



(Refer to NOFA for required information for each question.)

## **I. Demonstrated Need**

### **1. What is the need/opportunity being addressed by this program/project and how does that contribute to CDBG's national objectives?**

FRESH Food—a social enterprise program of Vermont Works for Women founded in 2011—addresses multiple societal issues: women's poverty, children's malnutrition, and the benefits of having a robust local economy (we will not delve into the third issue in much detail in this proposal, but we do all we can to source locally). The rationale for the FRESH Food model is based on the intersection of two distinct challenges facing our community:

1) One in five children in Vermont live in food insecure homes, making our state rank among the top ten in the nation for most severe food insecurity.<sup>1</sup> Burlington residents, in particular, struggle with poverty: 52% of students qualified for free or reduced price meals in the 2011-2012 school year.<sup>2</sup> In the short-term, poor nutrition can lead to emotional and behavioral challenges, reduced immune response, and an increase in health problems.<sup>3</sup> Over the long-term, the impacts are also dire: Vermont already has a population where 59% of adults are overweight<sup>4</sup> and 6% have been diagnosed with diabetes.<sup>5</sup>

2) Research shows that women are twice as likely as men, across all educational levels and age groups, to live in poverty. The reasons are many, and generally well-documented. Women are paid 77% of what a man earns for the same work, with comparable experience and education. Over the course of a lifetime, that income gap amounts to over \$400,000 in lost earnings – which not only reduces her buying power while employed, but reduces the social security benefit she will receive upon retirement. Addressing women's poverty and ability to obtain and retain employment isn't just a women's issue – it's an issue for our families and the economy. This is particularly true for women who have been incarcerated or reliant on public assistance, i.e. those served by FRESH Food.

FRESH Food was launched when Hunger Free Vermont (a statewide education and advocacy organization with the mission to end the injustice of hunger and malnutrition for all Vermonters) came to Vermont Works for Women with the idea to develop an ongoing training program that would also serve a community need. Childcare centers didn't have adequate kitchen facilities or the staff required to provide balanced, nutritious meals for children. Though the federal government provides funds to pay for such meals, each individual childcare center couldn't marshal the resources to leverage those funds. In fact, at that time, Vermont was among the worst states in the nation (ranked 49<sup>th</sup>) for accessing Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal reimbursements. CACFP is a federal program that reimburses child care providers for serving nutritious meals and snacks to children in their care. FRESH Food created a solution to this dilemma by providing meals to childcare centers out of a central kitchen and, since its inception, has brought over \$200,000 in federal funds into Vermont.

FRESH Food contributes to the achievement of the CDBG's national objectives in that it benefits low and moderate income people, both in the children fed and the women served by the training program. We serve 5 childcare centers in Burlington (Trinity Children's Center, Sara Holbrook, Robin's Nest, Franklin Square, and King Street Center). Three are squarely in the geographic eligible areas and two are on the edge but serve primarily low-income children.

## **II. Program/Project Design**

### **1. Describe the program/project activities. [UWCC]**

FRESH Food provides job training for women who have multiple barriers to employment (i.e. poverty, minimal work history, and/or a criminal record) while increasing access to nutritious meals for children from low and moderate-income families. While FRESH Food currently provides meals made from scratch for sixteen childcare centers and youth programs in Chittenden County, the focus of this proposal are the 5 centers served in Burlington (named above). Childcare centers use federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funds to pay for the meals (which cover a portion of the true cost of the production of those meals).

Through FRESH Food's healthy menus, children become familiar with appropriate portions, a variety of tastes and textures, and balanced nutrition. FRESH Food meals include superior nutritional content over traditional institutional

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<sup>1</sup> Hunger Free Vermont

<sup>2</sup> [http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Child\\_Nutrition\\_2012\\_Eligibility\\_Report.pdf](http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Child_Nutrition_2012_Eligibility_Report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Hunger Free Vermont

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control, 2011 Vermont data from <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/index.asp>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid – querying on diabetes as reported in 2010.

food. Meal time becomes a springboard for learning about food; childcare providers can discuss which foods come from plants and which from animals, which grow on trees and which come from underground, as well as conversations about the shapes, colors, textures, and temperatures. Several centers serve their meals in a family style, which promotes development of social skills as children and adults talk about the day's events, development of motor skills as children pass serving dishes and pour milk, and role modeling as "picky" eaters see their more adventurous peers enjoying a variety of foods. By following the CACFP guidelines—and exceeding them—the children reap these many benefits, developing habits that will have a lasting positive effect on their health.

