

Vermont State Housing Authority
Rental Housing Stabilization Program Grant Report

January 15, 2021

Pursuant to Legislative passage of Bill H.966, An act relating to the COVID-19 funding and assistance for broadband connectivity, housing, and economic relief and signed into law by Governor Scott on July 2, the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) launched on Monday, July 13th the Rental Housing Stabilization Program (RHSP). This program funds landlords on behalf of tenants in need of rental arrearage assistance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The RHSP will provide rental arrearage to the landlord for the actual amount owed by the tenant or the VSHA Payment Standard, whichever is less, per single household, if the unit meets eligibility criteria. The primary goal of this program is to keep Vermonters housed during this public health emergency by allowing them to keep their rented homes by granting back rent funds and avoiding terminations of tenancy, court evictions and homelessness. The secondary goal is to compensate landlords for some of their losses due to the CARES Act, judicial emergencies, and stay of evictions proceedings. Applications are currently processed on a first come first served basis and units must be free from life safety hazards.

The RHSP has been active for six months and as of December 30, 2020 has paid out \$19,195,084 in back rent assistance to 9381 Vermont households reaching every county in the state. The need for rent relief benefits in all of Vermont's communities was highlighted with a continuous flow of applications that has remained constant since the first day of implementation resulting in an average of \$159,959 per day going out to 78 families whose landlords are each receiving an average of \$2,046 per payment. To accomplish this, VSHA deployed the resources of 30 members of staff and Management across all Departments, many of whom worked overtime on a weekly basis. A biweekly check run was also implemented to expedite the flow of assistance.

The numbers have proven that many tenants have not been able to pay their rent during the current public health crisis, and many landlords were on the edge of losing their investments and livelihood. The RHSP has also underlined the continued need for affordable housing for all Vermonters and the importance of working with landlords large and small, for profit and non-profit to stabilize the diverse housing stock needed for a healthy community.

In the second half of the Program, VSHA stepped up its outreach in a range of formats from digital paid ads, newspaper articles, community and employer-based newsletter, and live radio spots around the state. Additionally, in preparation for the closing of the application period VSHA outreached to program participants and community partners to help spread the word

that this vital lifeline would stop accepting applications on December 11, 2020. This effort resulted in an uptick of applications that has grown steadily and culminated in approximately 3,500 submissions received in the last 10 days of the application period. As with all VSHA programs, the RHSP has interpretive and translation services available upon request and had several simultaneous translations with tenants to make sure their applications were completed properly, and the assistance was delivered.

The process for the RHSP was designed to expedite the review of applications to get assistance to those in need as quickly as possible. However, VSHA has maintained a strong emphasis on quality control with a six-point process that focuses on the accuracy and integrity of each submittal. Additionally, to meet the unique needs of tenants and landlords, VSHA increased the number of program elements from two Groups at its inception, to seven distinct sub-programs that meet the diverse needs of the residential rental housing community. The following are programs developed and implemented after July 2020:

Money to Move pays for first month's rent, security deposit, last month's rent, and where necessary, rental payments through December 2020 to help families move into sustainable housing.

Group 2B is a vacancy loss program for landlords whose tenants moved out unexpectedly and were forced to absorb the cost of that rental unit due to unforeseen vacancy and sometime tenant damage.

Stipulation Agreements are arranged by attorneys to settle back rent disputes out of court that may otherwise lead to an eviction.

Motion to Dismiss 12 VSA 4773 provides a renter a way to have a non-payment eviction case "discontinued" if the renter pays into court "all rent due through the end of the current rental period, including interest and the cost of suit". These payments are made to trust accounts at VT Legal Aid or Legal Services Vermont.

Mediation Services, developed and administered by the VT Landlords Association, works to settle disputes between tenants and landlords without the involvement of the court system. This service not only has access to RHSP funds to pay back rent, but also strives to reach an understanding of the rental agreement to help maintain a stable tenancy for the future.

As we enter the final phase of the RHSP it is clear that VSHA will use all of the funding immediately available after program cuts. With approximately 3,000 applications in process,

and the average payment of \$2,046, the anticipated shortfall is \$2,500,000. It is vitally important to Vermont that this additional funding come through without delay so tenants can remain housed and landlords pay the expenses associated with owning and operating residential rental properties. VSHA feels that an additional \$2,500,000 is needed to safely meet this anticipated demand, with the need to process payments into January 2021 for applications received on or before the end of the program on December 11, 2020.

The check run for December 16, 2020 totaled \$2,836,217 reaching 1517 households and hundreds of landlords across the state and was the largest 2-week total since the program started. While getting this amount of money out to those in need so quickly was a victory for our state, it also shows the tremendous need and how that need continues to grow.

