

Building Capacity to Ensure Long Term and Equitable Services for Women Veterans Facing Homelessness

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Aura Home Women Vets

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Application Form

Question Group

Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. To date, Buncombe County has awarded projects totaling \$23,093,499, leaving a balance of \$27,639,791 available to award.

Visit <http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding> for details.

This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

Organization Type*

Nonprofit

Nonprofit documentation

If nonprofit, attach IRS Determination Letter or other proof of nonprofit status.

IRS Tax Exemption Letter.pdf

Name of Project.*

Building Capacity to Ensure Long Term and Equitable Services for Women Veterans Facing Homelessness

New/Updated Proposal*

Is this a new project proposal or an updated version of a proposal submitted during the earlier (July 2021) Recovery Funding RFP?

New project proposal

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$418,746.00

Category*

Please select one:

- Affordable Housing
- Aging/Older Adults
- Business Support/Economic Development
- Environmental/Climate
- Homelessness
- K-12 Education
- Infrastructure and/or Broadband
- Mental Health/Substance Use
- NC Pre-K Expansion
- Workforce

Homelessness

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Aura Home Women Vets (AHWV) offers services to prevent homelessness for women Veterans, including assistance with accessing VA benefits, personal case management, chaperone service and financial assistance. Aura Home is currently in the process of renovating a former assisted living facility that will provide transitional housing for up to 12 women. This facility is located in Henderson County, while AHWV maintains its headquarters in Asheville to retain a close presence to the Veteran Administration.

This project supports capacity building for the organization to go from volunteer run to paid staff, and contracted services for grant writing, bookkeeping and business/strategic plan development. The ongoing economic effects of COVID-19 are creating an increase in the number of Veterans needing assistance. To effectively meet our mission, AHWV must ensure strategic growth to align with the need and does so equitably and sustainably.

Project Plan*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

As the organization prepares to open the Felicia Reeves Home the founder and current volunteer executive director will relinquish her daily administrative and management duties to concentrate on case management.

A Strategic/Business Planning Consultant will lead the organization in creating an effective business plan.

A paid executive director will help set policy and lead the organization in this growth stage.

An office manager/volunteer coordinator will ensure accurate data management and reporting.

A contracted grant writer will bring in support through foundation, corporate and government funding sources.

Year One

First Quarter

- Strategic/Business Planning consultant contracted.
- Business plan hiring staff Executive Director first priority by Board of Directors.
- Executive Director interviews and hiring conducted by acting ED and Board of Directors. Executive Director is part-time first year and moves to full-time in second year.
- Contract Bookkeeper selected.
- Acting Executive Director relinquishes role as ED and focuses on case management and programs.
- Contract grant writer seeks additional funding sources.

Second – Fourth Quarters

- Executive Director interviews hires office manager/volunteer coordinator position. Part-time in year one; full-time for year two.
- Strategic/Business Plan approval by Board of Directors and ED

Year Two

- Executive Director and Office Manager becomes full time position.
- Executive Director interviews and hires part-time Case Manager/Peer Support.
- Felicia Reeves Home opens; increase in numbers served.
- ED, Office Manager and grant writer implement strategic plan to ensure sustainability of organization.
- Contract grant writer continues to manage grant reporting and grant applications

Year Three

- ED continues to execute strategic plan and board of directors evaluate strategic plan effectiveness
- Office Manager works in conjunction with ED to develop and evaluate programs for improved effectiveness
- Board of Directors follow strategic plan to maintain funding for AHWV sustainability
- Contract grant writer continues to manage grant reports and grant applications

Statement of Need*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

In western NC, the number of beds available to female versus male Veterans is extremely disproportionate with only 20 beds available to females and 244 beds available to male Veterans. According

to state statistics, 14% - or approximately 12,120 of NC women Veterans are homeless or at risk of homelessness. www.milvets.nc.gov, www.abccm.org, www.aurahomewomenvets.com

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, female Veterans comprise the fastest-growing segment of the homeless Veteran population. From 2016 to 2017, the number of homeless female Vets increased by seven percent, compared with one percent for their male counterparts[1]. Female homeless Veterans have unique needs from homeless male Veterans, and lived military life differs from civilian homeless women where they feel like outcasts among people without experience with military life.
www.va.gov/homeless/women

Beyond the statistical data, AHWV has first-hand knowledge of the difficulties and obstacles that many women Veterans face that can lead to homelessness. The founder's own experience with homelessness, along with her experience volunteering for homeless populations and local shelters allowed her to gain insights into the lack of local options for safe shelter for women Veterans facing homelessness. Also actively involved with NC Coalition to End Homelessness Region 2.

