

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

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION
Committee On Temporary Shelter (COTS)
CONTACT NAME
Tamira Martel, Corporate and Foundations Relationship Manager
DAYTIME PHONE & E-MAIL
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NAME OF PROJECT
COTS Waystation
AMOUNT REQUESTED
\$7,500
ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION START DATE (FOR FEASIBILITY/PREDEVELOPMENT GRANTS)
N/A
ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE
Ongoing program
TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST
\$330,888

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.):

Please see Attachment A.: COTS Project Narrative-COTS Waystation

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

Please see Attachment A.: COTS Project Narrative-COTS Waystation

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

Please see Attachment A.: COTS Project Narrative-COTS Waystation

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

Please see Attachment A.: COTS Project Narrative-COTS Waystation

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

Please see Attachment A.: COTS Project Narrative-COTS Waystation and Attachment B.: COTS FY20 Approved Waystation Budget

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

Please see Attachment A.: COTS Project Narrative-COTS Waystation

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

Please see Attachment A.: COTS Project Narrative-COTS Waystation

Signature Page

Please check each box that applies:

- 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.
- 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.

Becky Holt, COTS Development Director

Print Name

  
Applicant Signature

11/25/19  
Date

**Project Narrative - COTS Waystation  
BURLINGTON HOUSING TRUST FUND FY20  
Capacity Grant Application**

*Submitted by the Committee on Temporary Shelter  
November 25, 2019*

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**Project description:** The Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) provides emergency shelter, homelessness prevention assistance, support services, and housing for those who are homeless or marginally housed in Vermont. COTS began in 1982 when a group of concerned community members joined to address the needs of the growing homeless population in Burlington. Today, COTS serves approximately 2,300 people annually through a variety of programs. Nearly half of all COTS clients are residents of Burlington.

This application seeks funding for the Waystation, a 36-bed emergency shelter that meets the most basic needs of adult homeless men and women in our community. The Waystation serves as a refuge from the streets and helps people stabilize their lives in times of crisis. It is the entry point for a variety of services offered through COTS, including assistance from COTS Housing Resource Center's Housing Navigator Team, access to COTS' housing (permanent or transitional) and connections to other community resources and housing through partners such as Champlain Housing Trust, Safe Harbor, Howard Center, and others.

Funding will be used to pay for the day-to-day expenses of operating the shelter and providing services to help stabilize approximately 280 homeless adults. Our goal is to help Waystation clients move toward independence and permanent housing.

**Please describe how the organization is currently involved in the construction of new affordable housing:** COTS is currently not developing any affordable housing units that will be available for occupancy within the next twelve to eighteen months.

**Please describe how the application supports one or more of the priorities listed in the City's Housing Action Plan:** Under the fourth priority listed in the City's Housing Action Plan (CHAP), "New Approaches to Homelessness in Our Community" item 2. outlines the benefits of emergency shelter, particularly as a gateway for accessing programs and services. COTS Waystation program is that point of connection for individuals experiencing homelessness in the greater Burlington area. As the largest service provider for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness in Vermont the breadth and depth of our services and connections to community providers is unmatched in this area.

Drawing on established research in this field, as well as 37 years of experience working with homeless populations, COTS knows that emergency shelter is not the solution to homelessness. It is absolutely critical to provide shelter, one of our most elemental human needs, to those without housing, but this itself is not enough to end homelessness. People become homeless because of many complex factors, including poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, soaring health care costs, and domestic violence. Shelter alone, without supportive services, does not address these factors.

Staff members work with residents to find employment, health care, and affordable housing so they can become independent. We help individuals obtain entitlement benefits and link them to local resources

that help them increase skill levels and income and overcome personal barriers hampering their ability to secure and maintain housing, such as poor credit and/or rental histories or substance abuse or mental health issues.

This is why COTS has designed the Waystation so that guests have their need for shelter met while also receiving supportive services that help them achieve self-sufficiency and stable, permanent housing.

**Please describe how the application supports one or more of the priorities listed in the City's Consolidated Plan:** COTS Waystation helps the City of Burlington positively advance in some capacity, several of the strategies and objectives listed in the City's Consolidated Plan.

