Cities for Responsible Investment and Strategic Enforcement (Cities RISE)
Phase One

Request for Applications 2017 – 2018 grants

CITIES RISE – PHASE ONE

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS ("RFA")

Application Submission and Due Dates: The applicant is responsible for ensuring arrival by 5pm on May 5th, 2017. Please submit all applications as a single PDF with the name of the municipality in the title to CitiesRISE@enterprisecommunity.org. Please note that only e-mail attachments will be reviewed; no information in the body of the e-mail aside from attachments will be considered part of the application. The projected date for notice of awards for this Request for Applications (RFA) is May 19, 2017, with awardees required to countersign and return required documentation by June 9, 2017. Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. (Enterprise) and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC; together "Enterprise and LISC" or "LISC and Enterprise") in their discretion may extend the application deadline.

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1. RFA INFORMATION

I. Background

Cities for Responsible Investment and Strategic Enforcement ("Cities RISE") will provide cities, towns, and villages in New York State with populations greater than 25,000 (or collaborations of municipalities with combined populations greater than 25,000) with easy to use technology that will coordinate, map out and analyze disparate sources of data with the goal of facilitating effective, equitable strategies to spur housing revitalization. Cities RISE will empower local governments to make improvements in three main areas:

- **Data Integration and Analytics:** Cities RISE will enable cities, towns, and villages to better understand their housing stock, identify trends in their distressed housing, and think strategically about interventions that can create healthier and more vibrant neighborhoods.

- **Equitable Policy and Practices**: The program seeks to support cities, towns, and villages to _recognize and correct_ existing housing and code enforcement policies that have historically had a negative and disparate impact on lower income communities.

- **Civic Engagement and Innovation:** Cities RISE will empower community stakeholders to participate in decision-making and implementation of innovative housing programs based on successful models backed by empirical evidence.

This Request for Applicants (RFA) seeks applicants for the Phase One of Cities RISE. The funding for this program was recovered by NY Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman as the result of bank settlements related to the housing crisis. Phase One is jointly managed by Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. (Enterprise) and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). Enterprise and LISC are national nonprofit organizations that facilitate community development, with a long history of program facilitation in New York State.

To inform program design, consultants were engaged to conduct a feasibility study to analyze the asset management capacity and data needs of NY municipalities. The study included a thorough market analysis of data platforms designed for code enforcement/ asset management. The study team unanimously recommended the BuildingBlocks application.

Applicants who are chosen under this RFA will receive a two-year license to use the BuildingBlocks data platform, technical assistance in using the platform, and additional consulting services to help plan and implement a comprehensive approach to housing challenges.

A. Problem Statement

Municipalities in New York State are facing many pervasive asset management challenges, including vacant and blighted properties, tax delinquencies, and noncompliant landlords. The housing crisis compounded these challenges, leaving under-resourced municipalities scrambling to try to address housing asset management problems that disproportionately affect low-income communities. In recent history, there have been significant cuts to community development programs, and there is uncertainty about the future of federal funding for code enforcement and asset management. Municipalities are doing more with less to address housing challenges. Cities RISE will equip municipalities with tools that will help them to create,

or strengthen, systems and policies to work more efficiently and to promote housing equity within cities.

B. Program Purpose, Phase One

Phase One of Cities RISE, which is the subject of this RFA, will provide municipal leadership a comprehensive asset management data platform and technical expertise to facilitate implementation. With the support of these resources, municipalities can create a blueprint for strategic and equitable allocation of code enforcement, housing improvement, and community development resources. The aim is also to increase collaboration within units of local government, particularly among agencies whose work affects housing quality and neighborhood outcomes, and with community stakeholders, and to promote increased communication across municipalities through the sharing of information, best practices, and policy innovations.

Awardees under this RFA will receive software licenses to enable them to use the BuildingBlocks platform of OpportunitySpace ("OS") for two successive one-year periods, with the first year starting June 2017. Grantees have no obligation to renew the BuildingBlocks license at the end of the two-year grant period, but may decide to renew at their own cost. Awardees will receive two years of:

- **BuildingBlocks**, a cloud-based web application designed specifically to coordinate housing and asset management-related data for local governments. The platform:
    - Integrates disparate datasets from across municipal departments—such as Code Enforcement, Legal, Police, and Fire—into a single, map-based dashboard that provides granular property details.
    - Overlays market-strength indicators—including income levels, and vacancy rates, and other relevant publicly available information—to inform decision-making.
    - Provides data reporting and analysis to leaders across siloes.
  Easier access to cross-departmental data available in one easy to use format is intended to help municipalities craft or refine strategies to deploy limited housing and code enforcement resources efficiently and equitably.