For the women trainees, FRESH Food teaches basic workplace and food service skills, including food safety and sanitation fundamentals, knife skills, kitchen math and measuring, and operation of food service equipment. Trainees gain valuable on-the-job experience being in a high volume production environment during a 13-week time period. They produce and deliver 300 lunches a day through over a dozen contracts with local childcare centers in Chittenden County. All meals and snacks are made in our industrial kitchen, which is housed in the O'Brien Community Center in Winooski. Through an established partnership with Good News Garage, the food is delivered from the kitchen to the childcare centers. Through their work in the kitchen and in the classroom, the women in our training program develop the self-confidence, work experience, and marketable skills needed to transition into permanent employment once they complete our program (to date, 78% of graduates have found permanent employment). The program is free for qualified applicants, and stipends are provided by the Department of Labor to make their participation possible.

**2. Why is the program/project designed the way it is? Explain why the program activities are the right strategies to use to achieve the intended outcomes. [UWCC]**

FRESH Food is designed the way it is in large part because of Hunger Free Vermont's invitation to combine what we have always done well to meet an unmet community need: feeding low and moderate income children in childcare centers healthy and nutritious food. In the first few years of this program we have found that the combination of these two efforts creates tremendous synergy. Children are fed delicious and nutritious meals made from scratch and trainees get a "real world" work experience that does an excellent job preparing them for permanent employment.

Good nutrition during infant and toddler years is crucial to the immediate and long-term well-being of a child. In the short-term, poor nutrition can lead to emotional and behavioral challenges, reduced immune response, and an increase in health problems. In addition, even mild food insecurity can lead to long-term consequences. Nutritional deficiencies when children are in the important early stages of growth can interrupt cognitive development and affect brain function in adulthood. Yet numerous studies show that a significant number of preschool children across the income spectrum do not get enough whole grains, fruits, or vegetables, and have diets that lack adequate intake of key nutrients: vitamin A, vitamin C, iron and calcium. The current major national initiatives focusing on childhood nutrition have recognized that "child care settings are key environments for support of healthy eating and obesity prevention."

Lastly, the activities of FRESH Food are the right strategies to achieve the program's intended outcomes because we: 1) Deliver freshly cooked meals directly to childcare centers thereby making it easy for the centers to feed their children healthy, nutritious food; and 2) Provide comprehensive job training to women in a "sheltered work-site" model in which women not only gain employment skills but get realistic on-the-job experience.

**3. How will this program/project contribute to the City's anti-poverty strategy?**

FRESH Food contributes to the City's anti-poverty strategy in that it helps meet children's basic need for adequate and sound nutrition. Additionally, the program provides access to employment opportunities, income supports (through the subsidized job training component of the program in which women are paid a stipend for participation), and helps get women into jobs that pay a relatively good wage, as many food service positions do (most women are paid \$10-\$12/hour when they graduate from FRESH Food).

**4. How do you use community and/or participant input in planning the program design and activities?**

We engaged a great deal of community input when designing FRESH Food. We worked closely with Hunger Free Vermont and Champlain Valley Head Start (our first childcare center contract) to develop the model. We have also been long committed to involving participants in shaping the direction of our programs. Through our work with women in our Transitional Jobs program we honed the idea for FRESH Food and the training model that would be most effective. Throughout a program cycle we gather feedback from participants through regular check-ins and post-program assessments to determine the program's relevance and effectiveness. We draw upon the advice of professionals in the culinary field, and from those involved in Burlington's school meals program.

