

Proposal Example #2 – Capacity Building

Overview of Grant Request

The Family Center of Jones County (the Center) provides an array of services to 4,000 children and families each year. The Center's current database is now obsolete. An upgraded system will help the Center operate more efficiently and thereby support its services. Of the \$27,875 required for the new database, the Center will provide \$5,625 and \$3,250 will be donated by State Mutual Insurance Company. The Center requests that the Community Foundation provide a grant for the remaining \$19,000 needed to complete this project.

The Family Center: An Important Resource in Jones County

The Family Center is located in Jones County (State), a rural area with a population of 160,000. Textile manufacturing that once supported a strong economy has steadily deteriorated since the 1970s and the county's unemployment rate is now 10%, which is substantially higher than the state's average unemployment rate of 5% (State Department of Economic Development, 2019). As shown in the chart below, the economic stress experienced by families in Jones County contributes to a variety of social problems.

Data from State Social Service Agency 2019 County Profile	Jones County	State	U.S.
Domestic violence per 10,000 people age 18+	60	29.9	30
Confirmed cases of child abuse/neglect per 10,000 age 0-17	247.9	84	89
Young teen pregnancy rate per 1,000 females age 15-17	30	15.8	16
Percentage of adults who are binge drinkers	20	16	14

The Family Center of Jones County is a 501(c)(3) organization that was established in 1990 with the mission of helping families build and maintain stable and healthy homes. From the 250 children and families who were served in 1990, the Center has expanded its reach and now serves approximately 4,000 individuals annually. The Center is governed by a 12-member volunteer board of directors and currently has 35 full-time and 10 part-time employees. The Center is dedicated to providing services that: 1) have substantial impact on community problems, 2) include a high degree of participation by families, and 3) provide assistance when and where it is needed. Current programs of the Center include:

Individual and family counseling by licensed mental health counselors. This service assisted 550 individuals last year.

Playgroups that help children build social skills and prepare for school. Last year, 1,000 children participated in the Center's playgroups.

Parent education and support to help parents build healthy, stable homes. The Center provides individual and group services on topics such as parenting, discipline, budgeting, communication, and career development. Last year, 500 parents used these services.

Childcare for infants and young children. Facilities have recently been updated and services are fully licensed. Last year 1,200 children were enrolled in the Center's childcare program.

A 24-hour crisis line to help families deal with emergencies by providing support, counseling, and referral to other resources. Last year the Center's crisis line handled 750 calls.

In June 2018, the State Social Services Commissioner, James Flood, named the Center recipient of the annual Excellence in Family Services award. Making the award, Mr. Flood said, "The Family Center has a tremendous, positive impact in one of our state's most challenged counties."

Over the years, the Center has maintained a commitment to quality programming that makes a difference. The following examples demonstrate the impact of the Center's work:

- A 2018 survey of 5,000 area residents conducted by Jones County United Way showed the Center is considered the most effective counseling service in the county. High-quality staff and flexible service delivery were cited as reasons for this ranking.
- A 2019 assessment conducted by Jones County Department of Education found only 60% of children entering kindergarten were adequately prepared to begin school. The same assessment conducted with children attending the Center's childcare programs found 80% were adequately prepared for kindergarten.
- Pre- and post-tests administered to participants in the parent education and support groups demonstrate that 80% of participants increase both knowledge and skills that will help them maintain healthy and stable homes.

For many families, the Center provides the support that helps them confront crises and move forward. When Sarah's husband died last year, she was left to provide for two young children. Without savings or life insurance, marketable skills, or a high school education, Sarah was in crisis. "The staff at the Center were amazing," she said. "They helped me enroll in assistance programs, find the training I needed to pursue a career as a nurse's assistant, and get my children into their childcare program. The counselors stuck with us, and that made all the difference."

The Center is funded by federal, state, and local government grants, foundation grants, donations, fundraising events, sliding scale fees for service, and Medicaid and other insurance. The Center's annual budget is approximately \$3 million. The Center's funds are tightly budgeted to support direct services. Current grant funds are dedicated to specific activities and cannot be used to support needed internal capacity-building improvements such as database development.

Need for a New Database

Quick access to accurate, up-to-date information on services provided by the Center is critical. Reliable data supports program implementation and monitoring, reporting, program evaluation, and planning. It's also necessary for maximizing payments from Medicaid and other insurance. As services have expanded to meet pressing community needs, the capacity of the data system has not kept pace and the Center now faces several critical challenges related to information management.

