



Office of the Mayor
City of Seattle
Bruce Harrell, Mayor

Executive Order 2025-06: Delivering Rental Assistance

This Executive Order directs City departments to improve coordination, transparency, and service delivery of emergency rental assistance efforts as a critical tool to prevent eviction and homelessness, especially among the most vulnerable Seattle residents. The actions ordered herein build upon and align with broader housing stability strategies, and affirm the City's commitment to racial equity, early prevention, and effective government.

WHEREAS, housing stability is foundational to community well-being, economic mobility, and racial equity, and is a critical determinant of public health, educational continuity, and neighborhood resilience; and

WHEREAS, the end of pandemic-era federal emergency rental assistance provided through the “Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021” (referred to as “ERA1”) and the “American Rescue Plan Act” (referred to as “ERA2”) has revealed the urgent need for sustainable, coordinated housing stability strategies; and

WHEREAS, evidence from local and national studies consistently shows that timely, flexible, and targeted emergency rental assistance reduces the risk of eviction, prevents immediate homelessness, and yields high public return on investment through reduced shelter, healthcare, and public safety costs; and¹

WHEREAS, 2024 survey results from affordable housing providers and recent interviews with these providers and other landlords indicate that non-payment of rent is a top issue of concern and threatens their ability to continue to provide housing; and

WHEREAS, individuals and families most impacted by eviction and housing instability in Seattle are disproportionately low-income, BIPOC, disabled, and single-parent households—underscoring the importance of equity-centered program design and implementation; and

WHEREAS, early intervention—before legal notices are served—has proven to be a cost-effective approach to preventing eviction and stabilizing households, particularly when paired

¹ *Policy Primer: Emergency Rental Assistance*. ChangeLab Solutions, https://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Policy-Primer-Emergency-Rental-Assistance_FINAL_20230510A.pdf, *Continuing Emergency Rental Assistance: How Jurisdictions Are Building on Treasury's ERA Program*. National Low Income Housing Coalition, <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Continuing ERA Final.pdf>.

with mediation and other flexible financial services; and

WHEREAS, tenant services that include tenant education on their rights and responsibilities is an important early intervention strategy for preventing housing instability and should be paired with emergency rental assistance for maximum impact; and

WHEREAS, enhanced cross-agency coordination and regional collaboration are essential to addressing the housing crisis in a holistic and durable manner, as renters often interact with multiple agencies and systems; and

WHEREAS, rental assistance alone cannot solve the housing affordability crisis, but it is a necessary and immediate intervention to prevent eviction and homelessness, especially when deployed strategically alongside affordable housing production, tenant protections, and long-term housing stability supports like housing vouchers; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle convened an Emergency Rental Assistance Team with involvement from the Human Services Department (HSD), Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections (SDCI), and the Innovation and Performance Team to align on a citywide strategy for distributing emergency rental assistance with a focus on equity, efficiency, and impact; and

WHEREAS, the Emergency Rental Assistance Team found that four departments were distributing emergency rental assistance in 2024 with different goals and eligibility requirements, all programs waited for a crisis event before intervening, legal services were siloed from homelessness prevention efforts, and there was no consistent data collection for measuring demand or outcomes; and

WHEREAS, community partners and affordable housing providers, including the Housing Development Consortium, have advocated for expanded and improved rental assistance programs, as well as emphasized the need for streamlined application requirements, coordinated case management, and data sharing to better support renters and landlords and improve service delivery outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle City Council issued Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) HSD-040S-A requesting that HSD and SDCI report on how best to distribute rental assistance to ensure maximum distribution to households at risk of homelessness or eviction or currently homeless or in eviction proceedings. The City Council, including the sponsors of this SLI, have been strong and consistent advocates for increased resources for rental assistance and for greater coordination across City programs and investments; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Harrell has identified a sufficiently funded rental assistance program as a key element of the overall functioning and health of the affordable housing sector and will add \$4 million to support rental assistance programs in the 2026 Proposed Budget;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bruce A. Harrell, Mayor of Seattle, order the following actions to strengthen emergency rental assistance delivery and advance housing stability:

A. Bring all emergency rental assistance programs together into one citywide plan.

The City will develop a comprehensive and well-coordinated plan to manage the distribution of emergency rental assistance. This will include improving two existing programs that help people in crisis and creating a new program that helps people earlier – before things get worse.

