

## **Section 2. Request Information**

**2A.** \$44,000

**2B.** Funds will not be used for capital outlay.

**2C.** Van Go plans to leverage this funding by using it as a portion of matching funds that are required for grant applications, specifically a National Endowment for the Arts grant to help fund the Fall 2015 JAMS program.

**2D.** 2014 funding from the City: \$38,566 Special Alcohol Tax Fund, \$35,000 Social Service Funding.

1. Any reduction in City funding would negatively impact our agency. If the reduction was significant, the Finance Committee would convene to determine the best course of action, likely a combination of reduced services and increased fundraising efforts.

2. Van Go is requesting a 20% increase in funding over 2014.

The additional funds will be used to serve more at-risk teens through the "Teen Eats" collaboration. This year, Van Go partnered with 2 organizations to expand its health outreach services to the community. We teamed with The Douglas County Health Department and Harvesters to provide "Teen Eats," a nutrition education outreach designed to empower youth to make healthy food choices, as well as feed community teens in need. That program served 72 teens ages 14-18. Additionally, Van Go will serve a minimum of 35 Housing Authority teens through our Go Healthy partnership with the Lawrence Douglas County Housing Authority. **Both programs, facilitated by our AmeriCorps volunteer, actually doubled our total numbers served by Go Healthy component from 100 to 207 and we are planning to serve similar numbers in 2014 and 2015.**

Additional funding will also help Van Go to supervise 8-week offsite placements for 10 Arts Train employees, who will have guided employment opportunities with local employers. Van Go has secured funding for the staff supervisor of this program.

It also reflects the degree to which Van Go programs support the goals of the Community Health Plan.

## **Section 3. Program Budget Information:**

**3A.** Budget: \$689,487

\$277,860      Personnel (all positions are existing)

- Executive Director (ft)
- Program Director (ft)
- 2 Social Workers (pt)
- Office/Building Administrator (ft)
- Development Manager (pt)

\$105,472      Youth Wages & Benefits

\$37,340      Contracted Labor

- Finance Director
- Art Instructors

- Grantwriter
- Food Program Coordinator (summer only)
- AmeriCorps stipend

\$35,296	Payroll taxes & fringe benefits (youth and staff)
\$ 4,000	Transportation/Vehicle
\$ 43,948	Supplies (program and art)
\$ 10,100	Equipment
\$175,462	Other

**3B.** Van Go's request of \$44,000 is 6% of the program budget.

**3C.** Anticipated Funding Sources: \$689,478

\$270,081	Grants
\$232,397	Contributions
\$64,000	Product Sales
\$115,000	Fundraisers
\$ 8,000	Building/Event rental

**4A.** Our agency proposes to address the following needs with this grant:

**Lack of work/employment training for teens**

83% of youth hired by Van Go have never worked before and 70% of Van Go kids live in poverty, meaning it is likely they have never been exposed to or seen the benefit of a positive and satisfying work experience. Unemployment for youth (16-24) remains high; the current unemployment rate in Kansas is 21.3%, compared to the adult unemployment rate of 5.8%. It may seem fair that teenagers, most of whom are not supporting families, should be the first to lose work opportunities. However, researchers at the Center for Labor Market Studies report that unemployment during the teen years follows a person throughout life; the more work experience a person has, the higher the wages at subsequent jobs. The report also found that kids who are already at-risk are the most affected.<sup>1</sup>

**Poor nutrition and lack of access to healthy food**

Healthy eating during adolescence is important as body changes during this time affect an individual's nutritional and dietary needs. Adolescents are becoming more independent

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, 2010

and making food decisions on their own. They also tend to eat more meals away from home. Additionally, many adolescents experience a growth spurt and the accompanying increase in appetite means the need for healthy options is especially important. It's also important to note that their peers can heavily influence teens' eating habits.

Recent studies indicate the age group served by Van Go (14-21 years old) is especially vulnerable to poor nutrition and its resulting negative consequences: "food insecurity directly translates into poor nutrition. Young adults and teens, rather than very young children, are the most likely to be subsisting on diets low in vitamins, minerals, fruits, vegetables, grains and meat."<sup>2</sup>

Researchers also found that youth between the ages of 14 and 18 living in food insecure environments appeared to be particularly vulnerable to inadequacy in their diets, while also consuming less milk, fruit and vegetables than their peers. The diets for teens living in food-insecure homes were found to be deficient in vitamin A, protein and magnesium while compensated with food higher in fat content, relative to those from food-secure homes.<sup>3</sup>

### **Lack of physical activity**

Just over half of Van Go teens recently reported that during a typical week they are only physically active 0-2 days. The Community Health Plan reports that ¼ of children and youth get recommended amounts of activity.

### **Mental health conditions**

In 2013, 81% of teens and young adults served by Van Go had a mental health diagnosis. 2014 looks like it will yield similar results and we can assume a similar figure for 2015. Left untreated, adolescents are vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and suicide.

