



Planning & Development Division
Planning & Economic Development Department

Room 160
411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

218-730-5580
planning@duluthmn.gov

Community Needs & COVID-19 Funding Summary of Community Input Process and Results Fall 2020

Overview of Additional Funding

In addition to the city's annual allocation received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the city received supplemental allocations of federal funding from the CARES Act to support the community's response to COVID-19. The funding from HUD is to assist with the prevention, preparation, and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City received its first COVID-19 funding from HUD in April 2020 in the amount of \$2,147,117 and the funding was awarded to projects following a community process May-July 2020.

In subsequent funding awards by HUD, the city will receive an additional \$1,752,840 from HUD to assist with COVID-19 related needs in the community. The subsequent award includes \$1,252,530 in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG-CV) funds to assist with shelter, prevention, and rapid-rehousing of people experiencing homelessness. The award also includes an additional \$500,310 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CV) funds to assist people with low incomes with services, housing, employment, and other basic needs.

The City of Duluth Planning & Development Division collaborates with many community organizations to meet the needs of and assist low- and moderate- income individuals and the neighborhoods in which they live. This includes improvements to housing access and quality, increasing economic self-sufficiency, and supporting social programs in the city. To help understand the critical needs in the community and inform the priorities for each funding year, the City conducted outreach for partners, community members, and those feeling effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to better understand the needs.

Outreach

In addition to the City's earlier outreach and input efforts related to community needs and COVID-19 earlier in 2020, the city identified the need to provide additional opportunities for input. A summary of these community input processes can be viewed on the city's website at:

<https://duluthmn.gov/planning-development/community-development-funding/cares-act-supplemental-funding/>

In October 2020 a process was created to provide opportunities to ensure the most prevalent community needs were identified. The city used several outreach methods to gain insight and better understand of how COVID-19 was affecting communities in Duluth. Outreach was conducted to community members, partner agencies, and organized community groups.

Public Hearing

A Public Hearing was held by the Community Development Committee on October 27, 2020. The hearing was held virtually and advertised with an invitation for community members to share what community needs had surfaced. Nine people attended the hearing and seven addressed the committee with comments. *(See Summary Attached.)*

Comment Period

A public comment period was held for those interested in submitting comments to the city. The official comment period was October 19-26, 2020, although the city continued to encourage community members to send comments through November 30th. Overall, 15 people submitted electronic written comments and one person connected with city staff via phone to provide input. *(See Summary Attached.)*

Community Input Session

On November 19, 2020, the city advertised and held a virtual community input session. This meeting included a brief overview of funding availability related to COVID-19 and the rest of the session was receiving input. Nineteen community members attended the session. *(See Summary Attached.)*

Additional outreach to existing groups

In addition to holding the public hearing, comment period, and community input session, city staff worked to outreach to other existing working groups in the community that could provide input and perspective to issues that have resulted from COVID-19. These groups were identified as critical connections due to their focus and connection with communities of color, people with low incomes, underrepresented people and groups, and people with limited access to formal means for providing comments. *(See Summary Attached.)*

- Affordable Housing Coalition (November 17, 2020)
- Duluth Workforce Board's Equity Committee (November 18, 2020)
- Wealth, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Stability Working Group (November 20, 2020)

Key Themes

Through two public meetings, solicitation of written comments, and discussion with three community collaborative groups that provide a variety of services in the community; the City was able to connect with many people and community groups throughout the input processes in October and November, 2020. While several comments and needs have emerged through this input a few key themes have emerged. Those key themes include:

- **Mental Health Services-** The COVID-19 pandemic has led to isolation, stress, job loss, housing instability, and a variety of other stressors that have indicated the need for more accessible mental health support.
- **Disproportionate Impact** –The pandemic has impacted communities differently throughout Duluth, with the greatest impacts falling on people of color and people of

limited economic means who must continue working in front line roles at lower than average wages.


- **Youth Services and Support-** Families are feelings stretched due to the need for distance learning, lack of accessible childcare, and families balancing health, social, economic, and physical needs.
- **Digital Divide-** Now more than ever, people have a need for technology for education, employment, health care, and social needs and those without access to the internet are not receiving critical technology needs.
- **Homelessness-** The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a rise in need for homeless services. Overcrowded shelters are unable to keep up with the need to serve all of the people experiencing homelessness.

These five themes and the overall input received will be used to guide the subsequent funding solicitation and selection processes to ensure the projects that result from the funding are meeting the community's needs.



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Summary of Comments Received

Public Hearing on Special Funding Allocation related to COVID-19
October 27, 2020

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has notified the city of an additional special allocation of funding associated with the federal CARES Act. The funding is intended to be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The city has been allocated the following amounts:

- Community Development Block Grant – CDBG-CV-3: \$500,310
- Emergency Solutions Grant Program – ESG-CV-2: \$1,252,530
- Total CDBG-CV-3 and ESG-CV-2 Special Allocations: \$1,752,840

The Community Development Committee held a virtual Public Hearing on October 27, 2020 at 5:30PM. At the hearing Planning & Development Manager Ben VanTassel provided an overview of the hearing purpose. The City will be receiving an additional \$1,252,530 in ESG-CV funds and \$500,310 in CDBG-CV funds to assist with the prevention, preparation, and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. All individuals attending the hearing were welcomed to speak about the current needs and use of the additional allocation.

Public Hearing Attendees:

Anthony Bonds
Cassy Burr
Elena Foshay
Alicia Kozlowski
Jordon Johnson
Lee Stuart
Pam Kramer
Sara Nelson
Will Wilson

Summarized comments include:

Anthony Bonds (Independent School District 709): Current challenges include engaging students and families and meeting their social and emotional needs. Currently there are technology infrastructure needs to properly engage all students. Most students have devices available to them, but there are some internet connectivity needs. Working to make personal connections with students continues to be a focus.

