

**Burlington Housing Trust Fund
FY2017 Capacity Grant Applications**

Agency/Organization: Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)

Project: Fund programming to prevent homelessness at the COTS Housing
Resource Center.

Funding Request: \$7,500

BURLINGTON HOUSING TRUST FUND
COTS Housing Resource Center – Capacity Grant Proposal

Submitted by the Committee on Temporary Shelter
September 30, 2016

1. Amount of funding being sought and the number of units proposed for housing projects:

\$7,500

2. Project/program narrative, including a detailed timeline and how BHTF funds will be used:

Background

COTS is the largest provider of shelter and services in Vermont for the homeless or those at risk of homelessness. During the past year, across all of our services, we assisted nearly 2,600 people (including 835 children) through emergency shelter, outreach, prevention services, and transitional and permanent housing. Nearly half of all COTS clients are residents of Burlington.

This proposal seeks funding for the Housing Resource Center to provide programming to prevent homelessness. COTS believes that emergency shelter, while critical for addressing the immediate needs of those who are homeless, is not the answer to end homelessness. This is why we have increased our homelessness prevention services to help keep people housed who are at risk for becoming homeless.

COTS has a successful track record and strong history of positive outcomes in homelessness prevention. Since 2008, COTS HRC has assisted 3,851 households. This translates to 8,810 individuals—including 3,666 children. Over the past eight years our programs have provided \$3.2 million in assistance to 3,851 households, helping them avoid eviction or be rapidly re-housed.

The programming and assistance offered by the HRC is a critical resource in our community and has proven to be extremely effective in preventing homelessness long term. Last year an in depth analysis of client outcomes over the first seven years of the program showed that less than 10% of those receiving assistance required future emergency shelter. Of the 423 households assisted between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016, 91% remained stably housed 90 days after receiving assistance and 80% remained stably housed 180 days after receiving assistance from the Housing Resource Center.

Program Objectives

The COTS Housing Resource Center's objective is to reduce the incidence and impact of homelessness in Chittenden County through targeted, limited, and strategic intervention. We aim to increase a client's financial stability and encourage their fiscal empowerment, by employing a layered approach to helping households develop their budgeting and savings skills as well as improve their credit worthiness. Our goal is find the pivot points and develop approaches for individuals and families where we can intervene to positively alter their trajectories, preventing future upheaval and reducing their risk of homelessness. Specifically, we aim to do the following through this program:

- Eliminate or reduce the amount of time households spend in emergency shelter or motels;
- Eliminate or reduce transitions households with children need to make before securing permanent housing;
- Stabilize households who are recently rehoused or at risk of losing housing;
- Streamline the application process and ease access to services by efficiently coordinating internally as well as externally with community resources and partner organizations, making best use of our unique areas of expertise;
- Maximize limited funds to address needs and achieve successful outcomes.

Programs

COTS Housing Resource Center, a centrally located one-stop resource dedicated to homelessness prevention and housing retention, provides an array of social services. Households in need are presented with a wide range of programs, including financial assistance and guarantees, case management and outreach for families and individuals, on-site and off-site educational and financial training, and linkage to community resources. With help from these services, families can avoid a devastating fall into homelessness, with its long-term effects on financial and emotional health. Our programs include the following:

