

UNITED WAY OF OLMSTED COUNTY



FOOD SECURITY

JANUARY 2018

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UNITED WAY OF OLMSTED COUNTY 2018 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

United Way of Olmsted County is a community change organization that fights for the education, health, and financial stability of every person in our community. Olmsted County is a fantastic place to live, work, play, and raise a family. A community with tremendous natural beauty, caring neighbors, a strong economy, and seemingly boundless opportunity, Olmsted County is an exceptional community.

But too often, there are people in Olmsted County who are left behind and don't share in the vitality. An unacceptable income gap. Geographic and socio-economic segregation. Personal and collective isolation. Gross inequities along racial and ethnic lines. These conditions and more cause Olmsted County to be experienced differently by people in need. United Way fights to erase divisions, bridge divides, and right inequities. We work to connect people with resources that change lives and transform our community.

We do this in a variety of ways. We operate programs and shared resources that support the community, such as our 2-1-1 information and referral service or our Get Connected volunteer matching portal. We work collaboratively with partners from many organizations and walks of life to create system change and solutions that elevate our community more than any single program or organization could. We provide financial, technical, and volunteer support for programs that make a difference.

At United Way, we LIVE UNITED with the change-makers, risk-takers, and problem-solvers as we seek, find, and create lasting solutions to the challenges that face our community.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

United Way is working to bring an end to inequity in Olmsted County and help people in need reach their potential. This requires taking a long view, working to ensure that families are stable and children grow up in healthy environments that promote success. Those families can break cycles of poverty, strengthen across generations, and make a better community for us all.

Without stable, reliable access to nutritious food, no family can progress. No child can succeed. No community can thrive. United Way recognizes the need for stable, equitable access to nutritious food and has issued this Request for Proposals to establish partnerships and provide support for programs that provide the foundation of our community’s food supports and help make food access equitable.

Anticipated Investments:

- United Way of Olmsted County anticipates awarding approximately \$150,000 in annual Food Security investments beginning July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2024.
- There will be an estimated 4-5 successful partnership proposals

Key Program Requirements:

- Annually report the number of individuals participating in healthy food access and/or nutrition programs
- Include administrative costs of at least 15%
- Demonstrate, practice, and report on continuous improvement practices
- Participate in anonymous partner surveys

* for complete details and program requirements, refer to page 8

Key Program Expectations:

- Attend quarterly partner cohort meetings
- Update your organization’s 2-1-1 listings at least annually
- Participate in developing client success stories at least one time per year
- Submit on-time program and performance reporting on an annual basis

* for complete details and partner expectations, refer to page 9

Key Proposal and Review Information:

After submitting proposals, prospective partners will be invited to meet with United Way staff and volunteers to discuss the program being proposed. Additional paperwork may be requested, and clarifying questions may be posed. The process is expected to be interactive with prospective partners and United Way representatives engaging in ongoing dialogue about the proposal.

- **Public Information Session:**February 6, 2018 (1:30-3pm) at UWOC
- **Proposals Due:**March 6, 2018
- **Award Announcements:**June 28, 2018
- **Funding Begins:**July 1, 2019
- **Funding Ends:**June 30, 2024

UNITED WAY FOCUS AREA: FOOD SECURITY

What is it?

Food insecurity is often referred to as hunger. It is defined by the federal government as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways”. Food insecurity can take many forms, including worry that food will run out, purchased food will not last, meal sizes are cut or a meal is skipped, family members eat less than they should, or the family cannot afford a balanced meal (Anderson, 1990).

Why are we talking about food security in 21st century America?

Poverty and income are deeply linked to food insecurity: about 66% of households utilizing food shelves have monthly incomes of less than \$1,000, and only 38% report a salary as their main source of income (Chase & Schauben, 2006). About 596,000 people in Minnesota live in poverty (US Census Bureau, 2015b), with nearly the same number (568,000) estimated to be food insecure (Gundersen, Dewey, Crumbaugh, & Engelhard, 2017).

Food insecurity disproportionately affects children and households with children. In Minnesota, only 31% of households overall have children, compared to the 42% of households receiving SNAP benefits, formerly referred to as food stamps (US Census Bureau, 2015a). Locally, although food insecurity rates have steadily decreased, an estimated 1 in 5 children in Olmsted County remain food insecure. This translates to 12,880 individuals in Olmsted County who are food insecure and 4,560 children in Olmsted County who do not have consistent access to food (Gundersen et al., 2017).

