

**STATE OF VERMONT**  
**Human Services & Educational Facilities Grant Program**  
**Application**

**LIBERTY MILL JUSTICE CENTER**

- A. List of Board Members** – not applicable
- B. IRS non-profit determination** – not applicable
- C. Narrative**

**THE PROBLEM**

Vermont, and the nation as a whole, finds itself with too many individuals in the legal system and too many people incarcerated. The state of Vermont with a population of 626, 562 residents has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest prison population in the New England region, claiming 255 prisoners for every 100,000 population a year. Lack of suitable transitional housing and high recidivism in the state contribute to breakdowns in the family, the depression of economic viability in communities, people not reaching their potential and downward cycles of poverty and incarceration.

On average, around 1300 first time entrants to any level of oversight by Corrections are incarcerated every year. And despite efforts by the State to decrease the prison population, prison's increasingly remain packed due to severe housing shortages in Vermont which makes finding suitable transitional housing for individuals about to be released extremely difficult. In 2014 alone, at any point of time throughout the year, there were 374 unsentenced detainees and 331 non-violent offenders who had served their minimum sentence but were held due to lack of housing options.

The issues are widely recognized but implementing solutions is hard given the risk necessary to make major systemic changes. The Windham County Sheriff's Office is taking that risk as explained below. Support for this initiative has come from Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, Vermont Judiciary, Vermont Police Academy, Agency of Human Services, our federal delegation, US Marshalls, and many local agencies. Some of the letters of support are attached.

**HISTORY OF THE PROJECT**

For a number of years the Windham County Sheriff has had a vision of reducing the number of incarcerated individuals, reducing recidivism and as a result offering a better quality of life to individuals and families, and making communities safer.

Considerable research has shown that a program this comprehensive located in one space does not seem to exist in the country. Various facets of this approach exist but it appears this would be a first and it could serve as a model project for other communities.

## PROPOSED APPROACH TO SOLUTION

This project will provide an individualized approach to address issues that confront both the individuals and the system itself. These approaches have the potential to make systemic changes to our criminal justice system - reduce incarceration, reduce recidivism, support individuals and families, and make our communities safer and more viable.

Arrestees within categories predetermined by the Judiciary/States Attorney/Sheriff who are pre-arraignment or pre-sentence will receive individual assessment, case management and supportive services. The same services will be provided to individuals in certain categories who are transitioning out of prison after serving the required minimum sentence

The process will be to screen for neurocognitive mechanisms of decision-making, learning style, current capabilities, life interest, mental health and substance issues. A gap analysis will be done to determine necessary changes for the person and the creation of a strategic plan of educational and social services to help the person get back on track using his/her full potential toward becoming a productive society member.

Underlying the entire approach is the need to provide stable transitional housing. Many people are detained or incarcerated simply because they do not have stable housing. This housing will be short-term while participants create a plan and begin its implementation. Each person should leave the Center with a plan and necessary contacts.

The supportive services provided on site will include housing, substance abuse and/or mental health counselling, life skills training, educational programming based on learning style, education and/or skills training, and other services as needed. Appropriate human service and educational entities will be partners – so far those who have agreed to partner are Veteran's Administration, CCV, Health Care & Rehabilitative Services, Springfield Hospital, Parks Place, Restorative Justice Center.

While in residency at the Center and receiving the services, some individuals will have either limited or free movement – determined individually. Limited/restricted movement could be done in a number of ways including electronic monitoring. This will allow them to access services in the community, continue employment if applicable, and reduce the sense of isolation from community that comes from being “locked up”.

## WHERE AND WHAT THIS WILL BE

The anticipated Center will be in a to-be renovated building in Bellows Falls located near but not in the Village Center. It will consist of 57,000 sq ft of renovated space and 19,000 sq ft of new space. It will provide space for housing, the supportive services, the Sheriff's offices, classroom and counselling rooms. In addition to those services listed above the Center will provide space for regional law enforcement training, regional dispatch for fire/police/rescue, supervised space for non-custodial parent visitations, and public inebriate beds. It will also address a federal issue

by providing building secure space (completely secure and segregated from other occupants and service) for 70-80 federal Vermont detainees. This is short term housing until sentencing and is much needed by the US Marshalls in Vermont.

