Flexible Housing Subsidy Pools ("Flex Pools") Request for Applications Webinar

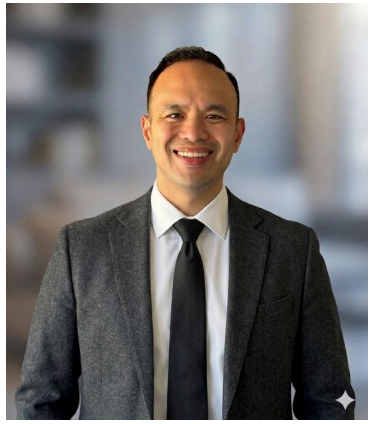
November 12th, 2026

DHCS
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Today's Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Overview of Flex Pools
3. Background and Status Update on Academy 1.0
4. Overview of the Request for Applications (RFA)
5. Permitted Uses of Funding
6. Technical Assistance Academy 2.0
7. RFA Application Questions and Guidance
8. Submission Instructions
9. Q&A

Welcome



Glenn Tsang

Policy Advisor for Homelessness and Housing, DHCS

Purpose

- This is the all-applicant webinar for the recently released "Flex Pools Investment Grant Request for Applications (RFA)"
- The goal is to share an overview of the RFA, clarify guidelines for eligibility and successful applications, and answer questions from those interested in learning more or applying for the opportunity.
- Content shared here will be posted on DHCS Housing for Health website.

Please send any questions not covered today about this RFA to FlexPools@dhcs.ca.gov.

Overview of Flexible Housing Subsidy Pools ("Flex Pools")

With the launches of Transitional Rent and BHSA Housing Interventions, DHCS is committed to supporting the formation and sustainability of Flex Pools.

Flex Pools help house people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness by:

- Coordinating and **braiding funding streams**, facilitating compliance and required reporting
- Acting as a **fiscal intermediary** between funders and landlords, on behalf of participants
- Identifying, securing, and supporting **a portfolio of units** for participants
- **Coordinating with providers of housing supportive services** to support participants

For more information, see the Flex Pools Technical Assistance Resource.

Flex Pools Academy Faculty



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Health Care and Housing Consultant, Klurfeld Consulting, LLC

Previously: Director of Safety Net Programs and Partnerships, L.A. Care Health Plan



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Cheryl Winter

Behavioral Health and Housing Consultant

Previously: Associate Director of CA Policy, Corporation for Supportive Housing

Background: Flex Pools TA Academy 1.0 & Planning Grants

In support of Flex Pools, DHCS launched the Flex Pools Academy and Flex Pool Planning Grants in August 2025. The Academy provides coaching and TA resources to 12 select local teams, alongside the Planning Grants of $125,000 per recipient to help launch and scale their model.

TA Focus Areas

- **Visioning** to develop a new Flex Pool or strengthen existing Flex Pool
- Identification of **potential funding sources**
- Funder and partner relationship development and/or **procurement** of a Flex Pool Operator
- Development and implementation of **operational processes** to launch services

Status Update: Flex Pools in CA as of June 2026[1]

DHCS is aware of at least 17 Flex Pools operating in California.
Of these, 12 counties are participating in the DHCS Flex Pools Academy.



Counties Participating in the Flex Pool Academy:

(12) *Lead Entities are listed in italics below.*

- Alameda, *County Health, Housing and Homelessness Services*
- Calaveras, *County Behavioral Health Services*
- Glenn, *County Health and Human Services Agency*
- El Dorado, *County Behavioral Health*
- Fresno, *County Administrative Office*
- Inyo/Mono/Alpine, *Inyo County Health and Human Services Department*
- Kern, *County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services*
- Sacramento, *County Homelessness and Housing Services*
- San Diego, *County Behavioral Health Services*
- San Luis Obispo, *County Behavioral Health*
- San Joaquin, *County Behavioral Health Services*
- San Mateo, *Health Plan of San Mateo*

Other Counties with known Flex Pools/Flex Pool-Like Systems:

(5) Los Angeles, Solano, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Trinity

[1]A DHCS landscape analysis in February 2025 found at least seven Flex Pools or Flex Pool-like systems were operating in the State at that time. For more information, see the Flex Pools Technical Assistance Resource.

