



September 13, 2024



Dear [REDACTED] Foundation,

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you the crucial work of Grow Food Northampton to ensure that members of our community grappling with food insecurity have access to enough healthy locally grown food to improve their health and well-being immediately, as well as access to land, resources, tools, and knowledge to grow their own healthy food in the long-term. We appreciate your interest in this unique, public health approach to ending hunger and creating a comprehensive local food system for the greater Northampton, MA area that can be replicated in other regions. In purchasing local foods for our community's food-insecure members from farms right here where we live, particularly farms owned and operated by farmers from communities marginalized and harmed by the conventional food system, we are creating a robust and sustainable local food economy in which everyone benefits. This is true food sovereignty -- by ensuring that all community members are exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat adequate amounts of responsibly grown, nutritious, culturally relevant, and affordable food, we are accomplishing our organization's mission to "create a just and resilient local food and farming system that nourishes our community and protects and enriches the earth."

We sincerely hope that the [REDACTED] Foundation will join us in this mission. We look forward to hopefully partnering with you on our proposed project.

With thanks,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alisa".

Alisa Klein
Executive Director



██████████ Foundation – Full Proposal

Problem or Opportunity* (3,200 characters)

Please describe the opportunity, challenge, issue, or need your organization works to address. *Please also describe your organization's target population, including socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and/or language.* We are more interested in your specific and unique insight into the particular nature of the problem and the complex systems that hold it in place. What do you know so far? What is less obvious about the way most people might think about the problem? What are the blind spots that you have noticed? Do you have a provocative critique that will grab the reader's attention? We have found that the best-written problem statements help the reader anticipate the specific outcomes or solutions proposed as the intervention.

Our national food system is broken. As are many aspects of the systems designed to ensure that individuals living in poverty can access food. As a food and farming justice organization, Grow Food Northampton (GFN) is designed to address both of these issues at the local level right where we live by, as our mission statement reads, creating a just and resilient local food system that nourishes our community and the earth.

The dominant form of agriculture in the US consists of industrialized, large-scale factory farms and agribusiness that conduct intensive farming practices that damage the environment – the very air we breathe, our water sources, and the health of the soil. The pesticides used in industrial farming harm not only the workers who grow our food, but the people who eat it. Industrialized agriculture transports food thousands of miles across countries and continents, not only contributing to climate destruction, but breaking down in pandemics, political unrest, and conflict. Federal subsidies incentivize and benefit agribusiness while small, diversified local and family farms struggle.

Despite ever-growing economies of scale in production in industrialized agriculture, food insecurity persists. Malnutrition costs the United States \$147 billion per year.

What is more, the national food system is designed to keep poor and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities from having access to healthy, affordable food. What used to be called “food deserts” are now known as “food apartheid” areas, communities that, due to structural and systemic racism, have been designed to exclude access to fresh, healthy foods.

Indeed, demographically, GFN is serving far more people of color, proportionately, than their white counterparts in the city. While since the pandemic, food insecurity rates in our county remain high at 45% beyond pre-pandemic rates, a vastly disproportionate number of community members who experience food insecurity, and whom we serve with our food access programs, are People of Color. 82% of Northampton residents are white, 3% Black and 7% Latino. Yet, amongst those we serve with food access programming, 13% are Black and 23% are Latino. That is to say, in our work to meet the food security needs of Northampton residents, we serve many more people of color than are represented generally in our community. Currently, a full 21% of the people we serve with our programming are single moms and 28% are children. 100% of those we serve live in poverty.

While food subsidy programs like SNAP and WIC have some positive effects on participants’ health, many users find it stigmatizing, restrictive, and inadequate in addressing nutritional needs. We hear this most commonly among BIPOC participants in our food access programs. Generally, we know that food insecurity is a core social determinant of poor health outcomes. What is more, recent research (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38315497/>) found that “food insecurity is a source of toxic stress.” This is why our food access programs are undergirded by dignity for all, and in implementing them, we aim to see improved health outcomes among participants.

Project Narrative/Description* (3,000 characters)

- **What you want to do (activities & goals) and the timeframe**
- **Who will do the work?**
- **Who will be the primary beneficiaries? (target population, including age, gender, ethnicity, and other relevant characteristics)**

Grow Food Northampton is creating an alternative to industrialized agriculture and the broken national food system: a vibrant local food system that is flourishing right here in our community. We ensure food sovereignty, the right of people to control their own food and agriculture systems, and to have access to healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate foods. On the GFN Community Farm, we practice agroecology, a method of growing food that promotes environmental resilience; tends to equity, nutrition, and health; and ensures that everyone has a relationship with the land where their food is grown. We view the local food system as an interconnected web of growers and eaters, all of whom are empowered to grow food for themselves and others, access nutrient-dense foods, and nourish themselves affordably and adequately.