Under the CDBG purpose: Decent Housing one of the key strategies is to protect the vulnerable. Homeless individuals face enormous safety and health issues. Without a secure place to be at night, they run the risk of being mugged, beaten, or raped. They face other health issues as well, such as frostbite, circulation issues, diabetes, skin infections, and upper respiratory infections.

The Waystation program provides those without a home with a warm, safe and sober place to sleep each night and a starting point to regain independence. The Waystation is a vital resource in our community for those homeless individuals in recovery trying hard to maintain their sobriety, particularly amid the state's opiate crisis. The emergency shelter provided 365 days a year to homeless individuals by COTS Waystation helps protect some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

The housing assistance provided by COTS' housing navigators to our Waystation guests directly addresses bullet number one under the CDBG purpose: Decent Housing.

- Assisting homeless persons obtain affordable housing;

Although the primary activity of the Waystation is the provision of safe and decent emergency shelter for homeless adults, Waystation guests have access to COTS Housing Navigators (HN). COTS' HN's are experts in housing. Their knowledge and expertise in this arena coupled with their ability to leverage community resources, such as COTS Housing Resource Center to their client's benefit is unparalleled in our area. HN's offer one-on-one support services to guests currently experiencing the crisis of homelessness, to assess and overcome barriers to housing stability. Our HN's help clients prepare for and locate sustainable housing. They provide direct housing assistance through the completion of housing and subsidy applications, addressing credit challenges, and connecting guests to mainstream and available housing resources that will expedite housing. Early in the process they provide targeted referrals for guests to services and supports in the community in-order-to focus on housing. This approach helps ensure a timely transition back to housing and stabilization.

**Please describe the financial need of the requested activity (include a project budget with all sources and uses):** COTS Waystation program costs more than \$335,298 annually. COTS Waystation is the largest emergency shelter for single adults in our area and serves as the centralized entry point to access shelter and services for a majority of men and women experiencing homelessness in Chittenden County.

The \$7,500 requested in a capacity grant from the Burlington Housing Trust Fund would be used for staffing, operations, and client programs.

See Attachment B. – COTS FY20 Waystation Budget



**Please describe the negative impact to the community if the request is not funded:** Over the past five years, the average length of stay in emergency shelters, statewide, has increased dramatically. This reflects the acute shortage of affordable housing in our region.

This lack of affordable housing is one of the most significant factors contributing to the risk of homelessness in Vermont. Although the rental landscape in Vermont is expanding, the vast majority of rentals remain unaffordable for many workers, not only for those earning minimum wage, but also for skilled middle-income workers.

The most recent annual report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition (VAHC), *Out of Reach: the High Cost of Housing*, said the state's current Housing Wage is \$18.18 per hour. This is the hourly wage needed to afford a one-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent (FMR) without an earner spending more than 30% of their household income on housing expenses.

The rental vacancy rate as of July 1, 2019, in Chittenden County decreased to 1.8% from its 20-year peak of 2.5% in 2017. This vacancy rate continues to fall far behind the national average of 4.8%. Our region is more expensive than 96% of other FMR areas in the United States. In the Greater Burlington area, the average rent for an efficiency apartment is more than \$850 per month. To cover this cost, without paying more than the recommended 30 percent of their income on housing, renters must earn \$36,750 annually (or \$17.67 an hour) – far beyond the grasp of many working low-income individuals.

Last year COTS Waystation was a lifeline for well over 280 individuals in our community who were experiencing the crisis of homelessness. The Waystation is a 36-bed, year-round overnight emergency program shelter for single adults. The shelter has 28 beds in the men's dorm and 8 beds in the women's dorm, and is open 365 days a year from 6PM to 8AM. The facility offers guests a spot to store their few belongings, and access to a washer, dryer, and clean showers. Guests work with staff to identify their needs, set goals and access services to increase stability and secure long-term sustainable housing.

Although our shelters at COTS are dry, meaning guests must be sober; the Waystation offers white flag nights (when the temperature is below freezing or otherwise inhospitable), when we permit guests under the influence to stay at the shelter. COTS Waystation staff work in tandem with the local Warming Shelter and the State of Vermont's Office of Economic Services Division to ensure that no individual remains without shelter during inclement weather.

