

**City of Burlington Housing Trust Fund (HTF)
Capacity Grant Application**

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION – Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)
CONTACT NAME- John Michael Longworth, Grant Writer & Foundation Specialist
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NAME OF PROJECT- COTS Housing Resource Center
AMOUNT REQUESTED- \$10,000
ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION START DATE (FOR FEASIBILITY/PREDEVELOPMENT GRANTS)
ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE
TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST- \$813,455.00

Is the applicant a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation organized and operated for the purpose of creating or preserving housing for very low, low and moderate income households?

- Yes
 No

Would the requested grant support the staffing, training, planning, fundraising or on-going operations of a nonprofit corporation, thereby increasing that corporation's capacity to create or preserve housing for very low, low and moderate income households?

- Yes
 No

Is the applicant a corporation, partnership or individual who is delinquent, at the time of application, in the payment of property taxes or impact fees to the City of Burlington, who have been convicted of arson, who have been convicted of discrimination in the sale or lease of housing under article IV of this chapter or under the fair housing laws of the State of Vermont, or who have pending violations of current city electrical, plumbing, building or housing codes or zoning ordinances?

- Yes
 No

Project Narrative

Funding priority goes to projects which respond to requirements of the Housing Trust Fund and the City of Burlington's affordable housing priorities. The Housing Trust Fund Administrative Committee (HTFAC) uses the attached criteria to score projects. Scores are tallied and ranked high to low. The HTFAC funds projects at its discretion.

Please provide the information below in the space provided. It is important to complete all fields. If you need additional space, attach separate pages to your application and title them as indicated below.

Project description (Please briefly describe your project. Specifically describe how Housing Trust Funds would: a) support your organization's ongoing operation and/or b) support the assessment of structural and financial feasibility of new affordable housing.):

COTS Housing Resource Center is Chittenden County's premiere program for prevention, coordinated entry case management, and housing navigation. The staff provide services to single adults and families with children, in the community at large, staying in COTS shelter programs, and after they move into new housing. The HRC staff was reorganized this year to help centralize our prevention, navigation, retention, and housing support staff under a Housing Services Director.

With new private and state funding, we added new housing retention capacity to support households who are leasing COTS permanent housing and those who are securing new housing following an exit from the State's emergency motel program.

Please describe how the organization is currently involved in the construction of new affordable housing:

COTS is currently in the process of building 16 new units of permanently affordable housing specifically for families with children who are either exiting our Family Shelter Program, another organization's family shelter, or emergency shelter in motels funded by the state of Vermont. The facility will be adjacent to our Main Street Family Shelter, providing easy access to the wrap around support team at the shelter, including educational and mental health advocacy and assistance for children.

Please describe how the application supports one or more of the priorities listed in the City's Housing Action Plan:

COTS HRC, itself an innovation within the state of Vermont and now a recognized model for facing the challenges of homelessness and housing insecurity, has also been a hub of innovation within COTS and within the greater Burlington area. Many of the innovations highlighted in *IV. New Approaches to Homelessness in Our Community* were brought to the community by the COTS HRC. We're continuing this work both through renewed partnerships with local businesses to ensure the success of the Opportunity Fund and the Compass program, and through new private funding for emergency needs like moving expenses and retention programming available to every COTS tenant. With support from the City of Burlington, we can continue this solid track record of developing means to prevent homelessness and to successfully accompany households out of shelter and into permanent housing.

Please describe how the application supports one or more of the priorities listed in the City's Consolidated Plan:

COTS HRC is committed to the long-term well-being of our clients, ensuring that they have access to decent and affordable housing, utilizing every available resource for income stabilization and financial security, and having an opportunity to reboot and rebuild their credit and rental record after a housing crisis. We believe that this supports the objective for EXPANDED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES: Empowerment and self-sufficiency for low-income persons to reduce generational poverty in federally assisted housing and public housing. We are continually seeking opportunities to create, nurture, and partner with the sorts of wrap around support that prevent multiple cases of homelessness or housing instability within a family, and from generation to generation.

Please describe the financial need of the requested activity (include a project budget with all sources and uses):

With the inclusive sweep of services in this program, we feel poised to serve a wide range of households, from the point of preserving existing tenancy for very-low and low-income households to creating financial plans, personal support, and tenant habits that help maintain permanent housing in the months and years ahead. Securing adequate support for this program has been a key priority for COTS, since we recognize that the landscape of emergency housing support has changed even more rapidly than we originally anticipated.

Early emergency supports like the CARES act wound down in early 2022, and the subsequent Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program (VERAP) received its final funding from the federal government. The spend down rates exceeded expectations and has led to a rapid wind-down of this assistance. Households with nowhere else to turn are turning to COTS HRC to create a new plan to preserve, enter, or stabilize their housing in the absence of these supports.

The average cost of arrears, back rent, and other financial emergencies are rising in the 30-50% AMI bracket, from less than \$1,000 three years ago to an average intervention of just over \$2,000 at the end of our recent fiscal year. We have asked all our funding partners, private, corporate, and government to help us rise to the challenge of meeting these costs and preventing homelessness in the first place.

Income		Expense	
Source	Amount	Source	Amount
State Grants	\$261,912	Personnel	\$590,675
Smith House Program Revenue	\$16,000	Operating Costs	\$128,983
BHTF	\$10,000	Client Supplies & Activities	\$93,798
Foundation Grants	\$127,500		
Fundraising	\$398,043		
Total	\$813,455	Total	\$813,455

Please describe the negative impact to the community if the request is not funded:

In the most recent COTS fiscal year, ending September 30th, 2022, the HRC had served 703 individuals, including 281 children. Without this vital service in the community, hundreds of households will either lose their current housing, or not receive the support they need to secure and maintain new housing after a period of housing instability and/or homelessness. We know that our prevention programs are one of the key ways we can reduce the need for shelter capacity and to keep more households stably housed.

Please describe how the proposed project supports an underserved and vulnerable population:

A review of COTS HRC assistance data for the last four years reveals that on average 98% of our clients are below 50% of AMI for our area, of those households, roughly 83% are at or below 30% of AMI. While our services are not exclusively for these tranches, a significant majority of our efforts assists very-low and low income households with achieving housing stability. All of our clients are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. 22% of our clients are Black/African Descent, 2% are Native American, 2% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5% are multiracial. Nearly 2% of our clients are Trans/Non-binary Vermonters.

Signature Page

Please check each box that applies:

- X **Good Standing:** I certify that I am in "good standing" with respect to, or in full compliance with a plan to pay any and all taxes due to the City of Burlington.

- X **Certification:** Under penalties of perjury, I declare that the information I have provided, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is true, correct, and complete.

John Michael Longworth

Print Name

John M. Longworth

Applicant Signature

11/17/22

Date