

Application Deadline: Friday, March 19, 2021 by 12:00 p.m. CDT

Overview

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (Minnesota Housing), in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division (DHS), is now accepting applications for funding for the Bridges and Bridges Regional Treatment Center (RTC) Programs (these programs are collectively referred to as the Bridges program unless the context indicates otherwise).

Minnesota Housing has been authorized to operate rental assistance programs for people with mental illness. The Bridges and Bridges RTC programs provide temporary rental assistance, security deposits, and access to housing supports and supportive services in accordance with Minnesota Statutes Section 462A.2097.

For the Bridges and Bridges RTC programs, the funded Housing Agencies will establish a rental housing assistance program for low-income people with mental illness. Rental assistance may be in the form of direct rental subsidies, security deposits, damage claims, vacancy payments, application fees, and utility connection fees for housing.

The rental subsidy is temporary and is intended to bridge the housing gap between exiting Institutional facilities, segregated settings, supervised release, and homelessness, to permanent affordable housing. Local partnerships with Behavioral Health Service Agencies provide access to supportive services to help households maintain housing stability.

Bridges supports the State of Minnesota's goals under the [Olmstead Implementation Plan](#), [The Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#) and the [Minnesota Comprehensive Adult Mental Health Act](#). Additional information, including the Bridges and Bridges Regional Treatment Center Rental Assistance Programs Guide (Program Guide), is available on the [Bridges webpage](#).

Any capitalized term not defined in this RFP, but defined in the Program Guide, shall be defined as described in the Program Guide.

Available Funding

Minnesota Housing anticipates awarding up to \$9,700,000 in grant funds for the biennium period of July 1, 2021-June 30, 2023. The available funding may be adjusted and is contingent on the amount awarded from the Minnesota Legislature.

Supportive housing services for tenants may be funded through a variety of resources, including grants from the Transition to Community Initiative and the Housing Support for Adults with Serious Mental Illness (HSASMI) program funded by DHS. The behavioral health service partner(s), in collaboration with the county, Adult Mental Health Initiatives (AMHI), or a tribal nation mental health entity should consider applying for this funding directly with DHS. Information regarding these grant opportunities can be requested by contacting Gary Travis at 651.431.2252 or gary.m.travis@state.mn.us at the Department of Human Services, Behavioral Health Division.

Eligible Applicants

Current Bridges and Bridges RTC administrators, and new applicants are eligible to apply for funding if they meet the requirements listed below.

Eligible Bridges and Bridges RTC applicants must be a Housing Agency (HA), tribal nation or nonprofit organization with demonstrated experience working with low-income housing programs and with people exiting Institutions, segregated settings, and supervised release. In order to be eligible, the application must also include documentation of a partnership with a Local Mental Health Entity (LMH Entity) that will collaborate with the Bridges administrator to implement the program. The partnership must also identify behavioral health service partners that can and are committed to serve Bridges Participants in the service area.

An LMH Entity can be:

- A Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) operating under the authority of the county
- A tribal nation mental health agency operating under the authority of the tribal government
- An Adult Mental Health Initiative, which is a collaboration of county LMHAs and/or a tribal nation mental health agency that provides or enhances coordination of the delivery of mental health services required under the Minnesota Adult Mental Health Act

NOTE: The application requires the expertise of both the Bridges rental assistance administrator and the LMH Entity in order to successfully respond.

Eligible Uses

Bridges and Bridges RTC funds can be used for:

- Direct payment to the landlord for the subsidy portion of the rent
- Direct payment to the landlord for the security deposit
- Direct payment to the landlord for the application fee
- Direct payment to the landlord for vacancy payments or damage claims
- Direct payment to the utility company for the utility connection fees

Administration Fee Limits: At the time of selection for funding, Minnesota Housing will approve a monthly administrative fee for the HA, and it will be described in the Bridges and Bridges RTC Grant Contract Agreement with Minnesota Housing. The administrative fee will be paid each month in which a Participant resides in an eligible assisted unit. Minnesota Housing will approve administrative fees that range from \$53 per household per month to \$68 per household per month, based on the target number of households, the amount of the grant, the geography of the service area, the population served, and other relevant criteria.

