

FLORIDA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION
Board Meeting
December 9, 2022
Action Items



FISCAL

Action

I. FISCAL

A. 2023 Proposed Operating Budget

1. Background

- a) The Florida Housing Operating Budget is created with a conservative approach to both revenue and expenses.
- b) The 2023 budget was created using the following approach, as applicable:
 - a projection of fee revenue based on the current loan portfolio and a conservative estimate of 2023 activity;
 - a projection of revenue from the administration of federal programs;
 - a projection of investment earnings based on input from investment managers;
 - a zero-based budget model for operating expenses, exclusive of salaries and benefits; a 2023 projected work plan developed by each business unit supports the expense budget request from that unit;
 - employee benefits information based on final quotes for insurance.
- c) Upon implementation of the 2023 Operating Budget, Florida Housing will closely monitor all revenues and expenses. Florida Housing will pay special attention to discretionary line items, such as staff development travel and outreach travel, which will be controlled at the executive level. With these measures in place to control expenditures, Florida Housing expects to maintain a positive trend of revenues exceeding expenses.

2. Present Situation

- a) The Proposed Operating Budget for 2023 is provided to the Board as [Exhibit A](#).
- b) An Account Guide describing the budget categories is included with the Proposed 2023 Operating Budget.

3. Recommendation

- a) Staff recommends approval of the 2023 Operating Budget.

MULTIFAMILY PROGRAMS - ALLOCATIONS

Action

I. MULTIFAMILY PROGRAMS – ALLOCATIONS

A. Request for Approval for the Development of an RFA for National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) Financing

1. Background

- a) Over the past few months, developers have been approaching staff indicating an interest in the use of NHTF resources as gap funding for new construction developments without the need to also use any other type of competitive allocation funding. The current NHTF plan requires the resource to be allocated through competitive solicitation. NHTF is currently allocated as an additional source in conjunction with SAIL and or SAIL and 9 percent housing credits in various RFAs to fund extremely low-income units (22 percent – 30 percent Area Median Income). The Corporation has never issued an RFA with the primary competitive source being NHTF funding.
- b) The Corporation currently has an unallocated balance of NHTF Funding, which presents an opportunity to explore new ways to allocate NHTF funding in accordance with the existing approved NHTF plan and applicable federal regulations. Staff would like to workshop and potentially develop an RFA for the New Construction or Redevelopment of Developments utilizing NHTF funding in conjunction with Tax-Exempt Bonds and Non-Competitive Housing Credits.

2. Present Situation

- a) If approved, staff would like to hold an RFA workshop in January 2023, and possibly issue an RFA in March 2023.

3. Recommendation

- a) Authorize staff to proceed with the workshopping and development of an RFA for the New Construction or Redevelopment of proposed Developments utilizing NHTF funding in conjunction with Tax-Exempt Bonds and Non-Competitive Housing Credits, and, if applicable, authorize the Executive Director to establish a review committee for the RFA to make recommendations for award to the Board.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SELECTION (PSS)

Action

I. PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SELECTION (PSS)

A. Single Source Procurement for the Affordable Housing Locator Subscription Services

1. **Background:**

- a) In August 2005 and May 2008, Florida Housing's Board of Directors authorized staff to carry out a solicitation process to select an entity to develop and maintain a web-based housing Locator to help Floridians conduct searches for available rental housing financed by Florida Housing. The goal was to create an adaptable system to enable the eventual inclusion of any affordable rental unit statewide that met Florida Housing's inclusion standards (for example, units that serve households at or below 140% of area median income).
- b) At the conclusion of both solicitations, the Board authorized staff to enter into contract negotiations with SocialServe.com. The Locator services, including the web-based search engine (www.floridahousingsearch.org) and a staffed call center, launched in October 2006.
- c) At the December 2013 meeting, the Board authorized a single source procurement to purchase housing Locator services directly from Non-Profit Industries d/b/a SocialServe.com, with a contract term of up to three years.
- d) In August 2015, Emphasys Computer Solutions, Inc. acquired the technology assets of Non-Profit Industries d/b/a SocialServe.com. The Locator continues to be managed by the same staff in the same manner as it was before this transition.
- e) In annual meetings since 2016, the Board has authorized a single source procurement to purchase housing Locator services directly from Emphasys Computer Solutions, Inc., for a period of one year.
- f) In the last six years, Florida Housing has also utilized the Locator's on-line and call center services to assist households, displaced by hurricanes, find short and long-term rental housing.

