Bezos Day One Families Fund

Request for Expressions of Interest (REI)

Point of Contact: contracts@homlesshouston.org

Date Released: April 5, 2023

Award Term: 12 months

Submissions Due: May 5, 2023, by 11:59 pm CDT
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A. ABOUT US

The Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County (CFTH) is the lead agency for The Way Home. Founded in 1982 and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 1988, the CFTH has a long-standing history as a local homeless response system leader. The CFTH acts as a catalyst, uniting partners and maximizing resources to move people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing with supportive services.

The Way Home is the name of our local Continuum of Care (CoC), referred to as TX-700 by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Way Home is the collective effort to prevent and end homelessness in Houston and throughout Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties, Texas. The Way Home comprises more than 100 partners from all areas of the community, including homeless service agencies, local governments, public housing authorities, the local Veterans Affairs office, and other nonprofits and community stakeholders. The partners of The Way Home CoC work to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in our region.

B. BACKGROUND

DAY 1 FAMILIES FUND

Launched in 2018 by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, the Day 1 Families Fund issues annual leadership awards to leading organizations on the frontlines that are employing compassionate, needle-moving work to help families move from unsheltered homelessness and shelters to permanent housing with the services they require to achieve stability.

Over the past five years, the Day 1 Families Fund has provided 170 grants totaling more than $520 million to organizations around the country working to combat homelessness and help families gain housing support and stability.

The Bezos Day One Fund made a $2 billion commitment to focus on making meaningful and lasting impacts in two areas: funding existing nonprofits that help families experiencing homelessness, and creating a network of new, nonprofit tier-one preschools in low-income communities. The Day 1 Families Fund issues annual leadership awards to organizations and civic groups doing compassionate, needle-moving work to provide shelter and hunger support to address the immediate needs of young families. The vision statement comes from the inspiring Mary’s Place in Seattle: no child sleeps outside. For more information, visit www.BezosDayOneFund.org/Day1FamiliesFund.

CFTH’S DAY 1 AWARD

In November 2022, the CFTH, the lead agency to The Way Home CoC, announced that it received a $5 million grant from the Bezos Day 1 Families Fund.

The CFTH was selected as a Day 1 Families Fund grant recipient by a group of national advisors who are leading advocates and experts on homelessness and service provision. National advisors brought expertise on housing justice, advancing racial equity, and helping programs employ resources effectively to assist families out of homelessness.
The CFTH applied for and was awarded an “umbrella grant” of $5 million to help families experiencing homelessness in Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties. Part 1 of the grant is $500,000 to support the CFTH’s work and to cover its costs of administering Part 2 of the grant. Part 2 of the grant is $4.5 million for the CFTH to re-grant to nonprofit partners to support their work helping families experiencing homelessness.

C. OPPORTUNITY

The Day 1 Families Fund is committed to ending homelessness for families so that “no child sleeps outside.” Project funds will be used to assist families currently experiencing homelessness – unsheltered or sheltered – to help those families regain housing through:

- Diversion
- Employment Pathway Program
- Social Enterprise

D. PROJECT SCOPE

The CFTH, in partnership with direct service agencies, coordinates the housing response for The Way Home CoC, as the lead agency. Community planning to address homelessness has continuously focused on ending family and youth homelessness. Since 2011, family homelessness has decreased in our community by 82%. Based on this needle-moving work, the CFTH was awarded the Day 1 Family Fund to re-grant to The Way Home partners to continue to help move families from unsheltered homelessness and shelters to permanent housing with the services they require to sustain and maintain permanent housing.

With the influx of public funding associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, our community has served over 10,000 people since October 2020. The Day 1 Family Fund will enable our community to ensure families have access to the services and resources they need to end their homelessness and achieve well-being. Identified gaps in current services for families include access to child-care, transportation, basic needs, and sustainable employment as well as limitations on public dollars for supportive services. To address these gaps and barriers, the CFTH is looking for partners interested in implementing the following projects designed to assist homeless families (sheltered or unsheltered) to help those families regain or maintain housing:

**DIVERSION**

Diversion is a strategy that helps people experiencing a housing crisis quickly identify and access safe alternatives to emergency shelter. Diversion strategies can include engaging in creative problem-solving conversations with clients; connecting clients with community resources, educational resources for children and family supports; providing housing search and placement services; and securing flexible financial assistance to help people resolve their immediate housing crisis. Flexible financial assistance should include:

- Basic Needs
These strategies have a significant impact on a community’s crisis response system because they can reduce new entries into homelessness, cut down on shelter wait lists, decrease demand for limited shelter beds, have a lower intervention cost than RRH or PSH, and target more intensive homelessness interventions to those with higher needs. Financial assistance may be provided for up to 12 months; however, the bulk of assistance should include conflict resolution and/or family mediation or other non-financial interventions to solve an immediate housing crisis.

