

Questions with an asterisk (*) are collaborative questions that may be found on funding applications for the United Way of Northwest Vermont.

I. Demonstrated Need

1. What is the need/opportunity being addressed by this program/project and how does that contribute to CDBG's national objectives?*

Pathways Vermont's Housing First Program is addressing homelessness throughout the state of Vermont by supporting individuals with histories of homelessness and other life challenges, including criminal histories, substance use, mental health crisis and trauma, to access and maintain permanent housing. Since 2010, the Housing First Program has housed over 406 homeless individuals out of long term homelessness across the state, many of whom had been identified by community providers as "hard to house." In the Fall of 2020, Pathways received funding to expand our Rapid Rehousing programs. Now, Pathways has three Rapid Rehousing programs: Supportive Services for Veteran Families, RRH Cares, and HUD RRH. So far, the RRH Cares program has had 114 program intakes, with 14 homeless households housed, and the HUD RRH program has served 30 individuals and housed 18.

Homelessness is a complex social issue driven by intersecting factors including poverty, unemployment, disability, substance use, mental health crisis and trauma. It is defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as when an individual or family lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Burlington has seen a decrease in the rate of homelessness, and this drop can be directly attributable to the investment in and actions taken by organizations such as Pathways Vermont's Housing First Program. The City of Burlington's 2018 Consolidated Plan has identified homelessness as an issue of great concern, estimating that there were 291 individuals experiencing homelessness in Chittenden County (*Consolidated Plan, NA-52*) Furthermore, a significant portion of Burlington's homeless population struggle with behavioral health issues; 36% live with a severe and persistent mental health condition and 21% with a substance use disorder (*January 2020 Chittenden County Point in Time Count Report, p. 10*). Additional resources to move these vulnerable subpopulations into permanent housing and out of emergency shelters has been identified as a critical need by both local providers and city officials.

The dearth of affordable housing in the area is a major driving force of this issue. The Fair Market Value for a 1-bedroom apartment in Burlington is \$1,223¹, meaning individuals must earn a monthly income of at least \$4,077 for this housing to be considered affordable. As such, affordable housing is out of reach for many of our city's residents, in particular those who struggle with issues such as substance use and psychiatric disabilities. The Housing First Program proactively addresses this trend by removing all barriers related to abstinence and treatment compliance prior to housing. However, the program's ability to effectively serve the target population is constrained by current funding restrictions. In 2014, Pathways' Housing First Program transitioned from grant funding to Medicaid reimbursement as its primary source of revenue. While this transition created long-term sustainability for the program, it formally restricted program eligibility to individuals diagnosed with a psychiatric disability. The requested funding would create capacity within our program to serve other vulnerable subpopulations and get closer to our goal of permanently ending homelessness in the state of Vermont.

II. Program/Project Design

1. Give us a short summary (2 sentences) that describe the program/project.

The Pathways Vermont Housing First Program provides permanent housing placement along with intensive

¹ National Low Income Housing Coalition, "2020 Out of Reach: Vermont." Accessed from <http://nlihc.org/oor/vermont>

community-based services to individuals with histories of homelessness and institutionalization, most of whom are living with disabling conditions. The program utilizes local housing stock in order to facilitate community re-integration.

2. Explain why the program activities are the right strategies to use to achieve the intended outcomes. Why is the program designed the way it is? (cite evidence, best practices, or community input)*

This program operates using the evidence-based practice of *Housing First*, which has been recognized by the federal government as the best practice in ending homelessness. The basic philosophy of the model is that while homelessness is a complex issue with multiple, intersecting causes, the solution to homelessness is simple: housing. The Housing First model asserts that eliminating barriers to housing and prioritizing placement in permanent, pre-existing housing has the best outcomes in terms of both housing retention and cost to the public. Individuals experiencing unresolved homelessness are typically caught in what is referred to as the “institutional circuit.” This means that they cycle between crisis services, state institutions and the streets. This cycle not only has a deleterious impact on the health and well-being of these individuals, but also incurs a high utilization of public resources and their associated costs. As a result, it is often more expensive for this population to remain caught in the cycle of homelessness than it is to intervene with permanent housing. For example, the Housing First Program estimates that the daily cost of “homelessness” for the population served prior to program enrollment is \$91.51, while the average daily cost of enrollment in the Housing First Program is \$43.00.