For existing grantees that reapply and are selected for funding, the current fees will be adjusted for inflation. The fees will increase by approximately \$8 per household occupying a unit per month (app. 18%). For example, if you were currently receiving an admin fee of \$45/per household for 15 households occupying units, you would receive \$675 month. With the increase, you would receive \$53 month for 15 households occupying units, or \$795 month.

Eligibility Criteria for Participants

Bridges: Under the Bridges program, an eligible Participant is defined as all the following:

- The head of household or other household member must be 18 years of age or over and have a diagnosed mental illness as defined in Minn. Stat. 245.462, subd. 20 (a);
- The household is eligible to receive a housing choice voucher (HCV) or other permanent housing option or can become eligible based on successful participation in the Bridges program; and
- The gross income of the household at the time of initial eligibility is at or below 50% of the area median income for the household size.

Bridges administrators must give priority to the following populations, with highest priority given to people in category 1.

1. People living in an Institution, segregated setting, **or under correctional supervision** who will be homeless **upon exit**.
2. People experiencing homelessness who are **assessed as High Priority Homeless (HPH) through the Coordinated Entry (CE) system. Including households of individuals, families with children, or youth (age 18+)**.
3. People who are experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness.

Institutions: Institutions include facilities such as regional treatment centers, community behavioral health hospitals, nursing homes, adult foster care settings, or other hospital or residential treatment centers, jails, and prisons.

Segregated Settings: As defined by [Minnesota's Olmstead Plan](#), segregated settings "often have qualities of an institutional nature. Segregated settings include, but are not limited to: (1) congregate settings populated exclusively or primarily with individuals with disabilities; (2) congregate settings

characterized by regimentation in daily activities, lack of privacy or autonomy, policies limiting visitors, or limits on individuals' ability to engage freely in community activities and to manage their own activities of daily living; or (3) settings that provide for daytime activities primarily with other individuals with disabilities.”

Correctional Supervision: A Community-based sentence which is served by the offender in the community under the control and supervision of correctional officials, subject to conditions which have been set by the court or the Commissioner of Correctional Services.

NOTE: All Institutions are also segregated settings. To evaluate if a setting is potentially segregated, use the three criteria listed in the segregated settings definition. Behavioral health residential treatment facilities, including mental health and substance use disorder treatment programs, are typically segregated settings. Tribal definitions of segregated settings and Institutions, if identified as different than above, will also be considered but must be approved in the sole discretion of Minnesota Housing.

Bridges RTC: Under the Bridges RTC program, an eligible Participant is defined as a person with mental illness that is eligible for Bridges and:

- Is hospitalized at the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center (AMRTC) or St. Peter Regional Treatment Center, now known as Forensic Services, and does not meet hospital level of care;
- Has significant or complex barriers to accessing and retaining housing; and
- Is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness upon AMRTC or Forensic Services admission or discharge.

Bridges RTC may be used, in some cases and with prior written approval from Minnesota Housing, for persons who are diverted from AMRTC or Forensic Services to community hospitalization.

AMRTC and Forensic Services patients must have significant or complex barriers to accessing and retaining housing. In addition to mental illness, these barriers may include chemical dependency, lack of financial resources, homelessness, criminal history, and other issues that contribute to poor housing histories.

Program Expectations

The following Bridges program expectations will apply to all grantees:

Partnership and Cooperative Agreement: Bridges operates as a partnership between the organization that provides the rental subsidies and the LMH Entity that provides connections to housing supports and behavioral health services to Participants.

Bridges grantees are required to participate in LMH Entity meetings at least twice a year and must have a collaborative working relationship with the LMH Entity in order to best serve people with mental illness who are experiencing housing instability. In addition, Behavioral Health Service Agency partners and service partners that provide Housing Stabilization Services in the area must be identified. The

resources to provide services must also be identified. The Bridges grantees are required to communicate regularly with these service partners, whether through the meetings with the LMH Entity or other organized meetings.