EMPLOYMENT PATHWAY PROGRAM

We know that, even when people leaving homelessness have the opportunity to enroll in career training programs that can help them earn a living wage, they can face significant barriers to completing that training including but not limited to: an inability to afford the program and/or time spent in class and on assignments takes away from critical income earnings, lack of child care, unreliable or unavailable transportation, life skills coaching, and mental and physical health support. Employment pathway programs would be designed to help clients overcome these barriers, leading to successful completion of their career training program, successful job placement, and the ability to earn a living wage. Employment pathway programs could offer any or all of the following supports to clients:

- Childcare
- Stipend
- Transportation (including personal vehicle maintenance)
- Job start-up costs (uniforms, equipment, etc.)
- Mental and Physical Health Support
- Life Skills

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

A non-profit social enterprise is a business or program that works to employ those who have been marginalized from the mainstream job market and individuals from backgrounds that often face discrimination in hiring practices. In addition to job skills, social enterprises also provide support services such as life skills, counseling, childcare and access to other services provided by the organization. Positive outcomes of operating a social enterprise include community participation, therapeutic benefits of employment, earning an income and ability to meet basic needs. Profits are reinvested into the business and/or training program.

A social enterprise designed to engage people experiencing homelessness should provide an inclusive workplace and supports beyond the workplace to meet the complex needs of employees. Supports could include any or all of the following:
• Childcare
• Paid Training (Earn as you Learn)
• Transportation
• Mental and Physical Health Support
• Financial and Life Skills Training

The workplace should be tailored to the individual and their needs.

E. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS & PROCESS

All submissions will undergo a threshold review for completion and accuracy prior to being scored by a Review and Selection Committee. Projects that submit incomplete responses or do not submit their response by the stated deadline in the competition timeline document may not be considered for funding. All project applications must include the following components.

Submissions must include the following:

I. General Background and Overview of Applicant
II. Proposed Project Narrative meeting goals and objectives outlined in REI
III. Proposed Project Budget
IV. Agency Operating Budget for current fiscal year
V. Federal Tax Exemption Determination Letter
VI. List of Board of Directors and organizational leadership (including a breakdown of self-reported demographics)
VII. Project Organizational Chart
VIII. Audited Financial Statements for most recently closed fiscal year
IX. Updated and Signed Partnership Agreement with The Way Home CoC as of 2023

Submissions must comply with the following and provide written acknowledgment for each of the below:

I. Compliance with Non-discrimination and Related Requirements.
II. Compliance with Fair Housing and Civil Rights Laws, which Encompass the Fair Housing Act and Related Authorities (cf. 24 CFR 5.105(a)).
III. Compliance with Housing First
IV. Not be suspended or debarred from receiving federal funds and in good standing with all government and funding contracts.
V. Participation in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and adherence to HMIS Policies and Procedures (subject to revision) including but not limited to data quality and timeliness standards.

We encourage potential applicants to submit questions during the open FAQ period referenced in the timeline below if they are unsure of their ability to meet any of these expectations or if they have any questions about the information within this REI.
Successful REI submissions will move forward and be invited to submit a full application for their program. Additional details including timeline will be provided to those who move forward in the selection process.

Submissions can be sent by the REI due date to contracts@homelesshouston.org.

G. TIMELINE

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<td>Wednesday, April 5, 2023, 3:00pm – 4:00pm</td>
<td>Virtual Conference</td>
<td>View the conference here: <a href="https://youtu.be/hLEsD6tknzg">https://youtu.be/hLEsD6tknzg</a></td>
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<td>Thursday, April 6, 2023</td>
<td>FAQ Email Opens</td>
<td><a href="mailto:contracts@homelesshouston.org">contracts@homelesshouston.org</a></td>
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<td>Wednesday, April 19, 2023, at 5:00 pm CDT</td>
<td>FAQ Email Closes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:contracts@homelesshouston.org">contracts@homelesshouston.org</a></td>
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<td>REI Submissions Due</td>
<td><a href="mailto:contracts@homelesshouston.org">contracts@homelesshouston.org</a></td>
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<td>Friday, June 9, 2023, by 5:00 pm CDT</td>
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H. REVIEW CRITERIA