### III. Proposed Outcomes

**1. What are the intended outcomes for this project/program? How are people meant to be better off as a result of participating? [UWCC]**

The intended outcomes of FRESH Food are:

- Children have access to adequate and sound nutrition during their early childhood years;
- Childcare centers are able to access federal USDA funds in order to provide healthy food to their participants;
- Unemployed women gain practical skills that enhance their ability to secure and hold a job;
- Trainees gain enhanced nutritional knowledge and eating habits, and they share these with their families;
- Increased support for local agriculture and vendors through year-round purchasing.

**2. List your goals/objectives, activities to implement and expected outcomes (# of units, # of individuals)**

Objective	Activity Funded	Outcomes
Meeting basic needs ( <i>Feeding children from low and moderate-income families nutritious meals from scratch</i> ).	Produce and deliver nutrition-dense meals made under the guidelines of the federal CACFP.	100 children at 5 Burlington area childcare centers receive a weekly average of 435 nutritious meals.

### IV. Impact / Evaluation

**1. How do you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you assess project/program outcomes; your description should include: what type of data, the method/tool for collecting the data, from whom you collect data, and when it is collected. [UWCC]**

Vermont Works for Women has a strong organizational commitment to evaluation and monitoring the results of our programs. FRESH Food carefully tracks its impact based on its three bottom lines:

- *Feeding children:* Using diligent record-keeping, we gather quantitative data on an ongoing basis to track the number of childcare centers we serve and the number of meals that we create. We will gather demographic data from the centers to document children’s race, ethnicity, and income level. Using informal surveys, we gather periodic qualitative anecdotes from parents/guardians, children, and the childcare centers.
- *Training women:* Again using diligent record-keeping and contact with graduates, we gather quantitative data on an ongoing basis to track the number of women trained, post-program employment rates, and wages and benefits information. On a post-program survey we gather qualitative anecdotes and quantitative data about how the program affected participants.
- *Sourcing locally:* Using our production database/dashboard, we track the percentage of food sourced from local sources and the number of local farmers or vendors we support.

**2. How successful has the project/program been during the most recent reporting year for your CDBG project? Report the number of beneficiaries you intended to serve with which activities (as noted in your last Attachment A) and your final outcomes (as noted on your Attachment C) from June 2013. For non-CDBG participants – just report on your achievements from the previous year.**

In the past year FRESH Food has met or exceeded our goals. We significantly increased the number of meals served to childcare centers and we are currently at maximum capacity for production (300 meals per day, or 60,000 over the past year). We have also increased the number of women served (9 over the past year). We are proud of the employment rate of program graduates, which was 78% over the past year. We have also developed a retail product (cranberry peanut butter bars), as well as a for-profit catering business, both of which are designed to help make FRESH Food more sustainable and less reliant on grant funding.

FRESH Food has enjoyed recent praise for its innovative model. The Centers for Disease Control’s Obesity Prevention Division (CDC) recognized FRESH Food as an exemplary model for a central kitchen initiative in an early care and education setting. The CDC highlighted our work in a national newsletter, commissioned us to make a webinar, and visited our site last year to learn more about the program. In November 2012, Hunger Free Vermont awarded FRESH Food the Marianne Metropoulos Humanitarian Award for our work feeding children in Chittenden County. Most recently, we were the first place winner of Key Bank’s highly competitive Build a Stronger Vermont competition.

**3. How does this data reflect beneficial outcomes of this project/program? Has this impacted your program planning at all? [UWCC]**

The data clearly indicates that FRESH Food has beneficial outcomes, both for the children who eat our meals and for the women who go on to secure permanent employment. Based on reaching our capacity, we are working to find ways to even further increase the number of meals we can produce and the number of women we are able to serve.

## **V. Experience / Organizational Capacity**

**1. What is your agency's mission, and how do the proposed activities fit with your mission?**

Vermont Works for Women's was founded in 1987. Our mission is to help women and girls recognize their potential and explore, pursue, and excel in work that leads to economic independence. Our women's programs address the needs of women seeking economic self-sufficiency—those interested in pursuing a career in fields nontraditional to women, those leaving public assistance and seeking work for the first time, and those re-entering the community and looking for employment after serving time in prison. FRESH Food fits within our mission in that it helps women who have multiple barriers to employment move towards economic independence by providing them with innovative and effective job training and support as they transition into permanent work.