In 2016, GFN launched a Mobile Farmers Market in low-income neighborhoods to ensure that community members experiencing food insecurity had access to fresh, organic produce from area farms. Produce was sold to customers at heavily subsidized prices. But when the pandemic hit in March 2020, and local farms lost the majority of their customers while, at the same time, food insecurity rates doubled, we devised a new model and expanded our food access program significantly.

The Free Mobile Farmers Market (FMFM) program was born! We immediately raised funds to purchase increased amounts of local foods, partnered with our local food pantry to supply shelf-stable foods, hired food access team members, garnered almost 300 community volunteers, and conducted weekly doorstep delivery to thousands of households while also holding outdoor market-style distribution sites adjacent to homeless encampments and low-income housing sites.

And continue to do so until this day! In the last 4.5 years, GFN has purchased and distributed over 1.5 million pounds of local organic produce, meats, eggs, and other value-added farm products to 3,300 unique individuals and 1,200 families so they have enough healthy food to eat for the entire week. But FMFM is more than just a food distribution program. A core value of our work is to shift power and leadership to people in our community marginalized by the food system and who struggle to feed their families. To this end, we convened a Food Access Advisory Committee (FAAC) and Food Ambassadors, individuals with lived experience of food insecurity, to design and lead the FMFM with GFN staff.

Last year, as advised by the FAAC, GFN added exciting new programming to our food access work: the establishment of organically managed community gardens at ten low-income housing communities so residents can grow their own food. GFN broke ground on the gardens and provides all materials, including seedlings and tools, and mentors residents to grow the foods they want to eat most. The program supports 250+ community gardeners to grow organic foods right where they live -- a solution to food insecurity for the long-term.

Expected Project Outcomes or Results*

What data will you track? (3,200 characters)

What are the specific, measurable goals and objectives for the proposed program or project?

Summarize and organize your projected results - answering "how much and how many" using numbers. (not just percentages)

The numbers help the reviewer understand the scope and scale of your program and how you know the program is making a difference.

This section is the most important part of your proposal.

Goal 1: In 2025, GFN's Free Mobile Farmers Market (FMFM) program will purchase fresh, healthy, culturally relevant local produce and value added farm products for weekly distribution to community members experiencing food insecurity to increase their intake of nutrient-dense foods, and improve their health, well-being, and sense of community.

Objective ("Obj") 1.1: Over the year, purchase at least \$140,000 worth (approximately 300,000 pounds) of food from at least 60 farms within a 50-mile radius of Northampton. At least 50% of the farms will be owned and operated by farmers from communities marginalized by the conventional food system, including BIPOC, women, and LGBTQ+ farmers

Obj 1.2: Weekly, distribute local farm foods, in portions sufficient for one week per individual, to between 300 and 600 unique individuals experiencing food insecurity at as many as 16 low-income housing communities throughout the community

Obj 1.3: Weekly, distribute any remaining foods to community partner orgs that serve food-insecure individuals: Resilience Hub, Star Light Center, Respite House, HEC Academy, and others

Obj 1.4: Meet w Food Access Advisory Committee and Food Ambassadors (individuals w lived experience of food insecurity) at least twice/month to gather feedback, brainstorm, prep materials in Spanish and English, and plan educational opportunities, events, and celebrations for FMFM participants and community gardeners

Obj 1.5: At least once per month, conduct an educational workshop, event, or celebration around local food for participants to learn how to prepare seasonal foods, manage health conditions w local food, and create community around local foods

Obj 1.6: At least twice/year, staff will conduct a study including at least 1/3 of FMFM participants on their self-reported consumption of healthy local foods, increased food knowledge, and improvements in health, well-being, and sense of community

Goal 2: Provide at least 250 food-insecure community members w access to at least 10 community gardens adjacent to their homes, plus resources, education, and support to grow their own food.

