

**Housing Action Illinois
RFP for Strategic Planning Consultant
August 25, 2011**

Summary

For 25 years, Housing Action Illinois, a statewide membership-based organization, has worked to protect and expand affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents throughout the state of Illinois. Housing Action now seeks an experienced consultant to work with its Board of Directors and staff to develop a 3-year strategic plan, including implementation/action steps, that will align the organization's infrastructure, programs, and current and expected resources with its mission. The strategic plan should be completed by February 29, 2012, with work on it beginning immediately. The proposal deadline is September 16, 2011.

Organizational Overview

Housing Action Illinois, formerly known as the Statewide Housing Action Coalition (SHAC), was formed in 1987 as a statewide, membership-based, not-for-profit organization. Our mission is to increase and preserve the supply of decent, affordable, accessible housing in the state of Illinois for low- and moderate-income households. We achieve our mission through three program areas: Training & Technical Assistance; Public Education & Organizing; and Public Policy Advocacy. Our vision is to create a network of resources, including community stakeholders, residents, businesses, government and housing experts, working to strengthen communities by increasing the supply and availability of safe and affordable housing throughout Illinois. We believe that housing is a basic necessity and that public policy and government spending should protect those in need. Communities throughout Illinois thrive when families and individuals have a place to call home.

During the past 25 years, Housing Action has enjoyed notable success, including leading significant public policy campaigns to establish resources for affordable housing and providing necessary capacity building support to other affordable housing non-profit organizations. Housing Action is coming to the end of a 4-year strategic plan that focused primarily on membership and communications. During this time, the organization experienced a growth in its staff and in the breadth and depth of its programs, especially relating to foreclosure-mitigation initiatives. However, as Housing Action has been confronted with ever-increasing demands on its expertise and staff, funding from key sources, particularly government, has decreased or stopped altogether. Moreover, all of this has occurred during a time of unprecedented disruption in the housing market and general economy, and for many non-profits, including Housing Action's membership. Despite uncertainty caused by these external factors, Housing Action seeks to strategically position itself to continue its leadership role for affordable housing throughout Illinois, which may include realigning its infrastructure, programs and activities with its current and expected resources. We are also interested in examining entrepreneurial funding strategies in order to sustain the organization over the long-term. Our goal is to thrive, and not merely survive, during these uncertain times, and to continue to be a meaningful resource for our membership, which is trying to do the same.

Project Description

Housing Action seeks a consultant to work with the Board and staff on a three-year strategic organizational plan. The plan must begin with an assessment of the current strengths and weaknesses

of the organization (including Board, staff, programs, and funding/resources), and should include consideration of the following elements:

- Board and Board Committee roles, composition and effectiveness
- Program structure and activities, and related staffing needs
- Fundraising and other resource development
- Membership
- New initiatives or areas of focus

We intend to complete the strategic plan within six months from the commencement of this project. During this time, we anticipate the consultant will perform the following tasks:

A. Preliminary interview and review of proposed Work Plan: The consultant will meet with the Executive Director and two Board members to obtain additional background information regarding the organization and our strategic planning goals. The consultant's proposed Work Plan will be reviewed and revised as necessary during this meeting. *(October 2011)*

B. Information gathering: During this phase of the project, the consultant will hold meetings and/or conduct interviews with staff, Board members, member organizations and, potentially, funders and other key stakeholders, individually or collectively, to develop an assessment of the organization's current landscape, including its strengths, weaknesses, membership needs, and areas of opportunity. The consultant will also conduct a scan of similar housing associations nationwide. Finally, the consultant will be expected to have reviewed Housing Action's website and print materials. *(October-November 2011)*

C. Written report to the Board and Executive Director assessing strengths, weaknesses and key issues facing the organization over the next three years. This report will form the basis for a strategic planning retreat to be held with the Board, Executive Director and, potentially, senior staff. *(December 2011)*

D. Strategic planning retreat: The consultant will facilitate a strategic planning retreat of the Board, the Executive Director and, potentially, senior staff, to address the key issues identified. The outcomes of the retreat will include a set of goals over a three-year period for the organization, responsibilities of staff and the Board for achieving those goals, the infrastructure and resources needed to achieve those goals, and benchmarks for meeting the goals. Following the retreat, the consultant will prepare a draft strategic plan (and dashboard version) that encompasses the discussion and decisions reached at the retreat. The strategic plan will be adopted by Board vote at its March 2012 Board of Directors Meeting. *(January-February 2012)*

Proposal Requirements

A. Project Approach: Include a complete description of the proposed approach and methodology for the project. This section should clearly convey your understanding of the needs outlined in this RFP.

B. Work Plan: Specify the detailed steps and timeline for completing the proposed assessment, report, retreat and draft strategic plan. The Work Plan should include all project requirements and the proposed tasks, services, activities, etc., necessary to accomplish the goals identified above. This

section must contain sufficient detail to convey the firm's knowledge of the subjects and skills necessary to successfully complete the project.

C. Qualifications: Provide a description of the specific skills related to this project, including a discussion of any similar projects undertaken. In addition, include:

- Name and direct contact information
- Education
- Work experience
- Significant accomplishments

If there will be other members of your staff or affiliated persons providing services on this project, please include the information specified above for each team member. Preference will be given to those who have substantial prior experience with affordable housing, advocacy, statewide and/or membership-based nonprofit organizations, or those with experience working with entrepreneurial non-profit organizations.

D. References: List names, address, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of three to five business references for whom strategic planning work has been completed and briefly describe the type of services provided. The consultant must grant permission to Housing Action Illinois to contact the references and others who may have pertinent information regarding the consultant's qualifications and experience to perform the services required by the project.

E. Budget: The proposal must provide a comprehensive, itemized project budget with narrative and time period over which funds will be expended.

Due Date: September 16, 2011

Please submit proposals by email only to the attention of Sharon Legenza, Executive Director, at sharon@housingactionil.org.

For additional information or clarification, please email Sharon at sharon@housingactionil.org. No phone calls, please.