Summary of payments per program element as of December 30, 2020:

- Number of households served / total payments:
 - Group 1 = 8418 / \$16,533,956
 - Group 2 = 397 / \$830,733
 - Group 2B = 192 / \$310,584
 - Stipulation Agreements = 116 / \$918,341
 - Money to Move = 258 / \$601,470

Details of payments by county per program element are in **Attachment A**. Please note that **Attachment A** does not reflect the final check run and reconciliation.

Attachment A:

Group 1: Tenant Arrearages		
	Number of Grants	Amount of Grants
Addison	318	\$ 572,388
Bennington	447	\$ 869,334
Caledonia	271	\$ 426,869
Chittenden	3017	\$ 5,810,503
Essex	23	\$ 59,453
Franklin	760	\$ 1,451,324
Grand Isle	83	\$ 156,441
Lamoille	151	\$ 351,852
Orange	201	\$ 414,567
Orleans	369	\$ 655,578
Rutland	629	\$ 1,540,749
Washington	825	\$ 1,680,727
Windham	635	\$ 1,139,211
Windsor	627	\$ 1,340,946

Landlord Resident?	Yes: 8856
	No: 607

Attachment A:

Group 2: Recalcitrant Tenant			
	Number of Grants	Amount of Grants	
Addison	11	\$	31,171
Bennington	24	\$	40,748
Caledonia	24	\$	28,947
Chittenden	137	\$	309,821
Essex	2	\$	2,330
Franklin	14	\$	39,439
Grand Isle	6	\$	15,725
Lamoille	9	\$	30,826
Orange	18	\$	36,099
Orleans	16	\$	30,569
Rutland	43	\$	83,832
Washington	19	\$	54,754
Windham	25	\$	60,530
Windsor	33	\$	38,067

Landlord Resident?	Yes: 408
	No: 38

Attachment A:

Group 2B: Vacancy			
	Number of Grants	Amount of Grants	
Addison	5	\$	4,921
Bennington	1	\$	927
Caledonia	12	\$	13,701
Chittenden	116	\$	173,333
Essex	0	\$	-
Franklin	11	\$	21,461
Grand Isle	1	\$	1,195
Lamoille	3	\$	5,204
Orange	2	\$	3,035
Orleans	10	\$	16,658
Rutland	10	\$	17,433
Washington	23	\$	31,701
Windham	4	\$	6,838
Windsor	12	\$	21,864

Landlord Resident?	Yes: 233
	No: 10

Attachment A:

Stipulations	Number of Grants	Amount of Grants
Addison	3	\$ 13,709
Bennington	7	\$ 74,802
Caledonia	3	\$ 14,572
Chittenden	26	\$ 200,617
Essex	1	\$ 18,978
Franklin	10	\$ 86,697
Grand Isle	0	\$ -
Lamoille	7	\$ 38,755
Orange	3	\$ 21,158
Orleans	7	\$ 58,617
Rutland	12	\$ 111,323
Washington	11	\$ 100,044
Windham	7	\$ 34,369
Windsor	13	\$ 130,328

Attachment A:

Group 3: Money to Move			
	Number of Grants	Amount of Grants	
Addison	11	\$	19,423
Bennington	23	\$	58,137
Caledonia	10	\$	15,707
Chittenden	69	\$	211,719
Essex	1	\$	1,055
Franklin	16	\$	43,675
Grand Isle	1	\$	3,533
Lamoille	4	\$	9,069
Orange	5	\$	7,339
Orleans	29	\$	65,045
Rutland	29	\$	74,111
Washington	16	\$	36,916
Windham	21	\$	32,435
Windsor	26	\$	38,087

Attachment A:

Limited English Proficiency:	Yes:	794
	No:	6257
	No Reply:	3940

Gender:	Male:	2772
	Female:	4483
	Non-Binary:	0
	No Reply:	3690

Age:	18-25:	745
	26-35:	2495
	36-45:	2040
	46-55:	1410
	56-65:	994
	66-75:	215
	76-84:	58
	85+:	8
No Reply:		2955

Disability:	Yes:	1786
	No:	4876
	No Reply:	4330

Income Range	\$0-\$15,000:	2878
	\$15,001-\$30,000:	2913
	\$30,001-\$45,000:	1312
	\$45,001-\$60,000:	441
	\$60,001-\$75,000:	131
	\$75,001-\$100,000:	41
	\$100,001-\$150,000:	6
	\$150,001+:	0
	No Reply:	

Ethnicity:	Hispanic/Latino:	248
	Non Hispanic/Latino:	5047
	No Reply:	5693

Race:	American Indian/Alaska Native:	190
	Asian:	175
	White:	6746
	Black/African American:	708
	Native Hawaiiin/Other:	0
	Pacific Islander:	13
	Other:	145
	No Reply:	2988