- **Prevention Assistance:** We offer financial assistance through grants or loans to cover back rent and mortgage payments to clients facing eviction or foreclosure. Loans to cover back rent are offered through a partner credit union to qualifying applicants. The HRC also provides small, one-time financial subsidies to help cover household gaps. Such assistance provides crucial support to help people stay housed, improve their credit, financial literacy, and overall financial accountability.
- **Re-Housing Support:** Security deposit assistance and loans allow clients struggling to move out of shelter or an unaffordable apartment enter stable housing more quickly than if they would have saved for a deposit on their own. We also offer security deposit guaranties to landlords on behalf of COTS clients who lack sufficient credit, savings, or landlord references to enter the rental market.
- **Opportunity Fund:** This privately-funded program provides rental subsidies to working households that risk losing their housing but do not qualify for other assistance. COTS is increasingly seeing households with wage earners who make slightly more than the limit for mainstream assistance (50% of Area Median Income or \$40,950 for a family of four in Chittenden County). When faced with an unanticipated expense, these families fall behind on rent and have few options for assistance, given the income limits for federal funding. For these households, COTS offers short-term rental assistance paid directly to the landlord. Clients also receive supporting services including comprehensive financial literacy training through CVOEO to help them create sustainable budgets and maintain credit.
- **COMPASS:** is a privately-funded program for households that, while able to pay rent, have a damaged rental or credit history that creates a major obstacle to housing. COTS staff work with them on their credit and other issues while providing the necessary financial backing. The COTS risk guarantee pool ensures that if a landlord does have expenses (such as an eviction or extreme damage), COTS will cover costs up to an agreed upon limit. After successful completion of a one to two year tenancy, the resident will enter a standard landlord-tenant agreement. The funds then will be used to assist another household in need.

- **Family Supportive Housing:** is a transitional housing program for families, in partnership with the state of Vermont, Howard Center and Champlain Housing Trust. After a brief shelter stay, families move into apartments master leased by COTS, allowing families to immediately begin restoring their housing credit and landlord references. A licensed clinician from HowardCenter works with the families to help them learn critical life skills, while COTS staff members work with them on budgeting issues related to housing, such as utility and rent payments. This solution reduces shelter stays for families, and children in particular and aims to prevent intergenerational homelessness.

Timeline

The programs listed above are all ongoing. The Housing Resource Center is also doing the following:

Continue and expand community outreach and recruitment of smaller agencies to pool resources and services at the center	ONGOING
Educate day-care centers, hospitals, schools and landlords about why and how to refer people to HRC <i>before</i> they lose housing	ONGOING
Conduct follow-up phone calls to landlords who have tenants in the program in order to measure retention and program effectiveness	ONGOING
Build existing landlord network list; develop extension to database for landlord information	ONGOING
Continue to secure matching funds for the Opportunity Fund challenge grant	ONGOING

Budget

The Housing Resource Center programs cost more than \$465,233 annually. The \$7,500 requested in a capacity grant from the Burlington Housing Trust Fund would be used for staffing, operations, and client programs.

3. Description of the need to be served by the project/program:

In Chittenden County the cost of housing continues to be a challenge for working families. Those households earning between 31 and 60 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), as determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, are feeling the impact of this situation most acutely. For FY16, that translates into a range of \$25,003 to \$50,400 annually for a family of four. Many low-income working households in Chittenden County live close to the edge, paycheck to paycheck. They often have limited savings, or no savings at all. These families also often do not qualify for mainstream benefits, public support, and do not have social networks with means to help them in times of crisis.

The most common reasons people become homeless are loss of job/cut in hours or unexpected expenses, such as car repairs or medical bills. In cases like these, where short-term intervention can be effective, it is far more economical to provide assistance before a household becomes homeless. On average, it costs the COTS Housing Resource Center slightly more than \$1,000 to stabilize a household. To put this in perspective, once a family becomes homeless and comes to one of our emergency family shelters, it can cost as much as \$10,000 to provide shelter and services. By proactively assisting people in this situation before they lose their housing, COTS reduces the number of households in our community who become homeless.

