

**Cumberland County Community Development Program
2014 CDBG General Program Application
Regional Cover Page**

Project Title The Cumberland County Homeless Prevention Program

Regional Applicant Cumberland County Commissioners

Non-Profit Entity The Opportunity Alliance

Contact Information Name Tara Kosma

Address 510 Cumberland Ave, Portland, ME 04101

Email tara.kosma@opportunityalliance.org Tel 553-5857

Program Category

Public Infrastructure/Facility _____ Downtown Revitalization _____

Public Service x Housing _____ Economic Development _____

CDBG "National Objective"

Low/Moderate Income: Area-Wide x Limited Clientele _____

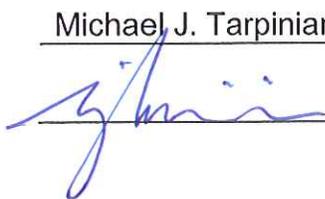
Direct Benefit: Presumed Group People at risk of homelessness (Identify Group)

Slum/Blight: Area-Wide n/a Spot Basis n/a

Amount of CDBG Funds Requested \$53,428.00

Total Estimated Project Cost \$93,428.00

Name of Authorized Official Michael J. Tarpinian, President & CEO

Signature of Authorized Official 

2014 General Application Questions

1. **Brief summary**

The Opportunity Alliance is requesting \$53,428.00 to provide homeless prevention services for residents of Cumberland County who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. Cumberland County has fewer housing resources than Portland and emergency housing options are severely limited. General Assistance providers are often a last resort for families and individuals, but are often unable to support people in long term stability.

The Opportunity Alliance has approximately 6 years of experience, serving hundreds of Cumberland County residents with housing focused case management, support and resources. Local partners are currently working with the Opportunity Alliance to leverage resources in support of this challenging issue. The United Way has committed to providing the Opportunity Alliance with funding to support this project. The Opportunity Alliance will also be meeting with the City of Portland to establish a strong partnership and ensure better collaboration in this endeavor. Additionally, the current homeless prevention program will partner with municipalities and those with residents experiencing an emergency to provide them with short term housing-focused case management so that residents can remain stably housed and in their community.

Continuing to learn how best to use resources, we are proposing a shift in focus by working more directly with municipalities that have residents who are at risk of homelessness. We would build capacity by offering education and training to municipalities so that there is a more sustainable approach to the housing issues and homeless prevention work. We believe that the impact and long lasting effect of the work can be increased by working closely with specific Cumberland County General Assistance administrators. We would provide education and support to them about the housing process and how to help residents remain stably housed. We will have a regular presence in towns in order to better work with GA administrators and town residents who need assistance with this process. The housing arena can be complicated and overwhelming for GA administrators and residents. Our work would help with navigation and education to better support GA administrators stay current with changes to the landscape, as well as to increase their knowledge and comfort with assisting clients. We will continue our work with landlords to provide safe, affordable housing in communities-these relationships have been critical to stabilizing families and individuals in a housing crisis.

2. **Need for the activity:**

a. **Convey the magnitude and severity of the issue to be addressed.**

Housing issues and the need for affordable housing continue to plague many low income people in Cumberland County. Housing and shelter was cited from Maine 211 in the "Top Call" category and was only second to Heating Assistance. According to Maine Housing data for 2011, the average length of time a family may be on a waiting list for a housing subsidy voucher is 2 years. Portland continues to see increasing

numbers of families and individuals in need of housing assistance. According to the 2013 "Point in Time Survey", 480 people were homeless in Portland. However, the 480-person estimate is now viewed as conservative. These numbers are only representative of homelessness in the city of Portland. Many more residents of Cumberland County do not have secure or stable housing, are living temporarily living with acquaintances, living in cars or tents, and, as a result, are not included in the data reported above.

b. Identify the total number of people affected by the issue.

We anticipate working with between 350 and 400 people based on our most recent statistics. These residents reside throughout Cumberland County. We will provide case management to clients in Westbrook, South Portland, Gorham, Bridgton, Windham, Harrison, Falmouth, North Yarmouth, Casco, Gray, New Gloucester, Cape Elizabeth, Scarborough, Sebago and Harrison.

c. Out of the total number of people affected, identify the number of people from low/moderate income households.

