

RHP General Assistance Policy

Rutherford Housing Partnership (RHP) is a small local nonprofit providing urgently needed repairs to the homes of qualified low-income homeowners.

Rutherford Housing Partnership receives funding from community partners and funders to program urgent housing repairs to assist very-low and low-income homeowners with special needs. It's goal is to provide repairs necessary to:

1. Prevent immediate threats to the life and/or safety of the homeowner;
2. Prevent homeowner displacement;
3. Provide accessibility for the homeowner.

This Assistance Policy describes who is eligible to apply for RHP assistance, the rating and selection of applications, the form and terms of assistance, and the rehabilitation process. This document does NOT pertain to families who are selected to participate in special funding programs such as North Carolina Housing Finance Agency's Urgent Repair Program or the Essential Single Family Loan Program, or other special repair programs as required by those funding sources.

Eligibility: To be eligible for assistance for RHP's repair program, the applicant and his/her household members:

1. must reside within Rutherford County;
2. must not have received past assistance
 - a. The residents have not already received Repair Program assistance within the last three (3) fiscal years; and
 - b. Either the new service needed is different from the previous services; or Construction staff determines that services previously provided have deteriorated by normal wear rather than due to the negligence of the Applicant.
3. must be willing to pay back a small loan for the cost of materials;
4. must show evidence of ownership and have occupied the home for at least 2 years;
5. must earn a household income 50% or below the statewide non-metropolitan median household income limits, as determined by household size (indicated by the table below);
6. must have urgent repair needs that threaten the life and safety of occupants;
7. must have a special need – elderly, handicapped or disabled, veteran, single parent with at least one dependent, a large family of more than 5 people, or a child under 6 in a home with lead hazards;
8. must be current on their property taxes and/or be current on a payment plan with the County for any past due property taxes;
9. and must have no other available resources to repair his/her home.

Additionally, our goal is to provide home repair assistance to homeowners who are in need and unable to afford necessary repairs on their own. We understand that some clients may own multiple properties, but our resources are limited and we prioritize those who are in the greatest need of assistance.

As such, we have established the following policy for clients who own multiple properties:

- If a client owns one additional property that generates rental income and that income is their only source of income, they may still be considered for assistance.
- If a client shares ownership of other properties but does not have residency or income on those properties, such as (ie, another family member has primary care of that property), they may still be considered for assistance.

- If a client owns more than two properties, they will not be eligible for assistance from our organization, until they have sold a property and used the equity to address their needed repairs. If their primary residence still has need beyond that point, a family may then qualify for assistance.

Our primary goal is to help those who are most in need, and we believe that this policy provides a fair and consistent approach for determining eligibility for our services. We will always strive to make decisions based on our mission and values while ensuring the responsible use of our resources.

Income Limits for Rutherford County (By Household Size)*

Statewide Non-metropolitan Median Income: \$70,900	Number in Household	30% of Median Income (very-low income)	40% of Median Income	50% of Median Income (low-income)
	1	\$14,900	\$19,840	\$24,800
	2	\$17,000	\$22,680	\$28,350
	3	\$19,150	\$25,520	\$31,900
	4	\$21,250	\$28,360	\$35,450
	5	\$33,950	\$30,640	\$38,300
	6	\$24,650	\$32,880	\$41,100
	7	\$26,350	\$35,160	\$43,950
	8	\$28,100	\$37,440	\$46,800

*HUD Median Income Limits, effective July 1, 2021

Funding Limits: There is a maximum cap to the amount of assistance that a family can receive per *application* which is \$12,000. Once a repair has been completed, a family cannot reapply for a minimum of 3 years.

Additionally, there is a lifetime cap to the amount of assistance that a family and/or house is eligible to receive. Framed homes, including on foundation modular homes, are limited to receiving a lifetime cap of \$20,000 per eligible house and eligible family with an exception for families/homes that qualify for Essential Single Family Rehabilitation (ESFR) Program Funds from North Carolina Housing Finance Agency, administered through RHP or funding that may come through defined and specialized housing opportunities.

Mobile homes are limited to \$5,000 for a single-wide and \$10,000 for a double wide or larger for applicants with a lifetime cap of assistance of \$20,000. Mobile homes are not eligible for ESFR program funds.

Qualification of Home: Homes will also be assessed to determine if repairs are feasible and advisable. Families whose homes are deemed “beyond repair” will be notified via written letter with included alternative referral resources for them. A family may rehab their home on their own to bring it to a level that makes an RHP repair advisable.

