

CITY OF BURLINGTON
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT - 2021 APPLICATION
Application must be no more than 11 total pages (including cover page) with 12 point font.
Refer to NOFA for required information for each question.

Project Name: Housing Orientation Program for Refugee Families (HOP)
Project Location / Address: 462 Hegeman Ave, Suite 101, Colchester, VT 05401
Applicant Organization / Agency: U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants Vermont (USCRI Vermont)
Mailing Address: 462 Hegeman Ave, Suite 101, Colchester, VT 05401
Physical Address: 462 Hegeman Ave, Suite 101, Colchester, VT 05401
Contact: Amila Merdzanovic Title: Director Phone #: 802-655-1963
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EIN #: 13-1878704 DUNS #: 0751982420000

CDBG Funding Request: \$30,000

Total Estimated Program/Project Cost: \$89,520

Grant Duration: mark one X 1 Year 2 Year

(Only Public Service programs with a focus on Early Childhood Education, Childcare and Youth Services are eligible for 2 year grant this year)

Development: mark one X Economic Development Construction

Public Service: Early Childhood Ed/Childcare Youth Services Health
Mark one Econ Opportunity X Housing and Homelessness

1. Type of Organization

- Local Government X Non-Profit Organization (please provide copy of your
 For-Profit Organization IRS 501(c)(3) tax exemption letter)
 Faith-Based Organization Institution of Higher Education

Certification

To the best of my knowledge and belief, data in this proposal are true and correct.
I have been duly authorized to apply for this funding on behalf of this agency.
I understand that this grant funding is conditioned upon compliance with federal CDBG regulations.

I further certify that no contracts have been awarded, funds committed or construction begun on the proposed program, and that none will be prior to issuance of a Release of Funds by the Program Administrator. In addition, this project is ready to proceed as of July 1, 2021.



Signature of Authorized Official

Amila Merdzanovic
Name of Authorized Official

Director
Title

1-28-21
Date

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?

Like the average low-to-middle income family in Burlington, affordable housing has become increasingly difficult to find for low-to-moderate income (LMI) refugee arrivals and refugee families in Burlington and throughout Chittenden County. With a vacancy rate hovering at only 2% in Chittenden County and median rent for a two-bedroom unit at \$1,186 (*Overview of Housing Issues in Chittenden County, Vermont Jan 2020, CCRPC*), finding and securing safe, affordable housing for LMI and very low income refugee residents can be daunting. In addition to securing housing, new arrivals face a range of barriers that can adversely affect long-term housing retention and stability. One of the biggest challenges refugee arrivals face is orienting themselves to the complex new world of renting an apartment or a house, including how to understand lease agreements and deposits; coordinating utilities and paying bills; household safety and new appliances; and connecting with neighbors and the community as residents in their new neighborhood. Inability to communicate with landlords, unfamiliarity with U.S. housing laws, and financial instability can be significant barriers that add to housing challenges. Housing discrimination can also be barrier for foreign-born and people of color looking to rent, with 46% of those populations citing racial discrimination in housing a study by Vermont Legal Aid (*Rental Discrimination Report, 2014, Vermont Legal Aid*). Once new refugee arrivals secure housing, they still must gain the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to maintain housing stability, achieve self-sufficiency, and prevent displacement.

Adjusting to the immense changes and new cultural differences within just a few months can be overwhelming, and yet refugee arrivals must work to become quickly self-sufficient while striving to overcome numerous linguistic and cultural challenges that accompany adjustment to a new life. Refugee families typically arrive in Vermont with very little or no money or assets, and are obligated to repay federal IOM travel loans (for their flight to the U.S.). Upon arrival, an overwhelming majority (90-95% - *USCRI Vermont*) meet the HUD definition of living at or below poverty level and yet are expected to find housing and achieve self-sufficiency within 3-8 months. Though some new arrivals may also be landlords and property owners in their home countries, the new system in the U.S. can prove challenging to navigate and understand, especially with language barriers. USCRI Vermont’s new Housing Orientation Program (HOP) aligns with CDBG National Objectives by providing crucial housing services and customized, culturally and linguistically appropriate housing case management to LMI refugee arrivals and families living at or below a poverty-level to help them move out of poverty, prevent these populations from entering poverty, and meet basic housing needs of those we serve currently living in poverty.