3. How will this program/project contribute to the City’s anti-poverty strategy?

The Housing First Program directly contributes to Burlington’s 2018 Consolidated Plan by meeting the basic needs of individuals living in poverty. The program stabilizes the living situation of homeless individuals by facilitating access to permanent, affordable housing. By using a scattered site model, which promotes community integration, Housing First additionally supports the city’s objective of decreasing social isolation among marginalized populations. Finally, the services provided by the program are designed to support individuals to improve their lives, which for many means improving their financial situation. This includes enrollment in eligible benefits and entitlements and employment services.

4. How do you use community and/or participant input in planning the program design and activities?*

All Pathways Vermont programming is client-driven, meaning service recipient feedback is an important part of quality improvement activities and program planning. Since its inception, the Housing First Program has had a Tenant Advisory Board to facilitate regular client feedback on program performance and potential changes. In December 2014 this Board transitioned to a Standing Committee composed of service recipients and Pathways board members which formalizes client feedback to the organization’s board of directors and primary funding source.

III. Proposed Outcomes

1. What are the intended outcomes for this project/program? How are people meant to be better off as a result of participating?

The primary objective of the Housing First program is to break the cycle of homelessness. This is achieved by providing services that support individuals to access permanent housing and live independently in the community. Once housed, clients are supported to address other goals including sobriety, health, social connectedness and employment. In addition to improving the overall well-being of clients, the program has a

demonstrated record of reducing individuals’ reliance on other resources including state-funded motels, emergency rooms, jails and psychiatric hospitals.

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

Objective/Goal	Activity	Outcome
End the cycle of homelessness via permanent housing.	Housing search and placement	100% of enrolled clients will find a housing placement; program maintains at least an 85% housing retention rate.
Individuals improve well-being and independent functioning	Service planning; service coordination	100% of clients will develop a service plan; 90% of individuals will make progress towards service goal.
Improve financial stability.	Benefits coordination; supported employment	90% of individuals will maintain or increase their income.

IV. Impact / Evaluation

1. How do you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you assess project/program outcomes; your description should include: what type of data, the method/tool for collecting the data, from whom you collect data, and when it is collected.*

Program performance is assessed through the organization’s electronic records, self-assessment data and program satisfaction survey. Clients’ housing outcomes, income, service engagement and utilization of emergency services are captured through administrative data. Indicators of well-being, including level of mental health distress, substance use and social connectedness, are collected via peer-reviewed measures.

2. How successful has the project/program been during the most recent reporting year for your CDBG project? Report the number of beneficiaries you intended to serve with which activities (as noted in your last Attachment A) and your final outcomes (as noted on your Attachment C) from June 2020 (or June 2019). For non-CDBG participants – report on your achievements from the previous year.

As noted in Attachment C from June 2020, the Housing First Program was able to house and serve 45 homeless individuals in the Burlington community. The cycle of homelessness has been ended for all of the service recipients of Housing First services and they continue to work on their self-stated life goals with the help of Pathways Vermont’s dedicated ACT team.

V. Experience / Organizational Capacity

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

Pathways Vermont's mission is to offer innovative mental health alternatives and to end homelessness in Vermont.

We aspire to minimize barriers that prevent individuals from meeting their essential needs by (a) supporting individuals to overcome these barriers and (b) creating low-barrier options where they do not exist. The proposed project would promote access to affordable housing for those who face the greatest barriers, including multiple years of homelessness, criminal records, and substance use challenges.

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

Pathways Vermont’s Housing First Program operates using the evidence-based *Housing First* model, which is regarded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other federal agencies as the best practice to end homelessness. The program was implemented in Vermont by Hilary Melton, who has 25+ years of experience managing non-profits. Hilary is a national expert in the *Housing First* model; she served as the program director for the first Housing First Program in New York in the 1990s and is a Training Faculty of the Housing First Institute.

