



Office of Homeless Youth Competitive Funding 2024–2025

Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

BIDDERS' WEBINAR: Thursday, November 9, 2023, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

PROPOSALS DUE: Tuesday, December 5, 2023, by 5:00 PM Pacific Standard Time

ESTIMATED TIME PERIOD FOR CONTRACT: January 15, 2024 – June 30, 2025

FUNDING SOURCE AND METHOD: This is state funding. Payments will be made on a reimbursement basis for allowable time and expenses.

RFP COORDINATOR:

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All current documents related to this RFP, including the funding application and exhibits, schedule of activities, Q&A, and any amendments, are available online at:

bit.ly/2024-hssp-funding

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Background

The Washington State Department of Commerce has contracted Building Changes to initiate this Request for Proposals (RFP), as part of the Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP), for the purpose of allocating resources to entities that provide housing support services to students and their families experiencing homelessness including unaccompanied homeless youth in Washington State.

Once apparent successful applicants are selected through a competitive review process, The Department of Commerce's Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) will contract with new HSSP grantees and Building Changes will support those grantees through training, technical assistance, and capacity building.

About the Office of Homeless Youth

Created in [2015](#), the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs hereafter called "OHY" leads statewide efforts to reduce and prevent homelessness for youth and young adults by ensuring access to the following five priority service areas:

- Stable housing
- Family reconciliation
- Permanent connections
- Education and employment
- Social and emotional well-being

OHY has a vision that, "every family and youth in Washington State has the individualized support they need so that no young person has to spend a single night without a safe and stable home. Every community has services that are equitable, accessible, effective, responsive, and coordinated."

OHY is dedicated to ending youth homelessness, centering and professionalizing youth lived experience, and diversity, inclusion, and equity across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, geography, creed, and migrant status.

About Building Changes

Our Vision: Communities thrive when people have safe and stable housing and can equitably access and use services.

Our Mission: Building Changes advances equitable responses to homelessness in Washington State, with a focus on children, youth, and families and the systems that serve them.

Our Values: Equity, People, Partnerships, and Integrity

Our Statement on Racial Equity: At Building Changes, we seek to hold ourselves accountable for addressing racism and discrimination. Black, Indigenous, and people of color disproportionately experience homelessness due to historical and systemic racism. We cannot address homelessness

without addressing racism at its roots and the trauma it continues to perpetuate. We set universal goals to end homelessness and pursue targeted solutions to achieve these goals. Our racial equity work does not stop there. We are committed to building an internal culture that challenges racism within our organization.

Our Work: Building Changes works at the intersections of housing, education, and health to ensure our systems better serve people experiencing homelessness, and that policies, practices, and processes are equitable to Black, Indigenous, and people of color who are disproportionately impacted by housing crises.

Guided by our values, we use an interdisciplinary approach to influence systems:



1.2 Objectives and Scope of Work

The Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP) intends to fund organizations to:

- 1) Provide housing navigation, housing resources, and/or housing stability supports to alleviate and end housing crisis for students, unaccompanied youth and/or young adults, and families in the K-12 public school system.
- 2) Provide ways to engage and connect students, unaccompanied youth and/or young adults, and families with education enrichment activities and supports, including but not limited to tutoring, life skills, economic mobility, entrepreneurship, afterschool programming, attendance supports, and school/district community events.
- 3) Develop partnerships with one or more school buildings and/or school districts and/or educational service districts in order to create, implement, and/or expand collaborative strategies between housing and education partners to promote housing and educational stability.
- 4) Develop and implement evidence-informed strategies to address racial inequities among students and families experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth, in the K-12 public school system.

Key elements of the Homeless Student Stability Program (HSSP):

Eligible beneficiaries

All beneficiaries of funds from this program must be from households that include at least one student experiencing homelessness as defined as a child or youth without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence in accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act, 42 U.S.C. Sec. 11431 through 11435.

“Student experiencing homelessness” includes an unaccompanied homeless youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. "Unaccompanied homeless youth" includes students up to the age of twenty-one, in alignment with the qualifications for school admissions under RCW 28A.225.160(1).

