix (it is one of the 19 core domains), someone experiencing these should not be automatically excluded from the program.

18. Do the terms "site" and "program" refer to a physical location, or to a case manager?

United Way will award grant agreements to organizations to serve a specific, identified geographic area (or site). Each "site" has a case manager with a caseload of 30 clients and a pool of client assistance to support that caseload of clients. Within a "site," grantees may establish one or more locations where they serve clients.

19. Are schools a best practice location for program locations?

Programs should establish a program location within the geographic service area that is easy to access by clients.

Over the past several years, United Way has identified that operating out of a school or establishing a partnership that allows for case managers to meet with clients at a school, is a best practice. While this is not required, we recommend that applicants include, where possible, information regarding their relationship with at least one school within their service area.

Also, please note that following grant award notifications and prior to execution of the grant contracts, United Way will request that applicants demonstrate that they have established a partnership with a least one school in support implementation of the Family Stability Program.

20. What if the site location is closed due to COVID temporarily? Will allowances be made.

Yes, absolutely. We encourage organizations to adapt to mitigate COVID-19 risks. For example, many programs have used video conferencing such as Zoom or Facetime to interact with clients.

21. Will you consider other areas/communities outside of those listed on your priority list, if they meet the ALICE and other criteria?

Yes, it is a priority list not an exclusive list.

22. If we have other financial assistance for eviction prevention services can we use it in this program?

Yes - Please see Question #5.

23. Can these funds be used to support a current permanent housing program that serves clients with families? For example if we have a family in a subsidy program, but is falling behind due to unforeseen costs, etc.

Yes, but the households should be receiving the assistance of the dedicated Family Stability Program case manager. Client assistance funds can be used to support households who are behind on rent regardless of the lease arrangement. Other examples of non-traditional lease arrangements include Section 8, public housing, Habitat for Humanity mortgages, and so on.

PART B: Questions Related to the Family Stability RFP

24. When we complete reporting in Community Force are we going to break down demographics and/or performance data by Tier?

The tiers assigned to each client/household will be reported in Community Force.

25. What documentation (if any) is required to prove we have matching funds, after the first 6 months?

We expect to see matching funds reflected in the budget. We also expect to see that you have spent those funds when you report on your expenditures for the year in those areas. We are looking that you budgeted for this match, committed the funds and then spent them over the course of the year.

26. We would like finance personnel to complete the budget section of the application if possible. How would we go about that?

The budget form can be downloaded from CommunityForce (See question #36) and e-mailed to finance personnel. You can then upload the budget that they complete into CommunityForce through your CommunityForce portal.

27. We had UWCM funds for the Family Stability program for years and then no longer received funding. Are we able to apply again (1 year off) or should we wait longer? Thank you!

You are eligible to apply. Past funding does not determine current eligibility.

28. Is this commitment only for FY2021?

No, this is an 18-month grant period spanning January 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022. These dates include the second half of FY2021 and the entirety of FY2022. Funds would be made available in January, 2021.

29. May we have a copy of this PPT?

Yes. The PowerPoint Presentation, Recording of the Grant Information Session and Question & Answer Document will be posted on the United Way's [non-profit funding page](#).

30. What is the grant cycle? When would funds be available?

See question #28. Please also note that this initial 18-month grant period is intended to align us with United Way's fiscal calendar for potential, future one year grant renewals.

How are organizations selected?

United Way will utilize a team of volunteers and staff with pertinent expertise and experience, who are trained to review and assess applications. They will utilize a specific scoring rubric that is designed to ensure objective, fair evaluation of the applications. Please note that the scoring rubric will not be made publicly available.

31. is there a date required on the Certificate of Good Standing?

Please submit a Certificate of Good Standing from this current Fiscal Year.

32. Can you provide a screenshot from Maryland SDAT Business search in lieu of the official Certificate of Good Standing?

Yes. You can search your business on the Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation's "Business Entity Search" and take a screen shot of your business name along with the phrase "your business is in good standing". Please ensure that the time/ date stamp is included. The website is located here:

<https://egov.maryland.gov/BusinessExpress/EntitySearch>

33. Can one organization apply for funding in two jurisdictions?

Yes. We require a distinct and complete application for each program site. You can apply to operate up to 3 program sites.

34. Are agencies limited to one login for the portal?

Anyone with an e-mail address can create a CommunityForce account, and certainly many within the same organization can create their own account. However, each application is only associated with 1 account.

35. With Howard, Harford, and Carroll Counties allotted one program site each, does that mean the maximum of new grants will be 6?

We expect to fund a total of 7-9 grant applications through this RFP Process. Included as part of these 7-9 applications, we expect to fund at least 1 in each Howard, Harford and Carroll Counties.

