

SMOC

South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Inc.

Organizing Resources for Social Change

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February 6, 2003

Darcy C. Bens, Contract Manager
Department of Correction
50 Maple Street, Suite 3
Milford, MA 01757

Dear Ms. Bens:

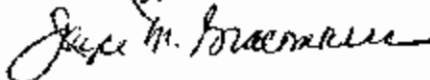
The South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Inc. (SMOC) is pleased to submit a proposal in response to Department of Correction's RFR titled Housing Placement Services for Massachusetts Prison Population (RFR# 03-Housing-M03).

SMOC has a demonstrated commitment of providing services for high risk groups, including offenders, homeless men, women and families, DSS involved families, DMH clients, substance abusers, dually diagnosed clients, and single parents and young mothers. We already serve the reentry population at so many different points within our own continuum and we recognize the value and preference for a system-wide reentry partnership where collaboration is essential between state and county criminal justice agencies, social/human service agencies and community support organizations.

With DOC funding, SMOC will develop and operate a statewide housing search system in Massachusetts that piggybacks onto our current housing search model while taking advantage of existing statewide criminal justice services. SMOC proposes the establishment of six housing search regions and plans to partner with Homestart, Inc. as a subcontractor to provide services in Boston.

We are extremely excited about the opportunity to be part of this exciting new DOC venture to focus on the reentry needs of female offenders statewide. If you have any questions about this proposal please contact Jeff Handler, Deputy Division Director of Community Development, at 508-620-2303. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Joyce Giacomarra
Chief Financial Officer

I. Contractor Profile

Agency Mission and Philosophy

South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) is seeking Massachusetts Department of Corrections (DOC) funding to provide housing placement services for Massachusetts prison population, herein referred to as **the Mobile Housing Reentry Program (MHRP)**. SMOC has a demonstrated, long history and commitment to providing housing services for high-risk groups including offenders, homeless men, women and families, DSS involved families, DMH clients, the elderly, substance abusers, dually diagnosed clients, children, single parents and young mothers. SMOC has the capacity and the experience to provide **comprehensive, statewide housing search reentry services to serious, violent offenders** as part of a broader **continuum of care model**, which has as its ultimate goal, **economic self-sufficiency**.

SMOC proposes the creation of a statewide, mobile housing search model with housing search staff **geographically located within each of the six CRC regions**. These housing search resources will complement SMOC's already existing housing search model, adding new resources in some regions and augmenting an existing housing search delivery system in others. In addition, this new program will take advantage of SMOC's expanding housing inventory. Regardless of an offender's point of origin, all reentry offenders will have access to a statewide housing placement and continuum of care system that incorporates a complex array of SMOC and non-SMOC services. SMOC will subcontract the Boston housing search position to Homestart, Inc. *(See Memorandum of Understanding between SMOC and Homestart)*

SMOC is a community-based private, non-profit corporation that operates a vast network of programs and services targeted to low income households. These programs include *housing and shelter programs, mental health and substance abuse services, child care and preschool education, adult education, employment and skills training, community services, nutrition, crisis intervention, energy and financial assistance, and an enormous housing search and placement system.*

SMOC's mission is threefold:

- (1) to organize, represent and advocate for low-income people in order to address and eliminate the causes of poverty;
- (2) to provide direct services to low-income people which are designed to promote social and economic self-sufficiency, and
- (3) to foster community growth and stability through housing and economic learning so that clients are empowered to advocate for themselves and to improve the quality of their lives. SMOC guarantees high quality, accessible, individualized, culturally appropriate services to any individual regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, religion, physical handicap, sexual orientation or ability to pay. *(See SMOC Brochure & 2002 Annual Report)*

SMOC is committed to a comprehensive, holistic approach to assisting high-risk individuals achieve social and economic self-sufficiency. We utilize a *multi-disciplinary team approach* where service providers consult and work together to provide a concerted menu of services. This model has been successfully implemented statewide.

A. Demonstrated Experience in the Field of Housing and Loan Administration

1. Housing Experience

Housing Search Experience

SMOC's experience in the field of housing and housing search is extensive and spans many decades. SMOC currently funds dozens of housing search specialists throughout the Commonwealth who serve a wide variety of populations including serious and violent offenders.

Mobile Resource Team (MRT): SMOC's Mobile Resource Team oversees a statewide employment and housing search program funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in which teams of housing and employment search staff do "in-reach" at shelters and transitional housing to provide direct services to homeless men and women. (See 2000 HUD "Best Practices" Award Letter). Staff is required to provide up to 6-months of stabilization for all clients in the program. Each region has developed a comprehensive, external community referral system that has been effective at delivering a comprehensive array of community programming. More importantly, each region maintains an active list of landlords over and above what SMOC housing stock may exist in the region.

MRT currently has staff positioned in Cape Cod and the South Shore, Framingham and Waltham, Worcester, Springfield and Northampton. Since its inception in late 1996, the program has serviced 4093 unduplicated men and women finding them permanent housing and employment. Since then, the program has placed 1592 individuals in permanent housing, 1367 in permanent employment and 724 in skills training programs. In addition, MRT maintains extensive, long-term relationships with private landlords within their respective regions and throughout the Commonwealth. MRT relies on a Housing Search Manual produced by Homestart, Inc. that is used statewide to assist individuals on the finer points of housing search. (See *Housing Search Training Curriculum*)

Mobile Stabilization Team (MST): This housing stabilization program in the MetroWest serves recently homeless individuals. Staff provides ongoing support aimed at keeping individuals in permanent housing. The program is part of a larger statewide effort led by Homestart, Inc. in Boston, with whom SMOC subcontracts to serve the MetroWest region. MST is closely tied into the Framingham MRT and principally works with individuals with disabilities. From November 1998 to November 2002 the program has served 171 individuals in the MetroWest region alone.

Housing Assistance Program Family Shelter System (HAP): HAP is an assistance program for families who are at risk of homelessness. Housing specialists work closely with families referred from the Department of Transitional (and other sources) to secure and/or maintain permanent affordable housing. Within only a two year period, the HAP program has provided services to 300 families from HIP and 240 families from HAP.