[1] <https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/46758/female-Veterans-comprise-fastest-growing-segment-homeless-Veteran-population/>

Link to COVID-19*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

The CDC's "Interim Guidance on People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness" those who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness face several risks to their health and safety and may be at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 due to older age or certain underlying medical conditions, such as chronic lung disease or serious heart conditions.

The average age of the women Veterans seeking help from Aura Home Women Vets is 52 ½ yrs. and many have chronic health conditions as well as underlying mental health and or substance abuse issues.

According to CommunitySolutions.com Covid-19 and Homelessness, "people experiencing homelessness are those among the highest risk for infection, complication, and death from COVID-19. They experience unsafe living conditions, can be exposed to crowded shelters that are tinderboxes for infection, and lack access to sanitation and spaces to socially distance. These vulnerabilities are the same conditions that have accelerated outbreaks of other diseases among this population, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and tuberculosis."

This project's goal is to first prevention of homelessness and second stabilization through offering a safe haven for women Veterans to live as they regain self-sufficiency. Keeping women and families intact in their current home and surroundings is safer for them and their potential to spread COVID-19.

Additionally, Aura Home's philosophy is more cost effective than most HUD funded programs, which restrict assistance until a family loses everything and are living out of a car or other uninhabitable place where contracting disease is far more likely. For women Veterans this unstable insecure lifestyle creates additional trauma that can be avoided by prevention programs or providing safe emergency housing for women who already lost their homes.

Population Served*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

Aura Home Women Vets serves any female United States Military Veteran facing or at risk of homelessness, regardless of branch of service or time served, or discharge status. In the year 2021 AHWV served 31 women, 3 partners, and 20 children.

As the organization grows, we are projecting to serve 80+ women Veterans per year, plus any partners/dependents and pets that are part of their life.

AHWV primarily serves female Veterans from Buncombe, Henderson & Haywood Counties, NC. Additional counties include Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, & Transylvania. Our current office is in Asheville; our transitional housing, the Felicia Reeves Home, is in Hendersonville, NC.

In 2021, 58% of clients were White, 35% Black and 6% Native American.

AHWV identifies its clients by verifying their Veteran status and accessing where they are, what assistance is needed, and what assistance they have applied for or are receiving from Veterans Administration.

Results*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

Our results are twofold: Direct funding will result in the hiring of staff to move an all-volunteer run organization to the next level in order to increase the number of women Veterans the organization is able to help and decrease the number of women Veterans who become homeless.

Performance measures of these activities include:

1. Date of hire(s)
2. Annual performance reviews
3. Strategic plan implementation/evaluation

The impact of this project is that AHWV is strengthened and sustainable to meet its mission of helping economically disadvantaged women become more self-reliant. Our vision is that Aura Home empowers women Veterans to be vibrant and self-sufficient to thrive in their community.

Results we hope to achieve for the woman Veteran includes:

- Access VA benefits rightfully due her and improves personal finances.
- She's confident to access VA facilities without requiring AHWV Chaperone Services.
- She regains stabilization, self-sufficiency and becomes self-reliant.

We measure success one woman at a time, meeting her where she is at and providing assistance until the issue is resolved and/or the woman is stabilized and able to maintain independent housing.

Measurable activities include:

1. Number of case management hours
2. Number of transportation trips provided- mileage, time, purpose and facility reported
3. Number of chaperone services provided (court, medical, VSO, DSS, SS)
4. Amount of financial assistance for services provided by category (rent, utilities, food, etc.)

Evaluation*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

The project will be overseen by the Founder and Board of Directors. To ensure success of onboarding new staff, the Founder/acting ED will provide training and be available for assistance. Quarterly performance reports for the first year will ensure targets/goals are identified and steps being taken to meet objectives.

The Executive Director and Office Manager sets policy on data collection and analysis. Ensures all data from previous years are transferred to an online management system, to be determined by strategic planning consultant for best practice reporting and tracking.

Additionally, the ED reports out monthly to Board of Directors to include:

- Client data reports
- Programs progress reports
- Steps toward implementing Strategic Plan
- Financial report

Equity Impact*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

This project will help build a more just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery by ensuring our female Veterans, regardless of race or ethnicity, have the specialized support they need to achieve housing stability and become/remain self-sufficient in a safe, secure home.

AHWV has been a high-access entry shelter since inception. AHWV plans to increase transitional housing by 38% in western NC with a 1 bed to 1 bath facility per woman Veteran.

We serve women Veterans regardless of discharge status, race, gender identity, religion, or ethnic background. To Aura Home, "if you are a woman who served in the US military and live in our service region, you will find inclusion at AHWV".