From 11.1.18 to 04.15.19 COTS provided safe and decent emergency shelter for up to four homeless individuals at a time who were referred by Economic Services Division to our Waystation facility. COTS had the following outputs and outcomes for that population during the time referenced above:

- 92 individuals referred through ESD and receiving General Assistance received shelter and supportive services at the Waystation during the performance period listed above;
- 463 bed nights in total during the reporting period were provided for individuals referred through ESD therefore reducing general assistance motel stays by a similar amount during the performance period listed above;
- ESD guests successfully integrated into the COTS program at the Waystation, 76 engaged in housing navigation services and as a result 13 secured transitional or permanent housing.

This program connects people who are homeless with housing resources and supportive services, while meeting their urgent need for safe shelter, food, and medical assistance. This program – and the critical service it provides – are an essential component of the safety net in our community.

If COTS is unable to raise the full program budget, it could result in a reduction of services and/or staffing within this program or in other areas of our organization. A decrease in services and staffing levels could result in fewer households served overall and potentially increased shelter stays particularly among chronically homeless individuals with little or no support networks. We would aim to sustain the program through additional individual contributions, corporate support, and foundation grants from new and existing sources. However in a more competitive fundraising climate, it may be impossible to provide the same level of service with reduced funds and it is likely that services could be negatively impacted in the short-term while trying to secure new funding.

**Impact of our work:** “Melissa”, her husband and their twin girls had lived comfortable for several years in a three-bedroom rental unit owned by a local non-profit housing agency. Unfortunately she and her husband had been having marital problems for some time. Earlier this year she returned home to find that her husband had abruptly moved himself and her two children out of their apartment and into the home of a relative. A few days later “Melissa” was shocked to receive an eviction notice for non-payment of rent from her housing provider. After a meeting with the housing provider “Melissa” found out that her husband had stopped paying their monthly rent almost a year earlier. “Melissa’s” only income was from a part-time job at a local retailer. For many years she had only worked part time so that she could stay home and care for their twins while her husband worked full-time. She now found herself alone without sufficient income to pay her monthly rent, let alone the massive debt that had accrued over the past year. After she was evicted “Melissa” spent the next several months couch-surfing at the homes of friends and relatives and in the warmer months living in her car. Eventually she came to stay at COTS Waystation, our overnight emergency shelter for single-adults. Within days of arriving at COTS Waystation she met with one of our housing navigators and began to develop a plan to pay off her debt, secure permanent housing and obtain custody of her children. Financial assistance from COTS Housing Resource Center helped her pay back a portion of the back rent she owed and with the help of her housing navigator she found an affordable apartment with the local housing authority. With stable housing, she is able to have regular visits with her children in her new apartment. “Melissa’s” long term goal is to increase her income and save enough money to secure a two or possibly even a three bedroom unit and permanently move her children back in with her.

**Please describe how the proposed project supports an underserved and vulnerable population:** The Waystation serves some of the most vulnerable members of our community, homeless men and women with few if any social or familial supports to access in times of crises. Many are struggling with ongoing issues that make finding and maintaining permanent housing a significant challenge. The Waystation offers a safe, caring environment and is the only alternative to the streets for many homeless adults. This program is also a gateway to a continuum of services offered through COTS, such as transitional housing or permanent single occupancy units.

Some Waystation guests suffer from a chronic health conditions (52%); a physical disability (39%); a developmental disability (18%); struggled with substance abuse prior to being admitted to the Waystation; (33%) or a mental health issue (57%) or are recently released from prison (9%). We work to connect these individuals with organizations within our community to provide the appropriate services and supports they need to regain and maintain their independence. As the percentages bear out many clients struggle with multiple disabilities or conditions.

As mentioned above many individuals experiencing homelessness struggle with chronic and/or debilitating medical issues. Prior to admission all Waystation guests are referred to the Safe Harbor Clinic to get a tuberculosis screening. Not only does it help to ensure the health of all guests at the Waystation, but it also means that guests will see a health practitioner who may notice additional health issues. Many homeless people do not have regular medical check-ups so this is one way to connect them with medical care. In addition, COTS has a long-time partnership with the University of Vermont's College of Medicine to provide additional health and wellness screenings and guidance.

More than 8% of the visitors to the Waystation are veterans and 30% of our guests have experienced domestic violence. Last fiscal year, the Waystation provided services to 281 unduplicated individuals, an average of 35 people each night ranging from 18 years old to 81. The two most common reasons Waystation guests became homeless: 1) asked to leave a shared residence/family situation changed and 2) loss of job or reduction in income. Chronically homeless individuals comprised 27% of Waystation guests.

