

RICHLAND COUNTY
OPERATION ONE TOUCH
MINOR HOME REPAIR PROGRAM
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



GRANTS DEPARTMENT

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I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the Operation One Touch Program is to provide assistance to low and moderate- income residents for household repairs to their home. Repairs may include the following areas:

Water heaters	Electrical
Roof	Windows
Floors	HVAC
Accessibility Improvements:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ADA Ramps• Grab Bars• Hand rails• Banisters	

Ineligible repairs include, but are not limited to: work on other buildings on the property not considered the primary residence (i.e. detached garage, sheds, and barns) or the repair or replacement of non-essential items (hot tubs, swimming pools, paint, etc.).

MOBILE HOMES ARE INELIGIBLE FOR THIS PROGRAM.

NO REHABILITATION/REPAIRS CAN BE UNDERTAKEN INVOLVING PAINT DETERIORATION, LOOSE PAINT, VISIBLE SURFACE DUST, PAINT CHIPS, OR ANY REHABILITATION OR REPAIR THAT WOULD INVOKE THE REQUIREMENTS OF 24 CFR PART 35 (LEAD-BASED PAINT POISONING PREVENTION IN CERTAIN RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES).

The focus of this Program is to help homeowner's correct minor deficient conditions in their homes. Richland County has a vested interest in working with its residents to ensure there is a quality housing stock. It is understood that fully functional homes better protect the occupants and add value to the overall neighborhood, thus increasing the livability of the entire county.

B. Program Funding Source

The funding source for the Minor Repair Program is the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, administered by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Richland County receives funds from this program on an annual basis to implement housing and community development activities in Richland County.

C. Minimum Property Standards

In compliance with the CDBG Program and HUD requirements, the Minor Repair Program will follow the **2021 International Property Maintenance Code** as the minimum property standard. This standard ensures that all houses improved with HUD funds adequately address and protect public health, safety, and welfare.

D. Applicability of Other Federal or State Regulations

While all Operation One Touch Program grants are subject to the requirements of these Guidelines, there may be additional special provisions and limitations on Minor Repair Program grants depending on the funding source. Consequently, additional requirements not shown in these Guidelines may apply and thus, these Guidelines may be amended from time to time by the Community Development Division to reflect changes in the requirements of the funding source of this program.

II. TYPES AND TERMS OF PROGRAM ASSISTANCE
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A. Type of Assistance

The program will provide up to \$23,000 in CDBG funds per home for eligible repairs. The County reserves the right to exceed \$23,000 per home on a case-by-case basis.

B. Terms of Assistance

Assistance will be provided in the form of a deferred forgivable loan. No repayment is required. However, applicants must sign a written affidavit indicating that they will occupy the home as their primary residence for at least five (5) years after assistance is granted through the program.

C. Minimum Grant Assistance

To qualify for this program, repair costs must be estimated to be a minimum of \$5,000.00.

D. Maximum Number of Grants

An applicant may apply for assistance anytime applications are being accepted. **However, an applicant may only be awarded one grant from this program within a five- year period.**

III. HOUSING RESILIENCY COMMITTEE
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The Richland County Housing Resiliency Committee provides input to maximize the effectiveness of the CDBG Program. The members of the three-person Committee act in an advisory role to the Division staff. All committee members reside in Richland County or represent organizations or businesses serving residents of Richland County.

Among the responsibilities of the Community Resilience Committee is providing feedback to the Community Development Department staff on applications for minor home repair assistance based on established eligibility criteria and staff recommendations. The Committee will also provide advice to staff in reviewing written appeals from applicants who have been denied assistance.

IV. HOUSEHOLD SELECTION AND ELIGIBILITY

Only completed applications through the Neighborly **online** portal will be reviewed for eligibility. Applications containing incomplete information will not be processed. Eligibility will be assessed on the following:

A. Ownership

Applicants must be listed on the Deed as the property owner and have resided in the home as their primary residences for a minimum of 18 months prior to submitting an application. The County tax record(s) will be the primary source of information to determine ownership.

B. Occupancy

The applicant must occupy the home as their primary residence at the time of application for assistance. The applicant must also sign an affidavit indicating that they intend to occupy the home as their primary residence for at least five (5) years after assistance is granted through the Program.

C. Property Taxes

Applicants who owe delinquent property taxes to the County on any property are ineligible for program assistance. All delinquent property taxes must be paid prior to receiving assistance.

