

11 December 2010

Dr. Maxwell Jardin
Director, Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program
U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Foods and Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-2299



Dear Dr. Jardin,

Thank you for considering our proposal to establish the Fresh Food Pantry Program™ (FFPP) subsidiary, a non-profit, self-sustained community garden program, implemented on behalf of the Ames Community Food Bank (ACFB), located in Ames, Iowa. Our organization, the Iowa Association of Food Banks (IAFB), will fulfill the primary goals of the grantor Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFP) to meet the food needs of low income individuals, and to increase the self-reliance of communities by providing for their food-security needs.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that 17.4 million U.S. households struggled with low food security in 2009. The USDA defines food-insecurity as those having difficulty at some point in the year to provide food for all household members. As economic conditions have deteriorated across the country, 12% or 6,000 Ames residents report that they are unable to afford the food that they need. Low income families continue to increase and ACFB's food supply continues to decrease; leaving a significant gap between what is needed and what the food bank has available. ACFB needs a self-reliant, long-term solution to provide a continuous source of food. Further, as individuals become more reliant on food programs to meet their basic food needs, food banks have an added obligation and responsibility to provide a complete nutritional diet.

The Iowa Association of Food Banks is a leader in developing contemporary programs to meet specific state and local food needs. The Fresh Food Pantry Program™ is designed to work with local food banks to develop large community gardens as a sustainable source of food, and to meet the nutritional standards prescribed by the USDA. With our program, the Ames Community Food Bank can expect a 65% decrease in the gap between supply and demand the first year of harvest.

With your support, IAFB will create the Fresh Food Pantry Program™ to end hunger, help people in need, provide community food-security, and influence dietary choices for better health.

This proposal outlines our plan for developing the FFPP and specifically addresses the following:

- Introduction of ACFB current situation.
- Methodology to help ACFB meet current demand.
- Our qualifications to implement this program.
- Benefits gained by CFP, ACFB and the residents of Ames.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal. With your help, the residents of Ames, Iowa will have affordable access to the nutritional foods they need. We look forward to hearing from you and the committee.

Sincerely,
Working Group
Iowa Association of Food Banks

A GRANT PROPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT



PRESENTED BY



TO GRANTOR

Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFPCGP)
U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Foods and Agriculture

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INTRODUCTION

Established in 1998 The Ames Community Food Bank (ACFB) has been helping the residents of Ames by providing food for the past 12 years. Their success is possible due to the strong support from the community and federal aid provided by the USDA Partnership Grants Program. This grant allows the ACFB to purchase materials and supplies, pay directors and maintain the facilities. This grant resource also permits the ACFB to help the families and individuals that are critically short of food.

As a result of declining economic conditions and changes to the USDA's Partnership Grant Program, it has become difficult for the ACFB to continue to meet the growing demand for food.

