

**Strategic/Preventive Investment Funding
LOI Cover Page**

Contact Information

Organization Name: Centro LatinoAmericano

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Organizational Information

Mission Statement: We are a bilingual, multicultural agency dedicated to the empowerment of the Latino community of Lane County by offering social services, access to community resources, and advocating for fair treatment.

No. of Employees: 12 (twelve)

FTE: 7.3

No. of Volunteers (annually)/ Volunteer Hours (annually) 160 / 1544

Name of Executive Director: Marcela Mendoza

Name of Board President: Juan Carlos Valle

Term Ending Date: Jan 2011

Number of members on Board of Directors: 6 (six)

Total Agency Budget: \$ 383,980

Fiscal Year End: June 30

Geographic Service: Lane County

Unduplicated Lane County Residents Served Last Year: (07/01/2008 to 06/30/2009) 3,254

Has your organization been previously funded by UWLC? No Yes, Year(s) 2009

Proposed Service(s):

Name of Proposed Services: Strategic Expansion of Tax Site to support immigrant working families with combined tax preparation assistance and employment assistance, financial literacy, and social service referrals as needed in one convenient location.

1. Mission:

Centro LatinoAmericano (Centro) was established in 1972 to meet the needs of the growing Latino population in our county: *“We are a bilingual, multicultural agency dedicated to the empowerment of the Latino community of Lane County by offering social services, access to community resources, and advocating for fair treatment.”*

Today Centro is meeting this challenge by addressing the needs of immigrants in a bilingual, culturally competent manner as it continues to provide vital services such as support for children and families’ basic needs (food, clothing, transportation, and access to healthcare), crisis intervention, referral, employment advocacy, interpretation and translation, and other services. Centro is the primary access point for Latino immigrants, especially those with limited English proficiency. Our programs and special projects are divided into four main areas: Children and Families services, Crisis Intervention and Employment advocacy, Alcohol & Drug Outpatient Treatment Services, and educational and enrichment classes. Committed volunteers provide a variety of educational opportunities and assistance to our clients.

2. Goal Alignment:

The proposed Strategic/Preventive Services will make a meaningful difference in our community by supporting working individuals and families with incomes at 100 – 250% of FPL become self-sufficient. This proposal fits squarely in the UWLC’S **income** goal of moving minority families from poverty to financial stability.

3. Funding Strategy Addressed and Proposed Strategic/Preventive Services:

For many years, Centro offered tax preparation assistance with support from committed volunteers and interpreters in the community. In the fall 2009 we set up a computer lab to offer computer literacy classes, and aiming to use those computers for tax preparation, resume preparation, and job search online. However the committed volunteers who assisted our clients with taxes lost their funding. We want to prepare our computers to handle this service (with secure Internet access and the necessary software), because we are committed to provide opportunities for every workers to pay taxes. To expand the free Tax Preparation Site at Centro LatinoAmericano we will use UWLC’s preventive investment funding, in-kind donation of time and talent from volunteers, and funds from our own fundraising. Our community short-term outcome is increasing the number of working Latino families who can access tax preparation assistance (with Spanish interpreter) while also receiving assistance in job searches, resume preparation, financial literacy, and related social service referrals. The UWLC funding will support site-development, site infrastructure needs (secure Internet connection, software, printing), recruitment and coordination of volunteers, outreach to clients, scheduling and case management. We will staff this tax preparation site partly with volunteers. Our long-term community outcome is contributing to increase the number of immigrant households living over 200% federal poverty line.

The total amount of funds requested is \$ 27,000, divided as follows:

First year: \$ 14,000

Second year: \$ 13,000

4. Need and Target Population:

The Latino population has generally thrived in Lane County, however about 30 percent of all Latino families in our county live at or below 100 % federal poverty level. Centro serves this particularly disadvantaged sector of the community. **In the past fiscal year, we served 3250-plus individuals. All of these individuals and their families had an income below the 200% federal poverty level** (in fact, one thousand of our clients had an income below 51% federal poverty level). This count does not include the average 285 clients per month participating in our day labor advocacy initiative (15-20 unemployed laborers waiting for a phone call from a potential employer are coming to Centro each day). Centro clients have distinctive socio-economic and demographic characteristics. The adults are mostly working age (25 to 45 years old) foreign-born immigrants who speak Spanish at home, and have less than 9th grade education. They are employed in low-wage occupations with low prestige or status that offer little job security and no health insurance. Their most common occupations are frequently described as “3D jobs”—that is “dirty, dangerous, or difficult.” **The average income for Centro’s male clients is \$1200 per month, while female clients earn about \$800 per month.** They have formed young families and are raising American-born children. These parents are counted among the working poor. According to U.S. Census estimates, a higher proportion of Latino households live in poverty in Lane County than households in any other population groups. Poverty data also show that a disproportionate number of Latinos live in poverty in the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area, compared to their percentage of the total population.

Centro core mission is to provide support to first and second generation individuals and families who are in the process of integrating to our society. These are children and youth of Latino descent and their parents, who benefit from the nurturing and secure environment that Centro’s case managers contribute to create. Some also benefit from the services of our bilingual counseling though Alcohol & Drug treatment services. Our efforts to teach English and a citizenship workshop, coordinate a play group, teach parenting classes, and help with basic needs such as food, safety and transportation are crucial to create a healthy environment in which they can thrive. This investment is real, as proven by those members of our community who have been able to achieve a much higher education than the previous generation. These successes translate in a more integrated community whose members can access better jobs, and are able to pay higher taxes. Additionally, by helping to prevent substance abuse, our Alcohol & Drug treatment program is serving the community in many fronts, such as legal, mental health, and prevention. Many of the immigrant families that receive services at Centro do not understand the system, lack access to a safety net, and wouldn’t know where to go for help. The referral, information, and advocacy that we provide strengthen the safety net for Spanish-speaking immigrants, whose limited command of English and cultural isolation make difficult for them to access other means tested forms of assistance. They come to Centro and our staff assists them in multiple ways with the goal of promoting the clients’ wellbeing and successful integration to the fabric of our society. United Way funding will make it possible for our committed staff to move minority families from poverty to financial stability.

Collaboration/Innovation:

This collaborative proposal includes the assistance of volunteers who will help our clients with tax preparation and financial literacy instruction, as well as volunteer Spanish-speaking interpreters who will help our clients in the process. Centro has installed a computer lab with ten computers and office furniture donated by the University of Oregon Warehouse; many hours of volunteer work went to setup and repair the computers and tables. Centro also collaborates with Workforce Development, a local non-profit that send weekly reports of local job openings; in turn, our caseworkers refer unemployed clients to Workforce Development. Also volunteers teach English at Centro in the evenings, an offering that helps improved the workers' communication skills and job readiness. Additionally, our caseworkers make referrals to social services and provide direct assistance to families in need.