

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS v8.1.22

VSHSL FS5: Service Provider Staffing Grant

This FAQ is provided in the context of the Veterans Seniors and Human Services Levy Request for Applications for FS5: Service Provider Staffing Grant, through which King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) and the Adult Services Division (ASD) plans to award up to \$1,537,614 to nonprofit human services partners who currently receive funding through the Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL). This RFA will fund one-time hiring and retention bonuses of \$2,000 to staff employed by partner agencies who are helping to carry out VSHSL-funded programs and who are earning \$22.00 or less per hour. Below is a Table of Contents of FAQ received to date.

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APPLICATION PROCESS AND ASSISTANCE

Q: Who should apply to this RFA – agencies or individuals?

A: Nonprofit Agencies (including subcontracted agencies) should apply on behalf of their employees earning \$22.00 or less per hour. The grant includes a 12% overhead rate to compensate agencies for this effort and cost incurred in managing the grant.

Q: What is the order of eligibility to apply for this RFA?

A: Eligible Applicants must meet the following qualifications, in this order:

1. Be a nonprofit entity currently receiving funding through the Veterans Seniors and Human Service Levy, with employees carrying out work directly guided by VSHSL programming.
 - Government entities are not eligible to apply on behalf of their government staff. Their subcontracted nonprofit partners are, however, eligible to apply.
 - Subcontracted nonprofits to a lead agency, even if that lead agency is a government contractor, are eligible to apply. Subcontractors should apply directly to this RFA, noting which agency holds their lead contract.
2. Have an ability to catalogue eligible staff positions by VSHSL programming and pay band.
 - A. Staff eligible to receive a one-time retention bonus payment must meet all of the following requirements:
 - 1) Employed by the applicant organization as a payroll employee as of the date of the Award Letter;
 - 2) Remain employed by the applicant organization as a payroll employee (30/60/90) days after the date of the Award Letter;
 - 3) Work in a position that helps to achieve VSHSL program goals as of the date of the Award Letter; and
 - 4) Are paid an hourly wage of \$22.00 per hour or less as of the date of the Award Letter.
 - B. Staff eligible to receive a one-time hiring bonus payment must meet all of the following requirements:
 - 1) Hired by the applicant organization as a payroll employee between date of Award Letter and July 31, 2023;
 - 2) Remain employed by the applicant organization as a payroll employee Staff (30/60/90) days after hire date;
 - 3) Are hired into a position that helps to achieve VSHSL program goals; and
 - 4) Have a starting hourly wage of \$22.00 per hour.

Q: How will applications be prioritized for funding?

A: Applications that meet eligibility guidelines will be funded in a first come, first funded order. The funding level for this RFA allows for up to 675 bonus payments at \$2,000 each. There will be multiple review dates and the application will remain open until funds are expended.

Q: Is there technical assistance to help complete this grant application?

A: Yes, technical assistance is available through the procurement lead, Gretchen Bruce. Our goal is to help agencies apply for all the funding for which they are eligible to get these bonus payments in the hands of lower-wage staff.

- ONLINE TUTORIAL was recorded and uploaded to the Airtable application walking agencies through the steps to apply. The link to this recorded tutorial is [here](#)

- **DAILY OFFICE HOURS IN AUGUST:** The procurement lead will hold daily office hours from August 8th through the 29th from 11 – 11:45 am via Teams. The Teams link for these office hours is: bit.ly/3J2XkwO and the passcode is AP4SbB.
- **WEEKLY OFFICE HOURS SEPT-NOV (Mondays).** The procurement lead will hold weekly office hours each Monday from 11 – 11:30 from September 12 – November 30th. The Teams link for these office hours is: bit.ly/3J2XkwO and the passcode is AP4SbB.
- **PROCUREMENT LEAD** Gretchen Bruce is available to answer questions. Gretchen may be reached at gretchen.bruce@kingcounty.gov or 206-263-9085.

POLICY AND PLANNING BEHIND ONE TIME BONUS GRANTS

Q: What community feedback informed this Bonus Opportunity (particularly feedback from lower-wage workers)? Why is King County releasing this RFA?

