

2016

Expression of Interest

Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable
Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB) Pilot



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INTRODUCTION

Ontario is launching the Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB) Pilot program to help survivors of domestic violence find safe and affordable housing beyond traditional rent-gear-to-income (RGI) social housing assistance. The province, through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), is looking for approximately three Service Managers to design, deliver and evaluate this Pilot program in their communities.

Currently, Ontario's housing system supports survivors of domestic violence by providing priority access to social housing through the Special Priority Policy (SPP). The policy goal of the SPP is to make it easier for survivors of domestic violence to leave an abusive situation by granting timely access to affordable housing. The policy was created when social housing was the only government supported affordable housing option. Since 2004, 5,964 households, on average, have been approved each year under SPP. However, according to the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's 2015 Waiting Lists Survey, 3,932 SPP households were on the wait list for social housing as of December 31, 2014.

Through the SDV-PHB Pilot program, the Province aims to provide survivors of domestic violence who are approved under the Special Priority Policy with additional options to meet their housing needs and alleviate pressure on the social housing system. Instead of staying in shelters or other precarious housing situations until a social housing unit becomes available, this Pilot program would provide survivors with the option to receive a portable housing benefit so they can immediately find housing in their community.

A portable housing benefit is a subsidy provided to a low-income household to assist with housing costs. The subsidy increases a household's choice of where to live since it is not tied to a specific unit like most RGI social housing.

A significant component of this Pilot is to evaluate the viability of a portable housing benefit as an alternative to traditional RGI assistance and its impact on the lives of survivors of domestic violence.

Interested Service Managers are invited to respond to this Expression of Interest by completing the application form and submitting it to MMAH by the required date. Service Managers are encouraged to review these Expression of Interest Guidelines prior to completing their application.

OBJECTIVES

The SDV-PHB Pilot program has five objectives:

- To increase support for those experiencing domestic violence to obtain and retain housing
- To decrease wait times for housing assistance for SPP households and other households on the chronological wait list for social housing
- To expand housing choice for SPP households
- To evaluate the household's experience and range of benefit options with respect to the delivery of a portable housing benefit
- To align with Ontario's action plan to end sexual violence and harassment

Service Managers should consider these program objectives when completing their Expression of Interest application.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

FUNDING

Through the Survivors of Domestic Violence - Portable Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB) Pilot, \$7.4 million over two years is available to Service Managers (includes Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards) who currently have SPP households on the social housing waiting list. Subject to annual budget approvals and the outcomes of the Pilot program, the Province is committed to providing stable, ongoing funding for portable housing benefits for some number of SPP households.

MMAH will be selecting approximately three Service Managers to administer the Pilot program. Selected Service Managers will be required to provide eligible SPP households with the option to receive a portable housing benefit to immediately find housing rather than waiting in precarious housing situations for a social housing unit to become available. Participating Service Managers will use the funding to provide a monthly subsidy to SPP households that accept the offer of a portable housing benefit to rent a unit of their choosing in the private market. Up to 10% of program funding can be used for administration costs and costs associated with the program evaluation (see Program Evaluation).

In order to receive funding, selected Service Managers will be required to sign a Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) with MMAH that sets out the roles and responsibilities for both parties and the accountability framework for the program including, but not limited to, the terms for funding and monitoring, and reporting requirements.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: SERVICE MANAGERS

To be eligible to receive funding under the SDV-PHB Pilot, Service Managers must meet the following criteria:

- Must be a Service Manager under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*;
- Must have a social housing waiting list with households that have been included in the special priority household category under ss. 54 to 58 of O. Reg. 367/11.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: HOUSEHOLDS

To be eligible to receive funding under the SDV-PHB Pilot, households must meet the following criteria:

- Must be on a social housing waiting list and be included in the special priority household category under ss. 54 to 58 of O. Reg. 367/11;
- Must consent in writing to participating in the evaluation of the SDV-PHB Pilot program.

LOCAL PROGRAM DESIGN

Under the Pilot, Service Managers, in consultation with local violence against women (VAW) shelters/organizations, will have the flexibility to use the program funding to design their own local portable housing benefit programs for eligible SPP households, which includes determining portable housing benefit amounts. Service Managers are encouraged to consider household income, size, and local housing market conditions when developing their local portable housing benefit amounts.