Letter of Support and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

It is required that applications for HSSP funds include a letter of support from the applicable school districts. Within 60 days of receiving a grant award, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) must be established between the housing providers and school districts defining responsibilities and commitments of each party to identify, house, and support students experiencing homelessness.

If an MOU cannot be established, the housing provider and school districts may work with the Department of Commerce on a case-by-case basis to provide, in lieu of an MOU, a detailed accountability plan for partnership between the housing provider and the school districts.

Eligible activities

Activities eligible for assistance include, but are not limited to:

- Basic and emergent needs such as items necessary for health and/or safety.
- Transportation, including gas gift cards, taxi, and bus/airline tickets for daily local transport associated with a verifiable, safe housing option.
- Identification documents fees for securing a state ID, birth certificate, social security card, etc.
- Education expenses associated with enrolling and attending school (excluding tuition and tuition-related fees) including GED tests, school IDs, and school supplies.
- Employment expenses associated with obtaining or maintaining employment, including interview clothing, work uniforms/shoes, tools/supplies, licensing or certification costs, haircuts, etc.
- Emergency shelter, housing, and/or hotel/motel expenses.
- Legal services and fees, if related to obtaining or maintaining housing.
- Interpreter/translation services and fees, if there is a need related to maintaining housing beyond program service provision.
- Housing support funds or ongoing assistance for needs such as food or utilities, used to support and maintain housing with a friend, relative, or host home while a program participant.
- Rental assistance (short-term, 90 days or less) such as: Diversion funds, initial move-in costs, moving costs, and/or rental arrears and utility arrears.
- Any additional items approved in advance by Department of Commerce.

See [Exhibit G: HSSP 2022-2023 Guidelines](#) on the Department of Commerce website.

Grantee data and reporting requirements

Grantee organizations must compile and report information to the Department of Commerce.

Data on all program participants must be entered into and tracked through the Washington homeless management information system (HMIS).

Grantees must track and report on the following measures, including but not limited to:

- Length of time enrolled in the grant program.
- Housing destination at program exit.
- Type of residence prior to enrollment in the grant program.
- Number of times homeless in the past year.

Grantees must submit narrative reports discussing programmatic status and partnership with school districts as set forth in their MOU. Reports must also include the kinds of supports grantees are providing to students and families to support housing stability and education enrichment activities.

Weighted scoring

In determining which eligible organizations will receive grants, the Department of Commerce must ensure that selected grantees reflect geographic diversity across the state. Greater weight shall be given to eligible organizations that demonstrate a commitment to:

- Partnering with local schools or school districts as demonstrated by a letter of support, and
- Developing and implementing evidence-informed strategies to address racial inequities. Specific strategies may include, but are not limited to:
 - Hiring direct service staff who reflect the racial, cultural, and language demographics of the population being served.
 - Committing to inclusive programming by intentionally seeking and utilizing input from the population being served.
 - Ensuring eligibility criteria does not unintentionally screen out people of color and further racial inequity.
 - Creating access points in locations frequented by parents, guardians, and unaccompanied homeless youth of color.

From [RCW 43.184C.340](#) (enacting statute for HSSP)

1.3 Minimum Qualifications

Minimum qualifications include:

- 1) All applicants must be licensed to do business in the state of Washington or submit a statement of commitment that it will become licensed in Washington within thirty (30) calendar days of being selected as the Apparent Successful Bidder.
- 2) Be a local government, local housing authority, regional support network established under the Revised Code of Washington 71.24, behavioral health organization, nonprofit community, or neighborhood-based organization, federally recognized Indian tribe in the state of Washington, or regional or statewide nonprofit housing assistance organization.

Culturally specific organizations or organizations led and staffed by persons of color that primarily serve communities of color are highly encouraged to apply.

Proposals that do not clearly meet or exceed all minimum qualifications listed above are non-responsive and will not be evaluated.

1.4 Period of Performance

The period of performance of any contract resulting from this RFP is tentatively scheduled to begin on or about **January 15, 2024** and to end on **June 30, 2025**. Amendments extending the period of performance, if any, shall be at the sole discretion of the Department of Commerce.

