

**THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION,
EMPIRE HEALTH FOUNDATION, AND
THE WASHINGTON STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOUSING FIRST PROJECT**

Background

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Empire Health Foundation, and WSCADV are partnering on a project focused on safe, permanent housing for domestic violence survivors.

In 2009, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded grants to four agencies through a competitive process to pilot a Housing First project tailored for domestic violence survivors. Those agencies are Eastside Domestic Violence Program (King County), Family Resource Center of Lincoln County, Womenscare Shelter (Whatcom County), and the YWCA of Kitsap County. Concurrently, WSCADV was awarded a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to provide technical assistance and support to the cohort agencies and to advocate for state and federal policy changes that will increase access for survivors to permanent, affordable housing. WSCADV, the cohort agencies, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation staff have been working together as a “Learning Community” to inform and advance the field on the DV Housing First approach.

The first year of this pilot project has produced impressive outcomes for DV survivors and for the participating agencies. **93.2% of households receiving assistance from the four cohort agencies either newly obtained or stayed in permanent housing as a direct result of this project.** The agencies have also experienced positive changes related to the range and flexibility of their services. The second year of project implementation will provide information on additional short term outcomes such as how long households will be able to maintain housing stability.

The work of the pilot cohort has illustrated how the Housing First approach can be successful in different kinds of communities. We are interested in the development of a second cohort to further test Housing First principles, particularly in culturally specific and tribal domestic violence programs that serve immigrant, Native, or people of color communities.

HOUSING FIRST PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Empire Health Foundation, and WSCADV are issuing this joint Request for Letters of Inquiry (LOI) to

WSCADV member programs interested in increasing access to and resources for permanent housing for domestic violence survivors. Agencies that are not WSCADV member programs, but provide shelter and/or advocacy services to survivors from tribal/native and/or marginalized communities may also be eligible.

This project has a significant focus on the principles and practices of the Housing First approach. Project participants are expected to engage in planning for and implementation of activities that support key Housing First principles:

- Homelessness is a housing problem and should be treated as such.
- Housing is a right to which all are entitled.
- People who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness should be returned to or stabilized in permanent housing as quickly as possible and connected to resources necessary to sustain that housing.
- Issues that may have contributed to a household's homelessness can best be addressed once they are housed.

Examples of DV Housing First services include:

- Survivor driven advocacy which allows a survivor to identify what s/he needs in order to access and/or be stable in housing.
- Flexible financial assistance and services that are tailored to the survivor's needs.
- Safety planning strategies for advocates and survivors that support community-based service provision.
- Housing placement assistance and advocacy and assistance in addressing housing barriers.
- Advocacy services can be time-limited or long-term depending upon the survivor's needs.
- Housing is not contingent on compliance with services – instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and supports that are necessary to help them do so successfully.

In addition to direct services and advocacy, project participants are expected to invest time and resources in overcoming systemic barriers to accessing permanent housing. The following activities are examples:

- Reaching out to landlord organizations, housing management companies, public housing authorities, civic organizations, and congregations to develop strong relationships to help improve capacity

to relocate individuals and families into permanent housing arrangements;

- Participating in county/local ending homelessness plan development or revisions; and
- Participating in community planning regarding allocation of state and federal housing and community development funds.

A formal evaluation for the project will be conducted. Project participants are expected to participate in all evaluation activities, including but not limited to data collection, quarterly check-ins, site visits, and focus groups.

Finally, since the new cohort agencies will be part of the Learning Community, it is expected that agency staff involved in program implementation, as well as agency board members, will participate in cohort convenings, conversations, and activities aimed at sharing lessons learned with the broader DV and homeless/housing communities. At a minimum, staff and board representatives of each agency will be asked to participate in meetings of up to two-days twice each year.