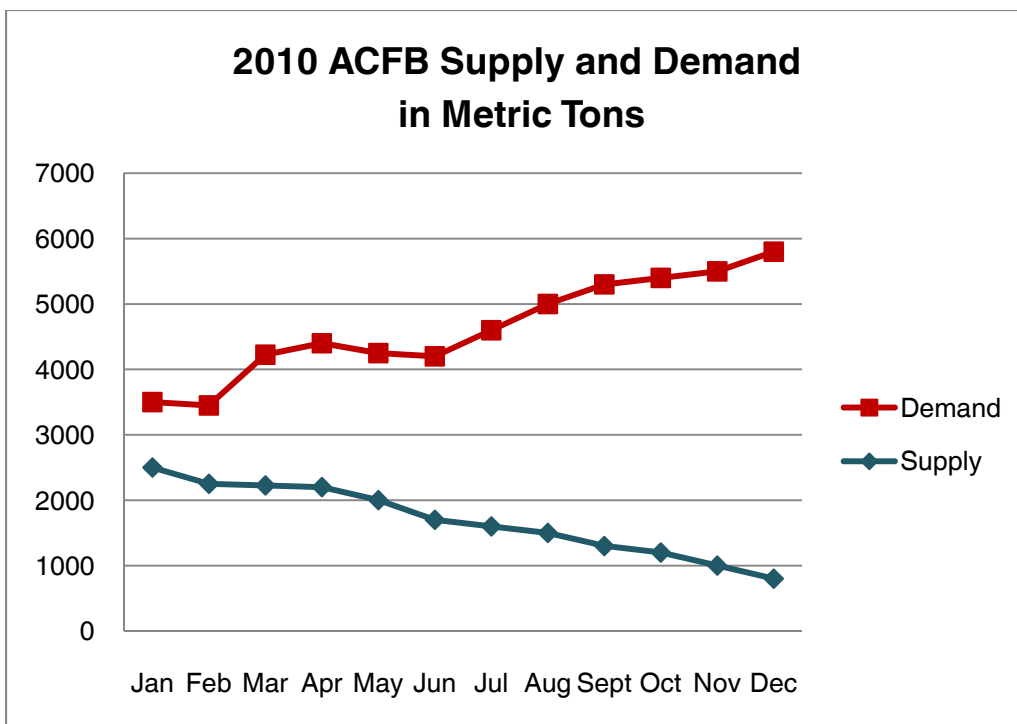


Figure 1. The demand for food has increased and the supply of food has decreased at the Ames Community Food Bank in Ames, Iowa.

Declining Economic Conditions

Beginning in 2007 the United States and much of the world experienced an economic crisis. Ames has been somewhat insulated but is still experiencing unemployment above 6.5% (US Department of Labor 2010). Higher unemployment has increased the number of people seeking alternative sources of foods and these people have turned to the ACFB as their primary source for food.

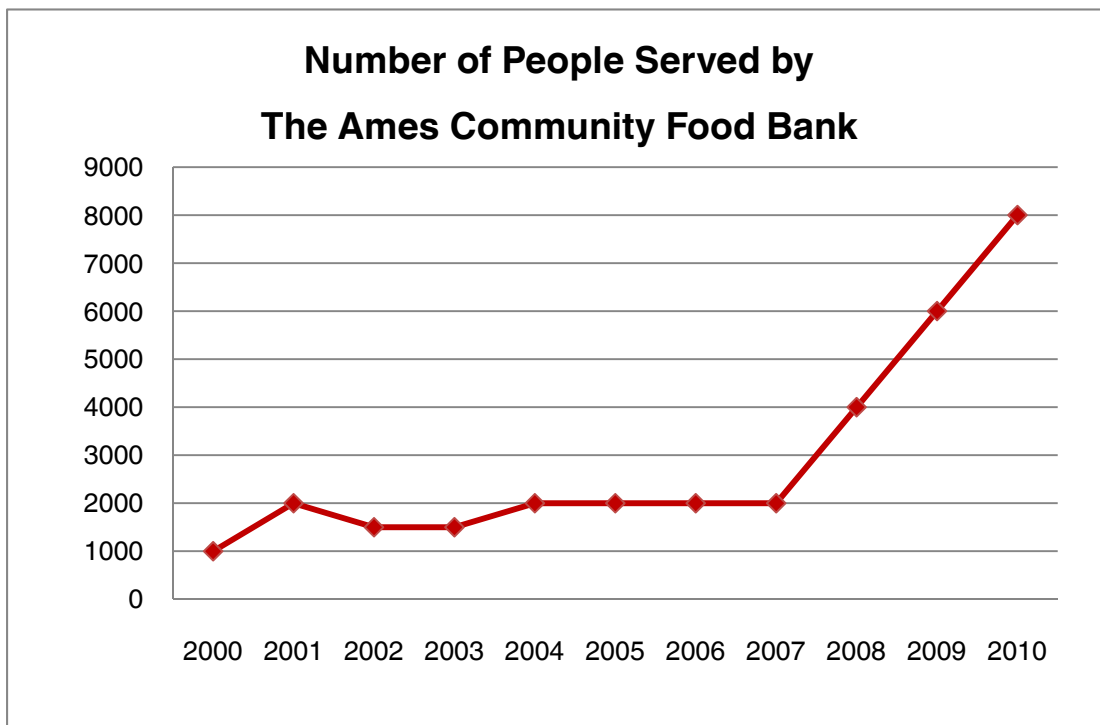


Figure 2. The number of people served at the Ames Community Food Bank has doubled between the years 2007 and 2010.

