



The Housing Trust Fund Corporation  
Office of Community Renewal

*Access to Home Program  
Program Year 2013  
Request for Proposals (RFP)*

**Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor**  
Darryl C. Towns, Commissioner/CEO, NYS HCR

NYS Homes and Community Renewal  
Office of Community Renewal  
The Hampton Plaza  
38-40 State Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Albany, NY 12207  
[www.nyshcr.org](http://www.nyshcr.org)

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The NYS Access to Home Program provides financial assistance to make residential units accessible for low- and moderate-income persons with disabilities. Providing assistance with the cost of adapting homes to meet the needs of those with disabilities will enable individuals to continue to safely and comfortably live in their residences and avoid institutional care. The eligible unit must be the primary residence of the person with a disability. Eligible applicants for the Access to Home Program are units of local government and organizations incorporated under the New York State Not-For-Profit Corporation Law, that have been providing relevant service to the community for at least one year prior to application date.

The Housing Trust Fund Corporation (HTFC), through its Office of Community Renewal (OCR), expects to make approximately \$1,000,000 available for the Access to Home Program under the 2013 Request for Proposals process.

For 2013, the following will apply for the Access to Home Program:

- The amount requested per applicant, per program, **may not** be less than \$75,000 and **may not** exceed \$150,000.
- Rehabilitation assistance is limited to a maximum of \$25,000 per unit.
- Awardees will be allowed a maximum of twenty-four (24) months from contract execution to fully expend all Access to Home Program funding.
- Awardees may use up to a maximum of 7.5 percent of each program award for eligible administrative costs.

Preference will be given to applications that demonstrate a need for an accessibility modification program in the proposed service areas **and** to applicants who demonstrate that they have the organizational capacity and resources to complete the proposed program in a timely, efficient and effective manner.

Furthermore, as New York State and NYS Homes and Community Renewal continue to focus on the needs of communities recovering from the effects of multiple natural disasters in 2011, 2012, and 2013, preference will be given to those applications with a focus on serving homeowners still evidencing need in service areas hardest hit by these storms. Applicants must demonstrate existing need as a direct result of the storms, **and** a lack of other Federal, State or other disaster recovery resources in order to receive preference in this category. Applicants will still need to demonstrate the required organizational capacity and resources to complete the proposed program in a timely, efficient and effective manner.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) describes the requirements for Access to Home applications and also explains the processes by which the HTFC and the OCR will evaluate applications requesting funding. Applicants may apply for Access to Home funding using HCR's Community Development On-Line System (CDOL), which is accessible online at <http://www.nyshcr.org/Apps/CDOnline/>. Potential applicants may request technical assistance from the OCR during the application process (see Section V). At the completion of this funding round, applicants that do not receive an award may request an exit conference to review their unfunded application.

## II. APPLICATION DEADLINES AND GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

### A. Application Submission Deadlines

*RFP Open Date: Monday, October 28, 2013*

*RFP Close Date: Friday, January 17, 2014*

Applications for Program Year 2013 Access to Home Program funding must be submitted through HCR's CDOL **no later than** 5:00 PM, EST, Friday, January 17, 2014. Any and all applications received after this deadline will be considered a late submission and will **not** be processed or considered for funding.

Applicants may make a request, based on demonstrated need, to submit a paper application in lieu of using HCR's CDOL. Requests for approval to submit a paper application must be sent to:

**NYS Homes and Community Renewal  
Office of Community Renewal  
The Hampton Plaza, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor South  
38-40 State Street  
Albany, NY 12207  
ATTN: PY 2013 ACCESS TO HOME PROGRAM**

Only on time applications submitted electronically using HCR's CDOL or pre-approved paper applications will be accepted for review. **Incomplete and/or late applications will NOT be accepted either through the CDOL or paper submission.**

For those applicants with prior approval to submit a paper application, applications will be accepted only at the address stated above. Paper applications received or postmarked after 5:00 PM, EST, Friday, January 17, 2014, will be considered late and will not be accepted or reviewed. Use of delivery confirmation services is required by those pre-approved to submit paper applications, to ensure an on time and traceable delivery of an application(s).

