

Cover Sheet – Social Service Activity

AGENCY NAME: Family Outreach of Amherst

AGENCY ADDRESS: 401 Main Street Suite 12 Amherst, MA 01002

AGENCY PHONE NO: 413-549-5548 CONTACT PERSON: Laura Reichsman

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2015 CDBG FUNDING REQUEST: \$40,000

1. Project Name Strive To Thrive

2. Project Description: The Strive To Thrive Project will help chronically struggling families identify the challenges that keep them cycling from crisis to crisis and work intensively with them to create lasting changes that lead to healthy, happier, more successful lives.

3. Project Location 401 Main Street Suite 12 Amherst, MA 01002

4. Budget Request: \$40,000

5. Type of Activity (check one):

- Family stabilization
- Youth development
- Economic self-sufficiency (adult education)
- Food and nutrition
- Emergency & preventive services: rental assistance, fuel assistance, and shelter services.
- Other – please explain

6. National Objective: Objective #1, benefiting low and moderate-income households.

Total number of beneficiaries (individuals served): 125 individuals, 45 Families

Total Low/Mod beneficiaries (individuals served): 125 individuals, 45 families

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National Objective Description

Family Outreach of Amherst's Strive to Thrive project meets national objective #1, benefiting low and moderate-income households. Low and moderate households will benefit from the project by stabilizing their lives, breaking the cycle of crisis, and learning the skills necessary to create a better life for themselves and their children, FOA will document participant eligibility by asking participants to complete and sign a self-declaration form declaring household size and income.

A. Demonstrate Consistency with Community Development Strategy

The proposed project is consistent with the Community Development Strategy priorities of family stabilization, economic self-sufficiency and preventative services. The project will help participants identify the challenges in their lives that cause them to experience regular crisis and prevents them from stabilizing their lives. We will work with participants to overcome those barriers, develop a plan to gain the skills necessary to stabilize their lives, and support participants as they put their plan into action.

B. Agency Information

Family Outreach of Amherst (FOA) has been providing intensive outreach and support services for over twenty-five years to the most vulnerable families in Amherst. Interrupting the cycle of child abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence is the primary focus of our community-based, intensive case management for families in need of substantial supports and services. FOA also offers Information, Referral and Advocacy services related to many important issues, such as housing, childcare, counseling, healthcare, and education.

In the past year over 450 Amherst families were supported as they struggled with:

Homelessness

Intervention by the Department of Children and Families because of poor parenting choices

A mental health episode that required hospitalization

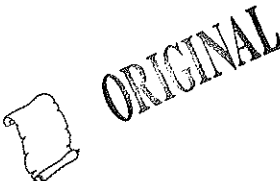
A diagnosis of a serious medical condition

Loss of benefits because of uncompleted paperwork

A domestic violence episode

A relapse of substance abuse.

The goal of Family Outreach of Amherst is to support and assist the most vulnerable members of our community. Our clients are families who struggle with mental health, trauma, medical, substance abuse, and life skills issues. When working with a family we have no identified "consumer." Each individual member of the family is a client and is offered services depending on their specific needs. This means that in a given week we may take a mother and infant to a WIC appointment, attend a special education meeting for an older sibling, take the teenager of the family to buy a swimsuit so they can participate in gym class at the middle school, and take the father of the family to a job interview. In one week, with one family, we have helped with nutrition, education, basic needs, and job skills.

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C. Project Budget Information

The budget is prepared by the FOA program director and a budget analyst from the Center for Human Development. Analysis of personnel costs included examining comparable salaries of current staff members as well as an assessment of current payroll tax and fringe rates. Non-personnel costs reflect typical costs needed to support field caseworkers-staff training & development, office costs (ie. postage, copier, telephone), staff mileage expenses, etc. Assessment of existence of matching funds to support this initiative was confirmed. The budget was developed by a MBA senior budget analyst at the Center for Human Development with over 20 years of experience in business, grant accounting and administration.

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D. Project Description

Family Outreach of Amherst (FOA), provides case management, advocacy, information and referral, and life skills coaching to struggling families living in poverty in Amherst. We often begin working with a family when they are in crisis. After the crisis is resolved, we then explore with the family strategies to improve their lives through our Strive to Thrive (STT) program.

