



POLICY MANUAL

EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANTS (ESG) PROGRAM

**COUNTY OF LEXINGTON
212 S. Lake Drive
Lexington, SC 29072**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 was signed into law on May 20, 2009. The ESG program provides funding to:

- engage homeless individuals and families living on the street
- improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families
- help operate these shelters
- provide essential services to shelter residents
- rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families
- prevent families and individuals from becoming homeless

ESG is a formula grant program. Eligible recipients generally consist of metropolitan cities, urban counties, territories, and states as defined in 24 CFR 576.2. Lexington County will subgrant ESG funds to non-profit organizations and will consult with the Continuum of Care that are operating within our jurisdiction to determine how to allocate ESG funds.

All funded agencies are required to follow federal guidelines in the implementation of ESG funding. Lexington County received ESG funds for the first time in FY2018. Therefore, the County of Lexington has written the following policies and procedures to facilitate the agencies in implementing the ESG guidelines as set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Agencies will provide assistance related to housing of persons at risk of becoming homeless and housing persons that are currently homeless, as well as provide housing relocation and stabilization services. The County of Lexington is focused on both the unincorporated and incorporated areas within the Lexington County.

Process for Sub-Awards

The County will issue a Request for Applications (RFA) requesting that interested agencies apply for ESG eligible activities. Applications will then be reviewed and scored by Lexington County Community Development Grants staff and then presented to the Advisory Committee for discussion and funding recommendations. After the required comment period and a Public Hearing, funding recommendations are presented to County Council for approval. For ESG funding, Lexington County must consult with the local Continuum of Care (CoC) in determining how to allocate these funds.

Policy and Procedure Manual

This Policy and Procedure Manual will be available on the Lexington County Website at www.lex-co.sc.gov and a hard copy will be available for review at Lexington County Community Development Department.

ESG Program General Overview

ESG is a formula grant program. The ESG program provides funding to engage homeless individuals and families living on the street, improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families, help operate homeless shelters, provide essential services to shelter residents, rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families and prevent families and individuals from becoming homeless.

ESG Program Support

ESG funds may be used to support activities under the following programs:

- a. Street outreach: Services related to reaching out to unsheltered homeless individuals and families, connecting them with emergency shelter, housing, or critical services, and providing them with urgent, non-facility based care.
 - **Eligible costs:** engagement, case management, emergency health and mental health services, transportation, and services for special populations. See 24 CFR 576.101.
 - **Eligible program participants:** Individuals and families who qualify as homeless under paragraph (1) (i) of the “homeless” definition under 24 CFR 576.2.
- b. Emergency Shelter:
 - Eligible Costs
 - Renovation (including major rehabilitation or conversion) of a building to serve as an emergency shelter. The shelter must be owned by a government entity or private nonprofit organization and must serve homeless persons for at least 3 or 10 years, depending on the type of renovation and the value of the building.
 - Essential Services, including case management, child care, education services, employment assistance and job training, outpatient health services, legal services, life skills training, mental health services, substance abuse treatment services, transportation, and services for special populations.
 - Shelter Operations, including maintenance, rent, repair, security, fuel, equipment, insurance, utilities, food, furnishings, and supplies necessary for the operation of the emergency shelter. May include a hotel or motel voucher where no appropriate emergency shelter is available for a homeless family or individual.
- c. Homelessness Prevention: Housing relocation and stabilization services and short-and/or medium-term rental assistance as necessary to prevent the individual or family homelessness. Costs are eligible to the extent necessary to help the participant regain housing stability in their current housing or move into other permanent housing and achieve stability.

Eligible costs:

- **Rental Assistance:** rental assistance and rental arrears
- **Financial assistance:** rental application fees, security and utility deposits, utility payments,

- last month's rent, moving costs
- **Services:** housing search and placement, housing stability case management, landlord-tenant mediation, tenant legal services, credit repair

Eligible program participants: Individuals and families who meet the criteria under the "at risk of homelessness" definition, or who meet the criteria in paragraph (2), (3), or (4) of the "homeless" definition in 24 CFR 576.2 and have an annual income below 30 percent of median family income for the area, as determined by HUD.

Rapid Re-Housing

Housing relocation and stabilization services and/or short-and/or medium-term rental assistance as necessary to help homeless individuals or families living in shelters or in places not meant for human habitation move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability.

Eligible costs:

- Rental Assistance: rental assistance and rental arrears
- Financial Assistance: rental application fees, security and utility deposits, utility payments, last month's rent, moving costs
- Services: housing search and placement, housing stability case management, landlord-tenant mediation, tenant legal services, credit repair

- Eligible program participants: Individuals and families who meet the criteria under paragraph (1) of the "homeless" definition in 24 CFR 576.2 or who meet the criteria under paragraph (4) of the "homeless" definition and live in an emergency shelter or other place described in paragraph (1) of the "homeless" definition.

