



**COMMUNITY  
INVESTMENT  
FOR FAMILIES  
DEPARTMENT**  
*Paths to Prosperity*



ERIC GARCETTI, MAYOR  
ABIGAIL R. MARQUEZ, GENERAL MANAGER

January 24, 2022

Council File: 19-0721-S1  
Council District: Citywide  
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Honorable Eric Garcetti  
Mayor, City of Los Angeles  
Room 303, City Hall  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Attention: Heleen Ramirez  
Legislative Coordinator

Honorable Members of the City Council  
City of Los Angeles, c/o the City Clerk  
Room 395, City Hall  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90112  
Attention: Keyonna Kidd  
Legislative Coordinator

**COUNCIL TRANSMITTAL: REPORT BACK ON THE SOLID GROUND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM AND REQUEST APPROVAL OF VARIOUS ACTIONS RELATED TO THE SOLID GROUND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM**

**SUMMARY**

The General Manager of the Community Investment for Families Department (CIFD) respectfully requests that your office review this transmittal and forward it to the appropriate committees for further consideration. Through this transmittal, CIFD provides an update on the Solid Ground Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) and respectfully requests approval for various actions related to the program.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- I. That the Mayor and City Council review this transmittal and forward it to the appropriate City Council Committee for further action.
- II. That the City Council, subject to the approval of the Mayor:
  - A. **AUTHORIZE** the transfer of administration of the Solid Ground program from the Los Angeles Housing Department (formerly known as the Housing + Community Investment Department) to the Community Investment for Families Department.
  - B. **AUTHORIZE** the General Manager of CIFD, or designee, to expand the Solid Ground program from eight FamilySource Centers to sixteen and to negotiate and execute new contracts with the sixteen FamilySource Center contractors to operate the Solid Ground program for the period of January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022, including an option to renew and amend the contract for an additional one-year term, subject to the approval of the Mayor and City Council along with the City Attorney as to form.

C. **AUTHORIZE** resolution authorities for the following positions to support the expansion of the Solid Ground program:

<u>Class Code</u>	<u>Class Title</u>	<u>No. of Positions</u>
9184	Management Analyst	2
1513	Accountant	1

D. **AUTHORIZE** the City Controller to:

1. Establish a new fund entitled, “CIFD General Fund Programs” for the receipt and disbursements of General Fund appropriations for programs administered by CIFD that include the Solid Ground HPP.
2. Establish new accounts within the new CIFD General Fund Programs Fund and transfer appropriation in the amount of \$4,000,000 from the Unappropriated Balance Fund No. 100/58, Account 580360 Solid Ground Program as follows:

<u>Fund/Dept</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Amount</u>
New/21	21V121 - Community Investment for Families Department	\$ 121,817.00
New/21	21V143 - LA Housing Department	\$ 13,112.55
New/21	21V582 - FamilySource Centers, Non-profit	\$3,740,070.45
New/21	21V212- Solid Ground HPP Evaluation	\$ 125,000.00

Increase appropriations within the CIFD General Fund No. 100/21 as follows:  
 1010 Salaries General - \$87,417; and 6010 Office & Administrative - \$34,400.

Increase appropriations within the LAHD General Fund No. 100/43 as follows:  
 6030 Leasing - \$13,112.55.

E. **AUTHORIZE** the General Manager of CIFD, or designee, to prepare Controller instructions and/or make any technical adjustments that may be required and are consistent with the intent of this action with the approval of the City Administrative Officer and instruct the Controller to implement these instructions.

**BACKGROUND**

On December 13, 2019, the Mayor and City Council approved a plan to implement a Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) (C.F. No. 19-0721) that expanded on a pilot program called Solid Ground.

Solid Ground

Solid Ground was launched in Service Planning Area 2 in July 2018 with funding provided by County Board Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. The program was operated through the City’s FamilySource Center (FSC), managed by New Economics for Women (NEW) and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s Family Solution Center, LA Family Housing, a non-profit organization. The Solid Ground Pilot program, modeled after the HomeBase New York program, provides homelessness prevention assistance to families and individuals who are at risk of becoming homeless.