Overview of Flexible Housing Subsidy Pools ("Flex Pools") Request for Applications (RFA)

DHCS

Overview of BH Flex Pools RFA

On November 2, 2026, DHCS announced a new grant opportunity, providing approximately $57 million, to help launch or scale Flex Pools in local communities to serve people with behavioral health needs.

About the Flex Pool Investment Grant

County behavioral health agencies are eligible to apply for this competitive funding opportunity to launch or scale their Flex Pool. Grantees will apply for one of two cohorts below, and all recipients will participate in technical assistance activities:

1. **Operational Cohort:** Intended for communities with an established, operational (or near-operational) Flex Pool with a third-party Operator, as well as sufficient scale and infrastructure to support high-volume housing efforts, or
2. **Building Cohort:** Intended for communities that are actively planning or establishing their Flex Pool or operating smaller-scale, In-House models, including small and rural counties

Tribal entities may join applications in either cohort as Tribal Funding Partners.

Key Dates

- **November 2, 2026:** RFA Released
- **December 17, 2026:** RFA Deadline
- **February, 2027:** Grantees announced
- **March 2027:** Grants awarded; program launch

Flex Pools Investment Grant RFA Applicants

Cohort	Operational Cohort	Building Cohort	Tribal Funding Partner
Eligible Applicants	County behavioral health agencies	County behavioral health agencies	Tribes and Tribal Entities
Designed For	Communities with an established Flex Pool and a third-party Operator that is under contract or near-operational	Communities planning or establishing new Flex Pools or operating smaller-scale, in-house* model Flex Pools	Tribal entities that are interested in investing in their local Flex Pool to expand housing opportunities in their communities
Award Size Per Grantee	Up to $6 million	Up to $500,000	Up to $500,000
Permitted funding uses: Domain 1	☑	☑	☑
Permitted funding uses: Domain 2	☑	☑	☑
Estimated # of Awards	8-10	8-10	4-6

*An in-house model is typically a good fit for small or rural communities and refers to a Flex Pool where all four core functions are offered in-house by a Lead Entity (i.e., led by a county; no third-party Operator). For more information on Flex Pools models, please refer to the Flex Pools Model TA Resource.

Operational Cohort Eligibility Criteria

County Behavioral Health Agencies can apply for the Operational Cohort; applicants must meet all the following requirements:

1. Be a county behavioral health agency that is a funder of the Flex Pool.
2. The Flex Pool population of focus includes individuals with behavioral health needs.
3. Lead Entity and/or Operator actively offer all four core Flex Pool functions.
4. Third-party Flex Pool Operator must be under contract (preferred), or an active RFP / sole source contract is in progress.
5. Transitional Rent must be incorporated within the Flex Pool, via at least one MCP contract.
6. Some BHSA funding must be (or is in the process of being) incorporated into the Flex Pool.
7. There must be either:
   a) At least one other funding source for permanent housing braided within the Flex Pool, or
   b) A concrete plan to achieve this braiding within one year.
8. The Flex Pool must have referred or placed at least one participant in permanent housing as of the date of this RFA application *(December 17, 2026)*. If Operator is not yet live, the County must have placed at least one person in permanent housing using Transitional Rent or BHSA.

Applicants found ineligible for the Operational cohort will be considered for the Building cohort.

Building Cohort Eligibility Criteria

County Behavioral Health Agencies can apply for the Building Cohort: applicants must meet all the following requirements:

1. Be a county behavioral health agency that is a current or intended funder of the Flex Pool.
2. The Flex Pool population of focus includes individuals with behavioral health needs.
3. The Flex Pool must have at least two funding sources. At least one of the funding sources must be Transitional Rent or BHSA; both are strongly preferred.
4. Demonstrate a commitment to maximizing BHSA Housing Interventions and pursuing Medi-Cal reimbursement for all eligible Flex Pool costs.
5. Commit to selecting and onboarding an Operator within 12 months of receiving Investment Grant (if intending to procure a third-party Operator).
6. Demonstrate how the Flex Pool is currently conducting or plans to conduct the four core Flex Pool functions in-house within 12 months of receiving Investment Grant (if applicant is from a small county pursuing an In-House model).

