

# Homeless Housing Placements Evaluation Proposal

to the

New York City Housing Development Corporation  
Director of Process Improvement for Housing  
Placements

Submitted by:

RiseBoro Community Partnership  
565 Bushwick Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11206

In partnership with  
Jacobs Urban Technology Hub at Cornell University  
2 W Loop Rd, New York, NY 10044

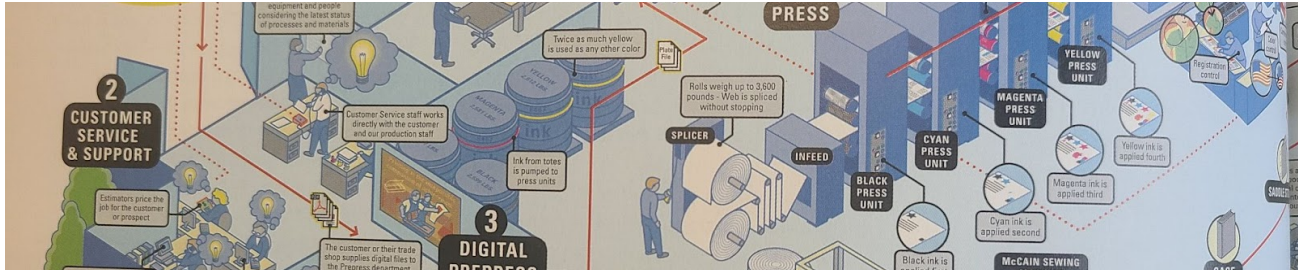
Period of Performance: April 17, 2023 – May 17, 2023

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Contact Information: Maushumi Suttles  
Chief Program Officer,  
RiseBoro Community Partnership  
[msuttles@riseboro.org](mailto:msuttles@riseboro.org)

Mirtha Santana  
Fellow  
Jacobs Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech  
[mirtha.santana@cornell.edu](mailto:mirtha.santana@cornell.edu)



Section of "How Books are Made"<sup>1</sup>--example of process map diagram

## Table of Contents

<a href="#">Letter of Interest</a>	3
<a href="#">Our Approach to Evaluation</a>	4
<a href="#">More about the Team: RiseBoro and the Jacobs Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech</a>	6
<a href="#">Examples of our Work</a>	9
<a href="#">Proposed Project Plan</a>	10
<a href="#">Proposed budget</a>	12
<a href="#">Engagement Letter/ Contract</a>	13
<a href="#">MWBE</a>	13
<a href="#">New York City Location</a>	13
<a href="#">Equal Employment Opportunity</a>	13
<b>Attachments</b>	<b>14</b>
1. Equal Employment Opportunity Report	
2. Doing Business Data Form (Compliance with Local Law 34)	

<sup>1</sup> Webcrafters, poster, 2005, USA  
Designed by Lin Wilson (Funnel Incorporated)

## Letter of Interest

Dear Selection Committee:

It is with great enthusiasm that we submit a proposal for the Homeless Housing Placements Evaluation RFP. This application is a collaboration between RiseBoro's Office of Innovation and Program Design and the Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech's Jacobs Institute. This extraordinary team of designers, researchers, practitioners, advocates, and technologists has unmatched experience in systems and program evaluation and design, community engagement, homeless services (including processing rental assistance vouchers and placing households into homeless set-aside apartments), and working with the City's systems for funding, managing, and evaluating these services. Our combined practical experience helping New Yorkers navigate and find housing makes us the ideal partner on this project; no other entity brings as much lived experience and system savvy as this group of partners. This is a remarkable opportunity to be in service of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

As a homelessness prevention service provider and property owner, RiseBoro has advocated to increase the supply of affordable housing developments, and to increase the number of units dedicated to those currently experiencing homelessness. However, we also acknowledge that the process to rehouse a household experiencing homelessness into an affordable apartment is complex, and thus requires the collaboration of the applicant, the property owner, and staff across multiple government agencies and nonprofit organizations; not to mention the multitude of databases, platforms, and assessment tools that must be utilized across this process. Therefore, we believe that simply building more affordable housing without serious attention and reform to the process of accessing that housing will not be enough to reduce the number of households experiencing homelessness in this great city.