Elena Foshay (City of Duluth, Workforce Development): Closing the digital divide is still a need and public access wifi in buildings or communities is important. Continues to be an overwhelming need to connect and outreach to youth to have them engaged in school and activities.

Jordon Johnson (Lifehouse): Continuing to engage students in education and services is important. Life House continues to serve a high number of students at their location and emphasized the need for emotional/social connection for youth.

Lee Stuart (CHUM): Engagement of students remains a key need within the community. Also needed, is services to operate a 24-hour warming center and day shelter. Continue to see a need for additional shelter space in the community. Food security remains an issue. Rent vouchers are important to ensure that they can remain housed. A coordinator position is something that might be useful due to the high amount of coordination that is needed for quarantining for vulnerable people.

Pam Kramer (Duluth Local Initiatives Support Corporation): Ensure the community connects youth and families to services. Food access continues to be needed throughout the community. A community coordinator is a key need. Access to affordable housing continues to be a need. More wifi access and connectivity is needed.

Will Wilson (Lake Superior Community Health Center): LSCHC is working to provide health services out in the community and partnering with other organizations serving people to ensure health needs are met.

Sara Nelson (Generations Health Care Initiatives): Submitted written comments during the meeting stating that Generations Health Care Initiatives was partnering with Community Action Duluth and Duluth Community Schools Collaborative.



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Summaries of Input Session and Community Discussions

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has notified the city of an additional special allocation of funding associated with the federal CARES Act. The funding is intended to be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The city has been allocated the following amounts:

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- Total CDBG-CV-3 and ESG-CV-2 Special Allocations: \$1,752,840

In October 2020, the city held a public hearing and comment period and continued to outreach to additional community groups in November to assist in identifying needs in the community related to COVID-19.

Community Input Session- November 19, 2020: 11:00AM

The City Planning & Development Division held a virtual Community Input Session on November 19, 2020 at 11:00 AM. The session was open to the public and everyone was encouraged to attend to submit comments. After a brief presentation by city staff, the community was asked to provide comments based on the following prompts related to COVID-19:

1. What are the current needs in the community?
2. What gaps in services exist?
3. How are communities that are historically/currently disenfranchised affected by COVID-19?
4. What else?

Community Input Session Attendees:

City Councilor Janet Kennedy
Greg Boertie-Obed
Kevin Anderson II
Andrea Crouse
Alicia Kozlowski
Brian Bluhm
Brooke Tapp
Cruz Mendoza
Don Ness
Jodi Slick

Justin Markon
Kira Kalberg
Lenelle Hrabik
Maude Dornfeld
City Councilor Terese Tomanek
Treasure Jenkins
Will Wilson
Stacey Nordby
Katlyn Frye

Summarized comments include:

City Councilor Janet Kennedy: Asked what the deadline is to spend funds? What type of organizations are available to apply?

Greg Boertje-Obed (Damiano Center): Concerned about people living outdoors and in unsafe conditions and without hygiene facilities.

Kevin Anderson II (Family Freedom Center): There is a need for better wifi and broadband access, especially for youth/students. Are there efforts to provide more broadband access in the community? About half of the youth that they are working with have a struggle to be able to attend virtual sessions. Community-wide broadband is needed.

City Councilor Janet Kennedy: Technology accessibility is difficult in more remote areas of the city. Mobile phone service is not available in some parts of the city.

Andrea Crouse (Zeitgeist): Expanding wifi throughout other neighborhoods is needed. There are people who are losing income because they are needed to assist with distance learning and other family needs.

Jodi Slick (Ecolibrium3): Emotional health needs continue to be present in the community as people experience effects of the pandemic. Need to build social cohesion and de-isolate people in the community. Shutdowns and restrictions are affecting many small businesses and need is great to assist small business owners. Assistance is needed to help businesses “ramp up” and facilitating collaborative district-based business marketing.

Kira Kalberg (Center City Housing): Some tenants are unable to pay rent and could lose their housing. Affordable housing providers are stretched to keep their facilities safe/clean and also utility costs are rising due to people being home more. Is mobile testing for COVID-19 available?

City Councilor Janet Kennedy: There are some communities, including the African Heritage community, which might be more comfortable being tested for COVID-19 in a more accessible testing process.

Will Wilson (Lake Superior Community Health Center): LSCHC is currently looking at mobile testing units. Internet connectivity are important for tele-health appointments and access.

Don Ness (Ordean Foundation): There is a lot of funding coming to the community there needs to be collaboration to ensure that all needs are being met by these wide varying funding sources and processes.

Affordable Housing Coalition Community Discussion- November 17, 2020

Needs and Comments:

- Frontline staff working at shelters are working in hazardous conditions
- Direct cash assistance is needed. \$100-300 to assist people with getting through the month. Buying cleaning supplies or things that would help to get through things that come up.
- Smaller landlords who own 1-2 properties are struggling due to delayed rent payments. Needed repairs might be foregone because tenants are behind on rent. Maybe focus funds on life safety issues.
- There is funding for renters who are eligible, but some landlords are having difficulty with renters actually applying for funds.
- There is a need for a 24-hr warming and hygiene center. This could be the time to move this process forward with these funds.
- A warming center is the priority for the homeless community.