**2. Please describe any indications of program quality, such as staff qualifications and/or training, adherence to best practices or standards, feedback from other programs or organizations you partner with, etc.**

FRESH Food is overseen by highly experienced and qualified persons. **Tiffany Bluemle** has served as VWW's Executive Director since 1997 and in that capacity she has helped the organization triple its budget, reduce its reliance on public funding by 70%, and diversify the agency's program roster to include initiatives that serve girls, incarcerated women, and programs that introduce women to careers in law enforcement, green technologies, and telecommunications. **Melissa Corbin** has been VWW's Director of Social Enterprises since 2011. Melissa has a background in both startup infrastructure development for nonprofits and in large scale project management in the for-profit sector. This blend of experience is what sparked her interest in overseeing the hybrid business model that is social enterprise. Before joining VWW, she served as the administrative director for an international nonprofit where she streamlined organizational process to support substantial growth.

All of Vermont Works for Women's program are based up on best practices. FRESH Food bases its work on the best practices and recommendations of the following: 1) *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Aligning Dietary Guidance for All*, November 4, 2010, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences; 2) *Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs*, 2010, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education; and 3) *Child Care Food Program Wellness Tool Kit*. This web-based tool kit focuses on innovative and effective CACFP best practices and strategies for implementing good nutrition standards at the state and local level. Food Research and Action Center (FRAC).

FRESH Food has received ample positive feedback from community partners and childcare centers alike. Below is an excerpt from a letter of support written by Marissa Parisi, Executive Director of Hunger Free Vermont:

*The FRESH Food program has made nutritious, daily meals a reality for many food insecure children and removed barriers for centers to participating in the CACFP program. Thanks to the outstanding quality of the catered food from the FRESH Food program, more children are eating fruits and vegetables grown locally. We see children experiencing new foods they may not be eating at home, and we hear often that children have requested this food from their parents, therefore influencing the eating habits of the whole family. It is our pleasure to work in partnership with FRESH Food in ending childhood hunger in Vermont.*

**3. What steps has your organization/board taken in the past year to become more culturally competent?**

Over the past year we have welcomed two people of color onto our Board of Directors (prior to that there were none) and have made a concerted effort to hire people of color, which has led us to have a slightly more diverse staff than we previously had. A member of our Management Team attended an anti-racism training conducted by the San Francisco-based Catalyst Project and will be sharing what she learned at our upcoming staff retreat in February where much of the conversation will be focused on the importance of integrating anti-racism work into our mission. We are in the process of reinvigorating our Diversity Committee so that it is more of an active and integral component of our organization. Additionally, we have engaged in conversations about gender diversity and how to make our "single-sex" programs welcoming to transgender folks or to those who are questioning their gender identity.

**4. Have you received Federal or State grant funds in the past three years?  Yes  No**

**5. Were the activities funded by these sources successfully completed?  Yes  No  N/A**



## VII. Budget / Financial Feasibility

1. **Budget Narrative: Provide a clear description of what you will do with CDBG's investment in the program. How will you spend the money? Give specific details. [UWCC]**

A CDBG of \$15,000 each year for two years would enable us to fully cover the food costs and delivery of meals we prepare and deliver to five childcare centers in Burlington (Trinity Children's Center, Sara Holbrook, Robin's Nest, King Street Center, and Franklin Square) all of which serve families with low to moderate income. Because our meals are made from scratch and include nutritious proteins and vegetable-infused standards like very veggie lasagna or carrot-based catsup, the cost to prepare these meals is higher than the federal reimbursement rate.

