

**Housing Trust Fund  
Capacity Grant Application**

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION- COTS (Committee on Temporary Shelter)
CONTACT NAME- John Michael Longworth
DAYTIME PHONE & E-MAIL- 802-391-9516; johnmichaell@cotsonline.org
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- \$752,292

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 in 2022 to help centralize our prevention, navigation, retention, and housing support staff under a Housing Services Director.

Through a partnership with KeyBank, we are recruiting a Community Enrichment Liaison to enhance the overall wellness and connection to community of our COTS permanent housing residents.

**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.

In addition to this project, COTS has also begun an engineering and feasibility study of our St. John Hall property on Elmwood Avenue with the goal of transforming this primarily SRO housing into apartments. This would be achieved through internal restructuring and some modifications to the roofline of the building to turn all 18 of the SRO units into efficiency apartments, and to restructure the 4 existing apartments to create at least 6 units of housing.

100% of the units in both facilities are reserved for households exiting homelessness and they have portable project-based vouchers to aid with housing transitions in the future.

**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.

We are recognizing that needs are shifting in our local landscape, from households who were primarily experiencing financial barriers, to systemic pitfalls like historically low vacancy rates, transportation gaps, intense mental health needs, and the complex trauma of living in poverty over long periods of time. We’re adapting to these changes and challenges by cross training all our housing case managers on the utilization of both private COTS funds and HOP funding located at CVOEO, and we’re making accompaniment and personal stabilization key features of our prevention programs. The limited number of studies looking at short term subsidies point towards income repair/improvement and access to affordable housing as key factors for long term housing stability after short term vouchers expire. This calls for a more time intensive form of accompaniment for our prevention and rehousing clients, which is expressed in the staffing plan we’ve put forth.

Income		Expense	
Source	Amount	Source	Amount
State Grants	\$378,595	Personnel	\$597,917
Smith House Program Revenue	\$16,000	Operating Costs	\$102,817
BHTF	\$10,000	Client Supplies & Activities	\$91,020
Foundation Grants	\$217,500		
Fundraising	\$169,659		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$791,754</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$791,754</b>

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

In the most recent COTS fiscal year, ending September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the HRC served 572 individuals, including 216 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 vital 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

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.

Jonathan Farrell      Executive Director

Print Name

*Jonathan Farrell*

11-10-23

Applicant Signature

Date