We have used the term 'the last mile'—a transportation term that captures the difficulty and cost associated with the last step in a long process—to describe the complexity of placing a homeless household into an affordable unit ready to welcome them. The opportunity to be part of the team that makes this last mile more efficient and human-centered to "*dramatically* reduce[s] the time it takes to place DHS shelter residents into permanent housing" (as stated in your RFP) is the impetus for our application.

We are ready to begin work on April 17th and deliver the expected outcomes within 90 days.

Respectfully,

The team at RiseBoro and the Jacobs Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech

## Our Approach to Evaluation

The 2022 Mayor’s Management Report (MMR) states that the ‘median time it takes to lease up a homeless set aside new construction’ is 203 days. Mirtha Santana–our subcontract consultant–has already conducted several interviews with stakeholders, including the applicants, property owners, approved marketing agents, industry experts and advocates, and the city; and they all believe that 203 days is far too many. We will deploy a human-centered and systems–design approach that will go beyond understanding why this process takes so long and provide the framework to reduce its duration radically.

### ***Arriving at the “Why”***

Before we make recommendations or identify procedural gaps, we will conduct extensive research on how the process works today by interviewing each stakeholder to learn more about the tools, technology, and policies driving the process and by analyzing the City’s available data.



*Branda Ayo–dreaming of a better process for placing low income households into affordable housing.<sup>2</sup>*

#### People First

Any project with the goal of process improvement must start by understanding the experience of its users – those who are responsible for implementing and interacting with the process. Using a human-centered approach, we will begin our research by interviewing individuals who have experienced the affordable housing system from the client side to better identify pain points that exist within current processes. We will conduct interviews with decision–makers and implementers at the various city agencies involved (Office of the Mayor, HPD, HDC, NYCHA, DSS). We will

speak with property owners, applicants, and nonprofits serving as intermediates between landlords and tenants. In addition to interviews, we will collect stakeholders’ feedback through surveys.

The table below shows some of the people we will interview during our discovery process:

The Leadership	The Implementers	The Property Owners	The Applicants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Office of the Mayor</li> <li>– NYC Chief Housing Officer</li> <li>–DSS Commissioner</li> <li>–HPD Commissioner</li> <li>–HDC President</li> <li>–HRA Administrator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Case Managers &amp; Housing Specialists in NYC shelters</li> <li>–Staff at HRA that process the CityFHEPS voucher and make payments (RAP)</li> <li>–Staff at NYCHA and HPD that process Section 8</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Leasing &amp; Marketing staff</li> <li>–Data management staff</li> <li>–Social service staff (if any)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Households who have been placed into homeless set–asides apartments</li> <li>–Households who are living in NYC</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> The Task Force is composed of 6 people with lived experience who are supporting Mirtha’s research.

-DHS Administrator	vouchers -Project Managers at the Housing Connect unit at HPD		shelters
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The Process, technology, and policy

These interviews will give us an understanding of each user’s motivations, fears, challenges, and aspirations, but it will not be enough to conduct a proper systems analysis. We will also evaluate the way that each stakeholder interacts with the process. This means understanding the tools, platforms, databases, and forms that each uses to illuminate the frictions and areas of harmony. Currently, a homeless household’s information is duplicated across a variety of databases including DHS CARES, HRA Workers Connect, HRA Current, and HPD’s Housing Connect. Each of these systems has a different purpose and interface and, through this project, we will analyze their role and how each affects the process. Analyzing the available data will also paint a fuller picture of the current process.

Finally, we will examine how policy affects the process of housing placement. We will conduct limited research on how the city applies the regulations of tax incentives used to promote the inclusion of homeless set-asides within affordable housing projects. Furthermore, we will reflect on the notion of “compliance” that is inherent in federal welfare policy and how this impacts the ability of an applicant and/or those serving on behalf of an applicant to navigate affordable housing systems and programs.

**Arriving at the ‘How’**

Once we collect background information using the approach described above, we will start to deconstruct the process of re-housing a homeless household into a homeless set-aside into micro steps. We will map out the individual journeys of applicants, DSS; HPD; HDC staff, and property owners. These journey maps will include timeframes for each micro-step, the documents required to move to the next step, the specific people that touch these documents, and the database/technology used to manage the process and the policies that serve as the foundation for each step (see a [Draft Property Owner and Applicant Journey](#))<sup>3</sup>. Concurrently, we will develop low-fidelity prototypes to test assumptions. These prototypes can later be used to pilot an alternative process. The rehousing process is very complex and requires both a quantitative and qualitative methodology. In that way, it can reveal which areas of the shelter-to-housing pathway are currently working as intended, which are serving their purpose but can be improved, and which are actively hindering the ability of the City to expediently re-house its homeless households. We can then make recommendations on how to improve the applicant experience and how changes to technology, staffing plans, and process design can support these improvements.

