

FRCoC Application for Funding Unsheltered Homelessness Initiative

Application Information

Applicant

Legal Name: Micah Ecumenical Ministries
EIN/TIN: 20-4044884
Address: 1013 Princess Anne St.

Application Contact

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Narrative Responses

Provide a description that addresses the entire scope of the proposed project. (Character Limit: 3,000)

Micah's street outreach efforts are a close compliment to its rapid re-housing program. It's one staff member doubles as manager of the hospitality center, where most people on the street visit on a daily basis. In addition to supporting teams of volunteers in addressing the immediate needs of those on the street, this position is primarily focused on engaging and supporting the highest barrier, most vulnerable individuals on the street in implementing a housing plan. People are identified for this wrap-around support based on VI-SPDAT score logged at the time of their "day center" enrollment or obtained through targeted outreach in places not meant for habitation in the community. Staff, including a PATH outreach worker, referral is also considered for those who have trouble navigating the system as designed or have a VI-SPDAT score that does not tell the whole story. Once enrolled in the street case management program, participants show up on a community prioritization list, where they can be assigned for housing placement. The street outreach case manager, called the Hospitality Coordinator, works intensively with around 25 people at a time and provides peripheral support to others accessing the day center. Generally, people who enroll in street case management will have been outdoors or precariously housed for an extended amount of time or are considered highly vulnerable. While most people are identified on a monthly basis, referrals to street case management can happen at any time. Once enrolled, the hospitality coordinator completes documentation of chronic homelessness (if applicable) and begins to identify the best housing intervention. This could include supporting a self-resolution, referrals to prevention, connection with veterans programs or prioritization through the CoC's community rapid re-housing process. This position also begins to establish goals with individuals and connect them to the supports they will need to eventually sustain housing (i.e. income, health care, identification, etc). As necessary, the hospitality coordinator will transport people to appointments, set up needed services in the community or problem-solve various life issues. The hospitality coordinator supports the housing team in their efforts to identify and secure sustainable housing, then turns over the case to a housing case manager once they are housed.

Because the street case management program sits at the center of Micah's wrap-around support system, program participants have instant access to a wide range of community resources. This includes a full-time PATH outreach worker, a full-time Goodwill employment specialist and a wide variety of rotating community partners (i.e. a DSS eligibility worker, veteran's administration representative, DMV, etc) that operates from Micah's main office. The hospitality coordinator generally walks program participants through the process of connecting to community resources either through a warm hand off or direct connection vs. handing out referral lists and phone numbers.

Certify that the project will adhere to the *FRCoC Coordinated Entry Policies & Procedures*, including the following requirements of the document:

- X Follow the Housing First model
- Participate in the FRCoC Coordinated Entry Process and/or the Victim Service Coordinated Entry Process (including coordinated assessment for shelter/prevention and prioritization for rapid re-housing)
- X Adhere to established project standards (including *FRCoC Rapid Re-Housing Policies & Procedures*)
- X Collect data through HMIS or a comparable database

What systems are in place to ensure that households experiencing homelessness are moved quickly to permanent housing and remain stably housed? (Character Limit: 3,000)

A significant number of the 700 people who access Micah's services in a given year are only on the street for short periods before they either get into shelter or otherwise resolve. Therefore, Micah focuses its housing and street case management efforts primarily on those who remain homeless for some time or demonstrate an urgent level of vulnerability. These individuals are identified in monthly meetings between Micah's housing, mental health outreach and street case management team. They are then set up with a Hospitality Coordinator who begins working intensively on their housing stabilization. Once enrolled in the street case management program, the individual goes onto the community's prioritization list where they are ranked based on vulnerability. Once assigned, they are generally referred to the housing locator within a week's time and housing is identified as quickly as possible. Once housed, case managers are prepared to offer wrap around support services, conduct home visits at a frequency deemed necessary by the client's needs and offer whatever support is necessary to connect program participants to the services that will help them remain stably housed.

