



## Letter of Intent Cover Page FOOD for Lane County

### Contact Information

**Organization Name:** FOOD for Lane County

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**State:** OR

**Zip:** 97402

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### Organizational Information

**Vision Statement:** To eliminate hunger in Lane County.

**Mission Statement:** Our mission is to alleviate hunger by creating access to food.

**No. of Employees:** 160 (116 are summer only)

**FTE:** 49.48

**No. of Volunteers (annually)/ Volunteer Hours (annually):** 66,900 hours annually

**Name of Executive Director:** Currently vacant; Karen Edmonds is serving as UW liaison in interim

**Name of Board President:** Michael Drennan **Term Ending Date:** Chair term expires June 2010

**Number of members on Board of Directors:** 13

**Total Agency Budget:** \$2,943,418 **Fiscal Year End:** June 30, 2010

**Geographic Service:** Lane County and Harrisburg (Linn County)

**Unduplicated Lane County Residents Served Last Year:** 70,358 people received emergency food assistance through FOOD for Lane County's network of food pantries, the largest of FOOD for Lane County's food distribution programs.

**Has your organization been previously funded by UWLC?**  No  Yes, Year(s) 1989-present

**Proposed Service(s):** Name of Proposed Services: Youth Farm Summer Leadership Program

## 1. Mission:

The mission of FOOD for Lane County is to alleviate hunger by creating access to food. We accomplish this in Lane County by soliciting, collecting, rescuing, growing, preparing, and packaging food for distribution through a 100-member network of human service agencies and programs; through public awareness, education, and community advocacy; and through a number of programs geared toward improving the ability of limited-income families, seniors, and other challenged populations to obtain an adequate supply of wholesome, nutritious food.

The Gardens Program consists of three educational gardens, including the Youth Farm that grow organic produce for the emergency food network described above and develop community and individual self-sufficiency skills. FOOD for Lane County knows that a key prevention to hunger is providing people with self-sufficiency skills and tools that will improve their access to resources and reduce their reliance on emergency food. The Youth Farm provides opportunities for low-income and at-risk youth to develop job skills, set career and secondary educational goals, learn about financial literacy, and access services while growing fresh, nutritious food for their families, their community and for FOOD for Lane County. This program increases the amount of produce in the emergency food system, offers nutritional benefits to clients and positively impacts the ability of marginalized youth to succeed in the future.

## 2. Goal Alignment:

How the proposed Strategic/Preventive services will make a meaningful difference in supporting the UWLC'S **INCOME** and **HEALTH** goals

### **Income**

FOOD for Lane County runs a Summer Leadership Program at our Youth Farm which is a youth employment and job training program for low-income and at-risk teens, ages 14-19.

In this intensive program, youth farmers participate in all farm activities, from seed to harvest. They complete a curriculum focused on organic gardening, customer service, financial literacy, nutrition and cooking, and learn to work productively in groups and independently. Guest speakers, independent projects, and field trips to local colleges round out the educational program. Youth Farmers are trained to run an on-site produce stand. They also assist with a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program where paying members of the farm receive a box of produce each week, and participate in farm celebrations. Each youth farmer is given a garden plot to practice their skills and encouraged to take home produce for their families.

Two returning youth farmers are hired to serve as crew leaders to assist with the ongoing operation of the farm, outreach to the general public, and leading of volunteer groups. Because of their experience, they are an informational resource for the crewmembers and lead by example. Two additional returning youth are hired as farm

stand managers to run the Saturday farm stand, open from June through October. In September, youth farm stand co-managers train first year youth farmers in all aspects of running the on-site farm stand.