Changes in USDA Partnership Grant Program

Beginning in 2009 the USDA instituted sweeping changes to its most important grant program – Partnership Grants. Partnership Grants are available to any organization that seeks to provide food sources for people living below the federally established poverty line. These grants have traditionally been used to pay for day-to-day operations and to make up for shortfalls in food supply. However, in 2009 the USDA implemented a number of changes that put the ACFB’s grant in jeopardy. The USDA now requires that all grantees use grant funds to purchase 40% of their food supply inventory in the form of fruits and vegetables.

As a result, the ACFB engaged the services of Dr. Max Smith, a Nutritionist from Iowa State University’s Food Science and Human Nutrition Department, to conduct a thorough evaluation of the food offered at the ACFB. Dr. Smith’s report revealed that 70 percent of ACFB’s food donations are in the form of non-perishable foods (i.e. breads, flour, sugar, rice, and canned fruits and vegetables); 15 % consists of dairy products; 10% consists of meats (ground beef, pork, and chicken); and the remaining 5% consists of fresh fruits and vegetables (Figure 3). Donations from corporate grocery chains (e.g. Hy-Vee, Cub Foods, and Wal-Mart) comprise the largest contributors of non-perishable foods. However, it is common to receive most of these donations at or near their expiration dates. Dr. Smith determined that a lack of fresh

produce was the number one contributor to ACFB’s failure to meet FDA nutritional guidelines. The final report was sent to the ACFB Board of Directors in September of 2010. The report concluded that ACFB was not meeting the nutritional requirements as set forth in the USDA’s Partnership Grant Program.

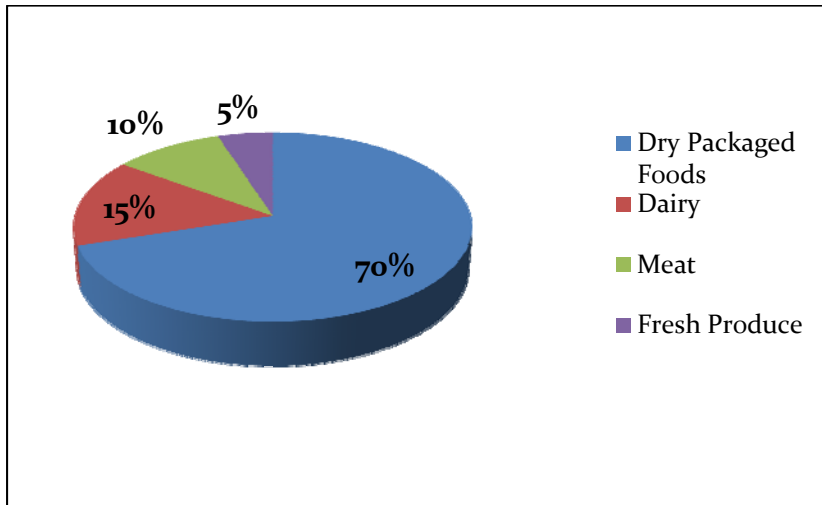


Figure 3. Only 5% of the total food donated to the Ames Community Food Bank is fruits and vegetables.

The ACFB forwarded Dr. Smith’s report to the USDA as required and as a result has been placed on a one year probationary status. This probationary period allows the ACFB to continue to receive grant money for operations while providing time to correct any deficiencies. If the deficiencies are not eliminated by the end of the probationary period, the ACFB will lose their Partnership Grant and will be ineligible to reapply to the program for one year.

Health Concerns

The Ames Community Food Bank’s current inability to meet the USDA’s nutritional requirements, combined with the dramatic increase in the number of people seeking an alternative food supply, has created an environment that inherently increases health problems.