Tribal Funding Partners Overview

Tribal entities[1] are key partners in local housing and behavioral health systems and are invited to join county behavioral health agencies' applications for this funding opportunity as "Tribal Funding Partners."
For more information on this model, please join the Tribal Funding Partner Webinar that will be held on 11/17.

Tribal Funding Partners can **receive up to $500k** in addition to the county's award

Counties can receive **bonus points of up to 7.5% of the RFA maximum score** for including a Tribal Funding Partner

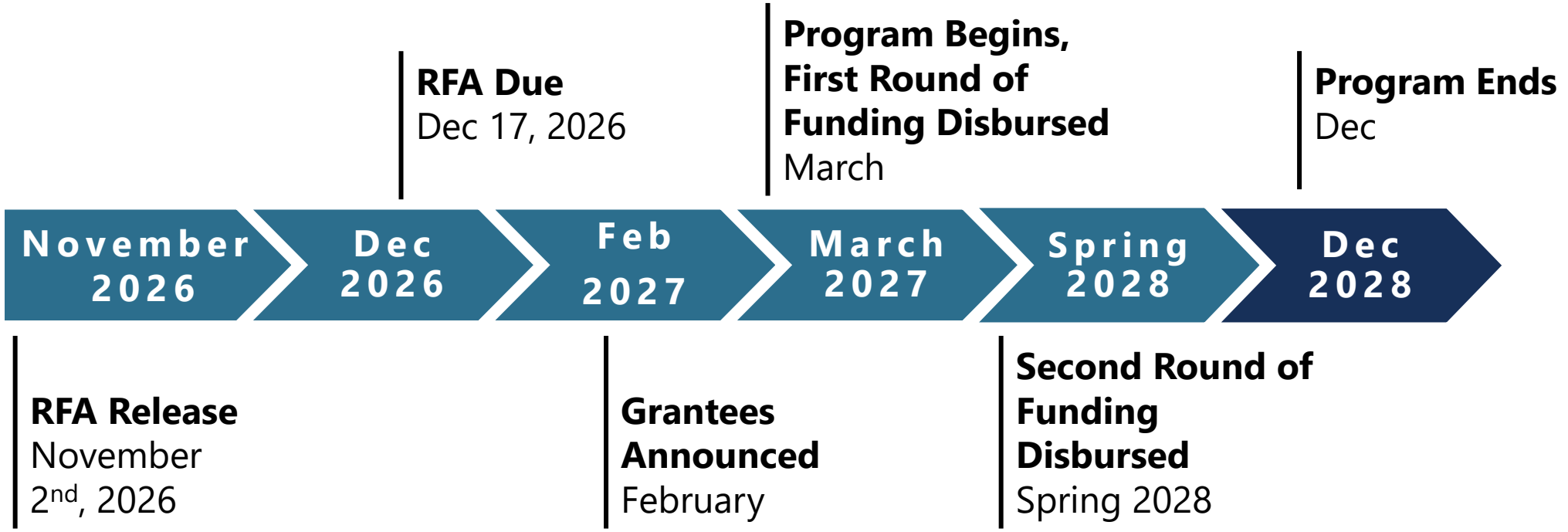
1. In this RFA, eligible applicants include (a) federally recognized Indian Tribes, tribal organizations, or Urban Indian organizations or (b) health care programs operated by Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, or Urban Indian organizations, as defined in Section 1603 of Title 25 of the United States Code and further defined in Section 5304. Other eligible applicants can include organizations that do not meet the above definition of eligibility (such as Tribally Designated Housing Entities, nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporations, or for-profit businesses) that have written support from an eligible Tribal entity for a proposed Flex Pool benefitting a tribal community.