Despite the steady improvement in the economy the working poor in Chittenden County, particularly families with young children, continue to struggle as the cost of living outpaces wage growth. Families continue to be the fastest growing segment of the homeless population nationwide. Based on the U.S. Dept. of Education's most recent count one in every 30 children in U.S. public schools is homeless.i

Homelessness has particularly adverse effects on children and youth including hunger, poor physical and mental health, and missed educational opportunities as documented by the American Psychological Association. The majority of homeless children and their families move several times during the course of a year, which often negatively impacts their schooling and future academic prospects. "Half of school age homeless children experience problems with depression and anxiety and one in five homeless preschoolers have emotional problems that require professional care. Homelessness is linked to poor physical health for children including low birth weight, malnutrition, ear infections, exposure to environmental toxins and chronic illness (e.g., asthma). Homeless children also are less likely to have adequate access to medical and dental care." ii

COTS' Housing Resource Center (HRC) provides a critical safety net to this potentially vulnerable population and is a key aspect of our homelessness prevention mission. The objective of the HRC is to reduce the incidence and impact of homelessness in Chittenden County through targeted, limited, and strategic intervention. We aim to increase a client's financial stability and encourage their fiscal empowerment, by employing a layered approach to helping households develop their budgeting and savings skills as well as improve their credit worthiness. We offer people in need a hand up and hope for a brighter future. Program participants develop and hone critical life skills that help strengthen their family and create a long-term stable environment deepening their connection and commitment to the community in which they live.

4. Organizational budget

See Attachment A. – COTS FY16 organizational Budget

Please note that COTS fiscal year ends 9.30.16. Our FY17 budget will not be completed and approved by our board of directors until November of 2016.

5. Project budget, including a line item breakdown of sources and uses (only if project funding is sought); indicate which sources are already committed and which are pending.

N/A

6. Plan for long term affordability (only if project funding is sought):

N/A

7. Progress report for previous year's funding:

The Burlington Housing Trust Fund (BHTF) provided \$7,500 to support COTS Housing Resource Center for the 2016 state fiscal year (July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016). During this grant period, COTS Housing Resource Center achieved the following outcomes:

During the previous twelve months (July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016), the COTS Housing Resource Center had the following outcomes:

- We provided assistance to 433 unduplicated households; 67% of approved applicants received prevention assistance while 33% received rapid rehousing assistance;

- This affected a total of 939 individuals – including 389 children;
- Of those assisted, 91% remained stably housed 90 days after receiving assistance from the Housing Resource Center and 80% remained stably housed 180 days after receiving assistance;
- Average dollar amount of assist per household: \$1,022.01 compared with an average assist of \$971.96 per household for the previous year;
- Every low-income household that sought assistance from the Housing Resource Center was referred to comprehensive housing resources (such as housing search assistance, free credit checks, and assistance with applications for 3SquaresVT and other financial support services);
- We leveraged public money with private money to provide direct services for clients.

The following story illustrates how COTS Housing Resource Center breaks the fall for people in need and helps them get back on their feet:

“Emma” came to COTS Housing Resource Center (HRC) seeking help for the back rent she owed to her landlord. She had recently been released from the hospital having survived an extremely brutal attack by her spouse. The attack took place at the beginning of the month and subsequently she had not yet paid her rent. Her spouse was arrested and taken to jail. She spent over two weeks in the hospital and lost her employment as a result of her absence and her inability to immediately go back to work due to her injuries. After several weeks, she was cleared by her physician to return to work and found employment in the retail sector. She immediately began working, but she was now more than two months behind on her rent. COTS HRC worked with “Emma’s” landlord on an agreement and provided her with the back rent she owed. They also referred her to other service providers in the community for additional services and support.

i National Center on Family Homelessness. (2014). “America’s Youngest Outcasts-A Report Card on Child Homelessness.” Retrieved August 18, 2016 from <http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/mediadocs/280.pdf>.

ii American Psychological Association. (2016). “Effects of Poverty, Hunger and Homelessness on Children and Youth.” Retrieved August 19, 2016 from <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/poverty.aspx>.