Data Collection (HMIS)

ESG funds may be used to pay for the costs of participating in and contributing to the HMIS designated by the Continuum of Care for Lexington County. Eligible costs may include computer software, software licenses, and hardware. Office space, utilities, equipment, technical support and salaries for operation of HMIS are eligible costs.

Administration

Up to 7.5 percent of a recipient's allocation can be used for Administrative activities. These include general management, oversight, and coordination; reporting on the program; the costs of providing training on ESG requirements and attending HUD-sponsored ESG trainings; the costs of preparing and amending the ESG and homelessness-related sections of the Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, and CAPER; and the costs of carrying out environmental review responsibilities.

HOMELESS DEFINITION

A Category 1: Literally Homeless

Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

1. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation;
2. Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or
3. Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.

B Category 2: Imminent Risk of Homelessness

- 1 Individual or family who will lose (within 14 days) their primary nighttime residence, provided that: Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance
- 2 No subsequent residence has been identified; and
- 3 the individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing

C Category 3: Homeless under other Federal Statutes

Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children or youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:

1. Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes;
2. Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application
3. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the preceding 60 days; and
4. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers

D. Category 4: Fleeing/ Attempting to Flee DV

Any individual or family who:

1. Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence;
2. Has no other residence; and
3. Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

ELIGIBILITY BY COMPONENT

Street Outreach (SO)

Individuals defined as Homeless under the following categories are eligible for assistance in SO:

- Category 1 – Literally Homeless
- Category 4 – Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV (where the individual or family also meets the criteria for Category 1).

SO projects have the following additional limitations on eligibility within Category

- Individuals and families must be living on the streets (or other places not meant for human habitation) and be unwilling or unable to access services in emergency shelter

Emergency Shelter (ES)

Individuals and Families defined as Homeless under the following categories are eligible for assistance in ES projects:

- Category 1 – Literally Homeless
- Category 2 – Imminent Risk of Homeless
- Category 3 – Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes
- Category 4 – Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV

Rapid Rehousing (RRH)

Individuals defined as Homeless under the following categories are eligible for assistance in RRH projects:

- Category 1 – Literally Homeless
- Category 4 – Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV (where the individual or family also meets the criteria for Category 1)

Homelessness Prevention (HP)

Individuals and Families defined as Homeless under the following categories are eligible for assistance in HP projects:

- Category 2 – Imminent Risk of Homeless
- Category 3 – Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes
- Category 4 – Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV

Individuals and Families who are defined as At Risk of Homelessness are eligible for assistance in HP projects.

HP projects have the following additional limitations on eligibility with homeless and at risk of homeless:

- Must only serve individuals and families that have an annual income below 30% of AMI

CATEGORIES OF AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

Category 1: Individuals and Families

- Has an annual income below 30% of median family income for the area
- Does not have sufficient resources or support networks immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place defined in Category 1 of the “homeless” definition
- Meets one of the following conditions:
 - (1) Has moved because of economic reasons 2 or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for assistance
 - (2) Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship
 - (3) Has been notified that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance
 - (4) Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost is not paid for by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for low- income individuals
 - (5) Lives in an SRO or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than 2 persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than one and a half person per room
 - (6) Is exiting a publicly funded institution or system of care
 - (7) Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient’s approved Con Plan

Category 2: Unaccompanied Children and Youth

- A child or youth who does not qualify as homeless under the homeless definition, but qualifies as homeless under another Federal statute.

Category 3: Families with Children and Youth

- An unaccompanied youth who does not qualify as homeless under the homeless definition, but qualifies as homeless under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) or that child or youth if living with him or her.

CONTINUUM OF CARE PROGRAM (CoC)

The Continuum of Care program is designed to assist sheltered and unsheltered homeless people by providing the housing and/or services needed to help individuals move into transitional and permanent housing, with the goal of long-term stability.

Since 1995, HUD has required that communities submit a single application for homeless assistance funding through a coordinated system and entity known as a Continuum of Care (CoC) established for a local area or a larger Balance of State (BoS) region. In 2009, the HEARTH Act codified the CoC as a planning and funding mechanism and consolidated three existing competitive homeless assistance grant programs (Supportive Housing, Shelter Plus Care, and Single Room Occupancy) into a single grant program known as the Continuum of Care Program. This consolidation and the codification of the Continuum of Care planning process were intended to increase efficiency and effectiveness in providing housing and services to those experiencing homelessness.