Obj 2.1: In winter, meet w community gardeners and housing staff at each site to design gardens, create crop plans, and assign plots

Obj 2.2: In spring, work w gardeners to create additional beds and prepare existing beds, including raised beds for disabled gardeners; source seeds and seedlings, including culturally relevant crops; distribute seed/lings and help gardeners plant

Obj 2.3: Throughout the year, plan educational workshops based on gardeners' interests; facilitate leadership within housing communities so gardeners teach workshops and mentor newer gardeners

Obj 2.4: Throughout growing season, staff visit gardens weekly to mentor and help gardeners weed, cultivate, irrigate, and harvest

Goal 3: Engage the broader community in the FMFM and community gardens project to integrate housing communities into greater community

Obj 3.1: Work w at least 100 unique volunteers to implement the FMFM and community gardens project

Obj 3.2: Work w at least 5 collaborative organizational partners on bringing other community resources to participants

Organization Background* (3,200 characters)

Please provide your mission statement and brief organizational history.

Grow Food Northampton's mission is to create a just and resilient local food and farming system that nourishes our community and protects and enriches the earth.

GFN was founded in 2010 when two adjacent farms totaling 180 acres, prime agricultural lands that had been used to grow food for centuries, were about to be sold to the City of Northampton for the development of playing fields, and to developers who planned to build "mini-mansions" on over 100 acres. Within months, local food system activists worked with the Trust for Public Land, raised enough money to buy 121 acres of the land, work out a deal with the City of Northampton, and create the Grow Food Northampton Community Farm.

In November, 2010, Grow Food Northampton was established as a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a racially, economically, and environmentally just local food system. In February, 2011, the Community Farm was conserved in perpetuity as farmland under the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program. In 2011, Grow Food Northampton leased farmland to several farms seeking affordable land to grow food for the community, created the Organic Community Garden, and began to develop its food access and education programs.

Over the following 12 years, GFN has turned the Community Farm into a vibrant, agroecologically managed hub of local food system activity. In addition to the on-farm programming, GFN developed extensive food systems-based programs throughout the community, including working hand-in-hand with the Northampton Public School system to provide classroom-based and on-farm food and farming justice education to every public school student, establishing food access programs and year-round farmers markets, and offering hands-on workshops for community members of all ages.

Please share your current programs and accomplishments, emphasizing achievements of the recent past.* (3200 characters)

GFN is committed to food sovereignty for all and operates along a public health continuum by both responding to the immediate needs of community members experiencing food insecurity and creating long-term, systems-change for our local food system. This is accomplished through three core components of programming: 1) food access; 2) land access and stewardship; and 3) community education.

We own and steward the 121-acre organic GFN Community Farm where we:

- Prioritizing farmers of color and others from communities marginalized and harmed by the industrialized food system, lease low- and no-cost farmland to 8 small farms (including 4 farms owned and operated by farmers of color, one a collective of 20 Somali Bantu refugee families);
- Run a 325-plot organic Community Garden for over 400 community members; we utilize an Equitable Access Policy to offer subsidized or no-cost plots so all who want to garden can grow food for themselves, their families, and their neighbors;
- Operate a Giving Garden that serves as a teaching and vocational site, and grows thousands of pounds of food for donation;
- Grow hundreds of edible plants and trees for community foraging;
- Conduct collaborative research projects with academics on climate adaptive and resilient agricultural practices;
- Cultivate a native pollinator habitat to increase biodiversity for our farm and for the region; and
- Provide extensive hands-on land- and food-based educational programming for learners of all ages, including workshops on the Indigenous Peoples who stewarded the land before it was colonized; the Northampton Association of Education and Industry, an abolitionist group that farmed the land in the mid-1800s while stewarding the adjacent Underground Railroad; diverse cultural foodways; gardening and farming for climate remediation; and other cutting edge food system-related topics.

We also:

- Conduct the Free Mobile Farmers Market program that supports over 60 local farms by buying their produce and delivering it to thousands of community members experiencing food insecurity, while also conducting healthy food knowledge and nutrition programming;

- Established and manage community gardens at 10 low-income housing communities so residents can grow their own food right where they live;
- Own and produce vibrant weekly year-round farmers markets that connect over 35 local farms and other food vendors directly to customers to ensure that community members can eat local farm food all year long;
- Run a SNAP Match program to more than double the spending power of SNAP recipients on nutritious local farm products at our year-long farmers markets;
- Partner with the Northampton Public School system to bring every elementary school student to the Community Farm for hands-on food system learning and provide workshops and internships for middle and high school students; and
- Ensure that all of our programming is guided and steered by people with lived experience of food insecurity, lack of access to land to grow food, and others from communities marginalized and harmed by the industrialized food system.