- Homeless numbers are rising and this past summer seemed to be the highest number of people living outside. A single place is needed where people can go for hygiene and warmth. Sleeping in cars is happening and it is not just people who formerly visited CHUM.
- Drug use by people in need will need to be considered. A place that is accessible for people using drugs.
- Emergency food access. Also, need more relief from homelessness by providing a bridge from transitional to permanent supportive housing.
- There is a need to increase the number of long term housing homeless units. We need everything! 24-hour warming center is really important. A permanent solution is needed. We do not currently have enough shelter beds.
- Paying people who are staffing a warming center or providing homeless services need to be paid well for the important and hazardous conditions.

Duluth Workforce Board's Equity Committee Discussion- November 18, 2020

Needs and Comments:

- Lack of student engagement. Support for the school district to engage students and support families.
- Families are stressed and trying to juggle work and assisting students with distance learning.
- Lack of access to childcare is an issue and difficulty for people to engage in the workforce.
- Technology and internet needs for students is high.
- Need for continued efforts to food access to ensure food is getting to students.
- Support for connecting with K-12 students. Especially middle school and high school.
- How can connecting with students be a multi-point touch? Providing food and other services door-to-door.
- Need for phones and devices- so all people can connect for benefits or other social services.
- Summer programming that would serve as an academic program and class credit recovery programs so that students don't have to repeat grades.
- Mental health services. All people are burned out so the more services that are available the better. Also, substance abuse/addiction issues continue to persist in the community.
- Vehicle services- needing a working vehicle, especially if public transit options are not available.
- Peer Recovery work has a gap in paying for peer recovery specialists.
- Lack of social interaction is strong. No longer able for students to meet and have interaction together. Community-wide treatment or mental health. Possibly public art.
- Helping Hands FB page or something similar. A place for people to connect with services and make a place for people to access services.
- Mental Health!

Wealth, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Stability Working Group Discussion- November 20, 2020

Needs and Comments:


- Sustainability to keep up existing funding levels for programs/supports when many funds end in December through until when there is a viable and widespread vaccine; working strategy should be based on estimated timeline for vaccine
- A lot of CARES Act funding ends in December, leaving a potential urgent needs for funds to fill gap right away in January; be prepared to implement emergency assistance
- Coordinating funding amongst other sources and agencies; when are current sources running out and how to prevent gaps in services, supports, and funding

- Utilities, groceries, rent, basic needs for people and families experiencing continuing or intermittent unemployment due to COVID
- Food sovereignty, food access
- Partner with school district: food busing program runs on weekdays, but here's nothing on weekends
- Programming that will increase workforce skills/readiness and entrepreneurship
- Childcare
- Human power to connect with community and assess what the needs are/how they are changing
- Safe & emergency housing for people experiencing homelessness as well as sex trafficking victims/survivors
- Widespread wifi access throughout City needed
- Digital divide, education wifi access
- Need more focus in West Duluth (west of Lincoln Park) populations may be a little more dispersed than in the Hillside and Lincoln Park, but there are pockets of LMI and BIPOC in West Duluth



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Summary of Public Comments Received

RE: Public Comment Summary for Special HUD Funding Allocation Related to COVID-19 Comment Period

A comment period was held Monday, October 19, 2020 to Monday, October 26, 2020 on a special funding allocation of funds from the U.S. CARES Act. The city continued to receive comments into December 2020. The following people submitted comments (attached):

- 10.21.20 Dawn Paquette (Community Action Duluth)
- 10.21.20 Julie Bellehumeur (Head Start Family Advocate)
- 10.22.20 Randi Omdahl (Community Action Duluth)
- 10.25.20 Miranda Pacheco
- 10.26.20 Cassy Burr (Community Action Duluth)
- 10.26.20 Cathy Erickson (Independent School District #709)
- 10.26.20 Laura Birnbaum (St. Louis County)
- 10.26.20 Lee Stuart (CHUM)
- 10.26.20 Seth Currier (Damiano Center)
- 10.26.20 Zayla Asquith-Heinz (Community Action Duluth)
- 11.18.20 Treasure Jenkins (Clayton, Jackson, McGhie Memorial Board) email and phone call
- 11.20.20 Carin Skoog (Safe Haven)
- 11.22.20 Jonathan Ballmer
- 11.23.20 Brittany Robb (Safe Haven)
- 11.23.20 Rebecca Lewis
- 12.4.20 Kassie Helgerson (American Indian Movement)
- 12.7.20 Babette Sandman (Indigenous Commission Chair)

From: Dawn Paquette
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Subject: CARES Act Funding
Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2020 12:53:48 PM

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Hi Ben, I am the Receptionist here at Community Action Duluth. I am also the lead person who's been running out TechUp Program. I see people every day and hear their stories of how they just don't have the resources to look for work because they don't have WIFI or a computer. We have been able to help 150 participants get laptops or a hot spot. That in return has helped them to either go back to school to further their education or look for a job. Most job postings now days are online as is everything. COVID has been things even harder. Now most in person meets are done on zoom. That means a person who doesn't have a laptop can't do a zoom interview. If CAD was able to get more funding for laptops and WIFI, we can get those in the hands of the folks who really need it.

Thank You,
Dawn Paquette



Dawn Paquette

Receptionist

2424 West 5th Street, Suite 102

Duluth, MN 55806

office: 218-726-1665 x200

fax: 218-726-1612

dawn@communityactionduluth.org

Please Check Out our All New Website! – www.communityactionduluth.org

Community Action Duluth has a commitment to Accessible Services for All.
Please ask a staff member about how we can help you access our services.

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From: Julie Bellehumeur
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Subject: Cares Act Funding
Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2020 8:12:13 PM

Hi -

I work with low-income families.

One of the needs I've heard about repeatedly is from families who received the additional unemployment funds, who used the extra funding to pay down debt or fix a car, etc and then who lost their benefits (food, etc) unexpectedly. They didn't realize the extra unemployment would cause them to lose their benefits.

