

UNITY of Greater New Orleans
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Housing First Permanent Housing Project

August 17, 2012

UNITY of Greater New Orleans, the lead agency for the homeless Continuum of Care for Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, is seeking proposals for the “Housing First Permanent Housing Project,” a new Permanent Supportive Housing tenant-based rental assistance project which will provide approximately 40 disabled homeless adults (and their families if applicable) their own apartments along with supportive services to help them remain stably housed. A total of **\$541,700** has been awarded to UNITY through the 2011 HUD CoC SuperNOFA competition for this project. This amount will fund one project sponsor for a 1-year grant period expected to begin by December 2012. It is anticipated that future funds for this project will be renewed annually assuming that the project sponsor is in good standing with UNITY regarding program and fiscal compliance. The target populations for the Bonus Project this year are chronically homeless persons (including families) and veterans who are ineligible for VASH. **Proposals are due 9 a.m., Monday, September 10, 2012. A funding decision will be made by September 21, 2012, and the project is expected to begin by December 1.**

Permanent Supportive Housing (“PSH”) is affordable rental housing linked to supportive services designed to enable persons with disabilities to become and remain stably housed. National studies show that PSH is a cost-effective solution to chronic homelessness and can successfully house and stabilize vulnerable persons living on the street who previously often were believed to be beyond help. UNITY expects project sponsors to follow “Housing First” principles.

The selected project sponsor must:

- Provide ongoing rental assistance and case management services to chronically homeless individuals or families in scattered site apartments found in the private rental market.
- Accept clients solely from the community-wide Permanent Supportive Housing Registry which prioritizes persons for PSH according to their vulnerability to dying and their chronic homelessness.
- Be willing to find housing for participants in both Orleans and Jefferson Parish depending on the participant’s preference and the availability of rental units. Rent amounts for the housing units may not exceed the current area Fair Market Rents.
- Be willing to “front rents” for a period not expected to exceed 6 weeks until reimbursement is received from UNITY. This amount will average \$35,000/month once the program reaches full capacity.

In order to expand the CoC’s capacity to administer Permanent Supportive Housing programs, the selection process for this particular RFP will give preference to those nonprofit and governmental agency applicants that are not currently administering CoC Permanent Supportive Housing programs and wish to learn how to do so. Experience administering other types of housing programs and/or providing case management and other supportive services for persons who are disabled or homeless is an asset.

UNITY will assist the selected project sponsor in developing a more detailed 1-year budget for the project, which will include these budget line items:

- Supportive Services: \$103,719 for 2 case managers and a part-time supervisor
- Supportive Services: \$ 5,200 for a part-time consultant
- Leasing: \$422,160 for leasing assistance for 40 participants
- Administrative: \$10,621 for project delivery costs

HUD defines chronic homelessness as follows: *"A chronically homeless person is defined as an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who 1) has been continuously homeless for a year or more OR 2) has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.*

Disabling condition is defined as a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. To be considered chronically homeless, persons must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g. living on the streets) and/or in an emergency shelter during that time. An episode is a separate, distinct, and sustained stay on the streets and/or in an emergency homeless shelter." Please note that HUD, for the first time, has expanded the definition of "chronically homeless" to include families in which a disabled adult is the head of the household.

For further information about assisting chronically homeless persons, supportive housing programs, or housing first programs, the following websites may offer useful information: www.pathwaystohousing.org; www.csh.org; www.naeh.org; and www.unitygno.org.

Please consult HUD's Supportive Housing Program Desk Manual for a description of the rules governing these program funds, how funds can be used, and the matching funds requirements for supportive services. The desk manual is available at www.hudhre.gov.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Your proposal, no more than 8 pages, must address the following:

- 1) Interest** - Describe the special needs and challenges presented by chronically homeless persons and explain why your agency is interested in serving this population.
- 2) Experience** - Describe your agency's experience and past performance in providing housing placement, direct financial assistance and supportive stabilization services, especially experience providing housing and services to homeless persons with disabilities. Include past performance on other HUD-funded projects or similar projects, if applicable.
- 3) Housing First Approach** - Describe how you will utilize a "Housing First approach" in which assistance is offered without requiring compliance with treatment or medication. Describe your agency's plans to acquire further training and expertise in providing Permanent Supportive Housing for chronically homeless or vulnerable homeless persons.
- 4) Plan for Effective Case Management** - Describe how you have provided effective case management to homeless, disabled or other special needs populations in the past. Describe your plan for providing effective case management to assist participants to obtain and retain housing in this program. Describe the duties of the employees you will hire to provide the services and how they will be supervised. Attach a resume of the person who will provide supervision and the case managers, if known.

- 5) **Timeline** - Describe your timeline for reaching full program capacity in housing 40 participants within 3 months after the start date of your grant agreement.
- 6) **Financial Capacity** - Describe your agency's capacity and ability to front direct assistance payments to landlords (reimbursement from UNITY may not occur until 6 weeks after your payments). Include your most recent audit and your agency's most recent financial statement.
- 7) **Cultural Competence** - Describe your agency's cultural competence. Include experience in serving with cultural sensitivity people who are racially, ethnically and religiously diverse; who speak languages other than English; who have a range of physical and mental disabilities; who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgendered; who are Young Adults or Elderly; and who are extremely low-income. Describe the diversity of your board and staff, your agency's non-discrimination policies, and how you ensure that your staff meets the needs of clients with sensitivity toward clients' varied cultural and life experiences.
- 8) **Program Enhancement** - Describe what your agency will "bring to the table" in enhancing the performance of this program. Describe what matching funds will be used to provide the \$27,230 for the first-year cash match required by HUD for your supportive services activities.
- 9) **Other**
- Attach proof of nonprofit tax-exempt status, if your agency is a non-profit organization.
 - Attach a copy of your 2 most recent annual Financial Audits.

Please limit your proposal to eight pages (not including attachments). Proposals must be received by Martha J. Kegel, Executive Director, UNITY of Greater New Orleans, **no later than 9:00 a.m. on Monday, September 10, 2012**. Proposals may be faxed to 504-821-4704 or emailed to Frances Misenheimer at fmisenheimer@unitygno.org or delivered to UNITY's main office at 2475 Canal Street, Suite 300, NOLA 70119. If you have questions about the RFP, please contact Deputy Director Vicki Judice at vjudice@unitygno.org or 504-821-4496, ext. 105.