



ESSHI 2023 – Round 8 Questions and Answers

1. Is congregate housing (i.e., living quarters with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities) approved housing under this RFP?

ANSWER – The ESSHI model requires tenant leases, not occupancy agreements, and units fully equipped with individual bathroom and kitchen facilities, which ensures privacy, fosters independence, a sense of permanency and ownership. Applicants proposing living quarters with shared bathroom and kitchen (shared space model) should thoroughly justify why the model best meets the needs of the proposed target population. Additionally, it is advised that applicants who consider proposing this model first familiarize themselves with any shared space policies of Capital Financing Agencies they intent to work with, as well as with any State Contracting Agencies who would typically oversee service provision of the proposed target population(s) indicated in the application.

2. On page 9, the RFP states “funding must be linked to a project that will create new housing units through new construction, the adaptive reuse of non-residential space, or the repurposing of vacant residential units. However, ESSHI funds may not be used for a scattered site apartment housing model owned and operated by a private landlord.” We are an affiliate of an organization completing a repurposing of vacant hotel units to be used as permanent housing. These units will have shared kitchen facilities and some units will have shared bathrooms. Is that an allowable projects for the purposes under the RFP?

ANSWER – See the answer to Question 1.

3. Do we have to have direct ownership of the building to be used for housing purposes?

ANSWER – The applicant for ESSHI does not have to own the site if there is an agreement with a developer to develop the site as integrated supportive housing in partnership with the ESSHI applicant to provide services and rent subsidies. Additionally, there are situations, such as a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) project, in which the ownership structure is more complex than “direct ownership”.

4. If we are a non-profit (denoted here as non-profit X) that is an affiliate of the non-profit that owns the building to be used for housing purposes, can non-profit X apply for the grant?

ANSWER – Yes

5. An agency has received conditional award letters to develop units in previous round, for which the plans have changed (increase in number of units). Is the agency required to resubmit an ESSHI proposal if the only change to the projects is for the provider to increase the number of each special needs population that will be served?

ANSWER – The number of units in the conditional award may fluctuate between a conditional and committed award, subject to approval by the ESSHI Interagency Workgroup, provided that no populations are eliminated or added, and sufficient community need has been established. However, while a resubmission is not required, applicants with conditional awards are advised to consider resubmitting to ensure that the conditional award does not expire prior to securing all capital necessary to develop the project.

6. Are buildings with a TCO only at the time of award for use or does the building need a Certificate of Occupancy issued? In other words, if the building at time of award on February 1, 2024 has a TCO with a CofO issuing in May of 2024 or later, can the building be used immediately while the CofO is pending arrival?

ANSWER – A TCO, by definition, would allow the building to be occupied. Typically, ESSHI conditional awards are made to projects that are to be developed. If this is a project in development or a turnkey, the application should provide detail on the nature of the capital used to develop the project, the terms of the sources or turnkey arrangement, timeline of the development, status, and plan for site control, etc.

7. What kind of evidence is sufficient to meet the requirement of “A copy of such notification must be included in the ESSHI application submittal”? Does this need to be a letter, an email or other form of communication? Where should this be uploaded?

ANSWER – There is no required format for documentation of notification. A letter, email, or any other documentation that provides evidence of notification would be acceptable. The document can be uploaded under Additional Document Upload Space under the Pre-Submission Upload page.

8. For the required LOS from the CoC, where should it be uploaded?

ANSWER – The Pre-Submission Upload page has a place where the letter of support may be uploaded.

9. Are there additional funds for food and staffing? Or does the awardee fund?

ANSWER – The maximum grant amount is \$25,000 per qualifying individual. Applicants proposing funds in support of food should list those expenses in the Operating Expenses screen.

10. We are working with a housing authority on a RAD conversion. In the current phase, there are 361 units that are planned to be demolished and replaced with new units.

While the current units have occupancy rates of 95-98%, the buildings themselves are 70-90 years old, lack ADA components and suffer from untenable infrastructure and maintenance issues. We do not believe we would be able to apply ESSHI on the original units, but if we were to add additional 50 units, bringing count to 411, would these new units be ESSHI eligible?