Solid Ground Expansion

On January 8, 2020, the former Housing + Community Investment Department (HCIDLA) solicited a Request for Interest from the FamilySource System to expand Solid Ground to eight FSC service areas with the goal of preventing new cases of homelessness by stabilizing housing and working with households to build a more financially secure future. In April 2020, with a \$1,000,000 investment, contracts were executed with eight FSCs in the amount of \$125,000 each to expand Solid Ground in the following communities:

FSC	Service Area
All Peoples Community Center	Southeast Los Angeles
Barrio Action Youth and Family Center	El Sereno/Lincoln Heights
Central City Neighborhood Partners	Westlake/Pico-Union
El Centro de Ayuda	Boyle Heights
El Nido Family Centers	Southwest Los Angeles
New Economics for Women	Van Nuys
P.F. Bresee Foundation	Wilshire
Volunteers of America Los Angeles	Hollywood

Further, during the City Council budget hearings in 2021, the City Council, through the leadership of Councilmember Curren Price, allocated an additional \$4M to support the expansion of Solid Ground to all sixteen FamilySource Centers. This report is requesting authorization to transfer funds from the Unappropriated Balance as referenced above and in accordance with the approved Fiscal Year 2021-2022 city budget.

Solid Ground HPP Program Overview

The Solid Ground program aims to prevent 500 households at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless. Participants seeking prevention services must be at imminent risk (delinquent on rent) or at risk of homelessness (facing a financial hardship that could result in homelessness) and have an income at or below 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

CIFD consulted with the California Policy Lab to develop an evidenced-based screening survey called the Preventive Targeting Tool (PTT). The PTT was designed to assist Solid Ground staff in identifying the most vulnerable households likely to experience homelessness and asks participants a series of questions about their housing status, vulnerabilities and housing barriers, and local policy priorities such as history of intimate partner violence. Their responses to the PTT survey are assigned points, and then a total score determines whether the participant is eligible for prevention services.

Eligible participants work with a Solid Ground Housing Stability Advisor to stabilize their current housing or secure other affordable housing. Participants receive up to three months of financial assistance for security deposits, rental assistance/arrears, utility arrears, move-in expenses, transportation costs, and/or food, and a year of wraparound services. Wraparound services include financial coaching, counseling, and aid in opening a savings account, establishing or improving credit, and reducing debt. The financial capability services are provided to ensure the household can sustain themselves in their homes after receiving financial assistance.

Prevention services may be received as a “Brief Service” (one day) or “Full Service” (up to 12 months of case management).

**“Brief Services” defined as providing one-day of service to the participant that includes the following services:**

- Mediation and/or landlord dispute resolution services to be provided directly by the FSC or via referral
- Referrals to public assistance benefits and/or other community resources
- Referral and linkage to other services (e.g. social service programs, pre-employment and employment support, mental health counseling and services)
- Limited Financial assistance: transportation and grocery cards

**“Full Services” defined as providing the full length of service to the participant that includes the following services:**

- Mediation and/or landlord dispute resolution services to be provided directly by the FSC or via referral
- Case management services for up to twelve months
- Referral to public assistance benefits and/or other community resources
- Housing stabilization services
- Housing location services, if needed
- Direct financial assistance
- Linkage to legal services (e.g. expungement of criminal records)

The Solid Ground HPP served 1,086 individuals of which 617 households were at imminent risk of homelessness, 442 faced an immediate housing crisis, and 38% were led by single female households. The average annual household income among the Solid Ground families was \$13,257, which is

one-third less than the 50% AMI for Los Angeles. The table below identifies the top three vulnerabilities contributing to and resulting from the low annual household income.

TOP THREE VULNERABILITIES	
Employment	Job loss, reduction of hours, and seasonal employment
Financial	Debt, bad or no credit, and little or no savings for an emergency
Legal	Housing, immigration, and government benefits

To help address the vulnerabilities, in March 2021, an additional \$500,000 in CDBG funds were added to the \$1,000,000 investment to provide emergency financial assistance, of which the FSCs used \$851,755 to pay rent for families facing a housing crisis. For families that were required to relocate, the Housing Stability Advisor provided housing location services, which included identifying available and appropriate housing units, and developing relationships with landlords and property management companies to increase permanent housing opportunities for households. 100% of the households that had to vacate their unit were successfully rehoused.

Performance Metrics

CIFD established three key performance metrics to measure the Solid Ground program impact: 1) reduce housing instability - as measured by mediation and/or landlord/tenant dispute resolution services, referral to public assistance benefits and/or community resources, and limited financial assistance; 2) increase in household income and/or mainstream benefits for increased ability to sustain housing when assistance ends – as measured by employment, wage increase, and/or access to other income support that benefits the household; and 3) increase financial stability – as measured by the ability to save, establish good credit or improve credit, and decrease debt.

