

Analysis

Item 3: Housing and Community Services Department

Disaster Consultation

Analyst: Michelle Deister

Request: Allocate \$500,000 from the Emergency Fund to the Housing and Community Services Department for contracted disaster and recovery consultant services.

Description: The Housing and Community Services Department (HCS D) is proposing to contract with a professional emergency management and disaster recovery firm as a means of maximizing the potential financial assistance available to the state and to Oregonians impacted by recent wildfires. HCS D is primarily an affordable housing finance agency, with related responsibilities of overseeing funding and services that promote housing stability for low-income Oregonians. With limited experience in disaster response, HCS D could benefit from dedicated expertise in these matters, particularly given the scale of the damage and the protracted recovery time-frame.

Other states have utilized similar professional service contracts, including California, Colorado, Florida, and North Carolina. Reports from these states indicate that the expertise provided through contract services enabled the client states to continue primary (e.g., non-disaster) services, while expediting assistance to disaster areas and maximizing available federal resources and reimbursements. Examples of disaster recovery consultant services include the following:

- Coordination of state, local, and not-for-profit housing-related assistance to avoid duplication of services
- Damage assessment and data collection
- State and Federal contracting guidelines
- Housing recovery program design that maximizes available federal resources
- Eligibility determination and application for financial assistance from federal agencies, including FEMA and HUD
- Federal grant management, including tracking of expenditures, and reporting requirements
- Federal advocacy

It is expected that HCS D will report and coordinate on the scope and outcome of their consultant's efforts with the Office of Emergency Management, pursuant to protocols established as part of the Oregon Disaster Recovery Plan (https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/get-involved/Documents/committees/ODHTF/OR_RECOVERY_PLAN_MARCH_2018.pdf) in an effort to avoid conflicting advice or duplication of services.

HCS D reports that it is investigating the possibility of directly awarding this contract for services and is working with the Office of Emergency Management to identify a possible candidate. The terms of the assumed contract, including the start date and specific services to be provided, were not available at the time of this writing. The need for services will likely continue into the 2021-23 biennium. Despite the lack of specifics but based on other states' experiences, HCS D estimates the amount needed for the 2019-21 biennium is between \$300,000 and \$500,000. An estimate for services and deliverables in 2021-23 is unknown but could be built into the 2021-23 budget as more information becomes available.

Recommendation: The Co-Chairs of the Emergency Board recommend that the Emergency Board allocate \$500,000 from the Emergency Fund to the Housing and Community Services for disaster recovery consultant services, with the understanding that the Housing and Community Services Department will report on contracted services, deliverables, contract duration, and outcomes, including financial and technical assistance sought, secured, and denied.



Oregon

Governor Kate Brown

Housing and Community Services

North Mall Office Building
725 Summer St NE, Suite B
Salem, OR 97301-1266
PHONE: (503) 986-2000
FAX: (503) 986-2020
TTY: (503) 986-2100
www.ohcs.oregon.gov

October 7, 2020

The Honorable Senator Peter Courtney, Co-Chair
The Honorable Representative Tina Kotek, Co-Chair
State Emergency Board
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301-4048

RE: Need for Disaster Response Expertise, Requesting \$500,000

Dear Co-Chairpersons:

Nature of the Request

Oregon has never seen a disaster of this scale. For the first time, OHCS is engaging with FEMA and other federal partners as OHCS and the Oregon Housing Disaster Task Force supports the state through housing recovery. This includes navigating complex appeals processes, duplication of benefits, sequence of delivery, and other federal requirements which could result in hundreds of millions of dollars in federal resources, including Community Development Block Grants-Disaster Recovery. To maximize federal resources, OHCS would like to hire a disaster consultant with robust experience in supporting communities through recovery

Agency Action

OHCS has worked closely with the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and has begun conversations with a consultant. Additional calls are scheduled for this week to determine the full scope of a contract and a timeline. OHCS will design this with the consultation of OEM and our colleagues in other states that have disaster recovery experience. Agency leadership have communicated with partners in other states that have utilized consultants, resulting in a return on investment as they were able to receive increased federal recovery resources. From our vantage point, the sooner we can begin the procurement process the better poised OHCS will be to bring down additional federal resources and coordinate Oregon's housing recovery. While a consultant might not come onboard immediately, funding for a consultant is the next step in moving forward.

Action Requested

OHCS is requesting \$500,000 to hire a disaster recovery consultant to support Oregon through housing recovery. The estimate of \$500,000 is based off of conversations with other states, particularly California and their experience with the recent Paradise fire. This consultant would help with: 1) data and analysis services to augment or appeal damage assessments and needs not fully identified by FEMA; 2) environmental assessments in impacted communities to aid and prepare for rebuilding; 3) comprehensive planning and assistance to local community

planning/rebuilding efforts (stitching together the local efforts that are likely to be fragmented) and pacing out the intermediate and long term strategies with the Housing Task Force; and 4) strategic advice on obtaining, applying for and leveraging federal dollars for the housing recovery. OHCS will report back to the Emergency Board with the scope of the contract in early 2021.

Legislation Affected

No relevant legislation is affected by this request.

Sincerely,

Margaret Solle Salazar, Executive Director

cc: Ken Rocco, Legislative Fiscal Office
Michelle Deister, Legislative Fiscal Office
George Naughton, Department of Administrative Services
Alisa Webb, Department of Administrative Services