



October 1, 2022

Mr. Josh Arneson, Town Manager
Town of Richmond
PO Box 285
Richmond, VT 05477

Dear Mr. Arneson:

The Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) would like to submit a request for \$1,000 from the Town of Richmond for fiscal year 2022-2023. In the most recent fiscal year, COTS served 3 households including 6 children in Richmond.

In the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2022 Out of Reach report, it is clear that there are no states within the US where an individual can work 40 hours per week at the minimum wage and afford a modest 1-bedroom apartment. In the greater Burlington area, renters must work an average of 71 hours per week at Vermont's current minimum wage to afford a one-bedroom apartment.

This year's report, also states that a Vermont worker would need to earn \$23.40 per hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment. In the greater Burlington area, workers would need to earn \$28.85 to afford a 2-bedroom apartment. This figure is known as the Housing Wage, the hourly wage a household must earn while working full time to afford a decent apartment at fair market rent, while spending no more than 30% of their income on housing expenses. This data from 2022 highlights the already challenging environment for low-income families trying to maintain safe and affordable housing.

The rental vacancy rate in Chittenden County is 0.9%, far behind the national average of 5.8%. Our region is more expensive than 96% of other Fair Market Rate areas in the United States. More than 7,500 local households, many working families with young children, allocate more than 50% of their income to housing costs, putting them one paycheck away from financial disaster.

The lack of supply in our area increases monthly rents, creating a crisis of unsustainability where previously secure renters and homeowners alike teeter on the verge of homelessness. Each year, through private and public funding, COTS helps hundreds of households avert the crisis of homelessness through prevention. In the prior state fiscal year, we helped 1,358 people (including 327 children) avoid homelessness by providing financial assistance and services. Private support, like that requested through the Town of Richmond is a critical and much-needed resource, as it specifically helps those at-risk, households who are often not eligible for homelessness prevention and rehousing assistance made possible through state and/or federal programs.

We are profoundly aware of the impending cessation of many state and federal supports for at risk households. CARES housing vouchers and in-home retention case management ended on July 1, 2022, and we anticipate additional housing navigation needs as households attempt to convert them into Section 8 vouchers or are forced to relocate if their new voucher is insufficient to maintain their current housing. In October of 2022, we will see the unwinding of the VERAP housing support program, giving many households as little as 12 months to replace that support and leaving thousands of households in need of emergency support or housing navigation.

This past year, the COTS Housing Resource Center provided prevention support to 43 households, including 45 children. We provided re-housing support to 83 households, including 45 children, and housing navigation services to 149 households, including 144 children.

We know that the key to ending homelessness is intervening with people experiencing crises before they show up at the shelter door. For more than decade, COTS Housing Resource Center (HRC) has demonstrated the impact and benefits of homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing services. Interventions through this program are truly making a difference, as the following client experience demonstrates:

Kent is a 61-year-old man. Kent was homeless for 4 years in multiple shelters around Vermont prior to coming to Chittenden County in February 2021. Kent was placed in a motel and began working with a COTS housing navigator. He entered Coordinated Entry and applied for all housing waitlists. Kent is a highly vulnerable individual and was prioritized for a BHA subsidized unit. However, he was denied due to a criminal charge several years ago. In September, a COTS housing navigator supported Kent in appealing the denial and connecting him to supportive services for retention once housed.

In December Kent was officially approved and offered a BHA subsidized unit. He applied for a security deposit and his portion of first month's rent, both were approved. Kent also received a move in basket of supplies for his first home in several years, as well as furniture through the Rapid Resolution Housing Initiative. The building Kent is in has a SASH program and he is excited for his daughter, who lives in Barre, to come and visit in his new home!

In addition to our prevention programs, COTS provides emergency shelter, outreach, and transitional and permanent housing to people in need. During the recent state fiscal year across all of our programs and services, we assisted 1,358 individuals, including 303 children and had the following outputs:

- COTS provided a safe, warm place for 25 families (including 55 children) at our emergency family shelters;
- Our Housing Resource Center helped 126 low-income households (90 of whom were children) experiencing financial crisis avert homelessness and stay in their housing or become rapidly rehoused;
- Our housing navigation team provided housing search assistance for 252 individuals and 83 families in shelter and the community;
- We served approximately 268 unduplicated individuals at our Daystation, a daytime shelter offering a free daily meal and access to additional support services;
- COTS provided overnight emergency shelter and a refuge from the streets for 139 single adults;
- COTS supported 426 household in local motels, including 62 children.
- COTS provided 98 units of affordable housing to meet the needs of individuals and families, as well as special populations such as senior, veterans and those with disabilities.