Supplemental Funds: Repair funding will be supplemented by funds from other state and nonprofit sources, when applicable, including the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) (\$10,000) and Heating Appliance Repair and Replacement Program (HARRP) (\$12,000), both administered by Community Action Opportunities in Asheville; Area



**Rutherford
Housing
Partnership**

PO Box 1525
Rutherfordton, NC 28139
www.rutherfordhousingpartnership.org
Office: (828) 248-3431

Agency on Aging funding (\$1,500) administered by Isothermal Planning & Development Commission (IPDC); additional materials and professional labor (\$18,000); and volunteer labor through RHP (\$48,000).

Selection & Ranking: Applications will be received, evaluated, prioritized, and selected in a non-discriminatory manner without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status and disability. Applicants receive points based upon where they fall in the following categories: special housing needs, income and housing condition.

**Rutherford County
Application Scoring**

<u>Special Housing Needs</u>	<u>Points</u>
Elderly (age 62 or older)	6
Disabled	6
Veteran	6
Child under 6 with lead hazards in house	4
Single parent with at least one dependent child	3
Large family (more than 5 household members)	3
<u>Income</u>	<u>Points</u>
Income below 30% of county median	10
Income between 31% - 40% of county median	7
Income between 41% - 50% of county median	4
<u>Housing Conditions</u>	<u>Points</u>
Critical Roof Repair (Roof is currently leaking)	7
Handicap Accessibility/Modification	6
Other Critical Repair	5
<u>Time on Waiting List</u>	<u>Points</u>
On the waiting list between 6-12 months	3
On the waiting list between 1-2 years	4
On the waiting list between 2-3 years	5
On the waiting list between 3-4 years	6
On the waiting list more than 5 years	10
<u>Past Assistance</u>	<u>Points</u>
Family has received more than \$15,000/past assistance	0
Family has received \$10,000-\$14,999/past assistance	1
Family has received \$5,000-\$9,999/past assistance	2
Family has received less that \$5,000/past assistance	3
Family has never received past assistance	4

Applications are ranked by total points. In the event of applications with the same total, the length of time on the waiting list will add additional points. If needed, the Rehab Specialist will visit the homes to determine the greater need.

Handicap accessibility needs are also considered as severe housing needs. Rutherford County supports the concept of “Universal Design” and “Universal Treatment” with the intent of improving the quality of housing for persons with disabilities and the need for handicap accessibility whenever possible.

The definitions of special needs populations under URP21 are:

- *Elderly*: An individual aged 62 or older.
- *Disabled*: A person who has a physical, mental or developmental disability that greatly limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. Those considered as disabled receive government disability financial assistance.
- *Large Family*: A large family household is composed of five or more individuals; at least four are immediate family members.
- *Head of Household*: The person or persons who own(s) the house.
- *Household Member*: Any individual who is an occupant (defined below) of the home to be repaired shall be considered a “household member.” The number of household members will be used to determine household size and all household members over the age of 18 are subject to income verification.
- *Occupant*: An occupant is defined as any immediate or non-immediate family member who has resided in the dwelling at least 3 months prior to the submission of the family’s application.
- *Single-Parent Household*: A household in which one and only one adult resides with one or more dependent children.
- *Veteran*: A person who is a military veteran, as defined as one who served in Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard; or as a commissioned officer of the Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or its predecessors, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.
- *Child under 6 with lead hazards in the house*: A child below the age of 6 living in a house where there might be lead exposure (i.e. a house built before 1978).

Client Referral System: Rutherford Housing Partnership is part of a network of social service providers working to meet the needs of very-low and low-income homeowners. As such, it regularly receives client referrals from Hospice of Rutherford County, Habitat for Humanity, Rutherford County Social Services, a number of home-health agencies, the Senior Center, United Way, Yokefellow Service Center, and Isothermal Planning & Development Commission.

Qualified applicants with needs beyond urgent housing issues are referred to any other agencies in the network.

What is the form of assistance that families might receive? RHP works with many different types of funding. Some funding is provided through Federal, State and Local funding that provides repair costs through a forgivable loan. Other funding is through donations. In order to continue to serve families in Rutherford County, we request families repair a portion of the cost of their project.

Types of projects that RHP might be able to assist with include: roofs, ramps, floor repairs, shower modifications, plumbing, electrical and more.

What kinds of work will be done? Repairs that address imminent threats to the life and/or safety of occupants of the dwelling unit or accessibility modifications will be performed by Rutherford Housing Partnership. It should be noted that our program **may not rectify all deficiencies in a home** and is based on the availability of funding.

