

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE January 8, 2021

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **Upcoming Agenda Item for City of Dallas Eviction Assistance Initiative**

The following Office of Equity and Inclusion item will be considered by the City Council on the January 13, 2021 Agenda:

Authorize a subrecipient agreement with Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, most advantageous proposer of two, to provide legal services to Dallas residential tenants at risk of eviction and homelessness due to financial hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic for the period December 31, 2020 through December 31, 2021 – Not to exceed \$200,000 – Financing: CDBG Funding (subject to annual appropriations)

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire country and to alleviate some hardships the City implemented the Eviction Assistance Initiative. In 2020 the City's Eviction Assistance Initiative, in partnership with Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas, provided tenants facing eviction with services including education and training, counseling, and legal representation.

In 2020, Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT) was awarded \$50,000 in CARES Act funds for the Evictions Assistance Initiative through the administrative action process. LANWT is a non-profit organization that provides civil legal services to low-income residents.

There is a continued need for eviction assistance due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a priority to continue counseling and legal support for evictions utilizing CDBG funding. To continue mitigation of evictions in the City of Dallas, the Office of Equity and Inclusion has taken steps to continue the Eviction Assistance Initiative in 2021 utilizing \$200,000 in CDBG funds.

To continue the Evictions Assistance Initiative, the Office of Equity and Inclusion issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) through procurement services on December 10, 2020 and set the RFP to close on December 28, 2020.

Since the close of the proposal process, the Office of Equity and Inclusion has followed procedure, including proposal scoring, verifying entities, and beginning the agenda process in Legistar. The office has now designated the top applicant as LANWT.

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LANWT intends to collaborate with several partners, including CitySquare, whose subsidiary is a plaintiff in litigation against the City. They disclosed and agreed to obtain a conflict waiver from their clients who are adverse to the City. LANWT has also implemented an ethical wall between their staff members who are representing clients adverse to the City and those who are working on the eviction program. They agreed not to use City-issued funds toward adverse litigation or clients.

The goal of the continued 2021 Eviction Assistance Initiative is to provide counseling and direct legal services to Dallas residents facing evictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will help individuals avoid an eviction judgment and the long terms effects of having an eviction on their record.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or Dr. Priscylla Bento, Policy Manager, at priscylla.bento@dallascityhall.com.



Liz Cedillo-Pereira
Chief of Equity and Inclusion

- c: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Chris Caso, City Attorney
Mark Swann, City Auditor
Billerae Johnson, City Secretary
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Kimberly Bizer Tolbert, Chief of Staff to the City Manager
Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager
- Jon Fortune, Assistant City Manager
Joey Zapata, Assistant City Manager
Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Chief of Economic Development and Neighborhood Services
M. Elizabeth Reich, Chief Financial Officer
Directors and Assistant Directors