A “Continuum of Care” is a geographically based entity that carries out the planning and local funding priority responsibilities of the HUD Continuum of Care Program. The Continuum of Care seeks to encompass all organizations providing housing and services to persons experiencing homelessness and representing the interests of those individuals and families. Through its organizational structure and governance board, the Continuum of Care designates certain “project applicants” as the entities responsible for carrying out the projects identified by the Continuum through its planning responsibilities. Each year, HUD awards CoC Program funding competitively to eligible project applicants, which can be nonprofit organizations, States, and/or units of general purpose local governments, collectively known as recipients. In turn, recipients may contract or subgrant with other organizations or government entities, known as subrecipients, to carry out the grant’s day-to-day program operations. The CoC also designates one entity to be a “collaborative applicant.” The collaborative applicant is the only entity that can submit a CoC application to HUD on behalf of the Continuum.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires that all Continuums of Care (CoC’s) maintain a Homeless Management Information System with the capacity to collect unduplicated counts of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The Act also requires Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program and CoC Program recipients/subrecipients to participate in the HMIS. There are HMIS privacy, security and data standard requirements that all participating recipients/subrecipients must follow. The CoC may set additional requirements beyond what is required and these can be found in the community’s HMIS Policies and Procedures. HMIS implementations can encompass geographic areas ranging from a single city to an entire state.

The CoC is responsible for:

- Designing and implementing the local application process for HUD CoC Program funds,
- CoC planning (including determination of local needs and funding priorities used to rank local project applications),
- Operating the CoC (including coordinating the implementation of a housing and service system for those experiencing homelessness within its geographic area),
- Designating, operating, and/or ensuring projects are participating in a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS),
- Coordinating other funding streams and resources—federal, local, or private—including

targeted homeless programs and other mainstream resources available to any eligible person or family.

SUBRECIPIENTS

Assistance is targeted to housing stabilization, linking program participants to mainstream resources and assisting them to develop a plan to increase future housing stability.

Sub-recipients provide eligible services and activities which may include: case management, counseling, developing, securing and coordinating services, linkage with mainstream resources, monitoring and evaluation of program participant progress. Sub-recipients also assure that program participants' rights are protected, and develop individualized housing and service plans, including a path to permanent housing stability once ESG program assistance is no longer available.

Each sub-recipient is required to read and follow ESG guidelines as set forth by HUD. The procedures contained herein serve to simplify the implementation of the regulations and identify allowable activities.

Sub-recipients will serve the population and provide the financial assistance and stabilization services as identified in the budget and scope of work as found in each of their contracts.

Preliminary steps to be taken in implementing the ESG activities are as follows:

All sub-recipients receiving ESG assistance are required to participate in the local Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or a comparable database and execute all Homeless Management Information System required documents as needed.

The Subrecipients shall conform to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, Audit Requirements of Federal Awards (Uniform Requirements) of 2 CFR 200.302 - Financial Management, 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F - Audit Requirements, 2 CFR 200.317-326 - Procurement, and Internal Controls – 2 CFR 200.303 as well as comply with the regulations, policies and guidelines and requirements of outlined in 24 CFR Part 84 and 24 CFR Part 85.

HMIS: ESG PROGRAM DATA COLLECTION

Client and services information will be collected and recorded using paper forms, and will be entered into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Client data on clients served, housing status, and services received must meet HUD standards of completeness and sufficiency. Staff will follow procedures to enter data into HMIS, and will ensure data quality and completeness. Staff will also keep paper forms in a hard copy client file. Any data or documentation not directly entered into or uploaded to the HMIS will be maintained in the paper file.

PROPERTY VERIFICATIONS AND INSPECTIONS: REQUIREMENTS FOR HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND RAPID RE-HOUSING

The ESG Program will conduct housing verifications and inspections as required by HUD.

1. Rent Reasonableness

A rent reasonableness assessment will be conducted by the subrecipient prior to paying back rent and emergency rent assistance for a current or new rental property to ensure the rental rates are fair market rates.

2. Habitability Inspection

When a re-housing client will move into a new rental, a Habitability Inspection is required to ensure minimum habitability standards and will be conducted by a trained staff of the Subrecipient. Habitability inspections are also required periodically for emergency shelters.

3. Lead-based Paint

If applicable, a Lead-based Paint inspection will be required for housing and shelters and will be conducted by a Certified Lead Base Paint inspector. Housing will be inspected when both of the following conditions exist for a household that has been approved to receive financial assistance from Project Action:

- a. The rental property is older than 1978, as shown by Lexington County property records; and
- b. The client household includes a child less than 6 years of age.

5. Repeat Inspections

Inspections will be conducted no more than two times. If unit does not pass inspection, one more inspection can be ordered. If the unit doesn't pass inspection a second time, Emergency Solutions Grant staff will assist the client to move to another property that will satisfy these requirements.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The ESG Program protects client confidentiality in the following ways.

