



MEMORANDUM

“...meeting community needs...enhancing quality of life.”

TO: Community and Economic Development Committee
FROM: Nikki Gerhard, Community Development Specialist
DATE: October 14, 2020
RE: 2020 Community Development Block Grant CARES Act Funding (CDBG-CV)

In the last few months, the COVID-19 outbreak has caused unprecedented unemployment and put thousands of households at risk of being unable to afford housing and other basic needs. It is important that multiple systems are given the resources to work together to address the needs in our community. The City of Appleton was awarded a special allocation of \$348,255 in Community Development Block Grant funding to be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. This allocation was authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to respond to the growing effects of the public health crisis. The CARES Act adds additional flexibility for these funds in these unprecedented times, including:

- The public comment period is reduced to not less than five days;
- The City may use virtual public hearings when necessary for public health reasons;
- The public services cap is suspended; and
- Costs may be reimbursed for eligible activities incurred for pandemic response regardless of the date.

In addition, Secretary John Gibbs has granted waivers and alternative requirements in connection with the use of these funds that can be utilized when necessary to expedite and facilitate the use of funds to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. Staff intends to take full advantage of several of these waivers, including reducing the public comment period, suspending the public services cap, and modifying the CDBG allocation process to ensure the funding organizations have the resources to fully meet current needs. Specifically, the application process will be streamlined, and the traditional review process will not be followed.

City staff has been working closely with philanthropic entities and community partners to understand the needs of our community during this pandemic. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic poses a clear risk to people experiencing homelessness, the precariously housed, and service provider organizations. Access to stable housing helps eliminate many of the barriers to gaining and maintaining health and safety. However, these organizations do not have the resources to fully meet current needs.

To address instability in our community as a result of the COVID-19 health emergency, staff makes the following recommendations [with the support of the philanthropic entities and community partners], as they manage the short and long-term needs as a result of this public health crisis. These recommendations will be considered by CEDC on October 14th and Common Council on October 21st, and will be incorporated into the CDBG 2020 Annual Action Plan as a substantial amendment.

1. Building for Kids Children's Museum: Museums in Motion (\$34,923)

Museums in Motion: Responsive Community Engagement Toolkits is a collaborative project that responds to the COVID-19 pandemic by addressing the educational and social needs of economically disadvantaged K-12 students in the community. Through partnerships with local libraries and schools, non-virtual toolkits that support engagement and learning for approximately 1,200 individuals will be created and deployed.

2. Fox Valley Lutheran Homes: Combating Social Isolation for Older Adults (\$24,946)

This program provides WiFi access and devices to older adult tenants as they continue to isolate due to COVID-19. This program will enhance the mental and physical well-being of 46 tenants and allow them to keep their minds active by connecting with resources online and through technology.

3. Greater Fox Cities Habitat for Humanity: Homeownership Program (\$78,386)

Habitat for Humanity is one of the largest providers of affordable housing in the Fox Cities. This program will acquire two additional houses for rehabilitation and sell the affordable unit to qualified families.

4. LEAVEN, Inc: Emergency Assistance Program (\$50,000)

Through no fault of their own, members of our community have lost jobs or are working reduced hours, leaving them unable to pay their rent, mortgage, utilities and other basic needs. There is a broader economic spectrum of people and a wider variance of financial need since COVID. This program is preventing the economically disadvantaged and vulnerable households from slipping into greater poverty and homelessness. These funds will be used to provide rental assistance to 100 households.

5. Apricity, Inc: The Mooring Programs (\$10,000)

The Mooring Programs would utilize funding to purchase technology as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purchase of these items would ensure continued services to approximately 225 individuals.

6. Pillars, Inc: Adult Shelter Bunk Beds (\$30,000)

Because of the pandemic, the Adult Shelter had to reduce its maximum capacity from 55 clients to 40 in order to create social distancing. By installing 25 bunk beds (50 beds), this would allow the shelter to increase back to original capacity and continue serving individuals experiencing literal homelessness and still allow for proper social distancing.

7. Pillars, Inc.: Adult Shelter Case Manager (\$50,000)

Incorporation of an additional case manager at the Adult Shelter and Resource Center will enable quicker identification of permanent housing alternatives for clients likely to have the longest shelter stays. This ultimately increases available bed-nights and the capacity to house more unsheltered individuals as the pandemic continues.

8. Salvation Army of the Fox Cities: Housing Retention Program (\$30,000)

The Housing Retention Program provides rental assistance for households on the cusp of losing their housing due to nonpayment of rent, thereby preventing homelessness in our community. With the addition of these funds, the program will be able to serve an additional 40 individuals.

9. WWBIC: Business Owner Program (\$40,000)

This program will provide assistance to microenterprises and small businesses, while specifically focusing on and tracking outcomes related to job creation and retention and providing hope and opportunity for restoration and resiliency during COVID-19. These funds will help approximately 4 business owners pivot and prepare for recovery and rebound.

The following attachments are provided for additional information for this action item.

Attached Documents:

- 1.) April 2, 2020 CARES Act CDBG award letter
- 2.) CDBG-CV Subrecipient Simple Summary
- 3.) 2020PY Annual Action Plan Substantial Amendment request

If you have any questions, please contact me at 832-6469 or nikki.gerhard@appleton.org. Thank you!