

# **FAQs: Contracting with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) for Targeted RAFT Outreach & Application Support**

**Date of Issuance:** October 7, 2022

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW & REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. What is the purpose of this program? What services will the CBOs be providing?**

DHCD will provide ERA housing stabilization funds to RAAs in order to subcontract with local organizations who provide services to or otherwise have strong ties with targeted communities in the RAA region. The primary objective of this program is to leverage existing CBO capacity to connect with households who may face additional barriers to accessing RAFT (see **FAQ 2**) and to better ensure that all households have equal access to emergency resources. Qualitative and quantitative data from the Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI)—i.e., interviews with partner organizations; HAPPY payment data—indicate that CBOs can expand RAA processing capacity and serve as effective third-party supports for RAFT applicants with limited technology or Internet access, limited English proficiency, or non-citizen status.

Under this program, CBOs will conduct outreach and provide RAFT application support for targeted households (as designated “advocates” in the application system). CBO staff will coordinate with RAA staff and will also provide in-community and in-person services for applicants. CBO support tasks will include the following:

- Submitting new RAFT applications and completing RAFT applications on behalf of targeted applicants as a designated “advocate”;
- Coordinating with RAA and/or DHCD staff, as necessary, to complete RAFT applications and other program requirements;
- Connecting with applicants at an office space or traveling to meet with applicants in order to submit and complete RAFT applications;
- Providing oral and/or written translation services for applicants when communicating with RAAs, landlords, and other parties in order to complete a RAFT application;
- Tabling at public events or at community hubs to raise awareness about the RAFT program and submit new RAFT applications;
- Sharing online resources about the RAFT program with targeted communities as requested by RAA or DHCD.

### **2. How is DHCD defining “targeted” households?**

“Targeted” households are defined as tenant or landlord applicants who may face barriers to accessing RAFT. The exact nature of barriers will likely differ based on RAA region, but must include one or more of the following:

- Limited Internet access or technological proficiency

- Limited English proficiency
- Non-citizen status

RAAs do not need to collect documentation or other proof of barriers. RAAs may accept self-attestation from the CBO support staff or from the applicants themselves.

### 3. What are the criteria or qualifications when selecting CBOs?

Required selection criteria include:

- CBO is based in a community or communities with a high proportion of targeted households, or CBO has past experience or other demonstrated ability to connect with targeted households;
- CBO will coordinate with local RAA about RAFT applications;
- CBO is able to participate in regular meetings with RAA staff (meeting cadence to be determined by RAA staff, but should at minimum meet on a monthly basis);
- CBO is able to provide in-person or in-community support for applicants (i.e., CBO has office space or CBO has the ability to travel with portable tech devices);
- CBO will attend DHCD trainings and/or RAA trainings about RAFT, as applicable (these meetings will mostly be virtual, but some may be in person);
- CBO is willing to comply with all RAFT program and policy changes and communicate said changes to applicants, as applicable.

Other selection criteria to be considered (but not necessarily required) include:

- CBO has an understanding of program goals and possesses sensitivity in working with targeted households;
- CBO staff can speak, understand, and translate the most common languages spoken within the RAA region;
- CBO has past experience in submitting and completing RAFT applications or applications for other housing assistance programs;
- CBO has past experience in connecting households to other supportive services, including but not limited to: legal services, physical and mental healthcare services, community mediation, financial assistance programs;
- CBO has past experience or demonstrated ability to complete basic data reporting requirements and manage program staff;
- CBO staff are able and willing to travel to applicants to submit or complete RAFT applications;
- CBO staff possesses strong communication and interpersonal skills.

All selected CBOs must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the RAA (see **FAQ 15** and **Attachment B**) using the MOU template provided by DHCD.

### 4. Can my RAA choose the CBOs that we will contract with?

RAAs can choose the CBO(s) that they work with, but selected CBOs must fulfill the required selection criteria listed in **FAQ 3**. DHCD reserves the right to deny funds if selected CBOs are deemed incapable of meeting the required selection criteria.

**5. Can my RAA work with CBOs who don't have past experience with RAFT or other housing assistance applications?**

Yes, RAAs can subcontract with CBOs who lack past experience working with RAFT applications or other housing assistance applications, as long as the CBOs fulfill all required selection criteria. Note that this includes the ability to attend required trainings with DHCD and/or the RAA, plus the ability to coordinate with RAA staff about RAFT applications.

**6. Can my RAA combine funds with another RAA?**

RAAs may request to combine funds and designate a single RAA as the lead contract manager for all CBOs in their respective regions. **RAAs who wish to combine funds must notify Anne Lin ([anne.lin@mass.gov](mailto:anne.lin@mass.gov)) in writing no later than two weeks starting on the Date of Issuance of these FAQs.** In the request, please include: (1) RAAs who are requesting to combine funds; (2) RAA who will serve as contract manager for all CBOs; (3) Brief explanation of how RAAs will ensure geographic coverage across all regions.

**7. What are the start and end dates for this program?**

RAAs may edit the length of service in the MOU terms in order to fit their needs, provided that:

- CBOs are providing services for a minimum period of 6 months;
- The last eligible date of service shall be December 31, 2023.

CBOs may incur costs on behalf of this program starting on November 1, 2022.

DHCD will issue funds to RAAs based on a monthly cost reimbursement model. Please see **FAQ 12** for more details on how RAAs should submit invoices for this program.

**RAAs must notify Anne Lin ([anne.lin@mass.gov](mailto:anne.lin@mass.gov)) in writing whether they intend to participate in this program, no later than two weeks starting on the Date of Issuance of these FAQs.**

## 8. Are there any data reporting requirements?

When submitting RAFT applications, CBOs must (1) appropriately identify themselves as an “advocate” on all RAFT applications and (2) must record the name of their organization with the prefix “CBO-.” For example, if the CBO was named “Housing Organization Inc.,” they should record their organization name in the application as “CBO-Housing Organization Inc.”

