


Date: October 4, 2021

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Oscar Orci, Director, Department of Development Services 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Long Beach Emergency Rental Assistance Program (LB-ERAP) Update**

The City of Long Beach (City) was previously awarded a total of \$30.2 million in funds through the Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (HR 133) and California State Senate Bill 91 (SB 91) to assist low-income renters who have experienced economic impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On February 9, 2021, the City Council directed staff to reserve the State Block Grant amount of \$16.4 million, conform the City's program to the State's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) rules, and self-administer a local program combining the State Block Grant with a previously received \$13.8 million federal allocation. Collectively, these funds are known as ERAP1.

On April 6, 2021, the City Council authorized a contract with Yardi Systems, Inc. (Yardi), to provide an online portal and assist with program implementation for ERAP1. Since that time, the City has been awarded an additional \$34.3 million in combined federal and State funding, known as ERAP2.

In partnership with Yardi, the Development Services Department (Department) launched the official LB-ERAP [website](#) to provide information on the program and the application process for rental and utility assistance for eligible renters who have experienced economic impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The webpage provides information for both landlords and tenants in English, Spanish, Tagalog, and Khmer, and includes program guidelines, eligibility requirements, and a list of required documentation. The website also provides a phone number for direct inquiries and a link to the application portal for both landlords and tenants.

A total of five community-based organizations (Heart of Ida, Housing Long Beach, Puente Latino Association, United Cambodian Community, and YMCA of Greater Long Beach) were brought under contract to provide outreach and application assistance across a diversity of neighborhoods, particularly those most impacted by the pandemic.

Likewise, the Department's Housing and Neighborhood Services Bureau (Bureau) implemented a comprehensive outreach strategy to notify residents about the program, which consisted of direct contact with religious, educational, grassroots, and nonprofit groups as well as assistance to individual applicants. The Bureau is also conducting numerous pop up events throughout the City directly assisting tenants and landlords, in multiple languages.

Activities Update

The following are recent key activities by the Department to help further the proficiency, productivity, and visibility of LB-ERAP:

- The Department reopened the application period and announced that it will remain open until all funds are exhausted;
- The Bureau has hired several new staff members and expanded its deployment of current staff to assist with program operations, which is designed to assist tenants and landlords in fully accessing the online portal to complete or correct their online applications;
- Yardi, the contracted service provider, has deployed between 14-17 case workers to approve applications and process payments. In addition, Yardi has created the LB-ERAP Information and Support Line at 833-358-5372 where landlords and tenants can obtain case information and request program information and technical support to complete their applications. At the October 12, 2021 City Council meeting, the Department will be requesting an amendment to Yardi's contract to increase case workers in order to process additional requests;
- The Department continues to work with the grantor agencies (Federal and State) to implement their recommended guidance to reduce burden of documentation;
- Select community-based organizations remain under contract to provide information and assistance to households and applicants; and,
- To date, the website has had a total of 189,294 visits. For this month alone, there were nearly 46,000 visits and just this past week, there were more than 14,500 visits.

Program Data

The City is committed to completing the LB-ERAP mission of providing assistance to as many as possible who are eligible under this program and who have applied for assistance. To date, the City has disbursed \$19.6 million in payments including 1,546 utility payments totaling \$715,549. The average amount distributed per household is \$7,000 in rent assistance and \$477 in utility assistance.

Since August 25, 2021, the City has simplified the document submission process by providing various attestation forms in lieu of paycheck stubs or rental agreements. Nevertheless, the issue of incomplete or duplicate applications from the same household continues to be a program hinderance. The City has received a total of 9,706 submitted applications to date, with varying degrees of completion. Of the total applications:

- 2,216 cases have been paid;
- 512 cases are at various stages in the payment pipeline;
- 2,031 applications were submitted only by landlords and now require the tenant to also apply to determine eligibility and for the landlord to receive funds for past due rent;
- 360 cases have been denied, mostly due to duplicate applications from the same household; and,
- 4,587 cases are in progress at various stages of completion.

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In many cases, applications are missing one or more of the critically-required documents such as household income information, past due rent ledger, and COVID-19 related economic impact. The City is required, under anti-fraud and other State and federal guidelines, to assure that payments are sent to either the owner of the property or the owner's contracted property management company. Documents that are frequently missing from landlords include signed W-9s for either the property owner or the property management company and proof of property ownership.

Generally speaking, processing times vary as applications can only be approved once all required documentation has been submitted. City staff and Yardi case auditors are continuing to work diligently to streamline communications with either the landlord or tenant to request the missing information. In some cases, landlords and tenants are not responding to requests by email, phone, or SMS text for missing documents. Frequently, there are over six contact attempts made before the tenant or landlord responds to a request for a critical missing document. When all the minimum document requirements are finally met/submitted, then those cases can be approved by the auditors and forwarded up to case supervisors to begin the payment process. Attached is a current program update with additional information (Attachment A – September 27, 2021 LB-ERAP Weekly Report).

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at (562) 570-6369 or via email at Oscar.Orci@longbeach.gov.

ATTACHMENT A – SEPTEMBER 27, 2021 LB-ERAP WEEKLY REPORT

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