D. Maximum Income

The **GROSS** annual income for **ALL** household members cannot exceed the applicable income shown in the following chart:

2023 MAXIMUM INCOME CHART	
Household Size	Maximum Income (80% of the Area Median)
1	\$ 47,000
2	\$53,700
3	\$60,400
4	\$67,100
5	\$72,500
6	\$77,850
7	\$83,250
8	\$88,600

Source: U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. These income figures are subject to change annually.

E. Conflict of Interest

Applicants can be denied participation in the Program if a conflict of interest exists. A conflict of interest exists if a grant applicant is an employee, officer, elected official or

appointed official of the County of Richland, and the applicant:

1. Exercises or has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to funds for this program.
2. Participates in the decision making process related to funds for this program.
3. Is in a position to gain inside information with regard to program activities.

F. Moving Furnishings

It is the applicant's physical and financial responsibility to move all furnishings before and after rehabilitation work.

V. PROPERTY SELECTION AND ELIGIBILITY
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Eligibility will also be assessed on the following:

A. Location

To qualify for grant assistance, the housing unit must be located within unincorporated Richland County.

B. Nature and Extent of Minor Repairs

As part of determining eligibility for this Program, all housing units will be inspected to determine if repairs can be undertaken within the scope of the Program. Factors to be evaluated include but are not limited to the type of repair, and the total cost of the repair(s). If a unit does not qualify for assistance based on the inspection, the homeowner will be notified.

C. Types of Structures

Structures eligible for this program are single-family detached. **Mobile manufactured homes are ineligible.**

D. Maximum Number of Grants Per Property

A property may only receive one grant award from this program in a ten-year period, with no more than two grant awards total per property.

E. Flood Insurance

If the property lies in the one-hundred year floodplain zone, flood insurance is required. Documentation of flood insurance must be provided with the application for assistance.

VI. DETERMINATION OF GROSS INCOME

A. Annual Gross Calculation

Income is defined as the gross amount, before any deductions have been taken, of income that is anticipated to be received by all household members and persons on title during the upcoming twelve (12) months. Income of household members under the age of 18 or a full-time student under the age of 25 is not counted. Income must be verified no earlier than six (6) months from the date the grant is made. Income may be verified through income tax returns, pay stubs, bank statements, and through other means deemed necessary by the Community Development staff.

B. Sources of Income

Sources of income used in determining gross annual household include but is not limited to the following:

1. All wages and salaries, overtime pay, commissions, fees, tips, bonuses, and other compensation for personal services (before any payroll deductions). Employment income must be verified via third party. This means that the verification must come directly from the employer.
2. Net income from the operation of a business or profession. This income is defined as the higher of either current year-to-date **net income** (verified through bank statements) or the highest **net income** shown on any one of the last three years' Federal Income Tax Returns with all schedules and attachments. **NET INCOME** is defined as gross income plus depreciation, plus amortization, plus deductions for use of a home.
3. All gross periodic payments received from social security, annuities, insurance policies, retirement funds, pensions, disability or death benefits and other similar types of periodic receipts, including a lump sum payment for the delayed start of a periodic payment.
4. Payment in lieu of earnings, such as unemployment, worker's compensation, severance pay and welfare assistance. However, lump sum payments under health and accident insurance such as worker's compensation are excluded.
5. Periodic and determinable allowances, such as alimony and child support payments, and regular contributions or gifts received from persons not residing in the dwelling to the extent that such payments are reasonably expected to continue.
6. All regular pay, special pay and allowances of a member of the Armed Forces (whether or not living in the dwelling) who is the head of the family, spouse or other person whose dependents are residing in the unit.

The following exceptions shall apply in the determination of gross income:

1. Income from the employment of children under the age of 18 years.
2. Payments received for the care of foster children. **Note: Foster children shall not be used in the determination of the number of persons in the household.**
3. Lump-sum additions to family assets, such as inheritance, insurance payments (including payments under health and accident insurance and worker's compensation), capital gains and settlement for personal and property losses. These items shall be considered as assets for the purposes of this program.
4. Amounts that are specifically for, or in reimbursement of, the cost of medical expenses.
5. Income from a live-in aide. **Note: A live-in aide shall not be used in the determination of the number of persons in the household.**
6. Amounts of education scholarships paid directly to the student or the educational institution and amounts paid by the government to veterans for use in meeting the costs of tuition, fees, books and equipment. Any amounts not used for these purposes are to be included as income.
7. Special pay for a household member serving in the Armed Forces who is exposed to hostile fire.
8. Amounts received under HUD-funded training programs or received under a public assistance program that are specifically for out-of-pocket costs made solely to allow participation in a specific program.
9. Temporary, non-recurring or sporadic income.
10. Lump sum payments of SSI and lump sum payments of Social Security benefits, the value of the allotment provided under the Food Stamp Act of 1977.

