

UNITED WAY OF GREATER CLEVELAND

RIGHT TO COUNSEL – CLEVELAND EVALUATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS



SUMMARY

Every year 9,000 – 10,000 evictions are filed in the Cleveland Housing Court. Only 1 – 2% of tenants facing eviction are represented by an attorney. With recently passed right to counsel legislation, as of July 1, 2020, legal representation in eviction cases will be a right for Cleveland renters with at least one minor child in the household living at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. To implement the right to counsel legislation, United Way of Greater Cleveland (United Way) and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland (Legal Aid) will be providing legal representation to covered individuals through the Right to Counsel – Cleveland (RTC-C) program.

United Way will oversee the administration of contracts with Designated Organization(s), primarily Legal Aid, and be responsible for all operations, outcome measurement, providing backbone support, and engaging the RTC-C's Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee, led by United Way, will support the implementation of right to counsel in Cleveland. This body will consist of representatives from the public and private sectors including philanthropy, local government, nonprofits, etc.

United Way is accepting proposals from firms or individual(s) to conduct an evaluation of RTC-C. United Way is interested in measuring and analyzing quantitative as well as qualitative housing outcomes, housing stability, and the subsequent well-being of tenants who receive legal representation in eviction proceedings compared to tenants who do not receive legal representation. Because evictions disproportionately impact black and brown families, especially African American women, single headed households with children, United Way is looking for a firm or individual(s) with a demonstrated ability to work within marginalized communities and all deliverables are expected to be framed through this lens.

The selected firm or individual(s) will work with United Way and Designated Organization(s) to provide technical assistance, to implement recommendations for increased efficiency and effectiveness for RTC-C, over a three (3) year period and to study and evaluate its effectiveness in:

- Preventing evictions;
- Lessening the impact of evictions;
- Preventing the need for other interventions and support;

- Return on investment;
- Financial impact of providing right to counsel; and
- Opportunities for increased program efficiency.



UNITED WAY AND LEGAL AID STAFF ROLES

Feedback and flexibility on deliverables, the approach to the evaluation, among other areas are anticipated in a team-oriented evaluation. RTC-C is a unique model that requires consistent collaboration between community-based nonprofit organizations. The firm or individual(s) should welcome intentional participation from United Way and Legal Aid staff.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Maximum proposal length, including title page, cover letter, proposal, qualifications, and budget, should not exceed 12 pages, although shorter proposals are welcome. Please use fonts no smaller than 12 point. A lens of race, diversity, equity, and inclusion is critical to successful evaluative work for RTC-C.

Proposals should address the following:

- Individual or Firm Profile
 - Names, qualifications, education, and experience of person(s) assigned to the project
 - Individual/firm experience and types of clients and projects
 - If the individual/firm anticipates engaging any other vendor(s) to assist with any portion of the planning or evaluation process, please describe in detail.
- Process
 - Description of the process the individual/firm proposes to use for this project
 - How collaboration with other researcher projects in Cleveland (e.g. Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition) will inform the final product(s)
 - At least one example deliverable (e.g. final report, white paper, dashboard, etc.) provided to a previous client, preferably on a similar project.
- Experience
 - Description of relevant evaluation experience, especially with non-profit organizations that work with low-income communities
 - Description of comparable work done by you or by others which can serve as models for the project
 - Names and contact information for three (3) references, preferably other legal aid, United Way, housing stability, or nonprofit organizations.
- Timeline
 - A proposed three (3) year timeline with identified benchmarks and deliverables.
- Product
 - A description of the product(s) United Way will have at the end of the process.

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUNDS



United Way of Greater Cleveland

United Way was founded in 1913 as the Cleveland Federation for Charity and Philanthropy and quickly became the national model for volunteer-driven community philanthropy. The goals of this unique philanthropic effort were to simplify community fundraising for health and human service needs, reach out to more than just Cleveland’s wealthiest citizens, and ensure that donations were invested in worthy, reputable institutions.

Although it has operated under different names over the years, United Way of Greater Cleveland continues the commitment to provide a safety net for vulnerable individuals and families in Cuyahoga, Geauga, and Medina counties by building a network of community organizations, funders, policymakers, and citizens.

United Way invests in the community through two unique arms, the Community Hub for Basic Needs (the Hub) and the Impact Institute (the Institute). United Way’s investments in the Hub are focused in four “hub” areas to help alleviate the effects of poverty: basic needs, education, health, and financial stability.

The Institute, a think tank with an action plan, focuses on root causes of poverty to develop and implement solutions in three key areas: Housing Stability, Thriving Families, and the Social Determinants of Health. United Way’s work with RTC-C falls under the Housing Stability Impact Institute.

After 105 years, United Way focuses its total investments on poverty reduction strategies and solutions. Cleveland has a history rooted in innovation and United Way believes this legacy can continue by investing and evaluating unique solutions to the city’s historic challenges.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

Legal Aid’s mission is to *secure justice and resolve fundamental problems for those who are low-income and vulnerable by providing high quality legal services and working for systemic solutions.*

Founded in 1905, Legal Aid impacted more than 18,000 people last year through 7,700 cases by providing high-quality legal services in areas of law that affect safety, health, housing, economic security, education and employment. Legal Aid’s services are provided at **no cost** to low-income clients, helping ensure fairness for all in the justice system – regardless of how much money a person has.