The majority of our participants first contact the program because they need help resolving an issue they are struggling with, such as a housing problem, a utility shut-off notice, or a medical or mental health crisis. The STT caseworker meets with the participant and together they create a plan to resolve the presenting issue. As the STT caseworker works with the participant to resolve the crisis, they often find that the situation is far more complicated than was first presented to them. For example, a parent who is struggling with a mental health crisis might ignore a communication from their landlord, which leads to an eviction notice—and because of their mental health issue, the parent struggles to wake up in the morning, which then causes their children to miss school, which in turn causes the school to call DCF. One challenge leads to another and another and before long the parent is overwhelmed and the whole family is destabilized. To address this, the STT program allows the case workers to act as crisis interventionists when the need arises, as well as serving as an on-going support system that assists a participant as they stabilize their life. This support interrupts the cycle of crisis many of our participants struggle with and ensures that they will be able to better focus on their goals of stabilization and self-sufficiency.

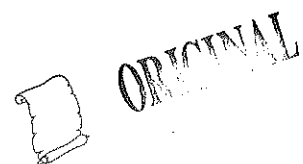
Once the family is stabilized the STT caseworker and the participant identify specific goals the participant has to gain greater self-sufficiency. Together they create an action plan that identifies milestones to ultimately achieve the final goal. Participants meet regularly with the caseworker to ensure that issues that arise as they work toward their goal are addressed quickly so a participant can continue to move forward without interruption.

Each milestone is treated as a success, for example when a participant accomplishes one of their designed goals such as obtaining a GED, this is celebrated as an enormous accomplishment, building confidence and modeling consistency and the value of education and community engagement to the participant's children.

E. Project Need

The most effective way to break the cycle of poverty is to ensure that parents are raising healthy, stable children and the best way to do this is to give parents the opportunity to access resources, services and programs that will help them be the healthiest parents they can be. The STT project accomplishes this by not only assisting parents to enroll in programs and services that help them create a more stable life, but supports them each step of the way to ensure that they are successful in their efforts. The Project's caseworkers problem-solves with and supports participants as issues arise so that a setback is not a failure.

FOA works with approximately forty-five families in Amherst at any given time. While families often come to us when they are experiencing a crisis, most families continue to work with us beyond the crisis. Of the forty-five families on our caseload the majority have

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expressed a desire to obtain the resources and skills necessary to create a better life for themselves and their children.

F. Community involvement and support

When the STT program began we initially received more than twenty-five referrals from other human services agencies. As participants have been enrolled, they have become our best referral source, encouraging their friends and neighbors to participate. While we continue to receive referrals from other agencies, we believe the best gauge of community priority for the STT program is the enthusiasm in the low-income community for the assistance the program offers. We anticipate working with 45 participants a year.

FOA implemented a client needs survey in the spring of 2015. Clients were asked to identify specific resources and activities that they would find most beneficial to ensure the success of the STT program. Assistance accessing child care and transportation were the most prevalent needs of the thirty-seven mothers who responded to the survey. In addition, since the inception of the program, the need for financial literacy and debt reduction support has become very apparent. To address this, the STT program has recruited volunteers with experience in financial planning to meet with individual participants to offer concrete advice and guidance. The project is also supported by a team of volunteers from the community with specific expertise in employment, child development, and nutrition, as well as volunteer drivers who are willing to assist families get to important meetings such as doctor visits and housing recertifications.

G. Project Feasibility

FOA has been providing intensive outreach and support services for over twenty-five years. The staff is well known and respected in the low-income community of Amherst. The program director and her staff have fifty years of collective experience and all are specialists in resource referral, housing issues, and parenting. For many years it has been a priority to offer services in Spanish and at this time ninety percent of the staff is bi-lingual. At its core FOA offers community-based, intensive case management for families in need of substantial supports and services. FOA has earned a reputation throughout the community as a program that can be relied on to serve effectively and respectfully those families facing the greatest challenges with the fewest resources.

FOA has consistently been responsive to the needs of struggling Amherst families through our case management and advocacy programs as well as our special programs such as a juvenile diversion program, a literacy project, a women's empowerment project, a domestic violence response project, and the Echo Village project. All these efforts have one common theme: they were all implemented in response to a stated need from both Town officials and community members alike. FOA has a proven record of providing timely, quality services to Amherst's most fragile citizens.