Describe what goals your organization has developed around diversity, equity, and inclusion.* (3,200 characters)

Grow Food Northampton recently completed a 1.5 year racial justice consultancy project with [REDACTED] that included an audit of our internal policies and practices, and our work in the community, as well as monthly learning sessions with our board, staff, and advisory committee members. At the end of the project, they left us with a report with recommendations to action steps. We created dashboards, one for the board and one for the staff, to make sure we're addressing all of their recommendations and charting our progress.

As an outcome of the work with the [REDACTED], the staff created a permanent five-person Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) that meets biweekly to move the staff anti-racism work forward and hold all of us accountable to this work. Working with the [REDACTED] report, and conducting research and study of its own, the ARC has identified priorities for discussion and action, and plans and designs activities for the staff to address on a biweekly basis and in an ongoing manner. The ARC is also responsive to new and additional issues identified by the staff as we conduct our work.

In our 1.5 hour biweekly racial justice sessions, the entire staff works on the activities and inquiries together, within small groups, as teams, and individually. The ARC is doing an excellent job of creating a range of ways to address different issues, inquiries, and actions. Great actions and changes are coming out of the work and the collective processes have moved everyone on staff along a continuum of change; some who may

be in different places are definitely learning from and along with others. Topics we've covered include, among others:

- Building partnerships with BIPOC-led local organizations to learn from their work and support it;
- Shared decision-making and shifting power to those most impacted by food insecurity and lack of access to land to grow food;
- Hiring and firing practices within the organization;
- Land justice and stewardship; examination of Land Back and land repatriation possibilities for further exploration
- "Flattening the hierarchy within the organization; and
- Anti-racist fundraising and financial management of the organization.

The Board of Directors is also moving its anti-racism work forward. Over the last year, the board has diversified its membership significantly with half of the members now BIPOC, and a full third coming from a background of food insecurity themselves. The board has created its own Anti-Racism Committee of four members and is focusing on recruitment of additional diverse members, creating policies and procedures that combat traditional white supremacist board values and actions, and reexamining its bylaws to create more room for anti-racist innovation in its structure and systems.

Tell us about your collaborations with other organizations, coalitions, and/or networks.* (3,200 characters)

GFN has a rich network of partners and collaborators with whom we work to create a just food and farming system, and to accomplish our food access work, in particular. We work particularly closely with the organizations and agencies that manage the low-income housing communities where we distribute food and manage community gardens. We also founded and convene the Hampshire County Food System Working Group, a collaborative of 28 organizations. Below are some of our key partners.

Northampton Housing Authority – 
execdir@northamptonhousing.org

Close collaboration with this organization that manages most of the low-income housing communities where we distribute food and manage community gardens.

Northampton Public School System – Mistelle Hannah, Nutrition Director,
mhannah@northampton-k12.us

Mistelle oversees and collaborates on all of our work with the public schools; together we conduct the Northampton Farm to School programming.

[REDACTED]
Local public school with over 50% of students from food-insecure households. We deliver organic farm foods, assist with in-classroom workshops, and host students on the GFN Community Farm for hands-on gardening workshops.

City of Northampton – Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra and Chief of Staff Alan Wolf,
mayor@northamptonma.gov and awolf@northamptonma.gov

The City supplied GFN with start-up funds to establish community gardens at ten low-income housing communities. We collaborate on other projects with the City, as well.

Northampton Survival Center (NSC) – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

For the first three years of the pandemic, we partnered closely with the NSC, the city's food pantry, to conduct food delivery together. We continue to stage our food distribution work in conjunction with them.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] is a funder collaborative that has been instrumental in supporting the food access work of Grow Food Northampton. They provided seed funding for the Free Mobile Farmers Market program at the start of the pandemic and continue to offer guidance in navigating the local philanthropic landscape.

[REDACTED] farm@gmail.com

We are currently purchasing from over 60 local farms to buy organic food for distribution, and prioritize farms owned and operated by farmers from communities marginalized by the conventional food system such as farmers of color, woman farmers, and LGBTQ+ farmers. [REDACTED] is one such farm, owned and operated by a woman farmer from whom we have purchased for over four years now. [REDACTED] says of

working with us that, “Grow Food Northampton has been an important source of economic stability for us.”