They are in need of housing and food support, primarily.

Thanks for providing an opportunity for input on this funding.

- Julie Bellehumeur

Head Start Family Advocate

--

Julie Bellehumeur

Myers-Wilkins

Preschool

Family Advocate

340-7460

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From: Randi Omdahl <Randi@communityactionduluth.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2020 3:44 PM
To: Council <Council@duluthmn.gov>
Subject: Council Agenda

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Dear Duluth City Council,

I implore you to do more to address the affordable housing shortage in Duluth. We can do better to make sure everyone is off the streets in clean, safe affordable housing this winter. We need 24-hour winter shelters, year-round access to hygiene facilities and more investment in affordable housing. Here at Community Action Duluth and the Lincoln Park neighborhood we are seeing the impacts of the economic down turn along with the need for housing at alarming rates. Folks are really struggling to make ends meet and the needs are getting dire. We already had a difficult time with homelessness in our greater Duluth community but the recent events have seemed to only exacerbate this concern much further. Please do what you can to make respite for folks out in the cold a priority. Do what you can to prevent families from being turned out this winter. Put in place a better safety net for if and when they don't have anywhere to go.

Chi-Miigwech!
Thank you!

Please note that I am working remotely at this time. The best way to reach me is by email at randi@communityactionduluth.org. I will return your message as soon as I am able.

Randi Omdahl
Financial Coach
Community Action Duluth
2424 West 5th Street Suite 102, Duluth, MN 55806
office: 218-726-1665 x218 | fax: 218-726-1612
randi@communityactionduluth.org



From: Miranda Pacheco
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Date: Sunday, October 25, 2020 11:23:36 PM

Hello. I think another shelter is needed in the Duluth area.

Thank you!

From: Cassy Burr
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Subject: October 27th Agenda
Date: Monday, October 26, 2020 4:45:01 PM
Attachments: [image003.png](#)

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Hello,

I do not plan to speak about this at the meeting tomorrow, but I want to submit written comments regarding the use of the additional funds that the city is receiving from the CARES Act. I am a Program Manager at Community Action Duluth, and a member of a group called the WEES group (Wealth, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Stability) along with several community consultants representing the BIPOC community and several other representatives of community organizations around the city. We just got done completing a series of over 100 surveys/interviews of community members, which asked, among other things, "What programs or services would have been useful during COVID-19?" I thought I should share the responses that we got. Respondents mentioned a variety of services that would have been helpful during COVID, with the ones most cited including general financial support (and rent/mortgage assistance specifically), food assistance/access to free food delivery programs, mental health support, assistance with their small business, employment (specifically online jobs), childcare/tutoring for children, internet service/computer classes, transportation, and access to PPE.

On another note, I want to mention some needs that Community Action Duluth as an agency is seeing in the community. On the most recent Community Needs Assessment that we conducted, which was completed in February 2020, three of the most-cited needs were money/employment, transportation, and technology. The demand for specifically three programs that Community Action Duluth has been running since the public health emergency began, which correlate with these three needs, has been through the roof. These programs are: our Community TechUp program, our Transportation program, and our COVID-19 Financial Assistance program. Our Community TechUp program provided laptops and wifi hotspots to individuals under 200% of federal poverty guidelines. This program started in July using funding we received as a Community Action Agency in response to COVID-19. We have already given out 146 laptops and 74 wifi hotspots, and we are currently out of funding for the program. This program is part of a larger Digital Divide Initiative across the city. Our Transportation program has also seen a lot of demand since the DMV reopened. This program primarily helps people get their driver's permit/license, and also connects people with bikes and offers a low-interest car loan for people with low/no credit scores. This program has always been popular, but because many people are less comfortable taking public transportation due to the pandemic, we have seen more demand for this program since the public health crisis began. Finally, due to a \$10,000 grant from LISC, we have been able to offer some direct financial assistance to people who have been negatively affected by COVID 19. The staff member coordinating this program has only been fully trained in for the last couple of weeks and we have done little advertising for the program, but we have been inundated by requests for assistance with rent, utilities, car repairs, debts, and household expenses (such as food, toiletries, and clothing). This is just a personal, anecdotal note, based on my observations: a lot of what I'm seeing is that people don't feel safe working right now, so they aren't working, even if their former places of employment have opened back up. However, their bills keep coming, so they are behind financially.

Many people are willing to work from home, but not everyone has access to the technology they need in order to do so. In addition, there aren't enough work-from-home jobs to go around, and most work-from-home jobs require skills that a lot of people don't have. The jobs that, by nature, require workers to report to a specific site, don't pay enough to make going to work worth risking one's life or the lives of one's family members for. I'm not sure if this means the city should use this funding to hire folks for temporary work-from-home jobs such as contact tracing or tutoring, subsidize wages with hazard pay, or offer financial assistance to help families pay bills, but this is just a major trend I'm seeing and I wanted to share my thoughts.

Let me know if you have any follow-up questions. Thank you for allowing me to submit this written input. I hope you are staying safe and well during this crisis.

Thanks,



Cassy Burr

Program Manager

2424 West 5th Street, Suite 102, Duluth, MN 55806

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fax: 218-726-1612

cassy@communityactionduluth.org

Pronouns: she/her



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From: Cathy Erickson
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Cc: [John Magas](#); [Anthony Bonds](#); [Jennifer Larva](#)
Subject: October 27th Agenda
Date: Monday, October 26, 2020 4:49:02 PM

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Dear Mr. VanTassel,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the US CARES act funding being considered for distribution by the City of Duluth.

Duluth Public Schools recognizes the great needs for our students and families during the COVID-19 pandemic and would like to offer the following initiatives to be considered when you announce your RFP process.

