

## **BWS QUESTIONS - Rent Assistance**

### **Commissioner Meieran:**

- What is the total amount of County funds dedicated to rent assistance (emergency, short term and long term)?
- What departments provide rent assistance?
- What is the breakdown of each type of rent assistance by funding source (federal, state, SHS, ARPA, County GF, etc)?
- Why is some rent assistance included in JOHS budget, while other short term/emergency/long term rent assistance is in DCHS (and potentially other departments)?
- What determines where rent assistance dollars are housed at the County?
- How many individuals/households are currently being housed with long term rent assistance dollars, and what is the breakdown by source of funding?
- How is all rent assistance across County departments coordinated, and who is ultimately responsible for overseeing the pot of rent assistance dollars?

### **Rent Assistance**

Rent assistance can be broadly defined as a subsidy that directly pays for the portion of rent that a tenant is unable to pay, and can be broken down into three broad categories reflecting need and time-frame of assistance:

- **Emergency (COVID-19)**
  - This form of rent assistance was introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on the work of the Short Term Rent Assistance (STRA) network of 19 community-based organizations, we recruited over twenty additional CBO's, and launched two new rent assistance teams within DCHS. This expanded network not only provided flexibility throughout the system, but created new points of entry for renters in need of assistance.
- **Short-term**
  - It is important to note that short-term rent assistance funding captures a range of services from a one-time only payment to prevent eviction due to rent debt, to providing ongoing assistance

for up to 24 months to provide a path to stability for individuals and families. These funds can also include other housing-related costs (“flexible client assistance”) such as securing an ID, furniture, application fees and deposit assistance, and, of course, the payment of rent and utilities.

- **Long-term**

- Long-term rental assistance is synonymous with a “rental voucher” and generally covers the ongoing cost of rent for someone whose income is consistently too low to afford the rent in a market rate or rent-restricted affordable apartment. Long term rental assistance may be provided to the individual who is seeking housing (tenant based), or be used to buy down the rent of an apartment (project based) that will be occupied by someone who is eligible for the housing.
- Prior to the introduction of SHS this year, the significant majority of the rent assistance in the Joint Office budget was short-term rental assistance. Local funds have primarily been used to provide the services that leverage federal long-term rental assistance, including Housing Choice vouchers, Mainstream vouchers, Family Unification vouchers, Shelter Plus Care vouchers, and VASH (Veterans) vouchers. With SHS, we are significantly expanding both the tenant based and project based long-term rental assistance programs.

**NOTE:** There is no single pot of rent assistance funding. Rather, the County is the recipient of a number of sources that each include specific programmatic guidelines/requirements. These requirements restrict the flexibility with which we can spend these funds. Therefore, coordination of funding is focussed on being able to leverage each different source to best serve community members in need of assistance.

Intensity of case management also varies from type/source of rent assistance and from provider to provider, dictated by individual client needs.

## County Departments

The Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS) and the Department of County Human Services (DCHS) are responsible for distributing County rent assistance funding through other County departments and community-based organizations (this includes the full spectrum of rent assistance services: COVID-19 emergency, short and long term).

Through JOHS and DCHS, this vast body of work is coordinated by County leadership, and implemented at various stages of the continuum by a network of County and City of Portland staff, Home Forward, and a range of community-based organizations.

The areas of focus in the continuum of rent assistance for each department can be summarized as follows:

### *DCHS Rent Assistance*

Focuses on housing stability and homelessness prevention, providing a range of rent assistance & support for those who are unstably housed or at risk of homelessness. This has included our COVID-19 emergency response, providing swift financial and legal assistance to prevent a surge of evictions.

### *JOHS Rent Assistance*

Focuses on supporting placement and retention for those experiencing homelessness, including short term rent assistance and long term rent assistance via rapid re-housing and supportive housing programs.

## DCHS Rent Assistance

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Emergency (COVID)</b> PO: 25490A&B, 25191	<b>Short-Term</b> PO: 25133, 25139, 25156	<b>Long-Term</b> PO: 25132
County GF		\$760,000	\$150,000
Federal	\$42,000,000	\$2,640,000	
SHS			
<b>Estimated Totals</b>	<b>\$42,000,000</b>	<b>\$3,400,000</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>

## JOHS Rent Assistance

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Short-Term</b> PO: 30300A, 30300B, 30301A, 30301B, 30302A, 30303A, 30306B (this leverages short term assistance to deploy federal vouchers), 30307, 30308, 30600A, 30700	<b>Long-Term</b> PO: 30400B, 30400E, 30401A, 30402, 30403A, 30403B, 30404, 30407C
City/County GF	\$12,000,000	\$5,500,000
Federal/State	\$2,000,000	\$400,000
SHS	\$13,000,000	\$23,000,000
<b>Estimated Totals</b>	<b>\$27,000,000</b>	<b>\$29,000,000</b>