The Department of Commerce reserves the right to extend the contract for two, two-year periods, for up to six years total, at the Department of Commerce's sole discretion.

1.5 Funding

Approximately \$1.45 million is available to promote housing stability for students experiencing homelessness as described in Section 1.2 Objectives and Scope of Work for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024-2025 (January 15, 2024–June 30, 2025). Building Changes expects individual project requests to be up to \$200,000 for this grant period.

Collaborative grants are allowed; however, one grantee must be designated as the lead and may subgrant part of the award to partner organizations as subgrantees.

While each program has its own purpose and unique set of objectives, there are several high-level goals and priorities we hope to achieve with this funding opportunity:

- **Geographic Distribution:** We seek to address geographic disparities by prioritizing funding so that communities have a robust continuum of care to adequately address the needs of students and families experiencing homelessness. We want to ensure youth, students, and families who request help receive the services they need such that no youth is turned away due to a community's inability or lack of capacity to respond with appropriate resources. Youth in crisis should not have to leave their existing community or support system to find safe and stable housing.
- **Equity in Services:** The risks of homelessness and housing instability are not equally shared among young people. Black, Indigenous, and people of color and LGBTQIA2+ youth are overrepresented among homeless youth, compared to their white and heteronormative peers—and are underrepresented in who gets served. Centuries of biased laws, policies, and practices have resulted in inequitable treatment and perpetuated ongoing trauma, abuse, family rejection and poverty for many Black, Indigenous, and people of color and LGBTQIA2+ youth.

Building Changes will prioritize funding requests from organizations that demonstrate they can adequately address the unique needs of these overrepresented populations, remove barriers, and provide services that are affirming, accessible, and responsive to youth and families who are marginalized because of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation. Grantees will be required to utilize emerging research and best practices for addressing the needs of these communities.

- **Youth Engagement and Voice:** It is important that young people have a genuine voice in the services that are being delivered. When young people are included as decision makers, the organizations that serve them are better informed and equipped to meet their complex and

unique needs. Furthermore, young people who feel valued are more likely to be invested in and increasingly take on leadership roles. Leadership opportunities empower young people and propel them towards successful outcomes. Building Changes is interested in supporting services that return power to young people, actively cultivate ways for youth to be involved, provide feedback, and take on leadership opportunities at every level of an organization.

1.6 Definitions

Definitions for the purposes of this RFP include:

Apparent Successful Contractor/Bidder/Vendor/Grantee/Awardee: The proposer selected as the entity to perform the anticipated services, subject to completion of contract negotiations and execution of a written contract.

Building Changes: The entity contracted by the Department of Commerce to issue this RFP, conduct the RFP review process, provide technical assistance and training support to successful contractors, and evaluate HSSP projects.

Contractor: Proposer(s) whose proposal has been accepted by the Department of Commerce and is awarded a fully executed, written contract. Also called Grantee, Awardee, Recipient, or Vendor.

Commerce or Agency: The Department of Commerce is the agency of the state of Washington that will enter into contracts with applicants selected to perform the anticipated services.

Exhibit: Document attached to the funding application, also referred to as Attachment, or resource linked to from this RFP and application.

Proposal: A formal offer submitted by applicant in response to this solicitation.

Proposer: Individual, firm, organization, company, or other entity or group of entities that submits a proposal in order to attain a contract with the Department of Commerce.

Request for Proposals (RFP): Formal procurement document in which a service or need is identified but no specific method to achieve it has been chosen. The purpose of an RFP is to permit the proposer community to suggest various approaches to meet the need at or below a given funding level.

Also see [Exhibit H: Glossary](#) on the Department of Commerce website for additional terms used in this RFP.

1.7 ADA

The Department of Commerce complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Proposers may contact the RFP Coordinator to receive this Request for Proposals in Braille or on tape.

