

Housing Search Software Q & A

General Questions:

Q: Does the property owned by the landlord need to be registered with the program as authorized for rental assistance?

A: No. We would like the ability to screen unit listings prior to posting but we do not pre-qualify properties. We would like property owners wanting to list a unit with our site to have a consent feature that they are willing to accept rental assistance payments as a condition of listing on our site and to ensure that units being listed meet affordability guidelines.

Q: What are the additional steps that the landlord and housing authority should comply within the housing rental assistance program? Please elaborate on how this needs to be captured in the system.

A: Many property owners have worked with the rental assistance program and are aware of the additional steps. Property owners will be asked to consent to their willingness to accept rental assistance and have their unit pass a habitability inspection prior to receiving payments as a condition of listing their unit. In this consent, links to additional information and direct contact persons will be listed.

Q: What are vouchers in this project?

a. Does this mean that housing authority issues vouchers to people in search of houses?

A: Vouchers are an offer from the Public Housing Authority to provide subsidized rental assistance to a specified individual or household that is low income and otherwise would not financially qualify to rent most units. Individual households must seek their own housing to apply the rent subsidy at.

b. What are the benefits and features of vouchers?

A: Rental Subsidy is the benefit of the voucher. A calculation is done by the Housing Authority that makes an individual tenant pay a portion of their rent based upon their individual income. The rental subsidy pays the remainder of the rent thus making persons with low incomes able to rent market rate units. As a persons income changes the payment portions change to continue to make the unit affordable for the household.

Q: Does the system needs to handle following contract management within the application or will this be handled offline?

a) Between Landlord and HUD rental assistance department

A: The system will not manage contracts.

b) Between landlord and tenants

A: The system will be exclusive to Property Owners being able to list available units. It will not need to provide any property management functions.

Q: What are the different stages in the property management program? We understand that there will be:

- 1. Property onboarding**
- 2. Inspection, verification, and approval by county staff**
- 3. Property listing**
- 4. Property search and enquiry by tenants**
- 5. Voucher management**
- 6. Property showing**
- 7. Inspection by landlords before and after tenants**
- 8. Contract management**
- 9. Leasing expiry management**

Is this assumption correct? If not, Please clarify.

A: Our software will not need any property management features. Property listing that are verified through a county staff and property search by persons receiving our rental subsidy are the scope.

Q: How rent payments to landlords are managed? Is it an automated process or does the system need to generate invoices and rent receipts? Do we need to consider an accounting feature to record rent transactions? Do you have any existing accounting software?

A: Property management features such as rent payments are not a part of this proposal. We have an existing accounting software to issue rental payments and manage participant files. Our provider for this is MRI and we use Happy software. We are not looking to change or integrate this.

Q: Is it correct that there will be 3 user roles on the platform: property owners, property managers (Housing Authority employees), and tenants.

A: No. We will want the following users:

- Housing authority staff who will have administrative functions
- Community partners with additional permissions to list, view, or add private notes to listings
- Home seekers who have been offered rental subsidy
- Property Owners to list units

Q: The RFP does not speak to any administrative tasks within the application. Is the County expecting to be able to perform administrative tasks (i.e., remove inappropriate listings, role management for stake holder collaboration, etc.)?

A: Dedicated users should be able to perform the following administrative tasks: Permit unit postings, remove or edit unit postings, reset logins, run reports, send marketing materials to property owners.

Q: How do you envision the process of helping people to find a unit within the platform? What are the main steps?

A: We would like the following features to aid home seekers:

- Login profile
- Search filters- Price, # rooms, # bathrooms, location, Sq Ft, pets, # of stories, amenities, etc
- Saved search
- Notifications of saved search

The users should be able to login to and view current available units. The home seekers will need to independently contact the property owner.

Q: As per the document, there are multiple organizations within the community providing services like Housing Location, and Navigation services. Do they have an existing system that can be integrated with the new system?

A: No

Q: Are there any outside systems that the application will be required to interface with?

A: No

Q: Please let us know the anticipated project timeline and preferred budget range for this engagement.

A: Our preferred timeline is to have a software accessible within 6 months of contract agreement. Our anticipated development price range is \$25,000 - \$40,000.

Q: Do we need to consider mobile applications for tenants and property owners?

A: Yes. We would like a web based software that is accessible for mobile devices.

Q: Are we right that the solution will operate as a web-based platform for all user roles?

A: Yes

Q: Does the county want this new application to be hosted in a cloud environment, or is the County providing the infrastructure necessary to run the new software?

