

Organization Information

Background: Hour Exchange Portland (HEP) is a non-profit, 501©3 organization founded in 1996 and governed by a nine member volunteer board of directors. HEP's members exchange services based on the currency of time. Every service is valued equally, hour for hour, selected from a directory of options ranging from the practical everyday needs of transportation to work, to more specialized services such as a medical appointment with a doctor. In 2008 over 20,000 hours of service were exchanged, which, in the market economy would be valued at approximately \$400,000 according to United Way Volunteer rate of \$20/hr. The exchanges are tracked by software as time dollars.

HEP has three staff and 700 members. The IRS does not recognize HEP's members as volunteers; however, it is relevant to note that its members contribute service hours that directly impact the total operation of HEP's programs.

Current Programs: In addition to its daily operation of connecting its mostly lower income members to services, HEP is lauded as a national model for Time Banks/Exchanges. HEP operates a national training center for Immersion Training for startup Time Banks and manages a regional Americorps*VISTA contract to place VISTA Workers within Time Banks in the Northeast Cluster. Its extensive service menu (1800 choices) also includes health care, small business development, adult education classes and access to the arts. These cash saving exchanges enhance the quality of life for its members while building social capital in our shared community.

Qualifications and Past History

Need: Maine has the oldest housing stock in the nation and energy prices are expected to rise again this winter. There is a one to three year waiting list for weatherization for income eligible Mainers through federal grants administered by the local community action agency (PROP). Additionally, fuel assistance is provided only to individuals at 125% of the federal poverty guideline. HEP's membership is 70% low income and 50% of its members own their homes. The demand for simple winterization and full weatherization of homes is very high.

In January, 2009, HEP launched the Hour Weatherization Cooperative for the purpose of providing home energy audits and comprehensive weatherization. Hour Weatherization is the first hybrid Exchange-Cooperative in the country. Members may receive energy saving benefits for their homes paid in part by time dollars, or they may earn time dollars helping other members receive benefits. The Hour Weatherization Co-op mobilizes "Green Team" members and facilitates time exchanges for winterization and weatherization for HEP members. As the Co-op evolved, it recognized that the most basic, simple winterization steps could be achieved with little cash outlay by persons with minimal skills. We call this first level of services the "Step One Weatherization".

This HEP initiative improves the economic welfare of the HEP members and may create additional jobs through the work experience. The HEP Coordinator serves the essential role of recruiting members who want to have their homes weatherized or to work on homes of other members. HEP members earn time dollars in service to others, and spend time dollars for weatherization or any other needed service. The overall cash fee for the home improvements is reduced through application of time dollars for the work, thereby saving on the work itself, *and* future energy heating bills. Additionally, this program recruits and trains interested persons in the field of weatherization. HEP's Green Team members can participate in home weatherization and will then be eligible to attend the ME State Certification for Energy Technician classes. This job training creates a ladder for employment with a pay it forward approach for HEP members helping themselves *and other members* reduce their energy costs and live in warmer homes.

Experience, Staffing & Partners: Hour Weatherization is managed by a Certified Weatherization Technician, an experienced and qualified carpenter and a business consultant with twenty years as a volunteer for Habitat

for Humanity in addition to owning a construction business. The HEP Facilitator is a seven year member who was one of the first Hour Weatherization clients. This team has already facilitated the education and training for one certified energy auditor and two certified energy technicians from within HEP membership.

Purpose of this Grant Request

In August, 2009, HEP began discussions with Seven Rivers Habitat for Humanity regarding a pilot program conducted in Midcoast Maine in 2008 in which 76 homes were successfully weatherized through community efforts. This model inspired four organizations in Portland to collaborate to address the same need in our shared community.

In October, 2009, this new alliance between HEP, PROP, Habitat for Humanity and Greater Portland United Way was formed under the banner of “Warm ME Up”. The organizations shared deep concern for low income individuals and families who are eligible for federal weatherization assistance (PROP) but forced to wait up to three years on a registered waiting list. HEP’s Step One Program is qualified, poised and available to continue the operation of the Alliance year round. This is significant because the other alliance members cannot dedicate ongoing human resources, or volunteers, to this project beyond the fall campaign.

Goals

This alliance will expedite existing waiting lists with PROP, work with Maine State Housing Authority for the procurement of sponsored materials, with Habitat for Humanity to store the materials and with Greater Portland United Way for publicity and recruitment of community volunteers. The first goal of 25 houses was part of a unified community blitz. The second goal of 50 additional homes could be achieved over a period of six months commencing in January, 2010, if HEP’s Step One Coordinator position is funded to continue the organizing and implementation of the project without interruption.

To sum, HEP’s Program Facilitator will work with the Co-op Weatherization Technician to coordinate the Warm Me Up partnership, schedule Green Team members for training and service delivery and document the work site evaluations and referrals for Step Two Weatherization.

Evaluation

The Step One Weatherization Coordinator will provide monthly reports to the HEP Executive Director and quarterly reports to the HEP Board of Directors. Additionally it will comply with all funder evaluations and this project will be audited as part of the HEP financial review process.

Budget:

STEP ONE Weatherization Technician
\$20/hr. X 20 hrs X 25 wks

\$10000