1. Support for additional student engagement. This would include dedicated staff to identify and create strategies to support educational engagement for students in distance learning. Increasing attendance is a key factor in improving educational outcomes.
2. Direct student support. This would include offering certified staff outside of the school day contact with students to offer support or guidance during a specific time period.
3. Tutoring support. This would allow the District to collaborate with a community partner to provide tutoring support for students after the school day, or as part of a classroom support.
4. Social emotional support. This would allow for the District to collaborate with community partners to support students and families.
5. Upgraded technology in buildings. This would allow for the District to create greater bandwidth for in-person student supports.

Thank You,
Cathy Erickson

--

Cathy Erickson

CFO, Executive Director of Business Services

Independent School District #709 | 215 N. 1st Ave. E., Room 215 | Duluth, MN 55802

Email: catherine.erickson@isd709.org | **Phone:** (218) 336-8704 (x1012) | **Fax:** (218) 336-8773

***PLEASE NOTE** that during school hours (M-F, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.) visitors and guests must use the Third Street entrance and sign in. Thank you.*

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From: Laura Birnbaum
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Cc: [Gena Bossert](#); [Linnea Mirsch](#)
Subject: comments
Date: Monday, October 26, 2020 7:35:32 AM
Importance: High

Hi Ben,

Below is our submission (from St. Louis County) for the public comment period. Can you confirm receipt? Thank you!

Best,
Laura

With a growing number of individuals experiencing homelessness with mental health and substance use issues, it is critical that we develop additional resources to address gaps in the current support system as temperatures turn colder during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is severely limited shelter space and people experiencing homelessness have limited options for housing support. Additionally, due to many public buildings being closed due to COVID-19, there are very little, if any, spaces for people to go during the day to stay warm. We know that we have more people camping and living outdoors than ever experienced in recent history.

People experiencing homelessness need shelter, additional housing options, increased homeless case management, outreach services and access to mental health and substance use disorder services. Our community does not have the housing or shelter stock to support the need pre-COVID; this need is even more extensive now due to additional systemic stresses with the pandemic.

The extreme lack of affordable housing for very-low income single individuals, and no relief in the driving forces of homelessness (poverty, inadequate systems of care for people experiencing mental illness, and lack of treatment and recovery options for people using meth, for example) has resulted in a massive increase in both the number of people who are experiencing homelessness and the acuity of their condition. Housing isn't available and individuals' illness makes it impossible for them to live without supports. Shelter has become a place of last resort, primarily for highly vulnerable people who have faced years of recurrent homelessness, who have disabling conditions and who require significant supports to live independently, and now there isn't enough space to safely shelter those experiencing homelessness.

There is a need for increased emergency shelter space and other housing options that can accommodate guidelines for social distancing, handwashing and the ability to isolate and quarantine in space, etc. It is incredibly difficult right now for congregate shelters to follow social distancing guidelines due to our community's high population of people currently without a home as well as meet the continuum of needs from low barrier shelter to space that is supportive of those seeking treatment in their recovery journey.



October 26, 2020

Comments from: Lee Stuart (Executive Director, CHUM)
102 W. Second Street, Duluth, MN 55802
218-720-6521; 218-260-3521 (cell)

Community Needs – public comment on CDBG/ESG CARES Supplemental Funding

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these thoughts for consideration on CHUM's perspective for the top priorities for allocating these funds. We could easily use it all toward care for those experiencing homelessness, but realize that we are not the only interest in Duluth and on the record, would not encourage the Committee to be so narrow in your focus!

24-hour Warming Center operation: services November through March (\$150,000)

We estimate that there are 200 people considered "unsheltered homeless" in Duluth. You know as well as I do about Duluth's chronic shortage of truly affordable housing. The City's Housing Action Plan and subsequent studies document a need for at least 1,000 rental units affordable to people with very low incomes. This is in addition to 2,000+ units needed for people earning near Duluth's median income. The majority of people in Duluth are rent-burdened, paying more than 30% of their income on housing. Until we address the underlying shortage of housing, and the underlying conditions driving homelessness (extreme poverty, lack of systems of care for people experiencing mental illness and chemical addiction, societal structures that offer hope against despair), we will need emergency shelters, encampments, and warming centers. Part of CHUM's mission, but not exclusively ours, is to make these emergency systems sufficient for the need.

Now in the third year, the City of Duluth, St. Louis County, Loaves and Fishes and CHUM have collaborated on Duluth's Warming Centers. The first year we were at Evergreen Senior Center, the second at Gloria Dei, and now we are back at Evergreen, though still looking for sites that are more suitable. Last year we also opened CHUM's Drop-In Center for 24 hours. Between CHUM and the off-site Warming Center, we served about 80-90 people a night in addition to the 60-70 in the CHUM dorms. For a Warming Center this year, we need a space that can accommodate at least 50 people, and even then know this is insufficient.

CHUM has been able to secure funding for warming center overnight operations through December through the State COVID process. This funding has a must-spend date of 12/30. We are putting together resources to carry us through March. A rule of thumb is \$600 - \$650 a night, including staffing and supplies but no space costs. In times of COVID, we really need a larger setting than either Gloria Dei or Evergreen to accommodate the numbers of people we expect, and we know that we need space available 24-hours.

Estimating commercial rent at \$20/sq ft (a premium because of relatively short-term lease) and 5,000 square feet, we estimate space costs of \$42,000 from November through March, and five months of additional

"CHUM is people of faith working together to provide basic necessities, foster stable lives and organize for a just and compassionate community."

staffing costs to cover 24-hour services, at about \$100,000. For a relatively small investment of \$150,000, we could assure a warm and safe space for all this winter.