A Cooperative Agreement between the HA and the LMH Entity that demonstrates how all parties will coordinate the implementation of the Bridges program is required for the grant term. Bridges RTC must have the endorsement of the Local Mental Health Initiative and a Cooperative Agreement with a Behavioral Health Service Agency. The Cooperative Agreement for both Bridges and Bridges RTC must contain:

- Each organization's roles and responsibilities
- A schedule of meetings
- A demonstrated plan to help ensure access to housing and services and choice for Participants
- A plan for housing and behavioral health crisis response to support Participants
- A plan to reach out to and engage with people currently in Institutions who are eligible for the Bridges program
- A plan to receive referrals from Coordinated Entry (CE) for households experiencing homelessness
- Signatures by executives from each organization participating in the Cooperative Agreement

Program Activities: The following is a list of activities that are carried out in implementing Bridges and Bridges RTC. Each activity is carried out by the HA, the LMH Entity or both. Responsibilities vary for different partnerships and must be described in the Cooperative Agreement. For a complete list of responsibilities, refer to the Program Guide.

- Publish information and provide outreach on the availability and nature of the Bridges program to landlords, RTCs, community-based residential treatment facilities, department of corrections staff, counties, shelters, social service staff, applicants, and Participants
- Create housing opportunities for Participants and provide housing navigation and support to remain stably housed
- Follow data privacy standards between the HA, the LMH Entity and other partners to include a release of information (ROI) for document sharing
- Verify diagnosis of people with mental illness and that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria
- Provide a housing quality standards (HQS) inspection and recertify the Participant at entry, at interim as needed, and annually thereafter
- Maintain and manage referrals and an applicant waiting list
- Make rental assistance payments to landlords and enforce Bridges contracts with Minnesota Housing
- Maintain financial management records

- Establish files containing relevant records for applicants and Participants
- Maintain consumer demographic information
- Report required information to Minnesota Housing
- Provide after-hours emergency response to landlords, Participants, and the HA
- Provide service referrals and resources to assist Participants with housing stability

Administrative Requirements (for the HA)

- Utilize the Foundational Service Practices
 - This concept arises from the Minnesota Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, which identifies four relevant areas of program implementation believed to have the greatest potential to positively impact outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Refer to the Program Guide for more specific information.
- Establish and maintain applicant and Participant files
- Participate in monitoring and financial reconciliation
- Ensure proper financial management:
 - Grantee must establish one or more separate bank accounts (checking or savings) for Bridges program payments from Minnesota Housing. The grantee may combine these funds with other funds in a consolidated account, provided that the banking system can adequately segregate the various restricted funds within one account.
 - Submit monthly payment requests: Grantee will prepare and submit to Minnesota Housing monthly payment requests that detail actual expenditures and Participant information for the previous month using the required Rental Assistance Draw Request Form no later than the 15th of each month.
- Submit annual narrative reports
- Participate in biannual grantee meetings
- Enter into formal agreements with all subgrantees
- Monitor and evaluate subgrantees on at least an annual basis
- Provide timely data and information needed for Bridges program management

Diversity and Inclusion

The Bridges and Bridges RTC programs are intended to serve people with mental illness as defined in Minnesota Statutes Section 245.462, subdivision 20(a). The programs are also intended to assist households with significant or complex barriers to accessing and retaining housing. In addition to mental illness, these barriers may include chemical dependency, lack of financial resources, homelessness, criminal history, and other issues that contribute to poor housing histories. The programs should also strive to serve households disproportionately impacted by homelessness or

housing instability and develop outreach efforts to improve their ability to serve these households in their region.

Applicants should demonstrate their capacity to serve people with mental illness and have implemented foundational service practices in their organization to create better access to the Bridges program for this population. Applicants should demonstrate program elements that reach underserved populations and create access for the most vulnerable household in the service area. The applicant should also partner with organizations that are working to create culturally appropriate practices that help ensure effective identification and service delivery for Participants. In addition, applicants should provide training as well as implement staffing, housing, and service models that are proven to provide results for people with mental illness and households with high barriers to housing.

