

## **Batten APP Proposal Application**

**Client description:** Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry, Inc. provides free groceries -- fresh produce and baked goods, frozen meats, and non-perishables -- to help people in need in the greater Charlottesville area feed their families. More than 17% of Charlottesville residents must choose between paying for housing, utilities, transportation, medicine - or food to feed their family. With food from the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and many local grocers, Loaves & Fishes gave out 2.3 million pounds of food (an average of 40 pounds--or 11 days of food--per person per visit) to 59,082 people (averaging 1,467 families/month) in 2017. Loaves & Fishes' client choice model allows pantry visitors to shop for the foods their families will eat, allowing clients to select the best foods for dietary restrictions and adding dignity to the process of seeking aid.

Loaves & Fishes is open Tuesday and Thursday from 6:30-8:30 pm, Wednesday from 2:00-4:00 pm, and Saturday from 10:00 am--12:00 pm. Loaves & Fishes' four full-time and three part-time staff rely on an average of 671 volunteers each month to pick up, sort, re-stock, and distribute food eight hours each week and pack and deliver food to 135 households/month; in 2017, more than 900 volunteers provided 19,010 hours of volunteer labor, the equivalent of nine full time employees.

*Loaves & Fishes' mission is to give food with kindness and compassion to those seeking assistance while providing an opportunity for volunteers to serve their neighbors in Charlottesville and surrounding communities.*

Loaves & Fishes' vision is to be a best practices food pantry that proactively develops partnerships and resources, providing sustainability and vision for the future.

To accomplish our mission and vision, Loaves & Fishes has developed partnerships with and cross-promotion of other community social services agencies/nonprofits, including the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, Feeding Greene, the Emergency Food Network, and the Food Justice Network; Dept. of Social Services, The Haven, the Salvation Army, Shelter for Help in Emergency, Region 10, Thomas Jefferson Area United Way, Love INC; and the Charlottesville Free Clinic, Sentara Starr Hill Health Center, UVA Student Health, UVA Hospital, and many others. A Community Awareness grant from the Charlottesville Radio Group that gave Loaves & Fishes free radio advertising from August 2017-July 2018 greatly increased visibility of the pantry's services to potential clients, volunteers, and supporters, and we are working to create a short video to use on our website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram sites, and possibly to do TV advertising. Loaves & Fishes has diversified our funding sources by developing a corporate support program and asking regular volunteers to also support financially and are working to develop a database of additional food sources to increase fresh produce, eggs, and dairy for our clients.

**Problem definition:** People experiencing food insecurity in Charlottesville may not be able to access available food at Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry because they cannot get to the pantry.

**Background of the problem:** From 2012 until mid-2014, Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry was located on Greenbrier Drive, near a bus stop, Route 29, and two lower-cost housing complexes and before that (2004-2012), at Jackson-Via Elementary School. Since moving to our permanent home at 2050 Lambs Road in August 2015, the number of households we serve has decreased by seven percent, and we suspect families we no longer serve cannot get to Loaves & Fishes. The closest public bus stop is ½ mile from Loaves & Fishes (Route 5, which stops at the intersection of Georgetown and Hydraulic Roads) and can only be reached by walking up Lambs Road, a hill with no sidewalk or shoulder. Loaves & Fishes is

giving out an average of 40 pounds of groceries per person, per visit, and transporting that amount of food to the bus stop is difficult for a healthy person, and many of Loaves & Fishes' clients suffer from chronic disease or are disabled.

People who experience food insecurity in the greater Charlottesville community often spend much of their available resources providing shelter for themselves and their family. Medical expenses and food needs can go unmet when money is tight and owning a vehicle might be a luxury. Loaves & Fishes is aware that there are people who need our food who are unable to get to the pantry, and in fact delivers to 135 households each month, but expanding the delivery program isn't the best option, as recipients aren't able to choose the food they receive the way they would be able to do if they can come to the pantry.

We have been exploring several options for increasing access to the food we offer. In May 2017, Loaves & Fishes Executive Director Jane Colony Mills met at the pantry with the Director of Charlottesville Transit Service, Albemarle Co. Transportation Dept., County Supervisor Diantha McKeel, and JAUNT to discuss the availability of public transport and the possibility of adding or moving a bus stop closer to the pantry. While to date, there has been no change in the bus line, we are hopeful that eventually, the #5 CATS bus stop will be moved across Hydraulic at Whitewood Rd. and that a sidewalk will be added to Lambs Road. In the meantime, we have been meeting with churches near low-income neighborhoods to see if they can bring their neighbors in church vehicles to get food.

**Specific tasks:** A Batten MPP student could help Loaves & Fishes' Executive Director conduct a comprehensive evaluation of what barriers are keeping people from getting free food at the pantry and develop a proposal with several options for removing those barriers. Specific activities would include: 1) developing a survey to determine which current Loaves & Fishes clients have difficulty getting to the pantry when they need food; 2) gathering information from social services case workers and other social services agencies to determine which of their clients who need food assistance do not have transportation; 3) interviewing Loaves & Fishes delivery clients to determine if they can come to the pantry; 4) participating in follow-up meetings with Charlottesville Area Transit and Albemarle Co. Transportation about the status of moving a public bus stop to the intersection of Hydraulic and Whitewood roads and building a sidewalk down Lambs Road and determining why the CAT and JAUNT buses have policies to limit the amount of food a Loaves & Fishes client can bring on board; and 5) researching additional area churches near low-income neighborhoods that own vehicles in which they would be willing to transport families to get food.

**Data availability:** Loaves & Fishes uses data from Feeding America to validate need in our community and has data on people we serve from our pantry.

**Other concerns:**

Loaves & Fishes recently started using the online Link2Feed client intake portal as our client registration database and is discovering that food need in our area is greater than we were aware. As a pantry that gives out two different USDA food programs and quite a lot of food each month, we still are seeing clients who are coming to our pantry or another pantry more than once each month. While they should only be able to get USDA one time each month, some clients don't seem to have any other source of food, and often, no income, either.