Program Impact

The Solid Ground program is demonstrating remarkable results. Funded at \$1,500,000 to provide homelessness prevention services to 500 households, the program met or exceeded its contract goal as illustrated in the table below. The program served 617 households comprising 1,086 individuals, at imminent risk or at risk of homelessness. 38% of the households were led by single female heads of households. 442 households were facing an immediate housing crisis and received 2,478 services to address their vulnerabilities, and as a result 391 households improved their financial stability, collectively increased their income by \$1,042,138, and stabilized their housing. The lessons learned and best practices are being used to guide the FY 2021-22 program expansion to all 16 FSCs.

Performance Measures & Goals	Unduplicated Households	Percentage of Goal
Households who received “Brief” Services	371	116%
Households who received “Full” Services	246	123%

Total households served	617	119%
Households who reduced their housing instability	442	110%
Increase financial stability	391	98%
Increased income ( <i>measured by dollar value</i> )	\$1,042,138	868%

**Lessons Learned**

The experience gained from the Solid Ground program has been invaluable in designing the program’s expansion. Some of the feedback CIFD has received from contractors include:

- Simplify and shorten the PTT by reweighting and rewording the questions - By reweighting the questions it would help distinguish high risk families among the population. FSCs also shared that some of the terms in the PTT were confusing and that it would be helpful to have standard definitions to help with comprehension. FSCs also suggested rewording questions. Some of the participants also had a difficult time recalling how many times they experienced homeless and eviction threats.
- Provide ongoing training using the PTT - Some of the the sensitive questions related to mental health, physical disability, and domestic violence were challenging for FSC staff to ask and for participants to answer. It was recommended that the department consider hosting a trauma-informed training to help staff navigate the sensitive questions.
- Create an Office of Community Wealth - It was suggested that it would be helpful to institutionalize a financial coaching academy to build the capacity of the system. With the high staff turnover, FSCs shared that it would be helpful if the City had a training academy that could help train their staff in financial coaching and asset building programs.

Based on these findings, the California Policy Lab helped reweigh and reword the questions in the PTT to make them easier to understand and to make participants feel more at ease discussing sensitive topics. This also included developing a glossary of term definitions. The Solid Ground expansion program will use the revised PTT to better capture the most vulnerable at-risk of homelessness families and will create an Office of Community Wealth to institutionalize financial coaching for providers and City departments as well as other types of training that help prevent homelessness and end generational poverty.

**SOLID GROUND HPP EXPANSION RECOMMENDATIONS**

To better serve families at imminent risk or at risk of homelessness, CIFD proposes to expand the Solid Ground program from eight FSC service areas to the sixteen below. COVID-19 has increased the need for supportive services, government benefits, debt counseling and financial coaching across the City and by expanding Solid Ground to the sixteen service areas, the City will have greater capacity to limit the inflows into the homeless system.

FSC	Service Area
1736 Family Crisis Center	West Adams
All Peoples Community Center	Southeast Los Angeles
Barrio Action Youth and Family Center	El Sereno/Lincoln Heights
Central City Neighborhood Partners	Westlake/Pico-Union
El Centro de Ayuda	Boyle Heights
El Centro del Pueblo	Echo Park/Cypress Park
El Nido Family Centers	Pacoima
El Nido Family Centers	Southwest Los Angeles
Latino Resource Organization	West Los Angeles
New Economics for Women	Canoga Park
New Economics for Women	Van Nuys
P.F. Bresee Foundation	Wilshire
The Children’s Collective Inc.	Southwest/Florence
Toberman Neighborhood Center	San Pedro/Wilmington
Volunteers of America Los Angeles	Hollywood
Watts Labor Community Action Agency	Southeast/Watts

CIFD proposes to fund the sixteen FamilySource Centers listed above at \$233,754 each for a term of one-year for the period of January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022, with the option to renew contracts for an additional one-year term, contingent upon contractor performance, funding availability, and Mayor and City Council approval.

The Solid Ground program will operate through the 16 FSCs and focus on preventing new cases of homelessness by targeting 1,568 unique households at imminent risk or at-risk of becoming homeless on an annual basis. The 1,568 households will work with a Housing Stability Advisor to stabilize their living conditions through supportive services and temporary financial assistance. Once housing has been stabilized, the Housing Stability Advisor will provide case management services through a service integrated financial coaching model. The Housing Stability Advisor will conduct a comprehensive assessment, which includes a financial health evaluation of the household’s banking, credit, debt, and

savings. Using this information, a housing stability plan will be developed in coordination with the household to ensure they are able to sustain themselves in their homes. This plan includes overall goals with specific action steps, measurable objectives, and techniques used to achieve objectives.

