

## **Category: Special Needs Housing, Housing Persons with Special Needs**

### ***Summary***

In 2006, the Tennessee Housing Development Agency Board of Directors created a Housing Trust Fund to address the housing needs of the very low income, the very low income elderly and the very low income special needs Tennesseans. The fund began with total allocations in fiscal year 2007 - 2008 of \$12 million in agency funds and \$4 million in State appropriations. Thirty-four grants totaling \$10,000,000 were awarded on a competitive basis to local communities and non-profit agencies to assist targeted populations overcome the barriers faced when seeking to obtain or maintain appropriate affordable housing. An additional \$300,000 was assigned to United Cerebral Palsy on a non-competitive basis to continue a program of installing ramps for persons "locked" in their homes because of decreasing mobility. 897 housing units in all regions of the state were created or maintained through the competitive grants portion of the Housing Trust Fund. Assistance included home-owner rehabilitation, rental housing offering supportive services, and adaptive reuse.

### ***Problem***

Very low income Tennesseans, whether or not they are elderly or have special needs, face extraordinary barriers when seeking to obtain or maintain adequate affordable housing. While these Tennesseans cope with physical, emotional and/or social obstacles that intensify difficulties in securing and sustaining appropriate housing, most housing assistance programs present obstacles that make securing acceptable housing more difficult. Properties made available through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program are consistently leased beyond the level of affordability for those at or below 50% AMI and wait lists for Public Housing and Section 8 properties are years long. In an effort to address immediate housing needs, THDA established a housing trust fund that makes assistance available to special needs populations without the constraints of traditional funding sources. Funding secured through the Housing Trust Fund also encourages the provision of supportive services by allowing suitable services to be counted as matching funds. THDA encouraged Trust Fund applicants to be innovative in providing housing and developing projects that did not necessarily fit other funding sources.

### ***Solution***

#### ***How it works***

Upon approval of the THDA Board of Directors, an annual Housing Trust Fund Competitive Grant Application is posted to the agency website. Eligible applicants are cities, counties, development districts, public housing authorities, other departments within State Government and private, non-profit organizations. While there is no cap on the grant amount awarded, grant recipients must provide at least a 50% match for

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funds awarded. The hallmarks of the program have been its flexibility in awarding funds for a wide variety of program activities, the fresh partnerships that were created by program participants because of the unique match opportunities that included volunteer labor and support services, and the explicit emphasis on innovation.

The Housing Trust Fund targets assistance to persons of very low income, those earning 50% or less of the area median income, with one area of special emphasis being persons with special needs. The 2007 round of competitive grants is supporting the chronically homeless, persons with mental retardation or mental illness, citizens with developmental disabilities, single mothers recovering from substance addiction or physical abuse, veterans with multiple needs and ex-offenders re-entering society. Of the total 897 housing units created through the trust fund, 353 units were for people with special needs. Trust fund monies of \$6.9 million were allocated for special needs populations, generating a total match amount of \$17.49 million – far in excess of the required 50%.

### *What it's Doing*

One of the distinguishing characteristics of funding available under the Trust Fund for those with special needs was the myriad of possibilities for program activities. Funding a wide variety of projects raises public awareness of the breadth of housing needs in our state, one of THDA's strategic goals. A commitment to publicizing the project's completion and accomplishments was also a requirement of grantees, thereby reinforcing this strategic goal.

Funded projects did, indeed, encompass a spectrum of activity. Funding for the homeless is included – there is one project providing housing for homeless, terminally ill veterans; one project is creating 40 permanent housing units for homeless individuals; another creating homes for 24 homeless individuals with mental illness and still another creating new housing units for homeless youth. Another project is a replication of the famous Delancey St. project in San Francisco (The Academy)– creating a campus to provide housing and job skills training for 31 homeless and ex-offenders in rehabilitation. Two projects provide rental assistance for transitional or supportive housing for persons with mental illness or in conjunction with the criminal justice system. This round of funding is also providing funds to acquire land for a multi-unit development to provide stable, affordable rental housing for persons with AIDS. Some people become home-bound merely because they cannot maneuver steps. A portion of the housing trust fund is paying for ramps to maintain the owners' connection to their communities.

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*Measurable Benefits*

As already stated, the special needs portion of the Trust Fund has leveraged enormous amounts of match funding throughout communities in Tennessee – in fact there has been a 250% match, instead of the required 50%! This amount of funding provides an overall economic stimulus to the economy of the local communities, far greater than what Trust Fund monies would be able to provide alone. Projects funded are having enormous personal and societal benefits also – through providing stable housing for persons with mental illness, residents have spent many fewer days in hospitalization; other projects have allowed residents to be diverted from incarceration, allowing them to experience success in their free-world life while also saving public costs of jail and prison; by providing stable, service enriched housing for youth who would otherwise be homeless, we are giving these young people a much stronger launch into adulthood. These are just a few of the many examples of measurable, societal benefits provided by the special needs portion of the Tennessee Housing Trust Fund.

**Supporting Documentation**

Freedom Recovery Community

The Academy

Alpha Omega Veterans Services

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## Freedom Recovery Community

### **Permanent Housing with Supportive Services:**

- 20 apartments for single women and single women with their children
- Opened August 2007 (full with waiting list)
- Designed for:
  - Women with co-occurring disorders
  - Criminal Background welcome
  - Willingness to work at least part-time
  - Participate in community life



**THE NEXT  
DOOR**



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**The Academy**  
**822 Woodland Street**  
**Nashville, Tennessee**



This 6,000 square foot house is the temporary home for approximately 30 residents of The Academy. Construction is underway on an acre site on Lindsley Avenue (across from Howard Office Bldg) that could eventually house 150 or more residents.



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**Alpha Omega Veterans Services (AOVS)**



AOVS offers resident hospice care for homeless veterans. Four bedrooms serve eight veterans and the fifth bedroom is for the live-in nurse.

Housing Trust Fund dollars supported the rehabilitation and the Veterans Administration made a match of \$133,146.