

City of Burlington / 2013 CDBG Application Form

Project Name: Cultural Integration and Preservation Project for New Americans in the Old North End

Project Location / Address: North End Studios, 294 N. Winooski Ave., Burlington, VT 05401

Applicant Organization / Agency: Vermont Performing Arts League

Mailing Address: 294 N. Winooski Ave., Burlington, VT 05401

Physical Address: 294 N. Winooski Ave., Burlington, VT 05401

Contact: April Werner Title: Executive Director Phone #: 802-863-6713

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EIN #: 03-0268765

DUNS #: 107000957

CDBG Funding Request: \$ 8,250

1. Type of Organization

Local Government

For-Profit Organization

Faith-Based Organization

Non-Profit Organization (please provide copy of your
IRS 501(c)(3) tax exemption letter)

Institution of Higher Education

2. **Conflict of Interest:** Please complete and sign attached form.

3. **List of Board of Directors:** Please attach.

Certification

To the best of my knowledge and belief, data in this proposal are true and correct.

I have been duly authorized to apply for this funding on behalf of this agency.

I understand that this grant funding is conditioned upon compliance with federal CDBG regulations.

I further certify that no contracts have been awarded, funds committed or construction begun on the proposed program, and that none will be prior to issuance of a Release of Funds by the Program Administrator.

Signature of Authorized Official

Name of Authorized Official

Title

Date

I. Demonstrated Need

1. Project Narrative: Provide a description of the project/program to be funded with CDBG. (Refer to NOFA for required information in this section.)

New Americans are faced with two simultaneous yet sometimes conflicting needs – to familiarize themselves with and integrate themselves into their new community, and to take pride in, preserve, and pass on their own cultural identity. Our project will address both of these needs in two initiatives. The first is a pilot program we have designed in partnership with the Burundian American Association of Vermont. We will house the organization within our facility for a year and provide the infrastructure and administrative support they need to serve their members. Through discussions between our staff and the board of directors of the Burundian organization, we came up with the idea to pair New Americans with American-born community members to build a cultural support organization that will provide its New American members access to education in several key areas (English language and literacy, driving skills, citizenship, computer usage and access, math skills, homework assistance), personal contacts within the greater community, and the means to preserve their own culture and language by passing them on to their youth and by sharing them with the general public. The second is a scholarship program for all New Americans, in which qualifying individuals will be able to sign up for all classes and cultural events at NES for free or at half the usual price, based on income. This will provide a comfortable environment in which to experiment in finding new interests and interacting with new people. We will create a new regularly-occurring event for all participants in both parts of our project, which will be an English Language Club, a guided social gathering in a casual setting, where the common denominator will be English conversation between non-native speakers at all levels and interested native English speakers from the community.

2. Innovation

a. What new programs and/or services will be provided as a result of CDBG assistance?

The entire project is new. We will open educational and recreational activities to parts of the community who are chronically underserved in these areas due to financial, cultural and social barriers to participation. We will also build a model for a team approach to teaching basic skills to New Americans, linking the acquisition of information to developing language and social skills, and pairing American-born teachers with ethnic-community translators and mentors.

b. How will existing programs and/or services be expanded as a result of CDBG assistance? Use actual numbers to demonstrate expansion.

Currently-offered classes and events will be expanded by new participants, adding 690 participant hours. This creates an income benefit to those who teach the classes and present the events, who are in most cases low- to moderate-income members of the local community.

c. Are there other programs in the community that address similar issues? X Yes No If Yes, how is this proposal different?

Other programs are addressing somewhat similar issues from a different point of view. We are creating an environment where previously isolated individuals and groups gain the skills and confidence to participate more fully in mainstream society vocationally, socially, and recreationally, rather than simply

teaching the skills. We are also supporting the concept that in some situations teachers from the same ethnic group are needed to transmit information successfully to their own people. Most other organizations (libraries, schools, social service organizations) offer classes intended for all refugee/immigrant individuals, with more emphasis on subject material than culturally comprehensible presentation.

II. Proposed Outcomes

1. How will this project/program impact individuals and contribute to the City's anti-poverty strategy?

Individuals will learn needed information and gain interpersonal skills to seek and retain better employment, helping them and their families to move out of poverty. They will also have access to classes and events that improve wellness and quality of life, basic needs of low-income people that are often overlooked. Participants in the Burundian program will be able to request assistance in accessing healthcare, legal, and mediation services that they might have difficulties finding on their own.

