COVID-19 Housing Assistance Grant
Media FAQs

Who is eligible for this grant?
This low barrier grant program is intended for Chicagoans who have been impacted by the economic fallout from COVID-19, including people who have lost their jobs through layoff or furlough, as well as people who have retained their jobs but have had their hours severely reduced. Eligible Chicagoans also must demonstrate that their household was at or below 60% of the area median income prior to their change in employment in order to receive the grant.

How many grants are available?
In this initial funding round, the Department of Housing is committing $2 million from the Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund (AHOF) to the program. This amount of funding will generate two thousand $1,000 grants for eligible Chicago households.

How will the grants be distributed?
Of the two thousand grants, one thousand will be retained by the Department of Housing for an online intake process for city-wide applicants. This online intake form will be open for applications from 8 a.m. on Friday, March 27th until 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, April 1st. On Thursday, April 2nd, the Department of Housing will run a lottery selecting one thousand applicants to receive the grant and will begin outreach to process those claims and award the grants.

The remaining one thousand grants will be distributed among a number of local community organizations who are City delegate agencies. These groups will work through their existing neighborhood networks to identify eligible households in need of assistance.

Chicagoans who may be eligible for assistance are encouraged to apply through the City’s intake portal, which can be found at chi.gov/coronavirus.

Why do a lottery?
A first-come-first-serve approach to the grant program would unnaturally skew toward tech-savvy Chicagoans. Keeping the application window open and doing a lottery drawing will allow for a wider range of Chicagoans to be considered in the process.

What about unbanked people?
Delegate agencies who are participating in the program will be trained on how to assist unbanked eligible Chicagoans with receiving the grant. Delegate agencies will be permitted to receive the funds into their own accounts and disburse the grant directly to recipients.

Is $2 million enough to meet the need?
The Department of Housing recognizes that the need for assistance with housing costs is far greater than this initial amount of funding will be able to fully address. In this partnership program with the Family Independence Initiative, DOH is establishing its own funding account for grants and will be able to privately fundraise for additional funding rounds. The City intends to raise additional dollars for future housing assistance grants throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

**What about people with non-traditional employment, including those in cash employment, gig-workers and independent contractors?**

The Department of Housing intends to keep this program low barrier and will remain flexible with Chicagoans in determining their eligibility. There will be DOH staff dedicated to processing applications in a personal manner, and applicants will be given ample opportunity to demonstrate their eligibility, including those with non-traditional employment.