

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
for
YEAR 41 HOUSING COUNSELING ACTIVITIES

The City of Philadelphia's Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) is soliciting proposals for Housing Counseling activities for Fiscal Year 2016 beginning July 1, 2015. Funding will be provided through the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program for services to residents of Philadelphia. Eligible applicants must be non-profit, in accordance with the federal tax code 501(c) (3).

OHCD intends to assist low and moderate income residents by providing housing counseling services to encourage responsible homeownership, curtail the loss of a home through foreclosure, and prevent homelessness. Specifically, OHCD requests proposals for housing counseling services in the areas of foreclosure prevention in owner occupied homes (both in mortgage and tax foreclosures), first time homebuyer opportunities, and assistance to the City's tenant population.

In addition, OHCD expects to continue to provide settlement grants to first time homebuyers through the Settlement Assistance Program. OHCD is also committed to funding housing counseling services specifically targeted to populations such as the disabled or the elderly.

Housing counseling agencies proposing to carry out mortgage foreclosure prevention activities are required to employ a minimum of two housing counselors certified in Philadelphia's foreclosure prevention program.

All housing counselors must be nationally certified by a recognized certifying institute and all housing counseling agencies must also adopt the National Industry Standards for Homeownership Education. In addition, all housing counseling agencies must become HUD approved, which is required to help leverage other sources of funding (HUD approved agencies are eligible to apply for HUD housing counseling grants). HUD approval demonstrates that your agency meets certain industry standards and federal guidelines.

PROPOSAL DEADLINE AND DELIVERY

This RFP is available on the OHCD web site at www.phila.gov/ohcd. Copies of the primary RFP documents will also be available at the OHCD reception desk, 1234 Market Street, 17th Floor during normal business hours. However, Appendix F, the General Provisions for Housing and Economic Development contracts will only be available on the web.

Proposals must be delivered to the OHCD no later than **5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 31, 2015**. Proposals received after this time will not be considered. There will be no exceptions to this deadline.

Ten (10) copies of the proposal, including one unbound copy, must be delivered to the following address:

Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD)
1234 Market Street, 17th floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Attn.: Hiram Carmona

BRIEFING SESSION

Applicants are encouraged to attend a briefing session on the RFP requirements on Wednesday March 11, 2015 at 9:30 a.m. The briefing will be held in the 17th floor Boardroom at OHCD, 1234 Market Street. Prospective applicants are encouraged to obtain and review a copy of this RFP and bring it with you to the briefing.

PROGRAM CONTEXT

During the last two years indicators suggest the economy has improved. Philadelphia's unemployment rate in November 2014 was 6.7 %, a reduction of 2.6 percentage points compared to November 2013 (the unemployment rate had peaked in April 2010 at 11.3 %). Home ownership has also risen an estimated 11% for the last three months of 2014 when compared with the last three months of 2013. Mortgage interest rates remain low, hovering under 4%, which should stimulate first-time homeownership. Sales in lower income neighborhoods also rose over the past 18 months. Just last December Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac eased their mortgage rules as a way to encourage first-time homeownership opportunities. These factors all indicate repurchase counseling will show a greater demand.

The City's Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Program has documented thousands of cases where homeowners were able to save their homes by becoming re-employed. Combined with a reduction of the mortgage interest rates by greater than 3% through loan modifications, more families in foreclosure are able to become stable once again. Yet the workforce returning to work remains hampered by lower paying jobs, requiring adjustments be made to family spending. This is why OHCD supports budgeting and debt management as an integral part of every housing counseling service. Programs such as Tools for Financial Capability and The Financial Empowerment Centers are excellent sources of additional budgeting and debt management services.

While data also indicate that foreclosure filings have been on the decline compared to 2010, filings have remained consistent throughout 2014 requiring a steady availability of foreclosure prevention services. In this regard the City remains committed to provide the services of the Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Program in partnership with the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania. Since the program began in 2008, OHCD-funded housing counseling agencies have saved over 8,500 homes from Sheriff's Sales. Foreclosure prevention in both mortgage and tax delinquencies remains a priority for OHCD-funded housing counseling services.