2. List your goals/objectives, activities to implement and expected outcomes (# of units, # of individuals, etc.)

Burundian project will include office space and utilities, meeting and classroom space as needed, teachers and peer translators, and administrative support from NES staff to provide services to its members and to build the capacity of the Burundian American Association to function effectively and independently in the future. Requested funds will cover one class a week with paid teacher and paid peer interpreter, and two or more additional classes with volunteer teachers and/or peer leaders. This will result in 150 class hours per year which would involve all members of the Burundian community (116 association members and approximately 50 more living locally) in one or more series of classes. NES staff will assist Burundian leaders in grant writing to provide funds for additional teaching hours and for 4 more computers, for teaching purposes and for use of members who do not have computers at home.

The scholarship program will offer financial and organizational support for underserved, low-income New Americans so they can pursue their interests in cultural and wellness activities that happen at NES. We will be able to offer free classes to 40 individuals of extremely low income (at an average of 9 sessions per person) and half-price classes to 20 individuals of low income (at an average of 12 sessions per person).

III. Experience / Organizational Capacity

1. What is your agency's mission, and how do the proposed activities fit with your mission?

The Vermont Performing Arts League was formed in 1978 to increase understanding between people of different backgrounds by the sharing and appreciation of each other's cultures. Our most recent project has been the development of North End Studios to provide a community cultural center in the heart of Vermont's most diverse neighborhood, Burlington's Old North End, which welcomes all

members of the community and strives to eliminate financial, cultural, and social barriers to participation.

2. How long has your agency been in operation?

We have been functioning since before our incorporation in 1978, creating a variety of programs over the years to further our goals of international understanding through the sharing of cultures. These included two performing groups (FolKids of Vermont and Green Mountain Volunteers) that shared American culture with audiences here and in dozens of countries around the world, and the Vermont International Festival, a large-scale annual event which brings together and celebrates the many cultures that have become part of Vermont’s identity. In 2007, we opened the first phase of what is now North End Studios, a 20’x30’ multi-purpose space appropriate for classes, meetings and small community gatherings. In early 2011, a much larger space in the same building, which formerly housed the Imani Center, became available. After extensive renovation, we opened Studio A, a flexible venue that can hold up to 200 people, in Sept. of 2011. The original space became Studio B, which can hold 50. Finally, we had the facility we needed to create a center for community activity in the Old North End.

3. What programs and services do you offer?

- Classes in ethnic and social dance, fitness, yoga, and other wellness activities
- Rental space for concerts, community gatherings of all kinds and private parties
- After-school programs in performing arts and fitness activities, in partnership with neighborhood schools
- Monthly international dinner series for the public highlighting the cultures and cuisines of ethnic groups that have settled in the Burlington area
- Individual and group mentoring in the performing arts for New American youth and adult groups
- Access to rehearsal space for culturally diverse performing groups
- Participation in Vermont International Festival for groups and individuals involved in cultural programs

4. If you plan to pay for staff with CDBG funding, describe what they do in relation to the specific service(s) / activity(ies) in your Project Narrative.

Specific Service / Activity	Position/Title	Work Related to CDBG-Funded Activity	# of Hours per Week spent on this Specific Service / Activity	% of Hours per Week spent on this Specific Service / Activity to be paid with CDBG
Classes for Burundian community	Specialist/ teachers	Conduct classes in conjunction with peer interpreter	1	100%
Classes for Burundian community	Peer interpreters	Provide translation and explanation for specialist/ teachers	1	100%

5. Explain how your agency has the capacity to carry out the proposed activity (i.e., staff qualifications and years of experience related to this type of activity, etc.)

Our executive director, April Werner, and artistic director, Ben Bergstein, are the founders of the organization and have designed and initiated all programs, coordinating staff and volunteers to insure their successful completion for 35 years. Over this time, they have forged invaluable relationships with key individuals and organizations in education, social services, the arts, and the many ethnic and cultural groups that have been established in this area. They have travelled extensively internationally, both with the performing groups and for their craft import business, and developed competency in adapting to cultural differences in the many countries they spent time in. Ben taught for 25 years in Vermont schools as an artist-in-residence in international dance and culture, and April provided health care access to many refugees and immigrants through her work at the Community Health Center of Burlington. Our office manager Stephanie Shoet has been with us for 3 years, helping to build North End Studios into an active and vibrant part of the community. She works with potential space users and supports their efforts to run successful activities. She also conducts fitness classes at NES. A consultant who will work with us on the Burundian portion of this grant is Kim McRae, a PhD candidate at UVM who has extensive experience working with women's groups, diversity issues and refugee organizations in Burlington.

