Request for Proposals

_Opportunity House seeks communities in St. Louis City with whom the organization can partner to develop and sustain housing sites for young people experiencing homelessness._

Organization Background

The lack of life skill, education and employment skill development, combined with inadequate housing and social support, results in young adults who are unable to live independently and who struggle to successfully transition to adulthood. As a result, these young adults experience increased levels of homelessness, poverty, violent victimization, sexual exploitation, mental illness, and substance abuse.

To address the diverse needs of the young people in St. Louis, Opportunity House seeks to achieve the following goals:

- Provide for the immediate housing needs of these young people following trauma informed, housing first, strengths-based, and harm reduction approaches.
- Provide young people with the support they need to address their immediate employment, education and life skill needs, and promote the full participation of these young people in society.
- Provide mental health services designed to reduce the impact of trauma and undiagnosed mental health disorders thereby reducing barriers to overall success and stabilization.
- Collaborate with other agencies to relieve the overall burden on current service providers.

To achieve this, Opportunity House engages the following strategies:

- Community-centered housing ensures young people can receive the support they need to prepare for independence through a housing to independence approach.
- Case management and therapy services are offered to all young people. These services provide young people with access to broader community resources.
- Employment and education support prepare young people for long-term, meaningful careers. Supporting young people in moving forward with their career will provide them with the skills needed to successfully transition to adulthood.

The Organization’s Core Principles
A. The organization believes that community involvement is key to solving young adult homelessness. It is only through active and ongoing partnership with the community that lasting solutions to the homelessness epidemic can be developed, implemented, and sustained.

B. The organization believes that housing is a right not a privilege and utilizes a low-barrier, housing first approach to service delivery. This means that housing is provided to those in need with minimal restriction.

C. The organization recognizes that traumatic experiences impact the ability of individuals to maintain stability and engage in prosocial behaviors. With this understanding, Opportunity House engages an individualized approach to service delivery which recognizes the unique needs of all individuals.

D. The organization believes in meeting people where they are and, as a result, takes a harm reduction approach to service delivery. The organization does not believe that forcing young people to abstain from risky behaviors is effective in generating lasting change. Through education and the promotion of safe practices the organization works to minimize overall risk and promote safety.

Partnership

Opportunity House will:

- Secure funding to sustain the agreed upon housing site.
- Provide administrative support including, but not limited to, finance, human resources, and legal oversight.
- Maintain expertise in the best practices in homeless service delivery, mental health, housing, and employment.
- Engage in ongoing program development, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement.

Participating communities will:

- Convene an advisory board, which will be in existence for the duration of the partnership. The purpose of the advisory board is to establish and maintain ongoing relationships with the surrounding community, address neighborhood complaints and concerns, and provide program oversight and guidance.
- Support the organization in identifying and procuring a housing site.
• Establish and maintain relationships with local leaders including, but not limited to, elected officials, nonprofit and religious leaders, and neighbors.
• Support the organization with fundraising efforts.
Application

Please respond to the following questions (1,500 word maximum for each question).

1. Describe the need for services for young people experiencing homelessness in your community.

2. Describe how you would define your “community” for the sake of this partnership. This can include geographic boundaries, ward, zip code, or community of shared identity (those who have experienced trafficking, LGBTQIA+ youth, etc.).

3. In partnering with Opportunity House, communities are required to identify and secure a housing site. Identify at least three property owners who you identify as potential collaborators on this project.

4. Please describe the qualifications of at-least four identified advisory board members. Please include education background, work experience, lived experiences with homelessness or housing insecurity, and any other relevant information. Please note – advisory board members are not required to have any specific work or education experience.

5. Partnering with Opportunity House requires community involvement and engagement. Describe the steps you will take to engage the broader St. Louis community in supporting Opportunity House.

6. Partnership with Opportunity House requires supporting fundraising efforts. If selected as a partner, what strategies will you use to support fundraising efforts? What challenges do you foresee?

7. Describe your understanding of how trauma impacts behaviors. How do you believe these behaviors may impact the ability of young people served by Opportunity House to successfully engage with the community and transition to independence?

8. Please reflect on our core principles. Which would be most challenging for your team and why? What is your plan for addressing these challenges?

9. Please share any additional information you believe would be helpful to the Opportunity House selection committee when considering your application.
Attachments

1. Letters of support from four community institutions (nonprofit organizations, places of worship, businesses, etc.) from the neighborhood where the housing site will be located.
2. Letter of support from all Alderpersons from Wards represented in your identified community.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

Return the completed application to info@opportunityhouestl.org.