Expanded Shelter Capacity: \$890,000

CHUM's emergency shelter was designed for between 20 and 30 people a night, but now we have between 50 and 70 regularly. By opening the Drop-In Center overnight, last year over the winter we sometimes had 100 or 120 people. We anticipate the same this year. Clearly, our shelter is insufficient and we need additional space. Using the standard commercial rate of \$16/sq ft, it would take \$160,000 to lease a 10,000 square foot building, and roughly \$730,000 to operate it for a year.

Continued food at CHUM: \$70,000 - \$200,000

At the beginning of the pandemic, when Damiano closed except for sandwiches, I reached out to the State for a possible solution for food for people experiencing homelessness and learned that it was an eligible expense for the legislative allocation. Then I reached out to Tom Hanson at the Duluth Grill and asked him if he could put together a menu at about half his regular price point. He was able to do that, and the net result has been that from May through December, we have been able to provide 3 hot meals a day to the roughly 75 people staying at CHUM or using the Drop-In Center (although the Center is closed to the general public, it is open to anyone experiencing homelessness). This has had the benefit of helping the sustainability of the Duluth Inn and keeping people employed, and the Duluth Inn employees are happy to be doing something beneficial during the pandemic. I attribute the relative lack of illness at CHUM (no positive COVID cases, and lower than usual respiratory and other infections) to better nutrition as well as our enhanced sanitizing regimes and mask requirements. To continue the food service three times a day, which is both a benefit to CHUM and to a local business, costs about \$210,000 through the end of April. One meal a day (a fallback position) is about \$70,000. This is an investment that easily multiplies its impact: first level impact at CHUM, second at Duluth Grill and its employees, and third on Duluth Grill vendors and their employees, and then, however the employees spend their money.

Out of the Box -- Rent Vouchers:

The City of Duluth could establish a City Rent Voucher analogous to the Federal Voucher. There are many obstacles to implementation, but \$1,500,000 could provide 178 people with full rent for a year (assuming an average voucher of \$700 per month). I would not argue for free rent, but a contribution of 30% of income toward housing, so more than 178 could be served. There are a couple of avenues for prioritization. These vouchers could be targeted first for households at risk of homelessness (especially because of loss of income because of COVID), similar and complementary to St. Louis County's emergency COVID funding for individuals). Or, they could be directed toward housing solutions for the 324 households on the Duluth Coordinated Entry Priority List with moderate to low barriers to return to housing. Either of these approaches would run into the shortage of housing units as a limiting factor, but money talks and owners who have resisted "low income" renters (legally or not) may be enticed.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit these thoughts.

From: Seth Carrier
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Subject: Comments
Date: Monday, October 26, 2020 2:53:25 PM

Hi Ben,

The Damiano Center was able to obtain a grant for a 6-Stall Portable Shower/Toilet facility. This is something that is much needed within our community. However it will take a lot of staff time to service and extra costs for utilities and operations, especially with the extra sanitizing needed during COVID.

As such, additional funding for staffing, supplies, and utilities in order to provide this essential service would be a need for the Damiano Center throughout the remainder of COVID and beyond.

Thank you,
Seth Carrier

Seth Carrier
Executive Director
The Damiano Center
pronouns: he/him/his

[218.336.1030](tel:218.336.1030) (direct)
[218.722.0375](tel:218.722.0375) (fax)
[218.722.8708](tel:218.722.8708) (agency)

www.damianocenter.org

206 W 4th St, #201
Duluth, MN 55806

Join the [Sustenance Partners](#) today!

From: Zayla Asquith-Heinz
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Subject: Public Comment
Date: Monday, October 26, 2020 10:22:06 AM

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Ben VanTassel,

I understand that the City of Duluth will receive funds from the U.S. CARES Act to assist in the response to CPVID-19. At Community Action Duluth our participants are in need of laptops and WiFi to access education, healthcare, employment and other services. Through our community needs assessments, we have known for years that the digital divide is a significant barrier to rising out of poverty. When the pandemic began impacting our community, we immediately noticed an increase in need. We responded by quickly developing a program to distribute refurbished laptops and WiFi hotspots, but the need exceeded our funding. We now have hundreds of people on our waitlist and phone calls almost daily. We hope that we will soon secure more funding to continue this essential program.

I hope that the City of Duluth will consider allocating a portion of the CARES Act funding to helping low-income families access the technology that is increasingly necessary to accessing basic services, education, healthcare, and employment. We are all impacted by the pandemic, but low-income community members face more severe consequences.

Thank you,

Zayla Asquith-Heinz

Tax Site Supervisor
Community Action Duluth
2424 W 5th St Ste 102
Duluth MN, 55806
(218) 726-1665 ext 225
zayla@communityactionduluth.org

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From: Treasure Jenkins
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Cc: [Adam Fulton](#); lorakingreen@gmail.com; oceantaj@gmail.com
Subject: Community Development CARES Act Supplemental Funding
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 4:10:09 PM

May This Message Find You Well In Body, Mind & Spirit

Hello Mr. Van Tassel,

Members of the Clayton, Jackson, McGhie Memorial Board have established a “household wellness” campaign, in order to offer support to those hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We assessed a community need and met that need by securing donations from the community and purchasing much needed household goods.

This campaign began in May and continues to provide essential items such as paper goods and basic cleaning supplies, to people who have lost employment or have had work hours reduced.

We have a focus on Communities of Color & Marginalized Community Members.

My question is one with regard to an available fund (perhaps a Block Grant) where CJMM could potentially apply to secure financial support, for our current initiative??

I plan to attend the community assessment hearing, tomorrow.

Thank you for your consideration.