Tribal Funding Partners Model

Aspects of Tribal Funding Model	Description
Multiple Partnerships	More than one Tribal entity can join the same county application. A Tribal entity can partner with more than one county if geographically appropriate.
Direct Payment	Awards will be paid directly to Tribal entity, with option for Tribal entity to defer funds to the county
Dedicated Technical Assistance	Tribal Funding Partners will be expected to participate in all activities of their Academy team, as appropriate. Tribal Funding Partners will also have a dedicated TA space.
Shared Accountability and Reporting	County and Tribal Funding Partner(s) to partner on data for quarterly progress reports.

Flex Pools Investment Grant Timeline

The RFA is now open and is due on December 17, 2026.
DHCS will notify selected applicants of awards in February, and the program will run through December 2028.



The County must spend or encumber the funds into the Flex Pool by December 31, 2028; once encumbered, the funds have no spending deadline.

Permitted Uses of Funds

Domain 1: Capacity and Flex Pool Infrastructure

Domain 1 funds can be used for expenses associated with planning and establishing a new Flex Pool or expanding and strengthening an existing Flex Pool. Allowable uses of funds consist of:

- **Staff/Consultant Costs:** Costs for staff or consultants to hold meetings, draft materials, conduct background research and needs assessment(s), develop educational and outreach materials to assist with engaging stakeholders, and otherwise assist in the launch, maintenance, and expansion of the Flex Pool.
- **Supplies and Materials:** Supplies and materials pertaining to the establishment, maintenance or operations of the Flex Pool.
- **Meeting / Provider Engagement Costs:** Community and provider engagement activities including in-person, virtual meetings, and collaboration forums.
- **Travel or Other Costs:** To support the participation of Flex Pool Lead Entity, Operators, and partners.
- **Technology:** To support the launch or operations of a Flex Pool (e.g., client relationship management system, financial documentation or billing software, data analysis or visualization software, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) modifications, data exchange planning and/or implementation support).
- **Capacity-Building**: For the third-party Flex Pool Operator, such as funding for working capital, staffing costs for HR, Finance, IT, and other administrative positions, training, leadership development, and/or strategic planning support.
- **One-Time Startup Funds:** to otherwise support Flex Pool launch or expansion, including initial staffing, infrastructure, or administration within the Lead Entity or other partners.

Domain 2: Start Up and Gap Funding

Domain 2 funds are intended for operational expenses of Flex Pools, including costs necessary to help eligible individuals secure and sustain housing, facilitate faster move-ins, and support sustainable outcomes. The entirety of Domain 2 funding must be invested in and administered through the Flex Pool as well as focus on serving individuals with behavioral health needs. Allowable uses of funds consist of:

- **Rental Payments and Move-In Supports:**
  - Communities are expected to maximize reimbursement of Transitional Rent, BHSA, and other housing funding sources for rental subsidies and move-in costs. Flex Pool Investment grant funds may complement but not replace these sources. This may be done by using Investment Grant payments to be deployed first and later reimbursed by Transitional Rent/BHSA, through an advance structure, and/or deploying Flex Pool Investment Grant funding for ongoing rental subsidies after Transitional Rent/BHSA sources have been exhausted.
- **Unit Acquisition Costs:** Including rental payments, holding fees and deposits made for vacant units at the onset of procuring units into a portfolio and/or during vacancy periods between placements of program participants.
- **Operating Costs:** For master leasing, master rental subsidy agreements, or similar models.
- **Damage Mitigation and Landlord Incentives**
- **Advance and Reserve Funds:** For Flex Pool operations, including any staff costs.

Technical Assistance Academy 2.0

DHCS

Technical Assistance (TA) Academy 2.0

To access Investment Grant funding, all grantees must commit to and sustain participation in the Flex Pool TA Academy 2.0. The Academy 2.0 will offer flexible, tailored TA from a team of Flex Pool Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who bring deep statewide expertise in housing, health care, and Flex Pools, with support from DHCS.

TA Focus Areas

Assist organizations to **launch, expand, or strengthen a sustainable Flex Pool** model in their locality

Help communities identify resources and partners to establish or further develop their Flex Pool

Provide **strategic guidance** to navigate local challenges and develop tailored solutions

Technical Assistance (TA) Academy 2.0

To access Investment Grant funding, all grantees must commit to and sustain participation in the Flex Pool TA Academy 2.0. The Academy 2.0 will offer flexible, tailored TA from a team of Flex Pool Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who bring deep statewide expertise in housing, health care, and Flex Pools, with support from DHCS.

