



Connecting Neighbors, Enriching Lives

ITEM # 198-22 FCS/ARPA

Freeport Community Services

FCS ARPA Funds Proposal

October 2022

Many thanks to the entire Council for considering FCS while deciding how to utilize ARPA funding within our community. Per our conversation at the last council meeting on Tuesday, October 4th, I have highlighted current, key program stats as well as projected needs within our community.

When we contracted with the Town of Freeport to administer the General Assistance program, we anticipated assisting a dozen or so households through GA annually. Due to significant changes within our community and economy, we are now assisting around 40 households each month. Our Director of Programs, Mike Tausek, has gone from spending a couple of hours each month on GA to around 80, drastically impacting the time he has for essential FCS programming.

The past few months have brought into perspective what our GA program will look like for the foreseeable future, as best we can anticipate. The City of Portland no longer supports any of the families at the BW. The families staying at the BW arrived after the City's May 5th rule change and are being placed there by the Maine Immigrant Rights Coalition and their housing expenses are paid for through a partnership between Prosperity Maine and the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

The remaining needs of the families such as food, non-food, and prescription expenses are being addressed through GA, meaning monthly recertifications for each family. This, in addition to the ever-increasing general community need for GA support has created a capacity issue that cannot be resolved within our current structure. The following information for FCS's work with GA in September illustrate the capacity issues that we face:

GA information for September

- 42 GA related office visits completed
- 31 families and 116 individuals assisted
- Total value of vouchers issued for month: \$22,184.00
- Total hours spent on GA: 75

I have spoken with Mike and Board leadership about the situation we are in and would like to present to the Town an alternative option. Currently, the Town is providing \$12,000 to FCS to administer the program. We request support from the Town of Freeport to hire a part time, 30/hr a week, position dedicated to GA. FCS is committed to keeping the program in-house and I feel that it has been a wonderful collaboration with many benefits to the community by housing all local services and resources under one roof. *Additionally, this dedicated staff member will also be able to develop a robust workfare/skills training programming that will help those utilizing GA to expand their employment opportunities when the time comes.*

30/HR GA Position

Expense	Description	Cost
Salary	30hrs a week at \$22/hr	\$ 34,320.00
Taxes & Fees		\$ 2,864.28
	Total for ONE Year	\$ 37,184.28

Other Community Needs

As indicated earlier, we are seeing ever-increasing general community needs due to issues related to inflation: rising costs of fuel for their homes and vehicles, increased costs of basic needs such as food and household supplies, increasing costs for electricity and so on.

Since early July, FCS has processed 21 Kaplan Fuel Fund applications. In years past, we had not begun to issue fuel assistance until mid-October. Due to the generally lower prices of heating oil during the summer months it seemed cost effective to process applications early with the expectation that it will help those families through the first stretch of the heating season.

Additionally, there is great unpredictability of when resources such as HEAP will be distributed to households within our community. The financial assistance provided by such resources will not go as far because of the increased costs. It is very likely that we will see households submit multiple requests for help with heat throughout this coming winter.

In FY22, we saw 125 more people utilize our pantry each month, 49 more households received heating assistance, and 53 more vouchers were written to help people fuel their vehicles to get to and from work, school, and essential appointments than we did in FY21. Our Backpack Program which provides weekend food for children during the school year is currently providing 17 more packages of food weekly than we were last school year, helping ensure that around 80 children aren't experiencing hunger when not in school.

Essential Programming and Resources

Program	Resource Provided & to How Many Helped	Cost less existing FCS Funding
Fuel Fund	Heating fuel, <i>100 households</i> 2X per season at \$5.96 average/gallon	\$ 73,250.00
Food Pantry	Food, <i>250 households</i>	\$ 8,000.00
BackPack Program	Food for RSU5 students, <i>80 students</i>	\$ 4,000.00
Emergency Assistance	Electrical disconnects, dental care, eyeglasses, auto repairs, etc., <i>20 Households</i> at \$100/need	\$ 2,000.00
	Total	\$ 87,250.00

Capital Projects

Earlier this year after discussing with Councilor Pillsbury anticipated, larger capital projects that we are preparing for here at FCS, I created a budget specifically for those expenses. The table below shows the budget for upcoming capital expenses. I understand from the Council that there may no longer be interest in allocating any of the ARPA funds towards capital projects. The FCS Board and Finance Committee have been actively preparing for when these expenses will occur, and I do not wish to imply as though all the projects are unbudgeted expenses.

However, there is one project that I have received a small amount of grant funding for, but much more is needed to get it started and completed. This project is to improve the accessibility of our garden courtyard at the community center. Currently, the existing set up of bricks and grass makes it very difficult for folks of varying abilities to navigate walkers, canes, or wheelchairs in that space. As we continue to grow our Age Friendly programming at FCS, having a truly accessible outdoor space will have a positive impact on the number of people who are able to enjoy activities in the garden. I plan to apply for additional grant funding if this is not of interest to the Council to consider for support

FCS Upcoming Capital Expenses

Year to Replace	Description	Cost
2022	Granite Pavers, Labor, & Furniture for Garden	\$ 13,000.00
2023	Vinyl Flooring Up and Downstairs	\$ 20,648.00
2023	Munchkin Boiler	\$ 10,134.00
2023	Hot Water Tank	\$ 6,967.00
2024	Pumping Tank	\$ 3,914.00
2026	HVAC System Throughout Center	\$ 160,742.00
	Total:	\$ 215,405.00

Overall Cost

Below is the overall cost of the need, resources, and projects identified above.

Total Cost

GA Position	\$ 37,184.28
Essential Programming and Resources	\$ 87,250.00
Capital Projects	\$ 215,405.00
Total	\$ 339,839.28

Upcoming Concerns

I would like to take a moment to share that while much of this proposal and included budgets are of projected need based on current trends we are seeing, there is the potential for one additional need to arise that we have just begun to assess. As of earlier this week, MaineHousing Authority let the community know that they have “paused” accepting **new** applications for Emergency Rental Assistance, or ERA. Per their press release:

The program, launched as a temporary support, is paid for with federal funds authorized under a pair of COVID-19 relief laws.

While MaineHousing initially projected program funds would last at least through December of 2022, this unexpected uptick in program demand over the last several weeks has accelerated the depletion of available funds.

Pausing new applications now allows MaineHousing and Maine's community action agencies time to process more than 11,000 pending requests to the program. This decision was necessary as a request from MaineHousing for additional funding from the U.S. Treasury remains unresolved.

So, what does this mean? Well, we are still sorting through that and will be connecting with partner agencies for clarity. What it could mean is that the number of folks within Freeport receiving ERA **may** lose it soon. Many of these people are living in various hotels within our town. It is important to note, ERA rental guidelines are higher than GA guidelines.

We may find ourselves in a situation where households who are losing ERA have current living arrangements that cost more than what GA guidelines generally support. Because of the volume of people that will be impacted by this, it would be wise for both FCS and the Town of Freeport consider our capacity and what measures we can take to prevent people from being forced out onto the streets. I hope to have more information to share with you by the time we meet next, but I wanted to let the Council know of my initial concerns at this time.