As a program of the Center for Human Development FOA can operate as a small grass-roots community based organization but is supported by an exceptional team of bookkeepers, budget managers, payroll and human resource experts and a management team that is talented and supportive. This ensures that contracts and budgets are managed effectively and that there is expert oversight.

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Participants will be enrolled, individualized plans will be developed and participants will attend trainings, employment searches, and volunteer positions throughout the year as well as attend a peer support group. Milestones will be celebrated at a monthly community lunch with a final community event honoring all participants and volunteers.

H. Project Impact

Participants will gain the skills they need to stabilize their lives, become able to effectively communicate and model the skills they have learned to their children, become more active participants in the workforce and community, be able to address issues that arise more quickly, and become more self-sufficient. STT will use quarterly goals sheets that evaluate the progress of each participant. At the beginning of a quarter, the participant will identify goals they are interested in achieving in the next three months. At the end of this time they will rank the achievement rate of these goals with the following options: no change, 50% goal reached, 75% goal reached, or 100% goal reached. This method gives both the participant and caseworker an on-going evaluation tool to identify which strategies are working well and what is not.

We anticipate that the majority of participants will stay involved in FOA activities for longer than the twelve-month period of the initial project, thus allowing us to continue to monitor their success and support them if they have a setback.

Direct Outcomes- Chronically struggling families will become more competent while their children will be exposed to higher functioning parents and will learn the life skills needed to live successful lives. In addition, the community will gain stronger, more competent parents, employees and volunteers.

Indirect Outcomes- Because chronically struggling families will gain the skills needed to become more self-sufficient and higher functioning, town services will be less utilized and ultimately, less overwhelmed. Participants will become more actively involved in their children's lives, ensuring that better relationships will form at the child's school lessening the strain on school personnel.

We will track quantitative measures by documenting the number of participants enrolled in program, number of milestone accomplished by each participant and number and type of each goal reached by each participant.

The definition of self-sufficiency will vary by participant. In some cases, there will be a clear trajectory from a STT participant relying on public benefits to the participant obtaining employment. In other cases, self-sufficiency will mean that the participant no longer experiences crisis on a regular basis, can resolve issues that come up in a timely way, are fully involved in the community through good relationships with their child's school and volunteer opportunities, and can model these skills to their children. The STT project will collaborate closely with many social service programs in the area such as literacy, ESL, and job training services, as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Survival Center, after-school programs and mental health providers.

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Family Outreach of Amherst
Strive to Thrive

July 1, 2017 thru June 30, 2018

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PERSONNEL	
PROGRAM MANAGER	20,880
PROGRAM DIRECTOR	3,763
FAMILY CASEWORKER	10,962
SUB-TOTAL SALARIES	35,605
F.I.C.A.	2,692
UNIVERSAL HEALTH INSURANCE TAX	67
UNEMPLOYMENT TAX	0
WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION	435
Total Payroll Taxes	3,194
LIFE INSURANCE & DISABILITY	370
HEALTH INSURANCE	3,750
DENTAL INSURANCE	161
PENSION	903
Total Fringe Benefits	5,184
Total Personnel Costs	43,983
STAFF TRAINING/204	
TRAINING/STAFF	400
STAFF MILEAGE/TRAVEL/205	
STAFF MILEAGE	252
CLIENT TRANSPORTATION/208	
INSURANCE VEHICLE	364
SUB-TOTAL CLIENT TRANSPORTATION	364
MISCELLANEOUS CLIENT EXP	675
SUPPLIES/PROGRAM	400
SUB-TOTAL PROGRAM SUPPLIES	1,075
PROGRAM SUPPORT/216	
EQUIPMENT RENTAL	164
INSURANCE PROFESSIONAL	231
INTERNET CONNECTION	198
POSTAGE	100
PRINTING/REPRODUCTION	150
SUPPLIES/OFFICE	255
TELEPHONE MOBILE	432
SUB-TOTAL PROGRAM SUPPORT	1,530
OCCUPANCY	
PROGRAM FACILITIES	
RENT OFFICE	1,845
SUB-TOTAL PROGRAM FACILITIES	1,845
Other Direct Costs	5,466
Total Direct Costs	49,449
INDIRECT COST	5,934
GRAND TOTAL	55,383
REVENUE SOURCES	
INCOME - AEC	7,500
INCOME - FUND RAISING	7,883
INCOME - GRANT CDBG	40,000
Total Revenue	55,383