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<sup>3</sup> This is in Draft format and it is being created and validated as part of Mirtha’s project at the Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech.

### **More about the Team: RiseBoro and the Jacobs Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech**

RiseBoro Community Partnership (RB) unleashes the potential of communities to thrive, no matter the odds. Since our founding in Bushwick, Brooklyn in 1973, we have offered services designed to meet the economic and social needs of communities across New York City. A pioneer in community development, RB reaches across generations, serving over 40,000 individuals each year. Our reach includes seniors, youth, justice-involved young adults, individuals with Limited English Proficiency, individuals with chronic health conditions, and individuals and families who are homeless, formerly homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

RiseBoro is partnering with Jacobs Urban Technology Hub at Cornell University. The Jacobs Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech is a new academic center in New York City that generates applied research, fosters an expanding tech ecosystem, and cultivates a new generation of urban technology leaders. We bring a human-centered approach to research and education with the aim of building a better world through increased access and opportunity within the technology sector.

We define “urban tech” as a new field of study and an emerging technology sector encompassing innovations that make cities more connected, livable, efficient, and accessible for people and businesses alike. The Hub aims to bridge the gap between academic resources and public needs, organizing strategic partnerships between academia, industry, communities, and government.

To this end, we identify urban challenges and opportunities, apply research and engineering solutions to real-world problems in real-time, and train the next generation of technologists to have a grounded approach to working with inhabitants to meet their needs. In doing so, we work with partners ranging from established industries and startups to local community groups and municipal partners — all to further the positive impact of urban technologies.

### **Meet our Team**

#### ***Team Member Bio—Maushumi Suttles***

Maushumi is deeply committed to delivering high-quality health and social service programs to marginalized populations with over 20 years of experience. In her role as Chief Program Officer, Maushumi’s mission is to support, integrate and advance RiseBoro’s Education, Empowerment, Seniors, and Health services in the community. One of Maushumi’s priorities is to elevate the voice and needs of the community. She leads the efforts to engage community members through a Community Advisory Committee who inform RiseBoro’s programs.

Maushumi has led large-scale population health and program evaluation initiatives while at her previous role as Executive Director of Informatics and Data Services at NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. She was part of the leadership team to oversee evaluation of programs for marginalized populations in NYC and collaborated with other agencies to disseminate information and make both program and policy recommendations (see example cases section below)

Maushumi previously worked at Oscar Health overseeing Population Health programs and Total Cost of Care initiatives overseeing continual process improvement and evaluation efforts for quality and cost of care. Prior to her work at Oscar, she was co-founder of ZilaCare, which provided consultative services to advance public health and wellness programs for businesses and nonprofits, including working on the 2020 NBA bubble. Maushumi has also worked as Vice President of Innovation and Analytics at Planned Parenthood of Greater NY to advance programming and clinical services.

Prior to Planned Parenthood, she worked at Evolent Health to support providers transitioning from fee-for-service to pay for performance models to drive high-quality health care. Maushumi has also worked at NYC DOHMH for providers across NYS to oversee core public health programming. There she also oversaw multi-agency initiatives to evaluate and improve critical services for marginalized populations including Incarcerated, Homeless as well as Early Development. Maushumi has a Master's in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University, School of Public Health, and a Bachelor's in Biology from Bryn Mawr College. Maushumi lives in Bedford-Stuyvesant with her husband and their sweet puppy.

#### ***Team Member Bio–Damaury Gonzalez***

Damaury works with RiseBoro's Office of Innovation and Program Design as the Program Innovations Manager. In this role, she works with RiseBoro leadership to design programs and interventions that address the needs of the community including leading RB's Community Advisory Committee. She is a program designer and has experience employing speculative and human-centered design when working with people with lived experience.