ANSWER – Based on the information provided, it appears that the additional new units would be eligible for ESSHI. Please note ESSHI rent subsidies may not be used in the same unit as Project-Based Section 8 vouchers in areas outside of NYC.

11. Two providers have both received conditional award letters to develop units. Plans have changed over the past few months, with only one provider identified as the Social Service provider. Plans have changed from developing 70 SMI units and 30 units for Families with Head of Household with SMI to increasing number served to 110 individuals and 40 families for a total of 150 units (total project is 250 units). Is an agency required to resubmit an ESSHI proposal if only change to the project is for the provider to increase number of each special needs population that will be served?

ANSWER – See the answer to Question 5. Based on the information provided, a new application is recommended.

12. Is a share of the building security an eligible cost when the purpose is to assist eligible participants live independently and remain stably housed?

ANSWER – Yes, share of building security costs is an eligible expense provided that the budget is acceptable and is accompanied by an adequate supportive services and staffing plan.

13. Are building security expenses considered Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) discretionary?

ANSWER – Some State Contracting Agencies currently consider contracted building security expenses to be subject to NY State MWBE goals.

14. Page 70 – Section 6: It is highly recommended to include proof of notification of letters of support from the local Department of Social Services (DSS), Director of Community Services (DCS) and/or OPWDD Regional Office as applicable:

- a. Would an email documenting notification satisfy this requirement? And what should that email include?

ANSWER – Yes, an email documenting notification would be sufficient. Notification should include intent to pursue the project and any relevant details that are known (location, population to be served, etc.)

- b. For a ESSHI program serving individuals with serious mental illness or substance use disorder, should the DSS be notified in addition to the DCS?

ANSWER – Yes, DSS is required regardless of population because all ESSHI populations should be serving homeless individuals.

- c. For an ESSHI program serving older adults, should the local department of aging be notified? And should the DSS be notified, too?

ANSWER – Notification to the DSS is required. Notification to the local department of aging is encouraged but not required.

- d. Should all notifications be combined into a single document?

ANSWER – Notifications may be combined into a single document, but this is not required.

- e. Where should the notifications be uploaded?

ANSWER – The Pre-submission uploads page.

- f. In addition to the upload, should the notifications be referred to in ANSWER to a particular question in the program narrative?

ANSWER – Reference to the notification in the program narrative is not required.

15. We are interested in partnering with an organization for a new project – this organization already has an existing award with another developer. Does this have any impact on their ability to apply to this round for a different project?

ANSWER – No

16. Referring to Page 4 of RFP –

- a. Is there a definition of “local planning board” for purposes of this RFP?

ANSWER – For the purpose of this RFP, local planning board refers to local government units, including both social service districts and/or local mental hygiene directors.

- b. Must local mental hygiene directors be notified if a project is not proposing to serve an SMI population?

ANSWER – No unless the project also includes the SUD or I/DD populations.

- c. Must social service districts be notified if a project is exclusively serving an SMI population?

ANSWER – Yes

17. May letters of support from the local Department of Social Services and local mental hygiene directors be uploaded in support of question 3c (Provide evidence of any relationships/linkages with other community service providers (letters of support, etc.), specific to the specialized population(s) proposed to be served) or these letters only be submitted as pre-submission uploads?

ANSWER – Yes. Those letters of support should be uploaded into the pre-submission Upload page if you are using that letter to demonstrate compliance with the mandatory notification requirement. Regardless, applicants are still required to provide a narrative answer to 3c.

18. Referring to pages 36-37 of the RFP –

- a. With regard to this RFP, is there any distinction between “local Department of Social Services” and:” social services districts?

ANSWER – No

- b. In lieu of documentation demonstrating notification of the proposed project, may an applicant submit a letter of support from the local Department of Social Services and the local mental hygiene director?

ANSWER – Yes, notification would be assumed in that instance.