Once awarded funding, grantees will be required to evaluate the effectiveness of their practices and models. Grantee should have a continuous improvement plan to monitor, make needed changes, and reassess throughout the grant term. Grantees will be expected to report on these outcomes during their annual narrative report.

Review Criteria

This is a competitive application process. Applications will be reviewed and scored by a committee comprised of Minnesota Housing staff, members of other state agencies, and community reviewers with topic/regional knowledge to determine selections and funding recommendations. Recommendations will be presented to the Minnesota Housing board for approval. The award decisions of Minnesota Housing are final and not subject to appeal.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

Threshold Criteria: Minimum threshold criteria for an application to be considered:

- The application must be complete and include all required items listed in the Application Checklist section that follows.
- The application must be submitted by the deadline. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Scoring methodology: The goals of the scoring methodology are to incentivize grantees to be high performing grantees that strive to identify and serve the Bridges program priority populations, improve their program design and procedures to efficiently serve the region identified in the contract with Minnesota Housing, develop staffing models and practices that create access for people with mental illness and diverse populations with high barriers to housing, create collaborative partnerships that promote the best possible service outcomes for Participants, and track outcomes to show improved practices.

Applications that satisfy the minimum threshold criteria will be scored using the following competitive criteria:

- Application = 65%
- Performance = 35%

The total possible score equals 100 points for Bridges applicants and 105 for Bridges RTC applicants. Because new applicants will not have a score for prior performance, they are asked to provide answers to four additional questions in the Application. The answers will be used to determine a performance score for the new applicant. The following table highlights the points for each application category as well as performance.

Category	Criteria	Maximum Score
Priority Populations	<p>Applicant demonstrates a thoughtful, well defined plan to reach and serve people residing in an Institution, other segregated settings or on supervised release</p> <p>Applicant has specific and actionable strategies to reach households exiting correctional facilities and who are on supervised release</p> <p>Applicant waiting list practices are clearly identified and demonstrate a commitment to promote equity in access for applicants and the priority population</p> <p>Applicant demonstrates that Participants are prioritized for all HCV in the region, which ensures that permanent subsidies are available</p>	15
Program Design and Implementation	<p>Applicant has a thoughtful plan and clearly defined strategies to provide subsidies to the entire geographic area, including ensuring that all counties and tribal nations have access to the program</p> <p>Applicant has a reasonable plan and dedicated resources to complete inspections and recertifications in the entire region. They have incorporated virtual inspections in the plan to create greater efficiencies</p> <p>Applicant has developed strong partnerships and resources necessary to provide housing search services across the region and has demonstrated effectiveness in assisting Participants locate/maintain housing. A partnership has been formed to provide Housing</p>	15

Category	Criteria	Maximum Score
	<p>Stabilization Services to Participants completing a housing search</p> <p>If subcontracting, applicant has strong compliance and monitoring standards</p> <p>Applicant has a well-established plan to monitor utilization and assess their program model throughout the grant term</p>	
Diversity and Inclusion	<p>Applicant has a strong understanding of the importance of inclusiveness and has developed a plan that is informed and insightful, and the plan will ensure Participants are reflective of the makeup of the services area and that they will have access to the program</p> <p>If tribal nations are included in the applicant’s geographic region, the applicant has demonstrated that tribal members have access to the program and have well-established collaborations with the tribal nations. Outreach plan in place for indigenous people living in the region</p> <p>Applicant has specific and actionable strategies to reach and serve underserved or disparately impacted populations</p>	10
Foundational Service Practices	<p>Applicant has described proven and effective strategies to reduce barriers to the program</p> <p>Applicant has described a process improvement plan that will keep policies, staff training and agency practices continuously successful at improving access and outcomes for people with mental illness</p>	10
Services	<p>Applicant describes specific and actionable service strategies that have been effective in ensuring housing stability for Participants</p> <p>Applicant has a strong, clearly defined plan on how to work with service providers to create service choice for Participants</p> <p>Applicant has a well-developed process in place to assist Participants with the transition to a permanent subsidy</p>	15
Bridges RTC	Applicant has a well-established relationship with the	5