Housing Opportunity for People with AIDS (HOPWA): HOPWA assists individuals living with AIDS in the MetroWest community with housing and housing-related matters. Individuals are referred from community agencies, or are self-referred, and work closely with housing specialists to identify appropriate housing opportunities throughout the community that will support their needs. Since 1994, HOPWA has served a total of 150 consumers.

Young Adults Residential Case Management (YARCM): YARCM Program provides transitional housing and case management services to 40 homeless and at-risk young adults in early recovery in order to support young adults in their recovery, reduce relapse, and enable participants to develop independence. SMOC provides services to 29 clients in Framingham and subcontracts with Somerville Homeless Coalition, Inc (SHC) to provide services to 11 clients in the greater Somerville area. The SMOC YARCM program is designed to provide a safe, supportive, and affordable environment based on a 12-step recovery model to foster long-term recovery and the commitment to abstinence for the treatment of drug and alcohol abuse.

Scattered Sites: This program serves 30 homeless families in apartment units throughout the Framingham area, although recently the program has expanded to follow SMOC's housing expansion into other regions of the Commonwealth. Families receive housing search and other support services. Since 1989 Scattered Sites has placed 575 families into housing.

South Middlesex Non-Profit Housing Corporation: With its vast portfolio of housing the Housing Corporation employs housing coordinators who make placements and outside referrals. Housing coordinators manage Housing Corporation property, interface with service providers inside and outside the agency, facilitate the movement of tenants through the agency's housing continuum and assist individuals and families maintain their housing. First and foremost the goal of the Housing Corporation is to keep people in housing. SMOC's housing search workers have an added advantage by having at their disposal access to SMOC housing units. It provides housing search workers with a greater understanding of landlord needs and concerns and it makes the housing search process quicker, easier and cleaner.

"Y" Bed Program: SMOC has been operating the "Y" Bed program for three years and had an initial annual allocation of 60 beds statewide. Due to budget cuts this figure was reduced to 49 beds. This program is an economic self-sufficiency program targeted at formerly homeless men and women who are committed to becoming self-sufficient within one year. All participants are expected to either be employed or in a job training program and contribute to an Individual Development Account (IDA). The IDA

component requires that participants contribute in lieu of rent a predetermined sum into a weekly savings account held by SMOC for that time when they will be ready to move on to permanent housing. These funds can be used for first and last month's rent, furniture and other miscellaneous purposes. "Y" Beds clients are located in three SMOC properties, Hardwick (serves 14 Veteran men, Wright Women's Home in Easthampton (serves 16 women) and Rhodes Street Women's Cooperative in Millbury (serves 17 women).

South Middlesex Non-Profit Housing Corporation

In 1986, SMOC created a subsidiary development corporation in response to the need for decent, safe and affordable housing for the homeless and low-income households targeting disadvantaged individuals, families and disabled adults. The chief mission of the Housing Corporation is to preserve and improve the existing affordable housing stock in addition to providing new housing opportunities. SMOC's Development Corporation also is charged with identifying the redevelopment of commercial and industrial properties throughout the region, especially buildings located in distressed neighborhoods that have fallen into disrepair. Indeed, the Housing Corporation has demonstrated an imaginative approach to the regional housing and community development needs by integrating the agency's human service programs with housing and community development initiatives. This service-enriched housing allows the agency to target specific populations and intentionally developed properties to meet those programmatic needs both in a social service and real estate dimension.

The primary goals of the Housing Corporation are as follows:

- to own, develop and manage the agency's real estate portfolio;
- to advocate and expand the supply of affordable housing units for individuals and families; to promote homeownership through development and education;
- to assist residents towards achieving economic and personal self-sufficiency; and,
- to promote community economic development initiatives and neighborhood revitalization.

The Housing Corporation owns and manages the agency's real estate portfolio including all program, residential and commercial properties. Appropriately, all real estate endeavors are linked to its mission and focus on expanding economic opportunity, redeveloping substandard and distressed properties, enhancing participation in community stabilization partnerships and identifying opportunities to rebuild neighborhoods. To this end, **SMOC owns 113 buildings, over 867 units of affordable housing in 14 communities** for various populations including many different Head Start and Day Care program spaces, commercial office space, emergency shelters, transitional housing for individuals and families, sober housing units, permanent affordable housing rentals and homeownership opportunities. (*See List of Housing Portfolio*)

SMOC has also provided regional homeownership training seminars and pre-purchase and post-purchase counseling to area homeowners. More recently SMOC has established

a new Community Home Center (CHC) where tenants, homeowners, and landlords can learn about a wide range of affordable housing opportunities. Since February 2001 the CHC has served 1,102 individuals in the Center and graduated 98 families in its 1st Time Homebuyers seminars. To strengthen the agency's programmatic responsiveness and management, SMOC Housing also serves as the landlord and property manager for all agency and affiliate program spaces along with providing third-party management and development services to other non-profits.

2. Loan Administration Experience

SMOC has experience overseeing various kinds of loan programs, some in the form of grants others direct loan programs. In some instances, SMOC has been responsible for only the front end phase of the loan process as a loan originator while in other instances the agency has been responsible for everything from marketing to servicing the repayment of the loan. The loan model proposed in *Section IIC* below draws from our various experiences to create a hybrid model that fits the parameters set down by the Department of Corrections in this RFR.

Frederick A. Rubin MicroLoan Program (FARMLP): Managed by the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, the FARMLP is a micro loan program targeted to new and existing businesses in Framingham and Marlboro. The program is funded by six commercial banks, each contributing \$50,000 to the loan pool. SMOC has performed the role of loan originator for the past five years. SMOC's representative meets with potential loan applicants, reviews the loan application, verifies the information in the application and then makes a recommendation to the loan review committee. Loans can be for up to \$15,000. Once the loan is approved one of the participating banks is responsible for servicing the loan.