Water hookups may be considered for households without water. Drilling for water is not guaranteed and will only be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Manufactured homes may be considered for repairs but none older than 30 years old. Exceptions may be made on a case by case basis for families seeking a ramp, or other access into the home.

Housing units do not have to meet any housing codes or habitability standards. However, the work performed under the Program **must** be performed in accordance with all state and local permitting, inspections, licensing and insurance requirements. Also, all work will be performed in a manner that does not endanger the life, health or safety of those doing the work or those living in the home.

Who will do the work on the homes? RHP is obligated to ensure that quality work is done at reasonable prices and that all work is contracted through a fair, open and competitive process. To meet those requirements, RHP will work with a combination of volunteer labor, supervised by our trained construction staff and invite bids only from contractors who are part of RHP's "approved contractors' registry."

When possible, a minimum of three approved contractors will be invited to bid on each job, and the lowest responsive and responsible bidder will be selected for the contract. "Responsive and responsible".

RHP also recruits skilled volunteers and teams of both adult and youth volunteers to provide labor, when applicable, as a way not only to save money but also to tap into the spirit of helping those in need.

What are the steps in the process?

- 1. Completing an Application form:** Homeowners who wish to apply may pick up an application from our office at any time. Applications are available outside 718 W Main Street, Forest City. Applications may be obtained by mail by calling Rutherford Housing Partnership, 828-248-3431; by email to info@RutherfordHousingPartnership.com.

Families whose applications are already on file will be asked to provide a yearly Application Update Form which will be mailed to each applicant. If the form is not completed and returned with one month, applicants will be notified by phone to complete the form. Applicants may choose to pick up the Application Update form at the office, or have a second one mailed to the address. If an applicant fails to return this form within two months, an applicant will be moved from the active waiting list and moved to a "hold" list which means we will maintain their file for two years during which time updating the file would move the family back into the active waiting list. Applications will be removed from the hold list after two years.

- 2. Screening of applicants:** Applications will be rated and ranked by RHP based on the priority system outlined on page Household income will be verified for program purposes only (information will be kept confidential). Ownership of property and payment of taxes will be verified as part of screening. When a new application comes in, it will be evaluated and ranked and put into the project queue based on its ranking.
- 3. Inspection & Work Write-up:** The RHP Construction Team will visit the homes of potential repair recipients to determine the need and feasibility of repairs/modifications. All parts of the home must be made accessible for inspection, including the attic and crawlspace, if any. The owner should report any known problems such as electrical short circuits, blinking lights, roof leaks and the like. The Construction Team will prepare complete and detailed work specifications (known as the "Work Write-up.")

Homes of applicants must be free of filth, public health hazards and excessive clutter and debris, prior to being served by the program. Staff, volunteers and/or contractors need healthy and safe access to all areas of the home. Upon initial inspection, staff will inform the applicant of the existence of any public health and safety issues in the home. Any public health and safety issues must be resolved before any work can begin. Failure to do so within 30 days of notification will jeopardize the selection of the applicant and his/her home for the program.

4. **Explanation of Work Write-up:** RHP staff will present the completed Work Write-up and scope of the work to the homeowner, with explanation of how the program will operate, including discussion of the required Promissory Note, and any potential repayment plans.
5. **Bidding:** For those portions of the work requiring professionals, the Work Write-up and bid documents will be mailed to a minimum of three contractors on the Approved Contractors Registry who will be given at least 10 days to inspect the property and prepare bid proposals. The names of the invited contractors will be supplied to the homeowner. Each will need access to those areas of the house, in which work is to be performed, in order to prepare a bid.
6. **Contractor selection:** Within 24 hours of the bid opening, after review of bid breakdowns and timing factors, the winning bidder will be selected. All bidders and the homeowner will be notified of (1) the selection, (2) the amount, (3) the amount of the cost estimate, (4) any support or contingency costs that will be included in the loan amount, and (5) if other than the lowest bidder is selected, the specific reasons for the selection.
7. **Volunteer team recruitment:** Should the Work Write-up include work by volunteers, the RHP team will line up a group interested in and with the skills needed to work on the project. The Work Write-up will be discussed with the Volunteer Team Leader. The Construction Team will meet with the Volunteer Team Leader at the site. The volunteer group will then select a date to work.
8. **Promissory Note:** The loan will be executed as well as the repair/modification contract prior to work beginning on the project. This contract will be between the contractor and homeowner, with RHP signing as an interested third party. The cost of the actual work and project-related support costs (up to \$1,000) will be included in the loan document.
 - Families who make 0%-10% the area median income, their repayment is 5% the project cost. (Example: a \$1000 project will cost a family \$50)
 - Families who make 11%-20% the area median income, their repayment is 10% the project cost. (Example: a \$1000 project will cost a family \$100)
 - Families who make 21%-30% the area median income, their repayment is 15% the project cost. (Example: a \$1000 project will cost a family \$150)
 - Families who make 31%-40% of the area median income, their repayment is 20% the project cost. (Example: a \$1000 project will cost a family \$200)
 - Families who make 41%-50% the area median income, their repayment is 25% the project cost. (Example: a \$1000 project will cost a family \$250)
 - A family can take as much time as needed for repayment, with a minimum payment of \$10/month.
9. **Construction:** The contractor will be responsible for obtaining any required building permits for the project before beginning work. If a permit is required, the permit must be posted at the house during the entire period of construction. Program staff will closely monitor the contractor during the construction period to make sure that the work is being done according to the Work Write-up (which is made a part of the rehabilitation contract by reference) and in a timely fashion. Code Enforcement Officers will inspect new work for compliance with the State Building Code. The homeowner will be responsible for working with the contractor toward protecting personal property by clearing work areas as much as practical.