Category	Criteria	Maximum Score
only	<p>Anoka Regional Treatment Center and the St. Peter Regional Treatment Center, and they have created engagement that leads to RTC openings being filled by qualified Participants</p> <p>Applicant has service resources and proven engagement strategies that get applicants into housing and assists them in maintaining housing stability over time</p>	
Performance OR New Applicant section of the application	<p>Current grantees will be evaluated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant fund utilization • Outcome – households served compared to proposed • Timely report submission • Communication with Minnesota Housing • Budget form responses <p>New applicants will be evaluated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to administer the Bridges program • Relationships with landlords and Behavioral Health Service Agency • Strong referral process to receive applicants • Staff with experience working with people with MI • Have policies in place that create access for people with Mental Illness • Budget form responses 	35
Total		100/105

After the grant review committee has met and the scores have been finalized, state agency staff may incorporate the scores into final funding recommendations that may also be based on geographic distribution, services to special populations, the applicant’s history as a state grantee and capacity to perform the work. Final funding amounts will be dependent on the amount requested, the number of applicants, and the amount available to distribute. Applicants with scores below 50 points may not be funded or may be given conditional funding and be required to receive technical assistance. Decisions are at Minnesota Housing’s sole discretion.

Additionally, Minnesota Housing reserves the right to request proposal revisions during the due diligence phase of the with Minnesota Housing’s Bridges Program contract period, which is after Minnesota Housing board approval but before the contract is executed.

Application Timeline	
Date	Activity
Tuesday, February 16, 2021	RFP posted via the Minnesota Housing website and eNews
Monday, February 22, 2021	RFP posted via the state register
Wednesday, February 24, 2021	Minnesota Housing holds an RFP information session
Friday, March 19, 2021	Applications due by 12:00 p.m. CDT (refer to the submission section below)
Thursday, April 22, 2021	Minnesota Housing staff recommends selection to Minnesota Housing's board
Monday, April 26, 2021	Selected grantees notified; due diligence phase begins
Thursday, April 29, 2021	Mandatory due diligence training for all selected grantees
Monday, June 7, 2021	All due diligence submitted to Minnesota Housing
Thursday, July 1, 2021	Due diligence approved and contract starts
Friday, June 30, 2023	Contract ends

Minnesota Housing will hold an RFP information session that will provide an overview of RFP content and provide a format to submit questions. Please register for Bridges RFP Information Session on February 24, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. CST at

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2860515152645010956>.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Application Checklist

Applicants must use the required application form without modification and include all the required information. Applicants are encouraged to be clear and concise in the presentation of information. The total length of the application must not exceed 10 pages (12 pages, if a new applicant). The minimum font size is 11. Please do not submit other materials that are not requested (letter of support, photos, brochures, etc.). Unrequested materials will not be reviewed.

All checklist items must be submitted to be considered for funding:

- Bridges and Bridges Regional Treatment Center Rental Assistance Programs 2022-2023 Application for Funding
- Application signature page
- Minnesota Housing Bridges and Bridges RTC Budget Workbook (one budget form should be submitted if applying for both Bridges and Bridges RTC; the workbook should include funding requests and information for **both** programs)
- Current local payment standards (for each part of the service area)
- Applicant financial information—all nongovernmental organizations applying for \$25,000 or more must supply current versions of the following financial documentation depending on their total gross revenue:

Documentation	Total Gross Revenue
Board-review Financial Statements	Under \$50,000 (or not in existence long enough to have completed IRS Form 990 or an audit)
IRS Form 990 and Aging Schedule	\$50,000 – \$750,000
Certified Financial Audit	Over \$750,000

1. [Affirmative Action Certification Form](#) (along with a Certificate of Compliance and additional documentation, as needed)—if applying for \$100,000 or more

If you have questions regarding the checklist items, contact the designated point of contact listed below.