The following demographics represent guests utilizing the Waystation:

AGE: 15% aged 18-30; 30% aged 31-40; 17% aged 41-50; 25% aged 51-60; 11% aged 61-70; 2% aged 71+;

ETHNICITY: 5% Hispanic/Latino; 95% Not Latin;

\*RACE: 5% American Indian or Alaskan Native; 2% Asian; 22% Black or African American; 76% Caucasian; 1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander;

GENDER: 29% females; 70% males, 1% identified as gender non-conforming;

HOUSEHOLD INCOME: 98% had a household income below 2% Average Median Income (AMI) as determined by HUD; 12% had income between 30% and 50% AMI as determined by HUD; 0% had income greater than 50% AMI as determined by HUD.

\*Percentages are of all respondents indicating association with a particular race. Some respondents indicated associations with multiple races. Denominator is all respondents who knew and chose to disclose their race. Percentages listed will not necessarily add up to 100%

## COTS FY20 Approved Budget Waystation

### REVENUE

#### UNITED WAY

UNITED WAY: Chittenden County

UNITED WAY: Other

Total UNITED WAY

-

#### GENERAL PUBLIC SUPPORT

Cookies

Bequests/Planned Gifts

Corporations

Foundation Grants

15,000

General Contributions

220,209

Major Donors

Holiday

Mailings

Other Special Events

Phonathon

Prospecting

Walkathon

Total GENERAL PUBLIC SUPPORT

235,208

#### FEDERAL GRANTS

FEMA

Total FEDERAL GRANTS

-

#### STATE GRANTS

Family Supportive Housing

Family Savings Account

HOP

92,589

Dept Children & Families (DCF)

VT Dept Bldgs & Grounds

State Veterans Grant

Total STATE GRANTS

92,589

#### MUNICIPALITIES

BHTF

7,500

Local, Cities and Towns

Total MUNICIPALITIES

7,500

**Total Fundraising**

**335,298**

#### OTHER

VT Children's Trust

Veterans Per Diem Fees

Program Revenue

Interest/Investment Income

Total OTHER

-

#### RENTAL INCOME AND REIMBURSEMENTS



Tenants Rental Income	
HAP Pmts for Tenants	
Miscellaneous Income	
Total Rent/Reimb	-
<b>Carry Forward Fund</b>	
<hr/>	
<b>Total REVENUE</b>	<b>100,089</b>

**EXPENSE**

## PERSONNEL

Salaries and Wages	224,926
FICA	16,914
SUI	-
Life & Disability Insurance	2,065
Medical Insurance	15,766
Dental Insurance	1,417
Workers Comp	2,327
Section 125 Benefit	1,984
403b Contributions	3,423
Employee Plan Management	723
EAP and COSTCO	528
Total PERSONNEL	270,073

## OTHER OPERATING

Operating Leases Canal St/95N	3,640
Furnishings	180
Infestation avoidance	500
Maintenance & Repair	6,039
Capital Obligation	10,293
Maintenance & Cleaning Supplies	7,051
Property Management Fee	3,777
Americorp/Vista	126
Life Safety & Security	803
Insurance	7,168
Property Tax Contribution	-
Utilities	11,492
Telephone	1,241
Contract Janitorial	3,121
Contract Labor	-
Technology Supplies & Equipment	2,688
IT & Network Support	2,124
HMIS Bridge	-
Office Supplies & Services	279
Printing & Reproduction	-
Postage	-
Dues & Subscriptions	-
Development Event Expenses	-
Volunteer Expense	-
Hiring & HR	398
Kudos	-
Travel	-
Training & Development	-

Board Expenses	-
Legal & Professional Fees	11
Accounting, Audit & Banking	2,584
Miscellaneous	-
Total OTHER OPERATING	<u>63,518</u>
CLIENT SUPPLIES/ACTIVITIES	
Client: Early Education	-
Client: Meals	50
Client Prevention	-
Client Rehousing	-
Client Telephone & Utilities	301
Client: Translation Services	250
Client Transportation	620
Client Rent	-
Client Supplies/Activities	486
Misc. Client	-
Total CLIENT SUPPLIES/ACTIVITIES	<u>1,707</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b><u>335,298</u></b>