In assessing the demographics of people we have worked with in homelessness prevention program from July through December 2013 we can anticipate that 90 percent (90%) of people will fall in the lowest income category.

d. Describe to what extent the project makes in the long-term measurable difference in the economic and social health of the region.

When housing, one of the most basic needs for people, is stable and secure individuals and families are more able to be healthy productive members in their community. Jobs are easier to secure, children are able to attend school more regularly, and overall health is better attended to. Couch surfing, living on the streets or migrating to cities with shelters does not promote healthy stability. If individuals and families are able to stay stably housed in their home communities their natural supports are available to them. All of these factors help people contribute in a more healthy and productive way to their community. Housing also plays a role in risk factors for DHHS case removal and involvement with the family. According to a 2011 report from The Opportunity Alliance's Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC), lack of stable housing was a contributing factor in child removal cases in the Portland, South Portland and Westbrook areas.

3. Management of the proposed activity:

a. Define *who* will manage the grant funded project and *how* they will manage it.

The Community Services Director of The Opportunity Alliance will manage the grant funded project. The Director will oversee a full time homeless prevention case manager. The physical location of the Director is 73 Deering Street, Portland. The case manager will spend a significant portion of his/her time in Cumberland County towns working with General Assistance Administrators and town administrators as well as clients. The Director will oversee the budget, day to day operation of the program and supervision of the case manager.

b. Explain the experience of the applicant in undertaking projects of similar complexity.

Since 2007, PROP (now The Opportunity Alliance) has managed housing-focused case management programs in Cumberland County. From 2008/2009 to 2011/2012 we managed a \$600,000 ARRA funded homelessness prevention grant. In that grant cycle we had two full time case managers supporting county residents who were at risk of homelessness or were already homeless.

In 2012/2013 we received funding for a part time homeless prevention case manager from CDBG. The data management, record keeping, releases, forms and tracking has been established for this area of work.

The Opportunity Alliance has served several hundred people in Cumberland County at risk of homelessness. We help consumers navigate the system, educate about housing options, assist with budgeting, help with filling out applications, and assist with landlord negotiation, etc. Every persons story is unique as are the resources in their community. With this grant funding we will dig deeper into all the local resources, collaborate with General Assistance and Town offices in towns and meet clients in their communities.

c. Demonstrate that an ongoing commitment exists to continue the maintenance and operation of the activity or facility.

The Opportunity Alliance is very committed to this work. Every day we see the huge need for support and guidance in the people who call us, walk through our doors or are referred to us. The housing system can be overwhelming, complicated and ever changing. Having people who specialize in this area is critical to successfully helping constituents. The Opportunity Alliance is a Community Action Agency committed to its mission to help those in greatest need. Homeless prevention work is in full alignment with this mission. Every persons story is unique as are the resources in their community. With this grant funding we will dig deeper into all the local resources, collaborate with General Assistance and Town offices in towns and meet clients in their communities.

For non-construction related projects:

- **Describe the steps that have been completed or must be completed to initiate the project. These may include: community support, staffing, securing an appropriate location, marketing and networking.**

Because we have been providing Homeless Prevention there will not be many steps needed to initiate the project. The focus of the work will shift from office-based to more community-based work. We will need to reach out to municipalities in Cumberland County to further establish partnership with them. We will need to provide further education to towns about how we can best serve clients with their imminently homeless or homeless status. We will need to establish a schedule for staff to be in towns working with GA administrators and clients. We currently have a staff member who is providing homeless prevention case management and information and resources to clients. She already works closely with many GA administrators and internal and external programs.

- **Describe any existing and/or potential impediments to project initiation.**
Some municipalities may be more open to working with us in this capacity. Since it will be a relatively new initiative and a new way of supporting clients in their towns there may be some uncertainty or questions. Hopefully, once municipalities see that by our assisting clients to be stably housed it will be a positive for clients, families and the town. Relationship building and trust will be critical to the success of this project.

4. **Ready to proceed**

This project has benefited from past support of the Cumberland County CDBG funds and this infrastructure has stayed intact. All systems are fully in place to renew the program as soon as the new funding cycle begins. The Director will hire one full time employee who will work with those at risk of homelessness. The project has successfully engaged General Assistance officers and has established this critically important relationship. We have successfully met our goal to be a recognized, accessible, and valued resource to individuals and families needing services, and to the municipalities needing a referral source. This integration has resulted in a system for dispatchers, 211, and towns to have 24-hour response to homelessness.