- c. Is notification of municipality (town, city, etc.) where the project is being sited/proposed/planned required?

ANSWER – Notification to a town, village, city etc. is not a requirement of ESSHI but is encouraged.

19. Section 1.1 identifies that funds can be used to develop housing that is “repurposing of vacant units”. Under this RFP, can an applicant use private funds to purchase a vacant building and use a portion of ESSHI funding (rental subsidy) to pay down the mortgage and other operating expenses?

ANSWER – Potentially, yes. The ESSHI rental subsidies are assumed and intended to cover the difference between the unit rent and 30% of tenant income (inclusive of Public Assistance shelter allowance). The project owner may then utilize the ESSHI rent subsidy revenue to pay project expenses, including debt service if applicable.

20. Is there a minimum number of units required for a project?

ANSWER – No

21. Does the number of units in the application affect the score of the proposal?

ANSWER – No, however applicants are reminded that proposed projects must comply with the Olmstead decision.

22. Does extensive renovations to a property into supportive housing units qualify as an acceptable project?

ANSWER – The RFP states that “funding must be linked to a project that will create new housing units through new construction, the adaptive reuse of non-

residential space, or the repurposing of vacant residential units.” Provided that the property is vacant (and that tenants were not vacated for this purpose) and not currently under any regulatory agreement, it would satisfy that initial criterion.

23. Regarding Section 1/Introduction, paragraph 6 (top of page 5) – To dedicate more than 50% of the ESSHI units for mental health and/or substance use disorder populations would not be compliant with the Olmstead ruling. Does this mean that if more than 50% were designated to Chronically Homeless population in general, rather than specifically stating mental health or substance use disorder, this would be acceptable to the reviewers and trigger the applicant to be eligible to receive more points than those who do not in regard to the aforementioned RFP reference?

ANSWER – Olmstead requirements apply to the total dwelling unit composition, not to the ESSHI units alone. Regardless, the chronic homeless population is not one covered by Olmstead and would not impact compliance with the rule.

24. Section 1.4 – Eligible Target Population states “AND have one or more (italics added) disabling conditions or other life challenges including:”. Does this mean that a provider can serve two distinct populations – “Seniors” and Seniors-SMI”?

ANSWER – In Section 1, applicants should identify which ESSHI eligible population they intend to serve. In the narrative description of the project, applicants should identify any additional criteria they intend to require or target. In the example above, an applicant may identify that the ESSHI eligibility criteria is seniors, but that the project is specifically targeting to serve seniors with serious mental illness.

25. Regarding Section 1.6 – Eligible Costs – If a project that will utilize 4% tax credits requires rents above 60% AMI to stay within SHOP term sheet, can we request higher rents and provide a justification?

ANSWER – No, a project may not exceed 60% AMI rents due to the need to provide adequate supportive services and the impact of rent increases over time on the total ESSHI grant. ESSHI applications are carefully reviewed to ensure proposed services are sufficient to meet the needs of the target population.

26. Proposal Narrative – Question 1a says “Continuum of Care” but it doesn’t ask a question. What is the question? Do you just want to know which Continuum of Care the project falls under?

ANSWER – Question 1a is asking which Continuum of Care the project falls under.

27. Proposal Narrative – Question 1b asks for the “Total number of dwelling units in the project.” Is this asking for the total number of ESSHI units or the total number of units in the building (ESSHI plus non-ESSHI)?

ANSWER – Question 1b is asking for the total number of units in the building.

28. The bottom of page 36 of the RFA provides a “list of required forms”. The second bullet references a “Director of Community Services.” Who is this and what entity does this Director of Community Services work for (e.g., Local DSS, NYS OMH, NYS OPWDD)?

ANSWER – The Director of Community Services is a county representative. Please also refer to Question 14.

29. The bottom of page 36 of the RFP provides a “list of required forms”. The second bullets states that proof of notification or a letter of support from the local DSS is highly recommended, but the fourth bullet states that it’s required. Is proof of notification or a letter of support from the local DSS recommended or required?