Home Modification for Individuals with Disabilities Loan Program (HMDLP): SMOC is one of six agencies responsible for a statewide program that provides loans for access modifications to the principle residence of elders, adults with disabilities and families with children with disabilities. The intent of the program is to allow people to live independently in their communities. The program lends money directly to homeowners in collaboration with CEDAC and MRC. The maximum loan amount is \$25,000. SMOC is responsible for all phases of the loan process including marketing, application process, application review, ensure income eligibility requirements, process loan request with CEDAC, site reviews with homeowners, disperse funds and for non-deferred loans, monitor quarterly payments by providing borrowers with a coupon repayment book. SMOC is responsible for servicing all loans. To date the agency has dispersed \$341,620 in loans. SMOC is by far outperforming the other five provider agencies.

MRTs Client Assistance Program: In addition to providing housing and employment search services statewide the MRT program has also made available client assistance money to help homeless men and women with housing and employment costs that they otherwise are unable to afford. For most clients, the program is not a loan program but rather a grant program.

Housing and employment specialists work one-on-one with individuals to determine client assistance needs. Funds can be used for first and last month's rent and security deposits, furniture and other household needs. Funds can also be used for employment and education related purposes like work clothes, tools and books. No payment goes directly to the client, rather all payments are either made out to the landlord or to the retail business for the exact amount. Loans are paid back on a predetermined schedule. Staff completes a client assistance request form that is then submitted to the agency's fiscal department. Funding for this service is a line-item in the MRT budget. (See *Sample MRT Client Assistance Form*)

South Middlesex Non-Profit Housing Corporation: The Housing Corporation provides the administrative support for the Home Modification program, inputting quarterly payments, the Corporation administers rent for over 800 units statewide. This rent collection system can be designed for any type of loan program where repayments need to be monitored.

Individual Self-Sufficiency Initiative (ISSI): SMOC is currently successfully administering the Individual Self-Sufficiency Initiative Program Resource Model in the Metrowest/South area. To date SMOC has issued 306 ISSI awards. This means the agency reviews and approves applications and disperses ISSI funds of up to \$5,700 per person per year. ISSI allocations are made directly to landlords and retail stores. Mobile Resource Team along with the remainder of SMOC's housing continuum staff submitted applications directly to SMOC, the regional non-profit housing organization. MRT has also executed memoranda of understanding with other regional non-profit housing organizations, specifically the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP), the Rural Housing Improvement (RHI), Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) and Hampden Housing Partnership (HAP), to disperse ISSI funds. Over the past two years MRT housing specialists have successfully obtained ISSI funds from these four agencies for 268 individuals.

Individual Development Account (IDA): The SMOC IDA program is an asset-based strategy to promote savings, economic literacy and financial self-sufficiency. SMOC's IDA model targets formerly homeless men and women who face a myriad of barriers to self-sufficiency. These barriers include among other things, affordable housing, mental health, substance abuse, medical, competitive skills, education, and employment. SMOC's IDA program has been designed to complement an already rich, holistic continuum of services. IDA accounts give individuals the opportunity to save money while they achieve stability in their lives. In a year's time, IDA participants have the opportunity to save enough money to reenter the community on an improved economic footing. Individuals develop an IDA plan with housing specialists, they then make direct deposits to SMOC Housing Corporation. Early withdrawals must be approved by the housing specialist. In anticipation of completing their program, the IDA candidate will request release of their IDA funds and a check will be made out in the client's name.

B. Demonstrated Experience with Referrals and Community Linkages

While we pride ourselves as having developed a comprehensive continuum of care system locally we recognize the fact that there are some services others do better. Especially statewide, SMOC staff is forced to replicate an extensive referral system, establish close relationships with external providers, and coordinate services and work closely within a Team model. We have learned how important a team approach means to the success of our clients. In our statewide approach the onus is placed on our staff to serve as the "hub" for local service providers, making sure clients access resources and get what they need.

Locally SMOC has developed several mechanisms to promote and enhance internal and external collaborations to create a continuum of care. This same continuum concept is used as the model in other parts of the Commonwealth. The continuum of care links recipients with the most appropriate and least restrictive service available and is achieved through levels of collaborative activities which have become formal collaborations and mergers.

In Framingham, external collaborations also include working with the MetroWest Community Health Coalition, MetroWest Medical Center, Marlboro Hospital, Advocates, Samaritans, Baypath, Spectrum, VNA's, Framingham, Natick, and Marlboro District Courts, Wayside Youth and Family, SMILES, Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance and MAPS. SMOC is also a member of the MetroWest Dual Diagnosis Coalition and the MetroWest Task Force on Mental Health and Substance Abuse. Additionally, SMOC meets also monthly with the Massachusetts Departments of Mental Health, Public Health, Transitional Assistance and Social Services. *(See a detailed breakdown of Primary Statewide Service Providers.)*

Homestart has developed the same type of network of service providers in Boston. Both Homestart and SMOC attribute much of our success to the fact that housing services are but one of a myriad of services needed by low-income people. Our success comes from developing trust between our staff and other service providers. It will be the goal of this program across the Commonwealth to establish strong links with already establish state, county and local criminal justice providers, so CRCs, County Correctional facilities and sheriff offices will be closely tied into a system of housing delivery.

C. Demonstrated Experience with Offender Population

SMOC is recognized as one of the more progressive social service agencies in the Commonwealth. With over 60 programs administered throughout the Commonwealth, SMOC has built a program delivery system that has been quite effective at moving individuals and families through a continuum of resources and services and then out into the community, living socially and financially self-sufficient. A review of SMOC programs and services incontrovertibly reveals the agency's capacity to deliver the

services outlined in this RFR. Last year the agency served over 20,000 clients statewide. Invariably one finds throughout our continuum the presence of offenders using SMOC services and resources. We know for a fact that offenders make up a solid percentage of the individuals we serve. In some programs they are the target population while in others the number is quite high.

The agency has demonstrated experience providing services to the offender population through several existing programs:

Meadows House is a transitional supportive housing program for women leaving MCI/Framingham and other correctional facilities throughout the state. The program provides transitional housing, substance abuse treatment, educational services, and vocational training by utilizing SMOC's wrap around services.