C. Federal Income Tax Returns

All household members and all persons shown on the title shall be required to provide a copy of their Federal Income Tax Return for the most recent calendar year. The Federal Tax Return will be used as a basis to verify gross income as well as household composition.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

The following implementation procedures may be modified at the discretion of the Community Development Block Grant Division.

A. Grant Application

Applicants must complete the full application through the Neighborly portal accessible through the Community Development website to be considered for assistance through the Operation One Touch Program. Only complete applications will be processed. The full application packet must include:

- a. Proof of ownership of the property for at least 18 months (i.e. deed)
- b. Copy of recent Mortgage Statement
- c. Copy of Home Insurance Policy
- d. Termite Bond OR CLEARED Termite Inspection Letter
- e. Copy of the most recent Federal Income Tax Returns (only 3 years **if** self-employed), including all schedules and attachments for all persons in the household ages 18 and over.
- f. Third party verification of employment, if requested.
- g. Other income documentation (supply a copy of the award letter or a copy of the check or direct deposit statement):
 1. Social Security/SSI
 2. Retirement
 3. Disability
 4. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 5. Rental Receipts
 6. Interest on Savings/Income Earning Accounts
 7. General bank statements
- h. Current year property tax paid receipt.
- i. Other support documentation as requested by Richland County

****The County is required to perform eligibility reverification every six months to determine eligibility for the program.**

B. Environmental Review

Richland County Grant Programs Division staff prepares environmental documentation assessing the environmental eligibility of the rehabilitation project.

Staff shall determine whether the property to be rehabilitated meets the following:

1. Project does not result in a change in unit density of 20%;
2. Project does not involve changes in land use from residential to non-residential; or
3. The estimated cost of rehabilitation is less than 75% of the total estimated cost of replacement after rehabilitation.

If the property meets all of the above, the staff shall prepare an environmental review screening checklist to evaluate the property with the environmental requirements at 24

CFR Part 58.5. The property may not be rehabilitated depending on the results of the checklist and evaluation.

C. Initial Property Inspection

Once the Community Development staff determines that the applicant meets the basic property eligibility requirements. The homeowner will be notified by letter, and then staff will arrange for one or more inspections of the house with the homeowner. The inspection(s) will be performed by the Community Development Housing Inspector and will include an evaluation of the requested repair(s) and any health or safety deficiencies, based on the minimum property standard.

D. Work Write-Up

Depending on the results of the initial inspection(s), a work write-up will be prepared consisting of a detailed list of eligible work.

E. Contractor Selection

Contractor Qualifications

Contractors interested in participating in the OOT program must submit a completed Contractor Application to procurement. They must attend the RCG Community Development Division's annual contractor's workshop.

Once the application and any other required information is returned, Procurement Services will contact the contractor. If all information received is satisfactory with Procurement Services, the contractor will be placed in a pool of other approved contractors and will be given the opportunity to bid on repair projects from this program as they become available.

Contractor Responsibilities

The Contractor is responsible for their quality of work, the work of their employees, and work performed by any subcontractors and their employees.

The Contractor is responsible for providing all manufacturers' warranties to the homeowner and copies to the Richland County Community Development Department.

The Contractor must warranty all work for a period of one (1) year from the date of completion (final inspection and acceptance by owner) of the entire job under contract. The Contractor will correct any defects that occur during that period at no additional cost to the homeowner or County.

The responsible Contractor should respond to warranty calls within seven (7) days of notification by the homeowner. Emergency warranty calls should be responded to the same day the complaint is received.

F. Bidding Process

At least three qualified contractors on the active bidders list will be asked to bid on each rehabilitation contract. Contractors will have a walk-through to inspect the house before submitting bids.

All bids will be recorded and the apparent low bid will be reviewed to ensure it is complete and responsive.

