Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago (NHS) is soliciting proposals from technical writers and designers to conduct research, perform interviews, write, and design a manual for 2-4 unit property owners looking to convert their basement into an income-producing rental unit. The manual will be for owner-occupants, with the goal of helping them coordinate, supervise, and hire the right professionals to complete such a project in compliance with City of Chicago building and zoning codes. Target audiences will be those 2-4 owners with current illegal basement units which need to be converted to comply with building or zoning codes, as well as owners with eligible basement spaces that can be converted to income-generating units.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
There is growing discussion among Chicago’s affordable housing advocates on the opportunity for basement units (sometimes referred to as Accessory Dwelling Units or ADUs) to help meet the growing need for affordable rental units across the city. These spaces tend to be more naturally affordable than other units, and often provide housing for some of the city’s lowest-income renters looking to stay in their preferred neighborhoods. These units can also provide a benefit to owner-occupants of 2-4 unit buildings by supplementing income to offset mortgage and maintenance costs.

Unfortunately, many existing basement units are not built to Chicago’s building and zoning codes, whether known by the owner-occupant or not. If discovered, the building owner can face severe fines and may be forced to stop renting this unit, resulting in the loss of affordable housing stock and income for the owner. Some basement units also present health hazards to occupants, if moisture and radon are not properly mitigated or dangerous mold has already infested the space. Building out a fully compliant basement unit can be an expensive, complex project for a homeowner, and resources are needed to help encourage these projects when they can be beneficial to both the owner and renter.

The goal of this project is to create a universal, publicly accessible manual that will prepare owner-occupants to better understand the planning, needs, costs, and risks associated with legally building out or converting their basement rental units. This manual will help overcome initial knowledge barriers and planning costs, while also acting as an outreach tool. This cross-platform manual will also be supported by professional drawings, visual aids, and project budgets to lower the barrier to entry for building out a legal and compliant basement rental unit. Visual aids should include detailed schematic designs of best practices for common buildout components, engaging illustrations, and diagrams that help make complex content easy to understand for the average homeowner.
The current content outline of the manual is as follows:

1. Overview of benefits and risks associated with basement unit conversions, and why “doing it right” will contribute to long term success in safety and maintenance
2. Description of minimum unit requirements per code, zoning, and fire safety
   a. basement assessment checklist to determine scope of project
3. Recommendations, illustrations/visual aids, and sample budgets for proper mitigation of common basement unit issues:
   a. Additional point of egress needed
   b. Minimum ceiling height
   c. Natural light and ventilation needed
   d. Mitigating safety hazards, radon and mold
   e. Site grading/drainage
   f. Interior and exterior drain tile and sump pump
   g. Backflow prevention valves/overhead sewer
   h. Replacing and insulating the concrete slab
   i. Damp proofing/water proofing
   j. Necessary MEP upgrades
4. Illustrations of common basement unit layouts for different building types
5. Navigating City permitting processes

NHS employees, including the Homeownership Director, Construction Services Manager, Grants Manager, and Public Policy & Innovation Strategist will be interviewed as experts on the project. Other organizations, such as the City of Chicago, Community Investment Corporation, Enterprise Community Partners, and Communities United, among others, have also agreed to contribute expertise to the project.

SCOPE OF SERVICES/DELIVERABLES

1. Refine and finalize the manual content outline and list of experts to be consulted on the project in conjunction with NHS staff.
2. Conduct research and interviews with subject matter experts to develop content for the manual.
3. Write an initial draft of the manual and work with NHS staff to edit as needed.
4. Create graphic layout and accompanying dynamic visual aids for manual, including:
   a. Engaging graphic design and clearly organized manual layout
   b. Compelling and dynamic visual aids that will be engaging for the average homeowner
   c. Schematic designs of common basement unit projects and layouts for common building types
   d. Design work can be completed by the main proposal submitter, or a suggested partner included in proposal budget
5. Create outline for incorporating content into online learning modules

FORM OF PROPOSAL

Proposals must consist of the following information indicated below:
• Cover letter stating interest in the project executed by a duly authorized principal outlining your approach to the proposed scope of services.
• List of key personnel along with biographies/resumes
• List of similar projects which demonstrate your experience in manual writing, graphic design, and schematic designs
• List of professional/client references
• Proposed budget to provide the outlined scope of services.

Individuals may submit proposals if they are able to meet all project needs. We also encourage proposals from teams that include multiple members such as (but not limited to) researchers, writers, architects, and designers, so long as all project guidelines are met and the total budget does not exceed the amount stated below.

ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTIONS OF PROPOSALS
NHS reserves the right to reject any and/or all submitters which have not met the proposal requirements, who have previously failed to perform properly or complete on time contracts of similar nature, or who is in the opinion of NHS, not in a position to perform the contract. NHS also reserves the right to waive any information and technicalities in bidding.

USE OF FEDERAL FUNDS
This project is supported through federal funds, and federal flow-down provisions will be applied.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS & BUDGET
All bid proposals should be submitted electronically by Wednesday, January 29, 2020 to:

Sarah Brune
Public Policy & Innovation Strategist
Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago
Sbrune@nhschicago.org
773-329-4150

Proposals with budgets up to $20,000 will be considered.

After evaluation of proposal, respondents may be contacted for a formal interview. However, a formal decision may be based solely on the written response without any request for a formal interview.

For technical information, call: Sarah Brune at 773-329-4150

Applicants who reflect the diversity of the communities served by Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago are strongly encouraged to apply.

NHS reserves the right to waive irregularities and to reject any and all proposals.