OHCD seeks to fund housing counseling agencies that possess a demonstrated ability to provide quality counseling services to ensure continued successes in budgeting, the Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Program and pre-foreclosure remedies, and also to help homeowners in their efforts to resume real estate tax payments. OHCD will also continue to fund pre-and post- purchase counseling services as they are an integral part of foreclosure prevention. Foreclosure prevention services begin at the time of repurchase counseling, when homebuyers are instructed how to purchase within their means and how to budget in times of difficulty. Group counseling sessions are strongly encouraged, particularly in pre-purchase counseling, as a way to free up housing counselor time to meet other demands.

The tenant population in Philadelphia also faces hardships as a result of the economy, as rents are on the rise in many areas of the city. OHCD intends to fund housing counseling services to tenants in an effort to prevent homelessness.

OHCD also seeks housing counseling agencies willing to perform home visits when the need arises. OHCD will continue to use CounselorMax as the required data management and reporting system.

GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The following seven (7) zip codes have had the largest foreclosure filings in numerical order: 19120, 19124, 19149, 19134, 19111, 19143, and 19135. OHCD seeks to continue funding foreclosure prevention and intervention activities in neighborhoods identified as having a higher number of foreclosure filings and Sheriff's Sales. OHCD welcomes applicants to expand their traditional geographic target areas to include other parts of the City with high foreclosure rates.

OHCD also provides a wide range of program and services to revitalize low and moderate income neighborhoods in the City. Therefore, OHCD will continue to fund pre-purchase activities throughout the City, particularly in neighborhoods in transition with rapidly appreciating housing values.

OHCD encourages housing counseling services to be provided in support of the City's Place-Based Strategies. Priority will be given to housing counseling services provided in the North Central Choice Neighborhood, the Promise Zone, and the 22nd Police District (see Exhibit C).

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

A review committee composed of representatives from the City and partner agencies shall review proposals for funding consideration. Generally, the City will base its selection on criteria that include, but are not limited to:

1. Superior ability to conduct housing counseling services in Philadelphia including utilization of best practices in housing counseling
2. Superior documented prior experience and skill of Applicant and staff
3. Superior plan to conduct housing counseling services in Philadelphia including superior staffing model
4. Administrative and operational efficiency, requiring less City oversight and administration
5. Ability to document other resources to leverage City funds in program
6. Ability to offer other supportive services to housing counseling clients
7. Cost effectiveness as illustrated through proposed budget and units of services to be completed
8. Eligibility under Code provisions relating to campaign contributions
9. Benefit of promoting long-term competitive development and allocation of experience to new or small businesses, including those with minority or disabled persons or by women
10. Applicant is in good standing with City of Philadelphia and illustrates that it can meet City contract requirements

Proposals will be evaluated in a two-stage process. Each proposal will be reviewed first for completeness and eligibility under the RFP (see "Threshold Criteria" below). **Proposals that are incomplete or that do not meet the minimum threshold requirements listed below will not be considered for funding.** Applicants should review the threshold criteria carefully. It is recommended that applicants use the checklist below to verify that their proposals are complete before submitting them to OHCD.

A. **THRESHOLD REVIEW**

If the answer to any of the following questions is "no," the proposal will be rejected automatically and will not receive further consideration:

- Is the applicant eligible to respond to this RFP?

- Is the applicant HEMAP certified? (Foreclosure prevention only)
- Is the applicant a non-profit organization in accordance with the federal tax code 501(c)(3).
- Does the proposal include each of the following sections?

1. Checklist

Proposal Cover Page (filled out completely with core counseling group selected).

Applicant Information

Qualifications of Applicant

Staffing

Supervision of Housing Counseling Services

Program Description and Goals

Geographic Area (needs of target population, and outreach plans).

In-Kind Services (agency complements housing counseling services).