Dr. Paul Rhodes, a Nutritionist from Iowa State University’s Food Science and Human Nutrition Department, conducted a collaborative study in 2010 with the Mary Greenly Medical Institute. A sample group of families and individuals utilizing ACFB were observed to compile data on diet and eating habits. Participants were paid to track and record their daily food intake, and a monthly physical exam was given. After six months, the results of the study indicated of the 200 participants, 74% are considered malnourished by USDA standards. Only two-thirds of the USDA food recommendations were being met, and the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables was the number one cause of malnutrition among these participants (Rhodes, 2010).

Dietary Response to Economic Stress

The vast majority of malnutrition occurs in low-income families, who are unable to afford fresh produce as part of their diet. As a substitute, nutritionally poor, processed packaged food is purchased first because it is cheaper and lasts longer. This lack of fresh produce can lead to many detrimental health effects. Including obesity, (particularly in children ages 5-16), increased chances of acquiring Type II diabetes, and reduced immune system strength (Welch & Bruski, 2008).

Sustainable Solutions

The Ames Community Food Bank does not need to rely solely on donations to meet their fresh food requirements. The Iowa Association of Food Banks will work to establish a sustainable community garden, which will provide the Ames Community Food Bank with 40% more fresh produce. Previous projects by IAFB have resulted in thriving community gardens that continue to create a source of fresh produce and food security for communities in need. These projects have a 94% rate of sustainability and have resulted in a 65% increase in the amount of fresh produce available.

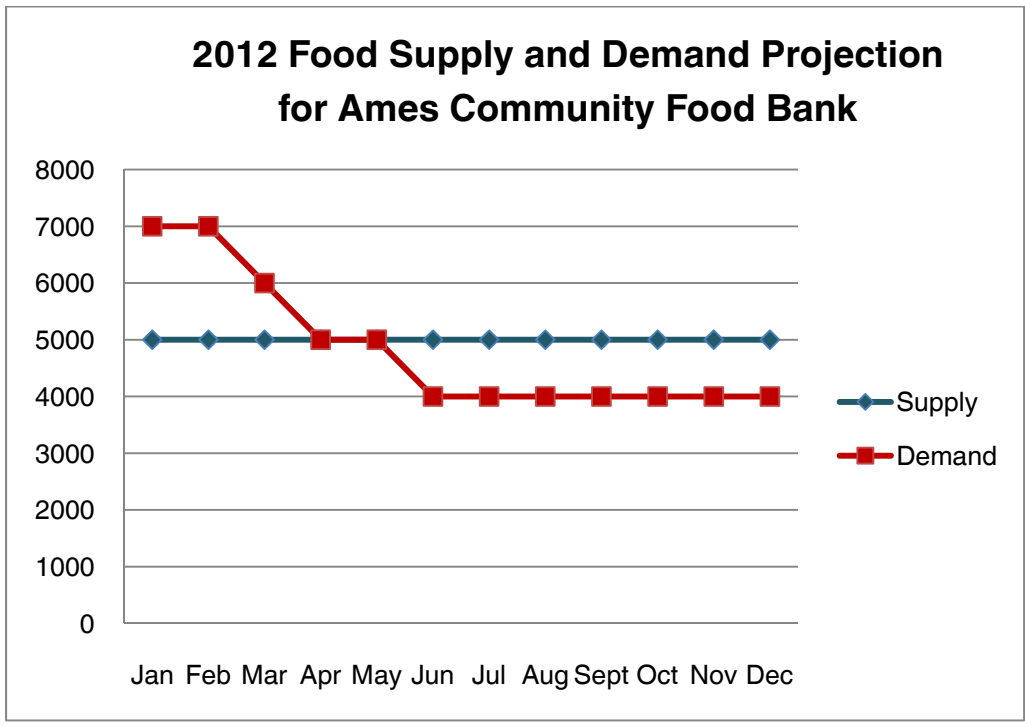


Figure 4. Iowa Association Food Bank 2 year projection of supply and demand at the Ames Community Food Bank.