Competitive REIs for this round of funding will:

Be well supported by expertise and data: The reason that the CFTH is issuing the REI in this way is because we want to hear from you! We purposefully designed this REI in this manner because, although the CFTH has macro data and information, we always rely on the expertise of you, our partners, to bring practical experience of working directly with people and challenge us on what is possible. Strong REIs will include narrative language that demonstrates the agency’s expertise, track record of success, and data to support the program. Highlighting your expertise by providing a snapshot of previous/current projects within The Way Home CoC is also recommended.

Address sustainability: Sustainability is a key strategy for any agency or program. The fact that this Day 1 gift is large and able to be spent over five years means that the CFTH plans to implement these dollars strategically over the life of the grant. This means that we do not at this time know how much money will be granted during this and future funding opportunities. Due to the one-time nature of this grant from Day 1 Families Fund to the CFTH and this process, the CFTH cannot guarantee future rounds of funding for any programs that are successfully
awarded. Therefore, strong REIs will address a path to sustainability for the programs they are proposing.

**Employ creative problem solving:** The fact that these dollars are private not only means a creative and more inclusive application process, it means that we can also be innovative with how we activate these funds. This is an opportunity to think of all the times you said to a coworker, “I wish we could do A, but the funds we have from B won’t let us.” Now is the time to do A!

**Leverage community partnerships:** Over the past decade, The Way Home CoC has employed a successful strategy of engaging partners from neighboring systems or issue areas to leverage their expertise and support our work to address homelessness. Strong REIs might include potential partnerships with other nonprofits, mainstream services providers, or other entities who can accelerate and enhance the impact of the proposed program.

**Provide broad program goals and objectives:** We recognize that this isn’t a full application so you may not have all of the information you need to deliver a full set of outputs and outcomes for your program, but strong REIs will provide preliminary outputs and examples of potential areas for observable outcomes.

I. FAQs

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q:** How do I submit my Expression of Interest?

**A:** Expressions of Interest can be submitted electronically to the contracts@homelesshouston.org. Ensure that all submission requirements/acknowledgements are included.

**Q:** Can I submit more than one Expression of Interest?

**A:** Yes! We encourage you to send more than one EOI. However only one project will go on to the application.

**Q:** Can I include overhead costs or admin costs in program budgets?

**A:** Yes, REIs can include program administration expenses in their program budget up to 10% of the total requested amount.

**Q:** Can we meet with CFTH staff to discuss potential ideas?

**A:** Please use the contracts@homelesshouston.org email to ask questions regarding your idea. Our team will respond to you within 2 business days.
Q: Are there any reporting requirements?  
A: Monthly reports will be required during the term of this project and a final report will be due one year after the grant awarded or when the project is completed.

Q: Can we partner with another nonprofit to submit a collaborative expression of interest?  
A: Yes, you can submit collaborative EOs; however, please be sure to describe the nature and details of the partnership in your program narrative and budget(s) to outline roles, responsibilities, and how funding would be allocated if awarded.

Q: Can we serve individual program participants with this funding or is it restrictive to families only?  
A: Project funds are restricted to families with minor children only.

Q: Will we be provided feedback for a declined REI?  
A: Unfortunately, given the large number of project submissions we expect to receive, the CFTH will be unable to provide specific feedback to each applicant.

Q: How can I become a The Way Home partner organization?  
A: Membership for The Way Home is always open! Organizations interested in becoming formally involved with The Way Home must first complete the partner application.

The application should only be completed by a senior member of the agency's leadership body (e.g., CEO, ED). Following the application submission, the Coalition will review the application and send the next steps accordingly.

Organizations must have an updated/complete application and partnership agreement on file with the Coalition to be considered an official partner of The Way Home. Not sure if you’re an official partner? Contact Caybryn Southern at csouthern@homelesshouston.org.

Q: We are located outside of the CoC region but are serving clients within the CoC, can we still apply?  
A: For this opportunity, applicants should be located within Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties and should only serve clients in those three counties with these funds.

Q: I missed the grant conference; can I still apply?  
A: Yes, you may still apply if you missed the grant conference, but we do recommend that you view the recording of the conference. That link can be found in section G. Timeline above in this REI, on the CFTH’s website at www.homelesshouston.org, and on the CFTH’s YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/houstonhomelessorg.