  We strongly encourage all applicants to click on this link to see a demonstration of BuildingBlocks in action:

  https://vimeo.com/211261548

  Substantial technical assistance will be provided by the application provider, including in-person training at the municipality, to ensure that core users understand how to use BuildingBlocks and maximize its value for their local needs.

- **Capacity Building**: Consultants will provide on-going support to grantees to facilitate use of the data to develop improved asset management strategies, including proactive initiatives to address inequity. The consultants will be supported by an advisory panel of leaders in the field, who will provide grantees with guidance and expertise.

With comprehensive, big picture, neighborhood-level and property-level data integrated between the different data sources and incorporating a predictive analysis overlay, Cities RISE grantees will be able to make improved decisions about how to allocate limited code enforcement and housing improvement resources.

II. Program Structure

Cities RISE will provide up to three phases of investment over a two-year period. **This RFA is for Phase One of the program.** Up to 40 municipalities selected through this RFA process will receive the first level of investment (BuildingBlocks license; technical assistance related to BuildingBlocks; and capacity-building consultant support for a period of two years.)

Municipalities that receive this first level of investment and can demonstrate success may be eligible to apply to for additional Phases of the program. Future phases could include additional change management resources, support to develop a community collaborative, and an innovation grant to launch new programs. Only grantees selected through this RFA will be eligible to apply for later Phases of the program.

III. Award Evaluation Information

1. Proposals will be evaluated based on evaluation criteria outlined in this RFA.
2. Proposals will first be examined for completeness. All complete proposals will be reviewed for eligibility and only complete, eligible proposals will be reviewed.
3. Eligible proposals will be reviewed by LISC and Enterprise, who will jointly determine which eligible applicants will receive awards.

IV. Performance Requirements

Awarded grantees will be expected to work with capacity building consultants to meet benchmarks related to improved use of data as part of a process designed to use an equity lens to make decisions related to policy-making and resource allocation. Municipalities receiving a Phase One award will be expected to:

1. Successfully onboard the BuildingBlocks application.
2. Dedicate at least two core users of the BuildingBlocks application, who will be responsible for using the data platform, including running analytics and producing regular reports.
3. Submit quarterly narrative grant reports on how the data platform is being used and what progress is being made.

In addition to these requirements, grantees will be expected to work toward a set of milestones during the course of the grant period. These milestones will be in two categories:

1. Data competency, which will measure how the grantee is using the technology to inform policy decisions and resource allocation and
2. Equitable policy and practices, which will measure whether the grantee is using an equity lens to make decisions related to policy-making and resource allocation that promote inclusive and equitable governance and do not have a disparate impact on historically disenfranchised populations.

2. GRANTEE PROPOSAL

I. Eligibility Information

A. Minimum Eligibility Criteria
To respond to this RFA, municipalities must demonstrate that they meet the following minimum eligibility criteria:

1. **Population**: This program is intended to support municipalities of varying sizes; however, the population must be of sufficient size to have complex municipal property data to support the implementation of the data platform. The applying municipality must have a population of **25,000** or more according to the 2010 census. Municipalities with smaller populations may choose to submit a joint application if their combined population exceeds 25,000 and if they currently share a consolidated code enforcement system.

2. **Municipal Code Enforcement**: The applying entity must be a municipality with jurisdiction over code enforcement. As indicated above, municipalities may apply together if they share a consolidated code enforcement system prior to the date of this RFA release.

3. **Data Requirements**: Grantees selected under this RFA must meet the minimum data requirements to utilize the BuildingBlocks data platform including:

   - Access to GIS files for each parcel in the municipality, or an agreement from the County to provide the GIS files for each parcel in the municipality.

   - The ability to demonstrate that at least three data sets are currently in a machine-readable format. Data sets can include: housing and building code violations; tax delinquencies; police reports; fire code violations; water / sewer payment delinquencies; foreclosures, vacant/abandoned properties, building permits, and utility shut-offs; access to additional machine-readable data sets related to the housing and economic conditions will strengthen applications.

   Please note: Personally Identifiable Information (i.e. information or data that can be used to identify or distinguish an individual's identity, including but not limited to name, date of birth, social security number, and biometric records) **must not be included in any of the data sets being provided to BuildingBlocks**.

