

**Request for Proposals**  
*Increasing Equity in Vermont's Housing Work: A Statewide Racial  
Justice Initiative*

Issued September 17, 2021

Issued by Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

**Overview**

The Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, in consultation with a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from NeighborWorks Alliance of Vermont (the Alliance), NeighborWorks America, Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA), and other to-be-identified stakeholders will sponsor a statewide initiative to address racial justice and equity in housing. This 12 – 18 month effort will proceed in two phases, the first of which is addressed in this request for proposals (RFP) and will include a seminar series as well as roundtable discussions. These opportunities will set the foundation for the second phase of the initiative, a leadership cohort to be addressed in a future RFP. Financial support for this initial phase will come from a variety of resources, including VHCB, NeighborWorks America, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston, VHFA, and private donors.

The goal of the initiative is to examine how racial inequities impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Vermonters and identify actions, on both policy and programmatic levels, which expand access to affordable housing for all Vermonters.

This RFP is intended to identify a consultant who will design and implement the first phase of the statewide initiative: the seminar series and roundtable discussions. Respondents to this RFP have the option of submitting a proposal for designing and implementing either the seminar series, the roundtable discussions, or a proposal that addresses both components. Respondents are encouraged to submit a proposal for the goal(s) described below that best aligns with their experience and expertise.

Racial Justice Initiative Phase 1 Goals

With the support of the consultant, VHCB, in consultation with the Steering Committee, is seeking to achieve the following:

1) Seminar Series:

- A statewide speaker series on racial justice and equity issues relative to housing in Vermont. The series would feature a mix of national and regional leaders in racial equity and housing. The speaker series would be available to the public, with priority registration provided to Vermont's nonprofit affordable housing and conservation organizations. It is anticipated that 3-5 speakers will be engaged.

2) Roundtable Discussions:

- The roundtable discussions will focus on specific systemic conditions that need to be addressed in Vermont's housing network and organizations. Housing practitioners will be invited to discuss identified topics and workshop solutions, with the intent of developing best practices to be adopted throughout the network. This series will be open to practitioners in the housing field. It is anticipated that 4-6 roundtable discussions will occur, and that each workshop will result in a set of actionable steps that participants will be able to enact within their organizations to address existing policies and practices which adversely impact BIPOC Vermonters. Potential topics to include:
  - Criminal background checks and credit reviews in the tenant selection process

- Staff training and education
- Addressing racism within the organization
- Land and reparations
- Translation services
- Equity in homeownership opportunities
- Managing tenant conflict and racist behavior

### **Scope of Work**

The Consultant will design and implement the initiative culminating in the two identified goals of Phase 1. This work includes assembling a Steering Committee inclusive of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Vermonters and identifying additional stakeholders to inform program design.

Consultant will also engage potential speakers for the seminar series and facilitate the roundtable discussions in accordance with the priorities set by Steering Committee and other stakeholders.

Activities include:

- Administration and Facilitation
  - Assemble and facilitate a Steering Committee, which will include at least two representatives of the Alliance, and one representative each from VHCB, NeighborWorks America, and VHFA. It must also include BIPOC Vermonters and stakeholders who are directly impacted by the issues this initiative is designed to address.
  - Coordinate and facilitate Steering Committee to set priorities for and implement the seminar series and roundtable discussions.
- Program Design
  - In consultation with the Steering Committee, assess the goals of this initiative and create a plan to engage a diverse array of speakers and workshop events.
    - Statewide speaker series, goal of 3-5 speakers. The number of speakers is dependent on cost and the available budget.
    - Roundtable discussions, goal of 4-6 discussions. Consultant will be tasked with facilitating the discussions including assisting the participants in identifying best practices and creating a process to ensure actionable outcomes. The number of roundtable discussions is dependent on the cost and the available budget.
- Implementation
  - Manage all aspects of the action plan with progress updates to the Steering Committee.
  - Manage the scheduling of all speakers and events.
  - Ensure that there is an effective evaluation process so that participants in each event can provide feedback, and share that feedback with the Steering Committee.

**Period of Performance:**

November to December 15, 2021 – Assemble Steering Committee, including BIPOC Vermonters, obtain feedback and incorporate into program design.

January 7, 2022 – Submit recommendations and implementation plan to Steering Committee for speaker series and roundtable discussions, including timeline and budget.

Exact delivery dates are negotiable with expectation that implementation will begin approximately January 2022.

**Supervision/Project Team:**

The project will be administered by the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, in consultation with the Steering Committee.

**Response Timeline:**

1. Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – RFP issued; open period for written questions, submit to [e.riley@vhcb.org](mailto:e.riley@vhcb.org)
2. Monday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – Close period for questions from RFP bidders.
3. Friday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – Anonymized bidder questions will be posted, along with funders’ responses on the VHCB website
4. Wednesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – Electronically submit proposal by end of business day to: [e.riley@vhcb.org](mailto:e.riley@vhcb.org)

**Available Funds:**

There is a budget of up to \$45,000 for the project, inclusive of speaker fees. There may be some flexibility in the overall budget, based on the quality of the proposals received.

**Proposal format:**

Respondents have the option to address in their proposal either one goal or both goals of the Phase 1 initiative: seminar series and roundtable discussions. Proposals must include the following information:

1. A description of the approach to be used to accomplish the activities outlined above.
2. Brief narrative describing your understanding of the initiative proposed by this RFP.
3. A brief description of the experience, qualifications, responsibilities and per diem rate for all contributing personnel.
4. An all-inclusive maximum proposed price to perform the desired work. Include direct and indirect costs, usual and customary expenses, and time estimates for contributing personnel.
5. Confirm or rebut period of performance, provide a proposed completion date.
6. The names of three references from past clients or associates, including a description of the relationship to reference, email address, and telephone number for each. If there is a link to a sample work product or written report, please share.

**Evaluation of Proposals:** Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Qualifications and experience of the principals who would be conducting the activities and preparing recommendations.
- Proposer’s understanding of the work to be performed and prior experience with similar projects.
- Quality and clarity of proposal in addressing scope and goals.
- Ability to meet timeframe of the proposed project.
- Hourly and all-inclusive rate.

**Selection Process:** VHCBC and the Steering Committee will evaluate proposals. The highest evaluated proposers may be invited to discuss their proposals and qualifications prior to awarding the contract. VHCBC and the Steering Committee expect to make a final selection by November 1, 2021. If additional time is required to make a final selection, updates on the timeline and status of proposal will be provided. We welcome and encourage proposals from BIPOC consultants and BIPOC led organizations. An understanding of Vermont's affordable housing network is preferred.