Q: Is there a maximum award amount per organization?  
A: There is no maximum award amount per agency.
Q: For the diversion intervention, are you asking applicants to follow the existing model? Are you looking to cover a specific geographic area? Are you seeking to serve families only vs. individuals?

A: For diversion, we know the model we’ve employed during the Community COVID Housing Program has been successful but if there is something new to try or new ideas, we welcome them. The geographic area is the same as our Continuum of Care: Harris, Fort Bend, and/or Montgomery counties, Texas. The Day 1 Families Fund is limited to serving families with minor children though we can talk further when addressing youth aging out of foster care or other adjacent systems.

Q: Can a health system apply?

A: Yes, a health system can apply as long as they meet the submission requirements. They could also work in partnership/submit a joint REI with a qualifying entity that applies. The health system would also be limited to serving families with minor children experiencing homelessness.

Q: Do clients for employment pathways programs need to be currently homeless?

A: They need to meet the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of homelessness, categories 1: Literal homelessness, 2: Imminent Risk of Homelessness, and 4: Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence. For more information visit the [HUD Website](https://www.hud.gov/).

Q: Are domestic violence agencies eligible to submit an REI(s)?

A: Yes.

Q: What will grant reporting look like? Are we able to create our own data points or are there specific ones you are looking for?

A: Specifics will be determined with the partners who are awarded; however, partners can expect to provide monthly reports.

Q: Is there a specific demographic area you are looking to serve? Are there any exclusions?

A: There are no demographic exclusions other than households served must include at least one minor child.

Q: Is this assistance only for families with minor children?

A: Yes, the vision of the Bezos Day 1 Families Fund is “no child sleeps outside.” There is the potential to serve youth aging out of foster care or other adjacent systems, so please get creative in your REI submission(s) if you have a great idea to serve that population!
Q: Are certified financial statements acceptable in lieu of audited financial statements if an agency did not meet the audit threshold for FY 2022?
A: Yes.

Q: For the social enterprise program, if we have a resale store already as a social enterprise, is hiring for it eligible? And are only clients eligible for hiring if so? Would salaries for existing staff be eligible?
A: Hires funded through this project must be participants. If your current staff are training or supervising or coaching these new hires then they could be paid with these funds as well

Q: Can REI budgets include funds for project evaluation from a third party evaluator?
A: You would need to demonstrate the impact on serving families with minor children but yes, those costs would be allowable.

Q: For the employment pathway program, what could the funds be used for and could you provide examples?
A: Ideas of supports in an employment pathway program could include cost of certifications, coaches/peer supports, interviewing skills. soft skills, transportation, stipend for students, child care etc.

Q: Can these funds serve homeless youth/minors on their own?
A: Yes.

Q: Would a domestic violence nonprofit looking to launch a retail space for employment training for survivors fit under social enterprise?
A: Yes.

Q: Is there a target cost per person served?
A: Due to the broad range of program possibilities, we don't have a target cost per client/household served.

Q: How many awards are you anticipating to make?
A: Due to the flexible nature of this process we don't have a specific number of awards that we anticipate making.

Q: Will there be any required match?
A: Match will not be required to use these funds but these funds should be able to be used as match for other programs.
Q: If awarded, how will the grant be funded?
A: We will work through those details with awarded projects but the Coalition will likely work to make some upfront funding available for program start up.

Q: Are organizations allowed to submit an REI for more than one focus or more than one project or program?
A: Yes! We love your enthusiasm and welcome organizations to submit as many REIs as they want! Please be sure to submit separate REIs for separate ideas/programs.

Q: Are there any concerns about serving individuals who are undocumented with these funds?
A: No.

Q: Are you accepting dual/partnership applications? If two organizations are working together on a project or program could they apply together?
A: Yes and yes!

Q: Will referrals to awarded programs be sent through Coordinated Access?
A: Yes.

Q: Is the $4.5M per year or to be spread over the five-year period?
A: The Coalition received a single $4.5M award to be used over a five year period.

Q: Will there be a limit of time that we can help clients (for example, with rental assistance)?
A: There will be no time limits imposed by the Coalition, but please note that the Coalition can only guarantee one-time funding to successful applicants. Strong REIs will address sustainability and plans to move households to stability and self-sufficiency.

Please remember to submit any other questions to contracts@homelesshouston.org by Wednesday, April 19 at 5:00 pm CDT.