

# Federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Planning

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# Prioritization-Providing targeted assistance

- OHCS—as the grantee of Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds—must establish a preference system that prioritizes assistance to households to avoid the **inequities of first-come-first-served allocation** and target resources to high needs households.
- Guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury requires that—at a minimum—grantees prioritize households with incomes less than 50% area median income (AMI) and households with one or more members that have been unemployed for at least 90 days.

# Prioritization-Providing targeted assistance

- In alignment with various statewide goals, OHCS will include additional prioritization factors to emphasize an equitable approach and account for risk factors that are higher for certain groups.
- These include groups that have been historically and systematically excluded from housing and economic opportunities and face greater health and economic impacts from COVID-19, including evictions.



# Prioritization-Providing targeted assistance

- Lean on national best practices and third-party research
- The Urban Institute developed the [Emergency Rental Assistance Priority \(ERAP\) Index](#)
- NLIHC, The Housing Initiative at Penn and the NYU Furman center created [“Learning from Emergency Rental Assistance Programs”](#)
- The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities says that [“Housing Policy Should Prioritize Those With Greatest Need”](#)

# Prioritization-Providing targeted assistance

- **% Area Median Income (AMI):** [From the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) and disaggregated at the 0 to 30, 31 to 50, and 50 to 80 percent income buckets. Households with income over 80 percent AMI are not eligible for rental assistance. Required by the U.S. Department of Treasury.
- **Days Unemployed:** Generated from [self-reported data](#) collected in the tenant Allita application. Required by the U.S. Department of Treasury.
- **Single Head of Household with children:** Head of household status and number of children collected from self-reported data collected in the tenant Allita application. Single Head of Households with children are disproportionately represented in evictions.
- **Household Size:** Collected from self-reported data collected in the tenant Allita application. Larger and more crowded households have been linked to housing instability, evictions, and homelessness.

# Prioritization-Providing targeted assistance

- **Eviction Likelihood:** Data collected from self-reported data collected in the tenant Allita application. Specifically, weighting factors relevant to eviction increases the likelihood of effectively using resources to maintain housing stability.
- **ERAP Priority Index:** [Urban Institute Rental Assistance Priority Index](#) estimates the level of need in a census tract by measuring the prevalence of low-income renters who are at risk of experiencing housing instability and homelessness, with an emphasis on accounting for risk factors that are higher for certain groups, particularly BIPOC renters.

# Prioritization-Providing targeted assistance

- Methodology: Create prioritization index of six factors based on weighted totals from data collected from the Application and ERA Priority Index.
- At conclusion, all factor weighted points will be summed yielding a final number comparable across households. This number will be the prioritization score and will determine the placement of the household in the application queue

# Prioritization-Providing targeted assistance

- CAAs will select the Applicant with the highest prioritization score and will attempt to finalize their eligibility assessment and application process before moving onto the next client. After concluding the application process with their current client, they will select the next household at the top of the prioritized queue.
- Commitment to iteration and updates from system feedback





# Tenant Feedback – WHY?

- Improving upon 2020 rental assistance program design:
  - 18 different programs across the state w/separate policies and procedures complicated service delivery and access
  - Decentralized design – variety of prioritization strategies

# Goal of Tenant Survey

- Understand challenges and barriers tenants **faced applying for and receiving** past rental assistance since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic.
  - Not an application
  - Responses are confidential
  - Does not affect or relate to any application
  - Not asking for program guidance
- **Hear from tenants** so OHCS understands how to better support grantees in meeting tenants needs

# Example Questions from Survey

- Everyone
- *“It was easy to find what information I would need to provide in order to apply for Rent Assistance.”*
- Asked on a Likert Scale
- Asks about eviction risks
- Only People who Applied
- Asks for experience during application
- *“The person I talked to treated me with dignity and respect”*
- Asked on Never to Always scale
- Asked about access and ease

# Scope of Tenant Survey

## SURVEY PROVIDES:

- Understanding of systemic barriers and challenges
- Evidence of the verbal feedback we have received
- Tenant voice
- Statewide Representation

## SURVEY DOES NOT PROVIDE:

- Recommendations of how to guide program
- ALL VOICES: only those with tech access
- Information about the full range of experiences that people have while seeking rental assistance



# Tenant Feedback – Working with Partners

## Future Goals

1. Build on this survey—acts as foundation for how we can engage with tenants in future with ERA and future \$
2. Use Allita data to ask pointed questions:
  - Group by application details – race, geography, income, etc
  - Successful application – *what determines successful application?*
  - Unsuccessful application – *what support can we offer our grantees?*
  - Unfinished application
3. Non-Extractive Engagement in OTHER Ways
  - Stakeholder groups
  - Webinar
  - Spoken feedback to accompany survey information



# Tenant Feedback

- Outreach
  - Public Housing Authorities—tenant advisory boards
  - Fair Housing Council of Oregon
  - Oregon Health Authority Community Based Organization network
  - Community Action Agency Network
  - Community Alliance of Tenants



# Tenant Feedback

- Discussion and questions from the Housing Stability Council Subcommittee on tenant survey?

# Administration, Next Steps, and Timeline

- Finalizing grant agreements
- Finalizing program manual, guidance, and FAQ
- Community Rental Assistance Plan
- Allita demo site for preparation and planning
- Allita training and technical assistance plan





# Ongoing engagements

- Regular/recurring meetings with CAPO and CAAs
  - Will be extended to sub-recipients/interested parties in regions with multiple providers
- Daily OHCS “huddles”
- Allita development meetings + demo/test site



<https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/housing-assistance/Pages/emergency-rental-assistance.aspx>