Serenity House is a six-month residential substance abuse program for women 18 and older. Vocational training and placement, parenting, and eating disorder components are also included.

Voices Against Violence, a Framingham-based program, provides counseling and advocacy to battered women and sexual assault survivors. These services include a 24-hour emergency hotline, crisis intervention and short term counseling, legal advocacy, support groups, assistance with hospital and police procedures, a battered women's shelter, and information and referral. These services are confidential and provided free of charge. In addition, Voices conducts community education and a bi-annual volunteer training program. Voices is funded by the Department of Public Health, the Department of Social Services, the United Way, and WIN.

SHADOWS (Shelter, Hope and Dignity of Women Searching) is a 10-bed emergency shelter serving single women located in Ashland, MA. Women in the program receive safe shelter, individual support services, case management, housing & employment search and a variety of other mental health and substance abuse services through SMOC's continuum of services.

Another SMOC program called the *Housing and Employment Search Program*, provided case management services for 95 women in DOC Pre-Release Facilities. SMOC's Prison Liaison responsibilities includes meeting with women 45 days prior to release from county and state correction facilities. The goal is to place women into appropriate transitional housing and substance abuse treatment programs with an employment and vocational training component. Upon completion of the program, the women are placed for employment and permanent housing. The Program has established a good working relationship with the following facilities: MCI Framingham, MCI Lancaster, Hampden County Correctional Facility, Suffolk County House of Correction, Barnstable County.

Another SMOC Program, the *Criminal Justice Program*, works with clients who are referred by the courts as a condition of probation. The program is currently working in the Framingham and Marlboro District Courts. Staff provides case management services

with a 16-week psycho-educational group that includes information on early relapse and relapse prevention.

Statewide the *Mobile Resource Team* (MRT) has had extensive experience working with the offender population through its housing and employment search program. Since the focus is on "in-reach" to local shelters and transitional housing facilities, we know that upward of 40% of shelter guests have criminal records. In many instances MRT staff are already providing housing and employment services to the offender population. We estimate that close to 75% of MRT clients are classified as ex-offenders; ex-offenders who were experiencing significant barriers to securing permanent housing. Public and private sector landlords in the state require both a credit/rental history check and criminal history check (C.O.R.I.) prior to an approval for a housing application. The ex-offenders were mainly being turned down for apartments due in large part to their criminal histories and or negative rental/credit histories. SMOC has developed effective strategies to combat the barriers that ex-offenders continue to experience in their housing search efforts. These strategies will be elaborated upon in the next section.

II. Program Services

A. Housing Placement Services Program

The presence of five CRCs with a six expected to come on line before the end of the current fiscal year and another 10 OCCs means a base of services are already present within the Commonwealth. SMOC is proposing the creation of a mobile housing search program that provides aggressive in-reach services with housing search specialists located in each of the CRC regions. Critical to a successful housing search model is the presence of a continuum of support services that includes among other services employment, substance abuse, mental health and education. Having housing search workers reside in close proximity to existing CRCs, OCCS, One-Stop Career Centers, mental health services, substance abuse services, adult education centers and Home Centers where they can take advantage of an already existing system of services is essential to keeping newly released serious, violent offenders in permanent housing. Add to this already extensive system of services SMOC's service provider system and we markedly improve an offender's chances for success. (See MA Chart of Services)

Due to budget constraints and SMOC's desire to build the best possible housing search system, the MHRP will fund five (5) housing search specialists each to be located in one of the five CRC regions, Springfield, Worcester, Lowell, Boston and Fall River. The new Framingham CRC, anticipated to open sometime before the end of this fiscal year will also support a housing specialist but this service will be provided by SMOC as an in-kind service. SMOC will contract with Homestart, Inc. to provide housing search services in Boston. The remaining four housing search workers will be managed by SMOC. (See Homestart Brochure & 2001 Annual Report)

Due to the fact that both SMOC and Homestart already provide housing search services statewide, it makes sense to piggyback onto this existing system and build upon this very

successful model of housing search services. The intent is to add the MHRP housing search workers to these statewide teams. In the two new regions of Fall River and Lowell, the housing search model would be replicated with local CRCs and external providers, with whom both SMOC and Homestart already have strong relationships.

The Mobile Resource Team has successfully developed collaborative relationships statewide with area service providers, shelter providers, SRO's, landlords in both the private and public sectors, substance abuse/mental health providers, CRC's, O.C.C., career centers, supportive transitional housing programs, regional housing agencies, local continuum of care members, and city and town officials. All of the above are critical to the continued success of providing a holistic resource network to deliver the highest quality services possible to the people we serve. SMOC's continued commitment to this extensive resource and service network has enabled us to effectively operate and secure housing for a difficult population in every region of the state. These relationships statewide will be essential to the success of the 5 new MHRP housing search specialists. The statewide resource network SMOC and Homestart has established will ensure a smooth transition for the 5 new staff and will offer the staff a strong foundation to promote success for the offender population.

SMOC has developed effective strategies to combat the barriers that ex-offenders continue to experience in their housing search efforts. The first strategy centers around extensive training on the American Disabilities Act (A.D.A.). Staff will receive education around the ADA and will receive comprehensive training on advocacy in the housing appeals process. According to the ADA, substance abuse is considered a legal disability. If an offender can relate their criminal history, with the exception of a distribution conviction, however extensive to their substance abuse issue, and show that they have made efforts towards recovery/treatment for their addiction, a landlord cannot legally deny them access to housing. An offender can demonstrate this treatment through a variety of ways: graduation from a substance abuse facility, substance abuse residential program, alcohol correctional centers or acute recovery program. This training and knowledge base has proven to be an enormous success to existing housing search specialists and will be vital to the success of the proposed 5 new housing search Specialists.