Budget

Technology

2. Organizational Required Documents

Articles of Incorporation	ATTACHMENT	1*
Bylaws	ATTACHMENT	2*
501(c)(3) determination	ATTACHMENT	3
List of board members	ATTACHMENT	4
Organizational Chart	ATTACHMENT	5

* only one copy of Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws need to be submitted

3. Other City Required Documents

City of Philadelphia Tax/Regulatory Status	APPENDIX A	To Complete
Local Business Entity or Local Impact Cert	APPENDIX B	To Complete
Diversity Report of Nonprofit Organizations	APPENDIX B-2	To Complete
General Disclaimer of the City of Philadelphia	APPENDIX C	Info Only
Anti-Discrimination Policy	APPENDIX D	Info Only
Campaign Contribution Disclosure Forms	APPENDIX E	To Complete
City of Philadelphia General Provisions	APPENDIX F	Info Only

B. PROPOSAL CONTENT REVIEW

Please limit your proposal to ten (10) pages, double-spaced, not including appendices/ attachments. The following information must be included in the proposal. Applicants must use section headings and section order as indicated below.

1. **Cover Page:** OHCD identifies four (4) core groups of housing counseling services. Applicants must identify the core group for which they are applying:
 - a. **Foreclosure Intervention:** counseling services aimed predominately at homeowners facing foreclosures.
 - b. **Comprehensive Housing Counseling:** traditional housing counseling services including pre-purchase counseling and homeownership services, but with no less than 50% of the units of services in Default and Delinquency counseling including mortgage and tax foreclosure prevention.
 - c. **Tenant Services:** counseling primarily targeted to solving tenant/landlord problems.
 - d. **Special Needs Populations:** traditional housing counseling services targeted to a specific population such as the elderly and/or disabled.
2. **Applicant Information.** Describe briefly your organization and its mission. State location of services and hours services will be made available. Indicate whether the agency owns or rents the facility, or shares any part with other organizations and if so, identify the organizations and explain the relationship that exists with your agency. Describe accessibility features for disabled and elderly clients, or how your organization makes alternate accommodations to serve their needs. Describe what space is available for one-on-one counseling and group education. Explain your agency's plans to avoid conflicts of interest.
3. **Qualifications of Applicant.** Describe your agency's administrative and financial capability, and your agency's experience with other federal, state, city and private sector funding resources. Include a description of appropriate accounting, reporting and program management systems that will enable an immediate implementation of the housing counseling program. State your agency's housing counseling accomplishments. State whether you agency has adopted the National Standards and whether the applicant is HUD approved, with corresponding dates.
4. **Staffing.** List with titles all staff involved in the housing counseling program (supervisors, housing counselors, and clerical support staff). State whether the position is full-time or part-time, is paid or volunteer capacity. Include length of employment. Identify counselors fluent in other languages. List the non-English languages available for each office. List all active national certifications obtained by the agency housing counselors, including a plan to ensure that appropriate certifications are maintained.
5. **Supervision of Housing Counseling Services.** Provide a written supervisory, monitoring, and quality control compliance procedures plan for supervising the work of the housing counselors. Describe in detail the review procedures and outline corrective actions.
6. **Program Description and Goals.** Explain the reason you chose the specific counseling core group. Provide a detailed description of your housing counseling program. State how many units of service your agency plans to complete and how many households you will serve in twelve month time using Exhibit "A". Discuss how your agency will work with the client to develop a plan of action to

achieve the client’s objectives. Please indicate whether your counselors will perform home visits if the need arises. Subcontracting direct client services and/or administration of program management is not allowed.

