

MEMORANDUM

To: Joint Fiscal Committee Members

From: Josh Hanford, Commissioner, Department of Housing and Community Development, Agency of Commerce and Community Development
Sean Brown, Commissioner, Department for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services

Date: April 9, 2021

Re: Grant #3034 Request for Reallocation of ERA funds for Housing Stability Services

To the Joint Fiscal Committee Members,

This memorandum is to request approval from the Joint Fiscal Committee (JFC) for a reallocation of ERA funds allocated in JFC Motion dated February 11, 2021 (the Motion), approving Grant #3034. The approved Motion is attached hereto for ease of reference.

DHCD requests to reallocate \$6,000,000 in funds to AHS for “other housing services”/“housing stability services” as contemplated in the Motion.

This reallocation will not result in a substantive change to the actual services outlined in the Motion, but instead will allow for administrative efficiencies due to existing working relationships, and program functionality.

PREFACE:

The February 11, 2021 motion approved Grant #3404: \$200,000,000.00 in Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance funds to the Agency of Administration (AOA), allocated to Vermont in Division N of H.R. 133, the Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (the “Act” herein).

JFC approved the following relevant allocations from AOA to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Agency of Human Services (AHS):

- \$15,000,000.00 to AHS to assist homeless individuals, those exiting homelessness, and implement other such programming as becomes allowable under federal guidance. This would include creation of two limited service positions; a Financial Manager II, and a Community Services Program Manager.
- \$9,000,000.00 to DHCD for “other housing services” as defined by the Act, which pending Treasury Guidance, may include tenant and landlord counseling and mediation services such as those administered by Vermont Legal Aid, and the Vermont Landlord’s Association, and to other programs which may become viable upon further guidance

from the U.S. Treasury. This would include creation of one limited service position; a Grants Specialist.

Subsection C. of the motion states: “Any reallocations between and among subsections i through iv must be approved by the Joint Fiscal Committee.”

AHS and DHCD, in consultation with AOA, have since determined that a reallocation in funds would be appropriate in this instance to accomplish the goals outlined in the Motion.

DISCUSSION:

Since the Motion was passed, U.S. Treasury has released updated guidance (as recently as March 26, 2021) clarifying the use of the \$200,000,000 in funds. The guidance states that programs such as tenant and landlord counseling and mediation services, and other such support programs that are not direct rental assistance are considered “housing stability services” under the Act, while “other housing services” fall within the scope of the direct rental assistance program being put forward by the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA).

AHS is working towards implementing its own direct rental assistance program targeted towards Reach Up and other similar program participants. AHS also intends to put forth “housing stability services” to help navigate applicants through their program and the wider VSHA rental assistance program. AHS has existing relationships (and prior grant agreements) with entities such as Vermont Legal Aid, to provide these “housing stability services,” and will need to have direct oversight of these entities to ensure their work aligns with program goals.

DHCD is similarly working towards implementing “housing stability services” to assist applicants in accessing the rental assistance programs, and to address more difficult cases via a mediation program.

Therefore, DHCD and AHS, in consultation with AOA, have determined that to most efficiently provide “housing stability services” (“other housing services” as originally contemplated by the Motion), DHCD should reallocate \$6,000,000 in funds to AHS.

As noted above, this reallocation will not result in a substantive change to the services provided, but will allow greater administrative and reporting efficiencies. AHS will use the funds to carry out the same goals outlined for DHCD in the original Motion.

REQUEST:

DHCD and AHS request authority from JFC to reallocate \$6,000,000 from Grant #3404 from DHCD to AHS in coordination with AOA.

Thank you for your time and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

E-SIGNED by Josh Hanford
on 2021-04-09 12:42:29 EDT

Josh Hanford, Commissioner, DHCD

April 09, 2021

Date



Sean Brown, Commissioner, DCF

April 9, 2021

Date