II. Program/Project Design

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

Offered as an extension of Reception and Placement case management services (which is limited to the first 30-90 days upon arrival), USCRI’s new HOP supports the housing needs of Burlington’s LMI refugee communities by providing access to safe, quality affordable housing, and creating long term housing stability through housing literacy education and specialized support. The HOP provides a comprehensive set of culturally and linguistically appropriate information, guides, and resources to help LMI refugee residents better understand basic housing related topics and activities such as lease agreements, home maintenance and repair, general safety, cleaning and upkeep, how to operate appliances, recycling and waste management, paying bills, landlord relations, relevant housing regulations and laws, tenants’ rights, and accessing the variety of rental and mortgage assistance programs available to those who qualify.

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):

As per federal mandate, USCRI is required to secure housing for new arrivals when they come to Vermont, so educating and acclimating clients once they are in their new home requires intensive case management and specialized educational tools like the HOP. Over its history of refugee resettlement in Burlington, surrounding towns and other parts of the state, USCRI has learned one of the most effective methods for helping new arrivals and refugee families navigate the complexities of securing affordable housing is by educating and preparing clients at the outset of the search and/or placement. Client feedback and response surveys tell us that finding and transitioning into a new home is made easier with translated materials and culturally appropriate educational content when used as a key part of case management. In response, intensive, customized housing case management and enhanced housing orientations provided through our expanded HOP are designed to promote housing retention, equip clients with a better understanding of their housing options, and help clients overcome barriers to housing stability. Case management may entail landlord mediation, application support for short-term financial assistance, community referrals for utility and heating assistance, budgeting, the art of recycling, and insect infestation support. These are several of the common case management interventions that USCRI has found to help LMI clients retain their housing. Enhanced housing orientation also bolsters housing retention by providing additional knowledge on tenant rights and legal protections (illegal evictions, tenant lawsuits, etc), a stronger understanding of typical housing norms (quiet hours, regular cleaning, recycling and waste removal, etc.), and basic home safety. Orientations will also include conversations with clients about homebuying options and services when appropriate, giving clients a stronger understanding of sustainable housing stability.

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

In accordance with the City's anti-poverty strategy, the HOP will help LMI residents meet basic housing needs and stabilize their living situations by providing access to and retention of safe, decent, and healthy affordable housing. The HOP will also help prevent vulnerable LMI City residents from falling into long-term poverty by providing the necessary housing education, program assistance, and intensive case management supports that will help this population escape poverty and/or avoid long-term poverty. The program also fills an important niche in regional homelessness prevention efforts by targeting limited English proficient populations with culturally responsive, linguistically accessible services. The HOP aligns with a number of priorities highlighted in Burlington's *2018 Consolidated Plan*, including: 1) improving the quality of lives for low-and moderate-income residents; 2) assisting persons at risk of becoming homeless; 3) increasing access to affordable, permanent housing in standard condition to low-income and moderate-income families, particularly to members of disadvantaged minorities; 4) empowerment and building self-sufficiency for low-income persons to reduce poverty; 5) increasing access to quality public and private facilities and services; and 6) promoting homeownership among income-qualified households.

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

The HOP is being expanded and refined in response to years of discussions and input from clients, feedback from rental companies and property owners, and meetings with regional housing service agencies like Burlington Housing Authority, Chittenden Housing Corporation/Winooski Housing Authority, and the Champlain Housing Trust. Our program assessment tools and quality control protocols are highlighted in Section IV. We have incorporated updated multilingual learning resources into the program like updated safety guides for COVID, resource listings, client progress and satisfaction surveys, tenant rights

information, and new housing assistance options that will better meet the housing resource needs of the clients we serve.

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?