These strategies include:

1. **Strategy #1: Preventing Imminent Risk of Homelessness:** The City will focus resources on households that have a significant amount of rent arrears due to temporary financial hardship, as they are most at risk of imminent homelessness.
2. **Strategy #2: Intervening in Active Eviction:** The City will support renters who have a significant amount of rent arrears, have an active eviction notice, and have fallen behind on rent due to temporary financial hardship.
3. **Strategy #3: Intervening at Early Signs of Instability:** The City will support renters without a significant amount of rent arrears facing early indicators of instability (e.g., late payments, income loss, benefit disruption) with flexible assistance that prevents escalation to formal eviction proceedings.

Assistance for all strategies may include making past due and future rent payments as determined necessary for housing stability, mediation support, and relocation assistance all combined with case management support.

B. Increase and Stabilize funding for emergency rental assistance strategies.

My 2026 Proposed Budget will include \$4 million in funding to support the three emergency rental assistance strategies. Within 60 days of this executive order, HSD will produce a draft spend plan across the three strategies.

C. Put one City department in charge of executing the plan.

The City will make it easier for people to get help by having one department manage rental assistance programs. This will reduce confusion, make rules clearer, and help community groups work better together.

1. **HSD shall be designated as the lead agency** for managing all new contracts involving emergency rental assistance, starting in 2026.

2. **SDCI will retain and complete existing emergency rental assistance-related contracts through the end of 2025** and continue to manage contracts thereafter that provide legal services for eviction prevention and services that help renters understand their rights and responsibilities.
3. **In 2025, HSD, with support from the Innovation and Performance Team, will launch a pilot** with a community-based organization to develop the new upstream intervention strategy to support renters facing early indicators of housing instability. As part of the pilot, HSD and the Office of Housing (OH) will collaborate to explore housing stabilization needs in the OH portfolio, and possible interventions that could prevent residents from losing their housing.
4. **In 2026, HSD shall issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for existing emergency rental assistance intervention strategies** for contracts beginning in 2027. This RFP will include coordination with SDCI's RFP for legal services.
5. **For new emergency rental assistance contracts:**
 - a. RFPs from HSD and SDCI will incentivize partnerships between organizations delivering emergency rental assistance, legal aid, and tenant services.
 - b. All contracts will include clear expectations for aligned data collection and reporting, enabling the City to evaluate equity of access, demand trends, and long-term housing stability outcomes.
6. **The Innovation and Performance Team and HSD shall analyze screening data, program data, and population-level statistics** to explore models that promote landlord participation and renter stability beyond emergency assistance.

D. Make it easier, faster, and fairer for people to apply for emergency rental assistance.

The City will create a simple, online way for people to apply when necessary. The goal is to reduce delays, cut down on paperwork, and make sure everyone has a fair chance to get the support they need. HSD, SDCI, and the Affordable Seattle Team will:

- **Develop a standardized screening and application form** in CiviForm by the end of 2025, in collaboration with emergency rental assistance-implementing organizations. The form shall:
 - Be consistent across City-funded ERA programs.
 - Standardize and minimize documentation requirements while ensuring verification and compliance with relevant regulations in line best practices from the City's other affordability programs.
- **Build a centralized, user-friendly digital "front door" for emergency rental assistance applications** in CiviForm. This entry point will serve as a common platform for applicants and shall be used to triage users to the appropriate provider or program.

- **In 2026, issue an RFP to select a community-based organization to manage front-door applications** for new contracts beginning in 2027. The RFP will encourage providing 24/7 phone line support for applicant navigation and referrals.

E. Work with other funders to better support renters across the region.

The City will coordinate with King County, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority, United Way of King County, and other public and philanthropic funders to share goals, track progress together, and combine funding where possible. This will help more people get both short-term help and longer-term support. Specific activities could include:

- Aligning investment priorities and program models across the region.
- Developing shared outcome metrics and approaches to measuring impact.
- Exploring shared databases or integrated platforms that enable effective case coordination and referral.
- Exploring pooled or braided funding strategies to support both those in need of temporary services as well as refer to services that can offer longer-term assistance.

Inquiries regarding this Executive Order should be directed to Chief Deputy Mayor Tiffany Washington.

Dated this 10th day of September, 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce A. Harrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Bruce A. Harrell
Mayor of Seattle