Describe specifically how participants will be assisted both to increase their employment and/or income and to maximize their ability to live independently. (RRH/Prevention Only, Character Limit: 3,000)

Micah operates a holistic income development program, called Step Forward, alongside each of its programs. Step Forward supports those staying at respite, in Micah's housing program or accessing street outreach in overcoming barriers to employment and accessing public benefits

that provide a sustainable income. The program offers both technical support and intensive case management. A job help center operated by Rappahannock Goodwill is available next door to the Micah Hospitality Center for anyone in the community who needs a job, including those whose lack of employment has caused them to need homeless assistance from Micah's other programs. Those identified with significant barriers may access one-on-one assistance, up to and including placement in the mainstream market, job coaching and application for public benefits. At the basic level, staff supports guests by answering questions, making general service referrals, offering job leads, helping on the computer and even supporting them to complete their own applications for public entitlements, such as disability or veteran's benefits. People qualify for more comprehensive services when they are assessed to have more significant needs. At this level, staff reviews a participant's interests, skills and abilities related to obtaining and maintaining an income and work with them to identify the best path to achieving it. Once a plan is in place, staff directly connects the participant to related supports, such as helping them register for GED or higher education, engaging in trial work experiences, placing them in a job with a partner employer, coordinating transportation to and from work, or hand-carrying a disability application through the social security system. Once employed, program staff supports both employer and employee for 90 to 180 days to make sure the hire is sustainable. If public benefits are obtained, staff will work with the participant to access incentives, such as ticket-to-work or the agency on aging job program, which can then supplement their fixed income. Step Forward is managed by a full-time income navigator, who supports the development of individual income plans and administers the SSI/SSDI application process for eligible participants. She supports Goodwill in operating the on-site job help center and supervises a full-time employment specialist. The employment specialist is a Goodwill employee who handles much of the technical support, soft skills training and supportive employment activities. Step Forward staff also work alongside other program managers who provide trial work opportunities in the day center, furniture bank and the newly launched cafe. The cafe not only provides opportunities for all people to share a common table and pay what they can, the kitchen is a job-training program for those seeking to work in food service. The program is funded entirely by local resources.

How will the project leverage mainstream resources? Provide project and community level examples.
(Character Limit: 3,000)

All of Micah's programs are heavily-rooted in a wrap-around support system, which depends on co-locating key community services in the spaces most convenient and comfortable to those needing assistance. This means offering space for community services to be provided directly from the day center at 1013 Princess Anne St., encouraging home visits of any resource that is willing and encouraging direct connection within our shelters. Examples of how these mainstream resources have been incorporated into our daily operations include:

- RACSB's mental health outreach worker (PATH) who works full-time from the day center. They also provide partial funding for the Micah staff person who completes disability applications using the SOAR method.
- Our partnership with Rappahannock Goodwill Industries, which operates an on-site job help center and provides a full-time employment specialist to our team.
- Department of Social Services sends an eligibility worker three days each week to enroll people in food stamps and Medicaid

- The Veteran's Administration comes weekly to connect eligible veterans with homeless assistance and VA benefits.
- Moss Free Clinic maintains a partnership that allows our onsite volunteers to complete eligibility applications for clinic enrollment.
- Germanna's nursing students come with a local doctor twice a month to conduct wellness screenings in the Community Café.
- Virginia Cares offers ex-offender support from the café on a weekly basis.
- The Lion's club conducts monthly on site vision and hearing screenings.
- DMV brings a mobile van every other month to support people needing identification.

How will the project leverage partnerships within the homelessness response system to limit duplication? (Character Limit: 3,000)

All those entering street case management are screened by the community's coordinated assessment. This may happen at the time of their first encounter with Micah, but at a minimum prior to their enrollment in street case management. Once in street case management, they are evaluated for vulnerability, chronic homelessness and other programs for which they may qualify. Cases are not assigned to the housing program until they have been discussed at the community prioritization meeting, which involves all other partners in the local system. It is determined at those meetings which agency is best suited to work with the individual and what supports will be needed.

How will this project ensure that it does not screen people out based on severity of needs and vulnerabilities (including having too little or little income; active or history of substance abuse; having a criminal record with exceptions for state-mandated restrictions; history of domestic violence)? (Character Limit: 3,000)

The more barriers a person faces, the more likely Micah's program is to take them on. Vulnerability and time homeless, for example, is actually a pre-qualifier for who is identified for street case management. Once people enter Micah's street case management program, they are triaged based on VI-SPDAT score, community prioritization and identified needs. This can mean coordination with veteran specific programs or problem solve so that a person may relocate or be reunited with family and friends who will take them in. The higher the vulnerability and severity of needs, the more likely the person is to be assigned to a housing case manager. Income, substance usage and mental health are often primary challenges of those being housed by Micah. How and when these issues are addressed is a voluntary part of the program. However, the effects of unaddressed substance abuse, mental health or income deficits can have natural consequences if they result in tenancy issues such as unpaid rent, property damage or neighborhood disturbances. To the extent they are willing, those struggling with addiction and mental health are often given great support in problem solving and connecting to resources before natural consequences occur. Even then, staff will go to great lengths to support the individual in avoiding eviction, making other arrangements, or being re-housed again if necessary. Micah's programs often come in and out of people's lives as they face cycles of housing crisis. People remain open to Micah's services no matter how well they do in any of our programs or how many times they cycle through.

