

**Angela Zaikowski, Vermont Apartment Owners Association, LLC  
Pamela Favreau, Vermont Tenants, CVOEO  
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**Finding Common Ground in Rental Housing: A proposal to conduct a public outreach and information program regarding the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants.**

**Submitted by: Vermont Tenants, CVOEO and The Vermont Apartment Owners Association, LLC**

**Background**

Vermont Tenants (VTI) is a program of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO). As a component of CVOEO's Statewide Coordinated Housing Services since 1981, Vermont Tenants has a well established history of providing education and outreach to renters in Vermont.

VTI provides free assistance, information, and referral services directly to tenants by phone and face-to-face tenant counseling. We strongly believe that there should not be "sides" in a landlord tenant relationship. We are not a "pro-tenant/anti-landlord" program. We understand that there are great landlords and bad tenants as often as there is the reverse. Our Mission at Vermont Tenants is to educate both parties to be the best that they can be!

The Vermont Apartment Owners Association, LLC (VAOA) is a statewide member-based organization for landlords. We have represented the interests of residential and commercial landlords in Vermont since 1974.

VAOA's goal is to inform and educate Vermont landlords so that they continue to provide quality rental housing to all Vermonters. We provide educational services to both members and non-members. VAOA has become a clearing house for accurate, up-to-date, information that impacts Vermont landlords. This information covers a complete spectrum of rental property issues.

Together our organizations share a common belief that landlords and tenants both want the same thing: A successful renting experience. We believe that this can be achieved through helping both parties understand their rights and responsibilities under Vermont Law.

**Project Summary**

Vermont Tenants and The Vermont Apartment Owners Association propose to create a Statewide Landlord and Tenant Education and Outreach Program.

We propose an initial one year pilot project in municipalities that have existing housing ordinances, Housing Boards of Review and/or housing offices. During year one, we will compile data to target future high need geographical areas. If successful and financially feasible, years two and three will expand the Education

and Outreach Program into targeted areas of the state with high incidence of requests for assistance from landlords and tenants. (These will be defined using data from both organizations as well as input from DHCD.) Year four would expand the program statewide.

The primary goal of this project is to increase information and education resources available to landlords and tenants across Vermont. There will be an emphasis on reaching landlords renting only one or two units.

This project engages stakeholders in the rental system including; non-profit housing assistance organizations, landlord associations, Municipal Code Enforcements Offices, Select Boards and Town Health Officers.

Anticipated outcomes include improved availability of information for both parties in landlord tenant issues. This will include information on landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities, evictions, access and Vermont's Warranty of Habitability, as well as resources for direct assistance.

### **Goal 1: Identify vulnerable populations of tenants and small scale landlords.**

*Objective 1.1:* Use existing data from both programs to identify highest need geographic areas with Municipal systems.

- *Objective 1.2:* Work with Municipalities with existing apartment registration programs; Bennington, Brattleboro, Brandon, Barre City, Burlington, Montpelier, St. Albans City, Rutland City and Winooski, to identify population of small landlords
- *Objective 1.3:* Work with Community Action Agencies in targeted geographic areas to provide venues and referrals for tenant education workshops and programs.
- *Objective 1.4:* Create an on line survey for both VTI and VAOA Websites seeking input from stakeholders. Use information from surveys to design workshops, written materials and to target high need areas.
- *Objective 1.5:* Use both program's websites to provide assistance and information to *both* landlords and tenants.

### **Goal 2: Provide outreach activities to landlord and tenants**

- *Objective 2.1:* Design and publish materials for landlords. These materials will include information on Vermont's Warranty of Habitability, Landlord and Tenant responsibilities, eviction process, legal withholding of rent and Vermont's anti-retaliation laws.

- *Objective 2.2:* Design and publish materials for tenants. The materials will include information on Vermont's Warranty of Habitability, Landlord and Tenant responsibilities, eviction process, legal withholding of rent and Vermont's anti-retaliation laws.
- *Objective 2.3:* Work with Town Clerk Offices in areas targeted as high need to display informational materials.
- *Objective 2.4:* Provide materials to Municipal Code Enforcement Officers and Town Health Officers to give to landlords and tenants in complaint inspection situations.
- *Objective 2.5:* Utilize media and social media to provide educational information for landlords and tenants.
- *Objective 2.6:* Work with Community Action Agencies (CAA) to identify high population areas of vulnerable tenants. VTI will provide materials to CAAs similar to that provided in above objectives for handout to tenants seeking assistance.
- *Objective 2.7:* Work with Municipalities with existing apartment registration programs; Bennington, Brattleboro, Brandon, Barre City, Burlington, Montpelier, St. Albans City, Rutland City and Winooski, to include landlord education materials in registration invoice mailings.

**Goal 3: Provide educational workshops and classes to landlords and tenants in varied media.**

- *Objective 3.1:* Provide four CVOEO "Rent Right" courses to tenants in Franklin, Grand Isle, Chittenden and Addison Counties. Create and make available "Rent Right" curriculum to non-profit social service agencies throughout the state on a contracted basis.
- *Objective 3.2:* Provide four landlord workshops in person, via public access television, Skype and Go To Meeting formats. This will include at least one workshop specific to new landlords.
- *Objective 3.3:* Provide one training to VT 211 staff
- *Objective 3.4:* Provide two trainings to housing non profit agencies via above formats, with at least one training specific to New Americans.
- *Objective 3.5:* Provide one workshop for Town Health Officers.

**Total Workshops and Educational Activities: 12**

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**Budget for year one**

**Expenses**

Workshops and Trainings

<i>Salaries and Fringe</i>	6,512.00	
<i>Materials</i>	600.00	
<i>Travel</i>	2,688.00	
Total		9,800.00

Educational Materials

<i>Salaries and Fringe</i>	5,920.00	
<i>Printing</i>	11,800.00	
Total		17,720.00

Postage/Shipping 4,346.00

**Total Expenses 31,866.00**