

The Home Improvement Programme

The Provision of Standard Grants to Vulnerable Households

The Government of Montserrat recognises that every citizen of Montserrat has the right to adequate housing. Therefore, as part of the National Housing Strategy - Vision 2010, the Government will provide some assistance to vulnerable households to bring their dwelling up to a minimum decent standard for human habitation. This assistance makes provision for vulnerable households to receive funds not exceeding EC\$10,000.00 to carry out essential repairs/refurbishments or finishing works to their homes.

Definition of the 'right' to adequate housing

The right to housing means the Government will ensure that everyone has access to housing resources adequate for health, well-being and security.

In the context of the Montserrat Housing Strategy, adequate housing includes adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regards to basic services all at a reasonable cost.

The government is committed to improving the housing conditions of households living in sub-standard housing without ready access to basic amenities such as an indoor toilet or shower or kitchen facilities or those who need assistance to carry out repairs or refurbishments or finishing (to a dwelling under construction) in areas essential for daily living. Typically, low income and elderly households living in these conditions are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in terms of housing. The government will assist households by prioritising those who are most vulnerable and/or disadvantaged. Every effort will be made to assist those least able to help themselves.

To support the need for vulnerable households to live in decent homes, the Government of Montserrat has adopted the Home Improvement Programme. This programme is designed to assist these households in carrying out essential repairs and refurbishment.

Who is most likely to qualify for assistance?

Eligible households should not have any other house save except where the request will enable the finishing of a dwelling under construction. Applicants will undergo a means test¹ to ensure that those most in need get the required assistance. The following qualifying households will be prioritised:

- households in homes that are in serious disrepair
- households with no indoor toilet/bathroom facilities and/or kitchen facilities
- households required to share toilet/shower facilities with other households
- households in Government-owned temporary dwellings
- where the refurbishment/repairs or finishing will allow individuals within the household to receive support to maintain their independence and remain in the dwelling or allow an individual to be discharged from a live-in institution e.g. hospital
- overcrowded households
- where there is a concern for the welfare of the occupants e.g. domestic violence, harassment or child welfare issues and the assistance will resolve the situation
- To prevent family separation
- Elderly (over 60 years of age) and disabled households

¹ Means testing involves a financial and social assessment of the household to determine vulnerability.

How do I apply?

Applications for Home Improvement will be made through the Housing Unit. To be eligible for assistance under this Programme the applicant should complete in full the Housing Assistance Application Form and include the following supporting documentation;

- (1) Photo identification i.e. passport or social security card
- (2) Job letters/ Payslips for all working persons within the household
- (3) A breakdown of works and costs involved including labour and transportation from a reputable contractor
- (4) Land certificate or lease agreement

Staff within the Housing Unit will collate all applications, assign a unique reference code to each applicant and arrange for the breakdown of works to be validated by the designated Works Supervisor/ Technical Officer. The unique reference code ensures that the identity of the applicant remains anonymous to Committee members except for the Director of Housing and staff of the Housing Unit who has the responsibility for collating these applications.

The Director of Housing will have the responsibility of presenting completed applications to the Committee for consideration.

To ensure equity in the Committee's deliberations all applications presented must have been validated to confirm the amount requested matches the works to be undertaken.

How will applicants be assessed?

The Housing Unit in the Ministry with the responsibility for housing will administer this programme. The Housing and Land Allocation Committee (HLAC) will select recipients based on the approved selection criteria. The Committee will review each application, determine eligibility and rank each application in priority order. The Committee will make recommendations and provide an explanation for its assessment. The Committee shall ensure that a record is kept of its recommendations.

The Housing and Land Allocation Committee will evaluate all applications using an eligibility test that is transparent and equitable.