

OFFICE OF THE
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

March 16, 2021

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Marin County Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

SUBJECT: Consultant Agreement with Unqork to provide software for the Rental Assistance Program

Dear Supervisors:

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Approve Consultant Agreement with Unqork Inc. in the amount of \$265,000 to provide software for the Rental Assistance Program

SUMMARY: Through the attached Consultant Agreement, Unqork will develop software that will meet all of the requirements of the Rental Assistance Program as required by both the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 - the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and the State Senate Bill SB 91, including providing an on-line application for both tenants and landlords, robust program tracking, and required reporting.

The software application will enable the County and local Community Based Organization partners to effectively manage and distribute rental housing assistance and other qualified funds.

BACKGROUND: On March 9, 2021, your Board accepted \$8,385,769.36 of Rental Assistance funds from the State as part of the State's share of the federal COVID-19 relief bill, the Consolidated Appropriations Act. The State will charge an administrative fee in the amount of \$139,762.82 leaving \$8,246,006.54 available for the County's Rental Assistance Program. On February 9, 2021 your Board accepted an award from the U.S. Department of Treasury of Emergency Rental Assistance funds in the amount of \$7,695,347, as part of the COVID-19 relief bill, Consolidated Appropriations Act. This bill, passed by Congress, allocated \$1.1 billion directly to local governments with populations over 200,000. Under the provisions of the State Senate Bill SB 91, if the County accepts the award from the State, the Treasury funds must be aligned with the State funds. Combined, the program will provide approximately \$16 million in rental assistance for local renter households and landlords.

The rental assistance program is intended to help eligible households cover rental and utilities arrears and up to 25% of rent for the prospective months of April, May and June 2021, subject to funding availability. The goal of the program is to prevent evictions and housing instability due to the COVID-19 pandemic and address the large amounts of household back rent accumulated since April 1, 2020.

The program will be a partnership with our local landlords and housing providers. The on-line application will include both a portal for tenants and landlords and will automate much of the application process to ensure these needed funds are distributed quickly into the community. One of the key aspects of this program is that landlords can choose to accept 80 percent of any unpaid rent owed from April 1, 2020, through March 31, 2021. If a landlord accepts this funding, the landlord agrees to forgive the remaining unpaid 20% rent for that covered period. However, if a landlord chooses not to participate, the tenant can still apply for relief valued at 25 percent of unpaid back rent they owe for the covered period.

The County has run a rental assistance program since early in this pandemic. The Unqork technology will allow the County to accelerate rental assistance payments for a variety of reasons. It will allow the County to focus on those in greatest need, based on Area Median Income (AMI). The application will be available in various languages and is an accessible tool. It will also allow the County to automate verification of information in the application as required for this program. This on-line application will be supplemented with the existing phone line, where staff are available to answer questions and offer assistance to those with access issues.

Unqork will officially launch on March 22, 2021. In the interim, we encourage landlords and tenants to pre-register at this link:
<https://marincounty.jotform.com/210615271701040>

Registration at this link will give us information so that once the Unqork tool launches, all those pre-registered will get a direct link to fill out the rest of the full application so that we can process these payments quickly.

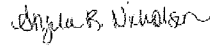
EQUITY IMPACT: The proposed Rental Assistance program will protect renters, who are disproportionately people of color, against displacement. It is a County priority that these funds are distributed in an equitable manner, ensuring that those most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic are served with dignity, respect, and compassion regardless of their circumstances including but are not limited to their race, ethnicity, immigration status, criminal record, disability, gender or sexual identity. The County recognizes that those most in need of pandemic related rental assistance are often also those for whom barriers to accessing such a program are the highest. The software will provide an on-line application which will be available in multiple languages and will meet all Accessibility Standards.

FISCAL/STAFFING IMPACT: There will be no impact on the General Fund net county cost. Funds for this agreement of \$265,000 are available in the Countywide Emergency Response program (99COVID005) within the Miscellaneous Projects Fund (1010).

REVIEWED BY:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Finance | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County Administrator's Office | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County Counsel | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A |

Respectfully submitted,



Angela Nicholson
Assistant County Administrator

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Consultant Agreement with Unqork Inc.