In addition, she has over six years of experience in homelessness prevention and rehousing programs such as the CityFHEPS voucher and the New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). Damaury has experience interacting with the various stakeholders involved in the affordable housing process and understands the housing insecurities marginalized communities face in NYC.

Damaury is passionate about social justice, and racial and gender equality and is looking to expand her knowledge of socio-economic and finding solutions for social issues in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods. She is currently enrolled in the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College to obtain her Master's Degree in Social Work focusing on Organizational Management and Leadership. Damaury believes that all communities deserve equitable access to resources and effectively collaborates with RiseBoro programs and community members in program design and implementation.

#### ***Team Member Bio–Joscelyn Truitt***

Joscelyn currently oversees one of RiseBoro's programmatic divisions, Empowerment, which is responsible for delivering eviction prevention services, Joscelyn serves to enhance program impact by developing or highlighting opportunities for programs to build off of one another's value to the community. Under her supervision, the Empowerment division offers larger-scale homelessness prevention programs, like Homebase and a housing legal services

practice, as well as smaller economic empowerment, workforce, and financial literacy programs.

Joscelyn is passionate about developing services and the skills of staff to respond to and validate the experience of those living in poverty. Prior to joining RiseBoro, Joscelyn was a Director at the Brooklyn Family Justice Center, organizing a “one-stop shopping” service experience for those experiencing domestic violence by coordinating and co-locating services through a trauma-informed lens.

As a career-long social worker, Joscelyn is most passionate about utilizing the power of social services to interrupt systems of oppression and those that perpetuate poverty, racism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. She is most interested in developing solutions to poverty that create real intergenerational wealth, economic mobility, and freedom from the oppressive nature of welfare-funded social service programs.

#### ***Team Member Bio–Zachary Chumley***

Zachary is a member of RiseBoro’s Office of Innovation and Program Design, serving as Director of Development. His work over the last three years as part of the RB development team has seen the organization’s budget more than double, increasing revenue by over \$10M annually through the solicitation of new funding sources and expansion of existing contracts. Prior to his current role, Zachary worked for six years within RB’s Empowerment Division. Here, he specialized in rehousing individuals and families who were homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness by utilizing various City, State, and Federal rental subsidy programs and working directly with private landlords to connect households to affordable apartments. While serving as Housing Specialist Supervisor for Empowerment’s Atlas program, Zachary’s team rehoused hundreds of SEPS and CityFHEPS voucher holders annually.

#### ***Team Member Bio–Mirtha Santana***

Mirtha’s commitment to homelessness prevention stems from her belief that no child should sleep in a homeless shelter. She is a program designer, an experienced manager, and an advocate. Mirtha is currently a Fellow at the Jacobs Institute Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech. Through her project, she is mapping the affordable housing application and selection process in NYC to determine how technology can be used to improve the experience of low-income applicants and property owners. Through the fellowship, she has already conducted hours of desk research on the process to lease up an income-restricted development project, interviewed over 25 stakeholders, created a task force composed of people’s lived experiences, completed high-level journey maps, and drafted diagrams of the databases.

As the Chief Program Officer at RiseBoro Community Partnership (RB), she led the Empowerment, Education, Seniors, and Food Justice divisions. While at RB, she built the homelessness prevention division now known as Empowerment. Using a human-centered approach, she designed and implemented multiple process improvement projects that led to an integrated division and better outcomes for clients.



Mirtha is also an experienced program and process designer. In collaboration with ideo.org, she designed economic mobility programs. She is currently a Co-Lead and Design Coach for IDEO's Health Equity Collective, a national coalition of healthcare providers changing the narrative and building a more equitable healthcare system for people of color across America with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

In 2020, Mirtha was selected as an Aspen Institute Healthy Communities Fellow for her expertise in community-based strategies that address housing insecurity, hunger, and access to education.

Mirtha is a board member of the New York Housing Conference. She is a Dominican immigrant and mother of three who lives in Queens, NY.

#### ***Team Member Bio–Rasmi Elasmr***

Rasmi Elasmr is an Urban Tech Fellow at the Jacobs Institute Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech. His research is focused on identifying opportunities to share resident data across public services to enable proactive outreach and simplified benefits enrollment, including understanding the legal and technical constraints associated with inter-agency data sharing, and identifying solutions that preserve the security, privacy, and agency of residents. In his remaining time, he is a Technical Program Manager responsible for pro bono technical projects with nonprofits and governments.