Skills development, high school graduation and college enrollment are primary objectives; we strive to provide an experience that transforms youth from challenged backgrounds who are struggling with poverty, into young adults with the self-esteem, job and life skills to succeed. The Youth Farm is an ideal place for youth to be successful. The program is structured with opportunities to set achievable goals, develop leadership skills and connect to the land, to adult mentors and to each other. In the words of one of the youth farmers, "I am so grateful to have this job. I have learned so much and found it an excellent program to get kids started in the work place. The non-stop giving that this farm does has inspired me to give more." ~ Daniel, age 19

**Health** We will assist youth farmers without health insurance to be enrolled in state programs through the Healthy Kids Initiative. Youth Farmers health also benefits from the nutritious food grown and prepared at the farm. Increasing fruits and vegetables in people's diets decrease their risk of developing chronic diseases, including diabetes and heart disease. We are encouraging healthy lifestyle choices that will benefit youth through the long term.

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

The funding strategy to be addressed, the proposed Strategic/Preventive services to be funded, the targeted community outcomes, and the amount of annual funds requested

We request \$42,5000 (\$17,000/year) from the United Way of Lane County's Strategic/Preventive Investment Funding to partially fund youth farmer's participation at the youth farm, including youth wages, supervisory costs, educational materials, and program supplies. FOOD for Lane County will be responsible for finding an equal match of funds for the program.

As a result of the Youth Farm Summer Leadership Program:

- 1) Sixteen low-income and at-risk youth farmers will gain job and life skills, set career and educational goals, and by the end of the program will either enter the work force and/or continue their education.
- 2) All youth farmers who are not enrolled in a health plan, will be enrolled in partnership with the Healthy Kids initiative. They and their families will also receive information about free and reduced cost health clinics.
- 3) Youth Farmers will improve their financial literacy by attending classes based on the FDIC's Money Smart for Young Adults Financial Educational Program with the goal of each youth creating a bank account by the end of the summer.
- 4) Youth Farmers will understand the importance of good nutrition by learning to cook and prepare fresh fruits and vegetables, and attending nutritional lessons. They will also access farm grown produce for themselves and their families.

The Youth Farm provides our community's youth with a positive and educational community service experience, connections to adult mentors, and access to fresh fruits and vegetables. They also gain life direction and support to pursue educational and career goals.

#### **4. Need and Target Population:**

Youth farmers face a challenging work environment. Oregon's high unemployment rate (11.3% compared to the national average of 10%), paired with a majority of low-wage service jobs provide an economic climate where it is incredibly difficult to afford high housing, transportation, and rising food costs. The state's consistent budget shortfalls have caused the price of state-funded higher education to escalate, preventing low-income teens from expanding their skills and employability.

Oregon is currently ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation in the percentage of households at high risk of experiencing hunger (USDA). An average of 6.6 percent of Oregon households between January 2006 and December 2008 experienced times when they were hungry but did not eat because there was not enough money for food. That compares to 3.9 percent in 2003-05 – a statistically significant 2.7 percent increase. Health consequences for children suffering from hunger and a poor diet include lack of concentration in school, frequent illness, and potential long-term health consequences. For many in Lane County, healthy food is beyond their means.

#### **5. Collaboration/Innovation**

Collaborative or innovative aspects of the proposed services, including non-UWLC resources that will be dedicated to the proposed services

Our collaboration with other organizations and agencies enhances the effectiveness of our work. We partner with several youth service agencies to do outreach to potential youth farmers including: School-to-Work and WIA contacts at local high schools, Looking Glass Youth and Family Services, LEAD Teen Program, Boys and Girls Club, school district community transition programs (CTP) and alternative schools, the Housing and Community Services Agency of Lane County (HACSA), Lane County Department of Youth Services, Direction Service, and Centro Latino Americano.

The Springfield School District provides the Youth Farm's land, and Willamalane Parks and Recreation provides some of the water and assists with projects requiring special equipment. Vital to the success of the Youth Farm are the hundreds of volunteers who annually donate nearly 4,000 hours of time, labor and skill.

The Youth Farm is funded partially through revenue raising activities, including a spring plant sale, the on-site produce stand, and the CSA (vegetable subscription box) program, as well as foundation support and individual and corporate donations. In addition, individuals and businesses make in-kind donations of supplies and tools.