Applicants should refer to the **Application Instructions** (see Section II, C Page 6) to identify the Exhibits and Attachments that are required to be submitted as part of the application.

### B. General Requirements

#### **Applicant Capacity & Prior Experience**

Applicants for Access to Home Program funds, as with all competitive OCR Program funds, are subject to an evaluation of prior program funding history, prior program administration performance and organizational capacity.

Interested parties are discouraged from applying for Access to Home Program funds if:

- The program activities cannot be completed within the required two-year grant agreement term; **OR**
- The amount of funding being requested cannot be expended within the same term.

Please note: funds that are not expended at the end of the grant agreement term are subject to deobligation and/or recapture.

Furthermore, applicants to the OCR must resolve any and all outstanding monitoring and/or non-compliance issues that involve a violation of Federal, State or local regulations, and/or program and OCR requirements **prior to the submission of an application for funding**. Applicants that do not resolve monitoring and/or non-compliance issues will be deemed ineligible and the application will not be accepted or reviewed.

**Prior to submitting an application for funding, applicants to the OCR should evaluate the progress of their open grant portfolio to determine if additional funds are warranted at this time.** For each open grant, applicants should evaluate the progress of the program(s) in terms of achieving the accomplishments set forth in the OCR-approved application and their HTFC grant agreement(s). Factors such as the rate of expenditure during the term of the HTFC grant agreement, the number of extensions requested and approved, and compliance with all HTFC grant agreement terms will be used to determine satisfactory performance in the review by the OCR of all applications. Applicants may be negatively impacted by unsatisfactory performance or may be determined to be ineligible for a grant when prior performance evidences significant lack of capacity to carry out the proposed project or program as required and according to the applicable laws, regulations, policies and procedures governing the program.

The HTFC and the OCR reserve the right to not fund any application if it has been determined that the applicant is not in compliance with existing State contracts and has not taken satisfactory steps to remedy such non-compliance.

### **New York State Grants Gateway Prequalification**

The new New York State Grants Gateway is a statewide effort that will improve the way New York State administers grants by simplifying and streamlining the grants management process.

Effective August 1, 2013, not-for-profit organizations must be prequalified in order to do business with New York State. In order to prequalify, not-for-profit organizations must submit an online Prequalification Application through the Grants Gateway. The Prequalification Application is comprised of five components to gauge your organizational structure and the types of services you provide. The required forms and document uploads are all part of the Grants Gateway Document Vault. Resources to complete the application and associated document vault can be found in the Quick Links Section of the Grants Gateway page at <http://grantsreform.ny.gov/>.

Prequalification is designed as a way for not-for-profits to interact more directly with State agencies before they compete for State contracts, enabling them to make adjustments and answer concerns prior to entering a competitive bid process. Once they have been prequalified, multiple State agencies will have ready access to the prequalification materials, eliminating redundant submissions of such information by the vendor. Not-for-profits will only have to formally prequalify every 3 years, with the responsibility to keep

their information current throughout the 3 year period.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Applicants that are **not** prequalified through the New York State Grants Gateway by the Access to Home Program application deadline of Friday, January 17, 2014, will **not be eligible to receive** Access to Home funds, and any applications submitted to the OCR will be deemed ineligible for review and consideration.

### **Statutory Compliance**

Applicants must ensure that modifications will be completed in compliance with all state and local codes and ordinances, and that all applicable health and safety standards are met. Installation of modifications in units with known health and safety hazards (such as observable lead paint hazards in units occupied by children) must not commence until other funding can be identified to address the hazards. Compliance with these standards will be monitored by the OCR Program Staff during a program's implementation.

Applicants are encouraged to leverage Access to Home funding with other funding sources in order to address all health and safety hazards above what can be covered by the Access to Home Program resources. However, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the project complies with any requirements including design requirements, codes, and ordinances of any other funding sources.

