



Robert P. Astorino  
County Executive

Department of Social Services

Kevin McGuire  
Commissioner

Philippe Gille  
First Deputy Commissioner

**46162**

**Date:** March 19, 2015

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

**From:** Kevin McGuire  
Commissioner, Department of Social Services

**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 the Department of Social Services (“DSS”) for the period July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016 in an amount not to exceed \$375,440 to be paid in monthly installments 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 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, 2015 through June 30, 2016 in an amount not to exceed \$375,440 to be paid in monthly installments pursuant to an approved budget and subject to appropriation.

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 almost thirty-eight 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. In addition to

eviction prevention, CLUSTER provides a broad range of Dispute Resolution Services that address 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 are stable, safe places in which to reside. Children especially will benefit as the result of avoiding the trauma of a displaced shelter life. The foundation and stability 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 stability for families. These services will also 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 involve the provision of services which aid in the prevention of homelessness. This, in turn, reduces the taxpayer's participation in caring for and supporting the homeless population in the County.

**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. Based on documented contract performance from July, 2014 through January, 2015, the Department is able to report the following statistics for the Westchester Mediation Center and the Housing Resource Center:

- Maintained Existing Housing 222
- Number of Customers Served 1,131
- Number of Issues Resolved 259
- Number of Shelter Placements 1

This agreement is exempt from the requirements of the Westchester County Procurement Policy, pursuant to Section 3(a) (xiv) thereof, which exempts “any procurement for the purpose of entering into a contract or contracts with not-for-profit organizations for the purposes of providing aid, care and support to persons in need of public assistance.” This contract is exempt from the application of the Common Grant Rule as the program falls under the category of Social Service Block Grant.

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.

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 05/20/2015 JONNY VILERA SECRETARY

## 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, 2015 through June 30, 2016 for an amount not to exceed \$375,440 to be paid in monthly installments 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
2015	101	22	8900	5960	-----	\$187,720
2016	101	22	8900	5960	-----	\$187,720

Budget Funding Year(s): 2015-2016 Start Date: 07/01/15 End Date: 06/30/16  
(must match resolution)

Funding Source

**\$375,440**

(must match resolution)

Tax Dollars: 86%

State Aid: 0%

Federal Aid: 14%

Other:

APPROVED BOARD OF ACQUISITION & CONTRACT - 05/27/2015 - JOMAR VIEIRA, SECRETARY