The city and state have released up to $3 million to non-profits so they can hire new staff to deal with the high demand for a rental subsidy program.

Over the summer non-profits, mostly in the Bronx and Brooklyn, were inundated with low income New Yorkers facing eviction and desperate for help. Lines for assistance were starting as early as 5 a.m., and people reported being turned away multiple times. Legal Aid sued the city and state in July alleging that underfunded non-profits were not meeting the demand, essentially blocking people from receiving benefits that could prevent them from becoming homeless.

The money will help groups like Bronxworks, which processes applications for the city's remaining housing subsidy, the Family Eviction Prevention Supplement, or FEPS. The program covers back rent and provides ongoing subsidies for several years.

Bronxworks' Carolyn McLaughlin said the city and state doubled her budget to $900,000, which means she’s been able to hire six people, and expects to bring on another six soon to deal with what she called a record number of applications.

RECOMMENDED LINKS
Give Me Shelter: Families Overwhelm Remaining Housing Subsidy
“It's been absolutely great,” McLaughlin said. “We were feeling really, really terrible about people being in a situation, coming to us desperate for help and we were not able to meet the demand and now with this additional resource we can.”

According to statistics from the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance the need for FEPS has been growing rapidly. In fiscal year 2008, 4,700 households received FEPS. From July of 2011 through August 2012, 9,200 applications were approved. Advocates for the poor say the demand is not likely to let up.

“The economy in New York unfortunately is still pretty dreadful,” said Legal Aid's Judith Goldiner. “So we have many, many more people who need this program and often it's the only thing standing between them and entering the homeless system.”

Goldiner said she was amazed at how fast the city and state responded, adding that Legal Aid will continue to monitor the situation.