

Allocation of one-time Emergency Services Program funds

During a special session of the 2019 Minnesota Legislature, \$3 million in one-time funds for the Emergency Services Program were appropriated to provide additional emergency shelter, motel vouchers, day shelter and essential services for single adults and families experiencing homelessness. The \$3 million in one-time biennial funding (\$1.5 million per year) is in addition to \$1.7 million in base, biennial Emergency Services Program funding.

One-time increase

- The Minnesota Department of Human Services Office of Economic Opportunity released a request-for-proposals for the Emergency Services Program state funds in March 2019. While the final appropriation was not known that time, the department encouraged applicants to request sufficient funding to meet the anticipated need in their community.
- In response to this request-for-proposals, the Office of Economic Opportunity received 56 applications, with requests totaling \$15.8 million.
- Award letters were issued on June 18, 2019 and most grantees have been using the one-time Emergency Services Program funds for several months to provide additional shelter and outreach services.
- The timing of this request-for-proposals was determined by the following considerations:
 - Contracts for State Fiscal Year 2019 expired on June 30, 2019. Without a request-for-proposals in place to allocate funds (regardless of a potential increase), existing grantees would have had a significant funding gap.
 - All Emergency Services Program funding (base and one-time) awarded during the State Fiscal Year 2020-2021 biennium expires **June 30, 2021**. A delay in releasing these funds could make it difficult to fully expend all funding before it expires.
- The Office of Economic Opportunity has a responsibility to invest one-time funds throughout the state. About \$2 million of one-time Emergency Services Program funding is invested in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and about \$1 million is invested in Greater Minnesota — a distribution reflective of the proportion of homeless respondents found in the Twin Cities metropolitan area versus Greater Minnesota during the 2018 Wilder Research single night count¹.

¹ Wilder Research. (March 2019). *Single Night Count of People Experiencing Homelessness: 2018 Minnesota Homeless Study Fact Sheet* [Fact sheet] Retrieved from <http://mnhomeless.org/minnesota-homeless-study/reports-and-fact-sheets/2018/2018-homeless-counts-fact-sheet-3-19.pdf>

Funded activities

- The one-time Emergency Services Program funds were eligible for service and operation costs associated with emergency shelters and street outreach programs.
- In both Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities metropolitan area, one-time funds were invested in additional staff, extended shelter hours, day-time services, master lease shelter units, street outreach programs and investments in culturally specific emergency services.
 - At least 96 new shelter beds were funded with one-time Emergency Services Program funds.
 - No applicants that met criteria for the Emergency Services Program request-for-proposals applied for new shelter beds in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This is likely due to the complex, expensive nature of developing a new emergency shelter — exacerbated by the one-time nature of these funds which expire June 30, 2021.
- Emergency Services Program funds (base and one-time) are not eligible for construction and/or renovation costs.
- The department set aside \$300,000 to be awarded via a request-for-proposals planned to be released in November 2019. These one-time funds will be targeted for culturally specific services provided by non-profit agencies and/or tribal governments.

Funding decisions

- Funding decisions were guided by feedback from individuals who have experienced homelessness, who prioritized daytime services (street outreach and day shelter spaces), safety in shelter, availability of trained staff and access to small-scale shelters.
- This feedback is also reflected in recommendations provided by the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness' Unsheltered Design Team, which include:
 - Sufficient and coordinated outreach
 - Low-barrier access to shelter that is responsive to the culture, preferences, and needs of individuals seeking services.