Food insecurity has real physical effects: Of Minnesota food shelf users, 47% of adults and 14% of children skip meals to stretch their budgets (Chase & Schauben, 2006). In our state, \$1.6 billion are spent to combat the effects of hunger in the areas of healthcare, hospitalization, medication, education, and other costs, including lost productivity at work and in school (Hunger-Free Minnesota, 2010).

Many people with food insecurity are not eligible for or do not participate in federal nutrition programs. In other cases, the programs do not fully meet the needs of participants. Food assistance programs strive to meet the unmet need.

How food insecurity affects individuals

Adults that are food insecure have an increased risk for diet-sensitive chronic diseases such as hypertension, high blood pressure, and diabetes (Seligman, Laraia, & Kushel, 2010). Food insecurity is also correlated to negative mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Jones, 2017). Somewhat paradoxically, those who suffer from food insecurity may disproportionately experience obesity, possibly due to restricted access to low-calorie and high-fiber foods which tend to be more expensive than refined and processed food (Franklin et al., 2012).

Hunger and undernutrition have a significant impact on child development. Maternal undernutrition during pregnancy increases the risk of negative birth outcomes, including premature birth, low birth weight, smaller head size and lower brain weight (Gala, Godhia, & Nandanwar, 2016). A child who faces food insecurity during the first three years of life—a period of rapid brain development—faces increased chances of experiencing depression, anxiety, and hyperactivity (Melchoir et al., 2012). Prolonged or severe food insecurity during childhood is associated with poor school and social development (Compton & Shim, 2015); increased odds of a mental or substance disorder (McLaughlin et al., 2012); and a hindered ability to maintain friendships, control one’s temper, and express sympathy (Howard, 2011).

In short, food-insecure adults are subject to significantly worsened physical and mental health risks and face barriers to employment success, parenting success, and financial success. Hungry children are sick more often, and more likely to have to be hospitalized; hungry children suffer growth

impairment that precludes their reaching their full physical potential; and hungry children incur developmental impairments that limit their physical, intellectual and emotional development. Children facing hunger may struggle in school and beyond. They are more likely to repeat a grade in elementary school, experience developmental impairments in areas like language and motor skills, and have more social and behavioral problems. Due to the relationship between food insecurity, delayed and impaired cognitive development, and physical health challenges that lead to poor school attendance, food provision can be a meaningful lever in improving children’s academic, health, and economic outcomes.

WHAT WORKS?

Traditional food access: When this RFP references “traditional food access,” it refers to food banks, as well as their traditional distribution partners. A food bank is a non-profit that distributes food to those facing insecurity. A food bank may distribute food directly to individuals, or it may operate as a ‘warehouse,’ supplying food to distributors such as food pantries, homeless shelters, schools, and soup kitchens. Food banks were first established in 1967, but the distribution methods by which they operate were established much earlier (“Feeding America,” 2017a).

In terms of scale and efficiency, it is hard to find a model that can put more food in the hands of hungry people at a lower cost. The food distributed may come from public donations, government programs, or by partnering with for-profit companies to distribute unsold food that would otherwise go to waste. In other words, the food distributed by a food bank costs very little, leaving primarily program operations and organizational management as the cost burden. Food banks often rely on volunteer labor, as do many of their distribution partners, which serves to keep those administrative costs low.

Food banks serve over 3.6 billion meals a year, serving 1 in 7 Americans (“Feeding America,” 2017b). The network connecting food suppliers, food banks, and distributors is both well-established and formalized, with over 200 banks and 60,000 programs included in the Feeding America network, America’s third-largest charitable organization (Barrett, 2016). In terms of addressing food insecurity, food banks are nearly as influential as the federal assistance programs, SNAP and WIC (formerly referred to as food stamps) combined. Food banks serve 46 million individuals annually (“Feeding America,” 2017b), while SNAP and WIC serve 44 million and 8 million individuals, respectively (United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, 2017a, United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, 2017b). Most individuals that utilize food assistance programs, such as food pantries, do not treat them as temporary relief but use them as a consistent, supplemental food source. More than half of all food pantry clients use food pantries for at least six months out of the year, and more than a third use them twelve months out of the year (Echevarria, Santos, Waxman, Engelhard, & Del Vecchio, 2009). In short, food banks and their partners are essential components of society’s response to domestic hunger.

EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIONS IN FOOD SECURITY:

Culturally-responsive food provision: Culturally-responsive food provision empowers individuals to maintain cultural integrity while accessing nutritional supports. Cultural responsiveness in food provision can manifest itself in various ways: the provision of culture-specific foods, culturally-responsive distribution methods, or even culture-specific education around food. Often, this is carried out by adapting existing services, though it can sometimes include the launch of new service areas.

Food distribution and intake methods that are not culturally responsive may disincline potential clients from enrolling in or fully utilizing a food support. For example, individuals from high-context cultures may not desire to participate in a program in which distribution is public or screening is intrusive (Koc & Welsch, 2001), and individuals from cultures with a large stigma on accepting outside assistance may be reluctant to participate in food provision programs at all.

Food access: A food desert is an area, especially one with low-income residents, that has limited access to affordable and nutritious food. Within Olmsted County, federally-designated food deserts are located in Rochester, concentrated in the Northwest and Southeast parts of town (Ver Ploeg & Breneman, 2017). Even in areas that are not federally-designated food deserts, access to fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods can become burdensome without a car or reliable public transport, particularly in a climate with seasonal extremes such as Minnesota’s.

Distribution systems: Market barriers often prevent full-service supermarkets from operating profitably in low-income neighborhoods. As a result of market barriers, market uncertainty, and crime, low-income neighborhoods tend to be served by smaller stores with poor selections and high prices (Dunkley et al., 2004; Jetter & Cassidy, 2006; Raja, Ma, & Yadav,

2008). Neighborhoods with such barriers are unlikely to see conditions change without intervention. One way of disrupting these conditions—without opening a grocery store—is by establishing distribution systems that bring fresh produce into these neighborhoods. This can be done using established infrastructure, such as incentivizing local markets to improve their healthy food selection, incentivizing other stakeholders to become food providers, or encouraging new partnerships that lead to either of those two results.

Health education: Nutrition is more than simply having enough to eat; it also requires there to be sufficient vitamins and minerals—as well as appropriate levels of fats, salts, and sugars—to result in good health. Generally, low-calorie and high-fiber foods are more expensive than refined and processed foods, and in a food desert, low-calorie and high-fiber foods are often geographically distant. This confluence may be one reason for the paradoxical finding that those suffering from food insecurity may disproportionately experience obesity (Franklin et al., 2012). In addition to obesity, and for similar reasons, individuals who are food insecure have an increased risk for diet-sensitive chronic diseases such as hypertension, high blood pressure, and diabetes (Seligman, Laraia, & Kushel, 2010). An individual with nutritional and health literacy, despite living in a moderately unhealthy eating environment, may experience improved health outcomes as long as there is a minimum level of access to healthy foods.

Parent education on nutrition has been shown to readily influence what children eat and drink (Rich, 2012), and children that grow up in households where healthy eating is modeled and encouraged tend to exhibit similar behaviors when they are grown (Savage, Orlet Fisher, & Birch, 2007). At times, these interventions are low-cost or no-cost and can be implemented even without changing the food environment.

Community-based access to fruits and vegetables: The most direct way to disrupt a food desert is to introduce a location-based source of healthy foods. As noted above, supermarkets often face challenges operating profitably in low-income neighborhoods. For this reason, community-based interventions are unlikely to be structured like a traditional supermarket. Location-based sources of healthy foods can be sustainable in the long run and, if sufficiently successful (i.e., have a high enough rate of participation, affordable prices, and consistent and varied options), have the potential to eliminate a food desert entirely.

Beyond any doubt, there are countless other innovative and effective means for promoting food security. The above are provided as suggestions and models of programs that have been effective in other places but do not replace local innovations or ingenuity in developing solutions to local problems. United Way of Olmsted County welcomes proposals from programs that represent new innovations in food security and models which we have not yet studied.

For a deeper exploration of food security and related research, visit www.uwolmsted.org/research.

If you wish to speak with a United Way staff member about this research, this request for proposals, or ask questions about a proposal idea, please contact Emily Johnston at emilyj@uwolmsted.org or 507-287-2002.

GRANT DETAILS & REQUIREMENTS

Investment Information:

United Way expects that 50% of investments (approximately \$75k annually) will be made in programs ensuring “traditional food access,” while the remaining 50% will be invested in innovative food security programming. We anticipate 4-5 total successful proposals, with a greater number of successful proposals for food security innovations than for traditional food access.