A: The County is not providing the infrastructure to run the software.

Q: Are there any similar platforms on the market (similar functionality, similar user flows, etc.)?

A: Yes. affordablehousing.com, zillow.com, Trulia.com are all similar software. These are for public access home seekers. Our software should be limited/permissioned access for households receiving our rental subsidy and property owners willing to receive our subsidy payments.

Q: In the Housing search features of the Scope of Services, the SCHA is looking for the application to provide map search capabilities. Does the county have a GIS that the application will connect to or would the application be connected to Google or some other GIS?

A: The county does not have a GIS.

Proactive Landlord Engagement:

Q: Does the system need to have integration with marketing campaign tools like Email campaign for landlord outreach and recruitment efforts? Are there any additional integrations required? Please elaborate.

A: Yes. The software should be pro-active in sending reminders of units posted and providing automatic follow ups to encourage future listings. The software should allow us an accessible list to send outreach and marketing communications to property owners who engage with the site.

Q: Does Sonoma county welcome any related or additional features to be considered as part of the scope that is not mentioned in the requirement document based on the vendor's experience? For example, Registering a property in Sonoma County for the rental assistance program, Approval of property for listing by Sonoma County officials etc.

A: Yes. Features that may support the objectives of improving connection to community landlords, improving access for our identified home seekers, and providing data tracking can be included.

Q: Collect and maintain landlord information. How do you envision this process?

A: A Property Owner wishing to list a unit should create a profile and submit a unit for listing. The Housing Authority would want to verify unit listings as authentic. Through the landlord

profile we envision being able to see history of unit postings and keep an updated email list of property managers who have engaged with us for targeted marketing.

Q: Automates follow up communications to Property Owners about listings. Do you mean that the Property owner will be able to communicate with Property manager or Tenants directly through the platform (e.g. live chat)?

A: No. Property Owners or tenants should be able to submit email inquiries. We would like automatic follow up emails to be sent to property managers to inquire if posted units have been filled.

Q: Automated follow up inquiries to Property Owners to encourage future listings. Can you give a bit more details here?

A: Properties that have listed a unit with us we would want to have automatic tri-annual messages inquiring if they have upcoming units to list and encouraging listing them with our site.

Stakeholder Collaboration:

Q: What are the exact workflows for stakeholders? Please elaborate on the specialized features offered by the system to stakeholders.

A: The system should have access to grant stakeholders member account access that allows representatives of their company to view units that are not viewable by general access and add private notes to unit listings.

Q: Under the section Stake Holder Collaboration, there is a statement 'Allow access to hold units for prioritization'. Does this mean that a few properties from the listing need to be reserved or blocked for priority allocation to voucher holders? Please elaborate.

A: Yes. We offer incentives to property owners who will agree to house persons that may have barriers that are prohibitive to accessing housing. If, for example, a property owner who will commit to housing a person with an eviction on record, may be offered to pay for a vacant unit or receive a bonus payment in exchange for hard to house tenants we chose to send them. Our community partners will have direct knowledge of the barriers faced by a hard to house individual (eviction, poor credit, criminal history, behavioral issues, drug use, etc). We envision these held listings having notes of landlord preferences and concessions that stakeholders can match to hard to house individuals. The units will be listed separately by Housing Locators who have had direct contact with property owners.

Q: Allow access to hold units for prioritization. Can you elaborate on that feature?

A: See above answer.

Q: Allow tiered access for partnering community agencies to participate in specialized features. What specialized features do you envision and how exactly partnering community agencies will use them?

A: See above answer.

Q: When the Scope of Services discusses Stake Holder Collaboration, we are reading this as the application will require role-based access unlocking specialized features. Is this a correct reading?

A: See above answer.

Analytics:

Q: Track Landlord Outreach and Recruitment efforts. Can you provide a bit more information on those indicators?

A: Data reports that are desired are:

- Amount of units posted in a period
- Amount of new Property owners making profiles in a period
- Amount of views by tenants, stakeholders, and property managers
- Demographics of units being posted (price, # of rooms, location).

Applicant Qualifications:

Q: If bidder has no direct experience developing a housing location software application but have developed other complex real estate related web applications will they be disqualified from bidding?

A: No. All proposals submitted will be considered.

Q: Though we are a US registered entity, we are proposing an Offshore development model to keep the costs optimal. Please let us know if there is no objection to this.

A: We are unaware of any regulations prohibiting this.