A: In 2021, the VSHSL funded a nonprofit wage survey in partnership with 501 Commons to confirm and inform the community's understanding that nonprofit wages are low and driving high staff turnover. Their report, [Putting People First](#)¹, provides findings among over 230 organizations and 20,000 staff positions, and shows that many nonprofit employees working in critical services like shelter provision, violence prevention, and community health earn wages at levels that make it difficult to sustain a career doing community-based work in the King County region.

501 Commons also surveyed nonprofit staff directly about compensation, diversity, communications, and other factors contributing to job satisfaction. Key feedback to this survey identified areas of strength: Employees are proud of their work; They feel their organization makes a positive impact; Most employees feel they are treated with respect; They have flexibility during the workday; They feel empowered to make decisions in their job. Areas of dissatisfaction were pay and benefit levels, perceptions of equitable pay within their organization and lack of career advancement opportunities. Employee recommendations centered on goals to improve pay and benefits and provide resources for professional development, ways for employees to develop and use new skills, and advancement opportunities. Providing bonus payments directly to lower-wage workers gives them the autonomy to use these funds in ways that best serves their goals for personal or professional gain.

Q: One-time bonuses seem more like a stop gap measure. What is King County doing to support longer-term wage equity?

We acknowledge that one-time bonuses don't solve the problem of helping to support nonprofit workers afford to live in King County and carry out the important work they do. [Brave Commitments](#), a group of leaders in King County's nonprofit community committed to strengthening and sustaining the nonprofit system, released a [Call To Action](#) in 2021, sharing that the past five years have been especially hard for nonprofit organizations. Turnover in human services is very high—40% is not uncommon—meaning that organizations are retraining nearly half their staff each year, with fewer applicants to fill vacant positions². COVID and recent inflation have created a noticeable increase in community members' need for services— with the result that organizations are trying to respond to increased requests for assistance but with fewer staff resources.

King County, through the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) is joining with 501 Commons, Brave Commitments, Seattle and King County Human Services Alliances, local cities, and

¹ [Putting People First](#), Building a stronger nonprofit sector together. 501 Commons, March 2022.

² [Call to Action: Reimagining How Nonprofits Will Meet Our Mission for the Children & Youth of Our Community](#), Brave Commitments, March 14, 2021

philanthropies, to develop sustainable solutions to the issue of wage equity and payment of a living wage.³ The proposed hiring and retention bonuses under this RFA are acknowledged to be insufficient to addressing the foundational need for wage equity and is a first step to supporting nonprofit workers while partners seek longer-term sustainable solutions.

Q: Why are only VSHSL funded organizations eligible to apply for this RFA?

A: Washington State Constitution states that the use of public funds must serve a fundamental government purpose and may not be used as a gift (or appearance of a gift). As nonprofit entities under contract with VSHSL funds have already gone through a competitive procurement process and their contracts are specifically for the purpose of advancing the goals and programs of the Veterans Seniors and Human Services Levy Implementation Plan, limiting the eligibility to nonprofit entities currently under contract ensures that these funds meet the test of serving a fundamental government purpose.

Q: Why was cut off set at \$22.00 per hour (50% AMI)?

A: The planning team started by reviewing the [MIT Living Wage Calculator for King County](#), which identifies a living wage for a single person in King County at \$21.42 per hour. Next, we reviewed the [HUD AMI](#) figures for the Seattle/Bellevue region, released in April 2022, which calculates \$21.78 as 50% AMI for a single person. We then rounded that up to \$22.00 per hour to capture more staff and for ease of communication.

Q: Why aren't employees from the homeless, mental health and child care sectors eligible for these bonus payments?

A: During conversations with Seattle and King County Human Service Alliance members, alliance members expressed a goal to provide bonus payments in 2022 or 2023 to all low-wage nonprofit workers in King County and is embarking on a strategic plan to support this goal. As homeless, mental health and child care workers have alternate bonus opportunities available to them, the VSHSL can reach additional staff who would otherwise not have access to bonus payments. This allows us as a community to increase the number of staff who get a bonus (instead of layering more bonuses on certain positions.)

Q: This has the potential to set up inequities between staff helping to carry out VSHSL funded programs and others. Why was this decision made by the VSHSL?