6. **Have you received Federal or State grant funds in the past three years?** Yes No
 Vermont Arts Council 2-year Organization Support Grant - current
 Vermont International Festival event grant in 2011

7. **Were the activities funded by these sources successfully completed?** Yes No
If No, please explain:
 2011 grant completed successfully; 2012-13 grant is ongoing

IV. Proposed Low & Moderate Income Beneficiaries / Commitment to Diversity

1. **Will the program target any specific group of people? (check one below):**

- Abused Children Elderly (62 years +) People with AIDS
 Battered Spouses Homeless Persons Illiterate Adults
 People with Severe Disabilities

2. **For your proposed project, please estimate how the Burlington residents will break out into the following income categories.**

Service / Activity	Unduplicated Total # of Burlington HH / Persons to be Served	# Extremely Low-Income	# Low-Income	# Moderate-Income	# Above Moderate-Income
Burundian Community Pilot Project	116	74	38	4	0
Scholarship Participation Project	60	40	20	0	0

3. **Explain how the target population is selected, qualified and monitored.**

The entire Burundian community of Burlington is included, as qualified by the Burundian Association. They have been screened for income eligibility by the Association in preparation for this application. Other low-income refugees and immigrants will fill out eligibility questionnaires which will provide necessary income information.

4. How do you ensure that your programs are accessible to all, inclusive and culturally appropriate?

We promote the programs through our website and Facebook locations and standard media outlets, but are aware that these methods only reach a small percentage of refugees and immigrants. We reach out to these populations through their individual ethnic organizations and the larger social service agencies and public schools that serve them. By seeking funding to subsidize participation, we remove financial barriers to access. By consulting closely with all participating ethnic organizations, we make sure that the programs are both culturally appropriate and relevant to their constituents. We are seeking funding from other sources to expand the scholarship program to include other low-income members of the community who are not refugees or immigrants.

5. What steps has your organization/board taken in the past year to become more culturally competent?

Through regular contact and interaction with individuals and organizations from a variety of cultures, we are continually increasing our cultural understanding and competence. It is an integral part of what we do here. When specific instances take place where we need clarification, we promptly address our questions to leaders of the relevant group.

V. Budget / Financial Feasibility

1. Project Budget

Line Item	CDBG Funds	Other	Total
Rent and Utilities for Burundian Association	\$ 2160	\$ 1800	\$ 3960
Teaching Services	\$ 2250	\$ 0	\$ 2250
Class fee subsidies for scholarships	\$ 3840	\$ 0	\$ 3840
Administrative support wages	\$ 0	\$ 2000	\$ 2000
TOTALS	\$8250	\$ 3800	\$ 12050

2. Funding Sources

	Project		Agency	
	Current	Projected	Current	Projected
CDBG	\$ 0	\$ 8250	\$ 0	\$ 8250
State (specify) <i>Vermont Arts Council</i>		500	2000	2000
Federal (specify)		0	0	0
United Way		0	0	0
Private (specify) <i>IBM Community Grant</i> <i>New Grant Applications in 2012 – to include HavMarket Fund, Staples, TD Bank</i>		1000	3000	3000 + 5000
Program Income		960	86977	95000
Other (specify) <i>Agency funds</i>		1340		
Total	\$ 0	\$ 12050	\$ 91977	\$ 113,250

3. Of the total project cost, what percentage will be financed with CDBG?

$$\frac{\$ \underline{8250}}{\text{CDBG Funding}} \div \frac{\$ \underline{12050}}{\text{Total Project Cost}} = \underline{68} \% \text{ Percentage}$$

4. Of the total project cost, what would be the total cost per person?

$$\frac{\$ \underline{8250}}{\text{CDBG Funding}} \div \frac{\underline{210}}{\# \text{ Proposed Beneficiaries}} = \$ \underline{39.28} \text{ Cost Per Person}$$

5. Why should CDBG resources, as opposed to other sources of funding, be used for this project?

We have created a community gathering place to serve a particularly needy Burlington neighborhood, and we have received immediate acceptance, enthusiasm and appreciation from a diverse group of local people. We seek long-term city and CDGB support for our activities in order to be a stable and accessible resource for all low- and moderate-income residents in this area. CDGB funding will be a small but significant part of our fundraising and revenue-generating plan.

6. Describe your use of community resources. Include any resources not listed in your budget.

Because we have such a varied schedule of activities at NES, many people with a great variety of talents and interests take part. They are our greatest community resource, and we carefully follow up on all offers of assistance and cooperation. We also maintain ties with educational institutions, arts councils, the media, and other organizations that share our interests in cultural preservation, education and the arts to facilitate collaborations and targeted promotion of events.