NOTE: Minnesota Housing will require applicants who are awarded funding to submit the following due diligence items no later than Monday, June 7, 2021.

- **Signed Grant Contract Agreement**
- **Board Resolution:** A signed original copy specific to the Grant Contract Agreement that designates authorized signatories, authority to enter into a Grant Contract Agreement and that references the requested and/or awarded amount
- **Certificate of Insurance with Employee Dishonesty/Crime Coverage** in the amount of at least one-eighth of the total amount of the funding amount (**NOTE:** Employee theft is not accepted)
- **Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Authorization Form** for a new applicant that has been selected, or if the current EFT on file needs to be updated
- **Certificate of Good Standing** issued by the Minnesota Secretary of State Office within 30 days (a screenshot is also an acceptable form of evidence)

- **Cooperative Agreement:** A final executed copy between the HA and the LMH Entity, after Minnesota Housing approves
- **Bridges Waiting List Selection Plan (only for Bridges applicants):** reviewed and approved by Minnesota Housing

Applicants awarded funding must have all due diligence items submitted and approved, and the Grant Contract Agreement fully executed, which includes both the applicant's and Minnesota Housing's signatures, before grant funds can be expended, or costs incurred.

Submission Instructions

Upload application materials to the online [Multifamily Secure Upload Tool](#) **no later than 12:00 p.m. CDT on Friday, March 19, 2021** in order to be considered for funding. Using the online tool, send items to mhfa.app@state.mn.us. Upload required documents in the original format; do not convert the documents into PDF or other formats except for the signature page of the application. Review the [Upload Tool Instructions](#) for more information.

NOTE: Submitted applications are considered final; **late and incomplete applications will not be considered.** Minnesota Housing may request additional information or clarification. The applicant will be responsible for all costs incurred in applying for this RFP.

Per the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, responses submitted by a grantee are private or nonpublic until the responses are opened. Once the responses are opened, the name and address of the grantee and the amount requested is public. All other data in a response is private or nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process, which for the purposes of this grant, is when all grant agreements have been fully executed. After a granting agency has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data in the responses is public with the exception of trade secret information as defined and classified in Section 13.37 of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. A statement by a grantee that the response is copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the response.

Contractual Requirements

An applicant awarded funding under this RFP will be required to:

- Complete signed contracts with Minnesota Housing outlining the scope of services to be provided. The selected applicants may also be responsible for completing proposal revisions, a work plan, and/or other exhibits that will become an attachment to the contract with Minnesota Housing.
- Maintain financial records for a minimum of six years after the contract with Minnesota Housing has ended that document the use of all program funds. Minnesota Housing, at its sole discretion, may request to review the accounting and documentation of such records at the site visit or at other times.
- Maintain client records for at least six years after the contract term has ended. File documentation for client records must include: An application/intake form, a signed Tennessee warning that lists Minnesota Housing, a signed release of information (ROI) indicating all entities that may be contacted, proof of program eligibility and case notes. Minnesota Housing, at its sole discretion, may request to review the accounting and documentation of such records at the site visit or at other times.
- Complete and submit by required due dates, all interim and final program reports in a template provided by Minnesota Housing.
- Must have an agency conflict of interest policy and take necessary steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interests. All suspected, disclosed, or discovered conflicts of interests must be reported to Minnesota Housing in a timely manner.
- Comply with applicable contracting and bidding requirements noted in the contract with Minnesota Housing.
- Comply with all Affirmative Action and non-discrimination requirements noted in the contract with Minnesota Housing.
- Comply with [Minn. Stat. §201.162](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee.
- Bridges applicants must have a Cooperative Agreement in place with a Local Mental Health Entity (LMH Entity) for the length of the grant term.
- Bridges RTC applicants must have a Cooperative Agreement in place with a county and/or a tribal nation mental health agency for the length of the grant term.

Questions

Questions can be directed to Ellie Miller, Program Manager, at 651.215.6236 or ellie.miller@state.mn.us.

No other staff are authorized to respond to questions from potential applicants. All questions and answers will be posted to [Minnesota Housing's website](#).