The Fresh Food Pantry Program™

The Iowa Association of Food Banks is convinced that the best way to solve the Ames Community Food Bank is by implementing a sustainable and independent source of produce. In concert with the goals of the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFP), we will create the Fresh Food Pantry Program™, a subsidiary of the Ames Community Food Bank. We will do this by adhering to our benchmark goals in the GROW formula – Giving, Retention, Outreach, and Wellness.

Fresh Food Pantry Benefits

- ACFB will be compliant with USDA nutritional standards.
- ACFB will reduce the current supply and demand gap.
- ACFB will have a sustainable source of fresh produce.
- ACFB will increase fresh produce availability by 90%.
- ACFB will be a source of learning and bonding for the community.

METHODOLOGY

Our goal is to implement a sustainable source of fresh produce for the Ames Community Food Bank. Our methodology is based on past successful community garden programs and on lessons learned from these unique situations. In the previous seven years, the Iowa Association of Food Banks is responsible for the creation of three community garden programs. One of these gardens is located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the second in Grimes, Iowa and the third is a blueprint of our program employed by White House community garden initiative. These community garden programs have helped us to develop a system that will ensure that the Fresh Food Pantry Program™ is sustainable in to the future. Our methodology will be accomplished in five tasks. Our methodology was designed to be conducted systematically. The following Gantt chart shows the timeline for each task. We will discuss each task in more detail following the chart.

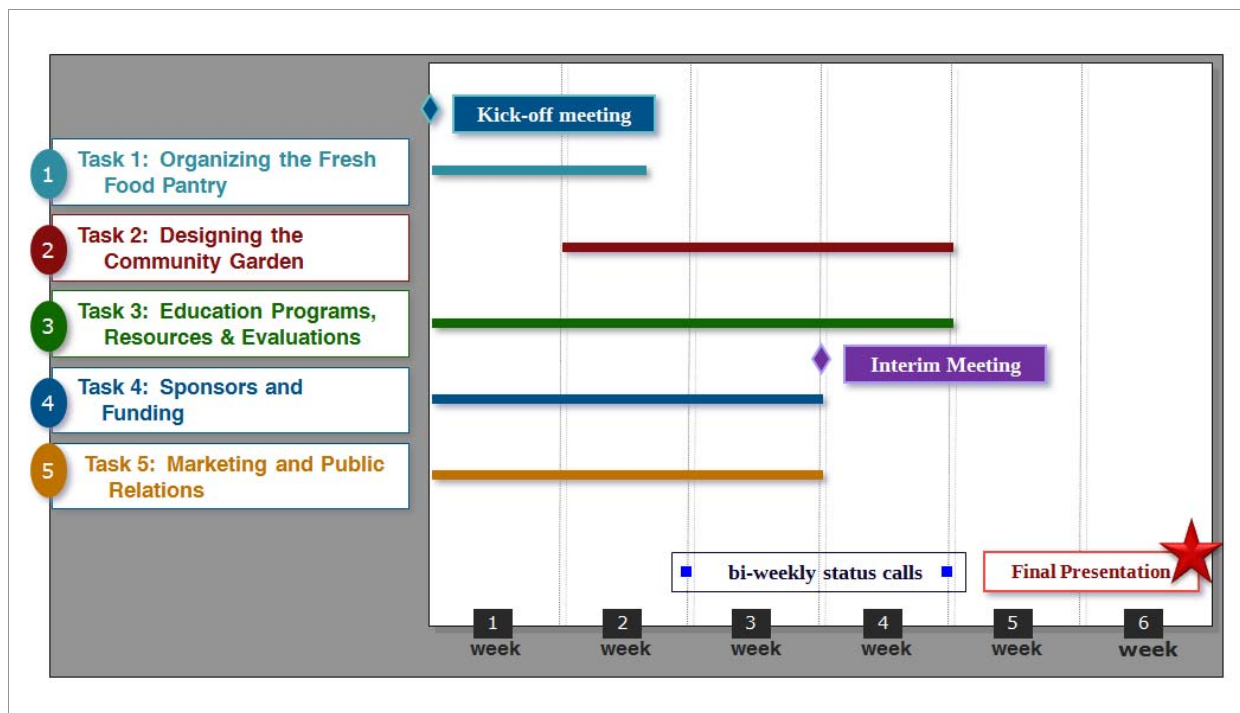


Figure 5. Timeline to implement the Fresh Food Pantry Program™ at the Ames Community Food Bank.