The second strategy the program will use is in reference to combating negative rental/credit histories. SMOC has effectively demonstrated through MRT the ability to utilize financial assistance and loan programs in an effort to combat an offender's negative rental/credit history. Housing Specialists have utilized both SMOC's client assistance fund program and the Individual Self-Sufficiency Initiative to encourage and entice both public and private sector landlords to approve housing applications that would not have necessarily been approved in the absence of such funds. Staff will receive comprehensive skills and tools that will enable them to successfully advocate and negotiate with public and private sector landlords. As a result of the training, staff will feel confident to meet with public and private sector landlords with the intent of selling the program they are representing, the monetary funds attached to the program, and finally the program participant.

This technique alone has enabled MRT Housing Specialists to place well over 300 program participants, a large majority of which were ex-offenders. For this contract, the proposed loan program would be utilized to duplicate the results we have already established through the client assistance fund and ISSI program. (See Section II C on the Loan Program)

SMOC Housing Specialists have also developed creative housing search techniques to address high risk, difficult to place offender subgroups, for example arsonists and sex offenders. Housing Specialists were forced to develop these techniques for these specific subgroups when the ADA and advocacy were either unsuccessful or not pertinent to the offender's case. In these specific cases, Housing Specialists turn to non-traditional housing venues as a viable alternative for offenders. Private SRO's and rooming houses where C.O.R.I. checks are not required are an enormous resource for placing these specific populations. With public safety in mind, staff target housing that is appropriate to the risk factors associated with each individual being served.

MHRP Housing Specialists will be trained to seek out individual landlords who focus more on references and rental history than on administering criminal history checks. Housing Specialists will always ensure the housing opportunity to be appropriate prior to placement. For example in the case of a sex-offender, the Housing Specialist would ensure that the housing is designated for single adults rather than families. The experience of MRT and Homestart will make it easier to convey these creative techniques to MHRP housing specialists to ensure placement of high risk, difficult to place, offender subgroups.

SMOC staff will be utilizing automated information resources through a manual that SMOC will develop in conjunction with the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance and Homestart outlined in Section IIB.

The MHRP Housing Specialists will begin the contractual relationship with the offender at the time of referral from the Department's Re-entry unit. This step will begin as part of the aggressive in-reach strategy where Housing staff will meet with offenders while they are still in prison. The Housing Specialist will conduct an initial Intake/Assessment to identify the following information: Criminal History, Substance Abuse History, Mental Health History, Medical History, Employment History, and Housing History. This step in the process is critical to identify the potential barriers the offender will face in their search for permanent housing. The Housing Specialist will proceed to obtain the following necessary information:

- Where does the offender want to live?
- Does the offender feel that he or she has a sufficient support network in that community?
If so, what is it?
- What does the offender feel he or she needs in a housing placement upon release? A structured environment, a supportive environment, independence?

- Does the offender have geographic triggers of any kind?

The next step for the Housing Specialist is to make a recommendation to the Department Re-entry Unit staff, based on the initial intake and assessment. This recommendation will include the identified barriers presented and recommendations on how to combat the barriers, along with a recommended housing placement for the offender. The Housing Specialist, the Department's Re-entry staff and the offender will work as a team to identify the most appropriate option based on this recommendation. Any of a number of options will may be available to the offender: A sober house SRO placement, a supportive transitional housing placement, a half-way house placement, a 6-12 month structured substance abuse program, a subsidized apartment, or market-rate apartment. The Department's Re-entry staff will meet with the Housing Specialist to provide feedback on the proposed recommendations.

The next step entails the Housing Specialist meeting with the offender to develop an **Individual Service Plan (ISP)**. The goals of the ISP are twofold. The first is to address the barriers to securing housing and the second to outline the short-term and long-term goals that will result in the offender successfully transitioning into housing. The ISP is a living document that acts as a guide for the offender and the staff to assist both parties in achieving their collective goal. The next step is to begin the housing search process. Once the housing placement has been secured, the Housing Specialist will coordinate support services through established community resources. The Housing Specialist will coordinate services with Department Re-entry unit staff recommendations and address holistically the following: Mental Health/substance abuse counseling, support groups – AA/NA, job training and employment, education, C.R.C.'s, O.C.C.'s, After Incarceration Support Services etc. The last phase of the Housing Placement Process is the most critical in addressing recidivism, the *stabilization services*. The Housing Specialists will work with the offenders for at least 6 months after permanent housing placements to ensure that the placement is successful.

Stabilization services consist of but are not limited to the following:

- Minimum of 2 case management meetings a month
- One home-site visit in which the Housing Specialist ensures that the apartment is being kept clean and in good repair
- Another office visit in which the Housing Specialist will address any difficulties/issues offender is experiencing and make any further needed referrals to services.

The goal of the stabilization services is to ensure successful reintegration into the community and to prevent recidivism. Stabilization will consist of continued extensive case management of the offender after placement. If an offender is not placed initially into permanent housing, Housing Specialists will continue aggressive case management

with the offender in the transitional housing program until permanent housing is secured. Once permanent housing is secured, the housing specialist will continue stabilization services for a minimum of a 6-month period of time to ensure successful placement.

Stabilization also involves maintaining excellent relationships with landlords. MRT experience has shown that what makes placement so successful is the opportunity for local landlords to have someone like a housing specialist available to help intervene on housing issues without the landlord getting directly involved with the tenant. Add to this some degree of financial security through the loan program, and landlords find themselves in an advantageous position. Landlords get a tenant that has been pre-screened, comes with a support system in the form of a housing advocate and can rely on this advocate to intervene on their behalf if problems should arise. Landlords can save significant money in eviction and legal costs by working together with the housing advocate.

MHPR Housing Specialists will receive an extensive orientation to the comprehensive resource network that SMOC and Homestart have established statewide. In conjunction with the automated information manual which will be developed, the staff will initially begin to introduce themselves and the new program at local continuum of care meetings, case management meetings, and all area service provider meetings in which SMOC and Homestart already have an established presence and membership. The goal of this initial aggressive outreach statewide is to raise awareness about the new program and network with area service providers to ensure that the new Housing Placement Team can and will be able to respond with appropriate housing solutions to unanticipated or time-sensitive placement needs of reentry clients. The strong relationships that SMOC and Homestart already possess and continue to foster statewide will enable our team to effectively handle any situation.

