

**Connecticut Council for Philanthropy
Housing Affinity Group
Request for Proposals (RFP)
Building a Suburban/Rural Housing Movement
July 2024**

Connecticut Council for Philanthropy's (CCP's) Housing Affinity Group seeks to increase availability and affordability of housing throughout Connecticut through the creation, expansion, and coordination of local resident groups, each working to build public understanding and support for housing issues in their communities. To this end, the group is seeking proposals from nonprofit organizations to build statewide infrastructure and to serve as an intermediary for regranting, with the goal of supporting a suburban and rural housing movement. **Proposals in response to this RFP are due September 6th by 11:59 p.m.**

The Housing Affinity Group will host an information session for interested applicants on **Wednesday, July 31st at 9:30am**. If you are interested in attending, or in receiving any follow up materials from the session, please mark your calendar and register [here](#) by July 30th.

I. Background:

Connecticut, like many other states nationally, is experiencing a housing crisis. A lack of new construction and a rise in the number of individuals/families seeking housing has resulted in the state's inability to meet the demand for housing. This has led to increases in housing costs, evictions, and homelessness, each of which have many other impacts on quality of life for all residents. Furthermore, the housing issues facing the state are felt most acutely by residents of color. Most affordable housing in Connecticut is concentrated in urban areas with relatively little affordable housing existing in the surrounding towns. This segregation by income and race/ethnicity was caused and exacerbated by a wide variety of structural barriers created by our state's history of redlining, currently enforced local zoning codes and other land use laws, government subsidy programs and a variety of other factors.

Funders, nonprofits, and advocates have researched, identified, and lobbied for a wide variety of changes at the statewide level to help alleviate the State's housing crisis, with some successes. However, despite the significant investment of time and resources in statewide advocacy, legislative progress has been minimal. While there are many non-political barriers to housing development (labor, materials, infrastructure, etc.), one primary issue has been the lack of public will and capacity in suburban/rural communities to proactively address housing issues, and a proliferation of misinformation

targeted at suburban/rural homeowners. **Greater support is needed to engage, educate, and organize suburban and rural residents around state and local housing issues, and the role their communities must play in addressing the housing crisis.**

The Connecticut Council for Philanthropy (CCP) is an association of funders committed to promoting and supporting philanthropy for a just and thriving Connecticut. CCP operates several affinity groups for funders interested in a particular issue or topic. The Housing Affinity Group began convening CT funders in 2020, and meets regularly to inform funders on issues in housing and homelessness, share grantmaking strategies, and to engage in joint advocacy and funding opportunities. It is currently composed of approximately 20 funders including community, private, and corporate foundations. In 2023, the Housing Affinity Group conducted a survey and follow up conversations with funders to determine areas of interest for co-investment to promote systems change and equitable opportunity in the housing sector. As a result of these engagement efforts, a group of 13 funders have come together to provide comprehensive support to build a suburban/rural housing movement through this RFP.

II. Vision and Goals:

The Housing Affinity Group seeks to increase availability and affordability of housing throughout Connecticut through the support of a thriving housing movement. We envision the creation, expansion, and coordination of local resident groups across Connecticut, each working to build public understanding and support for housing issues in their communities. We are looking to target communities that are nonexempt per the state's 8-30g list, which are largely rural and suburban communities that lack affordable housing units.

Resident groups throughout the state are doing the critical work of engaging, educating, and organizing their fellow citizens with diverse perspectives. It is critical to do this work in ways in which residents can hear each other, appreciate the complexities of this issue, and find ways to work together. That means bringing to the same table people on all sides of an issue, ideally in ways where they can stop "othering" each other and see their shared interests.

Some resident groups already exist throughout the State and are diverse in structure. A few are more formalized, either through the creation of a nonprofit designation or working through a backbone nonprofit organization, church, or municipal entity. Some efforts are all volunteer and some may have one or more paid staff. Groups may also be informal (i.e. a group of neighbors) and may be composed of residents from one

neighborhood, one town, or a group of neighboring towns. Groups may or may not be specifically organized around housing issues. Some groups may be more broadly focused on equity, inclusion, or social justice issues within their town, but should have an interest in understanding housing issues and changing the housing narrative in their community.