2 GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PROPOSERS

2.1 RFP Coordinator

The RFP Coordinator is the sole point of contact for this procurement. All communication between the Proposer and Building Changes upon release of this RFP shall be with the RFP Coordinator, as follows:

Name: **Samie Iverson**

Email address: HSSP@BuildingChanges.org

Any other communication will be considered unofficial and non-binding. Proposers are to rely on written statements issued by the RFP Coordinator. **Communication directed to parties other than the RFP Coordinator may result in disqualification of the Proposer.**

2.2 Estimated Schedule of Procurement Activities

Issue Request for Proposals	Wednesday, October 25, 2023
Question & Answer Period	Friday, October 27, through Friday, November 10, 2023
Bidders' Webinar	Thursday, November 9, 2023
Answers to Q&A and Bidders' Webinar Recording Posted on Building Changes Website	Wednesday, November 15, 2023
Applications Due	Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at 5:00 PM Pacific Standard Time
Community Review Panel	Wednesday, December 6, through Sunday, December 17, 2023
Community Review Panel Decision Meeting	Wednesday, December 20, 2023
"Apparent Successful Bidders" Notified of Awards and Email Notifications Sent to Unsuccessful Proposers	Friday, December 22, 2023
Window for Appeal Process	Tuesday, December 26, 2023, through Tuesday, January 9, 2024
Hold Debriefing Conferences (if requested)	Tuesday, December 26, 2023, through Tuesday, January 9, 2024
Negotiate Contract	Tuesday, December 26, 2023, through Tuesday, January 9, 2024
Contract Start Date	Monday, January 15, 2024

Building Changes reserves the right to revise the above schedule.

2.3 Question and Answer Period

Building Changes will accept questions about this RFP sent to the RFP Coordinator at the email address listed in Section 2.1 during this period. Questions should not identify the submitting person or organization. Building Changes will answer all questions in a Q&A document posted no later than the date identified in Section 2.2.

2.4 Bidders' Webinar

A bidders' webinar is scheduled to be held on **Thursday, November 9, 2023, at 10:30 AM**. The webinar will be virtual only. The registration link to attend is below and will also be posted on the Building Changes' website. All prospective Proposers are encouraged to attend; however, attendance is not mandatory. A recording of the webinar will be posted online.

Building Changes will be bound only to Building Changes' written answers to questions. Questions arising at the bidders' webinar or in subsequent communication with the RFP Coordinator will be documented and answered in written form and posted on the Building Changes' website.

Bidders' webinar details:

<p>Thursday, November 9, 2023 10:30 AM–12:00 PM</p>	<p>Please register for HSSP Bidders Webinar by clicking the link below.</p> <p>https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpcu-hrDsuHde9KjeHLOHzJCEIHfgYkWf6</p> <p>After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Zoom webinar.</p>
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Questions may be submitted via email to HSSP@BuildingChanges.org.

2.5 Revisions to the RFP

In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, notification will be provided via e-mail to all individuals who have made the RFP Coordinator aware of their interest. For this purpose, the published questions and answers and any other pertinent information shall be provided as an addendum to the RFP and will be placed on the website. Such addenda will also be published on Building Changes' website.

Building Changes also reserves the right to cancel or to reissue the RFP in whole or in part, prior to execution of a contract.

2.6 Submission of Proposals

Completed proposals must be received by the RFP Coordinator **no later than 5:00 PM Pacific Standard Time on Tuesday, December 5, 2023**. Proposals must be written in English and submitted electronically as an attachment to an e-mail to the RFP Coordinator at HSSP@BuildingChanges.org. **Attachments to e-mail must be in Microsoft Word format or PDF. Budget proposals must be submitted as Excel spreadsheets.** Zipped files and fax transmissions cannot be received by Building Changes and cannot be used for submission of proposals.

Proposers should allow sufficient time to ensure timely receipt of the proposal by the RFP Coordinator. Late proposals will not be accepted and will be automatically disqualified from further consideration, unless Building Changes' e-mail is found to be at fault, at Building Changes' sole determination. Proposals should be sent in one email. However, if more than one email is needed, all proposal materials must be received by the due date and time. Exceptions will not be made for partial submissions. Requests for deadline extensions will not be granted. All proposals and any accompanying documentation become the property of Building Changes and will not be returned.