- 1. Most clients interact solely with their case manager and do not have personal contact with other Emergency Solutions Grant personnel. The case manager will keep client names and personal information confidential except as it is necessary to discuss cases with a supervisor or with other Emergency Solutions Grant personnel for the purpose of case coordination.
- 2. When Emergency Solutions Grant staff communicates about client services via email

they will not share names or social security numbers. Instead they use client I.D. codes that are used in HMIS.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No person who is an employee, agent, consultant, officer, or elected or appointed official of the County of Lexington and who exercises or has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to ESG activities, or who is in a position to participate in an ESG decision-making process or gain inside information with regard to such activities, may obtain a personal or financial interest or benefit from the activity, or have an interest in any contract, subcontract, or agreement with respect thereto, or the proceeds there under, either for himself or herself or for those with whom he or she has family or business ties, during his or her tenure or for one year thereafter.

NONDISCRIMINATION & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY REQUIREMENTS

The ESG Program will ensure that information about ESG Program assistance is made available to all on a nondiscriminatory basis and ensure that all who seek services are provided equal access using the following methods.

1. Outreach information will be provided to a wide range of services providers and community based organizations.
2. To ensure that outreach materials and services are accessible to persons with limited English proficiency, ESG Program will provide information about the program on the County Website as well as maintain a hard copy in the respective offices. Staff members will be available who are bilingual in English and Spanish. When persons seeking services speak languages other than English or Spanish, or have vision or hearing disabilities, ESG Program staff will utilize other translation services to ensure fair access.

AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHERING FAIR HOUSING

The ESG Program will ensure that policies and procedures affirmatively further fair housing opportunities for classes protected under the Fair Housing Act, including race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, and familial status. Fair housing procedures will include the following:

1. Marketing the program to all eligible persons, including persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency;
2. Making buildings and communications that facilitate applications and service delivery accessible to persons with disabilities
3. Providing fair housing counseling services or referrals to fair housing agencies;
4. Informing participants of how to file a housing discrimination complaint, including providing the toll-free number for the Housing Discrimination Hotline:

1800-669-9777; and

5. Recruiting landlords and service providers in areas that expand housing choice to program participants.

ESG PROGRAM COMPONENT POLICIES

A. STREET OUTREACH

The ESG Program may provide the following services to eligible clients in order to connect unsheltered homeless with emergency shelter, housing, or critical services.

- Engagement
- Case Management
- Emergency health and mental health services
- Transportation
- Services for special populations (special populations include homeless youth, homeless persons with HIV/AIDS, and homeless victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking).

2) Shelter Stay Procedures

3) Essential Services

4) Shelter Outreach Performance Measures

Number of persons:

- Placed in shelter or safe havens
- With more non-cash benefits at program exit
- Participating in case management

EMERGENCY SHELTER

The ESG Program may provide for the following services to maintain or convert homeless shelter sites, provide essential services or assist with shelter operations.

- Case management
- Childcare
- Education
- Employment
- Life skills services
- Legal services
- Health
- Mental health
- Substance abuse services

- Transportation
- Services for special populations
- Operations (e.g., maintenance, utilities, furniture, food)

1) Policy for Admission

2) Policy for Diversion

3) Policy for Referral and Assessment of Needs

4) Policy for Discharge

5) Emergency Shelter Performance Measures

Number of persons:

- Exiting to temporary or transitional housing destinations
- Exiting to permanent housing destinations
- Participating in case management

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

The ESG Program funds may be used to provide housing relocation and stabilization services and rental assistance to those who earn 30% or less of the Area Median Income. Financial assistance will not be provided to a household for a purpose and time period supported by another public source.

- Housing relocation and stabilization services
- Short-and medium-term rental assistance
- Short-term = up to 3 months
- Medium-term = 4 to 24 months
- Up to 24 months of rental assistance during any 3-year period, including one-time payment for up to 6 months of rent arrears on the tenant's portion of the rent.
- Moving costs
- Rent application fees
- Security deposits
- Last month's rent
- Utility deposit
- Utility payments
- Housing search/ placement
- Housing stability case management
- Mediation and legal services
- Credit repair/ budgeting/ money management

1) Evaluating Eligibility for Assistance for Homelessness Prevention

Minimum requirements to be eligible for Rapid Re-Housing Assistance:

Client eligibility will be assessed in-person. Appointments will be made with the designated providers. During these appointments the clients will be informed about the resources within their community and offered suggestions.

Clients must meet eligibility requirements and provide documentation described below.

Client must:

1. Clients are permitted to have some assets, e.g. car, retirement plan, with maximum of \$3,000 (not including checking and/or savings).
2. Have resided in Lexington County for the past three months or longer.
3. Be either
 - Homeless (based on current HUD homelessness definition), or
 - Are about to lose their housing due to scheduled eviction or foreclosure, and have no other networks or resources to avoid homelessness, i.e., would become homeless but for this assistance.
4. Have experienced a sudden and significant change making it hard to pay rent or utilities, and, after a short or medium period of assistance, be likely to sustain stable housing on his/her own. Examples of sudden and significant changes include, but are not limited to:
 - Sudden loss of income
 - Unforeseen finance set back or life change
 - Loss of job or reduced hours
 - Medical issues
 - Medical bills caused inability to pay other bills
 - Car repairs
 - Student Financial Aid disrupted
 - Divorce or break up of a relationship
 - Death in family
 - Lost roommate or other living arrangements
5. Be willing to participate in a case plan that includes goals for improving his/her situation, such as job search activities.
6. Must provide verification documents:
 - Picture I.D.
 - Social Security Card
 - Birth Certificate
 - Proof of income
 - Bank statement
 - Bills that show cause/ need
 - Proof of residency
 - Eviction notice or a copy of the Notice of Trustee's sale and has a written lease agreement or a deed that corresponds with the foreclosure documents
 - Utility disconnect bill or proof of delinquent amount
 - Invoice for moving assistance

