Overview: Inspiration Corporation’s Housing Services Program

History
Inspiration Corporation was founded in 1989 by Lisa Nigro, a police officer who was searching for a personal response to the people she encountered on her beat. Lisa borrowed her nephew’s red wagon, filled it with coffee and sandwiches, and pulled it around the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago offering a little dignity and respect to the people she encountered. Over time, the wagon grew into a full-service cafe, where men and women experiencing homelessness could sit down, order off a menu and be served.

In the years that followed, Inspiration Cafe expanded its services to include case management, supportive services, housing, and employment training.

Inspiration Corporation added its Housing Services program in 2001 with an original contract to provide six units of permanent supportive housing. The program now administers units of supportive housing spread across the City of Chicago. In 2012, the organization opened its first project-based housing, an eight unit building for families in Washington Park.

Background
Inspiration Corporation’s Housing Services program seeks to alleviate the immediate, persistent unmet demand for housing services in Chicago, providing individuals and families with housing and wraparound supportive services. The Housing Services program administers nine publicly funded initiatives; a mixture of permanent supportive housing and transitional housing initiatives.

In the four years since the State of Illinois budget impasse threatened the continued existence of the Housing Services program, the program has been rebuilt and is expanding. Throughout the budget impasse, and the resulting effects, Inspiration Corporation staff worked to uphold the high standard of wraparound supportive care for which it is known, and due to these efforts, the agency maintained an average retention rate of 96.4% in its permanent supportive housing units.

The program has now expanded to serve more individuals than ever before in the agency’s history. During fiscal year 2020 (July 1, 2019- June 30, 2020), the agency anticipates serving 161 households, encompassing 344 individuals.

Housed participants consistently maintain nearly 100% two-year retention in the agency’s permanent housing programs. This is the result of intensive case management that the housing department staff provides for the heads of households. At a minimum, staff members make monthly contacts with each household and each landlord, conduct quarterly home visits, and complete annual needs assessments for every family member, income redeterminations, lease renewals and housing quality inspections.
Opportunity
With a proven model of support that is rapidly expanding, Inspiration Corporation is turning its sights towards maximizing the benefits of services for participants.

Inspiration Corporation has the potential to dramatically increase its impact by developing an enriched program more strongly supporting all aspects of a family’s well-being, including expanded support for children in those households. An enriched program could address goals related to health, mental health, education, employment, relationships, parenting, children’s development and educational success, and more.

The outcomes of this expanded programming would include longer-term housing stability for formerly homeless individuals and families; better well-being outcomes such as health and mental health; and better outcomes for children regarding their development, education and eventual economic stability. The ultimate goal of deepening and expanding services to individuals and families would be to provide a stronger foundation of support that helps families and their children escape cyclical and intergenerational poverty.

Before the agency can move forward with expanded services, however, more research is required. Inspiration Corporation has allocated funding to properly assess the potential for expanded services and deepening agency impact. Inspiration Corporation is welcoming proposal submissions by qualified applicants to carry out this assessment.

Parameters and Requirements
Qualified applicants include individuals and organizations with a deep understanding of the affordable and subsidized housing landscape and family services in the City of Chicago, who are available and willing to produce detailed findings that will support Inspiration Corporation’s efforts to improve the lives of participants enrolled in its Housing Services program.

With the reasonable assistance of agency staff, as well as monetary support, parties would be expected to provide the following deliverables:

Program Assessment: A realistic assessment of current program capacity regarding expanded services for all members of agency households. If selected, applicants would be expected to conduct comprehensive surveys of household needs, identifying existing gaps in agency services and reviewing programming requirements for identified needs.

Best Practices: A detailed report on current best practices for full family housing services, with demonstrated relevancy to the agency’s current goals, mission, and strategic plan. Research should be relevant or applicable to the Chicago area, and include a catalogue of agencies currently used by households to meet their needs, with information on program models, eligibility requirements, service costs, and payment methods.
Solutions: Multiple realistic solutions for expanded services, which address service gaps identified in the program assessment and incorporate best practices. Each solution should address fully the following areas:

- **Internal Development:** An analysis of the steps required by the agency to implement the proposed solutions, including, but not limited to, program and staffing structures that would enable families in the program to dramatically increase their access to, use of, and benefit from agency services.

- **Potential Partnerships:** An analysis of potential partnerships with peer agencies, as regards the proposed solutions, that would be required to adequately accomplish the agencies goal of providing expanded services to all members of agency households.

- **Cost Analysis & Timeline:** An in-depth cost analysis for each proposed solution, including a developed business plan for how ongoing costs would be covered.

Deliverables should be supported with sufficient documentation and research, to be submitted as supporting addenda with a final report. Once a proposal has been formally accepted, deliverables will be expected within three months.

**Selection and Oversight**
Proposals will be assessed by a committee comprised of Inspiration Corporation staff and board members, with analysis based on the following criteria:

- Experience/Understanding
- Demonstrated skills and abilities
- Availability and pricing
- Details of planned activities outlined in submitted proposals
- Degree to which proposals address stated needs
- Terms and conditions of submitted proposals
- References

The agency is welcoming individual, organizational, and collaborative applicants. Proposals will be welcomed until 11:59PM on November 22nd, 2019. The agency will make a decision by December 20th, 2019, and update all applicants with the status of their proposals. Inspiration Corporation may require the submission of additional information during the selection period. Participation in an interview may be part of the selection process.

**How to Apply**
A typed proposal of no more than five pages, as well as a cover letter and references, should be emailed to Jennifer Miller Rehfeldt, Chief Program Officer, at jmrehfeldt@inspirationcorp.org.

**Questions?**
Questions can be submitted to chiggins@inspirationcorp.org and will be answered as soon as possible. If pressing, please call 312-626-5884.