Building Changes does not assume responsibility for problems with Proposer's e-mail. If Building Changes' email is not working, appropriate allowances will be made.

Completed proposals must include the following:

Funding Application

- Applicant Information
- Subgrantee Information (if applicable)
- Attached letter of support from applicable school(s), school district(s), or educational service district
- References (up to three required)

Universal and Program Questions

- Must be completed by all applicants
- Must adhere to **250-word limit per response to each question**
- Video submission (optional)

Required Exhibits (A, B, C, D, E)

- Signatures may be scanned or electronic where required.
- Exhibit A: Certifications and Assurances (attached below)
- Exhibit B: Diverse Business and Inclusion Plan (attached below)
- Exhibit C: Workers Rights Certification (attached below)
- Exhibit D: Prior Business/Employees with Washington State (attached below)
- Exhibit E: Budget Proposal (download and complete spreadsheet posted at bit.ly/2024-hssp-funding)

Items marked "required" must be included as part of the proposal to be considered responsive; however, these items are not scored. Items marked "scored" are those that are awarded points as part of the evaluation conducted by the evaluation team.

Historically, only written application responses have been accepted for this funding opportunity. To expand submission options, we are now accepting video submission through Vimeo or YouTube for responses to Universal and Program Questions.

Video submission instructions for Universal and Program Questions only:

- To be mindful of the word count associated with the written application, please allow two (2) minutes or less for your answer per question.
- Submit two (2) video links (via Vimeo or YouTube) total: one video responding to Universal Questions (14 minutes max) and one video responding to Program Questions (12 minutes max).
- No supplemental video materials will be accepted.
- Try to minimize background noise and focus on sound quality as much as possible.
- For Vimeo and YouTube account support, see:
 - Vimeo Help Center: <https://help.vimeo.com/hc/en-us>
 - YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT9ScMAe5yQ>

The Certifications and Assurances form (Exhibit A) must have the signature of the individual within the organization authorized to bind the Proposer to the offer.

Questions should be directed to the RFP Coordinator at HSSP@BuildingChanges.org.

2.7 Responsiveness

All proposals will be reviewed by the RFP Coordinator to ensure all required application materials have been submitted. The Proposer will be notified if any part of the RFP is missing, or the RFP is incomplete. This may result in disqualification of the proposal. The Proposer may request feedback related to this process by contacting the RFP Coordinator at HSSP@BuildingChanges.org.

Proposers will be notified of the outcome of their application after Apparent Successful Bidder(s) are notified by Friday, December 22, 2023.

2.8 Appeal Process

Building Changes' appeal process:

- 1) Grounds for an Appeal: Applicants may only submit an appeal on the following grounds: Failure by Building Changes to follow procedures outlined in this Request for Proposal; and/or discrimination or conflict of interest on the part of a rater.
- 2) When to Submit an Appeal: Appeals will be considered from December 26, 2023 through January 9, 2024.
- 3) How to Submit an Appeal: Building Changes must receive all appeals in writing during the window for appeal from December 26, 2023 through January 9, 2024. Appeals will be reviewed by the Managing Director of Programs. Appeals must be emailed to the Managing Director of Programs, Liza Burell, at Liza.Burell@BuildingChanges.org. Applicants should indicate the grounds for their appeal and a short description of why they are appealing.
- 4) Review of an Appeal: All materials (application, score sheets, reviewer comments, supplemental materials) pertaining to the applicant along with the appeal letter will be reviewed by the Managing Director of Programs, who has the authority to have a new reviewer read and consider the application. Building Changes will have 10 business days to review the materials and provide a written decision back to the applicant.

2.9 Contract General Terms and Conditions

The Apparent Successful Bidder(s) will be expected to enter into a contract with the Department of Commerce which is substantially the same as the sample contract and its general terms and conditions included as [Exhibit F: Service Grant Format with General Terms and Conditions](#) on the Commerce website. This sample contract is for information and review only and should not be returned with your proposal. In no event is a Proposer to submit its own standard contract terms and conditions in response to this solicitation. The Proposer may submit proposed edits as allowed in the Certifications and Assurances form (Exhibit A) to this solicitation. All proposed edits to the contract terms and conditions must be submitted as an attachment to the Certifications and Assurances form (Exhibit A). The Department of Commerce will review requested exceptions and accept or reject the same at its sole discretion.