7. Demonstrates ability to maintain their housing and household expenses after assistance

Examples of Reasons the client eligibility may be denied:

- Client does not meet eligibility requirements listed above
- Client did not provide required verification documents
- Client did not agree to having a case plan, or did not follow steps in case plan
- Client used maximum time or assistance allotment
- There were substantiated landlord complaints, and the client did not comply with a correction plan.
- All sub-grantees must evaluate and certify the eligibility of ESG program participants at least once every three months for all households receiving homelessness prevention assistance, and once annually for households receiving rapid re-housing assistances
 - Initial Consultation
 - Sub-recipients must conduct an initial evaluation to determine the eligibility of each individual or family's eligibility for ESG assistance and the amount and types of assistance the individual or family needs to regain stability in permanent housing.
 - Documentation to verify requirements of this section have been met including completing a client in-take form. All sub-grantees must keep verification of this requirement in each client file.
 - Sub-grantees must verify Income below 30% the Area Median Income.
 - Verification of Homelessness or Risk of Homelessness using the HUD definition as described in Section II. B.
 - The sub-grantee must confirm that the individual or family does not have sufficient resources or support networks.
 - To receive assistance under Homeless Prevention, a client(s) must be at risk of becoming homeless and rental assistance is only necessary to prevent the individual or family from moving into an emergency shelter or another place.

2) Determining and Prioritizing Homeless Prevention Assistance

The purpose of the ESG program is to provide assistance to as many individuals and families who face obstacles to sustaining housing as possible. An individual or family's ability to sustain housing is not a threshold requirement. The program will focus on helping individuals and families overcome their immediate housing obstacles and connect them with the resources they need to stay housed when the program ends.

Sub-grantees will target assistance to families and individuals who are homeless or who are about to spend their first night at in a shelter or on the street. These families and individuals will be prioritized as follows.

Priority 1: Homeless Families

- Priority 1(a): The homeless family who is in the emergency shelter for less than 30 days
- Priority 1(b): The homeless family who has been living on the streets (places not meant for human habitation) for less than 30 days
- Priority 1 (c): the homeless family who has been in the emergency shelter for over 30 days
- Priority 1 (d): The homeless family or who has been living on the streets for over 30 days

Priority 2: Homeless Youth

- Priority 2(a): The homeless youth who is in the emergency shelter for less than 30 days
- Priority 2(b): The homeless youth who has been living on the streets (places not meant for human habitation) for less than 30 days
- Priority 2 (c): the homeless youth who has been in the emergency shelter for over 30 days
- Priority 2 (d): The homeless youth or who has been living on the streets for over 30 days

Priority 3: Homeless Individual

- Priority 3(a): The homeless individual who is in the emergency shelter for less than 30 days
- Priority 3(b): The homeless individual who has been living on the streets (places not meant for human habitation) for less than 30 days
- Priority 3 (c): the homeless individual who has been in the emergency shelter for over 30 days
- Priority 3 (d): The homeless individual or who has been living on the streets for over 30 days

3) Rent & Utilities Policy: Homeless Prevention

Rent

Sub-grantees will require program participants to pay a portion of the rent expense based on the individual or families' available income (up to thirty percent 30%). Participants are expected to contribute a portion of their income to pay for rent. Household income and rent contribution will be calculated based on household available income at the time of certification. Any household income increase must be reported to the sub-grantee within seven (7) days and the new rent contribution amount adjusted. Income shall be reassessed every three months for medium term rental assistance.

Sub-grantees may increase the household's contribution to the rent and utility cost as they acquire more financial independence and stability. An increase will be documented in the client's plan.

Rental assistance may be used to pay up to 3 months of rental arrears for eligible program participants. Rental arrears may be paid if the payment enables the program participant to return to the housing unit for which the arrears are being paid or move to another unit.

Rental arrears may be paid regardless of when they were incurred, provided that the existence of arrears prevents the eligible participant from obtaining housing. Payment for rental arrears must be included in determining the total period of the program participant's

rental assistance, which may not exceed 24 months in a 3 year period.

Rental assistance cannot exceed the actual rental costs. Rental assistance payments cannot be made on behalf of eligible participants for the same period of time that rental assistance is being provided through another federal, state or local housing subsidy program.

