

Cover Sheet – Social Service Activity

AGENCY NAME: Town of Amherst
AGENCY ADDRESS: 4 Boltwood Avenue
AGENCY PHONE NO: (413)259-3074 CONTACT PERSON: Nate Malloy
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2013 CDBG REQUEST: \$18,500

1. Project Name: Rental Assistance for Intermediate Living (R.A.I.L.)
2. Project Description (1-2 sentences): Short term emergency rental assistance for families or individuals in rental arrears, eviction or in need of housing.
3. Project Location: Town wide
4. Budget Request: \$18,500
5. Type of Activity (check one):
 - Homelessness and sheltering
 - Youth development
 - Adult education and job training
 - Basic Human Services
 - Emergency & preventive services: emergency rental assistance, emergency fuel assistance, emergency food and emergency shelter services that can include case management and coordination.
 - Other – please explain
6. Demonstrate Consistency with Community Development Strategy
The Town's Community Development Strategy specifically discusses the need for social service, including the need for short term rental assistance.
7. Describe how you will ensure that participants meet low/moderate income requirements
Planning staff will certify, complying with DHCD regulations, all incomes insuring that their incomes are below 80% of the area median income. This documentation will be reviewed by Senior Planning Administration to ensure compliance.
8. National Objective

Benefit to low- and moderate-income persons

Estimate the number of low- and moderate-income persons to benefit from the Project:

All individuals and households will meet income requirements.

Total Low/Mod individuals served - approximately 35 as the maximum amount for request will be \$1,000.

Please submit responses to the following questions:

A. Please describe in full the project for which you are requesting funding:

Include information on the number of individuals or families to be served and who they are, i.e. disabled, low-income, homeless, etc.

The Town will provide rental assistance to low- and moderate households (families and individuals) residing in the Town of Amherst and in some cases neighboring communities. Planning staff will be required to certify household income to ensure that applicants meet DHCD and CDBG requirements, which is that their incomes are below 80% of the area median income. Senior Planning staff will audit income certification to ensure compliance with regulations. Planning staff will also be required to justify each request based on the following policies:

Funds will be available to low- and moderate-income households or individuals for short term emergency rental assistance or emergency shelter. Households and individuals will be required to provide documentation that confirms their household income meets the state definition of low income.

Documentation for short term emergency rental assistance will require households or individuals to submit either a notice to quit from landlord, eviction statement, log of rental search (planning staff will provide form) or lease/rental agreement. Homeless individuals or families referred by outreach worker/social agency will be given priorities. Statement from outreach worker/social agency attesting to their services to help the homeless individual or family must be provided.

Income certified households are eligible for a maximum of \$1,000 rental assistance. Funding will be provided only with the assurance that these funds will stabilize a household's situation, for example that a household will not be evicted or will be placed in a home the household is able to afford.

Short term rental assistance can only be used for first and last month's rent. Rental assistance cannot be used for security deposits. In some cases an individual or household can receive short term rental assistance for move in cost within the neighboring communities. If rental unit is within the neighboring communities, the applicant must provide a log of their rental search. Planning staff will provide a form to be submitted with their application.

The homelessness outreach worker(s) will be responsible for screening individuals who are currently homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and follow the same procedure as described in 3.

B. What is the community's need for the proposed project/program?

Define the need or problem to be addressed by the proposed project. Explain why the project is important. Provide evidence of the severity of the need or problem. Who the affected population and why is this population presently underserved or not served?

The need for short term emergency rental assistance continues to increase, as does poverty in the United States and Amherst. In fact, 70% of the prior year's emergency assistance funds were allocated to: 4% emergency shelter, 31% rental arrears and 35% move in expenses. The latest U.S. census shows that in the past year there has been an increase of five thousand children living in poverty in Massachusetts. This increase in poverty is reflected in the increase of families seeking help with rental expenses, food and other basic needs. The R.A.I.L. program will help many families who have fallen behind in paying their rent, received an eviction notice or are in need of housing.

This large need is reflected in the Amherst demographics. The population of Amherst, according to the 2000 census is relatively diverse, with 78% of individuals being white, 6.5% black, 9.0% are Asian and 6% of the population is of Latino decent. Highlighting this diversity, 20.1% or 6,844 individuals speak a language other than English, at home. This is due in part to a large influx of refugees, since the 1990's, of both families and individuals from Cambodia, Central America, Puerto Rico, Cape Verde and Russia. Amherst also has a substantial number of low-income individuals and families; according to the 2,000 Federal Census, 20% of all individuals and (329) of all families have incomes below the poverty level. Over 45% of all households earn incomes below \$30,000.00. 15% of all families (705) are female single parent families with children under 18 years of age and 199 families receive public assistance from the Department of Transitional Assistance. 480 families receive some of subsidized housing. All of these households, due to the financial crisis facing our country are at risk of becoming homeless or having to make difficult choices between paying rent, eating or heating their homes.

C. Community Involvement

What process was used to select this particular project? How was the process responsive to expressed community need?

