



# City of Austin

## Recommendation for Action

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**File #:** 24-6160, **Agenda Item #:** 60.

11/7/2024

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### **Posting Language**

Authorize negotiation and execution of an agreement with Housing Connector to provide an online property platform and financial assistance to individuals experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness for a 24-month term beginning December 15, 2024, for a total agreement amount not to exceed \$2,135,732.97.

### **Lead Department**

Homeless Strategy Office.

### **Fiscal Note**

Funding in the amount of \$2,135,732.97 is available from the U.S. Department of Treasury, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

### **For More Information:**

David Gray, Homeless Strategy Officer, 512-972-7836; Chinazo Anya, HSO Contract Unit Manager, 512-974-6065; Estella Kirscht, Administrative Specialist, 512-972-4423.

### **Additional Backup Information:**

Approval of this item will authorize negotiation and execution of a new agreement with Housing Connector to provide housing barrier reduction and property engagement services. The housing barrier reduction services will help households at-risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness by reducing immediate barriers to obtaining and maintaining stable housing, and by establishing risk mitigation funds for properties partnering with homelessness response service providers. The property engagement services will make more housing units accessible to those at-risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness through improved relationships with property owners, property managers, and their staff, as well as support to help properties connect with service providers and navigate program and eligibility requirements.

This agreement is being awarded through Request for Proposal (RFP) 2024-003 Housing Barrier Reduction and Property Engagement. Over 650 vendors received the RFP, and four proposals were submitted to the Homeless Strategy Office. An evaluation panel comprised of individuals with education and expertise in the issue area rated each application. The criteria for evaluation included the following: fiscal and administrative capacity; experience in cultural competence and racial equity; program design and performance metrics; data-informed program management; and cost effectiveness.

Through this contract, Housing Connector will bring a new service to the Austin community by leveraging insights and accomplishments the organization has achieved in several communities across the country. Using an online platform, Housing Connector will aim to support nearly 1,000 individuals with housing by securing 450 new or renewed leases over the course of 24 months. Barrier reduction services will include various types of financial assistance (e.g., paid security deposit), housing application related supports (e.g., application fee), unit damage mitigation, and eviction prevention incentives. Additionally, through proactive and supportive engagement with properties, Housing Connector strives to bring up to 200 properties onto the platform over the course of 24 months, increasing the number of local properties connected to Austin's homelessness response system while also minimizing barriers to accessing those properties. Access to the portal will be offered to all local homelessness service providers and Austin-area property owners and

managers after the completion of a brief training, and additional ongoing support will be provided to both stakeholder groups.