

Town of Richmond

Request for Special Appropriations Request for Fiscal Year: 2026

Organization's Name: COTS
Address: PO Box 1616
City, State, Zip: Burlington, VT 05402
Website address: www.cotsonline.org

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Program Name: COTS General Operations Support

2. Contact Person/Title: John Michael Longworth, Grant Writer & Foundation Specialist
Telephone Number: 802-842-7402 x208
E-mail address: johnmichaell@cotsonline.org

3. Total number of individuals served in the last complete fiscal year by this program: During the past State Fiscal year we served 1,134 individuals including 201 children.

4. Total number of the above individuals who are Town residents: 4
Please, attach any documentation that supports this number.
Percent of people served who are Town residents: 0.004%

5. Amount of Request: \$1,000

6. Total Program Budget: \$4,820,682.46 Percent of total program budget you are requesting from the Town of Richmond: 0.021%

7. Please state or attach the mission of your agency:

The Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) provides emergency shelter, services, and housing for people who are homeless or marginally housed in Vermont. COTS advocates long-term solutions to end homelessness. We believe in the value and dignity of every human life, that housing is a fundamental human right, and that emergency shelter is not the solution to homelessness.

8. Funding will be used to:

Maintain an existing program Expand an Existing Program
 Start a new program

9. Has your organization received funds from the Town in the past for this or a similar program? Yes, we received \$1,000 on 6/6/24

If yes, please answer the following:

a. Does the amount of your request represent an increase over your previous appropriation? If yes, explain the reason(s) for the increase. No.

b. Were any conditions or restrictions placed on the funds by the Selectboard? _ If yes, describe how those conditions or restrictions have been met.

No.

B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1. Statement of Need: Identify the issue or need that the program will address (use statistical data to justify the need for the program). To what extent does this need, or problem exist in the Town of Richmond? _ This past state fiscal year, COTS served 3 individuals from the Town of Richmond, including 1 child.

In the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2024 Out of Reach report, it is clear that there are no states within the US where an individual can work 40 hours per week at the minimum wage and afford a modest 1-bedroom apartment. In the greater Burlington area, renters must work an average of 68 hours per week at Vermont's current minimum wage to afford a one-bedroom apartment.

This year's report, also states that a Vermont worker would need to earn \$29.42 per hour to afford a two-bedroom apartment. In the greater Burlington area, workers would need to earn \$36.29 to afford a 2-bedroom apartment. This figure is known as the Housing Wage, the hourly wage a household must earn while working full time to afford a decent apartment at fair market rent, while spending no more than 30% of their income on housing expenses. This data from 2024 highlights the already challenging environment for low-income families trying to maintain safe and affordable housing.

The rental vacancy rate in Chittenden County is 0.4%, far behind the national average of 5.8%. Our region is more expensive than 96% of other Fair Market Rate areas in the United States. More than 7,500 local households, many working families with young children, allocate more than 50% of their income to housing costs, putting them one paycheck away from financial disaster.

The lack of supply in our area increases monthly rents, creating a crisis of unsustainability where previously secure renters and homeowners alike teeter on the verge of homelessness. Each year, through private funding and supportive case management, COTS helps hundreds of households avert the crisis of homelessness through prevention.

2. Program Summary:

a. Identify the target/recipients of program services. Specify the number of Town residents your program will serve during the fiscal year and explain the basis upon which this number is calculated. Indicate any eligibility requirements your program has with respect to age, gender, income or residence.

COTS serves families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Based on the past two fiscal years of data, COTS estimates that we will serve approximately 5 to 10 residents of Richmond in the coming year. Our emergency shelter programs provide safe, temporary housing for those without a home, regardless

of age, gender, income, or residence. Our homelessness prevention programs, which provide back rent to help people stay housed and security deposits to help those who are homeless get rapidly rehoused, have income limitations due to state or federal limits. Most assistance is targeted at households with extremely low incomes – 30% or less of the Area Median Income (under \$35,670 for a family of four in Chittenden County). A smaller amount of funding is available to very low-income households, those between 31 to 50% of Area Median Income (under \$59,540 for a family of four in Chittenden County).

b. Identify what is to be accomplished or what change will occur from participating in the program. How will people be better off as a result of participating in the program? Describe the steps you take to make the project known to the public, and make the program accessible and inclusive?

COTS seeks to end homelessness by: 1) providing emergency shelter, case management, and re-housing support to homeless adults and families so they can enter permanent housing for the long-term; and 2) preventing homelessness in the first place – by offering assistance to households on the verge of becoming homeless. People are better off because they have a safe, warm place to stay when they have nowhere else to turn, as well as intensive supportive services to help them move towards housing stability and independence. For those who risk becoming homeless, COTS gives them a chance to get back on their feet before losing their home.