7. Has your organization experienced any significant changes in funding levels during the past year? Yes No If Yes, please explain.

Since the Studio A facility has been open only a year and a half, our program-generated income has been growing steadily as we utilize our spaces more fully. We have only just begun our efforts to attract outside funding, and have seen positive results so far. We will work toward increasing our funding from governmental, corporate and private sources. This will allow us to fulfill our commitment to serve our entire local community, without financial barriers to participation.

8. What cost-cutting measures has your organization implemented?

We carefully monitor heat and air conditioning usage to contain costs. We adjust our rental policies and fee structures as needed to make sure rental customers are covering all the costs they incur by holding events here. We continually look for ways to increase our use of the internet for promotion and communication to contain costs of public relations.

VI. Community Support / Participation

1. What other organizations or key individuals (if any) have given support to this project?

The Burundian American Association of Vermont board of directors

2. How are the community or program participants involved in decision-making and/or identifying the program need, design and/or evaluation?

The Burundian Association has been an integral part of identifying needs, project design and decision-making for the portion of the project that relates to their organization. Feedback will be gathered verbally or in writing from all individuals who participate in either part of the project.

VII. Readiness to Implement

1. Is the project ready to begin on July 1, 2013 and be completed by June 30, 2014?

Yes No

2. List any conditions (i.e., obtaining permits, availability of other funding, etc.) that may affect your ability to begin or complete this project.

None.

VIII. Impact / Evaluation

1. Describe how this project will effectively measure outcomes.

Surveys will be designed to assess starting competencies and progress achieved toward specific goals. Closing interviews will give participants a chance to express subjective opinions of their experiences. Attendance records will be kept to measure commitment and encourage continuity if necessary.

2. What strategies will you implement to collect the data necessary to analyze your results?

Since many adult Burundians and members of other refugee groups as well have not had access to education in their homeland or refugee camps, they are not literate in either their native language or English. Surveys will be administered verbally by bilingual peers at the beginning and end of the project. For participants with sufficient English skills, written surveys will also be available.

3. How are clients better off as a result of your program?

We have been conducting portions of the proposed activities on an informal basis over the past year and a half, and have found that refugee youth and adults have been very appreciative of the opportunities they have had at the North End Studios to explore their own educational and artistic goals. By formalizing the programs and evaluating their effectiveness, we will get specific information on the benefits that participants derive from their experiences.

IX. Sustainability

1. How will this project have a long-term benefit to the City of Burlington? If this project ends, will that benefit continue?

The benefit of this program to the City is to provide opportunities to low-income refugees and immigrants to gain skills that will help them participate more fully in the life of this community - skills that will increase their employment potential, their social interactions beyond their own ethnic community, and their individual development and satisfaction through education. In the case of the Burundians, and other ethnic groups that might follow this model in the future, during the first 8 months of their resettlement they receive financial and logistical support to arrange housing, employment, medical care, and other social services. After 8 months, there is an abrupt drop-off in services, but the need for ongoing support remains. We intend to provide a place where motivated individuals can find activities that will help fill their needs and further their goals. At the same time we offer the general population ways to interact with and learn from the newest members of our community, contributing to a more tolerant and welcoming environment for all. These benefits have already become evident from the North End Studios' regular programs, and will continue in those programs and others we design in the future. General organization support is currently provided by small grants from the Vermont Arts Council and IBM, and more grants will be applied for.

2. Provide evidence of long-term support for this project.

In the 16 months since we opened Studio A, we have been gratified by the enthusiastic response from participants and active involvement from other community organizations serving the same populations. These organizations include the Burlington School Department Afterschool Programs, the Association of Africans Living in Vermont, the Vermont Refugee Relocation Program, Diversity Rocks, and the Congolese, Bhutanese, Bosnian, Somali Bantu, Burundian and other ethnic associations. These individuals and organizations have repeatedly expressed their interest in increasing levels of partnership and cooperation in the future. As an example, the Integrated Arts Academy, our closest neighborhood school, started off doing afterschool programs at NES, and is now working with us to create programs for school-day activities in our facility and parent/student events after hours.

3. If CDBG funding ends, will the project be able to continue?

The community cultural center in Studio A has been functioning for less than a year and a half, and has already achieved considerable success at attracting funds. Our board and staff will be intensifying this effort to insure that our programs will be able to continue and grow. In addition, NES generates the greatest part of its revenue from space use fees and rentals, which can help fund programs as well.