Task 1: Organizing the Fresh Food Pantry

The Fresh Food Pantry Program™ will act as a subsidiary of the Ames Community Food Bank. The Director of FFPP will hold a concurrent posting as a Director of the ACFB. The necessary state and federal filings will be submitted to amend the ACFB charter and to legally restructure the organizational frame to include the FFPP. We will coordinate with the CEO of the ACFB to create a list of desired prerequisites needed to perform on the board of directors for the ACFB. This list will guide the hiring process and ensure the best person is hired for the job. Task 1 will accomplish a number of important deliverables that establish the foundation for the Fresh Food Pantry Program™.

Initial Tasks

- Amending the charter of the ACFB to include FFPP.
- Hiring the FFPP Director.
- Collaborating with community stakeholders.

Fresh Food Pantry Director's Tasks

- Create a distribution plan to transport fresh produce to the ACFB.
- Hold meetings with the community to identify possible partners.
- Locate organizations to negotiate in-kind donations.
- Write progress reports to the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program.

Deliverables

- A list of requirements for hiring the Director of FFPP.
- An amended legal structure for the ACFB.
- A list of local organizations willing to be involved with FFP.
- A clear process of how FFPP will interface with the ACFB.

Task 2: Designing the Community Garden

We will begin planning and constructing the community garden. The Fresh Food Pantry Program™ acquired five acres of land donated from Iowa State University Agriculture and Engineering Farm. The land will be rented for a low premium, and to ensure future sustainability, FFPP can renegotiate the contract to obtain additional adjacent acres of land for expansion. The Fresh Food Pantry Program™ has also received donated supplies and materials from Lowes and Ace Hardware – totaling \$1500.00. These funds will be used to break ground. Task 2 will bring together local professional collaborators to organize and construct a community supported garden.

Master Gardeners

Dr. Cynthia Haynes is an Associate Professor in Horticulture at ISU. Currently, her team trains approximately 500 Iowans per year to become Master Gardeners. These graduates are required to give back at least 30 hours of volunteer time in return for their training. There are about 2500 active Master Gardeners in Iowa—one hundred and fifty of those are located in Story County.

Growing in the Garden

This curriculum mirrors the Iowa 4H Connecting Learning and Living Program, which is the only comprehensive multi-subject agricultural, environmental, and nutritional curriculum and training program in Iowa. In 2003 the Growing in the Garden curriculum was identified as one of the top new gardening programs by the National Gardening Association (Iowa State University Extension, 2001).

Community Garden Management Tasks

- Contact horticulturists.
- Obtain liability insurance.
- Create planting schemes and watering regimes.
- Establish rules and guidelines.

Deliverables

- A sustainable and multi-participatory community garden.
- Rules and guidelines that help establish order and responsibilities.
- Food security for target beneficiaries.
- Improved access to high quality fresh produce.
- Community ownership, participation, and outreach

Task 3: Education Programs, Resources and Evaluations

“Growing in the Community” and “Start Again Skills for Life” programs are for all ages ranging from early childhood to seniors. Content will cover areas such as nutrition education, and basic horticulture skills.

Start Again Skills for Life

Is specifically aimed towards low-income families and individuals using the food bank, and will engage the participants in constructive activities that focus on teamwork, life skills, goal setting and decision making and all in reference to good nutrition.

Growing in the Community

Highlights horticulture, teaches and enhances life skills such as, developing patience, relationship skills, increases self-esteem, ownership and responsibility, and helps foster good relationships within groups and family members.

These programs are adapted to the needs of the Ames Community Food Bank and shall be evaluated biannually to ensure that they are having a positive effect on the participants. Task 3 deliverables gives access to on site education programs, and guides food bank clients to additional educational resources.