Selected Service Managers are expected to work collaboratively with MMAH to address issues related to the program and/or the evaluation as they arise.

Selected Service Managers with areas designated under the *French Language Services Act* are expected to provide services in both English and French.

PRIORITY ON THE WAITING LIST

Service Managers are required to ensure that SPP households do not lose priority status on their social housing waiting lists as a result of participating in the Pilot. As such, Service Managers must continue to offer a social housing unit to participating SPP households when a unit becomes available for them, unless the SPP household requests to be temporarily removed from the waiting list. Participating SPP households that choose to decline the Service Manager's offer of a social housing unit will continue to receive the portable housing benefit, and will not lose priority status on the social housing waiting list.

DURATION

The program will be launched as a two-year Pilot, beginning July 1, 2016. Service Managers are responsible for working with SPP households throughout the duration of the Pilot to determine continued eligibility and to manage any transition out of the Pilot program.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

MMAH intends to conduct an interim evaluation during the first year of the Pilot. Selected Service Managers will be required to work collaboratively with a consultant (procured by MMAH) to design an evaluation framework. Service Managers will also be required to implement the evaluation framework and collect data that will support the evaluation. Information collected from SPP clients by the Service Manager and provided to the Ministry or the consultant for the purposes of the program evaluation shall be anonymized. MMAH intends to complete the interim evaluation by spring 2017. Based on the outcomes of the Pilot, the Province may consider ways to enhance the Special Priority Policy and extend the potential benefits of this approach, including continuing to require data collection for further evaluation activities.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

One of the desired outcomes of the SDV-PHB Pilot is to quickly provide financial assistance to eligible households, and allow them to relocate into a rental accommodation. Successful Service Managers will need to demonstrate the capacity to deliver funding and assist qualifying households, monitor progress of the SDV-PHB Pilot in their community, and ensure data collection is consistent with the evaluation framework developed by the consultant, as part of the overall program objectives.

Service Managers are strongly encouraged to consider the following questions when describing their implementation plan in their application proposals.

- a. How will the Service Manager promote the program to eligible SPP households?
- b. How will the Service Manager select SPP households that will be offered the benefit?
- c. How will program funds be provided to recipients?

- d. How will the Service Manager assist SPP households to find safe and adequate housing in the private sector?
- e. How will the Service Manager monitor SDV-PHB funded households to ensure their ongoing participation?
- f. Given that the benefit is portable, what process will the Service Manager have in place to be notified when recipients move addresses?
- g. If qualifying participants become ineligible or withdraw during the course of the SDV-PHB Pilot, how will the Service Manager transition the funding to a new eligible household?
- h. If program take-up is slow, how will the Service Manager ensure the funding provided to them by MMAH is fully utilized?
- i. How will the Service Manager work with funded households (as well as eligible recipients that decline to participate in the Pilot program) to collect the required data and information as part of the program evaluation (e.g. for participating households, to determine how the program meets their needs; for eligible recipients that decline to participate, to determine why they chose not to receive the benefit)?
- j. How will the Service Manager comply with applicable privacy laws and respect the privacy rights of SPP clients and others?
- k. Are there any local programs, initiatives, funding and partnerships that could enhance your delivery of the SDV-PHB Pilot program?
- l. How will the portion of funding being requested for administration costs be used?

DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING

For the duration of the Pilot program, Service Managers will be required to collect and provide data to the Ministry that will be used to evaluate the program's performance and outcomes. The methods of data collection will be determined as part of the evaluation framework.

Service Managers must work with the selected recipients to ensure that anonymized data is collected on a monthly basis. Data would include items such as:

- Total number of households receiving funding;
- Total number of eligible SPP households that decline the offer of a PHB;
- Total SDV-PHB funding provided that month by the Service Manager to recipients;
- Total funding used by the Service Manager for SDV-PHB administration;
- For each recipient, the monthly amount of funding committed by the Service Manager, the monthly rent payable and household composition;
- Notification when recipients move to a new residence;
- Notification if any recipient withdraws from the Pilot program or is evicted from their unit;
- Total SDV-PHB funding remaining unspent (noting that unspent funding for a given year must be returned to the Province); and

- Total number of recipients who no longer need the benefit to remain safely housed.