2. **Present Situation:**

- a) On March 24, 2023, the term for Florida Housing's current contract with Emphasys Computer Solutions, Inc., will expire.
- b) The Locator service has been very successful. It is well-respected for being a very user-friendly service that allows people to locate available housing that best fits their individual and family needs. Throughout the past decade, Florida Housing has never received a complaint about the Locator or attendant call center services.
- c) Florida Housing staff continues to be very satisfied with the Locator's growth in use by consumers and landlords, as well as the provision of services by Emphasys to consumers who may need help with the site, advocates for consumers, landlords and Florida Housing itself. With the end of the current contract approaching, the staff has been researching prospective vendors that

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may be qualified and interested in applying to manage the Locator services with the same capacity and quality as the current Locator service.

- d) The services are widely used by supportive services agencies, homeless services providers and legislators' staffs in their efforts to assist Floridians find affordable and available rental housing that meets their needs. The on-line and call center services are ADA certified for use by persons with disabilities. Individuals can access the information online, in many languages, 24 hours a day. In 2020, the Locator services platform was updated to better accommodate searches conducted on mobile devices, making this more user friendly as individuals can now better access this tool using cell phones. They can easily search for available rental housing using a wide variety of search criteria with special mapping features and receive apartment listings that provide a variety of important information about each unit. In addition, the site connects people to other housing and community resources through website links and provides helpful tools for renters such as an affordability calculator, rental checklist, and renter rights and responsibilities information.
- e) The toll-free call center is staffed by specialists who are trained to work with both the public and landlords, with bilingual capacity to assist Spanish-speaking persons. The call center vendor is a non-profit organization that strives to train and hire persons with disabilities, formerly homeless individuals, and those with other special needs. Many of the call center specialists have had experiences similar to the consumers they are now assisting to find housing. Florida Housing has not found any other rental housing locator businesses that provide the call center services. These call center services have been instrumental when households need additional assistance searching for a home. The call center's capacity to quickly identify available rental housing for displaced households has also been extremely useful after a disaster.
- f) There are nearly 235,000 units now registered in the Locator's database. The services listed below that Florida Housing obtains from Emphasys cannot be replicated by any other vendor in the market:
- Assisting landlords to manage listings by helping to register units, monitoring for accuracy and helping them keep the listings current. It is not an "inventory style" listings like other services; it is real-time availability that is typically not offered through other housing locators and is critical to State disaster response needs as well as for locating available properties in a time-sensitive/time-critical manner. Listings are required to be updated every 14 to 28 days;
 - Screening properties for listing accuracy and Fair Housing violations and removing those in non-compliance;
 - Backing up its online services with a bilingual toll-free call center comprised of housing-specific trained customer service specialists who help tenants locate housing, help landlords initially register and

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regularly update listings, and support families displaced as a result of natural disasters and economic situations;

- Conducting rental housing searches for households that do not have access to the internet or need additional assistance;
- In addition to customer specialists at the call center, providing professionally trained case managers who assist households with special needs and/or are in crisis to search for temporary and permanent housing that meets their immediate and/or long-term needs;
- Contacting and working with households directly upon request by staff from Florida Housing, State agencies and Legislators' offices; and
- Assisting state and local emergency management systems in helping displaced households find housing local, regional and statewide. A component of disaster services is to update available housing stock in its database on a 24/7 basis and conduct ongoing searches for additional housing units and options.

- g) As a result of our research, and after consideration of the standards Florida Housing expects for a Housing Locator service and the available vendor options, Florida Housing's staff believes that Emphasys continues to be the only vendor with the capacity, qualifications and experience to maintain the level of service that Florida Housing and the State of Florida relies on and has come to expect for Locator services.

3. **Recommendation:**

- a) Staff believes that it is in the best interest of Florida Housing to continue with these services and proceed with a new one-year contract. Staff requests authorization to enter negotiations for a single source contract with Emphasys Computer Solutions, Inc., for this purpose.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SELECTION (PSS)

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B. Competitive Solicitation for Public Relations Services

1. Background:

- a) At the August 5, 2022 meeting, Florida Housing’s Board of Directors authorized staff to issue a competitive solicitation for Public Relations Services.

2. Present Situation:

- a) Florida Housing issued Request for Qualifications 2022-11 on August 15, 2022 but did not receive any responses to the solicitation. After speaking with colleagues and external stakeholders, staff have decided that it would be better to issue solicitations for specific media campaigns, rather than a blanket contract for services on an as-needed basis.
- b) To that end, Florida Housing would like to issue a competitive solicitation from outside firms to put together a statewide media campaign to educate Floridians about housing issues and eliminate stereotypes associated with affordable housing.

3. Recommendation:

- a) Staff recommends that the Board direct staff to proceed with issuing a new competitive solicitation for a public relations campaign to educate Floridians about housing issues within the state and address stigmas associated with affordable housing.