

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

<b>APPLICANT ORGANIZATION</b> Burlington Supportive Housing Initiatives, Inc. (BSHI)
<b>CONTACT NAME</b> Sarah Russell
<b>DAYTIME PHONE &amp; E-MAIL</b> 802-540-3265 srussell@burlingtonhousing.org
<b>NAME OF PROJECT</b> Transitional Housing Subsidy Fundraising Capacity
<b>AMOUNT REQUESTED</b> \$7,500
<b>ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION START DATE (FOR FEASIBILITY/PREDEVELOPMENT GRANTS)</b> Not Applicable
<b>ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE</b> Not Applicable
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST</b> Unknown

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**

**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.):

**BSHI seeks funding to increase fundraising capacity to support the Transitional Rental Subsidy Program.** Working closely with the Burlington Housing Authority (BHA) staff, BSHI has identified gaps in BHA's ability to support challenging households with both maintaining their housing and/or retaining federal rental subsidies due to certain HUD regulations. For example, HUD mandates that Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) have standards in place that allow them to terminate rental assistance if it is determined that a household is engaging in illegal drug use while a participant of federal rental assistance programs. HUD also mandates that PHAs deny admission to the program for applicants if the PHA determines that any household member is currently engaging in illegal use of a drug. Thus, vulnerable households may be found ineligible for subsidized housing or become ineligible for rental assistance due to drug use.

The City of Burlington has established an Opiate Alliance to tackle the opiate epidemic which is largely impacting services, law enforcement and quality of life for residents in our community. Access to safe, stable housing is an essential piece of solving the opiate crisis. As we know, recovery is a process that often involves periods of sobriety and relapse. However, current funding requirements aren't structured to provide support during times of relapse. Instead, they impose barriers for our community's most vulnerable households, often single mothers with young children, leaving them unable to obtain the housing stability required to enable treatment and sobriety. We find that when individuals complete residential treatment programs, they often return to homelessness, making ongoing recovery and sobriety even more challenging.

In addition, with waiting lists exceeding two years in many cases, obtaining a rental subsidy in the first place can take time. Homeless families who experience mental health and medical issues are vulnerable to new or relapsed substance use and even may risk losing custody of their children. Housing stability enables home-health services, supportive service delivery and improves the overall emotional health of the entire household.

In an effort to identify creative ways to support these households, BSHI, a non-profit affiliated with BHA, is exploring how to offer *transitional rental subsidies* that would aid a struggling family as they seek to become eligible for a HUD rental subsidy, in one of three ways:

- A household that is homeless which would otherwise be eligible for a HUD-funded rental subsidy, during times when the subsidy is not immediately available;
- A household already on HUD rental assistance, which has been found ineligible due to program violation, such as drug use, and needs to be temporarily suspended from the rental assistance program while they work toward becoming eligible again (attend treatment, etc.);
- A household that, were it not for current drug use, would be found eligible for HUD-funded rental subsidy.

Transitional rental subsidy for a defined period of time (likely six-months or less) would be provided to qualified households enabling a family to either obtain housing to address an addiction or barrier and become eligible for HUD rental assistance or to support a household during relapse while on HUD rental assistance, stabilizing the housing. Determination of eligibility for this transitional subsidy would be made by an independent commission (the Housing Review Team, overseen by VT Agency of Human Services Field Director) and administered by BSHI.

BSHI seeks BHTF funding to support the ongoing fundraising efforts for this initiative. We hope to identify other local, State and national funding opportunities to support transitional rental subsidies, as

we seek to expand the impact this resource can have on especially vulnerable members of our community, in creative, fiscally efficient, and supportive ways.

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

BSHI does not have any current projects aimed at construction of new affordable housing.

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

The Transitional Rental Subsidy supports Category IV. New Approaches to Homelessness in Our Community, Section 1. Strengthen Housing First. The National Alliance to End Homelessness defines Housing First as "an approach that centers on providing homeless people with housing quickly and then providing services as needed... [The Housing First approach] differentiates from other strategies in that there is an immediate and primary focus on helping individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing." The Transitional Rental Subsidy aims to house homeless households quickly without meeting HUD's guidelines with regard to illegal substance use (among other barriers) initially. With support services and access to services paired with stable housing, the household will become eligible for permanent HUD rental assistance (Section 8) much sooner.

The Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA) and BHA administer Shelter Plus Care grants which pair rental subsidy with wrap-around support services to households that meet HUD's definition of "Chronic Homeless"; a very narrow definition. Many households that are homeless in Burlington right now do not meet this narrow definition of homelessness (for example, "couch surfing" does not count) and therefore cannot be assisted by our only Housing First resource. The Transitional Rental Assistance seeks to fill this gap by enabling a struggling, vulnerable household to gain immediate access to rental assistance (housing) and work toward sobriety (or address another barrier) to move into relative self-sufficiency.

BSHI's Transitional Rental Subsidy is directly aligned with the City's Housing Action Plan.

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

In Section AP-65 Homeless and Other Special Needs Activities- 91.220(i), the City's Consolidated Plan states the City will work toward "Helping homeless persons... make the transition to permanent housing and independent living, including shortening the period of time that individuals and families experience homelessness, facilitating access for homeless individuals and families to affordable housing units, and preventing individuals and families who were recently homeless from becoming homeless again".

BSHI's Transitional Rental Subsidy aims to alleviate certain barriers, such as substance abuse, to enable homeless households access to permanent housing more rapidly. The Transitional Rental Subsidy will also enable a household that is currently on the Section 8 Program retain their housing and rental assistance while they work through a treatment plan, gain/regain sobriety and become eligible for a HUD rental subsidy. Through this innovative Program, households do not become homeless (sometimes, again) when/if they relapse. Housing remains stable while supports are put

back in place and stability can be achieved. The household will access supports from a variety of service providers including BHA's highly skilled Housing Retention Team.

By ensuring housing stability, the household can focus on accessing necessary support services. Further, by destigmatizing barriers such as substance use, the household becomes aware that their housing may not necessarily be in jeopardy and they may be more proactive about asking for support services and assistance early on.

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

BSHI seeks \$7,500 to secure fundraising support either from a newly staffed/hired development associate or contracted services from a fundraising agency. This is currently the only source of funding for this project. This funding award will help to create new capacity for BSHI to pursue this and many other supportive, flexible housing models for our community's most vulnerable. The Burlington Housing Authority will match up to 100% of this grant award toward fundraising expenses. BSHI will continue to seek ways it can partner with the City and other agencies to develop innovating strategies for supporting vulnerable households in our community.

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

BSHI currently does not have the capacity to fundraise for this initiative. If this request is not granted, the Transitional Rental Subsidy Program will be delayed until such capacity exists.

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

BSHI's Transitional Rental Subsidy targets very-low income households that are currently homeless or in danger of becoming homeless and who struggle with substance abuse. These households are some of the most vulnerable in our community and without flexible options, will not gain access to or be able to maintain their housing.

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.

Sarah Russell

Print Name



Applicant Signature

11/15/2017

Date

## Todd Rawlings

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**From:** Todd Rawlings  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 15, 2017 1:09 PM  
**To:** 'Sarah Russell'  
**Subject:** RE: BHTF Application

Good afternoon Sarah,

This is your confirmation that I have received your proposal prior to the Housing Trust Fund (“HTF”) Request for Proposals deadline. The HTF Administrative Committee (HTFAC) will be examining all proposals and we hope to have final decisions about the awards by the middle of December. I will notify you as soon as possible regarding the HTFAC’s decisions regarding awards. In the meantime, I may contact you if there are questions about your proposal.

Very Best,

Todd Rawlings  
CEDO Housing Program Manager  
652-4209

**From:** Sarah Russell [<mailto:srussell@burlingtonhousing.org>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 15, 2017 12:47 PM  
**To:** Todd Rawlings  
**Subject:** BHTF Application

Hi Todd,

Please Burlington Supportive Housing Initiatives' Capacity Grant Application for the Burlington Housing Trust Fund.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if there is further information I can provide to you or the review committee.

Thank you,  
Sarah

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Sarah K. Russell  
Director of Housing Retention and Services

Burlington Housing Authority  
65 Main Street, Burlington VT  
(802) 540-3265