#### ***Team Member Bio– Two Graduate Students at Cornell Tech (TBD)***

The team will include two graduate students at Cornell Tech to support research and document finds. Graduate students at Cornell Tech are well-equipped to contribute high-quality work for a project of this level.

#### ***Team Member Bio– Graphic Designer at Cornell Tech (TBD)***

Team will include a graphic designer with experience producing reports and diagrams and other visual ways to demonstrate a process. Cornell Tech has worked with designers in the past to produce reports and we will tap their network to select an appropriate person.

### **Examples of our Work**

Members of the team have contributed their expertise in the following projects which are listed below. In addition, the team has demonstrated long-standing partnerships with stakeholders from tenants, caseworkers supporting tenants, and building marketing agents processing applications – which will support focus groups, interviews, and gathering of information within the project timelines.

1. [The Health of Homeless Adults in New York City: A report from the New York City Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene and Homeless Services \(2005\)](#)
2. [New York/New York III Supportive Housing Evaluation: Interim Utilization and Cost](#)

[Analysis. A report from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in collaboration with the New York City Human Resources Administration and the New York State Office of Mental Health \(2013\)](#)

3. [Tenant Well being in NY / NY III Supportive Housing \(2005\)](#)
4. [Public Health of Vulnerable Populations: Morbidity and Mortality Among Ever Incarcerated in NYC Jails 2001 – 2005 \(NYC DOHMH, DOC, DHS\)](#)
5. [Health Equity Collective | Project | IDEO.org](#)
6. [Process Design for intake of the RiseBoro Homebase](#)
7. [CiviForm](#), a free and open web application that makes it easy for residents and governments to access and administer public benefits programs.
8. [Property Owner and Applicant Journey](#) (prepared as part of Mirtha’s fellowship)
9. [Technology and Administrative Burden](#) (in-progress report as part of Rasmi’s fellowship)

In addition, The Jacobs Urban Tech Hub at Cornell Tech has published the following reports:

- [How Cities Make Software Together](#)
- [Rebooting NYC: An Urban Tech Agenda for the Next Administration](#)

### Proposed Project Plan

Housing Placement Evaluation Project Road Map				
	April	May	June	July
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Kick-off meeting April 2023</li> <li>-Finalize Project Plan</li> <li>-Establish schedule of weekly meeting with Director of Process Improvement</li> <li>-Meet with various stakeholders</li> <li>-Determine reporting structure and different roles of members of the Task Force</li> <li>-Study all materials provided by the city including current process flow</li> <li>-Request data from the city’s data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Interview stakeholders</li> <li>-Conduct focus groups with members of each stakeholder group.</li> <li>-Hold co-design sessions with members of stakeholder groups.</li> <li>-Analyze the data obtained by the Property Owner Survey</li> <li>-Solicit feedback from stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Continue to conduct interviews</li> <li>- Assess administrative burdens in detail and identify levers for improvement.</li> <li>- Validate process change recommendations with residents and program staff</li> <li>-Implement low-fidelity prototypes that test assumptions</li> <li>-Test marketing assets with clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Present findings to stakeholders and solicit feedback on recommendations.</li> <li>-Housing Placement Evaluation Report out.</li> </ul>

	analytics team	-Collect data and information from interviews	and make adjustments based on co-design sessions.	
Deliverable / Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detailed research plan, including list of stakeholders to engage with throughout the remainder of the project.</li> <li>-Draft questions for interviews &amp; tools to capture interview data.</li> <li>-Develop survey to solicit feedback from property owners on current process</li> <li>-Create a responsibility matrix including all city agencies involved in the placement of homeless households into set asides.</li> <li>-Design a feedback loop mechanism that will be used to share deliverables with key stakeholders who are not members of the multi-agency task force</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design a map of information flow and technical systems including timeframes</li> <li>- Identify datasets and technical systems across housing placement processes</li> <li>-Design assets such as flyers, information guides and other marketing tools for clients</li> <li>-Report on the findings from the analysis the property owners survey and from data gathered by city analytics team</li> <li>-Provide synthesis information from stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create journey maps across all necessary stakeholders</li> <li>-Draft and validate diagrams that demonstrate the process</li> <li>- Report on opportunities and challenges associated with data sharing, system integration, or other technical interventions.</li> <li>- Provide a first draft of findings on gaps and administrative burdens and opportunities for improvement.</li> <li>-Provide a draft of recommendations on how to improve the client experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final report including journey maps, process recommendations, technical recommendations, and prototypes.</li> </ul>

## Proposed budget

RiseBoro and Jacobs Urban Tech Hub at Cornell are requesting \$214,895.86 to conduct the Homeless Housing Placement Evaluations. Below is the detailed budget breakdown.

