

**CVOEO: HOP** Presentation to the CCHA on 3.2.2023 on HOP Funding for Community Action Network services

**Purpose of HOP Funding:** To provide services to people who are Homeless or at At-Risk of Homelessness. These services include Coordinated Entry Housing Navigation, Homelessness Prevention Housing Navigation and Retention, direct financial assistance to help secure rental housing or prevent the loss of rental housing. HOP funding supports one CVOEO staff positions in Chittenden County; three full time housing advocates, a full-time outreach advocate, and part of a supervisor/management position.

**Amount of HOP Funding:** As of 3/2/2023, which includes a very recent amendment that provided additional Financial Assistance funding:

Coordinated Entry Housing Navigation Services	\$161,068.00	\$161,068.00
Homelessness Prevention Housing Navigation & Retention	\$128,264.00	\$128,264.00
Financial Assistance	\$651,000.00	\$651,000.00
Innovation	\$111,720.00	\$111,720.00
Essential Services – Transportation Assistance	\$37,500.00	\$37,500.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,089,552.00</b>	<b>\$1,089,552.00</b>

**Outcomes from Q1 and Q2 reports:** The CVOEO Community Outreach and Resource Advocates (CORA) worked with 40 unduplicated households during the first two quarters. Many of these are high needs, chronically homeless individuals who can be resistant to engaging in housing navigation services, and whose capacity to realistically do so is impacted by mental health issues and/or substance abuse. The Chittenden Community Action (CCA) Housing Advocates have worked with 131 households during the first two quarters, and CVOEO has processed financial assistance for 31 households in the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter (14 Homeless, 17 At-Risk) and 101 households in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter (36 Homeless, 65 At-Risk). To date, 69% of the HOP grant award for Financial Assistance has been allocated, and we are 66% of the way through the grant year. However, as financial requests/spending rapidly increased in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, coinciding with the step down of the VERAP program, and has continued to be very busy in the first two months of this 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, I would anticipate that we will exhaust the grant funds well before the end of the grant year, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**Challenges and Successes:**

For CCA:

- First, we are immeasurably grateful to OEO for providing ongoing guidance when questions arose, thank you to Ari Kisler and Sarah Phillips! As Ari and Sarah have said, this has been a learning year, with changes to the scope of services provided through HOP, a new process for CVOEO in terms of reviewing and processing applications, and revisions to the application forms.
- We would also like to thank all of our community partners and our fellow social service agencies for their support, patience, and willingness to adapt to these changes.
- The roll-out of the new application forms took time and our adjusting to having one CVOEO staff person (yeah, Linda!) responsible for reviewing all applications for grant eligibility and compliance was a challenge. Under the new process, we have expanded the number of agencies/advocates who can complete a HOP application with their clients, though that itself requires Linda to provide ongoing training and guidance for community partners, and rigorous attention to detail. CVOEO's processing time for applications is currently averaging 4.6 days from receipt of application to approval and submission for check processing. The new system is working well; Community Partners are using the eligibility guidelines and documentation check-list included as part of the application and CVOEO is receiving fewer and fewer applications that require us to request clarification on details or additional documents to back up the financial request. The more complete an application is the first time it is submitted, the faster we can review it.
- Staffing at CCA and Community Partner agencies has been strained and everyone is working at or above capacity at present. Between staff and/or family illness, much needed vacation time, and actual unfilled positions, our community (our agencies) are struggling to keep up with the demand for services. Community Action Housing Advocates are currently booking appointments for financial assistance two weeks out.

For CORA:

- One of the great strengths of the CORA advocates is their flexibility to respond to those in need and to community partners who request assistance; working with the police, park rangers, and local government, they are truly field advocates who spend much of their time meeting people experiencing homelessness where they are, providing essential needs such as food and survival gear, and trying to help people connect with supportive services.
- As a program that evolved out of CVOEO's and the State and local communities rapid-response to the COVID pandemic and the dramatic increase in the number of people presenting as homeless, CORA has now developed a comprehensive outreach plan for working with towns across Chittenden County. While we anticipate that the majority of CORA's time will continue to

be spent focused on the greater Burlington area, to date we have had a very positive reception from outlying towns and are planning visits with community leaders for the coming summer.

- The CVOEO Mobile Outreach Office was completed with the support of community partners, including Green Mountain Solar. This vehicle, equipped with a computer station, refrigerator and other amenities, allows us to provide a variety of services in the field. It is also, as we received feedback from clients and community partners, a large, mobile billboard advertising that wherever we are parked, there are people experiencing homelessness nearby, so we are taking that sensitivity into consideration as we plan and enact our outreach efforts.