

Memorandum



Date: December 1st, 2023

To: Sonia Grice, Director
Community Action and Human Services

From: David Clodfelter, Director
Office of Management and Budget

Subject: Rental Assistance Customer Journey Improvements

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Clodfelter". Below the signature, the text "DIRECTOR OMB" is printed in a small, sans-serif font.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has concluded its review of the “customer journey” for seeking rental assistance in Miami-Dade County, as requested by the Community Action and Human Services Department (CAHSD). The objective of the review was to identify any barriers to service residents may be experiencing when seeking rental assistance and to provide recommendations to improve service and the overall customer experience. To accomplish this objective, OMB interviewed key County staff, gathered relevant data, and hosted two workshops on September 13, 2023 and October 30, 2023 with key stakeholders to gather input and formulate recommendations to improve the rental assistance customer journey. Workshop participants included representatives from CAHSD’s Office of Housing Advocacy (OHA), Community Resource Centers and management team; Public Housing and Community Development (PHCD); the Mayor’s Office of Constituent Services; Homeless Trust (HT); Communications and Customer Experience (CCED) and community partners.

A challenge for the project team was that, during the course of the project, the primary County program targeted at renters, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) exhausted its available funding, though additional funding has since been made available. An important observation was that while financial resources specifically for rental assistance are limited, numerous other financial assistance programs exist which can potentially offset rental costs for residents in difficulty. Therefore, throughout the project great attention was paid to the need to ensure residents seeking help with rent can easily access other related resources.

This memo provides a summary of the observations and recommendations developed by the project team regarding steps to be taken to improve the rental assistance journey for Miami-Dade residents.

Methodology

In order to complete its review of the rental assistance process for Miami-Dade County customers OMB:

- Reviewed publicly available materials including County websites and the 311 knowledge bases as well as hotline data from May 2022 to November 2022
- Interviewed public-facing staff from CAHSD, PHCD, the Mayor’s Office of Constituent Affairs and other key community partners to pinpoint process challenges faced when assisting residents in need of rental assistance
- Created a rental assistance process flowchart to reflect the customer journey
- Completed a Suppliers, Inputs, Processes, Outputs, Customers (SIPOC) analysis and Customer Requirements Matrix

- Facilitated two in-person workshops with key CAHSD, PHCD, OHA, HT staff and community partner stakeholders

Observations and Recommendations

In workshops held with relevant stakeholders and facilitated by OMB on September 13 and October 30, 2023, participants identified several barriers that customers may face when seeking assistance and developed recommendations to mitigate or overcome these barriers. Some notable issues included:

- Miami-Dade County websites were outdated or challenging to navigate.
- Limited understanding of program services and eligibility criteria among those seeking assistance.
- The lack of a single repository/database of all programs countywide and comprehensive repository of available resources with matching capabilities makes it challenging for County staff to connect customers to all available resources.

Solutions identified include:

- Improving the CAHSD and PHCD website language and updating outdated pages and hyperlinks.
- Creating a landing page for government assistance programs that is user friendly.
- Providing training on trauma informed care to frontline staff.
- Continuing to pursue implementation of a customer data platform with stakeholder input, seeking a “fair housing” grant to help fund implementation of the central system/repository.

A matrix summarizing the barriers and potential solutions, along with the respective responsible parties and completion dates, is included as Attachment 1.

OMB is available to follow up as needed with the project team and will attend an upcoming quarterly meeting between OHA and community partners. Additionally, OMB will work with CAHSD to schedule a follow-up stakeholder meeting in February 2024 to track implementation progress. OMB would like to thank all the departments and workshop participants who contributed to this initiative.

Attachment

- c: Morris Copeland, Chief Community Services Officer
Carladenise Edwards, Chief Administrative Officer
Arleene Cuellar, Senior Advisor to the Chief Administrative Officer
Cassandra Arnold, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Alex R. Ballina, Director, Public Housing and Community Development
Inson Kim, Director, Communications and Customer Experience
Victoria L. Mallette, Executive Director, Homeless Trust