A: We acknowledge that. Washington State Charter directs that the use of public funds must be directed towards a public good and carrying out fundamental government intent. As programs already contracted with the VSHSL (either directly or through subcontract) have already been awarded funding through competitive processes, and therefore passed the threshold of demonstrating they are carrying out government intent, we can demonstrate that these bonus payments are not a gift but rather help to carry out the programmatic intent by helping agencies to hire and retain qualified staff carrying out the goals of the VSHSL. We intentionally did not limit it to VSHSL-funded *positions* but rather *programming* to be more expansive.

³ Living Wage Calculator, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), updated May 22, 2022, <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>

Q: It may be hard (and confusing) to track who is eligible vs. getting other bonuses. How will King County / VSHSL track that?

A: We acknowledge this. To lessen tracking individual level data as to who has (or has not) received bonuses among staff eligible for alternate bonus, we drew the line around who is *eligible* for these alternate bonus opportunities. This allows for greater clarity in communicating who is eligible for VSHSL-funded bonuses *and* it guides individuals and agencies to apply for alternate bonus opportunities, thereby helping to bring in additional resources and opportunities to all the nonprofit community.

For organizations paying hiring bonuses, it will be necessary to ask new hires if they have previously received any of the bonus opportunities among these fund sources. A one-page document was drafted to help organizations learn about and track these opportunities. See [this document](#) in Airtable

Q: How was the retention period established for Retention and Hiring Bonuses?

A: Originally the VSHSL proposed setting a 30-day retention period to streamline grant management and reporting. After hearing feedback from the community, we changed this to allow agencies to select their own retention period of 30, 60 or 90 days according to what works best for their programming and grant management. Agencies will select a retention period in the worksheet, and then formulas will calculate the end date of the retention period, at which time Agencies should disperse the bonus payments.

Agencies are responsible for dispersing bonus payments to staff and should do so as soon as possible after a staff member has passed the agency-selected retention period (30 / 60 / 90 days after grant award for Retention Bonuses, or after start date for Hiring Bonuses.) At a minimum, organizations should process bonus payments within three weeks of the staff member achieving the retention goal.

BUDGETS AND FUNDING AWARDS

Q: How many agencies will be funded, and at what level?

A: The amount of funding (\$1,357,614) allows for 675 bonus payments of \$2,000 each. Applications will be screened to ensure they have requested bonus payments only for those staff who are eligible for VSHSL-funded bonus payments. Presuming the request is accurately calculated, they will receive the full request until all funds are expended. Applications will be funded on a first submitted, first funded basis. Funding can only be awarded to those who apply through the RFA process. Agencies may apply for both the retention and hiring bonus and may apply in multiple rounds if their staffing situation changes.

Q: When and how do agencies receive their grant funds? When and how do staff receive their bonus payments?

A: Grants will be awarded through a streamlined Letter of Agreement, which will include the total fund award broken down by Retention Bonus, Hiring Bonus, and Admin. Each agency will receive an invoice template with award levels already filled in. On a quarterly basis, agencies will report on the number of bonuses they have paid out and request reimbursement – which is to say, this is a reimbursement type grant and agencies will report on bonuses they have paid out and request reimbursement of costs incurred.

Q: Is there a maximum fund request per agency?

A: There is no Minimum or Maximum award per agency. Applicants should ask for the full number of bonus awards for all staff that meet eligibility criteria. Applications will be funded on a first applied/first funded basis until all funds are expended.

Q: Are part time employees eligible for this bonus? How much will they receive?

A: Part time employees who meet the other eligibility criteria (supporting VSHSL-funded programs, paid \$22.00 or less per hour, not eligible for other bonus opportunities) are eligible for this VSHSL-funded bonus. They will receive the same amount (\$2,000). Part time employees working at more than one nonprofit are eligible to receive only one VSHSL-funded bonus. If an agency knows that an employee holds down jobs with other nonprofit partners, agencies should coordinate and identify which agency will serve as lead to request the VSHSL-funded bonus.

Q: Does this grant pay admin rate?

A: Yes, this grant applies a 12% administrative rate to the Bonus Fund Request to offset costs that agencies may incur to manage the grant.