Project Partners*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

The subcontractors to this project would include a contract grant writer and a contract bookkeeper.

Aura Home Women Vets contracts with LD Vincent Grant Writing, LLC to write, submit, and report on grant proposals. This workflow varies but averages out to 25% time per week.

Aura Home Women Vets is currently seeking a new contract Bookkeeper, as previous volunteer relinquished her services.

Non-funded partners that help with the success of the women Veterans seeking assistance include:

- Homeward Bound- Supportive Services for Veterans and Families (SSVF)-Buncombe Rapid Rehousing
- Transformation Village -transitional housing
- The Haven- Shelter in Transylvania County- shelter
- Thrive- Housing Services through NC Continuum of Care Region 2 Henderson, Polk Rutherford, Transylvania counties Housing and supportive services
- Charles George VAMC HUD-VASH- Housing Services- All counties permanent housing
- Heart of Horse Sense- Equine therapy for Veterans
- NC Serves Western/ NC Cares360- Veteran and community referral service
- United Way 211- referral service for community resources
- Pisgah Legal- eviction services and tenant/landlord rights education

Capacity*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

One of AHWV's most significant strengths comes from the leadership and experience helping women Veterans that comes from the founder and Executive Director, Alyce Knaflich. Her experience includes:

- 19 ½ years served in US Army
- 10 years lived experience with homelessness
- 3 years case management with homeless agencies
- 6 years participation with NC Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH), committees Region 2, Project Review, Point-in-Time Count, Consumer Advisory Council, Veteran and Coordinated Entry
- 13 years volunteering Veterans Affairs in patient advocate office, AMVETS Representative, Committees: volunteer executive, strategic planning, parking lot and staff hiring for associate director, special events coordinator
- B.S. from Virginia Tech
- Continuing Education training for VA, homeless programs and non-profit policy

Ms. Knaflich's devotion to women Veterans comes from the heart, as well as from lived experience, her knowledge of the VA, and her determined attitude and willingness to fight for justice for every Veteran who comes to AHWV. Ms. Knaflich will remain an active volunteer and looks forward to more time to spend with Veterans versus organization management.

Aura Home has not yet received federal funding; however, the organization has received funding from private foundations for a number of years and has appropriately managed grants and reported out as required. Additionally, Ms. Knaflich's experience with reviewing federal and state grants gives her insight into the management and reporting requirements of federal funds, as well as prioritizing funding projects for HUD funds in the state of NC.

Budget*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For

project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Recovery-Funds-budget-template.xlsx

Special Considerations*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

AHWV has been quietly serving women Veterans in Buncombe County since 2014. The statistics are telling us that is time to move forward and expand to a staffed non-profit to ensure we can meet the increase in need as well as ensure we will be here long into the future. Once we obtain start up capacity funding, we will be positioned to apply for additional funding opportunities and the paid staff will be able to follow the created strategic plan to grow individual and community support of organization.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- IRS Tax Exemption Letter.pdf
- Recovery-Funds-budget-template.xlsx

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
P. O. BOX 2508
CINCINNATI, OH 45201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: **NOV 03 2014**

AURA HOME WOMEN VETS
89 WATERS COVE ROAD
CANDLER, NC 28715-0000

Employer Identification Number:
47-2041216
DLN:
26053695001144
Contact Person:
CUSTOMER SERVICE ID# 31954
Contact Telephone Number:
(877) 829-5500
Accounting Period Ending:
December 31
Public Charity Status:
509(a)(2)
Form 990/990-EZ/990-N Required:
Yes
Effective Date of Exemption:
September 26, 2014
Contribution Deductibility:
Yes
Addendum Applies:
No

Dear Applicant:

We're pleased to tell you we determined you're exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donors can deduct contributions they make to you under IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522. This letter could help resolve questions on your exempt status. Please keep it for your records.

Organizations exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3) are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined you're a public charity under the IRC Section listed at the top of this letter.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that you're required to file Form 990/990-EZ/990-N, our records show you're required to file an annual information return (Form 990 or Form 990-EZ) or electronic notice (Form 990-N, the e-Postcard). If you don't file a required return or notice for three consecutive years, your exempt status will be automatically revoked.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that an addendum applies, the enclosed addendum is an integral part of this letter.

For important information about your responsibilities as a tax-exempt organization, go to www.irs.gov/charities. Enter "4221-PC" in the search bar to view Publication 4221-PC, Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, which describes your recordkeeping, reporting, and disclosure requirements.

Letter 5436

AURA HOME WOMEN VETS

Sincerely,

Thomas Ripperda

Director, Exempt Organizations

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			Total	\$	583,019.00	