How does your organization listen to/involve its constituents or community?*(3,200 characters)

A central value of our organization is to shift power to community members most affected by food insecurity, and to others who have been most harmed and marginalized by the industrialized food system. Every program that we run has an advisory group of program participants, from the food access programs to the gardeners and farmers on the GFN Community Farm, to every program in between. We recruit members from different parts of our community and work to ensure a diversity of voices, ages, experiences, cultures, and experiences in the food system. All of our programming is developed, designed, and steered by these advisory groups:

- Our Food Access Advisory Committee and Food Ambassadors, all individuals who are grappling with food insecurity and who participate in our food access programs (Free Mobile Farmers Market, community gardens at low-income housing, SNAP Match) guides, designs, and implements with GFN staff all of our food access programming;
- The Garden Sages create and contribute to policy, procedures, and educational programming for the GFN Organic Community Garden;
- The Land Stewardship Committee works closely with GFN’s Farm and Land Stewardship Manager to advise our work on the Community Farm; the committee is comprised of farmer lessees; experts from the community on agroecology, land stewardship; climate change adaptation and remediation; and responsible land use;
- The Education Advisory Committee is comprised of local teachers, food system educators; a local chef; a youth advisor; an educator from the David Ruggles Center; and others to advise, design, and create our education programming; and
- The Farmers Market is currently putting together an advisory committee of market vendors, customers, SNAP Match users; and others to advise on our farmers markets.

We also evaluate each of our programs on, at minimum, an annual basis. Evaluations, conducted in English and Spanish, always include qualitative data and feedback from

participants in our programs. As an example, in 2023, we heard from participants in our Free Mobile Farmers Market program:

"The amount of produce we are eating has changed 100-fold since it's so expensive to buy the food at the store. My family has been eating healthier! It's so hard to make ends meet buying healthy produce and this program has helped us make a way for my children especially,"

and

"Our vegetable consumption has increased greatly! I include a fresh vegetable every night in dinner, which is a very big difference from my life before the Mobile Farmers Market. I've learned how to include fresh vegetables in my cooking and how to flavor it in ways that are enticing to my kids."

We take participant feedback seriously and adjust future work based on what we hear from them. Listening to, responding to, and taking guidance from our program participants is a cornerstone to our work to shift power and leadership in the local food system to members of our community.

Please describe any recent major changes to financial and/or organizational circumstances or N/A* (3,200 characters)

Our food access work is a crucial component of our public health approach to addressing food insecurity and hunger in our community. As we are doing the long-term work to build a sound foundation for our local food system, we are simultaneously responding to the immediate need for nutritious food to prevent food insecurity in the present. This approach to the interplay of long and short term needs in our local food system has been recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR); during the pandemic and its aftermath, MDAR has provided GFN with funding designated for purchase of local farm foods for our Free Mobile Farmers Market program. MDAR has understood the need to both support local farms and ensure that community members grappling with food insecurity have access to nutrient-dense foods grown locally. But that pandemic-era funding from MDAR, a full third of our budget, is coming to an end and GFN is grappling with how to replace this significant loss of resources for our food access program.

We have an active, diversified development program with significant support from individuals and local businesses, in particular. We also have ongoing program revenue from lease and vendor fees, and educational offerings. Currently, we are beginning the quiet phase of a campaign to raise \$1.2MM in additional individual contributions, to be used to sustain our core operations in the coming five years and offset the potential loss of pandemic-era public funds. To date, we have over \$300K pledged for the campaign with other strong prospects. We are also aggressively pursuing funds from local and national foundations, in addition to actively seeking public funds at every opportunity to make up some of the projected food access funding shortfall in our 2025 budget.

We would be grateful and gratified to have the [REDACTED] Foundation come in as a significant partner to our food access program as we seek other long-term sources of funding.

Is there anything else you would like to add? (3,200 characters)

Although our food access programming is a central component of our work at Grow Food Northampton, we are not a traditional food pantry. We are not in the business of distributing food using a charity model. Rather, our work is about social change from, literally, the ground up! It is about teaching people how to grow their own food so they have that skill for the long-term. It is about listening to food-insecure community members talk about what foods they want to grow and which vegetables, fruits, and medicinal and culinary herbs are key to their cultural foodways, and making sure they have access to those foods to grow and eat them. It is about offering opportunities to learn about the nutritional content of foods, and how to use food to improve one's diabetes and other health issues. It is ensuring that families know how to cook with local produce and value-added local farm products. It is about creating true community, joy, and fun around food. GFN does all those things with love for our community in all its diversity.

