

**FY 2019-20 City General Use Tax Funds – Emergency Shelter Access Activities
Request for Proposals (RFP)
Questions and Answers**

1. Does St. Martha’s Hall qualify to apply as an applicant? Specifically, for the hotline operations—St. Martha’s Hall operate a 24/7 hotline to connect victims of domestic violence to our own emergency shelter services, or to other shelter services when St. Martha’s is full.

- a. Thanks for reaching out to ask this question.

If St. Martha’s Hall is willing to offer hotline services for the full community and work with all shelters to collect open bed information and refer persons accordingly, St. Martha’s Hall would be eligible to apply. Currently this service is the Homeless Hotline and is being provided by United Way. The City of St Louis Department of Human Services – Homeless Services Division is opening up the option for any other agency to apply to do a similar service, that would be able to cover for all persons in search of shelter the following scope of work, as outlined in the RFP:

These are the essential Emergency Shelter Access Activities required:

- Hotline Operations (The hotline number to be used for such engagement is 314-802-5444).
 - Extended Hours – 8 am to midnight (applicants are encouraged to be innovative in describing how they would cover regular business and extended hours)
 - Intake and needs assessment for emergency shelter
 - Diversion (problem-solving conversations and activities intended to divert persons from going into the emergency shelter system)
 - Service Referrals, as needed
- Data collection and reporting (monitor all emergency shelter openings and bed utilization)
- Transportation coordination (to emergency shelter or other safe alternative to shelter)
- Coordination with street outreach workers and emergency shelter staff

2. Where is the RFP regarding a call center that was mentioned in the Board meeting last week. Please advise on the location. Thanks!

- a. Here is where it is posted:

<https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/human-services/homeless-services/funding/documents/2019-20-general-use-tax-rfp.cfm>

and

<https://3.basecamp.com/4137133/buckets/10052609/messages/2306813794>

3. Given the impending weather, is tomorrow’s bidder’s meeting still planned? Any options for a call in perhaps?

- a. At this time, the Emergency Shelter Access RFP Bidder's Conference, tomorrow at 11am, is as scheduled. There may be another Bidder's Conference next Tuesday or Wednesday, if indeed there is a weather concern tomorrow. If a second Bidder's Conference is scheduled for this RFP, it will be posted on Basecamp and the Homeless Services RFP webpage.

Please note: Bidder's Conferences are optional and not required to submit an application for funding. Additionally, any questions you may be emailed to Amy Bickford (bickforda@stlouis-mo.gov) on or before January 22nd, to help clarify anything within the RFP.

Below questions and answers are from the Bidder's Conference:

- 4. Are there contractual numbers for service levels and call abandonment for whoever applies to this RFP can be held to? Like what percentage of calls were answered in a reasonable timeframe and what percentage of calls actually got answered.**
 - a. The main data points to be collected and reported outward, as stated within the RFP, are tracking and monitoring emergency shelter openings and bed utilization. HMIS data entry is required, which will involve collection of specific required data elements. Essential Activities (Hotline Operations, Intake/Assessment, Diversion, Services Referrals, Transportation Coordination and Coordinated with Street Outreach Teams) will require some data collection and reporting. This can and will be negotiated during the contract phase, but it is a good idea to think through these and state some options or ideas for them within proposals. The data elements mentioned within the question are great examples of those to add in proposals.

- 5. Does the City have any idea on how much volume is going to be increased just from the difference in being open from 7:00 pm to midnight, any idea what that would look like?**
 - a. Based on data United Way (UW) has provided in the past, there is no indication that call volume will be as high after hours as it is during daytime business hours.
 - b. Is it Monday-Friday or Saturday and Sunday as well?**
 - i. This service should be offered daily. People need to be able to access open shelter beds on Saturday and Sundays as well. The proposal should address if the services provided will differ at any specific hours and/or days.
 - ii. Applicants can address the hours requested of daily 8am-Midnight, in whatever way they see fit. The proposal should also address what happens to calls that would come in from 12:01AM-7:59AM.

- 6. Is the City doing anything to encourage shelters having an intake person available for those calls that come in from 7:00 pm to midnight? Did it get worked into the shelters' grants this year, anything like that? (United Way Staff asked this question and further stated shelters don't typically have an intake person after 4:00 or 5:00 pm., so being open till midnight will definitely help the situation, but if the shelter isn't open to do an intake, the person still won't be able to enter shelter).**
 - a. City Emergency Shelter contracts haven't changed to require a staff person to be available after business hours to do intakes. Primarily the City is requesting callers reach a live person, hear the concern and try to problem solve with the callers to try and get callers into a safe place which more than likely isn't a City shelter. Capacity at City funded Emergency Shelters isn't a concern. Shelters are filling up. These after-hours calls should utilize safety planning, diversion, problem-solving and resources/referral connections. Gathering call information and data during these after-hours will be useful in the first few months of operation to help inform future decision-making regarding needs in Emergency Shelters and/or other services needed within the Homeless Services System.

- a. Both financial match or in-kind match provided through partnerships or services will be favorable additions to any proposal put forth.
- b. The call statistical data kept and provided by United Way in the past wasn't considered when this RFP was written. That information is customary for call centers. A call center could be a likely applicant for this RFP, but there could also be proposals from agency's not accustomed to running a large call center, and a hotline may be staffed in alternative ways.
- c. If this service is funded beyond this 1-year Use Tax Funding contract, it will likely be funded using ESG (Emergency Solution Grant) funds which require a 100% match. So, if proposals provide match now then it would likely be viewed more favorably.
- d. Another idea about staffing...utilize Coordinated Entry Front Doors and its staff some of the time. Some communities have setup a phone tree where a caller can press 1 for this, 2 for that, and 3 for that, that funnels callers into different phone "buckets" and many of those receive a phone message directing callers to what the caller needs. This process can peel off a lot of calls that don't even need answering by the staff person. The Coordinated Entry consultants suggested a similar process based on population types. For example, all the youth homeless calls would be diverted to the Youth Front Door. All of the single adults might be diverted to an identified agency which has experience with single adults or a specific named Front Door. Families with children are diverted to an agency that has that type of expertise. This could happen only during specific hours, such as maybe calls are routed to front doors during working hours. So, the hotline staff person is just taking a certain level of calls that weren't able to be funneled off already.

10. What qualifies as a Safe Place?

- a. Being off the streets is Safe Place. It gets tricky when hotline staff are doing diversion too because staff don't want to divert someone back to an abuser. It could be linking someone to a Domestic Violence shelter and resources, talking through what caused the caller to be in that situation and determine what the caller can and can't go back to. A lot of determining what is a Safe Place for someone is asking the person if it will be a Safe Place.
- b. Often the only Safe Place identified is emergency shelter. A lot of the data and research is starting to show that people that access shelter could have accessed something else first. Sometimes it may be a utility issue because their power is shut off, but the person calls saying identifying as homeless when really, the caller could stay with someone for a few days while the caller is connected to a resource to help restore the utilities, and that prevents a person from entering the shelter system and continuing to live in homelessness.

11. Would the person that's doing all the coordinating be able to see all the beds at all the shelters? The way it works now is United Way/St. Patrick's Center gets an email from each of the main shelters each morning with available bed count.

- a. The City advocates for the use of having within HMIS a live bed count. Shelters aren't doing this currently but there are some ways it could happen. It would require a huge shift and commitment from the Emergency Shelters. One thought is to start piloting it with one or two emergency shelters and see how it works. With some positive feedback and outcomes, it could bring others along, and be added to contracts down the road. The City would welcome ideas on how the community could move towards the integration of a live bed count. Ideas on this could be suggested in proposals