Treasure Jenkins, CJMM Secretary
(218) 724-4105

From: [Ben VanTassel](#)
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Subject: Input from Treasure Jenkins
Date: Monday, November 23, 2020 4:49:33 PM

Phone conversation with Treasure Jenkins about the CARES Act funding on 11/23/20. Treasure is on the Board of the Clayton Jackson Mcghee Memorial and has also been working on the Household Wellness Initiative, which provides hygiene items such as laundry soap, dish detergent, masks, bathroom tissue, paper towels and other items that people in need can use to stay well during the pandemic. Treasure said that this effort has been going on since April at the beginning of the pandemic. This effort has received a grant from LISC and other private donations and additional funds would help to continue this effort. Treasure wishes to be contacted when grant funds are available.

From: Carin Skoog <Carin@safehavenshelter.org>
Sent: Friday, November 20, 2020 12:05 PM
To: Ben VanTassel <bvantassel@DuluthMN.gov>
Subject: CARES/HUD funding comments

So I just wanted to submit a formal comment regarding the additional CARES Act money that is coming available in the community soon. We at Safe Haven have been working towards a remodel of the shelter building for a number of years now, based on the principles of trauma informed care and the wishes of the residents and staff at the shelter. The pandemic has only exacerbated the need for us to move forward with this project, in order to better support our clients with privacy, space, and safety. I am so excited to hear there will be more money available, though I am sure there are many worthy causes to give it to.

I hope Safe Haven's request will be strongly considered in the process, as the population we serve is not only often homeless and underserved, but also isolated and abused. Our clients have incredible needs and we appreciate the City's intention to help support organizations like ours.

Thank you for your time and have a great weekend!
Carin

Carin Skoog
Director of Philanthropy
Safe Haven Shelter & Resource Center
carin@safehavenshelter.org
home office hours: Tues-Weds-Thurs (8:30am – 3:30pm)

From: Jonathan Ballmer
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Subject: Emergency Solutions Grant
Date: Sunday, November 22, 2020 4:24:31 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-nvrwgijq.gif](#)

Hi Ben,

I recently heard about the CARES Act Emergency Solutions Grant and immediately thought about my friends at Safe Haven Shelter. I have been working with them pro bono for a few years in looking to reimagine how they can better serve those impacted by domestic violence. The pandemic has exacerbated their previous space challenges at the Shelter, as many of the sleeping spaces were designed to have multiple women share the same room without consideration for current social distancing guidelines. This unfortunately has currently had a severe impact on their ability to provide the housing and onsite resources needed. I know that any funds received by Safe Haven would go a long way in helping protect people in our community that have nowhere else to turn.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Best wishes!

Jonathan Ballmer

Business Development Director



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Zero Today: Eliminating Injuries One Day at a Time

From: Brittany Robb <brittany@safehavenshelter.org>
Sent: Monday, November 23, 2020 12:32 PM
To: Ben VanTassel <bvantassel@DuluthMN.gov>
Subject: comment on ESG- CARES funding

I'm writing today to share with you my deep gratitude for the work of you, your team and everyone at the City in administering the ESG-CARES funding, and also sending along my comment in request for consideration of supporting the critical infrastructure needed to safely house our vulnerable homeless population with special emphasis on domestic violence victims in our Duluth community. During this time of the COVID-19 crisis we have seen an increase in the severity of injury among the domestic violence victims we serve, and throughout our most recent program year (10/1/19- 9/30/20), the number of unique adult survivors who sought shelter services surpassed our anticipated maximum of 250 by an additional 145 adults for a total of 395 unduplicated survivors (not including the 171 children that accompanied them). Our shelter has run out of space to safely accommodate survivors.

An investment in infrastructure supporting projects that provide long-term sustainability for agencies like Safe Haven that provide a beacon of hope for domestic violence survivors- homeless citizens in the most dire circumstances- will support the wellness of our community immediately in response to COVID-19, and in the future as the long-term effects of the pandemic become known to this exceptional population.

Many thanks for the opportunity to provide comment! I look forward to submitting our request for a partnership in more detail.

Warmly,

Brittany Robb

pronouns: she/her/hers

Executive Director

Safe Haven Shelter & Resource Center

Office: 218-730-2478

Mobile: 218-260-3796

brittany@safehavenshelter.org

From: Rebecca Lewis
To: [Ben VanTassel](#)
Subject: public comment ESG-CARES Funding
Date: Monday, November 23, 2020 2:07:54 PM
Attachments: [image005.jpg](#)
[image006.jpg](#)

Good afternoon Ben,

This email is written in support of the request by the Safe Haven shelter to be considered for funding from ESG-CARES sources. When the City is weighing deserving projects, I hope the long term community commitment Safe Haven has established is part of your evaluation. They provide critical safety net services for victims of domestic violence from our community.

Thank you for your consideration of Safe Haven as a possible recipient of ESG-CARES funding.

rjl

**Rebecca J. Lewis, FAIA, FACHA, CID | Principal, Director of Healthcare Design
DSGW Architects**

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Duluth Virginia Twin Cities

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American Indian Movement (AIM) Yurt Village

12.03.2020

American Indian (AIM)
Twin Ports Support Group

Kassie Helgerson, Chair
Brian Stillday Jr, Co-Chair
13302 West 3rd St Apt. 1
Duluth, MN 55808

Overview

Duluth has a homeless crisis. Roughly 200 homeless reside in Duluth currently many of them are sleeping outside or in tents. The affordable housing in Duluth is not sufficient to house all of the homeless in the city. Building Yurts to house the homeless would help alleviate the problem. The cost to the city for building the Yurts is \$0. Porta Potty rental \$185 for 28 days x 3 months = \$555 per unit. Benefits of housing homeless persons in Yurts include keeping them warm and safe, less loss of life due to inhospitable weather.