Deliverables

- Brings together stakeholders
- Community development and training
- Coalition and partnership building
- Information sharing
- Community-based economic opportunities

Task 4: Identifying Sponsors and Funding

The Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program is a one-time financial infusion, so it is important for the ACFB to work towards long-term financial sustainability. Therefore, a portion of the generous five-acre plot will be allocated to individuals for a membership fee if they seek to have their own section of a community garden. Low-income participants will not be assessed fees for membership if they choose to manage their own 144 sq ft plot. All proceeds will go towards the long-term operation of the Fresh Food Pantry Program™.

The Fresh Food Pantry Program™ will solicit sponsors through schools, churches, private businesses, foundations and the city government. In exchange for their participation FFPP will erect a sign in the garden to recognize these sponsors for their generous support. Task 4 deliverables demonstrate actions for long-term sustainability

Deliverables

- Fresh Food Pantry Program™ is sustainable.
- Long-term solutions to ensure food security in the community.
- Demonstrates in-kind participation and donations.
- Community-based partnerships and use of local services.
- Community –based economic opportunities.

Task 5: Marketing and Public Relations

Marketing and public relations are the life-blood of the Fresh Food Pantry Program™. It is here that we will attract professionals, volunteers, dedicated employees, and develop recruitment and retention for consistent, long-term management. We will use all available marketing resources such as brochures, newsletters, mailers, radio and television, newspaper. Additionally, FFPP will develop an interactive web site to disseminate nutritional information to the community. The web site will keep the community sponsors and grantors abreast of our activities and successes. The web site is also used for donations, membership fees, volunteer scheduling, and recognition. Task 5 deliverables will bring the community to Ames Community Food Bank.

Deliverables

- Voluntary participation and retention.
- Increased donations and services.
- Public awareness of facility, hunger, and local food insecurity.
- Community pride and enhancement
- Productive member of the community public services

QUALIFICATIONS

Malnutrition and hunger can create health risks, and other detrimental health effects. The Iowa Association of Food Banks will create the Fresh Food Pantry Program™, by doing so; FFPP establishes a sustainable and independent source of fresh produce to meet the nutritional demands of the citizens of Ames, Iowa. With our unique qualifications past experience implementing similar programs - we know that our projects are successful based on the following criteria:

- We are committed to bringing food-security to the Ames community.
- We have implemented previous successful community gardens to compliment food banks.
- Our staff and collaborators have the experience and education to meet our IAFB goals.

We are committed to bringing fresh produce to the Community of Ames.

IACFB believes that all Iowan's deserve access to nutritional adequate food, in a safe and culturally acceptable manner. By establishing a community garden, IACFB will implement the GROW formula (Giving, Retention, Outreach, and Wellness) to help citizens in need obtain fresh nutritional food, gain essential life and job skills, and learn about nutritional wellness.

We have implemented thriving community gardens

- Cedar Rapids Community Growing and Caring
- Grimes Grow a Row
- Plant a Row for the Hungry

Cedar Rapids Community Growing & Caring

Established in 2002 to provide a catalyst for neighborhood and community development, stimulate social interaction, encourage self-reliance, and produce nutritious food. In 2004, CRCGC obtained a \$200,000 grant to develop a 26,700 sq. ft green house. This program is 90% self-sustained, and now fully replenishes its local food bank with fresh produce year around.

Grimes Grow a Row

Established in 2006 to plant, pick, and deliver fresh produce to those in need. This program brings awareness to socio-economic issues, highlights the importance of local farming, and inspires volunteers of all ages. Today, Grimes Grow a Row is five times larger, and has recruited more than a thousand participants. Due to the efforts of IACFB and the citizens of Grimes, the Grimes Community Food bank has seen a 90% increase in fresh produce availability.

Plant-a-Row for the Hungry

Established in 2008 as the Garden Writers Association's public service program. Plant-A-Row for the Hungry is a resource for community planners to launch their own community garden program. Vegetable gardeners who join an existing campaign commit to growing extra food for a local food bank. There are more than 200 programs across the United States and Michele Obama launched her garden initiative for the White House from this resource.

