

CVOEO-RHSP CARES II 2021

Please accept this CVOEO proposal in collaboration with the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV) - See AALV proposal submitted separately - to Vermont Legal Aid for grant funds to support tenants, mobile home residents, refugee and immigrant renters and homeowners affected by COVID-19.

The Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) is a nonprofit corporation formed in 1965 to carry out the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 in Vermont's Northwest Counties of Addison, Chittenden, Franklin and Grand Isle. It is one of five Community Action Agencies in Vermont.

We bridge gaps and build futures. That is, we provide individuals and families with the basic needs of food, fuel and housing support in times of crisis, and we help them acquire the necessary education, financial skills and assets to build a stable future in which they thrive.

Although a regional non-profit, CVOEO runs four statewide Housing Advocacy Programs (HAP): the Fair Housing Program (FHP), the Mobile Home Program (MHP), the VTTenants Program (VTTenants) and the CARES Housing Voucher Program (CHVP).

The CARES Housing Voucher Program provides medium-term rental assistance to Vermont households who are experiencing homelessness and actively working to increase their income or secure other forms of longer-term affordable housing. It will operate until March 2022.

The Fair Housing Program works to protect and expand the fair housing legal rights of people traditionally subjected to housing discrimination and exclusion. Through education and outreach, we ensure that the general public, housing and service providers, and municipal officials understand their fair housing rights and responsibilities under Vermont and Federal law and we provide consultations and referrals for those experiencing discrimination. We also support state and municipal efforts to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing in order to expand the inclusiveness of housing opportunities in Vermont.

The Mobile Home Program specializes in helping people navigate the unusual situation of being both an owner and a renter. We offer a hotline service, advocate for residents to have greater control over their housing and through organizing and education, and engage them to protect and improve their housing rights and living conditions. Prior to the CARES Act funding allocation, MHP conducted COVID-19 Outreach efforts in Mobile Home parks with the main goal to get a better understanding of the current living conditions, needs and the issues most directly impacting Vermont's mobile home park residents during COVID-19 while providing essential resource info and referral as needed. MHP, as the only mobile home -focused service in the State, is a source of information and referrals that mobile home residents rely on.

Vermont Tenants offers counseling, free information, and referral services directly to tenants by phone and email. VTTenants education services provide participants the confidence, skills, and information necessary to find and maintain health and stable housing. Since the beginning of this pandemic, VTTenants has distributed information and resources to alleviate housing issues exacerbated by the pandemic and created a COVID-19 resources webpage with translated documents and interpreted videos in six different languages. Through collaboration with Vermont Legal Aid, VTTenants was also able to translate, in three additional languages, an important tenant resource: An Illustrated Guide to Vermont Renter's Rights.

CVOEO's Financial Futures Program has a Community Ambassadors Hotline offering free education, counseling, information, and referral services directly to New Americans in their own languages by phone. The Community Ambassadors are widely-known, respected members of New American communities. They are employed by CVOEO to support community members in accessing the resources, knowledge, and skills to meet their immediate basic and financial needs and also to work towards financial security. Currently, there are 10 Community Ambassadors who collectively support Somali, Mai-Mai, Arabic, French, Swahili, Nepali, and Spanish speaking community members.

COVID-19 relief measures have diminished momentarily hardships, but significant gaps and implementation challenges have delayed aid to many vulnerable households. Populations with literacy, internet access and navigation, language access, and technical assistance needs have significant difficulties accessing these resources.

We believe that with this second stimulus, there is a crucial need for a strong multifaceted and well planned approach. Rental assistance is crucial for keeping people stably housed as economic fallout from the pandemic continues but it needs also to be paired with deliberate and equitable targeting of the most vulnerable members of our communities with customized and fair access and technical assistance to services, programs and information. We believe that the approach that CVOEO HAP is proposing to provide statewide will create stronger and more direct connections to participants and not only access more crucial COVID-19 related housing financial assistance and support programs but also help them to ultimately stabilize and retain their housing. Providing equitable relief services and supports will help more people transition to anticipated COVID-19 recovery phases.

The success and lasting impact of these efforts depend on the participation of tenants/MHP residents, landlord/MHP owners in financial relief programs, collaborating with service providers such as VSHA, VLA and AALV and the building of strong relationships between these groups while increasing access to housing education to strengthen efforts towards healthy housing.

