

**Housing Trust Fund
Capacity Grant Application**

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION	The Ishtar Collective (a fiscally-sponsored project of Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs)	
CONTACT NAME	J. Leigh Oshiro-Brantly (they, them)	
DAYTIME PHONE & E-MAIL	347-703-0323	info@ishtarcollective.org
NAME OF PROJECT	Housing Justice Program Capacity-Building	
AMOUNT REQUESTED	\$10,000	
ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION START DATE (FOR FEASIBILITY/PREDEVELOPMENT GRANTS)	January 8, 2024	
ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE	July 31, 2024	
TOTAL ESTIMATED PROJECT COST	\$15,000	

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.):

This grant would build our capacity for strategic planning of expansion of our current housing justice program to include permanent housing. It would do this by supporting the assessment of structural and financial feasibility (and sustainability) to accommodate long-term housing for the communities we serve.

Our vision is to renovate an existing hotel, motel, bungalows, or a B&B and turn it into a sliding scale rental property for LGBTQIA+ people with disabilities who have had experience in the sex trade (either as survivors of exploitation or consensual adult workers). We want this space to be a place where the residence can have equity and build the community they want. It would be an intentional intergenerational space for disabled queer/trans adults to have their own safe, peaceful, supportive, and beautiful homes.

There would also be a community space for jobs skills training, community meals, and continuum of care services. We would provide the opportunity for new jobs for resident community members in areas they might be interested in such as cooking, custodial services, or peer support (onsite in Burlington). We would also have job creation in the form of fresh produce food distributors or transporters that would go from the space in Burlington to/from our existing community farm (which is located in Barre) or to our community refrigerator (located in Montpelier). This would be so that residents can have access to the free nutritious food we already grow. They could give back to others in need and they could also learn job skills by agricultural growing and cultivation on our farm, should they be interested. Further details are in the application questions below.

Because we have a big vision, we need to consult and work with more experts who have direct experience planning a project like this. We are ready to break down our planning and implementation into phases of development in order to stay on track for this process. Enter [Evernorth](#). With the majority of this capacity-building funding, we, the housing committee at Ishtar Collective would work our current pro-bono team (a financial advisor, a legal consultant and real-estate broker) alongside Burlington-based company Evernorth, hiring them as housing planning consultants to help us navigate the challenges and break down our efforts into achievable, scalable and sustainable steps.

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

Since 2020, the Ishtar Collective has had a housing justice program for extremely low-income disabled transgender and queer folks that have experience in the sex trade (either as survivors of trafficking/violence or consensual adult workers). Our current program includes:

- emergency relocation and moving support and assistance for survivors of trafficking into temporary housing
- emergency hotel housing for survivors of trafficking and transportation assistance
- monthly rental assistance for survivors and sex workers

It is from this program that we have identified community members who are poised for long-term housing solutions. We are currently working with a legal advisor, financial advisor, and real estate professional. We developed a housing justice strategic planning vision (made by our housing justice committee) in June 2023 and are connecting that vision to the Burlington real estate market and to funding solutions.

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

This application supports the following priorities listed in the City's Housing Action Plan:

- DH 1.1 Protect the Vulnerable - New Perm Supp Hous
- DH1.2 Protect the Vulnerable New Special Need Hsng
- DH 2.1 Acquire/Rehab - Rental or Owner Units
- EO 1.1 Support Microenterprises
- EO 1.2 Retain/Create Jobs
- EO 1.4 Reduce Economic Barriers - Access Resources

A detailed list of how we plan to achieve these priorities is found in the next section.

Please describe how the application supports one or more of the priorities listed in the City's [Consolidated Plan](#):

This application supports the following priorities in the City's Consolidated Plan:

1. DECENT HOUSING

- a. Assisting homeless persons in obtaining affordable housing-We will prioritize our homeless LGBTQIA+ community members for housing placement
- b. Assisting persons at risk of becoming homeless-Our second placement priority is for those who are chronically housing unstable (crashing on couches or using the hotel voucher services which are about to expire)
- c. Increasing the availability of affordable, permanent housing in standard condition to low-income families, particularly to members of disadvantaged minorities without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, or disability-Because our model is not a shelter, but sliding-scale permanent housing, our residents (who are all sexual and gender minorities living with disabilities) will be invested into the success of their own space, because they will have equity in it.