Legal Aid employs 52 staff attorneys and 87 total staff and engages 3,000 volunteer lawyers.

Legal Aid serves Cuyahoga, Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain county residents with incomes at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines. Clients come from a wide variety of ethnic and age groups and live in urban, suburban, and rural areas. They are the working poor, veterans, homeowners and renters, families with children, people with disabilities, and the elderly. In the past year:

- 83% of households served made less than \$25,000 a year
- 70% of clients were women
- 76% of clients lived in Cuyahoga County
- 21% of clients were older adults
- 531 clients were U.S. Veterans

Legal Aid fosters fairness, empowers individuals, and eliminates many of the barriers that block low-income families from escaping poverty. On any given day, Legal Aid attorneys represent clients in court and administrative hearings; provide brief advice through one-on-one consultations or at neighborhood legal clinics; present legal education and other outreach; and advocate for improved policies that affect low-income populations. Thanks to the support of the community, all clients receive services at no cost. Legal Aid's work is guided by its strategic plan's four areas of focus:

- **Improving Safety and Health**
Legal Aid secures safety for victims of domestic violence and other crimes, increases access to health care, and improves the health and safety of homes and neighborhoods.
- **Promoting Education and Economic Stability**
Legal Aid improves clients' economic security by ensuring access to employment, public benefits, and other income. Legal Aid helps provide access to quality education, which is a route out of poverty.
- **Securing Decent, Affordable Housing**
Legal Aid increases the availability and accessibility of affordable housing, improves housing stability, and improves housing conditions.
- **Ensuring the Courts and Government are Accountable and Accessible**
Legal Aid increases meaningful access to courts and government agencies for specific vulnerable populations, including people with limited English proficiency.

Legal Aid understands that clients often face issues with mental health, substance abuse, medical problems, transportation, or utilities that can undermine the benefits of legal representation. To help clients get the most out of our legal assistance, we combine legal expertise with skilled social work. Legal Aid social workers partner with many community service agencies, resulting in mutual referrals. This means clients get the holistic support they need to be stable.

Legal Aid's activities include:

- **Legal Assistance**

Legal Aid advises and represents clients in administrative hearings, negotiations, and litigation in consumer rights, disability, domestic violence, education, tax, employment, family law, health, housing, foreclosure, immigration, public benefits, and utilities. Legal Aid will partner with other service providers to ensure that the outcomes achieved through legal representation have a long-lasting impact on families.

- **Community Education and Outreach**

Legal Aid attorneys are engaged in the community through proactive, preventative neighborhood-based work, providing people with the tools they need to handle, avoid, or resolve legal problems on their own, as well as to know when to contact Legal Aid or another service provider for assistance.

- **Advocacy**

Legal Aid works to address underlying societal inequities by advocating for changes in local, state, and national policies and regulations. In addition, Legal Aid attorneys play leadership roles in statewide and national policy groups and participate in community coalitions and partnerships to improve shelter, safety, and economic security for low-income individuals, families, and communities.

DELIVERABLES

By June 30, 2020, the firm or individual(s) will develop and share with United Way a package of outcomes and metrics the Designated Partner(s) will be required to track and share with the firm or individual(s) and United Way as part of the 3-year evaluative process.

The following deliverables should be provided to United Way in the form of a full report, executive summary, and deployable white papers or dashboards for ease of use by United Way and Legal Aid field staff.

After the first and second years of the program, deliverable due by August 31, 2021 and 2022, the firm or individual(s) will provide United Way with interim evaluations that address the following:

- An evaluation of challenges and successes in implementation to inform efforts to change and improve the services delivered. This should include personal stories and qualitative information directly from client's; and
- Significant findings based on identified outcomes.

At the conclusion of a three (3) year period, deliverable due by August 31, 2023, the firm or individual(s) will provide United Way with a final evaluation addressing the following:

- An analysis of the data and key research findings;
- Significant outcomes of the eviction work, including a cost-benefits analysis/return on investment;
- Recommendations for on-going outcomes and metrics; and
- An evaluation of challenges in implementation to inform efforts to change and improve the services delivered;
- Three – five client narratives regarding successes and challenges of RTC-C.

TIMELINE

1. Proposals are due by midnight on Tuesday, March 31, 2020
2. Proposals will be evaluated, and finalists selected.
3. United Way and Designated Partner(s) will interview finalists with an anticipated selection by
4. The project will begin in June 1, 2020 and conclude by August 31, 2023.

BUDGET

If you are proposing an hourly rate contract, please provide the hourly rate, proposed total for the project, and any variables influencing total costs. If proposing a flat fee contract, please provide the proposed fee for the project and any variables that may impact the fee.

Total costs for RTC-C 3-year evaluation may not exceed \$500,000

INQUIRIES

Please direct questions regarding the RFP and submission to:

Andrew Katusin, Director of Basic Needs
United Way of Greater Cleveland
1331 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115
216-436-2219; akatusin@unitedwaycleveland.org (preferred)