Reporting & Measurement:

- Key performance measure(s): number of individuals participating in healthy food access and/or nutrition programs
- Additional performance measures to be co-developed by program and United Way

Budget requirements:

Proposals are expected to include a program budget (in your own preferred format) that provides both income and expense details. UWOC funding should comprise no more than 25% of the total program budget for “traditional food access” proposals, or no more than 50% of the total program budget for innovations in food provision. Additional consideration will be given to innovation programs that have plans for sustaining funding after United Way’s 5-year commitment.

While United Way wants to understand your program as clearly as possible in order to establish a positive partner relationship, we know that programs and program plans change and evolve over time. We anticipate that there will be changes to program budgets and designs over the life of the program and ask that you consult us when such changes are warranted.

United Way knows that all programs require foundational organization support for administrative and fundraising functions. In recognition of that, all program budgets should include an administration cost of at least 15% of the total program cost.

Similarly, any capacity-building (such as program evaluation systems, equipment, or training) needed to enact or sustain the program should be reflected in the program budget.

United Way funding is provided for programs, rather than organizations. Food Security investments will not be restricted to specific line items within a program’s budget (such as an individual staff member, or a capital purchase). These awards are made to the overall program budget, and are not restricted to specific kinds of program-related expenses.

Proposal review criteria:

Proposals will be evaluated in consideration of the following criteria, which will inform United Way’s investment decisions:

- Alignment: Program fits UWOC values and strategies, as well as the investment goals identified in this RFP.
- Priority populations: Program is intentionally designed to serve vulnerable and/or low-income populations.
- Performance measurement: Program demonstrates commitment to data-driven reporting and continuous improvement efforts.
- Program design: Program is intentionally designed, with high likelihood of achieving goals.
- Budget: Program budget includes administrative costs, capacity-building needs, and meets United Way’s total investment criteria.
- Sustained funding plans (innovation programs only): For food security innovation programs (programs not described under “traditional food access”), consideration will be given to those programs that have plans and ideas for sustaining funding after United Way’s 5-year commitment.

Additional consideration may be given to programs that demonstrate the ability to partner effectively with United Way and others and which are able to advance UWOC programs and strategies.

EXPECTATIONS OF PARTNERS:

- **Attend quarterly partner cohort meetings:**

Each quarter, for the length of this award period, representatives of partner organizations will gather with United Way staff to discuss programming, relevant challenges and opportunities, and emerging trends in the field. These meetings will sometimes be intended for executives and other times for program staff contacts. This is an important part of United Way's ongoing knowledge-building plan.

- **Update your organization's 2-1-1 listings at least annually:**

United Way sponsors 2-1-1, our local affiliate of the nation-wide internet- and phone-accessible information and referral service. It is critical that this service maintain the most up-to-date information possible about community supports and services. All United Way partners are required to update their service information at least one time each year.

- **Participate in developing client success stories:**

It is to the mutual benefit of United Way and its partners that we develop compelling stories of the success of individual clients, with appropriate permissions and media releases. These stories help to illustrate the value of our partnership and enhance United Way's ability to continue providing financial support for programs throughout the community.

- **Submit on-time program and performance reporting:**

For the length of the award period, partner programs must submit program and performance reporting on an annual basis. Metrics reported will include the Key Performance Measure(s), referenced above, and other performance measures mutually determined by your program and United Way staff.

- **Make volunteer engagement opportunities available:**

While it is not required of any program that it engages volunteers in its work, United Way asks that partners assist in finding and developing opportunities to engage United Way's stakeholders (volunteers, donors, corporate partners, etc.) in volunteer service opportunities.

- **Integration with United Way programming:**

Also not a requirement, United Way asks partners to consider the ways in which other United Way programming can be promoted through the partner's work (e.g. providing FamilyWize prescription discount cards at checkout for food shelf users, etc.).

PROPOSAL & REVIEW PROCESS

- **Public Information Session:February 6, 2018 (1:30-3pm) at UWOC**

A public session, during which United Way staff will provide an overview of the investment opportunity, the program requirements, and the proposal and review process. There will be a brief time for questions and answers. Individual follow-up discussions may also be arranged.