Define the process that will be used to maintain involvement of the project beneficiaries in the implementation of the project.

Amherst uses CDBG funds to support a variety of social service agencies that will provide a continuum of services for the most vulnerable individuals and families

residing in Amherst and the surrounding area. The Town is currently providing space at the Bangs Center, at low cost, for Big Brother Big Sister of Hampshire County and the Center for New Americans. The Town provides space at no cost for meetings of the Amherst Human Services Network, a coalition of agencies providing services for Amherst residents. The Town provides space, at low cost, for the Community Action's Head Start and childcare programs.

The Town has and will continue to provide financial support for the Amherst Survival Center, which provides emergency food and clothing for low- and moderate-income Amherst residents and Family Outreach of Amherst which provides case management support for low-income families at-risk for homelessness, women at-risk for domestic violence and families at-risk for substance abuse and other social issues.

The Community Development Strategy specifically discusses the support Amherst provides for social service agencies and programs and specifically identifies the need continued need for social services programs that address issues of relating to poverty, youth development health care, family planning, financial stress and others as the needs arise. The Community Development Strategy identifies the need for emergency rental assistance, emergency fuel assistance and emergency sheltering (priority 17). This project will provide emergency short term rental assistance and for low- and moderate-income households residing in Amherst. The social service project is a reflection of the emergency funds program which was recommended by the Community Development Director and unanimously supported by the Community Development Committee, which held its own public meetings to review projects.

As part of the application process for 2012, the Community Development Committee held a public hearing at which the Community Development Strategy as well as social service priorities were discussed and commented on by the public. The Community Development strategy continues to support the need for social service support and has identified the need for providing emergency assistance as a priority

After hearing from the public, the Community Development Committee voted the following social service priorities:

Homelessness and sheltering

Education: outreach and advocacy

Mental health services

Emergency & preventive services: rental, food, fuel, shelter and transitional assistance

The Town then requested proposals from social service agencies, identifying priorities as voted by the Committee. Proposals were advertised on the Town's website and emailed to a large number of social service agencies that provide

services to Amherst residents. The announcement was also sent to the Daily Hampshire Gazette and the Springfield Union. The Committee received responses and at a second public hearing agencies were encouraged to make short presentations of their proposed activities. At a public meeting, after closing the public hearing, the Community Development Committee voted to recommend the inclusion of funding for emergency assistance in the Town's 2012 application for funding.

D. Project Feasibility

The project impact will be evaluated upon the extent to which the response meets the following criteria:

1. Describe what evidence exists to show that the community at large or project beneficiaries will use the project. Include documentation of demand for the activity through summary descriptions of surveys, inquiries, waiting lists or past participation.

The Town continues to receive requests for emergency rental assistance from low- and moderate-income households and very little other funds exist for this purpose. Over the past year the Town provided over 50 low- and moderate-income households and individuals with emergency rental assistance.

2. If applicable, describe and document the availability and source of matching or other funds needed to complete the project.

No other funds exist

3. Identify the roles and responsibilities of all personnel involved in the project as well as internal controls.

Town staff will assume responsibility for this program. Ruth Taylor will be the initial contact for disbursing funds. She will review income certifications and in consultation with Nate Malloy will make final decisions as to eligibility.

4. Citing past accomplishments, document that the agency has the necessary past expertise to conduct the activity and has successfully completed past activities in a timely manner.

The Town has been administering emergency assistance for over 15 years and has managed CDBG projects for over 6 years.

5. Please submit a program budget that includes all sources of revenue and all expenses.

\$18,500

E. Impact

Describe the impact the activity will have on the specifically identified needs. What measurable improvements will result from the activity? How much of the need will be addressed? Define the direct and indirect outcomes that will result from the project. Identify quantitative and qualitative measures determine that the outcomes are achieved.

The short-term impact of this activity will be to prevent homelessness for those most at-risk. Based on the funding request it is projected that this activity could potentially prevent homelessness and can sustain intermediate living for up to 35- 40 families. The long-term impact will occur as agency staff work with families to create plans for long-term stability to ensure these families do not face such emergencies in the future.

F. Evaluation

Goals & Assessments: Please explain your short-term goals and long-term goals. Describe the changes in the target population that indicate the program's success. How will these changes be measured? Will anticipated changes affect the municipality's responsibility to this target population? How will the impact of this service on individual clients be tracked over time? Will there be additional beneficiaries? Will this service enable clients to become self-sufficient? How is this service linked to other human/social service programs in the community?

The goals of this activity are to prevent homelessness, resolve eviction status to ensure that families and individuals do not go without housing/shelter.

The Town will provide a narrative describing some of the more difficult situations and how funds have helped these families. In addition, the Town will keep statistics on the number of families receiving help based on their incomes and ethnic origin and the type of help they have received. The Town will request agencies making referrals to keep statistics on how additional funding has been leveraged to help these families and request follow-up information from agencies regarding additional

support provided.

G. Agency Information

Please provide an overview of your organization, including length of time in existence, experience in successfully conducting activities for which funding is being sought, and skills and current services that reflect capacity for success.