



Request for Qualifications: Independent Contractors/Firms to Develop and Implement Evaluation of Home Base

Description

United Way of King County (United Way) is soliciting Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) from qualified persons and/or firms with demonstrated capacity and experience to develop and implement an evaluation of Home Base, an eviction prevention program that pairs financial assistance with legal representation provided through the King County Bar Association's (KCBA), Housing Justice Project (HJP).

Target Population

Home Base anticipates serving 4,000 low income people facing an eviction proceeding in King County Superior Court during the first 15 months of operation. Tenants facing eviction receive legal counsel, financial assistance and connection to social services to keep their current housing and prevent entry into homelessness and the homeless services system.

Evaluation Goals and Scope of Services

This RFQ will be used to identify an independent contractor, firm or organization to assess the impact and cost effectiveness of Home Base. Respondents are encouraged to describe how they would design and implement a system for evaluating the impact of eviction prevention through Home Base and the methodologies best suited to evaluate program impact. Three primary goals have been identified:

1. Develop and implement an evaluation design to measure the impact of Home Base on preventing evictions and reducing inflow to the homeless system.
2. Evaluate the impact Home Base has on addressing racial disparities in eviction rates, the crisis response system, and/or access to legal counsel in eviction cases.
3. Assist in the refinement of success benchmarks and key outcome metrics used to determine project success; and work with key partners to develop data tracking systems and strategies to accurately measure and validate outcomes.

Funding Available

Approximately \$100,000 is earmarked for project evaluation. However, based on qualifications and scope of design, the final rate will be negotiable.

Application Process

Submit all proposals electronically by 5PM on March 20, 2020. Proposals must be emailed to Marlo Klein | MKlein@uwkc.org in PDF format, limited to 7 pages and cc: communityservices@uwkc.org.

About Home Base

Funding for this initiative is made possible through an \$8 million catalytic investment from the Seattle Mariners and Microsoft. United Way of King County is identifying and leveraging additional funding from the public and private sector to scale Home Base to a \$12 million project over three years, as part of our vision and commitment to end homelessness.

Home Base has increased the capacity of the King County Bar Association's (KCBA) Housing Justice Project (HJP) by expanding the number of staff attorneys available to represent tenants at imminent risk of eviction. Legal counsel and representation, coupled with social service referrals and flexible eviction intervention assistance is leading to more positive housing outcomes for low-income renters in King County.

Purpose

The purpose of this RFQ is to identify an entity to inform program design and evaluate results of United Way's Home Base partnership including services delivered by the King County Bar Association Housing Justice Project, Wellspring Family Services and The Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle. United Way wants to understand the efficacy of Home Base services in preventing eviction and reducing homelessness, and to learn how this particular program complements and/or supports county wide goals to end homelessness. Understanding the impact of the combination of these services and the funding required to yield results, will provide important information for stakeholders (policymakers, funders, and the programs themselves) about what it takes to successfully operate a courthouse eviction prevention program that combines legal services, financial assistance and social services for tenants at imminent risk of eviction. Because we know that people of color, particularly African Americans and women are evicted at higher rates, we want to ensure that the information is collected and presented with a strong racial equity analysis.

As year one comes to a close, United Way seeks an evaluator who will be with us through the duration of the initiative to help us tell the story of Home Base, the impact it is making, and how it can be successfully sustained in King County and implemented statewide. Information obtained from this evaluation will be used to make recommendations to stakeholders including, the new Regional Coordinating Board, the state legislature, King County Council, City of Seattle Council, Suburban City councils, donors and eviction prevention providers. A key piece of background for these recommendations is a deeper understanding of the financial resources needed to sustain Home Base programming after the 3-year initiative ends, particularly in the context of other eviction prevention programs, many of which receive public and private funding for homelessness prevention efforts. Home Base currently provides a private stream of all-inclusive client financial assistance for tenants at imminent risk of eviction and is seeing promising results thus far.