- **Proposals Due:March 6, 2018**

All proposals must be completed by 12:00pm on Tuesday, March 6, 2018. Proposals should be submitted through UWOC’s online grants portal, CommunityForce, at www.uwolmsted.org/grants. For assistance with the online tool, please contact Zeni Aly at 507-287-7877 or zenia@uwolmsted.org.

- **Program Review Conversations:March 13 – May 7, 2018**

A dialogue between prospective partners and United Way’s review team will ensue, which will include basic introductory conversations, possible additional written questions, follow-up discussion(s), and possibly performance measurement planning. The process will unfold differently for each program, based upon the questions our review team has and the advancement of the program through the selection process.

- **Performance Measurement:May 15 – June 12, 2018**

Finalists will work together with UWOC staff to develop the performance measures to be reported during the funding cycle. These measurements will be co-created and specific to the program. Performance measures should align with Results Based Accountability measures and focus on measurements of “how many and how well,” while “better off” measures will be considered above-and-beyond.

- **Award Announcements:June 28, 2018**

Prospective partners can expect to be notified of the status of their request on or before June 28, 2018, after United Way’s Board of Directors has approved its final decision.

- **Funding Begins:July 1, 2019**

First disbursements of Food Security grants will be made in July, 2019.

- **Funding Ends:June 30, 2024**

First disbursements of Food Security grants will be made in July, 2019.

United Way’s Online Grants Portal:

All proposals must be submitted through United Way of Olmsted County’s online grants portal. In your web browser, type in www.uwolmsted.org/grants to learn more about UWOC’s funding priorities.

To submit a proposal, click on “Funding Opportunities” to access the most up-to-date listing of funding opportunities. Select the opportunity that interests you and click on “Apply.” You’ll be asked to log in or create a new user account in order to access the proposal materials.

For technical support with the proposal process, you may contact Zeni Aly, Community Impact Administrative Assistant, at 507-287-7877 or ZeniA@uwolmsted.org.

For previous UWOC partners – this is a new system and all partners will need to create a new account.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can one organization submit proposals for multiple programs?

Yes. United Way of Olmsted County makes awards to programs, rather than to organizations. In the event that a single organization has more than one program that meets serves the goals of the RFP, multiple proposals will be considered.

Organizations may also be eligible to submit proposals to multiple RFPs within United Way's overall investment portfolio.

My program has been funded under one of UWOC's impact areas in the past. Is this RFP for me?

That depends. This RFP is intended to make investments in programs that help to address food security throughout Olmsted County. It is open to programs using both traditional and innovative strategies to improve food security. Whether those programs are motivated to do so in order to improve client health, student education, household financial stability, or another end goal, this RFP is open to considering their proposals.

My program already receives United Way funding, can I submit a proposal to this RFP as well?

Yes. There is no rule limiting a single program from receiving United Way support through more than one funding stream, nor is there any promise that any eligible program will necessarily be selected for investment.

Will you accept joint proposals?

Yes. Joint proposals involving multiple organizations are welcome to submit their proposals but should be limited to programs that are being jointly delivered. In practical terms, that requires all organizations to be serving the same individual clients toward a single, shared outcome over a sustained period of time.

We recognize this is a change of practice, which may produce fewer joint proposals. We prefer to reserve this practice for situations that require shared proposals, shared reporting, and shared program planning. We encourage community-serving organizations to develop robust cooperation and partnerships wherever possible, even where they aren't able to jointly submit their proposal.

I represent a [faith-based organization] / [unincorporated group] / [government agency]. Is my organization eligible?

Yes. Government agencies/units are eligible.

Faith-based organizations are eligible, provided they can demonstrate that there will be no explicitly faith-related content included in their programming and that there are no discriminatory restrictions (age, race, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, or otherwise) on service recipients.

Unincorporated community groups are eligible, provided they can document their relationship with a proper fiscal sponsor.

Can I save and edit my progress on the online Proposal?

Yes. Our online proposal management system requires an organizational profile and login to be created, which allows you to create, save, edit and submit your proposal online.

When can I expect to hear back from you?

You should expect to receive an automated notification that your proposal has been received immediately after submitting it. If you believe you've successfully submitted your proposal, but you haven't received an acknowledgement, please contact Zeni Aly (zenia@uwolmsted.org or 507-287-7877) for assistance.

After submission, you should anticipate hearing about the progress of your proposal during the week of March 20, 2018. We anticipate notifying final awardees around June 28th.

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