

Seattle Emergency Rental Assistance Program Guidelines

Revised March 25, 2024

Program Purpose: The City of Seattle is making funding available for rent arrears and rental assistance to support the operating stability of the City's affordable housing providers and housing stability of affordable housing residents. These guidelines set forth guardrails for the rent assistance programs they develop. Office of Housing staff is available to provide any further guidance as needed.

Policies and Procedures: Grantees must document their policies and procedures for determining a household's eligibility to include the method by which it will determine the prioritization of households as noted above and maintain records of their determinations. Grantees must also have controls in place to ensure compliance with their policies and procedures and prevent fraud. Grantees must specify in their policies and procedures under what circumstances they will accept written attestations from the applicant without further documentation to determine any aspect of eligibility or the amount of assistance, and in such cases, grantees must have in place reasonable validation or fraud-prevention procedures to prevent abuse.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. To be eligible for assistance, a household must be obligated to pay rent on a residential dwelling and meet **all** the following criteria:
 - a. One or more individuals within the household can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability **and**
 - b. The household has a household income at or below 30% of area median income (AMI).¹
2. All applicants for assistance **must** attest that all information provided is correct and complete.

Documentation Requirements: Grantees are discouraged from establishing document requirements that are likely to be barriers to participation for eligible households. Programs may be flexible as to the particular form of documentation required by permitting photocopies or digital photographs of documents, e-mails, or attestations from employers, caseworkers, or others with knowledge of the household's circumstances.

1. The following is required to document a risk of homelessness or housing instability:
 - a. A past due utility or rent notice or eviction notice, or
 - b. Any other evidence of risk as determined by the grantee and documented in policies and procedures.
2. Housing providers must document that household income is at or below 30% AMI. When possible, grantees should request supporting documentation. However, self-attestation (i.e. self-certification) by the household is allowable.

Eligible Uses of Funds:

1. Rent and/or Rent Arrears: Payment of rent arrears **must** be paid prior to payment of future rent. However, a household does not have to have rent arrears to qualify for assistance.

¹ See <https://www.seattle.gov/housing/property-managers/income-and-rent-limits> for income limits.

- a. Supporting Documentation:
 - i. A rent ledger from the housing provider will suffice for documentation.
 - ii. If a rent ledger is not available, other documentation such as copies of lease agreements will be acceptable
 - b. Payment Duration: Payment of prospective rent payments and/or rent arrears is limited to eighteen months.
 - c. Payment Amounts: The full payment of arrears is allowed for the duration of time noted above. However, a grantee may structure a program to provide less than full coverage of arrears.
 - d. Requirements of Landlords: Housing providers that receive assistance on behalf of a tenant must not evict, terminate, or refuse to renew the tenancy of **the assisted household** (regardless of current rent status) for nonpayment of rent or no-cause through at least 90 days **after** the period for which the Property receives payment.
 - i. This Agreement does not preclude a landlord from seeking to evict a tenant for lease violations unrelated to unpaid rent.
2. Utility and Utility Arrears: Utilities and home energy costs are separately stated charges related to the occupancy of a rental property. These costs include separately stated electricity, gas, water and sewer, trash removal, and energy costs, such as fuel oil. A household does not have to have rent arrears to qualify for assistance.
 - a. Allowable Utilities: Payments to public and investor-owned utilities are permitted.
 - b. Supporting Documentation: All payments for utilities and home energy costs should be supported by a bill, invoice, or evidence of payment to the provider of the utility or home energy service.
 - c. Unallowable Payments: Utilities and home energy costs that are covered by the landlord will be treated as rent.
 - d. Payment Amounts: The full payment of arrears is allowed for the duration of time noted above. However, a grantee may structure a program to provide less than full coverage of arrears.
3. Other expenses related to housing: Grantees should use care when paying for such costs and pay for costs only when necessary.
 - a. Eligible expenses include:
 - i. Relocation expenses (including prospective relocation expense), such as rental security deposits, and rental fees, which may include application or screening fees.
 - ii. Reasonable accrued late fees (if not included in rental or utility arrears).
 - iii. Internet service provided to the rental unit. Internet service provided to a residence is related to housing and is in many cases a vital service that allows renters to engage in distance learning, telework, and telemedicine and obtain

government services. Payment is limited to internet service that is required for at least one of these necessary uses.

- b. Documentation Requirements: All payments for these expenses must be supported by documentary evidence such as a bill, invoice, or evidence of payment to the provider of the service. If a housing-related expense is included in a bundle or an invoice that is not itemized (for example, internet services bundled together with telephone and cable television services) and obtaining an itemized invoice would be unduly burdensome, grantees may establish reasonable procedures for determining the portion of the expense that is appropriate to be covered.

4. Administrative Costs: Up to 10% of direct and indirect administrative costs can be charged to the grant.

No Duplication of Benefits:

If an eligible household receives a monthly federal subsidy (e.g., a Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, or Project-Based Rental Assistance) and the tenant rent is adjusted according to changes in income, the renter household may receive assistance for the tenant-owned portion of rent or utilities that is not subsidized.²

The grantee must review the household's income and sources of assistance to confirm that the assistance provided does not duplicate any other assistance, including federal, state, or local assistance provided for the same costs. Grantees may rely on an attestation from the applicant regarding nonduplication with other government assistance in providing assistance to a household.

Payment Requirements:

Grantee shall make direct payments to landlords and/or utility providers on behalf of an eligible household.

Reporting Requirements:

Anticipated reporting requirements are:

1. Address of the rental unit.
2. Amount and percentage of monthly rent covered by rent assistance.
3. Amount and percentage of separately stated utility and home energy costs covered by the assistance.
4. Total amount of each type of assistance provided to each household (i.e., rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, utilities and home energy costs arrears, and other expenses).
5. Amount of outstanding rental arrears for each household.
6. Number of months of rental payments and number of months of utility or home energy cost payments for which assistance is provided.
7. Household income and number of individuals in the household.
8. Gender, race, and ethnicity of the primary applicant for assistance.

Maintenance and Access to Records:

² A recertification by a household is not necessary for eligibility to receive rental assistance. However, grantees are encouraged to confirm that the participant has already reported loss or financial hardship to the Seattle Housing Authority or property manager and completed an interim re-examination before assistance is provided.

Grantees must make available at the request of the City of Seattle all records pertaining to this grant for monitoring and/or auditing purposes. All records must be maintained for a period of five (5) years after all funds have been expended, end of the contract term and/or funds have been deobligated.

Nondiscrimination:

Grantees must comply with all federal, state, and local statutes and regulations prohibiting discrimination.