

DURHAM STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Flexible Housing Assistance Fund

Funding That Moves at the Speed of the Work

Why It Matters

Households exit homelessness in moments — when a landlord says yes, when an arrears amount gets cleared, when a security deposit lands on time. If money can't move at the speed of those moments, the moments pass. The Flexible Housing Assistance Fund is the financial infrastructure that lets Durham's system act when opportunity opens. In the February 2026 family sprint, that speed was the difference — application fees, arrears, and deposits moved when the deals did, and fifteen families were home within a month. Just as importantly: it fills a critical funding gap for between 600-700 unsheltered people in Durham who face financial barriers to enter housing.

The Approach

Durham will consolidate housing payment functions related to flexible housing funds into a single, centralized fiscal agent that can issue payments within one business day, manage HAP contracts at scale, and underwrite the risk-mitigation guarantees that make landlord engagement credible. The premise is a pre-approved menu of allowable costs, minimal documentation friction, and one place every case manager in the system sends a request for flexible housing assistance funds.

Key Elements

- ◆ **Centralized fiscal administration.** A single entity receives, manages, and disburses flexible housing assistance funds across all programs in the system, eliminating duplication and giving every provider one familiar workflow.
- ◆ **A pre-approved menu of allowable costs.** Examples include application fees, arrears, holding fees, security deposits, landlord incentives, moving expenses, utility deposits and payments, rental assistance, hotel placements when no shelter is available, renter's insurance, and risk-mitigation reserves.
- ◆ **Speed standards.** Funds disbursed within one business day of complete documentation. Utility payments aligned to landlord billing cycles. No late fees absorbed by participants.
- ◆ **Rental assistance via HAP contracts.** Direct deposit to landlords on the 1st of each month, with tenants contributing income-adjusted portions and a progressive payment model designed to transfer full rent responsibility to the household within 12 months.
- ◆ **Risk-mitigation reserves.** Up to two months' rent in documented damage coverage, with the unit made available to another household exiting homelessness if mitigation funds are used.

- ◆ **Single point of entry.** Referrals come exclusively from the Coordinated Entry Administrator, ensuring equitable access and alignment with the by-name list.

Why Speed and Funds Matters

When money moves at the speed of opportunity, more people get housed. A case manager who finds a unit on Tuesday doesn't have to choose between losing it and waiting on a Thursday committee. The pre-approved menu, the single submission process, and the one-business-day standard reduce the system's reaction time to match the urgency of an unhoused household's situation. More critically: the very existence of flexible housing assistance funds will open doors for people to whom housing options are currently locked.