2. **If you plan to pay for staff with CDBG funding, describe what they do in relation to the specific service(s) / activity(ies) in your Project/Program Design.**

Specific Service / Activity	Position/Title	Work Related to CDBG-Funded Activity	# of Hours per Week spent on this Specific Service / Activity	% of Hours per Week spent on this Specific Service / Activity to be paid with CDBG
Eliminating Hunger and direct service to children from low income homes	Kitchen Operations Mgr	Menu creation to the standard of CACFP and USDA. Daily operations related to preparing and delivering meals.	20	0%
Eliminating Hunger and direct service to children from low income homes	Kitchen Assistant	Same as above.	20	0%

### 3. Program/Project Budget

Line Item	CDBG Funds	Other	Total
<b>Food</b> (purchasing costs for 18,961 meals per year)	\$ 10,000	\$ 13,304	\$23,304
<b>Delivery</b> (contracted with <i>Good News Garage</i> )	\$ 5,000	\$ 10,321	\$15,321
<b>Kitchen rent and utilities</b>	\$ 0	\$ 8,500	\$ 8,500
<b>Supplies</b> (supplies directly related to meals and meal delivery – cambros/coolers/hotel pans)	\$ 0	\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500
<b>Staffing</b> (directly related to meals for these Burlington centers)	\$ 0	\$ 40,560	\$40,560
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$ 15,000 (=\$0.79/meal)	\$ 75,185	\$90,185 (=\$4.76/meal)

### 4. Funding Sources

	Project		Agency	
	Current	Projected	Current	Projected
CDBG	\$	\$ 15,000	\$	\$ 15,000
State (specify)				
Voc Rehab			46,708	0
VT Dept of Corrections			159,223	159,223
VT Agency of Ed			45,000	45,000
VT Office of Ec Opp			10,000	10,000
VT Agency of Ed			10,000	0
Federal (specify) - NONE				
United Way			63,577	65,000

Private (specify)				
Individual			355,000	350,000
Foundation	23,601	8,601	490,000	500,000
Corporate			16,575	17,000
Program Income	66,584			
Sales	<i>(what Burlington</i>	66,584	221,063	221,000
Consulting/Conference	<i>centers pay for</i>		74,750	75,000
Tuition	<i>meals)</i>		71,720	70,000
Other (specify)				
In Kind Donations			15,310	15,000
Special Events/ Rental/Interest			15,680	15,000
<b>Total</b>	\$ 90,185	\$ 90,185	\$ 1,594,605	\$ 1,557,223

**5. Of the total project cost, what percentage will be financed with CDBG?**

$$\frac{\$15,000}{\text{CDBG Funding}} \div \frac{\$90,185}{\text{Total Project Cost}} = \frac{17\%}{\text{Percentage}}$$

**6. Of the total project cost, what would be the total cost per person?**

$$\frac{\$90,185}{\text{Total Project Cost}} \div \frac{100}{\# \text{ Proposed Beneficiaries}} = \frac{\$901.85}{\text{Cost Per Person}} \text{ to feed 1 child for 1 year}$$

**7. Why should CDBG resources, as opposed to other sources of funding, be used for this project?**

Each of FRESH Food's goals directly benefits the Burlington community: feeding children who are facing food insecurity, training un- or under-employed women for work, and sourcing food locally. This CDBG funding would support our ability to purchase and deliver food to five centers in Burlington where there is great need for public support: Franklin Square, Sara Holbrook, Robin's Nest, Trinity Children's Center, and King Street Center. The first four listed are HeadStart centers, four of the five fall in the mapped "Burlington Low and Moderate Income Areas" and while Franklin Square may fall just on the border of those areas, it serves families with low income. At each of these five centers children eat meals which qualify for Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) reimbursements from the Federal Government, which is only available for children from families with limited means.

We charge our clients at these centers \$3.75 per meal. In order to make a nutritious meal from scratch, we are able to make our hot lunches at a price point of \$4.76 per meal. By making a grant to support that differential, the City would be making an investment in its own youth, its own residents, and its own farm and food producers.

**8. Describe your use of community resources, including volunteers. Include any resources not listed in your budget. Will CDBG be used to leverage other resources?**

Vermont Works for Women and the FRESH Food program have many volunteers who help to make the program operate efficiently and which enhance the experience for our program participants (trainees).