Sub-grantees providing rental assistance for homeless prevention will be required to conduct initial and any appropriate follow-up habitability inspections of housing units into which a program participant will be moving. Units must be inspected on an annual basis and upon a change of tenancy. In addition, Lead Based Paint requirements must be met when applicable.

When a rental unit has been located, sub-grantees may need to assist the client in contacting the landlord to complete the appropriate paperwork and conduct a habitability standards inspection. Agencies must have acceptable documentation showing a participant in need of rental assistance. Documentation may be in the form of an eviction notice from a landlord or a letter stating intent to evict.

Sub-grantees must use fair market rent standard to determine eligibility. Sub-grantees should assist program participants to locate a rental unit at or below fair market rent.

Security Deposits and Utility Deposits

ESG Program funds may be used to pay security deposits and utility deposits. Security and utility deposits may only be paid with ESG funding if the program participant will otherwise be homeless without assistance.

Security and utility deposits covering the same period of time in which other assistance is being provided through another housing subsidy program are eligible, as long as they cover different costs types.

Security and utility deposits may be paid as a one-time grant not to exceed the monthly rental amount. Information documenting the need for a security deposit should be obtained at the same time the required rental paperwork is being completed by the client and landlord.

Sub-grantees must conduct a habitability standards inspection on any unit that a program participant will be moving into using ESG program funds for a security or utility deposit. Agencies must certify that the unit has passed habitability standards before any ESG program funds will be released.

Utility Payments

ESG Program funds may be used for up to 6 months of utility payments, including up to 3 months of utility payments in arrears. The program participant, or a member of the participant's household, must have an account in his/her name with a utility company. The participant must have a lease with their name on it to prove residency and verify address of utility service. Copies of the proof of responsibility should be obtained and maintained in the client file. Utility payments will be made directly to the utility company. Documentation must be made to verify that the participant is not receiving the same type of assistance from another agency for the same period. Also, if utility

assistance payments are available from another agency this source should be used first before ESG funds are provided.

A Standards for Determining Length and Level of Assistance for Homeless Prevention

- No participant may receive more than 24 months of assistance within a 3 year period.
- The maximum amount of assistance is based on FMR less the households 30% of monthly income.
- The maximum number of times the program participant may receive assistance is based on need but may not exceed more than 24 months of assistance in a 3 year period.
- Short-term rental assistance is to be limited to a maximum of 3 months of rent
- Medium-rental assistance shall extend for more than 3 months but not more than 24 months of rent.
- Only the assistance that is needed for a client to become stabilized will be provided.
-

B Homeless Prevention Performance Standards

Number of persons:

- Who maintained their permanent housing for 6 months or longer
- Exiting to permanent housing destinations
- With higher income at program exit
- With more non-cash benefits at program exit
- Participating in case management

RAPID REHOUSING

The ESG Program can be utilized to fund housing relocation and stabilization services and rental assistance to individuals and families who can quickly be transitioned into permanent housing and a stable environment. Financial assistance will not be provided to a household for a purpose and time period supported by another public source.

- Housing relocation and stabilization services
- Short-and medium-term rental assistance
- Short-term = up to 3 months
- Medium-term = 4 to 24 months
- Up to 24 months of rental assistance during any 3-year period, including one-time payment for up to 6 months of rent arrears on the tenant's portion of the rent.
- Moving costs
- Rent application fees
- Security deposits
- Last month's rent
- Utility deposit
- Utility payments
- Housing search/ placement
- Housing stability case management
- Mediation and legal services

- Credit repair/ budgeting/ money management

1) Evaluating Eligibility for Assistance for Rapid Re-Housing

Minimum requirements to be eligible for Rapid Re-Housing Assistance:

Client eligibility will be assessed in-person. Appointments will be made with the designated providers. During these appointments the clients will be informed about the resources within their community and offered suggestions.

Clients must meet eligibility requirements and provide documentation described below.

- A Clients are permitted to have some assets, e.g. car, retirement plan, with maximum of \$3000 in liquid assets (readily available money).
- B Have resided in Lexington County for the past three months or longer.
- C Be either
 - Homeless (based on current HUD homelessness definition), or
 - Are about to lose their housing due to scheduled eviction or foreclosure, and have no other networks or resources to avoid homelessness, i.e., would become homeless but for this assistance.
- D Have experienced a sudden and significant change making it hard to pay rent or utilities, and, after a short or medium period of assistance, be likely to sustain stable housing on his/her own. Examples of sudden and significant changes include, but are not limited to:
 - Sudden loss of income
 - Unforeseen finance set back or life change
 - Loss of job or reduced hours
 - Medical issues
 - Medical bills caused inability to pay other bills
 - Car repairs
 - Student Financial Aid disrupted
 - Divorce or break up of a relationship
 - Death in family
 - Lost roommate or other living arrangements
- E Be willing to participate in a case plan that includes goals for improving his/her situation, such as job search activities.
- F Must provide verification documents:
 - Picture I.D.
 - Social Security Card
 - Birth Certificate
 - Proof of income
 - Bank statement
 - Bills that show cause/ need