The program has been assessed for fidelity to the *Housing First* model and found to be operating in high-fidelity to the practice, as documented in a peer-reviewed article published in the American Journal of Public Health.² In addition to Housing First, the program utilizes the complementary practices of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Harm Reduction and Trauma-Informed Care. These trainings form the foundation of Pathways’ unique service delivery model which has been proven to be effective in supporting individuals who have traditionally been difficult to engage with.

3. What steps has your organization/board taken in the past year to address racial equity, inclusion, and belonging internally? What new commitments have been made to address racial equity, inclusion, and belonging internally in the year ahead?

In 2020, our internal Justice, Equity and Universal Access Committee (formed in 2018) implemented a monthly training curriculum for supervisors with the goal of better supporting staff and understanding bias, implemented quarterly training for all staff, and updated our statement of inclusion. Pathways leadership has been meeting monthly to discuss anti-racist action steps. Some progress from these meetings has been re-evaluating our vendor relationships to prioritize BIPOC-owned, local, and environmentally conscious businesses and re-evaluating what platforms we use to advertise job openings. The Pathways Vermont Board of Directors is actively evaluating how to become more representative of the populations we serve, and board members attended a workshop titled “Critical Questions for Anti-Racist Organizations.” The JEUA Committee continues to meet quarterly and is currently working on implementing a list of required readings for new hires, evaluating our hiring practices, evaluating Pathways Vermont holidays, and developing supports for BIPOC staff and board members that are responsive to the individual and their work at Pathways Vermont.

4. Have you received Federal or State grant funds in the past three years? Yes No

5. Were the activities funded by these sources successfully completed? Yes No
 N/A

If No, please explain:

VI. Proposed Low & Moderate Income Beneficiaries

1. Will the program solely serve a specific group of people? If so, check ONE below:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abused Children | <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly (62 years +) | <input type="checkbox"/> People with AIDS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Battered Spouses | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Homeless Persons | <input type="checkbox"/> Illiterate Adults |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People with Severe Disabilities | | |

² Stefancic, A., et al. “Implementing Housing First in Rural Areas: Pathways Vermont.” Am J Public Health: e1-e4. Oct. 22, 2013.
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2. a. For your proposed project, please estimate how the **Burlington residents** will break out into the following income categories during the total grant period. Use the Income Table at <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/CEDO/2020-HUD-Income-Limits>

Service / Activity	Unduplicated Total # of Burlington HH / Persons to be Served	# Extremely Low-Income (30% median)	# Very Low-Income (50% median)	# Low-Income (80% median)	# Above Income Limits (above 80% median)
Permanent Housing for homeless individuals.	88	88	0	0	0

b. All CDBG grantees serving limited clientele will be required to use CEDO’s **CDBG Beneficiary Self-Certification** form to collect beneficiary data including race, ethnicity, annual income, and family size. Is your organization willing and prepared to add this documentation to the intake process for your CDBG funded program by July 1, 2021?

Yes NO Not Serving Limited Clientele

VII. Commitment to Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

1. **Who is the project/program designed to benefit? Describe the project/program’s target population, citing (if relevant) specific age, gender, income, community/location, race or ethnicity, or other characteristic of the people this program is intended to serve. How do you select and reach your target population?**

Pathways Vermont’s Housing First Program serves individuals who have histories of homelessness and/or institutionalization who have struggled to maintain independent housing. The program has a reputation for successfully serving individuals who are considered “hard to house,” meaning they have burned through or are ineligible for assistance through existing resources. This population faces multiple barriers to accessing traditional housing services including active dependence on alcohol and other substances, frequent mental health distress and complex histories of trauma.

Pathways Housing First Program serves single adults and adult headed households. 100% of clients enrolled are literally homeless at the time of intake and therefore meet the criteria for presumed principally low/moderate income persons.