A quality database will enable the Center to operate more efficiently, maintain the quality and quantity of service it provides, and move forward to address emerging needs.

In 2005 a team of professional mainframe programmers volunteered to design a database for the Center. They used a product called Adabas and a programming language called Natural. The database was designed to maintain client confidentiality and capture demographic and service information on those served through the Center's counseling, playgroup, and childcare programs. The parent education and support program and 24-7 crisis line began in 2007 and are therefore not included in the database. The following challenges are presented by the Center's existing database:

- 1) Natural is an older mainframe programming language. Both Natural and Adabas that allowed its use on PCs are no longer available or supported by the company that produced them. Center staff do not know the programming language and cannot use the system flexibly to obtain more than very simple standardized reports that were designed in 2005.
- 2) The database does not capture data on parent education and support or 24-7 crisis response services that are substantial components of Center programming. Staff members responsible for these services collect information in different ways and several have designed their own simple databases. Data collection for these services is inconsistent.
- 3) Each year the Center produces a report showing how many children and families from each town receive various types of services. The report is an important way to inform the community of the Center's work. Without a database that produces accurate information for all services, producing the report is complex and time-consuming. Likewise, producing reports for planning and reporting purposes is time-consuming and difficult.

In the Center's 2019 annual performance review, staff and board members consistently identified an updated database as the most pressing infrastructure need. The review identifies the need for a database that: 1) collects data uniformly within program areas; 2) meets reporting needs of all programs; 3) provides data that can be accessed immediately in flexible ways; 4) can be managed internally without heavy reliance on consultants.

Goal and Outcomes for the Database Project

Goal

The use of high-quality service data will strengthen the capacity of the Family Center of Jones County to effectively and efficiently pursue its mission of assisting children and families.

Outcomes

Within a year the Center will be using a database that allows quick, accurate, flexible access to high-quality service data. Evaluation of the system after six months of use will show the following outcomes have been achieved:

- 1) Accurate and consistent data on program services is readily available;
- 2) High-quality data is being consistently used for management, reporting, planning, evaluation, and fundraising purposes;
- 3) Staff time consumed in compiling data has decreased;
- 4) The Office Manager can make routine adjustments to the database and access data in a flexible manner to produce customized reports.

Methods

To address the need for an updated database, the Center established a database team that includes John Wells, Executive Director; Susan Clark, Associate Director; Kimberly Ross, Office Manager; and Jeff Smith, a board member who is employed as Director of Database Operations for State Mutual Insurance Company.

The database team identified and met with four information technology firms with reputations for high-quality database design. Mountain Computer Services (MCS) in Jonesburg was found to offer needed services at the most reasonable price and demonstrated a willingness to work in a flexible manner to ensure that the Center's needs will be met.

This work-plan was designed by the database team in collaboration with Sarah Simonds, Senior Database Designer with MCS. Resumes of the team and Ms. Simonds are attached.

Major Task	Who will do it?	Time Frame
1) Collect information for design of comprehensive database. Review existing database, other Center information systems, and unmet data needs	K. Ross, Office Manager, supported by database team and S. Simonds of MCS	June 1 – July 30, 2020
2) Design new comprehensive database	S. Simonds of MCS	August 2020
3) Establish protocols ensuring information is provided for data entry in systematic manner	S. Clark, Associate Director, supported by database team	August 2020
4) Test database and note needed changes	Database team & program managers	September 2020
5) Make changes to database design as needed	S. Simonds of MCS	October 2020
6) Establish policies & procedures regarding use and management of database	S. Clark, Associate Director, assisted by database team	September – October 2020
7) Prepare database operation manual	S. Simonds of MCS	November 2020
8) Train lead staff in operation of database	S. Simonds of MCS will train K. Ross, Office Manager and S. Clark, Associate Director	November 2020
9) Train other staff as needed (i.e. assistant office manager, program managers, data entry staff)	S. Simonds of MCS and K. Ross, Office Manager	December 2020
10) Review use of new database; report on effectiveness and needed changes	S. Clark, Associate Director, assisted by database team	July 2021
11) Make needed changes to database	S. Simonds of MCS	August 2021

In consultation with Sarah Simonds of MCS, the team decided to use ACCESS to build the database. ACCESS was assessed to be adequate for the job, flexible, and easy to manage without heavy ongoing reliance on consultants. Because the Center owns this software and has a network license to use it on all computers purchase of additional software will be unnecessary.