2.10 Costs to Propose

Neither the Department of Commerce nor Building Changes will be liable for any costs incurred by the Proposer in preparation of a proposal submitted in response to this RFP, travel to or conduct of a presentation, or any other activities related to responding to this RFP.

2.11 No Obligation to Contract

This RFP does not obligate the state of Washington or Department of Commerce to contract for services specified herein.

2.12 Commitment of Funds

The Director of Commerce or delegate is the only individual who may legally commit Commerce to the expenditures of funds for a contract resulting from this RFP. No cost chargeable to the proposed contract may be incurred before receipt of a fully executed contract.

2.13 Electronic Payment

The state of Washington prefers to utilize electronic payment in its transactions. The successful contractor will be provided a form to complete with the contract to authorize such payment method.

2.14 Insurance Coverage

The Contractor is to furnish the Department of Commerce with a certificate(s) of insurance executed by a duly authorized representative of each insurer, showing compliance with the insurance requirements set forth within the contract.

The Contractor shall, at its own expense, obtain and keep in force insurance coverage which shall be maintained in full force and effect during the term of the contract. The Contractor shall furnish evidence in the form of a Certificate of Insurance that insurance shall be provided, and a copy shall be forwarded to the Department of Commerce within fifteen (15) days of the contract effective date. Standard insurance requirements are included within the sample contract and its special terms and conditions included as [Exhibit F: Service Grant Format with General Terms and Conditions](#) on the Commerce website.

3 EVALUATION AND CONTRACT AWARD

3.1 Evaluation Procedure

Responsive proposals will be evaluated strictly in accordance with the requirements stated in this solicitation and any addenda issued. The evaluation of proposals shall be accomplished by a community review panel, to be designated by Building Changes, which will determine the ranking of the proposals.

Building Changes will accept video submission through Vimeo or YouTube for responses to Universal and Program Questions. Please see additional information in Section 2.6 Submission of Proposals and in the funding application.

The RFP Coordinator may contact the Proposer for clarification of any portion of the Proposer's proposal. Proposers are not permitted to submit, or resubmit, any materials of any kind after the date and time stated in Section 2.6 Submission of Proposals.

3.2 Evaluation Breakdown

The following weighting will be assigned to the proposal for evaluation purposes:

Eligibility	Pass/Fail
Universal Questions	60 points
Project Questions	40 points
Total	100 points

Workers’ Rights Certification: Those Proposers that certify they do not require their employees to sign an individual arbitration clause as a condition of employment will receive an extra 5% of their awarded points added to their final score (see Exhibit C).

Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the requirements stated in this application and any revisions issued. Awards will be determined by threshold eligibility review, application score, and evaluating the proposal’s alignment with funding goals and priorities described in Section 1.5 (Geographic Distribution, Equity in Services, and Youth Engagement and Voice) and relevant Program Guidelines (see [Exhibit G: HSSP 2022-2023 Guidelines](#) on the Department of Commerce website).

3.3 Notification to Proposers

The Community Review Panel will make final funding recommendations to Building Changes’ RFP Coordinator and the Department of Commerce, taking into consideration all activities and criteria outlined above. Applicants will be notified regarding the status of their funding award by December 22, 2023. Project contracts are expected to begin January 15, 2024.

4 FUNDING APPLICATION AND EXHIBITS

For required application forms, download the Funding Application & Exhibits document and Exhibit E: Budget Proposal spreadsheet posted at bit.ly/2024-hssp-funding.

Links to [Exhibit F: Service Grant Format with General Terms and Conditions](#), [Exhibit G: HSSP 2022-2023 Guidelines](#), and [Exhibit H: Glossary](#), which are located on the Department of Commerce website, are included for informational purposes only.