We greatly appreciate the support we received from the Town of Richmond last year and in years past, which helps ensure that our programs remain open and available to everyone who needs help. We respectfully request your support once again as we continue to serve those in our community who are homeless or who are at great risk of becoming homeless.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



John Michael Longworth
Grant Writer & Foundation Specialist

Town of Richmond

Request for Special Appropriations

Request for Fiscal Year: 2024

Organization's Name: Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS)

Address: 95 North Ave Burlington, VT 05402

Website address: www.cotsonline.org

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Program Name: COTS General Operations Support
2. Contact Person/Title: John Michael Longworth, Grant Writer & Foundation Specialist

Telephone Number: (802) 540- 3084 ex 208

E-mail address: johnmichaell@cotsonline.org

3. Total number of individuals served in the last complete fiscal year by this program:
During the recent state fiscal year across all our programs and services, we assisted *1,358 individuals, including 303 children.
4. Total number of the above individuals who are Town residents: 11 (including 6 children)

Please, attach any documentation that supports this number.

5. Percent of people served who are Town residents: .01%
- 6.. Amount of Request: \$1,000
7. Total Program Budget: \$3,828,942
8. Percent of total program budget you are requesting from the Town of Richmond:
0.03%
9. Please state or attach the mission of your agency: Please state or attach the mission of your agency: The Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) provides emergency shelter, services, and housing for people who are homeless or marginally housed in Vermont. COTS advocates for long-term solutions to end homelessness. We believe in the value and dignity of every human life, that housing is a fundamental human right, and that emergency shelter is not the solution to homelessness.
10. Funding will be used to:
 Maintain existing programs
11. Has your organization received funds from the Town in the past for this or a similar program? Yes-- \$1,000 in FY22, FY21, FY20, FY19

If yes, please answer the following:

- a. Does the amount of your request represent an increase over your previous

appropriation? If yes, explain the reason(s) for the increase. **No**

b. Were any conditions or restrictions placed on the funds by the Selectboard? **No**
If yes, describe how those conditions or restrictions have been met.

B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1. Statement of Need: Identify the issue or need that the program will address (use statistical data to justify the need for the program). To what extent does this need, or problem exist in the Town of Richmond?

This past state fiscal year, COTS served 11 individuals from the Town of Richmond, including 6 children.

In the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2022 Out of Reach report, it is clear that there are no states within the US where an individual can work 40 hours per week at the minimum wage and afford a modest 1-bedroom apartment. In the greater Burlington area, renters must work an average of 71 hours per week at Vermont's current minimum wage to afford a one-bedroom apartment.

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2. Program Summary:

a. Identify the target/recipients of program services. Specify the number of Town residents your program will serve during the fiscal year and explain the basis

upon which this number is calculated. Indicate any eligibility requirements your program has with respect to age, gender, income or residence.

COTS serves families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Based on the past two fiscal years of data, COTS estimates that we will serve approximately 10 to 20 or more residents of Richmond in the coming year. Our emergency shelter programs provide safe, temporary housing for those without a home, regardless of age, gender, income, or residence. Our homelessness prevention programs, which provide back rent to help people stay housed and security deposits to help those who are homeless get rapidly rehoused, have income limitations due to state or federal limits. Most assistance is targeted at households with extremely low incomes – 30% or less of the Area Median Income (under \$27,500 for a family of four in Chittenden County). A smaller amount of funding is available to very low-income households, those between 31 to 50% of Area Median Income (under \$45,851 for a family of four in Chittenden County).

- b. Identify what is to be accomplished or what change will occur from participating in the program. How will people be better off as a result of participating in the program? Describe the steps you take to make the project known to the public, and make the program accessible and inclusive?

COTS seeks to end homelessness by: 1) providing emergency shelter, case management, and re-housing support to homeless adults and families so they can enter permanent housing for the long-term; and 2) preventing homelessness in the first place – by offering assistance to households on the verge of becoming homeless. People are better off because they have a safe, warm place to stay when they have nowhere else to turn, as well as intensive supportive services to help them move towards housing stability and independence. For those who risk becoming homeless, COTS gives them a chance to get back on their feet before losing their home.

To make sure that those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless know about our services, COTS partners with many organizations in Chittenden County to provide outreach and collaboration. These include agencies such as the Howard Center Street Outreach Team, the Joint Urban Ministry Project, Community Action, Salvation Army, and Safe Harbor Clinic, to name a few. To help address the specific needs of our guests and clients, COTS staff members also refer them to agencies such as the Community Health Centers of Burlington, Legal Aid, STEPS VT (domestic violence assistance), Voc Rehab, and the Department of Labor. COTS also works with a variety of faith-based institutions that offer referrals to people in need and provide donations for our work.

3. Program Funding:

- a. Identify how Town funds, specifically, will be used (i.e., funds will provide “X” amount of units of service

Funding from the Town of Richmond, like other funding we receive from towns and cities in Chittenden County, will be used for general operating expenses. This support aids COTS in our efforts to assist approximately 2,000 people each year by:

- Offering day and night emergency shelter to vulnerable families and individuals;
- Providing homelessness prevention assistance to ensure that low-income households stay in their homes and out of shelter;
- Offering the services of supportive case managers to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness move out of shelter as quickly as possible;
- Providing transitional housing to assist people on their journey to permanent housing;
- Supplying permanent housing units that provide affordable, sustainable housing for individuals and families;

- Developing programs that meet the unique needs of homeless veterans and children.

b. List the other agencies to whom you are submitting a request for funds for this program and the amount requested. How would this program be modified should revenues be lost?

