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Housing Finance Authority Hires Louisiana-Based Firm to Accelerate Slow-Moving Emergency Rental Assistance Program

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The V.I. Housing Finance Authority said Tuesday that it has awarded Louisiana-based Plexos Group, LLC a one-year professional services contract for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

The move is an effort to accelerate the program which has made little progress in achieving its goal of providing rental assistance to individuals and families affected by Covid-19. In February, V.I.H.F.A. said it was able to help [27 percent of the over 700 applicants](#), a support rate that invited the ire of lawmakers being bombarded by those in need of the assistance.

Valued at a little more than \$1 million, the Plexos Group's proposal was the most cost-effective at providing case management services for the federally funded program administered by the V.I.H.F.A., the authority said.

Plexo Group says that as part of its program management services, "a key to our success is deeply rooted in our philosophy of on-time delivery of complex programs while remaining agile as requirements may change," according to a [description](#) on the company's website.

"The Plexos Group presented a very thorough and targeted action plan for the timely processing of outstanding applications and a streamlined approach for handling new ones," stated Rick Grant, project management lead at V.I.H.F.A. "Their diverse portfolio related to disaster recovery and extensive experience in providing effective case management solutions were impressive." The contract includes a one-year option to renew, the authority said.

According to the release, seeking to clear a backlog of applications and assist the ERAP staff, the authority issued a request for proposals in February for a qualified firm to assist with fast-tracking the process using efficient and advanced technology. Nine proposals were submitted by the mid-March deadline and thoroughly reviewed throughout April.

"We needed to make an immediate dent in the applications we had in the pipeline, support our hardworking staff, and secure the future of the program," V.I.H.F.A. Interim Executive Director Dayna Clendinen stated. "To start, we put in place a 45-day plan to reduce the number of pending applications, which we have to 153. This is a significant milestone for our small team, with close to \$3 million in direct and indirect assistance delivered and nearly 400 households served. We look forward to working with Plexos to make the process even more efficient so that we can not only expand the number of residents we're helping, but do it as quickly as possible."

According to V.I.H.F.A., Plexos brings a dedicated support team of agents to augment the authority's existing staff, plans to launch its system to applicants and landlords within 14 days, and aims to cut the time from approval to payment within two weeks.

"Plexos Group is honored to be partnering with VIHFA again to serve and assist the people of the Virgin Islands," said Plexos Group CEO David Odom. "Plexos and our local partners are working together to leverage our extensive emergency rental assistance program experience to help tenants and landlords access the money they need as quickly and efficiently as possible."

ERAP funding is aimed at helping reduce the risk of homelessness through additional emergency financial assistance grants to qualified tenants and landlords that have experienced or will experience delinquent rent and utility payments due to the financial impact of Covid-19, V.I.H.F.A. said.