### **Bonding and Insurance Requirements**

Upon award of funds, Applicants are required to obtain and maintain proper insurance and bonds. At a minimum, copies of the following must be provided: a Certificate of General Liability Insurance, Workers' Compensation and Disability Insurance, Fire and Casualty Insurance and a Fidelity Bond in the amount of the largest anticipated disbursement and naming the HTFC as loss payee in accordance with the program agreement requirements.

### **Administrative Plan**

Implementation of each Access to Home Program will be governed by an Administrative Plan developed as part of the application process. Components of the Administrative Plan should include, but are not limited to, the following categories: Program Activities and Scope, Selection Process of the Assisted Units, Program Management, Construction Management and Timely Completion of the Program, Bid Solicitation and Procurement, Services and Program Linkages, Program Service Area Description and Public Outreach.

Administrative plans should be no more than 10 pages in length. Applicants should review the guidance in the Access to Home Application Instruction to ensure that the Administrative Plan that is developed meets all program requirements.

### **Property Maintenance Agreement**

In order to secure the investment of Access to Home Program funds and to ensure that the HTFC and the OCR are notified of the transfer of property, Applicants will be required to file Property Maintenance Agreements with the County within which the unit is located for each unit receiving assistance.

### **Smart Growth**

Please note that the Housing Trust Fund Corporation is subject to the New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Act (Chapter 433 of the Laws of 2010) and must, to the extent applicable, make funding decisions consistent with the provisions of the Act.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity/Minority and Women Owned Business**

Recipients of Access to Home Program awards of \$100,000 or more are subject to Article 15A of the New York State Executive Law, which requires that affirmative efforts are made to ensure that New York State Certified Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises are afforded the opportunities for meaningful participation in projects funded by the HTFC, pursuant to Section 313 of the Article. Recipients of awards of less than \$100,000 are not required to comply with Article 15A; however, they are strongly encouraged to make affirmative efforts towards compliance. Preference will be given to those Applicants who demonstrate at the point of application that their procurement goals and/or plans will meet the requirements of Article 15A of the New York State Executive Law.

### **Environmental Review**

Awards made under the Access to Home Program are subject to the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) at 6 NYCRR Part 617. Applicants will also need to obtain Environmental Clearance from the HTFC Environmental Analysis Unit prior to beginning any construction work. Guidance on obtaining Environmental Clearance is provided on the HCR website at: <http://www.nyshcr.org/Forms/AccessToHome/>.

## **C. Other Application Reference Materials**

This RFP provides only a portion of the information and materials needed by applicants. Other materials, available from the HCR website at [www.nyshcr.org/Funding](http://www.nyshcr.org/Funding), include the following:

1. Access to Home Program Year 2013 Application Instructions
2. CDOL Application Instructions
3. NYS Housing Trust Fund Corporation Rehabilitation Standards (rev. June 2006)
4. Access to Home Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The HTFC reserves the right to award all, a portion of, or none of a program's funds based upon funding availability, feasibility of the applications received, the competitiveness of the applications, an applicant's ability to meet HTFC criteria for funding, and an applicant's ability to advance the State's housing goals. The HTFC also reserves the right to change or disallow aspects of the applications received and may make such changes as an expressed condition of its commitment to provide funding to a program. The HTFC reserves the right to award less than the requested amount.

### III. EVALUATION AND SELECTION

#### A. General Goals and Objectives

The OCR will evaluate the investment of the resources made available through this RFP using the following three criteria: **fundamentals, leverage, and outcomes**. This framework accommodates all scoring criteria currently utilized by the OCR. These decisions will also be made in the context of a competitive process. To the extent feasible, the OCR will allocate its resources to meet housing needs and achieve a geographic distribution of funding across the State, while promoting community development policies that emphasize the needs of underserved communities and which advance smart growth principals and healthy living environments.

**Fundamentals:** consider the basic components of any investment – feasibility, team experience, and program structure. Under this RFP, the OCR will also consider certain threshold requirements specific to the Access to Home Program. The OCR will evaluate, among other things, whether the investment is feasible for our investment; whether all the necessary components are identified and committed and whether the applicant has the proven experience and team members to successfully complete the investment.

