

Proposal for Community Development Block Grant

January 2024 Round

Fellowship Housing Opportunities, Inc. (FHO) through the City of Concord hereby makes application for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds during the upcoming January 2024 application round.

THE BACKGROUND

FHO is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in downtown Concord, NH dedicated to promoting recovery from mental illness as a provider of high-quality, affordable housing, and client-centered behavioral services. Our mission is to "Provide safe, affordable housing with support to members of our community who live with a mental illness". We envision a community in which people with mental illness are able to manage their daily lives, be good neighbors, access resources, and find acceptance. The organization, originally named "Opportunity House", was founded in 1966. During the deinstitutionalization movement of the 1960s, a group of community leaders came together to ensure those integrating into the Concord community from New Hampshire Hospital felt welcome and supported throughout their transition. The early years of the organization comprised of two "halfway houses", offering safe and supportive settings for those suffering from a mental illness making difficult transitions into the community. Although these programs closed due to funding issues in the 70s, the organization remained active.

In 1980, the organization applied to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and was approved for the purpose of establishing a community residence for those with a mental illness in need of daily support and supervision. The residence is licensed by the State Of New Hampshire and operates under provisions of New Hampshire RSA 171-A and RSA 151 as a Community Residence (4+ beds). The residence opened in 1984 and housed 10 individuals, later expanding capacity to 12 in 2007. After the community residence proved self-sustaining, the organization grew to open new housing projects every few years. Fellowship Housing now runs six additional housing projects to provide safe, low-income housing units. In these apartments, our tenants live independently but receive supportive services to assist them as needed from both Riverbend Community Mental Health Center (Riverbend) and Fellowship Housing. Riverbend services may include both in office professional services and outreach services. Fellowship Housing services include outreach support to assist our residents in maintaining their housing.

The organization offers a variety of housing units comprised of efficiency, studio, one bedroom, two bedroom, and three bedroom units. The most popular units among current and prospective tenants are subsidized single units. All of the organization's buildings are located within a mile of downtown Concord, giving tenants easy access to public transportation, mental health services, medical doctors, community inclusion groups, shopping, etc. The agency currently has capacity to house over 60 individuals suffering from a severe mental illness.

THE PROJECT

The project we are seeking CDBG funds for is to preserve and rehabilitate our property at 22 Fayette Street which we purchased in the Spring of 2001 for \$198,500. The residence was built in 1865 and is known historically as Webster House. We worked with HUD for a fund reservation for an Affordable Housing Development Project under Section 811. We worked on the development until January 21, 2004, when we earned a Certificate of Occupancy and on April 28, 2004, held a Grand Opening Ceremony enabling us to house seven individuals living with mental health in a low-income supportive housing arrangement.

Specifically, we need to fully replace the fire escape on the building. We recently noticed that the footings of the fire escape appear not to be properly constructed and over the years they have therefore succumbed to rot. In addition, the floor boards on several of the landings are exhibiting various degrees of rot and upon closer inspection found that one could easily push a finger between the flooring of the fire escape. The structural integrity of the entire three-story fire escape is in jeopardy and needs to be replaced. While the structure provides emergency access to a three-story building it is designed with a landing between floors and is therefore constructed on five levels with a ramp on the first level providing handicapped access to the first level.

Since the project is an integral part of being able to live in the building, we are currently making repairs to the structure with the goal of holding us for up to two years. The goal of the project is to complete a full replacement of the structure within this time.

FHO strives to provide housing which is safe and to meet this requirement we need to have a structure which is secure while at the same time meeting the need for a means of egress in case of a fire.

THE PARTNERSHIP

FHO places a high priority on working with other Community Partners both to assist with its work and to assist others with their work. For this specific project FHO will be working in conjunction with our major partner.

FHO has a long-standing partnership with Riverbend. To provide affordable housing for individuals living with severe and persistent mental health issues and provide client-centered behavioral services, FHO established a contractual relationship with Riverbend which has been in place for several years. This allows FHO to establish a unique relationship with all its tenants and operate as an "interested landlord", involved with the day to day lives of our renters. All of our tenants are clients of Riverbend who provides all the clinical aspects of care while we provide the living environment. Additionally we provide Outreach services as identified in the personal treatment goals outlined by Riverbend and attend meetings as part of the treatment team when needed.

In addition, we partner with Riverbend in managing the housing placement process. All housing units in both FHO and Riverbend's inventory are discussed in a bi-monthly meeting and vacancies are assigned together considering clinical needs, access requirements, financial considerations and length time waiting for a unit. This allows us to work together to allocate scarce resources from a holistic approach taking into account all aspects of tenants needs in an effort to transition through the continuum of care as it relates to housing needs.

THE NEED

In this time of shortfalls in housing, increased rents, and a mental health crisis, it is imperative that existing housing units be maintained as well as expanded where possible. In this case the fire escape serves also as a second entrance and exit to the apartment. The landings provide a small amount of outdoor covered space to sit and relax, plant flowers and vegetables as well as get some fresh air. While there is an obvious need that additional housing meets there are some not so obvious needs which this project is aimed at addressing such as maintaining a safe living environment for existing tenants living with mental illness.

THE BUDGET

The budget is, at this point, difficult to present. We can, however, provide some key information that is providing guidance at a high level as we maneuver through the project. We have reviewed several quotes to do the work and based on the numbers that have been reviewed, we estimate that the repairs needed to stabilize the structure temporarily will be \$10,000. This work is underway, and we are targeting completion by the time winter sets in.

The long-term solution of completely rebuilding the fire escape is estimated to be \$100,000. As part of the ongoing operations for our housing projects, we place money in reserves each month based on our ten-year plan for maintaining the property. As a result, we can contribute \$25,000 of the reserves to the project. We are seeking a grant for the balance of \$75,000.

THE SUMMARY

Fellowship Opportunity Housing, Inc. appreciates the opportunity to make application for funding with the City of Concord and partner with them during the upcoming January 2024 application round. Funds will only be used for property building renovation as appropriate. You can see that the project focuses on preservation and renovation of housing which will benefit not only low-income individuals but also those living with severe and persistent mental health issues. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to partner with other local not for profit organizations to solve community and State problems and generate long-term benefits.

I look forward to working with the City of Concord as needed in the application to NH Community Development Finance Authority in behalf of our proposal herewith. If you have any questions regarding the proposal please contact me and I will get you an answer.

Herbert S. Carpenter
Executive Director
Fellowship Housing Opportunities, Inc.