Positive outcomes for LMI clients and families seeking housing include: 1) securing appropriate and affordable housing within 30 days of arriving or after starting a housing search, 2) understanding and improving their knowledge of how to find and secure housing, 3) being able to maintain the unit, operate appliances, preserve safety and upkeep, and sustain a good relationship with the landlord/property manager. By providing housing support for this specific population, USRCI will work to overcome cultural and community barriers to affordable housing, setting a strong foundation for refugee families to gain housing stability in the short term, and pave the way for home ownership long term. The intensive case management will also help LMI refugee families at risk for homelessness and/or displacement to avoid homelessness, as well as address situations that place tenancy at-risk and ameliorating landlord-tenant conflicts. Clients will also gain knowledge on the rights and responsibilities they possess as tenants and gain the confidence necessary to advocate for themselves in cases of landlord conflict. HOP clients will gain access to the comprehensive support necessary to address other barriers to housing such as employment, placing them on a track to achieve long term stability. USRCI believes that a multifaceted approach to housing will enable LMI refugee clients to retain safe, sanitary, and affordable housing, make better informed housing related financial decisions, and access a wider range of housing options in the long-term. Programmatic successes will ultimately contribute toward greater economic stability and avoiding poverty in the long term.

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

- Existing HOP content will be revised, updated, and expanded to include updated content on COVID safety, new housing resources, and new translated materials to better serve clients and improve housing education and placement outcomes for LMI clients receiving HOP services.
- **125** clients annually will receive HOP services and assistance within their first 90 days of arrivals as a part of housing case management.
- **100%** of participants will receive intensive housing services, consequently increasing the number of clients who will increase housing literacy, secure appropriate housing placement, achieve housing stability, and develop realistic plans for long-term housing success.
- **90%** of participants will secure affordable housing within one month of arrival as a result of HOP case management services.
- **100%** of participants will have access to housing resources beyond 90 days from their enrollment date.
- **90%** of participants will report an improvement in housing circumstances (e.g. housing representing a smaller share of their household budget, an improvement in housing conditions, better communication and positive relationships with the landlord) and better quality of life as a result of HOP services.
- **90%** of participants will report ongoing housing retention over the duration of their first lease.
- **100%** of participants who are eligible for community housing programs or require community housing support programs will be referred to the appropriate community resources through HOP.
- USRCI will increase its landlord and housing partner network by **15%**, increasing affordable and safe housing opportunities for HOP clients.

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.**

USCRI case managers will track HOP outcomes to monitor overall program performance, as well as incorporate program specific feedback to enhance its quality of service. As part of intake, case managers will collect the following data for all clients, including those receiving HOP services: 1) client personal data; 2) clients' progress in meeting Family Self Sufficiency Plan and Individual Education Program goals (including housing need and status); 3) clients' economic self-sufficiency status; 4) intensive Case Management notes. Each newly arriving refugee goes through several enrollment form processes, including a Self-Sufficiency Plan that identifies housing needs and goals. This form will be expanded to create more detail about the short-term and long-term housing needs of each client, housing goals, potential barriers to achieving housing goals, and an action plan for obtaining housing goals. HOP will use the Reception and Placement program's 90-day period report to document housing services and means of income within the first 90 days. This report is aggregated monthly, and will help measure the number of clients successfully housed and obtaining income.

Overall, client pre-placement outcomes will be determined by assessing current housing status and progress in securing appropriate housing and housing resources offered through HOP and/or referral services. Post-placement outcomes will be measured by evaluating household budgets (i.e. income sufficiently exceeds expenses in a budget that covers all required household expenses); tracking the rate at which families maintain their housing without emergency interventions; and the number and rate households report an increase in housing literacy. USCRI will conduct a housing safety checklist of each housing placement, so that each client understands the standards used for assessing "safe" and "sanitary" housing. HOP case managers will solicit periodic home assessments via phone, online video calls, or email, which capture qualitative feedback from clients on any housing concerns, housing questions, and general levels of housing satisfaction. Additional tools such as the Household Budget Form and Orientation Assessments are used to measure client progress and knowledge gained as a result of services. HOP case managers will provide the Director with internal reports on client progress weekly and as needed. USCRI monitors program quality through weekly Direct Service meetings and makes program policy and procedural adjustments on an ongoing basis. Monthly and annual client outcome and status reports are assembled in keeping with city, state, and federal regulations and requirements. With the proposed HOP expansion, the case manager will create a pre/post client satisfaction assessment in tandem with our Quality of Life Survey. This culturally- and linguistically-appropriate survey assessment will allow clients to reflect on the goals and needs they originally identified, and assess the quality and degree of services provided. The client satisfaction assessment will include both quantitative and qualitative questions, and be available for self-reporting with the use of an interpreter when needed. Assessments are anonymized and will not include any personally identifying data (such as name or address of client) to ensure client confidentiality. In this way, clients may be more comfortable to respond transparently on the survey.