ATTACHMENT 1
Rental Assistance Customer Journey Barriers and Solutions Matrix

Possible Barrier to Assistance	Potential Solutions	Effectiveness	Feasibility	Rating	Take Action? (Y/N)	Comments	Lead/Support Entity	Completion Date
		Scale of 1-5, 5 most effective	Scale of 1-5, 5 most feasible	Effectiveness X Feasibility = Rating				
1 - MDC website is challenging to navigate + some pages are outdated or "dead ends".	1A - Improve CAHSD and PHCD website language and include hyperlinks.	3	5	15	Y	Do not want to link to entities that do not have funding or give false expectations to users - CAHSD and PHCD to provide specific URLs to CCED for corrections	CCED/PHCD/ CAHSD/ HT	2/1/2024
	1B - Create a landing page for government assistance programs that is user friendly.	4	3	12	Y	Focus on "one stop shop" for landing page for rental assistance services offered by various departments. Possibly add "comment" box for users to enter specific requests. CCED is working on a prototype.	CCED/ITD	2/1/2024
	1C - Remove outdated pages on miamidade.gov (i.e. ERAP).	5	5	25	Y	Search results at miamidade.gov for "job fair" (which previously returned a result directing users to the ERAP program) are now satisfactory.	CCED/ITD	12/15/2023
2 - Not all front line staff are trained in trauma informed care.	2 - Provide "Trauma Informed Care" training for front line workers.	5	4	20	Y	HT working with HR to make available for PHCD and CAHSD front line workers.	HR/HT (Manny Sarria)	12/1/2023
3 - Constituent doesn't qualify for any public program but cannot afford to live in MDC.	3 - Maximize opportunities to use existing events and programs to connect the community to available resources and opportunities	3	3	9	Y	Include county job fairs among events to connect the community to available resources and opportunities.	CAHSD OHA	12/1/2023
4 - Limited understanding of programs/wrong assumptions about services.	4A - Produce videos/tutorials on what programs are available and how to apply.	4	3	12	Y	Use RAD video as example. Users found it very effective. https://youtu.be/9bedPX6i5Rg	CAHSD CRC (Letah Parrish)	2/1/2024
	4B - Clear guidelines / eligibility requirements (at local discretion/flexibility) in layman's terms on website	5	5	25	Y	Make the eligibility guidelines available on the website and in a paper format	CCED/ PHCD/ CAHSD/ HT	2/1/2024
5 - Lack of awareness that libraries offer access/help at certain locations.	5 - Advertise that libraries have social workers at certain locations to assist residents on CAHSD rental assistance webpages.	4	3	12	Y	Incorporate into any future potential landing page. Advertise through social media, newsletters, websites. Multimedia campaign. Make public aware that social workers are on-site at certain library facilities.	CCED + LIB + OHA	12/15/2023
6 - Residents without access to internet or phone have difficulties accessing rental assistance.	6 - Leverage existing resources to offer free tablets and phones + free or low rate internet; expand free Wi-Fi.	4	3	12	Y	Libraries offer Chromebook for 30 days. Have Assurance (cell phone company) join community outreach events. - Letah Parrish to invite Assurance to next community event. https://www.assurancewireless.com/	PHCD	12/15/2023
7 - Some housing programs have long wait lists (e.g. Section 8).	7 - Provide self-service kiosks at which residents could access information about available programs electronically.	5	2	10	N	Kiosk will not necessarily speed up long wait times for accessing rental assistance (i.e. Section 8 waitlist).	N/A	N/A
8 - No documentation (i.e. driver's license/social security card, credit history, income statements) to demonstrate eligibility.	8 - Request DMV staff to be onsite at community resource centers and libraries to assist residents in updating and acquiring identification cards, to include examples or tutorials showing how to complete the forms.	2	2	4	N	OHA partnered with Branches, Inc. to provide community IDs, financial literacy 101 counseling, and other resources.	OHA	11/13/2023

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9 - No process for identifying more affordable units / cannot locate affordable housing; existing (non-County) affordable housing websites are outdated	9 - Create website with up to date housing units available for qualified applicants.	4	2	8	N	Create website for landlords to update their information with members only access to connect landlords with residents. Homeless Trust uses PADmission program. Feasibility problems include the need to insure that information provided by landlords is up to date.	N/A	N/A
10 - Limited Countywide case management system makes it more challenging to connect residents with all available programs and resources. No single repository/database of all programs countywide with eligibility requirements, single application and matching capability.	10 - Continue implementation of customer data platform with stakeholder input. Use Salesforce CRM for central intake to support "No Wrong Door" to minimize duplication of effort. Find a "fair housing" grant to help fund implementation of central system/repository. Include case history in system.	4	3	12	Y	Long term project with CCED, PHCD, and CAHSD.	CCED	FY 2025 (Update to be provided in February)