Background and Context

Homelessness remains a crisis in our region. On any given night, more than 11,000 people will experience homelessness in King County. Our crisis response system strives to make

homelessness rare, brief and one-time; and while diversion, rapid rehousing, emergency shelter, transition in place, permanent supportive housing are effective response strategies for those already experiencing homelessness; our system must also further prevention strategies that “stop” people from becoming homeless in the first place.

To date, eviction prevention services have been an overlooked, underfunded and uncoordinated component of our crisis response system. This fragmentation makes it very difficult for low-income renters at imminent risk of eviction to obtain the financial and social services help they need in a timely manner. Additionally, most low-income tenants that receive an eviction notice do not seek the help of an attorney, and a high number fail to appear in court to contest the eviction. Without legal representation, tenants are more likely to be evicted and get an eviction judgement on their record. The imposition of high legal and late fees heaps additional debt onto low-income households already experiencing severe housing cost burdens; making it nearly impossible to compete for housing in a “hot” rental market, where affordable housing is in short supply and landlords can easily rent to tenants with ample income and pristine rental records.

These contributing factors propel a certain percentage of low-income households into homelessness. The flow of tenants with an eviction on their record into the homeless system impacts our service delivery system, as it takes longer for tenants to locate permanent housing due to poor tenant screening records, thereby increasing the length of time people spend in the homeless system or on housing waiting lists. For landlords an eviction means lost rent, paying court filing costs, spending time in court, preparing the unit to be re-rented, marketing it and waiting for new tenants to lease up. And for kids, eviction often means having to move to a different school; impacting student achievement rates.

Home Base aims to reduce the number of people being evicted by pairing legal aid, financial assistance funds and referrals to social services. By coordinating these three services, we hope to demonstrate the efficacy of eviction prevention as a cost-effective and proven strategy in combating homelessness.

Eviction Statistics

In 2018 the King County Bar Association’s Housing Justice Project and the Seattle Women’s Commission published a report, “LOSING HOME: The Human Cost of Eviction in Seattle”. Data from this report found that:

- 51.7 percent of eviction filings in the City of Seattle were people of color. African Americans received 4.5 times the amount of eviction notices than what would be expected based on how many African Americans live in King County.
- 87% of eviction filings in Seattle were for nonpayment of rent with the top cited reasons for nonpayment being lost employment or income, a medical emergency, or a death in the family. In most cases, eviction was initiated for one month or less in late rent, with a median amount of \$1,237 owed to the landlord.
- Eviction resulted in homelessness for most people – 37.5% were living unsheltered, 25% lived in a shelter or transitional housing and 25% stayed with family or friends after being evicted.

Among the report’s many recommendations was expanding courthouse-based resources to include social services and financial assistance to improve eviction prevention success rates.

In April 2019, in direct response to this report, the Home Base partnership was launched.

Home Base Program Description

Home Base serves low income renters at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level facing an eviction proceeding in King County Superior Court. To be eligible for Home Base services, tenants must have received a filed or unfiled Summons and Complaint, be represented by an attorney through the HJP and have the ability to pay next month's rent or demonstrate ability to pay. HJP refers tenants to Home Base case managers located at the courthouse.

The target population and eligibility may be further refined as the program enters year two, particularly in light of landmark eviction reform legislation that went into effect in late July 2019.

Currently, Home Base provides tenants with the following services:

- 1) Free legal representation at the King County Superior Court in Seattle and Kent by an HJP staff or pro bono attorney who negotiates settlement agreements with landlords to prevent or forestall an eviction
- 2) Flexible financial assistance for tenants that meet eligibility administered by one of two nonprofit agencies based at each courthouses. Financial assistance may cover rent arrears, late fees, utilities, damages, court costs, attorney fees, rent assistance, and/or other approved expenses as needed
- 3) Connection to an onsite case manager to assist with social service referrals

United Way plans to develop a tenant education and outreach campaign to educate tenants on the eviction process with the goal of improving tenant attendance in court proceedings. Tenant education materials will be developed in multiple languages and distributed throughout the county. Targeted outreach may be conducted in zip codes with higher rates of evictions and will target specific populations who are disproportionately evicted and overrepresented in the homeless population. Analysis of existing program data will help to inform these strategies.