- Applicants should **be prepared to participate fully** in Flex Pool Academy activities, including:
  - One-on-one coaching sessions with Lead Entities (monthly)
  - All-Academy, One-Day In-Person Gatherings (no more than 2 total)
  - Small Cohort Virtual or In-Person Gatherings
  - DHCS Virtual Office Hours (no more than quarterly)
  - Ad hoc support & resource sharing
- Tribal Funding Partners will be expected to participate in the activities of their Academy team, as appropriate. Academy 2.0 will also offer Tribal Funding Partners their own TA space, such as a Tribal peer learning cohort and one-on-one coaching, in addition to the activities they attend with county partners.

RFA Application Questions and Guidance

DHCS

RFA Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle	Description
Permanent housing is the priority.	This RFA will prioritize investments that lead to permanent housing outcomes, both in your current mix and in where you plan to be by 2028. Identify when interim housing serves as a clear bridge to a permanent home.
Operator partnerships matter.	For the Operational Cohort, we will look for longer-term Operator contracts (ideally five years or more), investment in the Operator's capacity, and a meaningful Operator role in building the budget. If your contract is still pending, share your concrete plan to finalize it.
Focus on your response to challenges.	Name the barriers you face, like high rents or limited housing supply, and share what you will do about them. Honest, specific weaknesses paired with a plan to address them are valued over “safe” or general answers.
Show your evidence.	The strongest answers include concrete support such as data, dated milestones, formal commitments (like budgeted positions or board action), and measurable outcomes. Clear descriptions can still score well, but evidence earns top marks.

RFA Guiding Principles cont.

Guiding Principle	Description
Realistic beats ambitious.	Goals should fit your community's size, stage and capacity, with a clear method behind them. Your plan and budget should be achievable and allowable, with funds encumbered by December 31, 2028.
Be strategic about what your community will fund.	California communities currently face unprecedented uncertainty in federal housing support, threats to Medi-Cal funding for health and housing services, and state budget shortfalls. Your program and budget should explicitly consider this context.
Build your capacity.	We recognize that investments in back office, financial stability, staffing, and technology are essential to operating successful housing programs. We encourage applicants to take advantage of this opportunity to make investments in capacity.

Operational Cohort: Narrative and Application Questions

Narrative and Application Questions (180 points)

Budget (10 points)

Tribal Funding Partner Section (if applicable, allows applicant to qualify for bonus points up to 7.5% of total)

- In the narrative questions section, the Lead Entity applicant should **demonstrate its ability to operate, strengthen, and scale a Flex Pool**.
- Successful applications will demonstrate:
  - ✓ A Flex Pool that offers all four **Flex Pool core functions** and has **defined roles and responsibilities for partners**
  - ✓ An **Operator who is a valued partner**. For example, show investment in the Operators capacity and commitment to long-term partnership in planning, budgeting, and navigating challenges.
  - ✓ A **focus on permanent housing results** (including placement data) and considered approach to throughput.
  - ✓ **Capacity and commitment to serving** individuals with **behavioral health conditions**
  - ✓ A process to **braid and maximize both Transitional Rent and BHSA HI** funding

Building Cohort: Narrative and Application Questions

Narrative and Application Questions (150 points)

Budget (10 points)

Tribal Funding Partner Section (if applicable, allows applicant to qualify for bonus points up to 7.5% of total)

- In the narrative questions section, the Lead Entity applicant should **demonstrate its vision and expected ability to operate a Flex Pool**.
- Successful applications will demonstrate:
  - ✓ **Strong vision of a Flex Pool** that aligns with local landscape and incorporates plans for braiding Transitional Rent, BHSA housing interventions, and/or any local funding sources
  - ✓ **Capacity and commitment to serving** individuals with **behavioral health conditions**
  - ✓ **A goal to be operational by 2028**, including measurable outcomes and milestones such as developing a budget or choosing an Operator; plan the core pieces early.
  - ✓ Process to **leverage Transitional Rent and/or BHSA HI** funding; both are preferred
- Note: A strong early plan can score as well as a launch-ready plan. Show the concrete steps (at least one) that have already been taken.