36. Can you show where to download the budget in the portal?

The budget can be found within the online application. Once you have created an account and start answering questions online, you can find the link to download the budget directly to your computer. It is located inside the "*Program Application and Submission Documents*" Section of your main dashboard. Right click on the blue hyperlink titled *FSP FY21 Budget Salary Schedule Workbook*.

PART C: Questions Submitted via E-mail

37. When would potential funding be awarded and what is the duration of the grant period?

Funding decisions will be announced in early December 2020, and funds will be released in early January 2021. The initial grant period will last for 18 months from January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

38. I wanted clarification on income level requirements - is it following ALICE so \$87,156 for a family of 4 in Anne Arundel County?

Yes. Households must have incomes below the ALICE threshold for their household type in their respective communities. A complete list of ALICE thresholds can be found on the UWCM non-profit funding page.

39. (a) Is it applicable to families who are doubled up? (b) What about families who are newly housed to sustain that housing?

(a) Client assistance funds may be used to house families who are doubled up, provided that there can be documentation that the family is living at the address. For example, a mother and her child(ren) may be living with their aunt. Client assistance funds may be used to pay the utility bill that is in the aunt's name so long as some kind of documentation can be produced showing that the mother and child(ren) are staying at that address.

(b) The amount of time that a family has been housed does not affect their eligibility for the program.

40. We will be conducting an audit in FY 2021-2022, but we do not have one currently. Is this necessary to apply?

First, please note that an audit is not required for all applicants. Information about what specific financial documentation is required (based on the applicants' revenues) is outlined on page 4 of the *Family Stability RFP*.

Second, to be eligible for this grant opportunity, programs must meet the guidelines regarding the submission of the required financial document with their application at the time of its submission. As indicated on page 4 of the *Family Stability RFP*, we will except financial documentation from within last two fiscal years.

41. what is required to have a program site and how many people (staff) would be needed?

See the *Family Stability Program Overview* for examples of program site locations. A site is typically operated by one case manager.

42. To confirm, there is no longer a requirement that households have enough income to sustain their basic needs going forward after receiving financial assistance? Families can enter the program at any income level (even zero income) as long as they are under the ALICE threshold, are willing to participate in case management, and demonstrate a desire to achieve self-sufficiency?

Households should demonstrate the **desire and potential** to achieve self-sufficiency. For example, households in need of ongoing rental assistance may not be a good fit for this program. Similarly, households not looking to obtain or grow their income towards self-sufficiency may not be a good fit for this program.

43. There is a new requirement to track hourly wages and credit scores. Where and how often will this be tracked?

These data elements will be tracked as columns in the SSM spreadsheet and in the correlated reporting in CommunityForce.

44. Is the target outcome of having 85% of families have a successful outcome no longer being defined by the SSM numbers, but instead now being defined as not becoming homeless during the service period?

To be successfully exited from the program, families must meet the exit thresholds for each of the 5 core domains: income (3+); employment (3+ with exceptions); housing (3+); food (2+); and children's education (4+).

45. I have concerns about the requirement to share client's data with HMIS. This will create a barrier for immigrant families to enroll in the program, as there is a lot of fear in the community about the government finding out they are receiving assistance and being designated a "public charge" (which can result in no longer having a pathway to residency or citizenship). If I tell immigrant clients that their information will be shared with the HMIS system, many of them will be too scared to apply. Even if the HMIS system does not report data to the federal government, sharing information with any government agency will scare immigrant families. Is there any flexibility on this requirement when working with immigrant clients? Our organizational policy is to safeguard our immigrant clients' personal information as confidential.

Families may elect not to have their information shared in HMIS.

46. I noted that the definition of school-aged has expanded to include Head Start children. If a child is the age of a Head Start child (3 or 4) but not enrolled in a Head Start program, are they still considered school-aged (based on their age)?

No. A child must be enrolled in school to be considered school-aged for ages 3-4. One of the key aims of the program is to avoid disruptive school transfers, we have chosen to focus program the resources/efforts on families with children enrolled in school.

47. Is there any consideration to being more flexible on the performance measure of 75% remaining stable in housing one year after program completion, given the realities of the COVID-19 crisis and additional challenges for immigrant families?

The performance measure is a target, not a rule. Program performance will be evaluated in light of the context of COVID and the global financial crisis.

48. Is the grant amount (ex: \$40,000 for 2nd half of FY21) supposed to only cover salaries and benefits, and the agency needs to find their own client assistance funds? Or is it meant primarily for client assistance funds?

The grant amount is based on a core 6-month site budget of \$30,000 for staff and overhead and \$10,000 for client assistance.