- d. Increasing the supply of supportive housing which includes structural features and services to enable persons with special needs (including persons with HIV/AIDS) to live in dignity and independence-As folks living with disabilities, we are especially concerned with accessibility. Beyond ADA compliance, we plan on making our space accessible for those of us who are living with autism and neurological differences. This means that overhead lighting will have dimmer features and will not be fluorescent. We also plan on having quiet spaces for decompression, yoga, meditation and with free community yoga mats, blocks, and stretching straps, foam rollers and massage guns. A small and accessible on-site gym area will provide exercise opportunities and residents will inform us of their exercise accessibility needs within their areas of interest. We also plan on providing free HIV treatment and prevention services through PEP and PREP through our on-site nurse, who will do periodic liver testing (for HIV-related meds). That person will also offer free weekly testing services for: STI's, blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol, for early prevention against lifestyle diseases. We hope to have on-site transgender support services (hormone therapy and counseling) and dental care down the road.
- e. Providing affordable housing that is accessible to job opportunities-We plan on offering job training and employment through the housing unit itself and through our farm (transportation would be provided from the Burlington housing center to our Barre farm). We also will have an on-site van to transport folks to/from their places of employment, as well as free community bicycles.

2. EXPANDED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- a. Job creation and retention-On-site jobs training and placement will be offered to all residents that do not have stable income. Leadership development and financial support for professional certifications will also be offered in order to not just create "a job", but to connect the worker with meaningful and sustainable employment.
- b. Establishment, stabilization and expansion of small businesses (including micro-businesses)-Quarterly free employment workshops will be offered in the community area and those employment workshops will be directed by residents through surveys of interest, so that we are connecting our community members with the opportunities they specifically desire in order to expand their own businesses (such as how to sell your art, small agricultural-based businesses, or catering, marketing, administration, web design and social media management, etc. are some interests we have already identified)
- c. The provision of public services concerned with employment-we plan on offering a space for free public service tax-preparation and business registration in our community space
- d. Access to capital and credit for development activities that promote the long-term economic and social viability of the community-We plan on offering microgrants for residents to start or expand their businesses or for professional certifications (food handlers permit, security guard licenses) (\$1,000-\$5,000 based on need)

3. SUITABLE LIVING ENVIRONMENT

- a. Improving the safety and livability of neighborhoods-Our housing would have other components to support a holistic living model which would center safety and livability. Some of these offerings would be free daily, nutritional food (made with our own grown produce), free community computers and workspaces, free weekly healthcare access, free community van transportation for outings and events and for those who need rides to work, harm-reduction kits, as well as community peer support groups for issues such as maintaining sobriety and healing from the trauma of violence and labor exploitation.

- b. Increasing access to quality public and private facilities and services-We plan on having an on-site nurse and social worker at least once per week in our common spaces to help facilitate potential physical and mental health issues, increase access to healthcare in general and connect folks to other public and private services
- c. Conserving energy resources-daily free community breakfasts & dinner meals as well as communal workspaces will conserve energy bills in all units by reduce heating bills and electricity bills

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

We do not currently have any capacity building funding for the next stage of our strategic planning, which would include bringing in outside professionals for a series of planning meetings with our housing committee.

We will be seeking \$10,000 from the Burlington Housing Trust for this month (November 2023) and an additional \$5,000 will be applied for from one of our current funders, the Vermont Community Foundation in March of 2024 through their Nonprofit Capacity Building Program for the final portion of Phase 1: Strategic Planning .

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

We would not be able to move forward in the process. We desperately need to plan the next steps (which lay the foundation for buying the building).

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

Our communities are a hyper-marginalized and vulnerable population. This capacity-building planning stage would directly and meaningfully-involve the experience of the folks who would be eventually moving into this housing community. Three folks are currently on our housing committee and every person who would be eligible for this housing would:

- be extremely low-income (0-30% AMI) or very low-income (31% to 50%)
- be currently experiencing homelessness or immediate housing insecurity
- be experiencing food insecurity
- be living with disabilities
- be LGBTQIA+ (with priority given to transgender people of color)
- have experience in the sex trades (with priority given to survivors of violence, exploitation, or trafficking)

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.

J. Leigh Oshiro-Brantly

Print Name



Applicant Signature

11/14/23

Date