Through this RFP, the Housing Affinity Group seeks a nonprofit partner that will provide statewide support for these disparate and local efforts, over time building a broad base of support for more systemic and statewide housing policy changes.

Specific goals for this effort include:

- *Provide convening and networking opportunities for resident groups across towns-* Resident groups are often not aware of other like-minded groups across the state and in our conversations, several expressed interest in partnering and learning from each other's successes and challenges.
- *Provide access to content expertise in the housing field-* Resident groups are primarily led by volunteers with limited backgrounds in housing. There is a need to provide access to content specific technical assistance (e.g. translating policy language into simple language) and access to data and best practices (e.g. providing examples of housing strategies that have been implemented successfully in other towns). This expertise may be provided directly and/or by coordinating other nonprofit partners/consultants.
- *Provide technical assistance and administrative support-* Resident groups often do not have the capacity to fulfill all the roles of a traditional nonprofit. New groups may need support in building structures for their work, established groups may need support in grant writing, marketing, or other aspects of operations and program implementation.
- *Support community efforts to launch new resident groups-* There are suburban and rural communities without any organizing where residents may be able to launch something easier and quicker with access to additional guidance, and resources.
- *Provide a platform for cohesive messaging and communications-* While each resident group develops its own agenda and messaging based on its unique context, there is value in providing an overarching communications strategy to provide some cohesiveness across messaging. This may be done through a contract with a communications firm or other professional services.
- *Connect groups to larger statewide efforts-* Provide a mechanism to connect suburban/rural resident leaders to statewide policy campaigns, public hearings, rallies, and other opportunities to influence decision makers.

- *Provide a funding vehicle for resident groups-* Re-grant to resident groups to support the costs of hosting and facilitating meetings, community engagement, securing experts, project management, etc.
- *Help resident groups set the table for inclusive housing discussions-* Support resident groups to authentically engage the experience of those with lived experience with housing instability including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and low-income households, people with disabilities or other barriers to safe, stable, and affordable housing. In addition, help resident groups to engage more broadly– including residents who may be resistant to housing policy change.
- *Listen and evolve-* Develop feedback mechanisms so that ongoing activities are driven and informed by the needs of resident groups doing work on the community level.

III. Proposal Requirements:

Only one proposal will be funded through this RFP process, however partnerships and collaboration are strongly encouraged, and dollars to a lead applicant may be subcontracted out to other partners (as noted in the budget). If the Housing Affinity Group receives proposals that appear to be complementary, we may also connect potential partners during the proposal review process. To be considered, nonprofits should submit a proposal (**maximum of 8 pages, not including attachments**) containing the following:

- A. Organization's mission and programming
- B. Description of your organization's vision of a thriving suburban and rural housing movement. While aspects may align with the vision and goals described above, we want to hear what you would add or adapt based on your knowledge and experience in this area.
- C. Proposed scope of work over a three-year period (should be the bulk of your proposal). Scope of work should address each of the goals outlined in Section II of this RFP and include a ramp-up phase which includes some method of gaining feedback from existing resident groups across the state to help solidify implementation plans.
- D. Organization's relevant experience and capacity in the housing field and in resident organizing (particularly in suburban/rural communities). This may include a discussion of current work and past activities. Please include any associated documents demonstrating capacity including webinars or reports, staff resumes, or references from resident groups.
- E. Proposed partnerships and collaboration. In order to provide the most comprehensive resources to resident groups, partnership with other

organizations, experts, and resources will be critical. Discuss the partnerships and collaborations that your organization would bring to the table for the benefit of resident groups (note current partnerships vs. those to be developed).