In addition, CBOs must submit monthly reports following the template in **Attachment A**. CBOs *do not* need to collect any personally identifying information as part of these monthly reports. Please see the accompanying screenshot of the monthly reporting template.

Data Dictionary & Reporting Guide	
Organization Name	Insert CBO name
Reporting Date Range	Dates of service (MM/DD/YY-MM/DD/YY)
Definition of a "Client"	This refers to any of the following: (1) Targeted tenant or landlord who applied for RAFT; (2) Targeted tenant or landlord learned about RAFT or another supportive program at CBO office or CBO-hosted event.
Outreach	How many new clients did the CBO reach out to during the reporting period? How did new clients learn about the program? Insert <b>unique count of new clients</b> . If zero, insert "0."
Supportive referrals	Insert count of <b>total referrals</b> made and <b>total referrals by program type</b> . If zero referrals were made in the reporting period, insert "0."

Organization Name	
Reporting Date Range	[MM/DD/YY-MM/DD/YY]
Outreach	[INSERT TOTAL COUNT HERE]
CBO staff/event	
RAA	
State/other public agency	
Landlord	
Other	
Supportive referrals	[INSERT TOTAL COUNT HERE]
Legal services/legal aid	
SNAP	
WIC	
LIHEAP/utility assistance	
TPP	
Healthcare program	
Other	

Screenshot of monthly reporting template (**Attachment A**)

These monthly reports should be submitted to Anne Lin ([anne.lin@mass.gov](mailto:anne.lin@mass.gov)).

## 9. Are there any requirements related to subcontractor management?

RAAs must ensure that CBO staff are aware of and present at all required DHCD RAFT trainings. Required trainings will be clearly communicated by DHCD staff (including program leadership, end-to-end staff and consultants, or readiness team members). CBO staff will not be required to attend RAA office hours nor RAA manager meetings unless otherwise noted by DHCD staff.

RAAs must ensure that CBO staff have reviewed and understand the content within key program materials such as the RAFT administration plan and end-to-end system user guides (as applicable). Please note that RAAs may use all materials on the Mass.gov [“Service Organization Trainings” webpage](#).

RAAs must convene regular meetings with CBO staff. RAAs can determine the exact cadence of these meetings and adjust as necessary, but they must meet with CBO staff at minimum on a monthly basis.

RAAs must manage all data reporting requirements, including RAFT application data entry and monthly reports (**Attachment A**). All monthly reports should be forwarded to DHCD program staff.

## 10. Can DHCD help identify potential CBO partners in my region?

Yes. Please reach out to Anne Lin ([anne.lin@mass.gov](mailto:anne.lin@mass.gov)) if you would like to subcontract with CBOs in your region but are unsure of specific contacts.

## CONTRACTING, FUNDING & ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS

### 11. How much money will my RAA receive for this program?

Fund allocation is based on the FY23 admin fee percentages, plus the assumption of a \$50,000 floor. Based on these calculations, each RAA will receive the following amount:

RAA	Available Funds for CBO Contracting (\$)	
BHDC	\$	50,000
CMHA	\$	50,000
CTI	\$	192,000
FCRHA	\$	50,000
HAC	\$	50,000
LHAND	\$	88,500
MHB	\$	373,500
NWHS	\$	231,000
RCAP	\$	115,500
SMOC	\$	55,500
WF	\$	264,000

### 12. How will DHCD issue funds to my RAA?

All invoices should be submitted by the 10<sup>th</sup> business day of the following month. DHCD will review, approve, and reimburse invoices on a monthly basis.

Each RAA should submit monthly invoices which includes:

- Cover invoice which shows the total monthly costs to be reimbursed
- Backup invoice, which shows:

- RAA admin costs (note that these admin costs must be directly related to the CBO program), including a list of staff who provided administrative support for the CBO program and the total hours worked in the month
- CBO total monthly costs to be reimbursed

Please send all invoices to Anne Lin ([anne.lin@mass.gov](mailto:anne.lin@mass.gov)). DHCD retains the right to audit spending as needed.

**13. What is the payment arrangement between my RAA and the CBO(s)?**

RAAs must compensate CBOs per complete application, not to exceed \$200 per application. A “complete application” refers to an emergency resources application with all required documentation.

**14. Will DHCD determine compensation rates for the CBOs?**

RAAs must compensate CBOs on a per complete app basis, not to exceed \$200 per application. However, DHCD will not set the exact compensation rates for each RAA. RAAs may set their own compensation rates for CBOs, though they are encouraged to set regionally competitive rates.

**15. Will DHCD provide template language to use when subcontracting with CBOs? Is my RAA required to use this template language?**

Eligible CBOs must enter an MOU with the RAA. If an RAA wishes to subcontract with multiple CBOs, the RAA must sign a discrete MOU with each respective CBO.

Please see **Attachment B** for an example MOU. With the exception of clearly marked fields (e.g., “Insert RAA name”), these terms and conditions are not to be edited without the written permission of DHCD.

**16. Will the CBOs be considered subrecipients under the ERA program?**

No. CBOs under this program do not meet the federal definition for subrecipients as defined under 2 CFR 200.331.

**17. Will the CBOs make any eligibility determinations on behalf of applicants?**

No. CBO staff will not make eligibility determinations, determine the amount of funds to be disbursed, or have responsibility for other programmatic decision-making.

For additional questions, please contact Anne Lin at [anne.lin@mass.gov](mailto:anne.lin@mass.gov).