**Leverage:** consider whether the proposed investment leverages significant outside resources such as third party funds, local funds and/or local support. Preference will be given to those applicants that demonstrate a **commitment of leveraged funds** at the time of application. A commitment means written documentation that funds are awarded to the applicant from the outside resource(s).

**Outcomes:** considers policy goals achieved by a particular investment. The OCR will evaluate whether the application proposes a quality program that efficiently responds to the needs of the community by producing a transformative effect or sustains a more livable community.

#### B. Application Processing Steps

1. **Application Receipt** – Once an Access to Home application is submitted through the CDOL, or a pre-approved paper application is received through a delivery confirmation mail service, an identification number is assigned and the application is made available for review by the appropriate and assigned program staff.
2. **Eligibility Review** – All Access to Home applications are reviewed according to eligibility criteria summarized below. **Applications that fail to meet all of the required criteria will not be reviewed further.**

**Access to Home eligibility criteria:**

- Eligible applicants for the Access to Home Program are units of local government and organizations incorporated under the New York State Not-For-Profit Corporation Law, that have been providing relevant service to the community for at least one year prior to application date.

- Only residential dwellings occupied by low- and moderate-income persons with disabilities may be assisted. Both rental and owner-occupied residences are eligible for assistance and may be improved with Access to Home program funds. Applicants proposing to provide assistance for rental units must ensure that Access to Home funds are not used to replace other resources available to building owners. Owners of rental units who are obligated to provide accessibility improvements as a condition of receiving other governmental assistance may **not** use Access to Home funds to pay for those improvements.
  - Eligible improvements include accessibility modifications to units especially when such modifications would allow a disabled person to remain in, or return to, the unit, rather than being institutionalized.
  - Rehabilitation costs are limited to actual and necessary cost of accessibility improvements such as ramps, lifts, handrails, grab bars, relocation costs, testing for environmental, health and safety purposes and related soft costs. Assistance is limited to \$25,000 per unit.
  - Assisted units must be occupied as the permanent residence of a household with income at or below 80 percent of area median income (120 percent of area median income for veterans who are certified by the U.S Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of Defense as entitled to receive disability payments for a disability incurred in time of war), and include individuals who have a disability or have substantial difficulty with daily living activities due to aging.
- 3. Rating and Ranking** – All Access to Home program applications are scored on criteria derived from the regulatory and policy considerations of the Access to Home program. Application ratings are based only on the application materials received by the submission deadlines.
- 4. HTFC Board Approval** – The OCR must present all proposed Access to Home Program award recommendations to the HTFC Board of Directors, who must approve such awards, and provide the OCR with authorization to proceed, before notification of awards and the entering into of program agreements may commence.
- 5. Application Review Letter** - Access to Home Program applicants will be issued a formal letter to inform them of the final status of their application(s);
- a. Selected for Funding
  - b. Not Selected for Funding
- 6. Program Agreement** – Access to Home applicants selected for funding may be asked to revise parts of their proposal prior to issuance of a Program Agreement. After required revisions are submitted and approved, a Program Agreement will be issued. **Applicants are reminded in advance that activity related to the program must not begin until a Program Agreement is executed with the HTFC.**

The HTFC expects to enter into a Program Agreement within 45 business days of the Access to Home applicant's compliance with submission requirements.

Awardees are required to provide supplemental documentation with the Program Agreement. This documentation includes the following, at a minimum:

- Certificate of General Liability Insurance;
- Workers' Compensation and Disability Insurance;
- Fire and Casualty Insurance; and
- a Fidelity Bond in the amount of at least half of the award amount and naming The HTFC as loss payee in accordance with the Program Agreement requirements.

**7. Implementation Meeting** – Access to Home applicants may be asked to participate in a program implementation meeting to discuss the overall grant administration and program requirements that must be met to ensure the successful implementation of an awarded program. Topics generally include, but are not limited to, file maintenance, financial management, statutory requirements, and programmatic compliance.

#### **IV. ACCESS TO HOME RATING CRITERIA**

Each Access to Home application that is determined to be eligible will be scored on a 100 point scale, based on the criteria listed below.