- Proof of residency
- Eviction notice or a copy of the Notice of Trustee's sale and has a written lease agreement or a deed that corresponds with the foreclosure documents
- Utility disconnect bill or proof of delinquent amount
- Invoice for moving assistance

G. Demonstrates ability to maintain their housing and household expenses after assistance.

Examples of Reasons the client eligibility may be denied:

- Client does not meet eligibility requirements listed above
- Client did not provide required verification documents
- Client did not agree to having a case plan, or did not follow steps in case plan
- Client used maximum time or assistance allotment
- There were substantiated landlord complaints, and the client did not comply with a correction plan.

All sub-grantees must evaluate and certify the eligibility of ESG program participants at least once every three months for all households receiving homelessness prevention assistance, and once annually for households receiving rapid re-housing assistances

➤ Initial Consultation:

- Sub-recipients must conduct an initial evaluation to determine the eligibility of each individual or family's eligibility for ESG assistance and the amount and types of assistance the individual or family needs to regain stability in permanent housing.
- Documentation to verify requirements of this section have been met include completing a client in-take form. All sub-grantees must keep verification of this requirement in each client file.
- Verification of Homelessness or Risk of Homelessness using the HUD definition as described in Section II. B.
- The sub-grantee must confirm that the individual or family does not have sufficient resources or support networks.
- To receive assistance under HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION client(s) must be at risk of becoming homeless and rental assistance is only necessary to prevent the individual or family from moving into an emergency shelter or another place.

2) Determining and Prioritizing Rapid Re-Housing Assistance

The purpose of the ESG program is to provide homeless prevention assistance to as many homeless individuals and families who face obstacles to obtaining and sustaining housing as possible. An individual or family's ability to sustain housing is not a threshold requirement. The program will focus on helping individuals and families overcome their immediate housing obstacles and connect them with the resources they need to stay housed when the program ends.

Sub-grantees will target assistance to families and individuals who are homeless or who are about to spend their first night at in a shelter or on the street. These families and individuals will be prioritized as follows.

Priority 1: Homeless Families

- Priority 1(a): The homeless family who is in the emergency shelter for less than 30 days
- Priority 1(b): The homeless family who has been living on the streets (places not meant for human habitation) for less than 30 days
- Priority 1 (c): the homeless family who has been in the emergency shelter for over 30 days
- Priority 1 (d): The homeless family or who has been living on the streets for over 30 days

Priority 2: Homeless Youth

- Priority 2(a): The homeless youth who is in the emergency shelter for less than 30 days
- Priority 2(b): The homeless youth who has been living on the streets (places not meant for human habitation) for less than 30 days
- Priority 2 (c): the homeless youth who has been in the emergency shelter for over 30 days
- Priority 2 (d): The homeless youth or who has been living on the streets for over 30 days

Priority 3: Homeless Individual

- Priority 3(a): The homeless individual who is in the emergency shelter for less than 30 days
- Priority 3(b): The homeless individual who has been living on the streets (places not meant for human habitation) for less than 30 days
- Priority 3 (c): the homeless individual who has been in the emergency shelter for over 30 days
- Priority 3 (d): The homeless individual or who has been living on the streets for over 30 days

3) Rent & Utilities Policy: Rapid Re-Housing

Rent

Sub-grantees will require program participants to pay a portion of the rent expense based on the individual or families' available income thirty percent (30%) or less. Participants are expected to contribute a portion of their income to pay for rent. Household income and rent contribution will be calculated based on household available income at the time of certification. Any household income increase must be reported to the sub-grantee within seven (7) days and the new rent contribution amount adjusted. Income shall be reassessed every three months for medium term rental assistance.

Sub-grantees may increase the household's contribution to the rent and utility cost as they acquire more financial independence and stability. An increase will be documented in the

client's plan.

Rental assistance may be used to pay up to 3 months of rental arrears for eligible program participants. Rental arrears may be paid if the payment enables the program participant to return to the housing unit for which the arrears are being paid or move to another unit.

Rental arrears may be paid regardless of when they were incurred, provided that the existence of arrears prevents the eligible participant from obtaining housing. Payment for rental arrears must be included in determining the total period of the program participant's rental assistance, which may not exceed 24 months in a 3 year period.

Rental assistance cannot exceed the actual rental costs. Rental assistance payments cannot be made on behalf of eligible participants for the same period of time that rental assistance is being provided through another federal, state or local housing subsidy program.