COTS 2015-16 Budget Worksheet

	TOTAL FY 16 Budget
REVENUE	
UNITED WAY	
UNITED WAY: Chittenden County	126,249
UNITED WAY: Other	-
Total UNITED WAY	126,249
GENERAL PUBLIC SUPPORT	
Cookies	8,862
Bequests/Planned Gifts	5,000
Corporations	90,000
Foundation Grants	535,000
Stock Gifts	36,000
General Contributions	220,000
Holiday	25,000
Mailings	214,000
Other Special Events	56,500
Phonathon	187,000
Prospecting	17,000
Walkathon	197,000
Total GENERAL PUBLIC SUPPORT	1,591,362
FEDERAL GRANTS	
Advocacy	48,910
ANFC	52,000
CDBG	8,256
ESGP	-
FEMA	8,000
PEER	62,000
SSVF	-
Reach Up (PATH)	119,917
Total FEDERAL GRANTS	299,083
STATE GRANTS	
CHG (Formerly HRF)	-
Family Supportive Housing	183,334
ESGP	-
HOP	388,273
ESD WamSltr	28,598
Reach Up (PATH)	152,623
State Veterans Grant	-

Vt Education	14,478
Total STATE GRANTS	767,306
MUNICIPALITIES	
BHTF	12,500
Local, Cities and Towns	16,500
Total MUNICIPALITIES	29,000
Total Fundraising	2,813,000
OTHER	
Grant Subrecipients	(74,000)
VT Children's Trust	12,134
Veterans Per Diem Fees	237,000
Program Revenue	33,400
Pay It Forward FSH Allowance	(27,750)
Donated Svc Revenue	-
Interest/Investment Income	65,000
Total OTHER	245,784
RENTAL INCOME AND REIMBURSEMENTS	
Rent - 95 North Ave	-
Tenants Rental Income	353,400
HAP Pmts for Tenants	-
Miscellaneous Income	11,600
Less Rent Subsidized by COTS	-
Total Rent/Reimb	365,000
Donated Equip & Svcs	-
Deferred Grants	-
Carry Forward Fund	107,791
Total REVENUE	3,531,575
<u>EXPENSE</u>	
PERSONNEL	
Salaries and Wages	1,905,745
FICA	142,550
SUI	10,803
Life & Disability Insurance	13,446
Medical Insurance	109,850
Transition Contingency	-
Dental Insurance	12,610
Workers Comp	23,178

Section 125 Benefit	-
<i>Employee Health & Dental Cont</i>	-
403b Contributions	37,940
Employee Plan Management	5,054
EAP and COSTCO	4,665
Total PERSONNEL	2,265,841
OTHER OPERATING	
Operating Lease Canal Street	138,156
Furnishings	5,000
Infestation avoidance	17,695
Maintenance & Repair	145,680
Capital Obligation	60,000
Maintenance & Cleaning Supplies	37,328
Property Management Fee	57,300
Americorp/Vista	30,416
Rent	44,917
Life Safety & Security	12,930
Insurance	41,342
Property Tax/PILOT	6,434
Utilities	110,000
Telephone	14,846
Contract Janitorial	28,200
Contract Labor	37,551
Technology Supplies & Equipment	31,731
IT & Network Support	50,692
HMIS Beidge	10,000
Office Supplies & Services	11,800
Printing & Reproduction	26,783
Postage	14,234
Dues & Subscriptions	3,988
Development Event Expenses	20,000
Volunteer Expense	427
Hiring & HR	7,005
Kudos	4,000
Travel	2,250
Interest Expense	5,678
Training & Development	4,000
Board Expenses	2,595
Legal & Professional Fees	8,000
Accounting, Audit & Banking	51,344
Miscellaneous	2,000
Donated Service Expense	-
Total OTHER OPERATING	1,044,321
CLIENT SUPPLIES/ACTIVITIES	
Client: Early Education Initiative (E	3,696

Client: Meals	4,191
Client Prevention	100,000
Client Rehousing	30,650
Client Telephone & Utilities	11,441
Client: Translation Services	2,350
Client Transportation	5,569
Client Rent	53,334
Client Supplies/Activities	10,181
Misc. Client	-
Total CLIENT SUPPLIES/ACTIVITIES	221,412
TOTAL EXPENSES	3,531,573
NET ORDINARY INCOME	-