SMOC and Homestart currently collaborate with federal, state, local and public policy agencies including the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) towards establishment and advancement of new initiatives aimed at preventing homelessness and generating housing opportunities for offenders who are especially difficult to place. For example, both SMOC and Homestart are members of MHSA and the executive directors of both agencies are on MHSA's executive board. SMOC's executive director is president of MHSA's executive board. Both agencies have had a long and extensive relationship with MHSA and continue to do so. Currently both agencies are working with MHSA and other members to produce a statewide response to a new federal NOFA to address the issue of chronic homelessness. This is a \$35 million dollar effort that relies on a "housing first" model to reduce chronic homelessness. SMOC works closely with MHSA on several programs including MRT (this program was developed by MHSA before it was proposed to HUD as a statewide program), shelter plus care, the "Y" Bed Program, Post-Detox program and various other services. Homestart has a similar long-term relationship with MHSA. (See *Letter of Support from MHSA*)

The Housing Specialists will be responsible for the continued development of both transitional and permanent housing opportunities/resources for low-income families and

individuals. The staff will be trained in the appropriate presentation of the program and the program participants with the goal in mind of continuing to increase awareness and increase resources for the program participants. The staff will be responsible for reporting to their supervisor new resources created on a monthly basis. The resources resulting from these outreach efforts in the community will be added to the automated information manual, as it should be a living document that will continue to grow.

SMOC is committed to the effective collaboration with all 17 Department facilities and county facilities operated by Sheriffs with whom the Department collaborates. It is SMOC's intent to work interdependently with all Department staff, specifically the Department's Re-entry unit to achieve the highest possible delivery of service to program participants. SMOC will participate in established triage meetings to ensure effective in-reach and information sharing. SMOC is convinced that collective-brainstorming in team meetings, information-sharing, and interdependent collaboration is vital to the success of the program.

The Housing Specialists will work in conjunction with the Department's Re-entry unit in the development of realistic, concrete housing options/placement. The Housing Specialist will be required to make a recommendation the Department's Re-entry unit staff after the intake/assessment has been completed and barriers have been identified. The expertise and knowledge base of both the Housing Specialist and the Re-entry unit staff are critical in the development of an appropriate, realistic, and successful placement. SMOC is committed to an effective collaborative relationship with all Department of Corrections agents.

B. Sample On-Line Housing Manual

There are currently available a number of different databases that focus on a variety of information that would be beneficial to housing search specialists and the reentry population. All of these different sources are being used by SMOC's MRT housing staff and Homestart's staff, but at this time there is a lack of consistency in the format and accessibility.

MRT, thanks to the hard work of Homestart, currently uses the Homestart Housing Manual 1977: Finding Housing in Massachusetts. (*See Table of Contents of this guidebook*) The guidebook is an exhaustive manual that looks at every possible aspect of housing search issues from CORI issues to Fair Housing Laws to tenant rights.

Homestart, Inc. maintains a list of all SRO facilities available in the greater Boston area. SMOC MRT maintains a similar inventory that includes upward of 800 units separate from SMOC Housing Corporation's inventory of units. (*See Table of Contents of this SRO listing*)

SMOC MRT program also has at its disposal a housing manual that housing specialists use statewide that provides guidance to people looking for housing. The manual includes

forms that assist individuals compute rent needs and other types of housing information. (See *MRT Housing Search Manual Table of Contents*)

Finally, the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance is soon to unveil an online database tool titled *The Road Home* that promotes the movement of homeless adults forward along the continuum of care to appropriate services and permanent housing. This database provides a key informational support for movement from shelter settings to the appropriate discharge of individuals into non-emergency settings from state systems. The database contains over 500 programs appropriate for homeless adults, representing 275 agencies, including DPH, DMH, DTA and other Commonwealth programs.

If awarded this grant we will propose expanding MHSA's online database to include elements of each of the manuals and databases described above that would be accessible through MHSA's website, www.mhsa.net. MHSA's executive director has agreed to commit its own funds toward this end. The database is expected to be unveiled by spring of 2003. (See a sample of MHSA's On-Line Database)

C. Loan Program

SMOC has had extensive experience with loan and grant programs of one sort or another as was revealed in *Section IA* of this proposal. We have the capacity through our Housing Corporation to administer loans utilizing the same system we use for rent collection. Below is an outline of how the loan program would operate.

- Individuals are pre-approved by the Department of Corrections
- Loan application is completed by each applicant in conjunction with the housing specialist
- Housing specialists will be responsible for determining need, amount of loan, purpose of loan and repayment schedule
- Loan eligibility will be driven by client need
- Loan application is then submitted to SMOC's fiscal department. No checks are made out to the client; all checks must be paid out to the landlord or vendor.
- Housing specialist will forward checks either in person with the client or through the mail
- SMOC will provide each client with a repayment coupon book (See *sample Coupon Book*)
- Payments are made directly to the Housing Corporation and logged.
- Housing Corporation will track payments and provide housing specialists with weekly payment roll to determine current repayment status of all loan recipients and appropriate action
- All efforts will be made to help those applicants who have fallen behind in their payment to put in place a repayment plan for the period of arrears.
- All permanent defaults will be referred back to the Department of Corrections for corrective legal action
- Loan repayments are returned to the loan pool for future allocation

SMOC will provide **quarterly reports** to the Department of Corrections that includes all activities of the loan fund during that period. However, defaulted loans will be reported to the Department of Corrections within a predetermined timeframe. The ISSI program alluded to in the RFR was offering a maximum one-year commitment of \$5700. If the program were to adopt this figure and every applicant received the maximum, it would only allow for a maximum of less than 9 clients to be served by this fund. A more realistic loan amount should be closer to \$1000 to \$2000 per recipient. If awarded this contract SMOC will work with the Department of Corrections to determine an appropriate maximum loan ceiling.