4. **Management and Staffing**: The project proposal must have the active support and frequent involvement of the highest-ranking municipal official(s)—the chief executive officer of the local government—which may be the mayor and/ or the city/ town manager. Additionally, the applicant must demonstrate that it will dedicate sufficient personnel to staff the project and that the agencies using the data are prepared to coordinate with each other. Municipalities applying jointly must each individually demonstrate a staffing plan sufficient for database implementation.

   - The application must include a cover letter signed by the municipality's chief executive officer that demonstrates her/his support for the application and commitment to the municipality's successful use of Phase One resources. A similar letter will be required for the granting of the license for the second

year of the grant term. For municipalities applying jointly, each chief executive officer must submit a commitment letter.

- A staff person must be assigned to manage the data platform deployment (estimated commitment of 10-20 hours total over the course of 3-4 weeks). Responsibilities include but are not limited to:
  - Coordinating kick-off call, requirements definition, user training, and launch
  - Facilitating data transfer. If staff person is non-technical, s/he will oversee vendor's interactions with relevant technical staff.

- At least two staff members from relevant departments must be assigned, and receive training, as core users of the data platform as well as to interface with the capacity building consultants provided through this grant, throughout the entire grant period.

5. **Community Partnerships**: The applying municipality must demonstrate a commitment to working in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders. Applications must include:

- Two (2) letters of support from community institutions, stakeholders, and/ or Community Based Organizations (CBOs) (not including elected officials).

B. Preferences
Applications will be prioritized that meet the following criteria:

1. **Need**: This program is intended to support municipalities with comparatively high levels of community and property distress as demonstrated by publically accessible metrics. Indicators could include but are not limited to:

- According to 2015 American Community Survey, a poverty rate above 15%. Alternatively, municipalities with lower overall poverty but with census tract concentrations with at least 20% poverty rates will also receive preference.
- A high percentage of the municipality's housing stock with significant numbers of code violations related to health and safety.
- High bank foreclosure rate, tax foreclosure rates, or other financial signals of distress.

2. **Community Impact:** Competitive applications will demonstrate a history of focusing on improving housing conditions for vulnerable populations and minimizing displacement, or if there is no extensive history, specific steps that the applicant plans to take, using BuildingBlocks and assistance from consultants provided to it under Phase One, to achieve these outcomes. To participate in the program, applicants must be prepared to fully embrace the goal of using data to create or update a strategy to target housing resources in both an efficient and equitable way.

3. **Staff Support:** Preference will be given to municipalities that assign at least one staff person from each of the relevant departments or agencies as core users of the data platform.

4. **Sustainability**: Competitive applications will demonstrate how the municipality will ensure long term sustainability—both financially and operationally—of the data and management systems put in place by this program. The municipality may demonstrate commitment to continuing data integration systems after the two-year program with a letter from the City Council or equivalent governmental decision-making body.

II. Narrative Proposal

Answers to the questions below must be presented as a narrative; any words beyond the limit for that section will be disregarded, **whether municipalities are applying jointly or individually**. The narrative should be organized and labeled based on the sections outlined below. For municipalities applying jointly, only one lead municipality must submit answers to the questions below but reference its partners' need, experience, etc. as applicable.

1. **Need (25 points) (Not to exceed 500 words)**
   - What are your municipality's greatest housing challenges?
   - Provide metrics, referenced under *Section 2.I.A and B* of this RFA, that illustrate your municipality's housing challenges. Does your municipality contain pockets of concentrated poverty or distress?
   - In what ways does your municipality need to improve its data systems related to code enforcement and asset management?
   - What do you see as the role of data collection and management in addressing your municipality's housing challenges?

2. **Experience (15 points) (Not to exceed 500 words)**
   - Does your municipality have an interagency working group that meets on a regular basis to discuss code enforcement/ asset management? If yes, please describe. If not, how do you currently facilitate effective interagency cooperation?
   - How does your municipality manage distressed property data? What data systems are you currently using? What sets of data (related to code enforcement/ asset management) do you currently have electronically?

3. **Proposed Strategy (20 points) (Not to exceed 500 words)**
   - What are your top priorities for improving code enforcement/ asset management?
   - Specifically, which datasets from which municipal agencies/ departments do you plan to feed into the BuildingBlocks platform if selected under this RFA?
   - What (if any) disparate impacts do your current code enforcement/ asset management practices have on low-income communities? How will data help you correct for this imbalance?

4. **Community Partnerships (15 points) (Not to exceed 250 words)**
   - Does your municipality currently solicit community feedback in making housing policy? If so, how do you collect community input?
   - How will your municipality solicit feedback from community members to inform your code enforcement/ asset management strategies?
   - Recognizing privacy concerns, would you want to make any of the data housed in the BuildingBlocks platform public? If yes, describe what data you might share with the public.