7. **Geographic Area, Needs of Target Population, and Outreach Plan.** Identify the geographic area (include zip codes) and the housing counseling needs of the population in the area your agency seeks to serve. Discuss how your program will meet these needs. Provide a plan to reach the residents of the target area or target population. If you do not currently have a site office in the target area, please explain how you will reach out to those needing assistance.
8. **In-Kind Services.** Describe the nature and extent of any additional programs or activities that your agency offers such as social services, financial literacy, administering home retention programs and down payment assistance, and developing housing projects.
9. **Budget.** Prepare a budget using Exhibit “B”, by which your agency will be reimbursed for actual allowable costs incurred in providing housing counseling services. Clearly specify all sources and funding amounts your agency expects to receive for counseling activities. Training costs for counselors to maintain certifications should be incorporated into budgets.
10. **Technology.** Housing counseling agencies will be responsible for having the following technology capabilities and resources in performing the work: Computers for all staff with internet access, appropriate office software, and ability to use CounselorMax. Please provide information on your organization’s technology capabilities and ability to meet this objective. Include a detailed plan on how your agency will enter client data and report outcomes in CounselorMax.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS AND INFORMATION

OHCD will award contracts under this RFP with an option to renew the contracts for up to three successive one-year renewal terms.

Applicants are encouraged to review the relevant federal regulations to ensure compliance with all program requirements. Regulations for the CDBG program can be found at 24 CFR part 570, as amended. Copies of these regulations are available on the internet at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/retrieve.html>.

All applicants agree to comply with all State, Federal and Local laws, executive orders, regulations or other mandates. Each successful organization must complete a Program Management Systems Review if the agency has not held a contract with OHCD in the last three years. “The City of Philadelphia Professional Services Contract General Provisions for Housing and Economic Development Services” state OHCD contract provisions, and are available for review on the RFP website.

PROCUREMENT OF GOODS OR SERVICES

Recipients of funding under this RFP shall exhibit best efforts to include minority, women and disabled-owned business when procuring goods or services that may be required in the implementation of this project. A listing of the City’s Office of Opportunity certified consultants and vendors may be found on their web site at <http://oeo.phila.gov/>.

DESCRIPTION OF HOUSING COUNSELING SERVICES

Following are the types of housing counseling services which are offered under OHCD.

- A. **Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Counseling:** assist owner-occupants served with a foreclosure complaint with participating with the Diversion Program. Includes preparation for client conciliation conferences, attendance at conciliation conferences and loan negotiations with the lender attorney.
- B. **Default and Delinquency Counseling:** negotiate an array of remedies to cure mortgage defaults outside the Diversion Program.
- C. **HEMAP Application:** assist homeowners with assembling and completing a HEMAP application.
- D. **Pro Sé Petition to Postpone:** assist owner-occupants with the filing and presentation of a Pro Sé Petition to Postpone Sheriff Sale.
- E. **Home Purchase Counseling:** provide home purchase and money management instructions with emphasis on foreclosure prevention, the City Settlement Grant Program requirements, and the selection of an appropriate mortgage loan. Group sessions are encouraged.
- F. **Anti-Predatory Lending Counseling:** assist homeowners in understanding home equity and/or home improvement loans, refinancing loans, and other loans.
- G. **Real Estate Tax Delinquency Counseling and Other City Liens:** advocating and negotiating hardship payment arrangements.
- H. **Equity, Deed, and Other Homeownership Problems:** information and/or assistance with tangled-titles, reverse mortgages, as well as others.
- I. **Tenant Counseling:** information on rights and responsibilities of tenant and landlord, Fair Housing Laws, rent subsidy programs, and assist with rental delinquency and eviction prevention options.
- J. **Housing Consumer Education:** includes budgeting, credit repair (face to face counseling required) and extensive money management, plus assistance with receiving public entitlements, as well as others.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Compliance with Applicable Federal, State and Local Laws, Regulations and Executive Orders

Applicants are encouraged to review the relevant federal regulations to ensure compliance with all program requirements. Regulations for the CDBG program can be found at 24 CFR part 570, as amended. Copies of these regulations are available on the Internet at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/retrieve.html>. All applicants agree to comply with all State, Federal and Local laws, executive orders, regulations or other mandates.