We have the unique qualifications and collaborations necessary to implement this project

Along with our many collaborators, the Iowa Association of Food Banks will bring together our unique experiences, and educational background to create a successful and sustainable project:

Fredrick Lloyd, Founder of ICFB

Fred has been with ICFB for 12 years. Prior to his involvement with ICFB Fred has served as full time executive director for Friends of Burlington Gardens, Vermont. Fred is a veteran garden and community organizer who has helped to establish and support many of Iowa's community gardens.

Jessica Lancial, Community Programs Coordinator

Jessica has been with IAFB for 12 years, and is a lifelong organic gardener with a Bachelors degree in Human Dimensions in Environment and Natural Resources. She has worked in farmland preservation, soil and water conservation.

Claudette Sandoval-Green, Major FFPP Project Coordinator

Claudette has a Bachelors degree in Horticulture, and served on the boards of Natural Foods Cooperative and Iowan Organics.

Partners and Collaborators

Susan Andersen; Consultant,

Susan is Iowa Start Again- Skills for Life Content Specialist. Andersen has extensive experience with developing and implementing rehabilitation for inmate's educator curricula and training. She will aid in the modification of the Growing in the Garden curriculum and the development of Iowa State "Start Again Skills for Life" curriculum.

Ruth Litchfield, PhD,

Ruth is an Associate Professor in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition at Iowa State University, and a Nutrition and Health Extension Specialist. Ruth has research interests in Nutrition Education and Health Promotion in community settings. She will provide expertise in the nutrition education intervention and evaluation components of this project.

Cynthia Haynes, PhD,

Cynthia is an Associate Professor in the Department of Horticulture and a Horticulture Extension Specialist. She conducts research in horticultural pedagogy, and is also Professor-in-charge of the Master Gardeners' program at Iowa State University. She will oversee the evaluation of the Growing in the Garden curriculum.

Lesia Oesterreich, PhD,

Lesia is the Human Development and Family Studies Extension Specialist at Iowa State University. She will aid in the modification, development and evaluation of the Growing in the Garden curriculum.

BENEFITS GAINED FROM THE FRESH FOOD PANTRY PROGRAM

The Iowa Association of Community Food Banks is ready to use our proven methodology and our unique qualifications to establish the Fresh Food Pantry subsidiary for the Ames Community Food Bank. Once the Fresh Food Pantry is established, it will create several benefits for the ACFB and Ames residents.

- The primary goals of the Community Food Projects (CFP) are met.
- The ACFB will meet USDA nutritional requirements to retain their Partnership Grant.
- The ACFB will dramatically increase the amount of food available.
- The Ames community will have a unique resource for public learning.

The primary goals of the Community Food Project are met

The Iowa Association of Food Banks (IAFB, will fulfill the primary goals of the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program; to meet the food needs of low income individuals, and to increase the self-reliance of communities by providing for the food-security needs of the community.

The ACFB will meet USDA requirements

Implementing the Fresh Food Pantry Program™ will enable the ACFB to meet USDA nutritional requirements and the ACFB will continue to receive their USDA Partnership Grant. This source of funding is vital to the organization's mission.

The ACFB will Increase the amount and variety of food available

The ACFB will use the Fresh Food Pantry Program™ to stock fresh fruits and vegetables in amounts that were previously not possible. The increased supply will have added health benefits and help reduce the supply and demand gap. The ACFB will provide a more nutritionally complete variety of fresh food from a sustainable source.

The community of Ames will have a learning and bonding resource

The IACFB seeks to create more than just a supply of fresh produce from the Fresh Food Pantry Program™. The community garden creates a natural outdoor classroom, where our outreach programs can teach nutritional awareness, teamwork building, and basic gardening – these are tools and skills for a better way of life.

The IACFB has the expertise and methodology needed to help the ACFB meet their needs. We will use our Fresh Food Pantry program to build a thriving community garden in Ames. This garden will help the ACFB meet the nutritional requirements of the USDA's Partnership Grant program and maintain their vital source of funding. The community garden will also provide the community of Ames with a place to learn together and grow together.