Every year COTS requests funds from all towns and cities in Chittenden County, except for three towns that have specifically told us that COTS does not fit under their process for discretionary funding. Of the towns we did submit requests to last year, 90% provided funding. This ranged from \$250 to \$15,000. In addition to the requests to cities and towns, COTS also submits about 60 other proposals each year, including those to private funders, foundations, state agencies, and federal agencies. If revenues are lost for COTS programming, we may have to cut back on the number of people we can serve or the extent of the services we provide.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

1. Describe your agency's capability to provide the program including its history, previous experience providing this service, management structure and staff expertise. ___

At a time when the nation's economy was stuck in recession and the unemployment rate was above 10%, a group of concerned citizens in Burlington set out to help those who had lost their homes and needed a safe, warm place to stay. On December 24, 1982, with temperatures well below freezing, COTS opened its doors with two volunteers on hand to welcome anyone who needed shelter. Over the past 37 years, the number of people facing the crisis of homelessness has increased, particularly among families. COTS has continually evolved, responding to emerging needs and demographic shifts, as well as proactively working toward long-term solutions.

COTS has 38 full-time employees and 8 part-time employees, as well as 13 temporary substitute staff. The organization is overseen by a Board of Directors comprised of 16 volunteer community members who meet monthly and provide expertise in various areas, including: legal, financial, development, human resource, property management, business, social work, and public relations. Rita Markley has been the Executive Director since 1996 and has significant experience in this area. Our structure is divided into operations, human resources, development, and programs. COTS staff are hired based on specific areas of expertise, ranging from accounting to case management. All programs are overseen by a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker.

2. How will you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you will assess program outcomes. Your description should include: what (what kind of data), how (method/tool for collecting the data), from whom (source of data) and when (timing of data collection)

COTS utilizes a HUD HMIS (Homeless Management Information System)-compatible vendor, Foothold Technologies and a Web-based software program called AWARDS. AWARDS captures HUD-required data elements as well as services delivered, meetings with clients, outcomes, and has unlimited capacity to store paperwork in the client's virtual file cabinet. AWARDS enables us to analyze program specific data and outcomes, evaluate programs, and track and measure program results. We look at the number of households and people served, household demographics, reasons for needing assistance or becoming at-risk of eviction, and the type and amount of assistance received. In addition to implementation of this tool across programs, COTS has invested in ongoing

training for our staff to provide more refined analysis and outcomes so we can monitor data in an efficient and timely way to produce more positive program outcomes.

COTS uses Results Based Accountability (RBA) in all of our programs, including the HRC. As such, we use performance accountability measures that focus on whether clients are better off as a result of our services. We examine the percentage of households that remain in housing three and six months post-assistance, as well as overall project recidivism rates. We track referrals for mainstream benefits programs and to community partners for additional supports and services when appropriate.

From design to program development and implementation, COTS focuses on obtaining positive outcomes for our clients and has established the systems to measure our progress, continually assessing achievements and failures. Over the past 38 years, we have developed strong capacities in evaluation, planning, and resource management to ensure incorporation of best practices to help our clients achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

3. Summarize or attach program and or service assessments conducted in the past two years.

COTS has numerous federal and state funders that require specific assessments of our programs. These vary depending on the funder. Several of our funders conduct the assessments or hire external evaluators, providing us with an impartial assessment of our programs. For example, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Office of Veterans Affairs are two of our largest federal funders. They conduct rigorous annual assessments of the programs they fund, including site visits. We are fully compliant with both agencies. The State of Vermont hires an independent evaluator to monitor progress of our Family Supportive Housing program and three similar programs in the state; the evaluator has completed their annual evaluation of the project, based on interviews with participants and outcome data submitted by COTS and partnering agencies, and concluded that the initiative is reaching its targets. We also have annual assessments for our programs funded by the United Way, including site visits conducted by community members serving on the United Way committees.

4. Does your organization have a strategic plan and a strategic planning process in place? YES - If yes, please attach your plan.

The strategic plan should include a mission statement, goals, steps to achieve the goals, and measures that assess the accomplishments of the goals.

5. What is the authorized size of your board of directors? 16
How many meetings were held by the board last year? 12

I, the undersigned, confirm the information contained herein is accurate and can be verified as such. I understand and agree that if the requested funds are approved, the disbursement of funds are subject to all conditions established by the Richmond Selectboard.

Signature of Applicant



Date 8/24/22

John Michael Longworth, Grant Writer & Foundation Specialist

Print Name of Applicant and Title

