

**12258**

**Robert P. Astorino**  
County Executive

**Department of Social Services**

**Kevin P. Mahon**  
Commissioner

**Date:** June 14, 2010

**To:** Honorable Members of the Board of Acquisition & Contract

**From:** Kevin P. Mahon  
Commissioner

**Re:** Authority for the County of Westchester to enter into a Contract with Congregations Linked in Urban Strategy to Effect Renewal, Inc. (CLUSTER) whereby CLUSTER will provide homelessness prevention and eviction intervention assistance and other related mediation services between tenants and landlords at the Yonkers and Mount Vernon District Offices of DSS for the period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 in an amount not to exceed \$375,440 to be paid monthly pursuant to an approved budget and subject to appropriation.

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Authorization is requested for the County of Westchester to enter into a Contract with the Congregations Linked in Urban Strategy to Effect Renewal, Inc. (CLUSTER), whereby CLUSTER will provide homelessness prevention and eviction intervention assistance and other related mediation services between tenants and landlords at the Yonkers and Mount Vernon District Offices of DSS for the period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 in an amount not to exceed \$375,440 to be paid monthly pursuant to an approved budget and subject to appropriation.

A Request For Proposals (“RFP”) was issued on March 26, 2010. The County received a total of eleven responses to the RFP by the April 16, 2010 proposal due date. An evaluation committee was formed to review the proposals submitted in response to the RFP. The committee reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the agencies that responded to determine if they were qualified to administer and manage this program. Proposals were evaluated on both technical and financial criteria, including but not limited to, qualifications and experience, technical knowledge, implementation methodology, soundness of the proposed program, program design and familiarity with

eviction prevention services. CLUSTER submitted two proposals for services through their Westchester Mediation Center and their Housing Resource Center. The Department determined that CLUSTER ranked the highest using a specified evaluation criteria scoring 289 out of a possible 300 points for the former (Westchester Mediation) and 284 out of a possible 300 points for the latter (Housing Resource Center).

Congregations Linked in Urban Strategy to Effect Renewal, Inc. has a longstanding relationship with the Mount Vernon and Yonkers communities. They have served the community for thirty-five years. Since 1989, this agency has been providing eviction prevention and other services to the County. In the past, the agency's programs have been successful in meeting the County's desired objectives. CLUSTER provides a broad range of Dispute Resolution Services other than eviction prevention, that may address other family issues.

The services provided pursuant to this contract serve a **public purpose** by ensuring adequate protection for those people who are in danger of becoming homeless as a result of eviction or those in imminent danger of losing their homes.

**The goals and objectives of** this agreement are as follows:

- Perform intervention to maintain existing housing arrangements
- Secure suitable replacement permanent housing, if necessary
- Provide a Telephone Housing Counseling Hotline
- Perform a risk assessment and service plan for each family
- Conduct Credit/Money Management counseling and workshops
- Provide linkages to other fiscal resources available in the community
- Assist customers in completing applications for Section 8 vouchers and public housing
- Advocate on the customer's behalf in housing courts to resolve conflicts to lease disputes, rent arrears, code violations, eviction proceedings, rent overcharges, rent increases and recovery of security deposits

**The goals and objectives are in the best interest of the County in terms of health and safety.** Individuals will benefit from living in apartments that provide stable, safe places in which to reside. Children especially will benefit from avoiding or leaving the trauma of a displaced shelter life. The foundation of a private apartment will also help to nourish family life and thus make it more likely that families may successfully move toward or maintain self-sufficiency and better lives in general. The provision of these services at the Yonkers and Mount Vernon district offices will also result in enhanced stability for families as well as provide access to otherwise often unavailable resources which, in turn, will improve the lives of multiple generations.

**The goals and objectives are in the best interest of the County in terms of fiscal responsibility** as they help in reducing the financial burden of the taxpayers in caring for and supporting the homeless population in the County, as this program is aimed at prevention and intervention in matters that lead to eviction and homelessness. **Without this program,** Westchester County could possibly end up housing this population in homeless shelters at a cost of \$100 daily/\$3,000 monthly for homeless

families and individuals and could possibly incur additional expenses in the form of legal fees to settle housing evictions and landlord/tenant disputes.

**The goals and objectives will be monitored** using the performance measurement indicators developed by the Department and approved by the County Budget Office. Monthly performance reports and narratives will also be submitted to the Department. These reports detail the accomplishments relative to the contract's objectives. There are also phone contacts with the vendor regarding any issues that may arise. The Department has determined that newly designed outcomes best measure the effectiveness of the program. Tracked outcomes will include the following:

- Number of interventions performed to maintain existing housing
- Number of replacement permanent housing secured
- Number of risk assessments and service plans prepared and signed by customers
- Number of linkages to other fiscal resources in the community
- Number of credit/money management workshops conducted
- Number of contact for Telephone Housing Counseling Hotline

The vendor provided the above said services under an existing contract extended through June 30, 2010 and given below are the results/outcomes for the period from 1/1/10 through 5/31/10:

Westchester Mediation Center

- Maintained Existing Housing 86
- Number of Customers Served 665
- Number of Issues Resolved 127
- Number of Shelter Placements 0

Housing Resource Center

- Maintained Existing Housing 19
- Number of Customers Served 46
- Number of Issues Resolved 29
- Number of Shelter Placements 0

Accordingly, the County of Westchester, acting by and through its Department of Social Services, is requesting authorization from your Honorable Board to enter into a contract with the Congregations Linked in Urban Strategy to Effect Renewal, Inc. (CLUSTER) to provide the aforesaid services.

A resolution requesting the same is attached for your Honorable Board's approval.

## RESOLUTION

Upon a communication from the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, be it hereby:

**RESOLVED**, that the County of Westchester, acting by and through its Department of Social Services, is hereby authorized to enter into a contract with the Congregations Linked in Urban Strategy to Effect Renewal, Inc. (CLUSTER) whereby CLUSTER will provide homelessness prevention and eviction intervention assistance and other related mediation services between tenants and landlords at the Yonkers and Mt. Vernon District Offices of DSS for the period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 for an amount not to exceed \$375,440 to be paid monthly pursuant to an approved budget ("the Agreement"); and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that this contract is subject to County Appropriation; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that this Agreement is also subject to further financial analysis of the impact of any New York State Budget (the "State Budget") proposed and adopted during the term of this Agreement. The county shall retain the right, upon the occurrence of any release by the Governor of a proposed State Budget and/or the adoption of a State Budget or any amendments thereto, and for a reasonable period of time after such release(s) or adoption(s), to conduct an analysis of the impacts of any such State Budget on County finances. After such analysis, the County shall retain the right to either terminate this Agreement or to renegotiate the amounts and rates approved herein. If the County subsequently offers to pay a reduced amount to the Contractor, then the Contractor shall have the right to terminate this Agreement upon reasonable prior written notice; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the County Executive or his duly authorized designee is hereby authorized to execute any documents and take any actions reasonably necessary and appropriate to effectuate the purposes of this Resolution.

Account to be  
Charged/Credited

	Fund	Dept	Major Program, Program & Phase Or Unit	Object/ Sub-Object	Trust Account	Dollars
2010	101	22	8900	5960	_____	\$187,720
2011	101	22	8900	5960		\$187,720

Budget Funding Year(s): 2010-2011      Start Date: 7/1/10      End Date: 6/30/11  
(must match resolution)

Funding Source

**\$375,440**  
(must match resolution)

Tax Dollars: 41%

State Aid: 36%

Federal Aid: 23%

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 7-1-2010 - JOMARY VIEIRA, SECRETARY