- 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. N/A.**

V. Experience / Organizational Capacity

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

Founded in 1980, USCRI Vermont (formally the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program) brings hope and opportunity to the lives of refugees and immigrants through comprehensive, integrated, and linguistically and culturally appropriate services. USCRI is the only Voluntary Agency in Vermont that provides refugee resettlement services through the United States Refugee Program. As the only refugee resettlement agency in Vermont, USCRI Vermont has helped thousands of newly arrived refugees and other eligible populations from over 35 countries secure safe and affordable housing, adjust to new cultural and social norms, gain employment opportunities, learn English, and access other community services. Securing affordable housing for new arrivals within the first few weeks is one of our most critical services, and USCRI is well-positioned to enhance and expand housing services to more adequately support both the initial and long-term housing needs of refugees. Over the last decade, USCRI has helped over 3,000 refugee and immigrant families find housing and achieve economic and social self-sufficiency in Chittenden County and throughout the state.

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.):

Through our comprehensive programs, USCRI Vermont has resettled over eight thousand refugees from more than 35 countries of origin over the last forty years in Burlington, Winooski, Chittenden County, and throughout the state. USCRI staff are comprised of former refugees and immigrants from these same communities, and share similar experiences that make them particularly attuned to intercultural dynamics. All case management staff are credentialed and have decades of professional experience providing customized, culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Amila Merdzanovic, Director of USCRI Vermont, was resettled in Vermont as a refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 and has a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy, concentrating in International Organizations and Forced Migration from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. USCRI has established solid relationships with local landlords and property management companies, who work with staff to ensure affordable and accessible housing for individuals with special considerations or mobility issues. In addition to municipal grants, USCRI has successfully managed numerous federal and state grants awarded by the Department of State, Bureau for Populations Refugees and Migration, Agency for Children and Families, State Refugee Office at Agency for Human Service, and Vermont Department of Health. From July 2020 to December 30th, 2020, USCRI managed a \$350,000 CARES Act grant that provided material assistance directly to 300 refugee and immigrant households in Chittenden County.

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?

Racial equity, inclusion, cultural diversity, and advancing anti-racism have always been a priority at USCRI and have informed our approach to programming, our client work, our partnering, community engagement, and hiring practices over the last three decades. In Feb 2020, USCRI staff and educators attended a day long training taught by Mercedes Avila/UVM Medical Center on the effects of systemic racism and bias in the healthcare industry and the impact of racism on health outcomes for BIPOC communities in Vermont and the U.S. Since March 2020, USCRI has been co-leading the Vermont Coronavirus Multilingual Taskforce which has filled a critical gap in providing public health messaging related to COVID-19 in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner. In July 2020, USCRI Vermont signed on and joined the Mayor's Office and the City of Burlington's declaration of racism as a public health emergency. For 2021, the USCRI leadership is reinforcing its commitment to these values by supporting projects that will strengthen USCRI's ongoing efforts to open and expand access points in education, health, child and family services, employment opportunity, and housing for refugee populations in Burlington and the County.

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
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:

- Abused Children Elderly (62 years +) People with AIDS
 Battered Spouses Homeless Persons Illiterate Adults
 People with Severe Disabilities

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.

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)
HOP Intensive Case Management; resource sharing; placement; referrals; inspections; on-site support	125	100	25	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?

The program will serve 125 LMI and very low income refugee new arrivals, refugee families residing in Burlington and surrounding communities within Chittenden County from July 2021 to June 2022. Of the total client number receiving HOP services, approximately 90% are very low income and at or below the poverty level. 49% of the clients we serve are female and 51% are male. 71% are Black, 27% are Asian, 1% are Latino, and 1% are White. Our clients are primarily from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and Syria. USCRI also sees diversity within the family size of its clients, ranging from single individuals to families of eight to ten individuals. Greater than 57% of the families we serve through housing case management are larger, multigenerational families of five or more, and 9% are children/minors. With household income already at or below the federal poverty line, these trends put additional budgetary strain on household providers and increase the need for safe and affordable housing able to accommodate large, multigenerational families.