RFQ Evaluation Goals

- Understand the level of impact of courthouse eviction prevention services on reducing entries into the homeless system in King County
- Develop a high-level cost analysis and/or financial profile to share with stakeholders to increase understanding of the cost and efficacy of this type of eviction prevention program
- Distill themes that highlight effective practices

Scope of Work

Using a racial equity analysis, the Contractor will obtain information from all Home Base partners and should include, at a minimum:

- Program budget overview, revenues, costs (fixed and variable costs, including program overhead), billing/payment cycle, process and implications
- Program processes including intake, assessment, staffing, administrative tasks

Once selected, we anticipate working with the evaluator to fine-tune the following scope of activities:

1. Implement an evaluation design that measures the impact of programmatic interventions on participant outcomes. Some key questions to be answered may include:
 - Is Home Base effectively preventing evictions?
 - What are the housing stability success rates for households whose tenancies were saved?

- Are there particular characteristics or trends that reveal which tenants might be more successful at maintaining housing stability after receipt of services?
 - For households that received an extended move-out with and without financial assistance, were they able to successfully locate new housing and if so, how quickly after move-out?
 - Is there a difference in success rates between Home Base households that have previously experienced homelessness and those that haven't?
 - What lessons can we learn from households that have entered the homeless system after receipt of Home Base services, compared to households that have not entered the homeless system?
 - What percentage of tenants might benefit from additional case management?
 - What factors should be taken into consideration to inform future service delivery?
 - Does the level of service provided impact results, and if so, how?
 - Do results differ between the two courthouses, why? What programmatic changes, if any, need to be made?
2. Create a framework for evaluating the impact that Home Base has on addressing racial disparities in eviction rates, access to legal services, and/or prevention of homelessness.
 3. Evaluate the overall need for eviction prevention services in King County and assist in the refinement of success benchmarks and key outcome metrics that will be used to determine project success; and work with key partners to fine-tune data tracking systems and/or strategies to accurately measure and validate outcomes.

Activities for this scope of work *may* include, but are not limited to:

Evaluation Design

- Review existing King County eviction and homelessness data; inventory eviction prevention and other homeless prevention program processes used to serve the same or similar target populations that might be helpful in designing the full evaluation
- Work with project partners to prepare a comprehensive evaluation plan, including: evaluation design, data collection and analysis plans, a detailed work plan and timeline;
- Interview initiative partners, providers, landlords, tenants and other key stakeholders to assess needs, goals and potential risks/challenges of the evaluation related to the design, data collection needs and feasibility, including an understanding of data availability and existing data use agreements, measurements, etc.
- Work with partners and other key stakeholder groups to obtain access to administrative data relating to eviction filings, homelessness demographics, services utilization and outcomes – including court data systems, Homeless Management Information System, and other potential data sources such as Best Starts for Kids, etc.
- Work with United Way, HJP, and Home Base service providers to assess, develop, and refine eligibility and other programmatic processes involved in collecting individual-level data on legal services, tenant engagement, service participation, housing stability and other required outcomes to meet project goals

Implementation over course of project

- Work with initiative partners and key community stakeholders to implement the evaluation in a coordinated manner

- Conduct in-person and phone interviews to obtain additional information from other stakeholders
- Assist in training initiative partners in use of any assessment tools, data collection processes or survey administration procedures
- Attend Home Base meetings as needed
- Aggregate, clean and analyze data from multiple sources

Deliverables

- Summary of key themes, analysis and recommendations for entities providing Home Base services
- High level cost analysis and/or financial profile demonstrating outcomes associated with Home Base courthouse eviction prevention program
- Review and recommendation of programmatic strategies for reducing racial disparities in eviction proceedings
- Production of final report and key findings, in partnership with United Way of King County and Housing Justice Project