Sub-grantees providing rental assistance for rapid re-housing will be required to arrange initial and any appropriate follow-up habitability inspections of housing units into which a program participant will be moving. Units must be inspected on an annual basis and upon a change of tenancy. In addition, Lead Based Paint requirements must be met when applicable.

When a rental unit has been located, sub-grantees may need to assist the client in contacting the landlord to complete the appropriate paperwork and conduct a habitability standards inspection. Agencies must have acceptable documentation showing a participant in need of rental assistance. Documentation may be in the form of an eviction notice from a landlord or a letter stating intent to evict.

Sub-grantees must use fair market rent standard to determine eligibility. Sub-grantees should assist program participants to locate a rental unit at or below fair market rent.

Security Deposits and Utility Deposits

ESG Program funds may be used to pay security deposits and utility deposits. Security and utility deposits may only be paid with ESG funding if the program participant will otherwise be homeless without assistance.

Security and utility deposits covering the same period of time in which other assistance is being provided through another housing subsidy program are eligible, as long as they cover different costs types.

Security and utility deposits may be paid as a one-time grant not to exceed the monthly rental amount. Information documenting the need for a security deposit should be obtained at the same time the required rental paperwork is being completed by the client and landlord.

Sub-grantees must conduct a habitability standards inspection on any unit that a program participant will be moving into using ESG program funds for a security or utility deposit. Agencies must certify that the unit has passed habitability standards before any ESG program funds will be released.

Utility Payments

ESG Program funds may be used for up to 6 months of utility payments, including up to 6 months of

utility payments in arrears. The program participant, or a member of the participant's household, must have an account in his/her name with a utility company. The participant must have a lease with their name on it to prove residency and verify address of utility service. Copies of the proof of responsibility should be obtained and maintained in the client file. Utility payments will be made directly to the utility company. Documentation must be made to verify that the participant is not receiving the same type of assistance from another agency for the same period. Also, if utility assistance payments are available from another agency this source should be used first before ESG funds are provided

Standards for Determining Length and Level of Assistance for Rapid Re-Housing

- No participant may receive more than 24 months of assistance within a 3 year period.
- The maximum amount of assistance is based on FMR less the households 30% of monthly income.
- The maximum number of times the program participant may receive assistance is based on need but may not exceed more than 24 months of assistance in a 3 year period.
- Short-term rental assistance is to be limited to a maximum of 3 months of rent
- Medium-rental assistance shall extend for more than 3 months but not more than 24 months of rent.
- Only as much assistance needed to become stabilized will be provided.

Rapid Re-Housing Performance Standards

Number of persons:

- Who maintained their permanent housing for 6 months or longer
- Exiting to permanent housing destinations
- With higher income at program exit
- With more non-cash benefits at program exit
- Participating in Case Management

INELIGIBLE SERVICES NOT PROVIDED BY THE ESG PROGRAM

- Mortgage costs
- Credit card bills or other consumer debt
- Pet care
- Entertainment activities
- Cash assistance directly to participants

TERMINATION OF ASSISTANCE

A sub-grantee may terminate assistance to a program participant who violates program requirements. Sub-grantees may resume assistance to a program participant whose assistance was previously terminated. In terminating assistance to a program participant, the sub-grantee must provide a formal process that recognizes the rights of individuals receiving assistance to due process of law.

For Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing rental assistance the process of

termination, at minimum, must consist of:

- a Written notice to the program participant containing a clear statement of the reasons for terminations;
- b A review of the decision, in which the program participant is given the opportunity to present written or oral objections before a person other than the person who made or approved the termination decisions; and
- c Prompt written notice of the final decision to the program participant

ESG PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- 1 Procedures for Annual Plan and CAPER Reports
- 2 Use of IDIS
- 3 Monitoring Direct Service Contractors
 - a. Purpose
 - b. Frequency
 - c. Findings
 - d. Follow-up Procedures

SUMMARY OF ESG PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Lexington County in consultation with the Continuum of Care will develop performance standards that will provide measures to evaluate the effectiveness of 1) Targeting those who need the assistance the most; 2) reducing the number of people living on the streets and emergency shelters; 3) shortening the time people spend homeless; and 4) reducing each program participant’s housing barriers or housing stability risks.

ESG Program Performance Standards	
Activity	Outcome/ Outputs
Street Outreach	Number of persons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placed in shelter or safe havens • With more non-cash benefits at program exit • Participating in case management
Emergency Shelter	Number of persons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exiting to temporary or transitional housing destinations • Exiting to permanent housing destinations • Participating in case management

Homelessness Prevention	<p>Number of persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who maintained their permanent housing for 6 months or longer • Exiting to permanent housing destinations • With higher income at program exit • With more non-cash benefits at program exit • Participating in case management
Rapid Re-Housing	<p>Number of persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who maintained their permanent housing for 6 months or longer • Exiting to permanent housing destinations • With higher income at program exit • With more non-cash benefits at program exit • Participating in Case Management