FAIR HOUSING AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

All federal, state, and local fair housing requirements apply. Housing beneficiaries may not be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, familial status, or disability. Project sponsors must adopt procedures to ensure that persons in these protected classes who qualify for assistance know of the availability of the federally funded program.

THE PHILADELPHIA TAX AND REGULATORY STATUS AND CLEARANCE STATEMENT

It is the policy of the City of Philadelphia to ensure that each contractor and subcontractor has all required licenses and permits and is current with respect to the payment of City taxes or other indebtedness owed to the City (including, but not limited to, taxes collected by the City on behalf of the School District of Philadelphia), and is not in violation of other regulatory provisions contained in The Philadelphia Code. To assist the City, through its Department of Revenue and Department of Licenses and Inspection, in determining this status, each Applicant is required to submit with its Proposal the certification statement entitled City of Philadelphia Tax and Regulatory Status and Clearance Statement which is attached to this RFP as **Appendix A**.

If the Applicant is not in compliance with the City's tax and regulatory codes, an opportunity will be provided to enter into satisfactory arrangements with the City. If satisfactory arrangements cannot be made, Applicants will not be eligible for award of the contract contemplated by this RFP.

The selected Applicant will also be required to assist the City obtaining the above information from its proposed subcontractors (if any). If a proposed subcontractor is not in compliance with City Codes and fails to enter into satisfactory arrangements with the City, the non-compliant subcontractor will be ineligible to participate in the contract contemplated by this RFP and the selected applicant may find it necessary to replace the non-compliant subcontractor with a compliant subcontractor. Applicants are advised to take these policies into consideration when entering into their contractual relationships with proposed subcontractors.

If an Applicant or proposed subcontractor is not currently in compliance with the City's tax and regulatory codes, please contact the Revenue Department to make arrangements to come into compliance with at 1-215-686-6600 or revenue@phila.gov.

LOCAL BUSINESS ENTITY OR LOCAL IMPACT CERTIFICATION

Pursuant to Mayoral Executive Order No. 04-12, the City Department will, in selection of the successful Applicant, consider whether that Applicant has certified that either (1) Applicant meets the criteria stated in Section 17-109(3)(b) of the Philadelphia Code to qualify as a Local Business Entity or (2) in the performance of the resulting contract, Applicant will employ City residents, or perform work in the City. Any Applicant who wishes to demonstrate its eligibility for this consideration shall do so by completing, executing and attaching to its application a completed Local Business Entity of Local Impact Certification, the form of which is attached to this RFP as **Appendix B**. The Applicant shall then also include in a separate section of the application, labeled "Local Business Entity or Local Impact Certification," a statement that the Applicant believes it has met the Local Business Entity or Local Impact criteria "as set forth in the attached Local Business Entity or Local Impact Certification." The City Department shall deem it a positive factor where the Applicant has, in the City's sole discretion, met the Local Business Entity of Local Impact criteria.

GENERAL DISCLAIMER OF THE CITY AND RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

This RFP does not commit the City of Philadelphia to award a contract. This RFP and the process it describes are proprietary to the City and are for the sole and exclusive benefit of the City. No other party, including any Applicant, is intended to be granted any rights hereunder. Any response, including written documents and verbal communication, by any Applicant to this RFP, shall become the property of the City and may be subject to public disclosure by the City, or any authorized agent of the City.

This RFP states requirements for the project, including the services and tangible work products to be delivered, and the tasks the Department has identified as necessary to meet those requirements, based on changed circumstances (such as a change in business or technical environments), the proposal selection process and contract negotiations with the Applicant(s) selected for negotiations, and to do so with or without issuing a revised RFP.

The City reserves the right to condition payments on the satisfactory completion of the specified milestones, tasks, services and/or work products listed above.

The City reserves and may exercise, at its sole discretion, the following rights and options with respect to the selection process outlined in this RFP as indicated in the **Appendix C** of this RFP.

