



## Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):

This Notice of Funding Opportunity serves as the first step in the expansion of THN's efforts to aid communities across Texas via the **Housing Solutions Initiative: Innovation Fund**. Agencies can apply for grants of private, flexible-funding to further their goals of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

## Summary

Texas Homeless Network (THN) invites qualified organizations operating within the Texas Balance of State to apply for funding via **Innovation Fund Initiative**. The objective of this initiative is to further support agencies serving families within the Balance of State with low-barrier funding.

**Application Open Date:** 11:00AM CST October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Application Close Date:** 11:59PM CST November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025

### **NOFO Point of Contact:**

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\*Hopeful applicants may only contact the NOFO Point of Contracts regarding this request. Please submit any inquiries or requests via email. Other Texas Homeless Network employees do not have the authority to respond.



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## Introduction

Texas Homeless Network (THN) serves as the Collaborative Applicant and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead Agency for the Texas Balance of State Continuum of Care (TX BoS CoC), which covers 214 counties of Texas' 254. The TX BoS CoC was formed to carry out the responsibilities required under the CoC Program Interim Rule (24 CFR 578). The TX BoS CoC comprises a broad group of stakeholders dedicated to ending and preventing homelessness across Texas. The overarching CoC responsibility is to ensure community-wide implementation of efforts to end homelessness, including ensuring programmatic and systemic effectiveness of the local continuum of care program.

Texas Homeless Network (THN) invites qualified organizations operating within the Texas Balance of State to apply to for **Innovation Funds**, designed to help families avoid or exit homelessness. This funding opportunity recognizes the critical role that adaptable, client-centered financial support plays in disrupting cycles of poverty and housing instability. Flexible funds seek to bridge the gap where traditional funding streams, with rigid restrictions, inadvertently penalize families as they work toward stability.

Through this Notice of Funding Opportunity, THN aims to strengthen frontline organizations by equipping them with the financial agility to close gaps, unlock client potential, and move families toward long-term housing stability. Eligible applicants will be those who demonstrate a commitment to innovation, collaboration, and accountability in their service to vulnerable families.



## Innovation Fund Initiative

### **Innovation Fund Initiative Project Summary**

Investment by the **Bezos Foundation Families Fund** to Texas Homeless Network has furthered our organizational ability to support families and agencies throughout the Balance of State. Accordingly, we have developed Housing Solutions that seek to bolster efforts by agencies to end homelessness for families.

Families on the brink of or already experiencing homelessness often face complex, fast-moving challenges, many of which do not fit neatly into predefined categories of public assistance. **Innovation Fund** is a key initiative to meet these moments with the immediacy and nuance they require. It allows local organizations to meet unique needs without delay or constraints, support employment and educational advancements without triggering benefit losses, and offer creative, localized solutions tailored to the communities they serve.

Agencies can further the outcomes of Federal, State, and local grants for families by supplementing Innovation Funds where traditional funding can't. Examples of Funding uses include: Landlord Incentives, Utility/Rental Arrears, Document Replacement, Application Fees, Moving Costs.



## Fund Use Requirements

### Eligible Grantees

- A. The Housing Solutions Team has identified the following priority regions for the Phase 1 of the Innovation Fund Initiative: ***Sherman, Texarkana, Victoria, Laredo, and Hidalgo***. Any agency serving clients within these regions is eligible to apply for Innovation Funds.

### Participant Eligibility

- B. Families:
  - a. Per the restrictions set forth by the Bezos Foundation, all Innovation Funds are required to be used for **families**. As it pertains to this initiative, Housing Solutions defines a family as 2 or more individuals living in the same household.
- C. Prioritization:
  - a. Research has shown that housing instability has a measurable impact on children. 50% of children experiencing homelessness under four years of age are also experiencing developmental delays, up to 4x that of their housed counterparts.
  - b. For this reason, THN is requiring the following prioritization of families being served by Innovation Funds:
    - i. First, families with children between 0-5 years of age
    - ii. Second, families with children up to 18 years of age; and
    - iii. Third, all family compositions

### Monitoring:

- D. HMIS:
  - a. Use of Homeless Management Information Systems will be required for each application of Innovation Funds to a participant. A Supportive Services Only (SSO) project will be created for agencies to record each funding use. (**Access**



to HMIS will be supplied free of charge to agencies awarded Innovation funds and Agencies are required to complete training/onboarding before funds are awarded.)