5. **Program Management (15 points) (Not to exceed 500 words)**
   - Name the agency positions that will be assigned to this project. How much time will each position commit to this project? What additional staffing plans do you propose for this project?
   - What activities will the team assigned to this project undertake once the data is loaded into the BuildingBlocks platform?
   - Describe how your municipality's chief executive officer(s) (mayor and/ or city/ town manager) will engage in this project?

6. **Support and Sustainability (10 points) (Not to exceed 250 words)**
   - How will your municipality ensure long term sustainability—both financially and operationally—of the data and management systems put in place by this program?

7. **Supplemental documents**
   - Please provide the following additional documents:
     i. Cover letter from the municipality's chief executive officer—the mayor and/ or the city/ town manager (required).
     ii. Summary page: Appendix I (required).
     iii. Agreement letter from the county to provide GIS files for each parcel in the municipality (required if the municipality does not currently have access to GIS files for each parcel in the municipality).
     iv. Two letters of support from community institutions, stakeholders, and/ or Community Based Organizations (CBOs) (required).
     v. Letter from the municipality's city council/ local governing body stating its financial commitment to sustaining data management systems beyond the two-year grant (optional).

III. Proposal and Submission Information

A. Timelines

Application issued: April 7, 2017

Informational call: April 18th, 2017 at 2pm EST.
Conference number 1-866-469-3239, code 66184256.
Please submit questions by 5:00 pm on April 14th. Submit questions as underline attachments to CitiesRISE@enterprisecommunity.org, with the word QUESTION clearly labeled in the name of the attachment. Any questions in the body of the e-mail or with the word QUESTION not in the title will not be viewed.

Due date and time: 5:00 pm EST on Friday, May 5th, 2017

Award notice: The projected notice of awards is May 19, 2017

Contract period: June 9, 2017 to June 8, 2019

B. Submittal Instructions

In order to fairly evaluate all proposals, a uniform proposal format is required. Each proposal section is listed below.

1. **Cover letter from Mayor/ Chief Executive Officer**
2. **Summary page**: Appendix I.
3. **Narrative**: Provide answers to the questions above, with a strict adherence to word count limitations.
4. **Commitment letters and supplemental attachments**: Listed above.

Please submit all applications as a single PDF with the name of the applying municipality (or municipalities) in the title to CitiesRISE@enterprisecommunity.org. The application must be submitted with a cover letter signed by the municipality's chief executive officer (mayor and/ or city/ town manager). Please note that only e-mail attachments will be reviewed; no information in the body of the e-mail aside from attachments will be considered part of the application. The projected date for notice of awards for this Request for Applications (RFA) is May 19, 2017, with awardees required to countersign and return required documentation by June 9, 2017. Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. (Enterprise) and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC; together "Enterprise and LISC" or "LISC and Enterprise") in their discretion may extend the application deadline.

IV. Grant Terms

Selected applicants will be required to enter into a grant agreement with Enterprise or LISC governing the grant of the license and related technical assistance from the BuildingBlocks vendor (Enterprise/LISC will pay the vendor directly), and enter into an End User Licensing Agreement with the vendor.

V. APPENDIX I: Application Summary Page

Legal Name of Municipal Corporation (or Corporations, if joint application):	
Is your Municipal Corporation responsible for Code Enforcement, with a dedicated office?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If you have another arrangement, such as shared code enforcement across municipalities, explain.	
In which county are you based?	
Population (2010 US Census):	
Poverty rate (2015 American Community Survey):	
% of census tracts with poverty rate of 20% or higher (2015 American Community Survey):	
Does your Municipal Corporation have access to GIS files for each parcel in the municipality, or an agreement from the County to provide the GIS files for each parcel in the municipality?	☐ Access to GIS files for every parcel ☐ Agreement from County to provide GIS files for every parcel (Agreement letter attached)
Relevant Municipal data sets in a machine-readable format	☐ Code Enforcement ☐ Property Tax ☐ Fire ☐ Police ☐ Utility ☐ Corporation Counsel ☐ Other (describe): _____
Name and title of staff person assigned to manage data platform deployment	
Name and titles of at least 2 staff people assigned as core users of data platform	

	Primary Contact	Secondary Contact
Name:		
Title:		
Agency/Office:		
Address:		
City, ZIP:		
Phone Number:		
Cell phone #:		
Email Address:		