We have a very synergistic relationship with the Intervale, which includes membership in their gleaning program during the summer and fall months. The weekly donation of produce helps us to offset our food cost by thousands of dollars each year while making use of blemished food that would otherwise go to waste. We have direct relationships with area farmers, who donate food to our program in exchange for volunteer labor we send into their fields. Finally, we grow our own produce in the summer, using the yield to both educate our trainees and to lower our food cost.

**9. If your organization has experienced any significant changes in funding levels during the past year, please explain.**

The Vermont Works for Women budget has remained consistent at approximately \$1.3 million for the past four years, except there was one year where it was higher at \$1.5 million thanks to the infusion of an ARRA Grant which funded our participation in Vermont Green, a statewide initiative to train workers for green jobs.

It should be noted that many of the costs associated with that grant were related to participant training fees and supportive services – direct costs that disappeared when the program ended. Other costs that the grant had covered – one full-time employee and overhead expenses – were transferred to other programs and funded through new revenues raised in anticipation of the grant's end.

## **10. What cost-cutting measures has your organization implemented?**

Vermont Works for Women remains a lean and responsive nonprofit, and enjoys a reputation for being highly effective and efficient. We have historically kept overhead low and have worked hard to diversify funding sources so that cuts to any one particular program don't jeopardize the future of our programs.

## ***VIII. Collaboration/Efficiency***

### **1. Please describe other organizations/programs you work with to achieve outcomes for your program participants. How does your program collaborate with other programs, organizations, or services to address the needs of the people you serve? [UWCC]**

One of our organizational values is "strength in partnership" and we believe that individuals and organizations are strongest when they act in partnership with others. To this end, we have always depended upon collaboration to leverage our work. FRESH Food in particular has relied upon many partners: Hunger Free Vermont was instrumental in developing this business model; Champlain Valley Head Start gave us our first four childcare center contracts; the Department of Labor provides stipends to our trainees through the Workforce Investment Act; Good News Garage provides our delivery service; and the City of Winooski is a client, landlord, and partner in working with youth employees.

### **2. Describe your agency's efforts at becoming more efficient in achieving your outcomes or managing your project/program.**

This program has been operating for three years and the efficiencies continue to evolve as we grow and mature, learning from our clients, our trainees and our partners. We have tried various menu patterns over the years and we now have a solid list of recipes that we know meet the federal guidelines for a balanced meal, are in alignment with our cost projections, and that are enjoyable to the population of children that we feed.

The recruitment process for the trainees that participate in our program has evolved over the years. It has become increasingly clear that as our volume has grown, we need individuals in our program that have all of the support structures in place for them to be successful with an employer post graduation.

### **3. What other agencies provide similar services or programs? [UWCC]**

There are other training programs in our community that are available to serve similar populations, and one other culinary-specific program. However, being a foodservice training program is not what makes FRESH Food unique. It is the multiple facets of this enterprise that make it stand apart from others in our community. Our model mirrors the demands of a business. Clients expect their orders to be on time, to be of the highest quality, and arrive without mistakes. Trainees interact with our customers every day, thereby developing customer service skills and learning the needs of their clients. We have a roster of food vendors, use inventory software, and allocate all expenses using cost of goods accounting. Finally, trainees keep timesheets and are paid for their work in the kitchen. FRESH Food offers an on-the-job training program that truly prepares participants to obtain and maintain employment.

## ***IX. Sustainability***

### **1. How will this project have a long-term benefit to the City of Burlington? If this project ends, will that benefit continue?**

The long-term benefit of children receiving adequate and sound nutrition in their early years cannot be underestimated. If FRESH Food were to end (which we do not anticipate happening) that benefit would continue.

### **2. If CDBG funding ends, will the project be able to continue?**

Because FRESH Food is a social enterprise, the program employs a unique model in which a consistent income source (sales from the meals we make) is combined with special order sales and philanthropic funds to provide diversified and sustainable revenue streams. While FRESH Food has been successful in attracting philanthropic funds, we are working towards decreasing our dependence on these funds and increasing our sales revenue.