The contractor will go over operating and maintenance requirements for any new equipment installed and discuss general maintenance of the home with the homeowner.

10. Change Orders: All changes to the scope of work must be reduced to writing as a contract amendment ("change order") and approved by all parties to the contract – the owner, the contractor and representatives of RHP. If the changes require an increase in the loan amount, a loan modification stating these changes in the contract amount must be completed by RHP, and signed by the owner. If the changes result in a decrease in the loan amount, an estoppel informing the homeowner of these changes in the contract amount will be completed by RHP and conveyed to the owner.

11. Payments to contractor: The contractor will be paid following inspection of and satisfactory completion of all items on the Work Write-up and change orders.

12. Closeout: Once each item outlined in Section 13 has been satisfied and the homeowner has signed a Certificate of Satisfaction, the job will be closed out (fully completed).

Is there a procedure for dealing with complaints, disputes and appeals? Although the application process and repair/modification guidelines are meant to be as fair as possible, Rutherford County and Rutherford Housing Partnership realize that there is still a chance that some applicants or participants may feel that they are not treated fairly. The following procedures are designed to provide an avenue for resolution of complaints and appeals:

During the application process:

1. If an applicant feels that his/her application was not fairly reviewed or rated and would like to appeal the decision made about it, he/she should contact RHP, Executive Director, Mel Ailiff at 828-248-3431 within five days of the initial decision and voice their concern. If the applicant remains dissatisfied with the decision, the detailed complaint should be put into writing.
2. A written appeal must be made within 10 business days of the initial decision on an application.
3. RHP will respond in writing to any complaints or appeals within 10 business days of receiving written comments.

During the repair/modification process:

1. If the homeowner feels that repairs or modifications are not being completed according to the contract, he/she must inform the RHP Program Specialist, Tricia Wheat, by calling 828-248-3431.
2. RHP Construction team members will inspect the work in question. If the RHP finds that the work is being completed according to contract, the complaint will be noted and the Construction Team and the homeowner will discuss the concern and the reason for the Construction Team's decision.
3. If he finds that the work is not being completed according to contract, the Construction Team will review the contract with the contractor and ask the contractor to remedy the problem.
4. If problems persist, a mediation conference between the homeowner and the contractor may be convened by RHP.

Will the personal information provided remain confidential? Yes. All information in applicant files will remain confidential. Access to the information is limited to RHP employees.



PO Box 1525
Rutherfordton, NC 28139
www.rutherfordhousingpartnership.org
Office: (828) 248-3431

What about conflicts of interest? No officer, employee or other public official for Rutherford County, or member of the Rutherford County Board of Commissioners or the Rutherford Housing Partnership Board of Directors, or entity contracting with the county shall have any interest, direct or indirect, in any contract or subcontract for work to be performed with program funding, either for themselves or those with whom they have family or business ties, during their tenure or for one year thereafter.

Relatives of RHP or Rutherford County government employees and others closely identified with RHP or the County, may be approved for urgent repair assistance only upon public disclosure before RHP, the County and written permission from the necessary funding agent.

What about favoritism? All activities, including rating and ranking applications, inviting bids, selecting contractors and resolving complaints, will be conducted in a fair, open and non-discriminatory manner, entirely without regard to **race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, familial status and disability.**