CVOEO HAP and Financial Futures do propose two services to support of COVID-19 rental assistance programs: **Community Ambassadors Hotline** and **VT Tenants and MHP Technical Assistance/Support Specialists services**.

**Note that most of wages listed below are additional hours added to existing staff positions.*

Community Ambassadors Hotline

Host Program: Financial Futures

Area of operation: Statewide

Staff: 10 community Ambassadors (Somali, Mai-Mai, Arabic, French, Swahili, Nepali, and Spanish) and 1 supervisor

Total Funding needed: \$42,135.86 (includes wages, indirect and operation expenses)

Services: The Community Ambassadors are widely-known, respected members of New American communities. They are employed by CVOEO to support community members in accessing the resources, knowledge, and skills they need to meet their immediate basic needs and also to work towards financial security in their own

languages. They run a hotline where 10 Community Ambassadors collectively support community members who speak Somali, Mai-Mai, Arabic, French, Swahili, Nepali, and Spanish.

The Community Ambassadors will provide outreach, support and referral to relief resources and programs to the New Americans Community through its statewide hotline:

- Spreading information about the program through established social networks. Community Ambassadors will connect with their language communities through social media sites, apps, and direct discussion. This allows community members to receive information about the program in their own language and from community members they trust.
- Providing support to community members whose primary language is not English in completing rental assistance application, seeking answers to their questions about programs, and following up about their application and the assistance they receive as needed.
- Connect callers directly, through a hard referral process, to AALV, VLA and other services providers when required or needed.

To provide this support, the Community Ambassadors will all need an initial 2-hour training session on the new rental assistance program and how to accurately complete the application. We will provide additional trainings throughout the grant period to ensure Community Ambassadors have up-to-date information about the program and support in completing their work consistently and accurately. We anticipate an average of 12 hours, collectively among the Community Ambassadors, of support provided to community members per week for the ten months of the grant period.

Community Ambassadors Hotline Budget		
Item	Cost	
Financial Empowerment for New Americans Project Manager	\$11,301	25% of \$45,205.20
Community Ambassadors	\$17,520	Training: two 2-hour sessions x 10 Ambassadors (40 hours x \$30/hour) Outreach: 4 hours x 10 Ambassadors (40 hours x \$30/hour) Direct Service: 12 hours/week x 10 months (504 hours x \$30)
Fringe	\$1,892 part-time \$3,797	10.8% of part-time salaries; 33.60% of full-time salaries
Workers Compensation	\$363.15	
Indirect	\$6,225	21.60% of salaries
Rent (office space)	\$627	25% of office space for 10 months
Utilities	\$65.	10 months
Phone	\$344	10 months
Total	\$42,136	

Technical Assistance/Support Specialists

Total Staff: 1.5 FTE

Total Funding needed: \$112,587 (includes wages, indirect and operation expenses)

Host Program: Housing Advocacy Programs Team (VTTenants and MHP)

Area of operation: Statewide

Staff: 1.5 FTE (VTTenants-1 FTE/MHP-0.5 FTE)

Services:

The VTTenants TAS Specialist will connect with renters and:

- Provide rental assistance application processes support and follow up supportive services as required.
- Employ best practices and work with tenants, landlords, housing providers and/or service providers towards housing stability and sustainability.
- Take appropriate action to address barriers and referrals to other programs and agencies.
- Coordinate referrals for legal support services as needed and verify status of ongoing and/or completed referrals.

The MHP TAS Specialist will connect with mobile home residents and:

- Provide rental assistance application processes support and follow up supportive services as required.
- Work with residents, MHP owners, MHP property managers and housing services providers to sustain their housing affordability, stability and sustainability.
- Coordinate referrals for legal support services as needed and verify status of ongoing and/or completed referrals.
- Take appropriate action to address barriers and referrals to other programs and agencies.

Technical Assistance/Support Specialists Budget		
Item	Cost	
Salary	\$66,204	1.5 FTE
Fringe	\$22,205	
Workers Compensation	\$834	
Hiring Fee	\$500	For VTTenants 1FTE position
Background Fee	\$76	For VTTenants 1FTE position
Computer Equipment	\$2,000	
Service Contracts	\$602	
Office Supplies	\$500	
Postage	\$500	
Indirect	\$14,101	
Rent (office space)	\$3,861	10 months
Utilities	\$377	10 months
Phone	\$676	10 months
Total	\$112,435	

TOTAL FUNDING NEEDED: \$154,571