How will the project ensure that participants are not terminated from the project for the following reasons: failure to participate in supportive services; failure to make progress on a service plan; loss of income or failure to improve income; being a victim of domestic violence; any other activity not covered in a lease agreement typically found in the project's geographic area. (Character Limit: 3,000)

Micah understands that, in many cases, the services it provides are a last and only resort. Staff is, therefore, committed to trying all strategies possible before exiting people from a program. All of our supports are voluntary and people utilize the resources we make available to varying degrees. Some are successful at sustainability using a minimum number of supports. Others are significantly impacted by minimal engagement. Our philosophy tends to be offering as many different wrap-around supports as we can come up with and using various methods to engage the person. While the burden of engagement responsibility is on the case manager, the program participant may eventually face natural consequences if they do not participate in what is offered and have not been able to make progress with their own devices. Progress and success, however, are defined very loosely and on an individual basis. In the rare case of termination, we seek alternative arrangements that will reset the course and get them back on track toward sustainability. Although we may give someone a break from our programs for short periods, we do not maintain a "do not admit" list and we often welcome people to return multiple times during their journey back from brokenness. This can mean re-housing people multiple times or bringing them back into shelter, even after a negative exit.

Describe how the project is meeting the requirement of reducing barriers to homeless services programs and the specific barriers that have been reduced. Additionally, describe in detail how the project will meet the Prohibition Against Involuntary Family Separation and Equal Access and Prohibited Inquiries requirements. (Character Limit: 3,000)

All of Micah's programs have been historically low barrier. For example, the program does not breathalyze, drug test or have other limitations that prevent people from entering. The program prefers higher barriers and more vulnerabilities. Although the program does not serve families, it is prepared to address the Equal Access and Prohibited Inquiries Rule when it comes to transgender individuals who may require gender specific arrangements. This could include allowing the person to consider a housing match with a person of their preferred gender. Unless the information is offered by the program participant, sexual orientation is not a question that is asked as part of the eligibility process for any of Micah's programs.

Provide a description of project staff capacity to include experience and training. If any staff dedicated to the project are also dedicated to other projects, explain the breakdown of hours by project. (Character Limit: 3,000)

The Hospitality Coordinator will have a bachelor's degree and experience working with vulnerable populations. She is supervised by the Executive Director and works closely with a four-person housing team. As her work with those on the street is not as intense as housing case management, she is able to manage about 25 people at a time. As situations change frequently in her role and the goal is handing those in street case management off to housing as quickly as possible, she is typically able to exit people within 90 days. Funding from the unsheltered homelessness grant will allow this position to be dedicated to issues facing unsheltered homeless, as opposed to sharing a lot of different responsibilities from a number of different programs.

Provide evidence of organizational capacity to include governance, leadership, experience, and financial management. (Character Limit: 3,000)

Micah was founded in 2005 by a group of churches whose history with the homeless population extends back to the 1980s. It is governed by a twelve-member board of directors, comprised of appointees of each of the nine founding churches. It has a full-time staff of 15, four part-time and three seasonal for cold weather shelter purposes. Finances are managed by a fulltime bookkeeper/administrative position and supported by an Executive Director. Between these two positions, checks are cut on an at least weekly basis, remittances are submitted for grant reimbursement monthly and quarterly reports are compiled as requested. Financial and risk management policies govern financial practices.

Describe past experience administering a Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) project and/or working with the unsheltered homelessness population. (Character Limit: 3,000)

Micah exists largely because, at one time, there was no other provider working with the street homeless population. Its ministries, therefore, have been designed and evolved around the unique needs of those who are not eligible or struggle to succeed in other homeless service programs. Our work has included distribution of tents and sleeping bags, campsite clean-up, targeted outreach of people in places not meant for human habitation, among other low-barrier services. Our housing program has existed in an official capacity since at least 2010. In that time, its targeted efforts for housing and supporting the most vulnerable has resulted in an 84% decline in community chronic homelessness as well as significant changes in the population actively living on the street.

Are there any unresolved monitoring or audit findings for any grants operated by the applicant or potential subrecipients? If yes, please explain. (Character Limit: 1,000)

Yes No

Attachments (each project)

Project Policies & Procedures
Project Job Descriptions (must be housing-focused)

Attachments (once per agency)

Spending Plan
Organizational Certifications and Assurances
Board of Director Listing(s)
Org Chart
990 (if applicable)
Profit and Loss Statement (prior year and most recent YTD)