LETTER OF INQUIRY PROCESS

WSCADV staff will select up to 6 Letter of Inquiry applicants based on the process and criteria below. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Empire Health Foundation will separately consider inviting full proposals from up to four of the successful LOI applicants. These LOI applicants would be invited to submit proposals for grants of up to \$250,000 each over three-year grant terms. Half of the requested funds must be used as direct assistance (rental, childcare, transportation, tuition, etc.) that directly supports survivors' housing stability. The remaining half may be used for agency staffing needs to implement the project, community partnership, and systems advocacy efforts related to housing, and to incorporate planning and/or practices based on the Housing First approach into the agency culture.

The grant award(s) will be subject to the separate internal review and approval processes defined by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and by Empire Health Foundation and subject to execution of a grant agreement. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and/or Empire Health Foundation will consider awarding a grant to up to four of the applicants invited to submit proposals. Any potential grant award(s) will be subject to the internal review and approval processes of The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and/or Empire Health Foundation. WSCADV will not be involved in the grant award process. Potential three-year grant terms would begin in late Summer or early Fall 2011.

WSCADV has submitted a grant proposal to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to provide training and technical assistance to the participating agencies, and to work at the statewide level to develop partnerships with relevant housing entities and to advocate for policy changes that increase housing for domestic violence survivors. The award of a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant for provision of these services will be subject to the Foundation's internal review and approval processes.

SCREENING CRITERIA

We anticipate that a minimum of two cohort members will be agencies that provide services primarily to survivors from marginalized (culturally and linguistically specific and/or tribal) communities.

In addition, successful applicants must demonstrate the following:

- Understanding of applicant community demographics and the unique needs of survivors that are served.
- Demonstration of larger agency or program budget that can adequately support the project being proposed, including allocation of staffing and other resources, in addition to the requested grant funds, toward activities that directly promote project outcomes.
- Commitment to implementing Housing First approach and testing Housing First service components.
- Willingness to be creative and to "think outside the box" in both service delivery and adjustments to agency culture.
- Existing community relationships that facilitate housing placements for survivors
- Willingness to participate in a learning community through meetings, phone conversations, training, technical assistance, networking and systems advocacy activities coordinated by WSCADV.

HOW TO APPLY

Follow the instructions on the attached form and submit your Letter of Inquiry **no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, April 29, 2011**. Applications may be submitted by email or fax to Linda Olsen, linda@wscadv.org, fax 206-389-2520.

**LETTER OF INQUIRY FOR BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION
AND EMPIRE HEALTH FOUNDATION
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOUSING PROJECT**

Please include the information below and submit via email or fax to Linda Olsen, linda@wscadv.org, fax 206-389-2520. Deadline for receipt is Friday, April 29, 5:00 pm.

Questions? Contact Linda Olsen at 206-389-2515 x 205 or linda@wscadv.org.

Agency name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Contact person for this application: _____

Contact email and phone #: _____

Signature and Printed Name of Executive Director or Authorized Tribal Representative: _____

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Describe your primary geographic service area and provide demographic information about the populations you serve.
2. If you primarily serve survivors from marginalized communities (culturally and linguistically specific and/or tribal), describe how your governing body (board of directors, tribal council, elected officials) and staff (paid and volunteer, executive management and advocate) reflect the populations you serve.
3. Describe the ways in which your current housing advocacy efforts and/or housing programs (such as shelter and/or transitional housing) work and don't work well for survivors from historically marginalized populations. How might you (or have you) adapt a Housing First model for these survivors?
4. Describe how Housing First principles are included in your agency

priorities and plans (e.g., include language from strategic plans, program development goals/objectives, organizational structure, job descriptions)

5. The DV field has been built, in part, as a shelter movement. Housing First represents a significant change. How do you envision changing your organization and your organization's supporters to be inclusive of this model?
6. Describe how you currently assist survivors with finding and securing permanent housing. Include specific information about
 - (a) housing assistance for shelter, transitional housing, and/or non-residential clients;
 - (b) ongoing advocacy for survivors post-placement in housing
 - (c) existing partnerships/relationships with housing providers (private landlords, public housing authorities, low income housing providers) in your community
7. Describe how your agency budget would complement grant funds, if awarded, to support this project (examples: donated goods provided for participating survivors; advocacy, shelter and/or crisis line staff that would be providing services to participating survivors, resource development and management staff that would provide support to project)