



**Reponses from Amherst Community Connections to CPA follow-up questions:**

- **If funded, will ACC seek additional CPA funding during these three years?**

The requested amount of \$251,457 for rent-related costs and case management services and the in-kind support and \$15,840 in private funds that will be raised by ACC will provide adequate funding for the proposed three-year project, with no additional funding needed from CPA during that time. Depending on the needs of the community, the organization may request funds for other project proposals. However, the proposed project will be adequately funded with the requested amounts.

- **How would it change your planning if just one year were funded?**

Permanent supportive housing is a long-term effort. It takes time for participants to become stabilized and to adjust to permanent housing. Chronically homeless individuals who will be served through this project have been out of housing for extended periods of time and are dealing with disabling mental and medical conditions. For these individuals, the basic skills for self-sufficiency and independence must be developed over time and through the provision of support services during the transition period. A period shorter than three years would not provide participants with enough time to adjust to their new living arrangements and to develop life skills and positive habits for maintaining stable housing arrangements. Without the development of these skills and habits, participants would struggle to maintain stable housing.

Additionally, the amount of preparation (including many hours of volunteer oversight of the program's development and implementation) that will be provided by ACC will be such that the project will not be feasible if only funded for one year. Therefore, ACC would not be able to implement the proposed project if it was funded for only one year.

- **Can any state or federal funding be leveraged to make CPA funds go farther?**

ACC will leverage state and federal funding sources (such as the Community Development Block Grant) in order to make the most efficient use of CPA funds. In addition to these funds, ACC has already begun to actively search for other funding sources through our extensive network. ACC will continue to leverage private funds and to seek additional private funding through individuals and foundations such as the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts.

- **Is case management support allowable?**

Case management support is allowable. During the development of this proposal, ACC referenced the Eastham Affordable Housing Trust's successful application for funding from the

Community Preservation Committee. Their proposal included rental assistance and case management. We can furnish documentation if necessary.

- **Could you make this work if rental subsidy came from CPA with other services funded through another source?**

ACC will be supplementing CPA funds with in-kind labor support and private fundraising, in addition to state and federal funding sources. However, CPA funding for support services will be essential for the successful implementation of this project.

Support services are an integral part of permanent supportive housing. The rental subsidies proposed in this application will be utilized to secure housing for individuals who have been identified as “chronically homeless”. In order to meet this definition, these individuals must have been homeless continuously for a year or have had 4 episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years, and they must have a disabling condition. Disabling conditions include a diagnosable substance abuse disorder, serious mental illness, or chronic physical illness. These conditions contribute to the extended periods of homelessness these individuals experience. Without support services, our participants would most likely be unable to maintain stable housing and would struggle to adjust and develop the skills necessary to live independently. Studies of similar projects have shown that the provision of support services and housing increases participants’ ability to maintain stable housing and drastically reduces public expenditures for emergency care, ambulances, and law enforcement.

Funding for support services is essential to the success of this project. ACC is actively seeking additional funding sources to supplement this project, but without a guarantee of funding for support services, successful implementation of the rent subsidy portion of this proposal would be put at risk.

- **Can you provide more details about how beneficiaries will be identified and selected, and how potential beneficiary’s relative need is prioritized?**

ACC has been operating in the Amherst community since 2009, and ACC staff have developed strong relationships and extensive records of the individuals utilizing our services since that time. Data collection has helped us to identify 20 individuals who fit the definition of chronic homelessness. This information is based on caseworker knowledge of the individuals’ housing histories in addition to medical and mental health providers’ verification of the disabling conditions these individuals are experiencing.

Our proposal is seeking to subsidize housing for 5 individuals. These participants will be identified from among the 20 chronically homeless individuals we serve, based on an analysis of which individuals are most vulnerable. Vulnerability will be gauged by utilizing the VI-SPDAT survey which assigns a risk-level score to each individual based on the severity of medical conditions and mental health challenges. This will ensure that the most vulnerable members of our community are being served through this project.

- **What is long-term solution and how might that be funded?**

Housing is the solution to homelessness. ACC's long-term vision is to make at least 20 subsidized units available to our chronically homeless population, coupled with support services. This would be possible with the construction of a 40-unit apartment complex consisting of efficiency studios with kitchenettes and bathrooms. This complex would include 20 subsidized apartments and 20 market-rate apartments as well as support services offered on-site.

The subsidized apartments and support services would be funded through multiple sources. Partial funding would be sustainable through income from the market-rate apartments. Other funding sources could include CDBG funding, other state and federal funding sources, private fundraising, and CPA funds if available.

ACC has a history of successful fundraising in the community. The organization also operates with an extremely low overhead thanks to a robust volunteer force including lawyers and social workers from the community and students from the local colleges. This enables ACC to make the most efficient use of funds.

- **What is best practice in other communities for serving this community?**

The Housing First approach has been recognized since the 1970s as the best practice for addressing the issue of homelessness. In the past decade, agencies and communities have increasingly begun to shift away from transitional and shelter services and toward Housing First and prevention approaches to homelessness. These methods focus on keeping individuals and families in housing whenever possible and rapidly re-housing when homelessness occurs. This approach relies on the fact that homelessness is first and foremost a housing issue, and that issues that may contribute to a person's homelessness can be best addressed only when their basic need for housing is met.

This shift is occurring because of a growing body of research identifying the positive impact of a Housing First approach. This research demonstrates that associated methods are the most effective at placing individuals in housing and preventing them from becoming homeless again. Particularly for individuals identified as chronically homeless, Housing First approaches that offer wrap-around services after placement in housing have been found to break the cycle of frequent re-entry into shelter services. Research has demonstrated that Housing First approaches are less expensive than the costs of emergency services provided to an individual who remains homeless.