Homeless Housing Placements Evaluation Budget				
Personnel				
Description	# Staff	Allocation	Annual Salary	Total Salary
<i>Program Innovations Manager</i>	1	0.6	\$78,000.00	\$11,556.00
<i>Chief Program Officer</i>	1	0.1	\$235,000.00	\$5,802.69
<i>Vice President, Empowerment</i>	1	0.1	\$180,000.00	\$4,444.62
<i>Director Of Development</i>	1	0.1	\$115,000.00	\$2,839.62
			<b>Salary Subtotal</b>	\$24,642.92
<b>Fringe Rate</b>				<b>\$6,407.16</b>
<b>Personnel Subtotal</b>				<b>\$31,050.08</b>
OTPS				
Supplies	Unit Cost		Quantity	Subtotal
Office Supplies	\$25		10	\$250
<b>Supplies Subtotal</b>				<b>\$250</b>
Travel	Unit Cost		Quantity	Subtotal
Staff Travel – interviews Focus Groups	\$31.75		15	\$476.25
<b>Travel Subtotal</b>				<b>\$476.25</b>
Participant Incentives	Unit Cost		Quantity	Subtotal
Gift Cards	\$50		100	\$5,000
<b>Participant Incentives Subtotal</b>	<b># consultants</b>		<b>Consultant Cost</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>

<b>Consultants</b>				
Fellow @Cornell Tech	2		\$39,000.00	\$78,000.00
Graduate Student	2		\$19,500.00	\$39,000.00
Graphic Designer	1		\$12,000.00	\$12,000.00
<b>Consultants Subtotal</b>			>>	<b>\$129,000.00</b>
<b>OTPS Subtotal</b>			>>	<b>\$134,726.25</b>
<b>Indirect Cost Rate</b>			0.2963	\$49,119.53
<b>Subtotal IDC</b>			>>	<b>\$49,119.53</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>				<b>\$214,895.86</b>

**Engagement Letter/ Contract**

RiseBoro will be able to provide an Engagement Letter Contract upon award. RiseBoro has dozens of contracts with the City of New York and it is well aware of requirements and regulations.

**MWBE**

As a matter of standard procedure in completing projects such as our proposed Homeless Housing Placement Evaluation, RiseBoro meets or exceeds M/WBE requirements when possible by including these requirements in our contract with contractors, who will be responsible for meeting all applicable goals through the hiring of qualified subcontractors. Consequently, though we are not requesting a waiver, we are not yet identifying vendors at this time.

**New York City Location**

RiseBoro’s and Cornell Tech’s headquarters are in NYC.

- RiseBoro Community Partnership, 565 Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11206
- Jacobs Urban Technology Hub at Cornell University, 2 W Loop Rd, New York, NY 10044

Both institutions are committed to purchasing goods and services, hiring and developing housing in NYC.

**Equal Employment**

RiseBoro’s is Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) / Affirmation Statement is below. An EEO Report can be provided upon award.

It is the policy of RiseBoro to provide equal employment opportunity to all employees and applicants for employment. No individual will be discriminated against on the basis of race,

color, age, creed, religion, national origin, citizenship status, political or union affiliation, marital or partnership status, sex, sexual orientation or affectional preference, gender identity, familial status, genetic information or predisposition or characteristic, disability, status as a victim of domestic violence, status as a veteran or member of the U.S. military and related obligations, or any other characteristic protected by law. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including but not limited to, recruitment, hiring, job placement, compensation, benefits, training and apprenticeship, employee development, promotion, demotion, discipline, transfer, lay-off and recall, and termination. RiseBoro makes reasonable accommodations based on religion and/or disability as required by law, and requests for accommodation are to be directed to the Human Resources Department.

## **Attachments**

1. Equal Employment Opportunity Report
2. Doing Business Data Form (Compliance with Local Law 34)