ANSWER – Proof of notification to the local DSS is required. A letter of support is recommended but not required.

30. Our understanding is that the upcoming RFP from OMH for SP-SROs will include both capital and services funding for the OMH units. But Section 1.1 of the ESSHI RFP says “funding will not be made available to existing projects, which have already secured service and operating funds through other sources, as a means to enhance their existing subsidies.” Would it be acceptable, if awarded funding under the OMH SP-SRO RFP (which is likely to be announced after the ESSHI announcement and so services funding would not already be in place at the time of the ESSHI award) to elect to receive either funding and forego getting the services funding from the OMH SP-SRO RFP so that ESSHI would fund both the rental assistance and services funding? To be clear, we would only be seeking to get services funding from one source – either ESSHI or OMH SP-SRO, not both for the same units.”

ANSWER – In general, as noted in the question, applicants may apply for funding for projects that have not already secured operating funding. There is no prohibition against pursuing multiple funding sources simultaneously, though multiple service and operating funding sources may not be used for the same unit(s) to enhance funding. Questions about the OMH SP-SRO RFP should be directed to that opportunity.

31. Page 10/Section 1.2 – The contract is stated to be in place for a 5-year term, but is it renewable every year based on the RFP issuance cycle? Is the pre-program expense of 3 months allowance a part of the 5-year term or in addition to the 5 years?

ANSWER – Contracts are for a 5-year term and are intended to be renewed for additional 5-year terms and is conditioned on a legacy review. A contract must be in place in order to issue payments, the contract term is inclusive of the three-month allowance.

32. Pages 8 & 9/Section 1.1 – Will the state consider a review of the 2% adjustment in subsequent years in recognition of and alignment with the recently approved rental rate adjustments by NYS?

ANSWER – The state regularly reviews funding considerations and will make future funding decisions based on market conditions and the availability of state resources.

33. Page 9/Paragraph 2 – What number of units or ratio of apartments is accepted as the threshold for this RFP particularly if each setting caters to multiple categories of eligible applicants?

ANSWER – There is no required unit threshold for this RFP. Projects are required to comply with Olmstead requirements as outlined in Section 1.1 of the RFP if proposing to serve impacted populations.

34. Pages 11 & 12/Section 1.4 and Page 27/Item 4 – Eligible target populations are defined along with disabling conditions. It is clearly stated that “There is no competitive advantage or disadvantage to servicing multiple populations.” This appears to be at variance with Page 27 (Item 4) that appears to imply that the Workgroup and/or SCA reserves the right to disqualify by reducing the number of scores for applications including “proposals that fail to incorporate all proposed populations to be served...” Kindly clarify that this statement refers not to the number or scope of eligible target populations but refers to a proposal neglecting to define or explicitly specify/include the target populations it elects to serve amongst those listed.

ANSWER – This question does not include the full clause from the reserved rights on page 27. The RFP states that the Workgroup reserves the right to disqualify proposals that “...fail to incorporate all proposed populations to be served *in ANSWERS.*”

35. Page 26/Section 2.9 - The interagency workgroup and state contracting agency rights include several organization representatives. Each organization has its parameters and rules for example:

HCR specifies that each qualifying individual occupies a single housing unit while OASAS and OPDV do not permit multiple qualifying individuals in the same unit.

How will any potential conflicts be resolved as a bid to serve all interests could result in increased operational costs?

ANSWER – There are no conflicts between the requirements of the various state agencies involved. Projects will be expected to comply with all requirements that are applicable based on the populations proposed to be served, capital funding, etc.

36. Pages 10 & 11/Section 1.3 – Is there a list of existing properties (particularly for repurposing spaces) or specifications for such buildings?

ANSWER – No

37. How will performance and impact be measured given the diversity of eligible populations and proposed services per applicant? Will there be any common or standardized baseline established?

ANSWER – Subject to specific state agency requirements, performance is measured through the provision of services and compliance with the terms of an executed ESSHI contract including scope of work. Site visits are conducted throughout contract terms to further evaluate performance.