

Overview: Placer County’s collaborative spirit and focus on easing access has allowed many residents affected by the pandemic to remain housed through emergency rental assistance.

Challenge: Many communities throughout the state have experienced difficulties quickly and thoroughly disbursing historic levels of financial support available through the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program for those struggling to remain in their homes because of the pandemic. Many tenants and landlords remain unaware that the program exists—and, when they do find out, can experience difficulties with the application and gathering documents needed for submission. According to a recent Urban Institute survey, 40% of landlords and 31% of tenants were unaware of ERA.¹

To confront this challenge, the County’s Housing Authority partnered with the City of Roseville, Placer’s largest city, and other critical stakeholders, to draw down and quickly push out about \$8 million and counting. Placer needed to involve both of its Housing Departments, even though the City of Roseville, the county’s largest jurisdiction, could not directly receive ERA funds because it did not meet eligibility criteria. Enlisting both departments was key to leveraging the knowledge of staff, including city personnel, that best know their community—as well as utility companies, tenants and landlords that stand to benefit from ERA.

Solution: Recognizing that Roseville’s Housing Department would be better suited to serve Placer’s largest population center, the County contracted with the City to share ERA funding and work together on program delivery. The two departments co-authored the application, created and implemented training, and focused hard on marketing and targeted outreach. They also recruited public and private partners to help. For instance, the County’s Information Technology Department created a stand-alone, online portal for applications to be submitted, processed, and completed. The Placer Community Foundation, the region’s flagship philanthropy, and 211 Placer were contracted to publicize the program and drive potential recipients to the online portal. Community-based organizations like AMI Housing and Sierra Community House processed applications, while the County’s Medi-Cal and CalFresh staff were redeployed to do the same.

¹ <https://journal.firsttuesday.us/landlords-tenants-in-the-dark-about-emergency-rental-assistance/78885/>
Placer County Health and Human Services – Human Services

Innovation: While partnerships between jurisdictions and community partners are often characterized by sharing best practices and working toward common goals, pooling resources between groups remains more elusive. Placer’s partnerships were solidified contractually, and its financial resources combined. Moreover, the partnership ensured Roseville, Placer’s largest city and home to about 36% of its residents, was at the table to develop, implement, and refine the program.

Results: Whereas other communities have struggled to organize and execute an ERA response, Placer has received a second award (bringing resources to \$15.5 million), processed 1,500 applications and counting, and enlisted even more community organizations to reach more people. To date, we have administered \$8.1 million ERA funds to 685 tenant households, paying rental and utility arrears and future assistance payments, and are poised to administer much more. Equally important, Placer’s two housing departments have ushered in a new era of collaboration, resulting in shared service delivery on other critical programs like the Emergency Housing Vouchers and Housing and Urban Development’s Family Self-Sufficiency. While our two departments have always shared data and best practices, our relationship is now more integrated than ever through the use of shared contracts, which we hope serves as a model to benefit other residents in need.

Replicability: The partnership described here between two housing departments—one administered through the County, the other through a city—is not abstract, but tangible and concrete. As ERA funding and requirements were being rolled out, the County, City of Roseville, and others were already in discussions about how to bring the partnership and financial resources contractually under one roof. The resulting shared decision making, and joint program administration is not just benefitting renters and landlords yet is necessary to respond to on other historic homelessness prevention efforts coming down the pike like the new Emergency Housing Vouchers and Family Self-Sufficiency programs, as well as other programs designed to quickly serve those in need.

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Additional Materials: [Emergency Rental Assistance Placer \(renthelpplacer.com\)](https://www.placer.ca.gov/renthelp)