The Housing Stability Adviser will meet with the household monthly to track their ability and progress in developing and managing safe and affordable banking relationships; establishing or improving their credit score; decreasing debt; and building savings. The milestones for achieving financial stability include opening or transitioning to a safe and affordable bank account; establishing good credit or improving credit; decreasing debt; increasing savings, and establishing monthly savings for at least three months. The progress and tracking of goals, milestones and outcomes will occur during monthly case management meetings. Every quarter, the households will undergo a reassessment to identify any emergent issues or needs and, if necessary, revise the housing stability plan accordingly.

Performance will be measured against the following performance goals:

<b>Performance Measures &amp; Goals</b>	<b>Annual Performance Levels Per FSC</b>	<b>Total Annual Performance across the 16 FSC</b>
Minimum # of unduplicated households who receive brief services	63	1,008
Minimum # of unduplicated households who receive full services	35	560
Total minimum # of unduplicated households to be served	98	1,568
Total minimum # of unduplicated households who reduce their housing instability	65	1,040
Total minimum # of unduplicated households who increase their financial stability	65	1,040

**EVALUATION**

To evaluate the impact of the Solid Ground Program on client outcomes and to help identify opportunities to scale additional homelessness prevention practices in the City of Los Angeles, CIFD will contract with Health Management Associates (HMA) to evaluate the Solid Ground Program. HMA was procured through a competitive bid process in 2018 and is the current evaluator of the FamilySource System. The Department will piggyback off the FamilySource System’s evaluation procurement and use HMA to evaluate the Solid Ground program. HMA was selected to lead this work because its proposed cost was the most reasonable compared to its competitors.



HMA will evaluate the quantitative impact of the Solid Ground program on housing stability and the financial outcomes of families receiving services. Metrics will include the number of households served, number of individuals who receive homelessness prevention services, number of housing stability plans developed, number of households who reduce their housing instability, and number of households who increase their financial stability. The evaluation will also include a qualitative assessment that will be assessed through qualitative methods, such as interviews and surveys. The qualitative data will assess the ability to problem solve challenges as they arise and satisfaction with services and coordination of services.

## **PROGRAM AND BUDGET**

The expansion of the Solid Ground program will require additional staff support to effectively manage the implementation and evaluation of this program. The City of Los Angeles' Solid Ground program provides an opportunity to prevent further inflows into the homeless system. The CIFD Solid Ground team will oversee and monitor the sixteen Solid Ground contracts and requires at a minimum two Management Analysts and one Accountant to assist with implementing and monitoring the program. Responsibilities of the proposed positions include:

- **Management Analyst (2 Positions)** - The Management Analysts will work under the direction of the FamilySource Center Senior Project Coordinator to oversee the day-to-day functions of the Solid Ground program. This includes, but is not limited to: preparing the scope of work for contracts and contract amendments; collecting and reviewing contract execution documents; working with the contracts unit to execute contracts; reviewing budgets, budget modifications, and budget supporting documents; preparing budget and budget modification approval letters; reviewing and approving invoices; coordinating the invoice payments with accounting; building the data reporting system to capture all program services, outcomes, and demographic information needed to complete reports; conducting annual program risk assessments, and conducting a minimum of two monitoring reviews a year. The monitoring review includes reviewing of the organization's administrative policies and procedures; ensuring all vacant positions are filled within 90 days and meet position qualifications; ensuring all contract requirements are met; reviewing client files for eligibility and documentation to support services and outcomes; interviewing staff and clients to ensure program protocols are being met and services were rendered; running program reports and completing the monthly program scorecard for performance evaluation; and providing technical assistance and training to contractors. A total of \$62,281.33 is requested to support staffing for two Management Analysts for the remaining fiscal year of 2021/22.
- **Accountant (1 position)** - The Accountant will process the contractor invoices, payments, and coordinate with the Controller's Office for any questions that arise. The Accountant will also work closely with program staff to ensure the invoices are accurate before payments are made. A total of \$25,135.67 is requested to support an Accountant for the remaining fiscal year of 2021/22.

<b>Solid Ground HPP Expansion to 16 FSC Budget</b> January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022	
<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
<b>Contracted Services</b>	
FamilySource Center	\$3,740,070.45
Evaluation	\$ 125,000.00
<b>LAHD</b>	
Leasing	\$ 13,112.55
<b>CIFD</b>	
Administrative/Staffing	\$ 121,817.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,000,000.00</b>

**FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

The \$4,000,000 for the Solid Ground HPP was appropriated from the Unappropriate Balance Account. These funds will be utilized to implement the program from January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022.



ABIGAIL R. MARQUEZ  
 General Manager