D. Intake and Assessment Process

The MHRP Housing Specialists will begin the contractual relationship with the offender at the time of referral from the Department's Re-entry unit, which will take place as part of the aggressive in-reach strategy. The Housing Specialist will conduct an initial Intake/Assessment to identify the following information: Criminal History, Substance Abuse History, Mental Health History, Medical History, Employment History, and Housing History. This step in the process is critical to identify the potential barriers to securing permanent housing. In addition, the Housing Specialist will proceed to obtain the following necessary information:

- Where does the offender want to live?
- Does the offender feel that he or she has a sufficient support network in that community?
If so, what is it?
- What does the offender feel he or she needs in a housing placement upon release? A structured environment, a supportive environment, independence?
- Does the offender have geographic triggers of any kind?

The next step for the Housing Specialist is to make a recommendation to the Department Re-entry Unit staff, based on the initial intake and assessment. This recommendation will include the identified barriers presented and recommendations on how to combat the barriers, along with a recommended housing placement for the offender. The Housing Specialist, the Department's Re-entry staff and the offender will work as a team to identify the most appropriate option based on this recommendation. Any of a number of options will may be available to the offender: A sober house SRO placement, a supportive transitional housing placement, a half-way house placement, a 6-12 month structured substance abuse program, a subsidized apartment or market-rate apartment. The Department's Re-entry staff will meet with the Housing Specialist to provide feedback on the proposed recommendations.

The next step entails the Housing Specialist meeting with the offender to develop an **Individual Service Plan (ISP)**. The goals of the ISP are twofold. The first is to address the barriers to securing housing and the second to outline the short-term and long-term

goals that will result in the offender successfully transitioning into housing. The ISP is a living document that acts as a guide for the offender and the staff to assist both parties in achieving their collective goal. The next step is to begin the housing search process. Once the housing placement has been secured, the Housing Specialist will coordinate support services through established community resources. The Housing Specialist will coordinate services with Department Re-entry unit staff recommendations and address holistically the following: Mental Health/substance abuse counseling, support groups – AA/NA, job training and employment, education, C.R.C.'s, O.C.C.'s, After Incarceration Support Services etc. The last phase of the Housing Placement Process is the most critical in addressing recidivism, the stabilization services. The Housing Specialists will work with the offenders for at least 6 months after permanent housing placements to ensure that the placement is successful.

E. Sample Case Record

The Housing Placement Program would require Housing Specialists to develop and maintain a detailed case record of each offender receiving housing placement and/or loan administration services. The case record would include but is not limited to the following documentation:

Section I

- Referral from Department Re-entry unit
- Intake/Assessment
- Individual Service Plan
- Release of Information
- Progress Notes

Section II

- Copies of Housing Applications submitted
- Correspondence with any or all Transitional Housing Programs
- Copies of Requested Credit Reports
- Prior Landlord References
- Certificates/Inventory of Programs Completed while Incarcerated
- Loan Eligibility/Approval Documentation
- Detailed financial record of loan requirements and obligations
- Stabilization Progress Notes

The Data Collection in *Section I* above will be initiated and completed during the initial Intake/Assessment interview with the offender. *Section II* above will be the responsibility of the Housing Specialists to track the compliance and progress of the offender in successfully completing the goals initiated in the ISP which outline a successful Housing Placement model. The Housing Specialist will be responsible for collecting and tracking all loan administration documentation and services once approved by the Department. (See sample of Case Records)

F. Tracking System/Data Collection

In addition to maintaining case records, SMOC will participate in and cooperate with the Department's overall data collection effort related to the evaluation of its reentry strategies. SMOC agrees to participate in the Department's post release tracking efforts via telephone. SMOC will work closely with the Department to refine and modify performance measures throughout the duration of this contract. Performance measures will be a combination of process data and outcome data defined by the scope of services.

Data collection for the housing and /or loan administration services shall be shared with the Reentry Unit and Research Division. Monthly reports will be forwarded to the Department by the fifteenth of every month to include at a minimum, the following data in aggregate numbers of offenders receiving services. (*See Data Collection Forms*)

- Number of intakes and assessments completed for housing placement only.
- Number of intakes and assessments completed for loan administration only.
- Number of intakes and assessments completed for both housing and loan administration services.
- Number of placements in transitional housing.
- Number of placements in permanent housing.
- Number of offenders on waiting lists for transitional housing.
- Number of placements on waiting lists for permanent housing.
- Number of housing placement denials.
- Listing of housing placement denial reasons.
- Number of payment defaults on loans administered.
- Amount of interest earned.

Additional information that SMOC proposes to track includes:

- Demographic Information
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Veterans Status
 - Primary Disability
 - Income at program entry
 - Income at program exit
 - Housing placement at program entry
 - Housing placement at exit
 - Services provided by program staff
 - Services provided by Department Re-entry unit
 - Services provided by community service providers
 - Stabilization services
 - Month program participant entered program

- Month program participant exited program
- Number of terminations
- Any significant events for the reporting period
- Any additional data as requested by the Department for this contract.

G. Hours of Operation

Housing search services will be offered Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Housing services will also be available evenings and Saturdays by appointment for offenders who cannot access services during regular business hours.

Other services provided directly by SMOC will be offered Monday through Friday during regular business hours, and evenings and Saturdays by appointment. Referrals to *external community programming* will be made on a case-by-case basis to match the needs of individual offenders. Because of the breadth of services available and SMOC's expertise at making community linkages, it is anticipated that housing search specialists will easily be able to accommodate the program and scheduling needs of individual offenders.

SMOC is committed to providing services that are tailored to the unique needs of the individuals being served by this contract and will make adjustments to the hours of operation and staff schedules as necessary.

H. Staffing

1. Supervision Model

Rather than create another new layer of supervision SMOC already has a detailed statewide model in its MRT program. The MHRP Program Manager responsibilities will be shared by the two existing MRT regional managers. The MRT Western manager will oversee Springfield, Worcester and Framingham. The MRT Eastern Regional manager would supervise Lowell and Fall River. Boston will be covered by the subcontract with Homestart. In turn, the two regional managers will continue to be supervised by the Deputy Division Director of Community Development.