Based on our intake data, USCRI estimates approximately 90-95% of new refugee arrivals are very low income and at risk of falling into poverty within the first year of their residency. Nearly all arrive after

having spent years living in refugee camps overseas. Over the last four years, most of our new arrivals came from the Democratic Republic of Congo (55%), with 15% from Bhutan, and the remaining 30% from Somalia, Burma, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Our target population is assigned to USCRI and arrives initially through the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. USCRI has a mandated 90 day window to help arrivals secure affordable housing, employment, educational opportunities, get enrolled in English Language Learning classes, open bank accounts, acclimate to their new home, and begin to achieve self-sufficiency over their first year of residency. USCRI works with new arrivals over the first year to access local, state, and federal resources and services and place refugee arrivals in education, language skills, and job training programs through its resettlement programs.

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

USCRI Vermont’s staff members, many of whom are former refugees from the populations being served, have decades of experience providing linguistically accessible and culturally appropriate services to the target population. Staff members utilize interpretation and translation services and adapt services, educational materials, and other information to meet the needs of specific populations. USCRI Vermont also conducts periodic client surveys and focus groups to assess evolving client needs, receive feedback regarding services, and to ensure inclusion, equity, and accessibility of programs.

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.

CDBG funds will be utilized to meet partial salary for a HOP Housing Case Manager to provide intensive case management from July 2021 to June 2022. This staff person will be responsible for coordinating and facilitating HOP activities, including housing case management, enhanced housing orientation, housing ESP, landlord outreach, emergency and temporary outreach support, referrals, and housing placement. Additional expenses include interpretation, program supplies, audit and insurance coverage, telephone, and travel.

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
Intensive case management, resource sharing; placement; referrals; inspections; on-site support	Housing Case Manager	Housing assistance	14	35
Interpretation	Interpreter	Interpretation	4	20

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
HOP/Housing Case Manager salary	\$14,000	\$26,000	\$40,000
Interpreters	\$3,640	\$0.00	\$3,640
Fringe Benefits	\$4,162	\$7,127	\$11,289
Travel	\$754	\$500	\$1,254
Printing	\$319	\$592	\$911
Supplies and Materials	\$628	\$1,166	\$1,794
Other	\$3,770	\$7,003	\$10,773
Indirect	\$2,727	\$17,132	\$19,859
	\$30,000	\$59,520	\$89,520

4. Funding Sources

	Project		Agency	
	Current	Projected	Current	Projected
CDBG	0	\$ 30,000	\$	\$
State (specify)	0	0		
Federal (specify)	0	0		
United Way	0	0		
Private (specify) Hannaford Supermarkets	30,000	0		
Program Income	29,520	0		
Other (<u>specify</u>)	0	0		
Total	\$ 59,520	\$ 30,000	\$ N/A	\$ N/A

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

$$\frac{\$30,000}{\$89,520} = 29\%$$

CDBG Funding Total Program/Project Costs Percentage

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

$$\frac{\$89,520}{125} = \$716$$

Total Program/Project Cost # Total Proposed Beneficiaries Cost Per Person

$$\frac{\$30,000}{125} = \$240$$

Total Amount of CDBG Funding # Total Proposed CDBG Beneficiaries Cost Per Person/CDBG

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

USCRI currently needs funding in the next 6 months to respond to the immediate and growing housing crisis affecting our most vulnerable clients. Over the next 6-8 months we anticipate that approximately 125 new arrivals will be coming to Burlington as USCRI ramps up efforts to rebuild our HOP and larger housing case management capacity. USCRI is scrambling to secure salary support for a position that will be serving hundreds of new clients over a condensed timeline, and partial salary support is a cost category that most traditional funding sources we partner with like private foundations and targeted state and federal funds are unable to accommodate in the near to immediate term.

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?