To make sure that those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless know about our services, COTS partners with many organizations in Chittenden County to provide outreach and collaboration. These include agencies such as the Howard Center Street Outreach Team, the Joint Urban Ministry Project, Community Action, Salvation Army, and Safe Harbor Clinic, to name a few. To help address the specific needs of our guests and clients, COTS staff members also refer them to agencies such as the Community Health Centers of Burlington, Legal Aid, STEPS VT (domestic violence assistance), Voc Rehab, and the Department of Labor. COTS also works with a variety of faith-based institutions that offer referrals to people in need and provide donations for our work.

3. Program Funding:

a. Identify how Town funds, specifically, will be used (i.e., funds will provide “X” amount of units of service.)

Funding from the Town of Richmond, like other funding we receive from towns and cities in Chittenden County, will be used for general operating expenses. This support aids COTS in our efforts to assist approximately 1,500 people each year by:

- Offering day and night emergency shelter to vulnerable families and individuals;

- Providing homelessness prevention assistance to ensure that low-income households stay in their homes and out of shelter;
- Offering the services of supportive case managers to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness move out of shelter as quickly as possible;
- Providing transitional housing to assist people on their journey to permanent housing;
- Supplying permanent housing units that provide affordable, sustainable housing for individuals and families;
- Developing programs that meet the unique needs of homeless veterans and children

b. List the other agencies to whom you are submitting a request for funds for this program and the amount requested. How would this program be modified should revenues be lost?

Every year COTS requests funds from all towns and cities in Chittenden County, except for three towns that have specifically told us that COTS does not fit under their process for discretionary funding. Of the towns we did submit requests to last year, 90% provided funding. This ranged from \$250 to \$20,000. In addition to the requests to cities and towns, COTS also submits about 60 other proposals each year, including those to private funders, foundations, state agencies, and federal agencies. If revenues are lost for COTS programming, we may have to cut back on the number of people we can serve or the extent of the services we provide.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

1. Describe your agency's capability to provide the program including its history, previous experience providing this service, management structure and staff expertise.

At a time when the nation's economy was stuck in recession and the unemployment rate was above 10%, a group of concerned citizens in Burlington set out to help those who had lost their homes and needed a safe, warm place to stay. On December 24, 1982, with temperatures well below freezing, COTS opened its doors with two volunteers on hand to welcome anyone who needed shelter. Over the past 40 years, the number of people facing the crisis of homelessness has increased, particularly among families. COTS has continually evolved, responding to emerging needs and demographic shifts, as well as proactively working toward long-term solutions.

COTS has 38 full-time employees and 8 part-time employees, as well as 13 temporary substitute staff. The organization is overseen by a Board of Directors comprised of 14 volunteer community members who meet monthly and provide expertise in various areas, including: legal, financial, development, human resource, property management, business, social work, and public relations.

Our Executive Director, Jonathan Farrell has been with COTS since 2011 and has significant experience in this area. Our structure is divided into operations, human resources, development, and programs. COTS staff are hired based on specific areas of expertise, ranging

from accounting to case management.

2. How will you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you will assess program outcomes. Your description should include: what (what kind of data), how (method/tool for collecting the data), from whom (source of data) and when (timing of data collection).

3. Summarize or attach program and or service assessments conducted in the past two years.

COTS utilizes a HUD HMIS (Homeless Management Information System)-compatible vendor, Foothold Technologies and a Web-based software program called AWARDS. AWARDS captures HUD-required data elements as well as services delivered, meetings with clients, outcomes, and has unlimited capacity to store paperwork in the client's virtual file cabinet. AWARDS enables us to analyze program specific data and outcomes, evaluate programs, and track and measure program results. We look at the number of households and people served, household demographics, reasons for needing assistance or becoming at-risk of eviction, and the type and amount of assistance received. In addition to implementation of this tool across programs, COTS has invested in ongoing training for our staff to provide more refined analysis and outcomes so we can monitor data in an efficient and timely way to produce more positive program outcomes.

COTS uses Results Based Accountability (RBA) in all of our programs, including the HRC. As such, we use performance accountability measures that focus on whether clients are better off as a result of our services. We examine the percentage of households that remain in housing three and six months post-assistance, as well as overall project recidivism rates. We track referrals for mainstream benefits programs and to community partners for additional supports and services when appropriate.

From design to program development and implementation, COTS focuses on obtaining positive outcomes for our clients and has established the systems to measure our progress, continually assessing achievements and failures. Over the past 40 years, we have developed strong capacities in evaluation, planning, and resource management to ensure incorporation of best practices to help our clients achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

4. Does your organization have a strategic plan and a strategic planning process in place?

Yes

If yes, please attach your plan.

The strategic plan should include a mission statement, goals, steps to achieve the goals, and measures that assess the accomplishments of the goals.

5. What is the authorized size of your board of directors? 16

How many meetings were held by the board last year? 12

I, the undersigned, confirm the information contained herein is accurate and can be verified as such. I understand and agree that if the requested funds are approved, the disbursement of funds are subject to all conditions established by the Richmond Selectboard.

Signature of Applicant  Date 9/24/24

Print Name of Applicant and Title

John Michael Longworth, Grant Writer & Foundation Specialist