Minimum Qualifications

This opportunity is open to entities that meet the following minimum criteria:

- Experience designing, developing and implementing evaluations of programs targeting people at risk of homelessness; people experiencing homelessness; or other vulnerable populations
- Working knowledge of King County’s homelessness response system, including funding landscape and policy issues
- Demonstrated commitment to racial equity and to equity-based strategies in project approach and evaluation

Proposal Contents

Please limit your narrative (items 1-8) to no more than 7 pages in length, and submit all content in PDF format as one document. Please include the following information:

1. An overview of the team/staff who would be working on the project, their qualifications and experience in this type of work.
2. Information on your approach to racial equity, including but not limited to:
 - a. What does racial equity mean to you?
 - b. How have you brought a racial equity analysis to previous projects?
 - c. How will you bring a racial equity analysis to this project?
3. Experience using complex data sets to answer program impact questions such as calculating social return on investments, cost benefit analysis or program financial profile
4. Describe your experience collaborating with government and nongovernmental entities to evaluate programs and inform project design.
5. Evaluation/assessment methodologies you think would best meet the needs of this project, any potential risks you see in evaluating the project and steps you would take to mitigate those risks
6. Identify any anticipated challenges to implementing the evaluation, particularly any issues that might arise from creating comparison groups, accessing data from HMIS or other systems, obtaining consent from study participants.
7. Project work plan, including proposed timeline
8. Project budget and rationale for costs associated with proposed evaluation activities

9. 1-2 brief, relevant examples of your work that illustrates how you present written/visual information, no more than 2 pages each.
10. List of data sources, systems and software products you have access to and/or experience using to perform data mining, predicative analysis, data analytics and/or visualization
11. Resume and 3 references

Selection Process

Proposals will be reviewed by a selection committee comprised of key staff from United Way of King County, the King County Bar Association and other stakeholders. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Ability to think creatively about how data can be used to answer questions
- Demonstrated experience and knowledge of assessment methods; experience designing and implementing evaluations of social programs
- Working knowledge of King County's homelessness system, funding landscape, reporting requirements and system outcomes. Selected contractor will need to engage King County Department of Community and Human Services to obtain any HMIS data needed, which includes negotiating a data sharing agreement or subcontract
- Soundness of approach and degree to which proposed evaluation design and activities meets stated goals
- Experience and commitment to evaluating racial equity and social justice issues
- Strong proficiency in query/reporting tools, SQL, Advanced Excel, Tableau (or similar visualization tool)
- Experience in data analysis, data mining, business case development or other related analytical projects
- Track record of successfully collaborating with public-private partnerships
- No conflict of interest with partners
- Ability to onboard quickly within timeline framework
- Quality of references

Timeline

Responses are due by **5 pm on March 20, 2020**. Initiative partners may hold phone or in-person interviews with top applicants during the week of March 30 and anticipate selection of evaluator by April 17. All applicants will be notified by April 30.

Questions:

Marlo Klein
Community Impact Manager
United Way of King County
mklein@uwkc.org
206.461.5082

Additional Information

United Way manages and oversees the Home Base Initiative. United Way collects monthly program reports and reviews data, develops program policies and procedures, and contracts with Wellspring Family Services and The Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle to assess tenant need, distribute financial assistance and make referrals. In July, agencies began entering Home Base data into the Homeless Management Information System including demographics, outcomes, and other required data fields.

Program Results

From April 2019-December 2019, Home Base has had a big impact:

- 816 households had their tenancy saved
 - Compared to 112 saved tenancies during the same time period by HJP before Home Base
- And, 265 households received extended move outs
- 75 Section 8 Vouchers Preserved
- 70% of evictions prevented were POC led households

Resources

- [United Way of King County](#)
- [King County Bar Association, Housing Justice Project](#)
- [Losing Home: The Human Cost of Eviction in Seattle](#)
- [WA State Eviction Reform Legislation: SB5600](#)
- [Monthly Agency Reporting Metrics](#)