2. **Describe the steps you take to ensure the project/program is accessible, inclusive, addressing racially equity, and culturally appropriate for the target population. ***

The Housing First Program provides person-centered services, meaning that services are tailored to accommodate each client’s individual situation and needs. This high degree of flexibility means the program can creatively respond to issues regarding accessibility and appropriateness in care. The program is designed to be community-based, meaning that staff typically meet and support clients in their current environments (often in their homes) vs. requiring clients to attend meetings in a clinical environment. As such, staff are able to assertively connect with individuals who have struggled to maintain appointments or are adverse to interactions in unfamiliar settings. Additionally, the Housing First Program strives to recruit staff with their own lived experiences with homelessness, mental health and other life challenges with which clients may identify. These shared experiences allow staff to create strong, trusting relationships with clients.

VIII. Budget / Financial Feasibility

1. **Budget Narrative: Provide a clear description of what you will do with CDBG’s investment in the project/program. How will you spend the money? Give specific details.**

The Housing First Program currently has the capacity to serve 79 individuals in Chittenden County, in part due to current CDBG funding support. The requested funding would increase this capacity to 88 and would expand eligibility requirements to include other vulnerable subpopulations.

2. 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/Program Design.

a.

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
Service Coordination	Service Coordinators (1 position, .34 FTE)	Service planning, service coordination, benefits coordination	12	8%

b. All CDBG grantees that use CDBG funds for salaries must submit timesheets that capture total time and effort of staff members funded with CDBG. These timesheets must record CDBG hours worked, other hours worked, all funding sources, and a narrative for all CDBG and non-CDBG funded activities, and they must be signed by the employee and supervisor. Does your organization have the ability to implement a timekeeping system for CDBG funded staff that meets these requirements by July 1, 2021? Yes No Not funding salaries

3. Program/Project Budget

Line Item	CDBG Funds	Other	Total
Personnel (Salaries, Fringe, Contracted Services)	\$35,000	\$591,629	\$626,629
Client Costs (Security Deposits, Furnishings, Repairs)	\$0	\$311,456	\$311,456
Operations (Office rent, utilities, staff mileage, etc.)	\$0	\$95,499	\$95,499
Administrative Contribution	\$0	\$146,342	\$146,342

4. Funding Sources

	Project		Agency	
	Current	Projected	Current	Projected
CDBG	\$17,500	\$35,000	\$17,500	\$35,000
State (specify)				
VT Department of Mental Health	\$584,319	\$584,319	\$2,568,966	\$2,568,966
VT Department of Corrections	\$383,550	\$383,550	\$1,039,663	\$1,039,663
VT Office of Economic Opportunity	-	-	\$704,253	\$704,253

Federal (specify) <i>Department of Veterans Affairs (subcontract with Vermont Veteran Services at UVM) United States Department of Housing and Urban Development</i>	\$177,058	\$177,058	\$177,058	\$177,058
	-	-	\$812,141	\$812,141
United Way (Northwest and Addison)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$30,000	\$30,000
Private (specify) <i>Foundations, Businesses, Individuals</i>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$776,000	\$776,000
Program Income	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other (specify)				
Total	\$1,162,427	\$1,179,927	\$6,125,581	\$6,143,081

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

\$35,000	÷	\$1,179,927	=	3.0%
CDBG Funding		Total Program/Project Costs		Percentage

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

\$1,179,927	÷	88	=	\$13,408
Total Program/Project Cost		# Total Proposed Beneficiaries		Cost Per Person

\$35,000	÷	88	=	\$397.72
Total Amount of CDBG Funding		# Total Proposed CDBG Beneficiaries		Cost Per Person <u>CDBG</u> Investment

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

The Housing First Program, and its proposed expansion, directly contributes to Burlington’s Consolidated Plan by increasing housing resources for vulnerable populations. This addresses Burlington’s stated goals of protecting vulnerable populations and supporting low-income individuals to retain permanent housing, both of which have been identified as high priority needs (*SL 1.1: Provide Public Services Homeless.*) While Pathways Vermont and other community providers are already working towards this shared goal, there remain gaps in service delivery that limit the community’s ability to comprehensively address this need. If awarded, CDBG funding would be used to supplement existing state-funded permanent housing services to address homelessness in Burlington. The requested funding would expand the Housing First Program’s existing infrastructure to serve additional vulnerable subpopulations who are currently falling through the cracks, for example homeless individuals struggling with alcohol and other addictions.