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY – PARTICIPATION COMMITMENT

Each Applicant is subject to the provisions of Mayoral Executive Order 03-12, the City's Antidiscrimination Policy for participation by Minority Business Enterprises ("MBE"), Woman Business Enterprises ("WBE") and Disabled Business Enterprises ("DSBE")(collectively, "M/W/DSBE") as those terms are defined in Executive Order 03-12. While there are no specific participation ranges established for this RFP, Applicants are required to exercise their "Best and Good Faith Efforts" to provide meaningful opportunities for the participation on M/W/DSBEs in their Proposals. Forms, instructions and special contract provisions which explain the requirements of the Antidiscrimination Policy for City contracts in more detail are included in **Appendix D** to this RFP, including the "Solicitation for Participation and Commitment Form." A list of certified minority and women consultants and vendors can be found on the Office of Economic Opportunity's web site at <http://www.oeo.phila.gov>.

The successful Applicant must submit an **Equal Opportunity Plan** to the Compliance Unit before a contract is awarded.

MONITORING; SECURITY

By submission of a Proposal in response to this RFP, the Applicant agrees that it will comply with all contract monitoring and evaluation activities undertaken by the City of Philadelphia, and with all security policies and requirements of the City.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The successful Applicant shall report to the City of Philadelphia on a regular basis regarding the status of the project and its progress in providing the contracted services and/or products. At a minimum, the successful Applicant shall submit a monthly invoice detailing the services and/or products provided, the goals/tasks accomplished, and the associated costs. If hourly rates are charged, the invoice must detail the number of hours, the hourly rate, and the individual who performed the service. The Department reserves the right to condition payments on the satisfactory completion of the housing counseling units of service and data entered into CounselorMax.

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION DISCLOSURE FORMS

Each Applicant must complete the attached Campaign Contribution Disclosure Forms (**Appendix E**) and attach it to its Proposal. All Applicants for contract opportunities must disclose any contributions made to:

- A candidate for nomination or election in any public office in the Commonwealth or Pennsylvania
- An incumbent in any public office in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- A political committee or state party in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- A group, committee or association organized in support of any candidate, office holder, political committee or state party in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

NOTICE TO APPLICANTS TO STATE REQUESTED EXCEPTIONS TO CONTRACT TERMS IN PROPOSAL

The City's standard contract terms and conditions for services of the type sought by this contracting opportunity (Contract Terms) are set forth in the General Provisions attached to this RFP as **Appendix F**. By submitting a Proposal in response to this contract opportunity, the Applicant agrees that, except as provided herein, it will enter into a contract with the City containing substantially the Contract Terms.

Applicants must state clearly and conspicuously and modifications, waivers, objections or exceptions they seek ("Requested Exceptions") to the Contract Terms in a separate section of the Proposal entitled "Requested Exceptions to Contract Terms". For each Requested Exception, the Applicant must identify the pertinent Contract Term by caption and section number, state the reasons for the request, and propose alternative language or terms. Requested Exceptions to the City's Contract Terms will be approved only when the City determines in its sole discretion that a Requested Exception makes business sense, does not pose unacceptable risk to the City, and is in the best interest of the City. By submitting its Proposal, the Applicant agrees to accept all Contract Terms to which it does not expressly seek a Requested Exception in its Proposal. The City reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to evaluate and reject Proposals based in part on whether the Applicant's Proposal contains Requested Exceptions to Contract Terms, and the number and type of such requests and alternative terms proposed.

If, after the City issues its Notice of Intent to Contract to an Applicant, the Applicant seeks Requested Exceptions to Contract Terms that were not stated in its Proposal, the City may, in its sole discretion, deny the Requested Exceptions without consideration or reject the Proposal.

The City reserves the right, in its sole discretion, (i) to waive any failure to comply with the terms of this Notice to Applicants if it determines it is in the best interest of the City to do so; and (ii) to require or negotiate terms and conditions different from and/or additional to the Contract Terms in any final contract resulting from this contract opportunity, without notice to other Applicants and without affording other Applicants any opportunity to revise their Proposals based on such different or additional terms.