G. Cost Reasonableness

After bids are received, procurement and Community Development staff will compare them to the work write-up to determine the cost reasonableness of the contractor's bid. The lowest bid must be within 10% of the work write-up.

If the lowest bid is 10% higher than the work write-up then the low bidder will be given the opportunity to negotiate his bid into the acceptable range. If the bid cannot be negotiated into the acceptable range then the house may be re-bid.

If the lowest bid is 10% or lower than the work write-up then the low bid will be evaluated to determine if there were any mistakes and that the contractor can complete the work as outlined in the scope of work. If the bid is determined to be reasonable and responsive it may be accepted as the winning bid.

H. Homeowner-Contractor Agreement

After approval of the bid, Community Development staff will prepare a Homeowner-Contractor-County Agreement (Tri-Party Agreement). Staff then arranges a time and date with the homeowner and contractor to sign documents.

At signing, applicants and contractor sign all required documents. The Contractor will also discuss the details of the project with the homeowner and staff.

I. Notice to Proceed

Along with execution of all grant documents, staff shall issue a written Notice to Proceed to the contractor. The Contractor will commence work no later than ten (10) business days after the execution of the Tri-Party Agreement, unless a later date is mutually agreed upon by the homeowner, contractor and Richland Community Development Department.

J. Contractor Payment

Request for payment

Upon completion of work set out in the Homeowner-Contractor Agreement, the contractor will submit an original invoice identifying the work items completed and their cost, to Richland County Grant Programs Division staff, or their designee.

Payment Process

Following receipt of all items listed above, staff or their designee, shall:

- Inspect the property to ensure all work has been completed and is in compliance with all County codes.
- Obtain a signature from the homeowner on a completed Certificate of Final Inspection form and Closeout Conference form.
- Obtain a signature from the contractor on a completed Contractor Warranty form and Final Release and Waiver of Liens form.
- Forward authorized contractor invoice to Procurement Services for payment.

K. Change Orders

A change order occurs when there is any modification to the agreed upon original scope of work. The modification may be relatively minor or incorporate a major change. A change order must be executed for any deviation, addition, or deletion made to the original job specification (even if there is no cost change). Change orders must be in writing and approved by the homeowner, Rehabilitation Inspector, and the Contractor.

Since change orders add to the administrative cost of the job, they will only be considered if additional code violations (**2021 International Property Maintenance Code**) are discovered during the repair or if the change is necessary for proper job completion.

All change orders must be evaluated for cost reasonableness and for the effect it will have on the amount of assistance approved prior to the change order. The cost analysis of the recommended change will be documented and will include a statement verifying that the approved cost is both reasonable and acceptable. The Community Development Housing Inspector will establish the cost reasonableness of the change order.

If a change order reduces or increases the amount of assistance provided, the Tri-Party Agreement will be amended.

The County cannot exceed \$24,999, which includes change orders per property.

VIII. MARKETING PROGRAM

The Operation One Touch Program may be marketed in a variety of ways. This may include informational brochures, flyers, newspaper articles, advertisements, along with posting on the County's website and social media platforms.

IX. DENIALS

Applications for assistance may be denied for the following reasons:

1. Applicant failure to meet the eligibility criteria.
2. Property failure to meet the eligibility criteria.
3. Applications which contain false or misleading information.
4. Failure to provide complete information to the County, within the requested timeframe.
5. Home needs extensive work beyond the program allowance of \$23,000

X. APPEALS

Applicants may appeal a decision of denial by filing a written appeal to the Richland County Community Development Department within 30 calendar days of receipt of such a written decision. The Community Development staff and the Housing Resiliency Committee will review all appeals. If the appeal is not approved the denial will be final.

XI. PROGRAM CHANGES

At the discretion of the Community Development Department, the program may be modified to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness of program funds and to otherwise meet the intent of assisting lower income households in improving their homes through the program. In appropriate circumstances, provisions of the policy may be waived by the county unless required by law.

XII. DISCLAIMER

Any discussions with or any information given by a Richland County employee or its designee regarding application for the Richland County Operation One Touch Program prior to receipt of a formal commitment letter from Richland County or its designee committing a specific amount of funds to the project is only for program information and may not be considered a binding commitment on the part of Richland County to provide funds or technical assistance to the project.

Any costs incurred prior to receipt of a formal commitment letter from Richland County or its designee committing a specific amount of funds to the project is at the risk and expense of the applicant.

Richland County does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or familial status in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its federally assisted programs or activities.