E. Ledgers

- a. To ensure our good stewardship of these grant funds, THN will require agencies to share their monthly ledger to be checked against HMIS entries. Ledger sharing will be required until all Innovation Funds have been exhausted.

## Funding Use:

- F. Innovation Funds are intended to reach a wide scope of obstacles that traditional funding cannot, due to ineligibility, restrictions, incompatibility, and underfunding. Accordingly, grantees may use this funding as needed with the following provisions:
- a. Participant meets the eligibility criteria.
  - b. Agency is unable to address obstacles from traditional funding sources.
  - c. The participant has not previously been awarded funds from this well in **excess of \$3000** during this calendar year. Grantees may engage in a conversation with THN for special circumstances.



## Timeline

### A. Schedule of Events:

THN will make every effort to adhere to the following anticipated schedule

	Event	Date
1.	Notice of Funding Opportunities goes live on THN webpage	9/1/25
2.	Application portal opened	10/15/2025
3.	Application portal closed.	11/5/25
4.	Follow-up meetings scheduled with applicants if necessary.	11/10/25 –11/20/25
5.	Applications scoring is completed, and Grant Agreements are sent to agencies.	11/24/25
6.	Grant Agreements signature deadline.	12/15/25
7.	Innovation Funds administered to agencies.	1/5/26

## Application Guidelines

THN's Housing Solutions team has committed itself to a low-barrier process to ease the burden applicants often face from grant applications. The application process will consist of organizations submitting an online application via Microsoft Forms. Grant amount will vary based on the strength of the application. Prospective grantees can reference the scoring rubric below to better understand how to develop their application. Accordingly, applicants should feel free to attach any supporting documentation they feel may strengthen their application.

Microsoft forms link will be posted on THNs website @ 11AM on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025



## Evaluation

### Scoring Rubric

Category	Criteria	Score Range	Scoring Guide
<b>1. Strategy to Use Flexible Funding to Exit Families from Homelessness</b>	Clarity, feasibility, and focus on stability.	0–10	0–3: Strategy is vague, unrealistic, or not aligned with housing outcomes. 4–7: Strategy is somewhat clear and feasible but lacks detail or strong housing focus. 8–10: Strategy is clear, actionable, and strongly aligned with rapid exits from homelessness using flexible approaches.
<b>2. Demonstrated Need for Families for Flexible Funding</b>	Provides clear, data-informed justification of the need among families experiencing or at risk of homelessness in their area	0–10	0–3: Vague or no data; fails to show local need 4–7: Some data or anecdotes present; need is implied, but not strongly established 8–10: Clear, compelling use of local data (e.g. HMIS, PIT, school homelessness counts); well-articulated gap that flexible funding could address
<b>3. Track Record with Past Funding</b>	Past use of funding for homelessness/housing work exemplifies efficient, equitable, and impactful spending	0–10	0–3: Poor or unclear track record; limited outcomes or accountability. 4–7: Moderate success; some evidence of impact and financial stewardship. 8–10: Strong history of effective use, equitable outcomes, and responsible fund management.
<b>4. Barrier Identification and Mitigation in Proposed Intervention</b>	Anticipation and removal of barriers that could prevent families from accessing funds (e.g., documentation, eligibility, intake processes)	0–10	0–3: Intervention introduces or fails to recognize major barriers. 4–7: Some barriers are addressed but approach may still restrict access. 8–10: Actively identifies and minimizes/eliminates access barriers with family-centered design.





<b>5. Capacity to Deliver</b>	Staff, systems, and partnerships in place to effectively distribute and track flexible funds.	0–10	0–3: Low capacity; lacks infrastructure or clarity. 4–7: Moderate capacity with some risk or unclear partnerships. 8–10: Strong operational readiness, skilled staff, and clear systems for delivery and oversight.
<b>6. Use of Lived Expertise</b>	Proposal includes voice and input of people with lived experience in design or decision-making	0–5	0–1: No inclusion of lived experience. 2–3: Some consultation or references to lived experience. 4–5: Meaningful co-design or advisory roles for people with lived expertise.