There will be additional benefits to the immediate community: the creation of 60-75 new jobs – good jobs with benefits; the clean-up of a blighted property; additional property taxes with a newly renovated building; savings to towns for dispatch services; possible interns and employees for local employers; and increased activity for local businesses. There will also be some intangible benefits by the increased presence of educators and other professionals, and by an increased visible presence of law enforcement.

## TIMETABLE

Up to this point the project has:

- Completed the Phase I and Phase II Environmental Studies,
- Stage one of a structural analysis. The second phase of the analysis will be completed by end of November.
- Applied for inclusion on the SeVEDS CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) list.
- Applied for a grant from USDA RCDI for pre-development money
- Been in contact with our Federal Delegation
- Started contacting foundations for program funding

Our projected timetable for construction is:

Completed design work by March 2016

Construction begin April 2016 (inside clean-up will start before that)

Construction complete June 2017

Occupancy July – September 2017 (phased in for various programs)

## BUDGET

See the budget explanation under **E. Budget Form**

This application is for \$22,500 to be used for:

\$9,000 for completion of Structural Analysis

\$9,000 for historic preservation consultant including application for Historic Tax Credits

\$4,500 for architectural and visual renderings to be used for public presentations and potential investor packages

At this point the estimated cost of the renovation of the building is approximately \$22Million. Once pre-development work is complete, it is anticipated that funding will come from a combination of Historic Tax Credits, New Market Tax Credits, funds from US Marshalls, loan from USDA Rural Development. Foundations and other sources will be approached for funding for the programming as an innovative, pilot project.

The money requested in this grant application is essential to the continuation of the project. Without the results of the structural analysis the construction will be unable to continue; without an historic preservation consultant evaluation and application for tax credits the financing

package will not be complete. And without some visuals to present to future funding sources the requests will be severely disadvantaged – visuals are important in gaining support for building projects as has been acknowledged in this application packet. It is hard to suggest a minimum but funding for any one of the three components would be welcome.

**D. Letters of support** – see attached

**E. Budget form** – budget explanation

The total anticipated cost for renovating the building is, as stated above, \$22M

Our request is \$22,500

The grant application packet asks proof of financial support as expressed by local fund raising. This is not the type of project for which there will be “fundraising” in the traditional sense at the community level. Rather support will be shown in different ways while financing will primarily come from grant writing and loans. It will also come with local businesses and individuals expressing support – much of which has begun to happen. Individuals have expressed support, businesses have started to show support, e.g. Sovernet is based in Bellows Falls and wants to be a partner when IT is addressed, and others have offered help at the appropriate stages. The USDA grant required a 1:1 match which was offered by Don Wells, owner of DEW Construction in the amount of \$250,000.

The matching money for this application has come from the Sheriff’s budget (sheriff’s budgets are not state or federal money but are generated by the entrepreneurial efforts of each sheriff.)

\$5,000 purchase option for the building

\$4,500 for down payment to engineer for structural analysis

\$13,468 salaries for project managers hired specifically for this project

Total spent by Sheriff as of 10/30/2015 \$22,968

Additionally, while not used as match for this application, there has been much time devoted to it by the Development Director for Rockingham/Bellows Falls and the ED or Bellows Falls Area Development Corporation. The USDA grant required a 1:1 match which was offered by Don Wells, owner of DEW Construction in the amount of \$250,000.

**F. 990** – not applicable

**G. Other** – see attached

Map of the village area

Aerial view of building

Photo of building in current state

Attempted sketch of what building could be

Letters of support (there are many more but packet limited it to three)