F. Outputs, Outcomes and Data Collection.

- a. Discuss current methods for collecting and reporting on outputs/outcomes and overall plans for quantitative and qualitative data collection for this effort.
- b. Discuss outputs and benchmarks to be measured over the course of the grant period. (i.e. number of resident groups engaged; activities of resident groups including community forums, community surveys, efforts to educate town council/staff/officials, opinion pieces published, etc.; number of capacity building/TA/networking opportunities provided.)
- c. Create three (3) outcomes to convey what will change because of your actions and how you plan to document your progress. Outcomes may include changes that result, at least in part, from resident group's efforts. This could include ordinances passed, residents elected to boards and commissions, housing developments that successfully move forward, perception changes among residents, etc. Here are the five elements that should be in each outcome statement.
 - i. Verb (overall action: build, lower, add)
 - ii. Object (what result? for whom?)
 - iii. How much (what yardstick? How much?)
 - iv. By when (timeframe?)
 - v. How is it measured? (process/info to measure)

G. Proposed budget and budget narrative

- a. The estimated budget for this RFP is up to \$615,000 in the first year. Funders anticipate investment in this work to continue over multiple years. Subsequent years of funding will be negotiated directly with the awardee on an annual basis.
- c. The budget should cover one calendar year, beginning January 2025, and should include both income and expenses. Please include other funding sources or in-kind resources that would contribute to the vision and goals outlined above.
- d. Budgets should include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Staffing and related expenses (mileage, professional development, etc.)
 - ii. Training and technical assistance for resident groups (both direct costs and funding for other implementation partners)

- iii. Development of shared messaging/communications strategies (could be through a consulting contract)
- iv. Re-granting to new and existing resident groups
- v. Administrative overhead

H. Financials

- a. Current organizational audit (or 990 if the organization does not conduct an audit).

IV. Reporting

The grantee will be expected to provide a written narrative report annually with progress on activities, outputs, and outcomes as indicated in the proposal. Periodically, the grantee will be asked to meet with the Housing Affinity Group to have a conversation regarding progress, challenges, and lessons learned. The grantee will also be asked to provide a six month and an annual expenditure report, including dollars re-granted.

Note that about a third of funds will come from funders that have specific geographic interests. The selected grantee will need to be able to report impact by region¹.

V. Review Process and Criteria:

Review and decisions will be conducted by members of the Housing Affinity Group, as well as a few members of resident groups throughout the State engaged in this work. The group will use the following criteria to assess each applicant:

- Scope of Work
 - Feasibility of scope of work.
 - Extent to which the scope of work seeks to raise up the voices of people with lived experience and promotes a racial equity agenda.
 - Extent to which feedback and listening to resident groups is embedded into the scope of work.
- Experience and Capacity
 - Capacity to implement an effort of this scale on a statewide basis.
 - Level of expertise in the field of housing, particularly in CT municipal housing policy.
 - Level of experience in resident organizing, particularly in suburban and rural towns.
- Partnerships and Collaboration

¹ Geographic interests of funders include: Eastern CT, Fairfield County, Greater Hartford, Greater New Haven, Greater Waterbury, Northwest CT.

- Ability to convene and coordinate multiple resident groups, nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders.
- Outputs, Outcome and Data Collection
 - Capacity to collect and report on outputs and outcomes.
- Budget and Budget Narrative
 - Feasibility of the budget.
 - Access to and allocation of additional resources (including in-kind) to further the vision and goals.

VI. Timeline and Submission:

- RFP released- July 22nd
- Informational webinar- July 31st at 9:30am via zoom (register [here](#))
- Proposal deadline- September 6th by 11:59 p.m.
- Interviews with top applicants- October 7th and 8th
- Selection and final negotiation on proposal/budget/outcomes- mid to late October
- Grant start date- January 2025

Proposals should be submitted via e-mail to Becca Allen and Erika Frank at rallen@melvilletrust.org and fbcf@fbcfct.org. If files are too large for email, contact us to make other arrangements. Questions may be directed to either Becca or Erika.