- 1. Community Needs (Up to 10 points)** Measures the extent of need in the proposed service area.
  - a. Number of Persons with Disabilities in Poverty in the Service Area – (Up to 5 points)** – Based on the number of persons with disabilities in the service area with income below the poverty level. Maximum points will be awarded to proposals that show the highest number of persons with disabilities in the service area.
  - b. Percentage of Persons with Disabilities in Poverty in the Service Area – Up to 5 points)** – Based on the percentage of persons with disabilities in the service area that have incomes below the poverty level. Maximum points will be awarded to proposals that show the highest percentage of persons with disabilities in poverty in the service area.
- 2. Transition and Diversion Need – (Up to 10 points)** – The Applicant must identify the number of persons with disabilities that may be diverted from institutionalization or nursing home care if accessibility modifications are provided. Applicant must cite the source of this data.
  - a. Number of Diversion Candidates – (Up to 5 points)** – Based on documented number of households in the service area that could be diverted from or transitioned out of institutional care with installation of accessibility modifications. Maximum points will be awarded to proposals that cite reliable independent data that documents high need for transition and diversion assistance.

- b. Number of Transition Candidates by County – (Up to 5 points)** – Based on a documented number of households in the service area that could be transitioned back to their homes as a result of the installation of accessibility modifications.
- 3. Income Targeting – (Up to 5 points)** – Based on the average income level to be served by the proposed program. The maximum points will be awarded to applicants that will only serve households with incomes at or below 30 percent of the HUD median income for the area.
- 4. Housing and Supportive Services – (Up to 10 points)** – Based on the experience of Applicants and identified partners in administering housing rehabilitation programs. Applicants that have administered at least two other housing rehabilitation, emergency repair, or environmental modification programs during the past three years, with funding amounts equal to the proposed program, and who demonstrate an adequate staffing plan, will receive the most points.
- 5. Organizational Experience – (Up to 10 points)** – Measures the organization’s experience with the Access to Home program, or other similar programs.
  - a. Experience** – Applicants must demonstrate the organization’s experience (for the last 3 to 5 contract years) with the Access to Home Program, or other similar programs. Applicants listing experience in home repair and rehabilitation grant administration will receive the most points.
  - b. Program Penalty Deductions – (-1 to 2 points)** – Points will be deducted for Applicants with incomplete Access to Home contracts or documented grant administration issues including, but not limited to, multiple amendments to complete contracts, fiscal concerns, or building owner complaints.
- 6. Leveraged Funds – (Up to 10 points)** – Applicants must demonstrate **committed** and eligible sources of funds that will be leveraged by the requested Access to Home Program funds. Applicants presenting high percentages of private sources of committed leveraged funds will receive the most points. Formal documentation of financial commitments must be attached to the CDOL application at the time of submission to be considered. Sources of funds that are not relevant or feasible sources to contribute to the proposed Access to Home project will not be considered as leveraged funds for the purposes of this scoring criterion.
- 7. Program Design & Implementation Capacity – (Up to 45 points)** – Applicants must show the readiness of the organization and that they have organized the proposed project having assembled sufficient resources to complete the project in a timely and effective manner to reach the goals and objectives of the program. Maximum points will be awarded to applicants that fully comply with the program requirements. Applicants should show that technical assistance will not be necessary in order to implement a timely and efficient program.

## **V. APPLICATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Applicants are encouraged to review the Access to Home program application instructions prior to beginning the application process as these instructions provide guidance for completing the application as well as troubleshooting issues with the CDOL system. The OCR will offer a technical assistance webinar on November 14, 2013, to provide a program overview, provide a demonstration of the CDOL application system and answer application FAQs. Potential applicants interested in participating in the webinar may register at [OCRinfo@nyshcr.org](mailto:OCRinfo@nyshcr.org). The e-mail should include the participant's name, organization name, phone number and e-mail address. The subject line of the e-mail should read "Access to Home TA Webinar Registration".

Additional assistance may be available upon request. Please contact the OCR staff at (518) 474-2057 with any questions related to program eligibility.