USCRI utilizes resources from the state's Coronavirus Multilingual Task Force, the Racial Equity Task Force, VT Department of Health, and local organizers to translate and make available materials relating to housing safety and best practices during the COVID pandemic, all of which will be utilized through HOP case management. Once state COVID regulations allow it, the HOP will begin to incorporate volunteers to help conduct residential visits and provide guidance and informal training on home safety, how to operate and maintain household appliances, cleaning assistance, inspections, repairs, and general family support. CDBG grant support would be leveraged to find funding for salary costs of the position and HOP supplies beyond June 2022.

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.

USCRI Vermont has worked with the Burlington Housing Authority, Champlain Housing Trust, Chittenden Housing Corporation/Winooski Housing Authority, and Vermont State Housing Authority for years to help secure safe, affordable housing for LMI refugee families and to help educate and empower new arrivals and refugee families as they resettle in Burlington. USCRI case managers work closely with Burlington and Winooski Housing Authorities to assist newly-arriving refugees with applying for subsidized housing and other housing opportunities. In situations where clients are working (or about to start working) and need one-time assistance to pay overdue rent, USCRI helps clients request assistance through CVOEO and Chittenden Community Action. These partnerships streamline housing support possible across community providers and increase client access to community resources. Case managers make referrals to, and coordinate closely with, Committee on Temporary Shelter and STEPS to End Domestic Violence, providing ongoing case management for active USCRI clients. These partnerships are critical safety nets for clients requiring emergency shelter or transitional housing. Beyond housing, USCRI Vermont has an extensive history of partnering with a number of state agencies and regional nonprofits such as the Agency of Human Services/Office of State Refugee Coordinator, the Governor's Office, the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV), King Street Center, Howard Center, Spectrum Youth Services and others as well as the cities of Burlington, Winooski, Rutland, Montpelier and smaller towns throughout the state.

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

There are other housing assistance programs in Burlington and the surrounding region, but only USCRI offers culturally and linguistically appropriate intensive housing case management in-house to LMI refugee families. The state's Rapid Resolution Housing Initiative Program provides direct financial subsidies for

individuals and families experiencing homelessness due to the COVID-19 public health crisis. CVOEO's Community Action Housing Assistance Program provides provide information and referrals to help secure affordable housing. Vermont Legal Aid provides tenants' rights information and eviction/displacement legal assistance. Champlain Housing Trust has Homebuyer Education and Homeowner Services. The Rental Housing Stabilization and Mortgage Assistance Programs through Vermont State Housing Authority/CARES Act provided direct subsidies and other financial help as well as multilingual assistance with state housing applications, but that program ended in December 2020.

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

Like nearly all other service agencies and providers, the COVID pandemic has forced USCRI to move our client interactions and formerly in-person case management services online, yet the change has also allowed us to streamline and increase efficiencies with most elements of our program delivery. We no longer schedule drop-in meetings, but do serve a greater volume of clients electronically. The new reality accelerated the development of our new online case management tools, and transformed our short term programming focus into one directed at expanding access to online resources for our clients, creating new digital literacy platforms, and distributing free Chromebooks to all interested clients.

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?

Combined with our existing case management services, the HOP will help reduce the immediate and long term risk of homelessness, housing insecurity, and falling into poverty among some of the most vulnerable populations in the City. Services offered through the HOP provide critical assistance and information that will help LMI refugee families in the City secure affordable housing and maintain housing stability while working to achieve and sustain economic self-sufficiency. If the HOP ends, LMI beneficiaries will continue to benefit through continued use of the education, information, skills, and experience gained from the HOP. LMI families will be better able to navigate the challenges of tenancy and maintaining housing stability.

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

Yes, USCRI will need to provide HOP services to a growing number of clients over the next year and beyond. Longer term funding opportunities managed through the state and possibly new federal sources of funding to support housing access and placement for LMI refugee populations might be available to support HOP into 2022-2023. USCRI also has funding options through its affiliate network of Field Offices to pursue longer term case management grant support as a network of regional resettlement service providers.

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

If the full amount requested is not received, USCRI Vermont will need to scale back the housing Case Management staffing FTEs, leading to a reduction in the number of LMI families being served. The HOP will prioritize only those families that are at the most risk of homelessness or with the greatest barriers to achieving housing stability.