The interplay of the Free Mobile Farmers Market program with the community gardens at low-income housing is critical to the long-term health and well-being of community members experiencing food insecurity. Our public health approach to creating and

strengthening the local food system means that we do not just meet immediate needs by distributing food to people who need it; we also create the infrastructure and build the knowledge and skills people need to access and grow their own organic food as a long-term solution to food insecurity. The very act of gardening and growing one's own organic food is a direct path to not just food security, but health, well-being, and community-building. Choosing one's own seeds and seedlings, digging in the earth in the beautiful outdoors, planting and tending to seeds and plants, and harvesting delicious, nutrient-dense vegetables, fruits, culinary and medicinal herbs, and flowers is positively life-affirming. It is food sovereignty at its best! Current community gardeners attest that not only are they excited to grow their own food, but that the community gardens have built a sense of community in their housing complexes that never existed before. At MacDonald House in downtown Northampton, residents say that the food distributions, events, and garden plots have, for the first time ever, motivated them to come out of their apartments, spend time with their neighbors, and enjoy nature together. We are so gratified and excited to be able to, with the participants themselves, create that for community members who have often struggled to feel valued in their lives and in our community.

Our work also benefits local farms, thus "raising all boats higher" in our local food economy. We are never more gratified than when a local farmer comes to a food distribution site or community garden to meet the people eating the food they grew for them and teach them how to grow food. We are truly creating a food system that supports all eaters and growers.

We would be so happy to partner with the [REDACTED] Foundation to continue and strengthen this life-affirming work. Thank you for this opportunity.

GROW FOOD NORTHAMPTON, INC. - PROJECT & ORGANIZATION BUDGET SUMMARY

Federal ID #
Budget Period

01-0959428				
01/01/2025		12/31/2025		
PROJECT BUDGET			ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET	
	Total	% of	Total	% of
This	Project	Total	Organization	Total
Request	Budget		Budget	

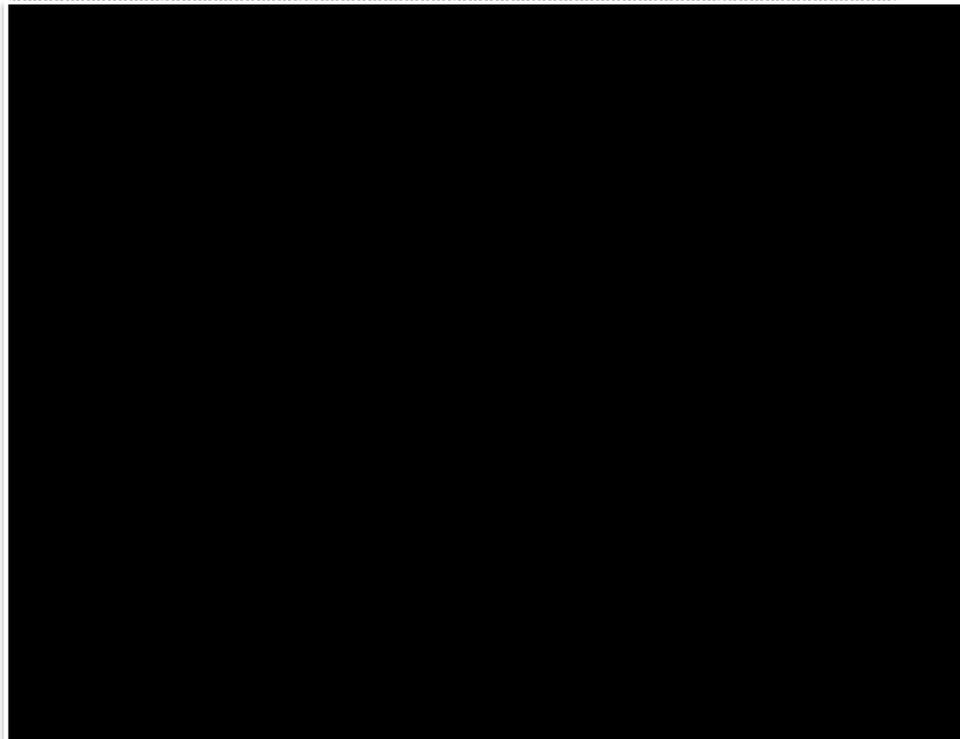
Income Sources

- Government Grants
- Foundation and Corporate Grants
- United Way
- Individual Contributions
- Earned Income
- Interest Income
- In-Kind Support
- Other Income
- Total Income**

Expenses (fill in your own line items here)

- Payroll Expenses (Footnote 1)
- Contract Services
- Supplies, Postage, Printing & Mailing
- Facilities and Equipment
- Program Expense (Footnote 2)
- Transportation & Meetings
- Other expense
- Total Expenses**

Excess of Revenue Over Expenses



Footnotes/Narrative