The model of supervision will entail weekly one-on-one supervision with each housing specialist and initially, weekly regional MRT team staff meetings as the process of fine tuning the program design proceeds. Additional supervision will take the form of weekly senior staff coordination meetings among the director and two regional managers. In addition, we will encourage weekly regional service provider meetings centralized through each of the CRCs that encompasses mental health, substance abuse, education, skills training and other relevant providers.

2. Staffing Matrix

The staffing pattern includes a core of staff funded by this contract and a parallel in-kind staffing to provide the full matrix of services needed at the Framingham CRC.

Program Manager	.30 FTE	\$10,560
Includes two regional managers each at .15 FTE for the day-to-day operations of The program providing direct supervision of housing specialists, assisting in the coordination of regional services, and liaison with CRCs and other criminal justice entities.		
Program Director	.10 FTE	\$8,000
Individual responsible for liaison with funder and all external providers, provide program design and budgetary oversight and manage Program Managers.		
Direct Care/Program Staff II	6.20 FTEs	\$157,000
Five statewide housing search specialist, one full-time employment specialist and .20 FTE housing coordinator.		
Program Secretarial	.20 FTE	\$5,390
Individual to provide secretarial support at .10 FTE and a .10 FTE to service loan program.		
Subcontract/Direct Care	1.0 FTE	\$27,000
One housing specialist as part of \$40,000 subcontract with Homestart to serve the Boston area.		

Supervision, secretarial support, and housing search services will be reimbursable costs. Program Director, Employment, the Framingham housing search specialist, housing coordinator and loan serve administrator will all be provided as *in-kind services* by existing SMOC employees.

All Framingham Housing specialists will comply with DOC rules and regulations and will be subject to background checks (including a Criminal Justice Information System criminal record check and fingerprinting) prior to employment. Upon hiring they will undergo a 40-hour institutional orientation program prior to entering correctional facilities. Every reasonable effort will be made to fill staff vacancies within 30 days.

3. Staff Schedule

All staff for the MHRP will be scheduled to work Mondays through Fridays from 9am to 5pm as well as evenings and Saturdays by appointment to meet the scheduling needs of offenders who cannot access staff during regular business hours. These hours are subject to change depending on the demands of program participants.

SMOC is committed to providing services that are tailored to the unique needs of the individuals being served by this contract and will make adjustments to the hours of operation and staff schedules as necessary.

IV. Fiscal Terms

- A. Budget** (*See attached budget*)
- B. Future Recommendations**

The budget set forth in *Section IVA* responds to the budgetary guidelines set down by DOC at the time of the bidder's conference. Every effort was made to meet the ceiling cap of this budget set at \$225,000. Our extensive experience managing statewide programs tells us that even the \$234,000 budget proposed here fails to meet the minimum requirements of this project. At the bidder's conference it was indicated that additional funds might be available. To keep costs down and to make certain that all regions are staffed with a housing specialist, SMOC made the decision to provide the housing search worker in Framingham as an in-kind service. In addition, we only allocated resources for one (1) housing search worker in Boston. Considering Boston's size, expected demand for housing search services and the difficult housing market there, one position will probably be insufficient. If additional funds are made available, we propose the addition of two more housing search workers, one in Framingham and one in Boston.

V. Value-Added Services

The South Middlesex Non-Profit Housing Corporation has an extensive portfolio that boasts 850 units that range geographically from the Metro-West area to the Western part of the state. To compliment the statewide housing options that exist internally within SMOC, SMOC also has successfully operated a statewide housing/employment initiative for over a five year span entitled the Mobile Resource Team (MRT). Without a doubt, SMOC's greatest added value is this existing system of housing search and housing stock. MRT staff already understand the housing markets, already maintain working relationships with private landlords, connected to other local service providers, linked to existing criminal justice system in their region, understand and have developed strategies for difficult populations, and have access to the agency's existing housing portfolio. Transitional housing that combines a place to stay with other services, such as drug treatment and job counseling, is key in helping ex-offenders re-establish themselves in society. This is something that SMOC offers that no other provider can.

SMOC has also had extensive experience administering loan programs of different types and will be allocated in-kind resources through the Housing Corporation to administer these loans along with SMOC's fiscal department. In Framingham and Boston in particular, SMOC and Homestart are in a unique position to provide value-added services to this contract because of the breadth of programs and services that both agencies provide to low-income individuals and families.

Case managers will work closely with individuals to make appropriate referrals and ensure that program participants get the assistance they need to navigate the myriad of services and programs available to them within SMOC and the community at large. All resources are designed to provide temporary assistance; the goal being for the program participant to become self-sufficient.

FY 03

Contractor Name:

Amendment #, If Applicable:

If Federal Funds, CFDA #:

PURCHASE OF SERVICE - ATTACHMENT 2: PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Program Name:	Document ID#:	MMARS Code:	Program Type Housing Services	UFR Program Number:
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PROGRAM OUTCOMES	MEASURE	GOAL*				
		year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5
1. Rate of released offenders with temporary housing in place	# of referred inmates -- # of inmates in temporary housing The goal is to eventually establish a threshold %age of offenders to be met	Actual then %age				
2. Rate of released offenders with permanent housing in place	# of referred inmates + # of inmates in permanent housing The goal is to eventually establish a threshold %age of offenders to be met	Actual then %age				
3. Loans repayed	# of loans given to inmates + # of loans repayed in full. The goal is to eventually establish a threshold %age of offenders to be met	Actual then %age				
PROGRAM OUTPUTS		GOAL*				
1. Program Operation Audits conducted will result in a minimum of 90% for each section audited.	Specifications defined in the contract. Less than the acceptable percentage may result in penalties.	Year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5
2. Completion of individual case records for inmates	Total # individual case records ÷ Total number of referred inmates	95%	97%	100%		
3. Required reports submitted	Total # reports completed as required ÷ Total # of required reports.	95%	97%	100%		
4. Staff vacancies filled within thirty days of position becoming vacant	Total # of staff vacancies filled within thirty days ÷ Total # of staff vacancies	97%	99%	100%		
PROGRAM EFFICIENCY		GOAL*				
		Year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5
PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS		GOAL*				
		year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5

Attach additional years, if appropriate
01/17/01