8. Describe your use of community resources, including volunteers. Include any resources not listed in your budget. Will CDBG be used to leverage other resources?*

The Housing First Program relies on the support of the community to achieve its goals. In addition to individual contributions, we rely on in-kind donations to help furnish client apartments. We have been enrolled in ReStore's "Essential Needs" voucher program for the past 10 years to support this endeavor. If awarded, CDBG funds would be used to meet a service match requirement for Shelter + Care vouchers and similar housing subsidies, which require a sponsoring agency to manage a housing voucher for enrolled individuals.

IX. Collaboration/Efficiency

1. Give 1 or 2 examples of key successful collaboration(s) between your program/project and another agency/program/group to address the needs of the people you serve.

The Housing First Program exists on a continuum of community services that support individuals to prevent and end episodes of homelessness. Program staff regularly participate in stakeholder meetings, including the Local Interagency Team and Continuum of Care, to ensure that the Housing First Program is being utilized by individuals with the most pervasive barriers to housing and who are the most vulnerable. Pathways participates in both Vermont Continuum of Care's HUD recognized Coordinated Entry system processes and receives referrals through this system.

2. Do identical or similar community programs exist? How does this program complement or collaborate rather than duplicate services? What makes this program unique?

While there are other local agencies providing permanent support housing, Pathways Vermont is the only organization utilizing the evidence-based practice of Housing First. Pathways Vermont's Housing First Program participates in the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance's Coordinated Entry process and accepts referrals to the program directly from this coordinated effort. Pathways Vermont's program values and services align closely with the community's prioritization process around housing supports.

3. Provide 1 example of how your agency has become more efficient in achieving your outcomes or managing your project/program.

Pathways Vermont is a data-driven organization, relying on regular service recipient feedback and outcome reporting to evaluate program performance and inform decision making. In December 2014 Pathways Vermont converted to a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) format with the intention of streamlining our evaluation efforts through the identification of performance indicators that capture real progress towards agency goals. For Housing First, these indicators include client retention in housing, changes in income, levels of engagement (service hours), client utilization of emergency services and progress towards independent goals.

X. Sustainability

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

Expanded investment in the Housing First Program is a critical piece of the puzzle in ending homelessness in Burlington. Besides being a major threat to individuals' health and well-being, homelessness has a major impact on the Burlington community. Without a specialized intervention like Housing First, individuals experiencing homelessness have frequent interactions with the police department, emergency rooms and emergency shelters, meaning these resources carry a disproportionate burden. The Housing First Program stops the cycle of homelessness and reduces clients' reliance on these resources, increasing their capacity to

serve their intended purpose. Beyond immediate impact of ending an individual's episode of homelessness, the Housing First Program has a long-term impact on other domains of life, including health, social connectedness and financial stability. With the support of the Housing First team, clients are supported to regain their independence and become contributing members of the community.

2. CDBG funding is intended for new or expanded services. If CDBG funding ends, will the project be able to continue?

Pathways Vermont has a long-term commitment to the Vermonters it serves and will explore every funding avenue available to ensure continuous services to its participants. If CDBG funding ends, Pathways Vermont will look to utilize and expand upon existing contracts with state agencies, as well as existing and potential grant funding and funding from the private community to continue to serve and sustain its current population of service recipients.

3. How will you prioritize the proposed project activities if you do not receive the full amount requested?

If the full request amount is not granted, Pathways Vermont would staff a part-time position on the existing Housing First team that would be able to serve a proportional percentage of the number of additional service recipients outlined in this proposal.