Goals

1. Build 3-5 yurts on city property or an unused vacant lot on or near a bus line
2. Equip each Yurt with a woodstove for both heating and cooking
3. Provide Porta potty for their use
4. Provide weekly trash removal
5. Provide assistance in applying for needs (housing, therapy, counseling, food support, job training, etc.)
6. Provide health checks by Rn's and Nurse Practitioner

Issue

Duluth has had nearly 50 homeless persons die this year already. The current affordable housing is inadequate to house our homeless population. With the added restrictions and challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic many of those will remain living outdoors in unsafe environments throughout the winter. Given the nature of the inhospitable winter weather here many may die of hypothermia or at best suffer from severe frostbite.

Objective

AIM Twin Ports Support Group **will** build Yurts for the homeless. We will also provide assistance with food support and clothing. We will continue our efforts in helping the homeless find housing as well as therapy and/or treatment where needed. AIM shall continue to do weekly check ins with the local homeless population providing assistance while preserving their privacy and dignity.

Solutions

1. Yurt Building

Yurts will be constructed by hand from locally harvested hardwood saplings. They will be assembled on top of a wooden platform and covered with reflectix insulation followed by a layer of blankets to provide additional insulation. The outer covering will be made from vinyl. The inside of the yurt wall will be also covered with reflectix insulation effectively covering the wooden lattice in a fire resistant material. All flooring will be treated with a fire retardant. Each yurt will be fitted with a door and a window opening to the outside with an inside measurement of not less than 28 "

Each yurt will be fitted with a wood stove. Each stove will be used for both heating and cooking. Stoves will be placed on a patio block foundation as well as being equipped with a spark arrestor and rain cap installed two feet above the highest point of the building. Heat baffles will be installed behind each stove with a clearance of not less than 1" from the wall behind it. A new fire extinguisher will be installed in each yurt.

In addition to the window each yurt will have a skylight installed to provide more natural light.

2. Services provided

One or more Porta potties will be provided when an indoor restroom is not available.

Potable water will be supplied weekly to each yurt with additional deliveries as needed by AIM team and Allies

Weekly food deliveries will be made to each yurt as needed by AIM team and Allies

Health checks will be provided free of charge by 6 Registered Nurses and 1 Nurse Practitioner

Assistance connecting with agencies to apply for housing, food support, counseling, and or treatment will be offered and encouraged by AIM team and Allies

Clothing support will be provided by AIM team and Allies

Check ins will be done at the yurts at least once per week by AIM team and Allies

Conclusion

AIM Twin Ports Support Group consists of local Native Americans and their families who have not only seen the issues homeless people in our area face but have also lived it. Having all been homeless at one time this makes us uniquely qualified to provide assistance to those currently experiencing homelessness in the capacity listed above. We spent most of the summer passing out food and water to the homeless and at risk population here in Duluth. We took the time to speak with them and to get to know many of them and their stories. Unfortunately some of those have since passed away. We knew that the current system of building affordable housing was not sufficient to help many people this winter. We realized that it would take thinking outside the box to come up with a way to help. The cost of the Yurt program is much less than the cost of any other proposed program and could help to keep people alive this winter. Living in a yurt is much safer, cleaner and warmer than the current method of living in a tent and heating with a candle or sleeping in the open that is being used by many of the homeless here. The benefit from AIM building Yurts with the only cost to the City being that of renting porta potties (\$555.00 per unit for 3 months throughout the winter) and the use of a dumpster is miniscule compared to the saving of lives that this program can potentially do

Onigamiinsing
"at the little portage"

Duluth Indigenous Commission

December 9, 2020

Mayor Emily Larson

Duluth City Council

Ben VanTassel Manager, Planning and Development

RE: Support for the Yurt Village Proposal to Help the Homeless

Greetings Mayor Larson, City Councilors and Planning and Development Manager VanTassel,

12 years ago, St. Louis County set a 10-year goal of ending homelessness; clearly, that goal is yet unmet. Homeless camps in Duluth are scattered all over the city. The Duluth Police Department raids and relocates "illegal" campsites to other areas of the city, but as of yet, no real plan has been made to adequately, and humanely manage a health hazard that comes with crime and an inherent danger to those living there. Make no mistake, we at the Duluth Indigenous Commission are aware of the homeless situation in the City of Duluth and think there are better ways to help the homeless than to relocate them from one area of the city to another.

Many have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, and we know that it's not always as a result of drugs or mental illness. Making ends meet during a pandemic when you're unemployed has brought a new rank to the homeless issue. According to a recent article in the Duluth News Tribune "The most common thing they [the homeless] wanted was some kind of confirmation that their life made a difference, or that they were important to somebody." Everyone deserves a safe place to live, somewhere to clean up, and access to toilet facilities. We need to be warm in cold weather and have something to eat and drink. These are basic human needs. We might even argue they are basic human rights.

When Kassie Helgerson, President of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in Duluth, presented her proposal to help the homeless we heard a concrete plan that could potentially serve what is needed, until we find a way to end homelessness. AIM proposes to build a YURT Village for the homeless that attends to all the needs mentioned above. In addition, the AIM Patrol – already active in our community keeping people safe – would also provide security for the YURT Village. The homeless who live in the YURT Village can sleep at night knowing that the AIM Patrol is in the Village keeping a safe environment!

We, the Duluth Indigenous Commission, support the proposal for the YURT Village to help the homeless. This is a solution that can make a difference. Please join us in support of the YURT Village proposal from the Duluth Chapter of AIM to help the homeless.

We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Babette Sandman

Duluth Indigenous Commission Chair