

Request for Proposals
Housing and Services for Vermont's Most Vulnerable Residents.
March 10, 2021

Issued by Vermont Housing & Conservation Board and Vermont Housing Finance Agency

Overview

Affordable housing owners and managers and homeless shelter providers are serving very low-income tenants who increasingly need support services to remain stably housed. These residents include households who have experienced chronic homelessness, are at risk of homelessness, and families with children. They often present with significant needs, including chronic mental illness, substance use disorder, and other complexities.

There is significant concern among housing and shelter providers that, given the increasing needs of vulnerable residents, services are not sufficient on a statewide basis. There are numerous examples of local, effective solutions for service delivery but these solutions are often siloed geographically (i.e. only available in the largest city of a county) or programmatically (i.e. services for individuals exiting a corrections facility).

In 2020, stakeholders (see below) have been meeting monthly to share their experience providing housing for vulnerable residents and discussing how they are helping to provide or manage services. These providers have a deep understanding of their community and a commitment to ensuring the residents they house are well served. These conversations reveal significant challenges facing Vermont's service delivery system but also the opportunity to enact savings through strategic statewide investment in ongoing community-based service delivery and housing retention services. This RFP is intended to identify a consultant who will translate the collective experience of housing and shelter providers into an actionable policy agenda.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders are:

- Residents of nonprofit affordable housing and emergency shelters
- Emergency shelter providers
- Nonprofit affordable housing organizations
- Public Housing Authorities
- Designated mental health agencies
- Specialized housing and service providers
- Intermediaries and funders: Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
- Continuums of Care: Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness, Chittenden County Homeless Alliance

Policy areas

Stakeholders have identified three policy areas needing further expansion:

- 1) Increase the number of residents in emergency shelter and affordable housing that have meaningful and ready access to supportive housing services, including but not limited to comprehensive clinical mental health services, services for individuals with substance use disorder, and/or housing retention and eviction prevention support services. Current experience of shelter and housing providers shows

that readily available services are not fully meeting all the needs, and this is contributing to housing insecurity.

- 2) Explore programs (Medicaid and possibly others) that allow for payment of population-based health services within affordable housing properties to demonstrate the value of housing in lowering health care costs and improving health outcomes for residents.
- 3) Work with Vermont's Agency of Human Services (AHS) to develop an effective and equitable system for consistent statewide deployment of housing retention services.

Scope of Work

The Consultant will facilitate conversations among stakeholders and also provide programmatic leadership to determine what Vermont needs to change to more effectively provide services and how that change can be actualized. Activities include:

- Administration and Facilitation
 - Coordinate and facilitate steering committee and stakeholder meetings.
 - Coordinate routine engagement with VHCB and VHFA on project status.
 - Convene listening/engagement session(s) with residents of nonprofit affordable housing and emergency shelters.
 - Monitor AHS process for renewal of Global Commitment agreements with the Center for Medicaid/Medicare Services.
- Problem Identification
 - Summarize need and scope of problem and solutions. This may require interviewing housing, shelter, and service providers if the consultant is not already well-versed in the current landscape across Vermont.
 - Survey non-VT jurisdictions for specific models of funding services to support housing retention and homeless prevention. These models should focus on those with the potential to work in Vermont, are replicable, and not already implemented statewide.
 - Survey VT and non-VT jurisdictions for other models of funding services, including operations, delivery systems, and appropriations.
 - Through engagement in the Global Commitment process determine feasibility of allowing population-based support services as Medicaid expenses.
- Craft Response
 - Develop a policy brief on how Medicaid or other AHS funding could be expanded to further reduce and prevent homelessness and improve cost effectiveness in delivering health care in Vermont.
 - Prepare brief (2-4 page) action plan that proposes short- and mid-term policy and funding goals, using the policy areas described above as a starting point.
 - Develop a plan for engaging legislators and AHS department leadership. Provide support for meeting organization and follow-up.
- Potential Next Steps
 - Prepare final report to evaluate progress, setbacks, next steps. Consultant may be engaged to support further implementation.

- Develop proposals to expand programs to demonstrate the effectiveness of funding integrated housing with services.
- In consultation with the Steering Committee, prepare an RFP for a consultant to conduct a study to quantify the impact of providing comprehensive services for the residents of affordable housing on Medicaid, the health care system, and programming offered through AHS.

Period of Performance

Final report will be submitted in draft form to the steering committee by September 1, 2021 and the final report by October 1, 2021. Draft format is flexible and exact delivery dates are negotiable.

Response Timeline:

1. Wednesday March 10, 2021 – RFP issued; open period for written questions, submit to ian@vhcb.org.
2. Monday March 22, 2021 – Close period for questions from RFP bidders.
3. Monday March 29, 2021 – Responses to bidder questions will be posted anonymously along with funders’ responses on the VHCB website
4. Wednesday April 7, 2021 – Electronically submit by end of business day proposal to: ian@vhcb.org

Available Funds:

Up to \$20,000 is available for the project.

Proposal format:

Proposals must include the following information.

1. A description of the approach to be used to accomplish the activities outlined above.
2. Brief narrative describing your understanding of the problem proposed by this RFP.
3. A brief description of the experience, qualifications, responsibilities and per diem rate for all contributing personnel.
4. An all-inclusive maximum proposed price to perform the desired work. Include direct and indirect costs, usual and customary expenses, and time estimates for contributing personnel.
5. Confirm or rebut period of performance.
6. The names of three references from past clients or associates, including a description of the relationship to reference, email address, and telephone number for each. If there is a link to a written report, please share.

Evaluation of Proposals: Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Qualifications and experience of the principals who would be conducting the activities and preparing recommendations and reports.
- Proposer’s understanding of the work to be performed and prior experience with similar projects.
- Quality and clarity of proposal in addressing scope and goals.
- Ability to meet timeframe of the proposed project.
- Hourly and all-inclusive rate.

Selection Process: VHCB and VHFA will evaluate proposals. The highest evaluated proposers may be invited to discuss their proposals and qualifications prior to awarding the contract. VHCB and VHFA expects to make a final selection by April 21, 2021.

Attachment: Notes from recent meetings of stakeholders are available upon request, ian@vhcb.org.