5. **Budget for project.**

<u>Public Service Programs</u>				
Cost Category	CDBG Funds	Municipal Funds	Other Funds	Total
Equipment				
Materials/Supplies	\$200.			\$200.00
Operations	\$7648.50.		\$6062.50.	\$13,711.00
Salaries	\$24436.50.		\$24,436.50	\$48,873.00
Fringe	\$9501.00.		\$9501.00	\$19,002.00
Transportation	\$4,000.			\$4,000.00
Consultants	\$250.			\$250
Space/Rent	\$6,421.			\$6,421.00
Project Management				

Other – 1) insurance, telephone, staff development	\$971.			\$971.00
Other – 2)				
Total Costs	\$53,428.		\$40,000.	93,428.00

Provide the basis for determination of budget amounts: The budget is based on one full time housing case manager and 4 hours a week of supervision and program oversight by the Program Director. Office space for the case manager, phone and IT costs are factored in. Some travel is allowed for the case manager to provide the work in the community at town offices and in client's homes. A small allowance for interpreters is included under consultants should the need arise. United Way will contribute \$40,000.00 toward the project.

6. Implementation Schedule

Project Implementation Schedule								
Activity	Q #1 J - S 2013	Q #2 O - D 2013	Q #3 J - M 2014	Q #4 A - J 2014	Q #5 J - S 2014	Q #6 O - D 2014	Q #7 J - M 2015	Q #8 A - J 2015
Contract/ Environmental Review	X							
Reporting		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Staff education and training	X							
Outreach to municipalities/information sessions	X	X						
Establish a schedule with municipalities to be available in the town for clients and GA administrator	X	X	X					
Work with towns to designate meeting space for client meetings	X	X						
Establish how appts and schedules will be managed	X	X						
Begin to meet with clients and GA administrators	X	X						
Have an established schedule with interested municipalities		X	X	X				
Project Completed:				X				

7A) NON-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ONLY
Need for CDBG program funds

- a. **Why are CDBG funds critical for the commencement and ultimate success of the project?**

TOA's experience of the need for support for individuals and families at risk of homelessness or who are already homeless in Cumberland County outside of Portland is great. We have provided support, information, resources and case management to people who are experiencing imminent homelessness or homelessness for the past 6 years. We see firsthand every day the need. We talk with and meet with hundreds of people who are unemployed, under-employed, disabled, elderly, single parents or new to this country who are struggling to be stably housed. Funding availability has been difficult to find.

- b. **Have you, or will you, seek funds from other sources? If so, what are those funding sources?**

We continue to seek out other funding sources and have identified several possibilities at this time. We had hoped that there would be some Federal grant opportunities for this work but have yet to see any this fiscal year.

- c. **What is the impact on the project if CDBG funds are not received or if only partial CDBG funds are received?**

If we do not receive CDBG funds for this project we may need to discontinue providing in-depth work in homeless prevention.

The Opportunity Alliance (TOA) continues to pursue non-CDBG funds for this project. This year we are optimistic we can decrease our request for Cumberland County CDBG funds as the United Way has committed funding. The United Way has committed \$40,000.00 toward this project. TOA will secure a commitment letter prior to July 1, 2014. However, TOA could not continue the program without CDBG program funds. TOA is also working with the City of Portland to determine the City's capacity for funding. Last year, TOA applied and received a planning grant to collect outcome data from our previous homeless prevention work. It is our belief that we will be better poised to attain longer term sustainable funding to support this project in the future once the data and outcomes have been produced.

Type of Funding	Match Amount	Source of Match	How is the match calculated?	Is the match secured? Please circle yes or no.	If yes, please attach relevant documentation. ¹
Cash	Municipal Cash	\$		Yes / No	
	Other Cash	\$	40,000.00	Yes / No	
	Other Cash	\$		Yes / No	
	Other Cash	\$		Yes / No	
In-Kind/ Donation	Municipal In-Kind & Donation	\$		Yes / No	
	Other In-Kind & Donation	\$		Yes / No	
	Other In-Kind & Donation	\$		Yes / No	