

Performance Measures and Narrative Report

Vermont Agency of Human Services Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living Act 186 Pilot Planning Grant

Awardee: Riverflow Community, Inc.
Grant #: 03460-7-2604
Performance Period: October 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

1. Update on the management of grant funding and financial services for Riverflow’s housing project.

During this first reporting period, Riverflow Community identified experienced candidates to provide financial management, grant reporting guidance, and bookkeeping services. Bank accounts were established and initial payments for services were made. Bookkeeping and accounting procedures are in development and are expected to be finalized in the upcoming grant period.

2. Update on suitable housing locations and collaborate with other partners to ensure the project remains within constraints through completion.

In the current reporting period, the Riverflow Community team spent considerable time establishing ideal site characteristics and researching possible locations and specific properties. We are pleased to report that we have identified an ideal 30-acre property, located in Addison County (Monkton) which meets all the criteria for Riverflow Community’s property buildout.

After extensive research of this specific property, we hired an environmental engineer to determine the site’s potential for septic capacity and additional housing construction. We also hired a housing inspector to help the team identify the costs involved in bringing the existing house into compliance with Vermont’s Therapeutic Community Residence regulations, as well as identify the renovations needed to make the house safe, suitable, and supportive of community life. The Riverflow Community team will sign a lease/purchase agreement with the property’s owner in the upcoming grant period.

The Riverflow Community team has communicated our progress on the Monkton property with our lead Designated Agency partner at the Howard Center, as well as our contact at Washington County Mental Health Services (WCMHS). A tour of the site is planned during the next reporting period. We have also established preliminary relationships with individuals at Champlain Housing Trust, Vermont Community Foundation, Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation, Vermont Housing Conservation Board and other local entities that have potential to support Riverflow Community's mission.

3. Update how individuals with developmental disabilities living in the State of Vermont will be able to apply to Riverflow Community.

Our Intentional Community Consultant has been researching relevant admission policies from similar communities and will be working with the team to establish Riverflow Community's admission policy by mid-2024. The Riverflow Community team has also had several discussions on Riverflow Community's intentional, but not exclusive, commitment to serving adults with higher support needs and how best to balance the diversity of needs inherent in that commitment.

4. Update on progress with Howard Center and WCMHS and the planning process to ensure Riverflow is developing its intentional living community in compliance with all federal and Vermont Developmental Disabilities laws and regulations, and the Vermont System of Care Plan.

In addition to our communication on progress-to-date with the Howard Center and WCMHS described above, the Riverflow Community team plans to invite representatives from DAIL's Division of Licensing and Protection to tour the Monkton property in the next reporting period, with the intention of getting their guidance on renovations necessary to meet TCR compliance and on the project's adherence to the Medicaid Settings Rule, Vermont's System of Care Plan, and Vermont Developmental Disabilities laws and regulations. Our intentional community consultant also has extensive experience complying with these various safety and settings regulations, and is guiding our progress in this area.

5. Update on progress creating and establishing relationships with Designated Agencies and Specialized Service Agencies including Franklin and Addison counties.

In addition to our relationship-building progress with the Howard Center and WCMHS during this reporting period as mentioned above, the Riverflow Community will be contacting the Counseling Service of Addison County in order to introduce them to Riverflow Community and to discuss their potential involvement and collaboration with future development of Riverflow Community.

6. Update on progress of Intentional Community Consultant, Hannah Schwartz.

Please see attached invoices, which include a detailed description of Hannah's work for Riverflow Community during this reporting period, including significant progress on board development and training, donor education and cultivation, fundraising guidance for team and board, team cohesion, operational and strategic planning, logo/website design and website content development, as well as critical guidance on discerning Riverflow Community's optimal location and requisite property and residence characteristics.

Hannah has also met with the financial management team to begin fleshing out a comprehensive operations budget for Riverflow Community's first house and has begun work on a 3-5 year capital campaign for Riverflow Community's eventual buildout, with plans to include a minimum of three additional residential houses, a community center and small barn.

7. Update on accountant and the progress of establishing accounting procedures for Riverflow.

In addition to the information provided in answer to question 1 above, the bookkeeper is tracking all invoices and issuing checks as needed, as well as establishing Riverflow Community's bookkeeping system (which will be entirely run on Quickbooks as of next reporting period) and has initiated steps to establish a Riverflow Community brokerage account in order to receive future donations and securities contributions.

8. Update on administration expenses.

Administrative expenses for this period include charges for two site visits by an environmental engineer to determine feasibility of the Monkton property for Riverflow Community's buildout, with particular emphasis on testing for septic capacity. Also included in administrative expenses is the property's inspection visit and report, including an outline of necessary renovations in the future. Administrative expenses also include Riverflow's work with a local design firm which is guiding us on logo design, website development, domain name, and various branding needs, including letterhead etc. As mentioned above, we have also hired a financial manager who is overseeing the development of our financial tracking system and have consulted with a grant administrator for guidance on grant reporting.

Finally, while much of the legal work required for Riverflow Community was contributed pro bono by Jim Caffry, the time that exceeded his pro bono contribution toward this application has been invoiced as an administrative expense.

9. Update and progress on hiring an individual who has firsthand lived experience. Update on how the individual has provided valuable insights and guidance during the development process, ensuring that the housing project meets the highest standards and fulfills the needs of the community.

The Riverflow Community team has begun discussion of how best to gather input from individuals with developmental disabilities, especially how to meet the challenge of hearing from those adults who have limited ability to express their needs and wants verbally. We anticipate moving forward with this task during the next two quarters.