



# Coordinating Emergency Rental Assistance Across Internal and External Systems

The successful implementation of an emergency rental assistance (ERA) program depends on several factors, including program design, outreach and engagement, and alignment with other eviction prevention services offered locally.

Yet another crucial factor is maintaining strong coordination across the many entities that have a stake in ensuring that eligible tenants and landlords successfully apply for and receive emergency rental assistance. Beyond the ERA program team, this list of stakeholders can include multiple city departments, other service providers and community-based organizations that are responsible for program administration and payment distribution.

This worksheet guides city staff through practical steps for coordinating internal, municipal systems and external systems in ways that will contribute to the successful implementation of a local ERA program.

# Emergency Rental Assistance Coordination Action Steps

## Identify Internal and External Systems that Require Coordination

Prior to the launch of the ERA program, think about the internal and external systems that need to be coordinated and aligned to allow for the effective provision of assistance. Brainstorm with the ERA program team to identify those systems, as well as barriers that may hinder stakeholder coordination and program effectiveness.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Identify city departments that will be involved in setting up and launching the ERA program, and determine the responsibilities of each department before and after the program launch. Departments or teams may include:
  - ◆ Finance and Budget
  - ◆ Procurement
  - ◆ Information and Technology
  - ◆ Communications and Marketing
  - ◆ Community Development
  - ◆ Legal or the city's head legal counsel
  - ◆ Human Resources
  - ◆ 311
  
- ◆ Identify external organizations that will assist with ERA program implementation, including community-based organizations that may deliver assistance or support outreach efforts. Clarify the responsibilities of each external organization in ensuring the success of the program.

- ◆ Brainstorm barriers that might hinder coordination among internal and external systems and limit the ERA program’s success. Create a priority list of barriers for the program team and internal and external stakeholders to address prior to program launch. Common barriers or challenges include:
  - ◆ Long phone wait times due to high call volume
  - ◆ Website crashes or slow load times due to a high volume of web traffic
  - ◆ Slow application processing due to limited staff capacity or insufficient technology solutions
  - ◆ Delays in processing direct deposits of assistance or cutting checks

## Establish a Coordination Strategy for Internal Systems

Beyond the city department responsible for implementing the ERA program, it is important to coordinate with other city departments that will also impact program success. Establish a strategy for coordination across city departments and teams to keep everyone aligned and prevent backlogs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Develop onboarding materials for city departments that explain the launch and implementation of the ERA program, program objectives, target populations for assistance, and the timeline for distributing funding.
- ◆ Create a working group of the program team and city departments responsible for ERA program implementation. Working group meetings can be the venue to address internal barriers that may impact users’ awareness and uptake of available assistance.
- ◆ Establish subcommittees within the working group based on operational capacity. This might include subcommittees dedicated to outreach, technology or delivery of assistance. As issues arise, the appropriate subcommittee will be primed to address them.
- ◆ Select the best methods for communicating challenges and successes across city departments outside of established working group meetings. This might include an internal email distribution list, a dedicated message board channel, or internal memos distributed on a set schedule.

## Establish a Strategy for Coordination with Subgrantees

If the city is partnering with community-based organizations or other entities in the distribution of ERA funds, establish a coordination strategy for external systems. The goal is to ensure consistent and effective messaging and program implementation across all subgrantees.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Establish clear policies, procedures and trainings that will guide subgrantees as they step into their responsibilities for executing the ERA program. To ensure a seamless user experience for tenants and landlords, provide subgrantees with guidance on:
  - ◆ Funding and reporting requirements
  - ◆ Program objectives
  - ◆ Eligibility requirements
  - ◆ Program benefits
  - ◆ Application review procedures and prioritization
  - ◆ Onboarding or training materials for subgrantee staff
- ◆ Create standardized materials for use by subgrantees, including:
  - ◆ Program application
  - ◆ Program FAQs
  - ◆ List of required documentation and/or checklist for applicants
- ◆ Provide subgrantees with a centralized technology solution for administering emergency rental assistance. Consider a technology solution that allows for application processing, case management and reporting, as well as payment distribution. A centralized technology solution allows for improved transparency and data sharing among subgrantees, preventing duplication of benefits.
- ◆ Establish a subgrantee working group to triage challenges and elevate best practices. Schedule regular working group meetings to align messaging and program implementation while addressing challenges as they arise. This subgrantee working group also can be a forum for highlighting successful strategies for outreach and engagement.

## Monitor and Evaluate the Effectiveness of Coordination Strategies

The success of a local ERA program will hinge on regular monitoring and effective check-ins to assure alignment among internal and external systems. Establish a feedback loop and review process for making regular improvements to the coordination strategy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Establish a quarterly feedback session or deploy a quarterly, anonymous survey among department staff and subgrantees. From these sessions and surveys, program staff can discern what improvements will strengthen coordination and alignment of internal and external systems.
- ◆ Create an “after-action report” following each funding distribution cycle to explicitly detail the wins and opportunities for improvement with respect to coordinating across external and internal systems. Use these reports to strengthen future ERA disbursements and similar programs.