Operational and Building Cohorts: Budget

Narrative and Application Questions (180 points- Operational Cohort, 150 points – Building Cohort)

Budget (10 points)

Tribal Funding Partner Section (if applicable, allows applicant to qualify for bonus points up to 7.5% of total)

- Applicants should describe **how they intend to use the investment grant** to achieve desired outcomes.
- Applicants should clearly demonstrate:
  - ✓ A **collaborative budget process** with the Operator
  - ✓ **Strategic leveraging of this opportunity in relation to existing funding streams** (TR, BHSA, BHBH reallocation if applicable, and other sources)
  - ✓ Use of funds to **make programs and operators whole** (e.g., identification of barriers to program success and use of funds to solve for these)

Operational and Building Cohorts: Budget

Category	Brief Narrative *(no more than 50-100 words per row)*	Expected budget *(dollar amount)*	Expected Timeframe *(can extend beyond 12/2028)*
DOMAIN 1: Capacity & Flex Pool Infrastructure			
Staff and/or Consultant Costs, Supplies and Materials, Meeting Costs and/or Provider Engagement Costs, Travel or other Costs to Support Stakeholder Participation, Technology, Capacity Building, One-Time Startup Funds			
DOMAIN 2: Start Up and Gap Funding			
Rental Payments and Move-In Supports, Unit Acquisitions, Operating Costs, Damage Mitigation and Landlord Incentives, Advance and Reserve Funds, Other, Indirect Costs (Maximum = 15% of grant)			
TOTAL FUNDING REQUESTED *Up to $6 million (Operational Cohort) or $500k (Building Cohort, Tribal Funding Partners)*			

Operational and Building Cohorts: Tribal Funding Partner Section

Narrative and Application Questions (180 points)

Budget (10 points)

Tribal Funding Partner Section (if applicable, allows applicant to qualify for bonus points up to 7.5% of total)

- A joint partnership statement is **required from the Tribal Entity, the applicant, and the Lead Entity, if different**, to qualify the application for bonus points and consideration for Tribal Partner funding.
- Successful applications will demonstrate:
  - ✓ Intent for the Tribal Entity to work with the partner Flex Pool to **serve and house people with behavioral health needs**
  - ✓ Intent to **design and manage a Tribal referral pathway** into the Flex Pool
  - ✓ Commitment for the Tribal Entity to **partner with the Lead Entity and other funders in the Flex Pools planning and governance**

Submission Instructions

Application Submission Instructions

- The application and attachments, along with submission instructions, can be found on the **DHCS Housing for Health website.**
- Applications will be **accepted electronically only**. Applications may not be hand delivered or mailed.
- **Submit applications by email** to FlexPools@dhcs.ca.gov with the following:
  - Subject Line: RFA Submission [Operational or Building Cohort] by [Name of Applicant Organization]
  - See RFA Attachments A, B, and C for required application content
- The deadline for applications will be **December 17, at 5:00 p.m. PT**.



For individuals with disabilities, DHCS will provide assistive services such as reading or writing assistance and conversion of the RFA in braille, large print, audiocassette, or computer disk. To request copies of written materials in an alternate format, please send an email to FlexPools@dhcs.ca.gov.

Upcoming Flex Pools Investment Grant RFA Webinars

1. **Tribal Funding Partners Webinar: November 17th from 10-11am PST**
   a) For applicants interested in applying as or with Tribal Funding Partners
   b) Registration Link
2. **RFA Office Hours: December 3rd from 10-11am PST**
   a) Drop-in hours for applicants to ask questions regarding the application
   b) Registration Link

Contact & Additional Resources

Please send questions about this RFA to FlexPools@dhcs.ca.gov.

- Explore the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pools: Technical Assistance Resource to learn more about Flex Pools, their key functions, and the roles and responsibilities of partner organizations.
- Visit the DHCS Housing for Health website for additional resources and webinar recordings.

Questions?

