

# **CITY OF BOSTON**

**Substantial Amendment  
To Program Year 2019 Action Plan**

**CARES Act Funding: CDBG- CV**

**Posted 11/30/20 for Public Comment**



**Martin J. Walsh, Mayor**

**Sheila A. Dillon, Chief of Housing and Director,  
Department of Neighborhood Development**

The Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) is amending the Program Year 2019 Action Plan, to expend a total of **\$20,039,341** in special **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CV)** program funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The CDBG-CV funds are authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and are to be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus pandemic. We are programming the funds for emergency rental assistance and program administration as shown in the budget table below.

To clarify the budget table, the CDBG-CV funds were awarded by HUD to Boston in two funding rounds. The first round of \$10.3 million was earmarked for two activities - emergency rental assistance and small business help. Subsequently, the City of Boston identified another funding source for the small business help, thereby allowing us to dedicate ninety percent (90%) of these funds to assist vulnerable renters. The approximately \$2 million (10%) remaining will be used for program management, reporting and administration of the grant.

<b>CDBG - CV BUDGET: November 2020 Update</b>					
<b>Program</b>	<b>Use</b>	<b>CDBG-CV, Round 1 Previous Amendment</b>	<b>CDBG-CV, Round 1 Revised Thru this Amendment</b>	<b>CDBG-CV Round 2</b>	<b>Total CDBG- CV</b>
Housing Stability + Homeless Prevention (90%)	Emergency Rental Payments	\$5,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$8,000,000	\$18,000,000
Small Business Help + Job Retention	Operating Expenses	\$5,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Management of Program & Administration of Grant Funds		\$257,948	\$257,948	\$1,781,393	\$2,039,341
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$10,257,948</b>	<b>\$10,257,948</b>	<b>\$9,781,393</b>	<b>\$20,039,341</b>

**Housing Stability & Homeless Prevention:** We are allocating 90% of the CDBG-CV funding for housing stability and homeless prevention activities through the **Rental Relief Fund (RRF)** launched in April 2020. The RRF helps income-eligible tenants achieve housing stability by providing direct financial relief to assist with rental payments. As of 12/1/20, 1262 households have received assistance. The RRF is managed by DND’s Office of Housing Stability and three nonprofit partners, Metro Housing | Boston, Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) and Project Hope. Complete information on the RRF is posted here: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/neighborhood-development/office-housing-stability/rental-relief-fund>.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Rental Relief Fund</b>
<b>Goals Supported</b>	Public Services (05Q)
<b>Needs Addressed</b>	Housing Stability, Homelessness Prevention
<b>Funding</b>	CDBG-CV \$18,000,000
<b>Description</b>	Provide direct financial relief to assist with rental payments.
<b>Estimate of the number of households assisted</b>	Approximately 2600 households.

**Citizen Participation Process:** The Substantial Amendment was prepared and submitted in accordance with the HUD waiver granted to expedite actions to respond to COVID-19. Specifically, the Citizen Participation Public Comment Period was 5-days rather than the standard 30-days. The Amendment was posted on the Department’s web page with email and telephone instructions to submit comments. <https://www.boston.gov/departments/neighborhood-development/hearings-and-public-comment>).

**General Notifications:** DND emailed approximately 340 Policy News subscribers, individuals and organizations, on a list maintained for this

purpose; and, notified 10,000 followers on the Department’s Twitter and Facebook feeds.

DND’s Office of Housing Stability (OHS) extensively promoted the Rental Relief Fund (RRF) through a range of actions. A brief summary:

Starting on April 3rd, the Department of Neighborhood Development shared notification of the fund to 7,699 followers on the Department's Twitter feed and by email to property managers at DND and BPDA monitored developments. The fund was covered by 14 different news outlets. The Office of Housing Stability team also shared information about the fund during a weekly webinar hosted by the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Advancement that was accessible online via computer or dialed in by telephone. The webinar was attended by staff from non-profit organizations who work with immigrant communities in Boston. A working session with the Boston City Council Housing Committee and OHS regarding the RRF was also held. During the week of April 6th the link to the Rental Relief Fund webpage was sent out via text to households who signed up for COVID alerts with the City of Boston.

There is strong support for the **RRF** from attendees of the webinar, the working session with the City Council Housing Committee and written comments.

<b>Rental Relief Fund (RRF)</b>	
<b>Comments – December 2020</b>	
Councilor Flynn wrote in support of the RRF and commended the City efforts to offer the fund in multiple languages.	Thank you.
R. Gehret wrote in support of increased funding to the RRF highlighting the great need for tenant assistance due to the expiration of the eviction moratoriums.	Thank you
<b>Comments - May 2020</b>	<b>City’s Response</b>
<b>Issue: Prioritize all of the CDBG-CV funding for rental payments and not small business assistance.</b>	
B. Bruner/CEDAC wrote in support of	Thank you. We acknowledge

<p>using CDGB-CV funds for the RRF over the SBRF because of the greater need due to high job losses and businesses can apply to the Small Business Administration for help. Also, the grant amounts offered by the SBRF are unlikely to have much of a positive impact.</p> <p>L. Song, GBLS and organizational members urged Boston to use all CARES Act funds, not otherwise restricted, for housing payment assistance as a safe home to shelter in is the appropriate response to the COVID-19 public health crisis.</p>	<p>that the CDBG-CV awarded to Boston will not meet all the needs for both renters and small business owners. We continue to monitor all sources of funding (federal, state and local) that can be secured to assist in our response to the pandemic.</p>
<p>R. Gehret (resident) supports both uses of CDBG-CV funds and urges the City to consider using other federal resources (CDBG and HOME) to continue supporting the RRF as laid off low-income tenants will have difficulty finding full-time employment.</p>	<p>Thank you. We will monitor and evaluate the demands for rental relief and other eviction prevention efforts.</p>
<p>L. Song, GBLS and organizational members urge Boston to maintain the existing Citizen Participation Process as much as possible to afford Boston residents reasonable opportunities to comment and respond to proposals involving federal funds.</p>	<p>Thank you. We strive to balance urgent needs with good judgement when utilizing the HUD granted waivers.</p>

**-END-**