



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**21-1624

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**Agenda Item Number:** 4

**Agenda Date:** 2/12/2021

**In Control:** Culture and Neighborhood Services Committee

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### **DEPARTMENT:**

Neighborhood and Housing Services Department

### **DEPARTMENT HEAD:**

Verónica R. Soto, FAICP, Neighborhood and Housing Services Department Director

### **COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:**

Citywide

### **SUMMARY:**

Presentation by members of the Risk Mitigation Fund Stakeholder Group on the proposed amendments to the City of San Antonio's Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP).

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

On April 23, 2020, City Council approved the creation of the Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP). The program provides eligible applicants rental or mortgage assistance, utility assistance, and cash assistance. The EHAP is administered by the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD). As of February 8, the City has approved \$71.9 million in assistance to over 28,770 households seeking emergency rental, mortgage, and utility assistance.

At the request of the Housing Commission, City staff developed and distributed a survey to all EHAP applicants, participating property managers & owners, and implementation partners. The Housing Commission's Outreach Subcommittee helped with the survey's development and distribution. The survey was open November 9th- December 31st, 2020. The survey data spoke to the need for a better referral system, technical assistance for those who do not have access to a computer or need assistance applying online, and the need for more months of assistance.

The survey data informed the proposed EHAP amendments. The amendments also reflect the limitations associated with the US Treasury funds, staff and applicant feedback, input from the Mayor and City Council, Cultural and Neighborhood Service Council Committee, and the Housing Commission as well as feedback received by the EHAP Call Center and other community meetings. The following amendments are proposed:

- Extend the term of eligibility from 2 months of assistance to 6 months of assistance.

- Continue to provide rental, mortgage, and utility assistance (CPS, SAWS, and internet), but eliminate the cash grant.
- Develop a robust referral system.
- Develop an application assistance program for those families that lack access to a computer or need assistance gathering the necessary documentation for program eligibility.

Proposed Assistance Allowance is tiered based on the applicant's AMI:

- If an applicant's AMI is at or below 50%, the applicant is eligible for up to 6 months of rental or mortgage assistance and the current bill amount for utility bill (SAWS, CPS, Internet) assistance.
- If an applicant's AMI is between 51% and 80%, the applicant is eligible for up to 6 months rental or mortgage assistance, but no utility assistance.

#### **ISSUE:**

At the request of Councilmember Roberto Trevino, members of the Risk Mitigation Group will present their analysis of the EHAP survey and proposed changes. The Risk Mitigation Stakeholder Group is an informal group that was created by City staff in April 2019 to help with the evaluation of the Risk Mitigation Policy that was adopted by City Council in March 2019. It was created at the request of community members who participated in the original public input of the policy and wanted to continue to provide input as the program evolved. The Stakeholder Group is not a subcommittee of the Housing Commission but two members of the Housing Commission serve on the Risk Mitigation Fund Stakeholder Group along with NHSD staff members.

City staff has worked with the Housing Commission on the development of the survey and briefed them on the EHAP survey results and proposed amendments at their January meeting. The Commission approved a motion directing City staff to share the survey results and the accompanying Housing Commission's feedback on the proposed amendments. While two of the members of the Risk Mitigation Stakeholder Group are on the Housing Commission, the analysis to be presented by the Risk Mitigation Group has not been reviewed by the Housing Commission nor the city staff members that have served on the Risk Mitigation Fund Working Group.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

This is for briefing purposes only.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This is for briefing purposes only.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

This is for briefing purposes only.