The reporting requirements and report templates for the Pilot will be outlined in the Transfer Payment Agreement.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Eligible Service Managers are invited to respond to this Expression of Interest by completing an application form through the Grants Ontario System (GOS) and ensuring mandatory criteria are met.

Proposals will be evaluated based on how they best meet the guidelines and desired outcomes of the program. Upon review, MMAH will select Service Managers to participate in the program and allocate funding. Selected Service Managers must sign a Transfer Payment Agreement with the Ministry prior to receiving funding.

Service Managers who are selected to receive funding will then hold their own selection process to identify eligible households that can be quickly funded under the Pilot program.

Due to the program budget, the Ministry cannot guarantee funding to all Service Managers that submit an application or allocate all funding requested by Service Managers through the Expression of Interest.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

A review team will evaluate Service Manager proposals using the criteria listed below. Each proposal will receive a score out of a maximum of 100 points, with the following scoring criteria applied:

Alignment and Rationale (15 points)

The proposed approach aligns with the objectives of this Expression of Interest. The Service Manager has demonstrated a need for the funding.

Program Design and Scalability (15 points)

The proposed design of the portable housing benefit will support SPP households in an adequate and equitable way. The proposal is scalable and can be adjusted based on available funding.

Implementation (25 points)

The proposal outlines a clear implementation plan that describes how the Service Manager plans to deliver funding and assist qualifying households, monitor progress of the SDV-PHB Pilot in their community, and ensure data collection as part of the overall program objectives.

Service Manager Capacity and Partnerships (20 points)

The proposal demonstrates the Service Manager's capacity, which may include partnerships (e.g., VAW sector agencies), infrastructure, and resources to deliver the Pilot program.

Sustainability (15 points)

The proposal demonstrates how the Service Manager will continue to assist SPP households that receive a portable housing benefit (e.g., transition planning to other forms of housing assistance) upon completion of the Pilot program.

Feasibility (10 points)

Is the proposal possible within the proposed timelines and budget? Have relevant milestones, indicators, and outcomes been identified with a view to measuring progress and overall project success?

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

After individual proposals have been submitted and scored, the following considerations may be applied before final funding decisions are made. These are not formal scoring criteria.

Funding Sources

MMAH would consider proposals that include municipal, Service Manager, and/or other contributions to support the delivery of the Pilot program in their communities.

Regional Representation

MMAH would attempt to select Service Managers that represent a range of Ontario's diverse demographics and geography, including but not limited to covering population in urban, rural/remote, and northern locations.

Notwithstanding the above, the application process is not a legally binding one and the decisions as to Service Manager selection and the allocation of funding rest within the discretion of the Ministry.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Interested Service Managers must submit their completed proposal application through the Grants Ontario System (GOS) no later than **5:00 PM on Friday, April 29, 2016** to be considered for funding under the SDV-PHB Pilot. For assistance or questions regarding the Grants Ontario System, please contact the Grants Ontario – AIMS Support Desk at aimssupport@ontario.ca or by telephone at 416-585-7070 or 1-866-417-5399 (toll free).

Questions about the SDV-PHB can be submitted to housingprograms@ontario.ca.

Submissions received after the designated date/time will not be reviewed as part of the current expression of interest process. Applicants will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of their electronic proposal. Key contact information must be provided in the event the Service Manager needs to be contacted.

TIMELINES

Item / Milestone	Deadline
Deadline for EOI submissions to MMAH	April 29, 2016, 5:00 PM
Successful Service Managers are notified	May 13, 2016
Successful Service Managers enter into Transfer Payment Agreements with MMAH	May 20, 2016
Evaluation design with successful Service Managers and consultant will begin	May 24, 2016
Program launch	July 1, 2016
Evaluation of Pilot – Year 1 concluded	May 2017

*Timelines may be subject to change.