A review of hardware by Sarah Simonds showed the need for: 1) a read/write DVD system for regular back-up of the database; and 2) a more powerful server with a back-up power supply. Jeff Smith of the Center's board requested that his employer, State Mutual Insurance Company, purchase the needed hardware and the company has agreed to do so. Their purchase of the equipment represents a \$2,250 cash match for this project (see attached letter).

Evaluation Plan: Assessing Effectiveness of New Database

In July 2021, when the database has been operating for six months, the Center's Associate Director, Susan Clark, will assess effectiveness of the system. Ms. Clark holds an MA in Public Administration, has served at the Center for 15 years, and has extensive knowledge of the agency's data needs. In examining effectiveness of the system, Ms. Clark will:

- 1) Review the quality and accuracy of data being produced
- 2) Assess the degree to which the system is achieving the four expected outcomes
- 3) Interview staff to assess satisfaction with the system and desire for changes

Ms. Clark will consult with the database team and Sarah Simonds of MCS to construct evaluation questions for reviewing the system's impact. Evaluation results will be used to revise the database as needed, report to the board of directors, and report to the State Community Foundation.

Budget for The Project

Line-Item	Grant Request	Family Center	Donated	Total
<u>PERSONNEL</u>				
1) Office Manager – 120 hrs x \$15/hr	0	\$1,800	0	\$ 1,800
2) Associate Director – 100 hrs x \$20/hr	0	\$2,000	0	\$ 2,000
3) Executive Director – 20 hrs x \$25/hr	0	\$ 500	0	\$ 500
4) Board representative – 20 hrs x \$35	0	0	\$ 700	\$ 700
5) Fringe benefits @ 25% on items 1 – 3	0	\$1,075	0	\$ 1,075
Subtotal Personnel	0	\$5,375	\$ 700	\$ 6,075
<u>MOUNTAIN COMPUTER SERVICES (\$100/hr)</u>				
1) Direct info gathering for design of system = 8 hrs	\$ 800	0	0	\$ 800
2) Database design = 80 hrs	\$ 8,000	0	0	\$ 8,000
3) Revisions to database = 45 hrs	\$ 4,500	0	0	\$ 4,500
4) Writing database operational manual = 45 hrs	\$ 4,500	0	0	\$ 4,500
5) Staff training = 10 hrs	\$ 1,000	0	0	\$ 1,000
6) Consult on evaluation of database = 2 hrs	\$ 200	0	0	\$ 200
Subtotal Mountain Computer Services	\$19,000	0	0	\$ 19,000
<u>HARDWARE UPGRADES</u>				
1) Read/Write CD rom data back-up system	0	0	\$ 250	\$ 250
2) Server computer with back-up power supply	0	0	\$ 2,300	\$ 2,300
Subtotal Hardware Upgrades	0	0	\$ 2,550	\$ 2,550
<u>OTHER: Supplies, communications, copying, etc.</u>	0	\$ 250	0	\$ 250
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	\$19,000	\$5,625	\$ 3,250	\$27,875

Budget Justification

1) Personnel: Salaries at the Center are comparable to those of similar positions in Jones County. The hours required to complete database tasks were determined in consultation with S. Simonds of MCS. Mr. Smith's hourly rate is based on his salary at State Mutual Insurance Company. The Insurance Company will give Mr. Smith release time for his work on this project. See attached letter.

2) Mountain Computer Services (MCS): Of the four qualified consultant firms interviewed, MCS was most enthusiastic about the project and its hourly rate was \$15 less than any other firm interviewed. A reference check by Mr. Smith found that customers are consistently satisfied with MCS services.

3) Hardware Upgrades: Ms. Simonds of MCS provided specifications for hardware upgrades. A read/write DVD system for database backup has been priced at \$250; a back-up power supply for the server computer has been priced at \$300; the server computer has been priced at \$2,000 and will have 2 CPUs, 40 GBs of redundant disk storage, 1 GB of RAM, and will be an Intel Pentium 4 machine with 2.6 gigahertz. This hardware will be purchased by State Mutual Insurance Company and donated to this project. See attached letter.

4) Other Costs: It is expected that minimal supply, telephone, and copying costs will be incurred. This is an estimate.