School counselors and Bert Nash staff refer the majority of kids to Van Go because of our ability to serve youth who have few opportunities for success...there are very few places in Lawrence where a teen with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, or severe ADHD can find success. According to a 2013 study conducted by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, approximately one-half (53.4%) of young adults with an ASD (autism spectrum disorder) had ever worked for pay outside the home since leaving high school, the lowest rate among disability groups. Young adults with an ASD earned an average of \$8.10 per hour, significantly lower than average wages for young adults in the comparison groups.

Van Go teaches independence, teamwork, and vital job skills (especially soft skills) that help give disadvantaged teens and young adults a chance to succeed.

**4B.** Van Go formally introduced healthy living components with the creation of Locally Grown JAMS in the summer of 2004 to encourage proper nutrition and health among

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<sup>2</sup> Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, The Journal of Nutrition. 2008

<sup>3</sup> ibid

JAMS participants. Prior to the inception of Locally Grown JAMS, Van Go partnered with the USD #497's free summer lunch program because our participants were income-eligible. Lunches were delivered to the Van Go site each day, but staff noticed that teens ate very little of their food, brought unhealthy snacks from home or went without lunch. The avoidance of the school lunches troubled staff since, for many Van Go teens, this was their only meal of the day.

Recognizing that health and nutrition are basic needs that must be met for Van Go's mission to be fulfilled, the organization turned to the community, engaging local chefs and nutrition educators.

The first homemade meal was met with enthusiasm. Teens loved the organic, nutrient-rich food, and also the family feel of having someone cook for them, sitting together at a communal table and passing bowls of freshly prepared food—new experiences for many of them. Their enthusiasm led to the formal inception of Locally Grown JAMS.

In the summer of 2005, the program expanded to provide meals *twice* a week and to introduce nutrition education and farm tours, all meant to foster an appreciation of agriculture and wholesome, locally grown food. Now, Van Go offers lunch every day in the summer, after school snacks during the year, provides physical activity, and mental health & life skills sessions.

**4C.** The City should address this problem because the at-risk youth served by Van Go are typically life-long residents of our community. Steering them on a course of success during their critical teenage years is not only a wise investment it also strengthens the social fabric of Lawrence. The employment training services we provide helps build sustainability by preparing young people for a lifetime of successful employment. Starting out life behind the eight ball puts most of our constituents at an extreme disadvantage, as they easily become part of the destructive cycle of poverty. But by teaching valuable life and job skills, Van Go helps prepare them to support themselves, contribute to society, and fulfill their dreams of successful adulthood.

Additionally, the City should address the unique mental and physical health needs of teenagers, especially those at-risk. This population is vulnerable; they are beginning to make independent food, health, and financial decisions, often with little guidance from home. While the Community Health Plan groups everyone under 18 together, carving out resources for this specific population is essential.

**4D.** Van Go's program aligns with the Community Health Plan because we provide:

- 1) **Access to healthy foods** Teens working at Van Go get a healthy after school snack and those working in the summer are fed a healthy lunch. They also receive a bag of groceries at every Teen Eats session (provided by Harvesters) and tokens to spend at the farmers market. Additionally, families receive nutrition advice, meal preparation techniques, and food at Van Go's Family Dinners, offered 4-6 times annually.
- 2) **Onsite mental health professionals** Van Go employs 2 social workers and utilizes 2 KU social work interns and volunteer professionals to provide

individual and group mental health care. We improve awareness of available mental health services through frequent healthy living lessons and volunteer presentations, and our social workers are often an important part of the continuum of care required by our constituents. Through frequent discussions of mental health issues, Van Go reduces the stigma related to mental illness and seeking care for its treatment.

- 3) **Opportunities for physical activity** Van Go integrates daily physical activity in our summer program, using community volunteers (Don “Red Dog” Gardner, yoga instructors, martial artists, dance/aerobic teachers, etc.). Kids keep track of their physical activity and every fall participate in Walktober, sponsored by LMH. Van Go has worked with Sunflower Bike Shop and the LBC to provide bikes and helmets and has an artful bike rack in a prominent spot near our front door.
- 4) **Job training & employment to address the root causes of poverty** As the first employer for most of these youth, Van Go teaches kids what it means to be employed, paying special attention to vital ‘soft skills’ that employers value: promptness, task completion, working with others, taking direction, and being a ‘self-starter.’

**5A.** Van Go will serve 100 teens/young adults with the grant by hiring them to work in our JAMS and The Arts Train programs. Teens are referred to the program by community partners and hired to work for 8-week sessions (for JAMS) and the entire year (TAT). Van Go proposes to meet this needs identified above by providing:

**Healthy Snacks and Lunches:** Poor nutrition, inadequate exercise and resulting weight issues are strong indicators of impending serious health issues and hinder the ability of already disadvantaged groups to realize their potential. Amy Bertrand, Van Go’s social worker, has found that poor nutrition is an underlying cause of many of the behaviors she encounters: hunger and low blood sugar makes kids impatient and crabby, interfering with their ability to navigate basic daily challenges. She’s observed that teens come to Van Go after school and they’re hungry – providing a nutritious, protein-rich snack helps them be physically and mentally prepared for their work at Van Go.

Van Go will also serve families with this funding. 63% of JAMS teens reported on the annual food survey that their families NEVER talked about nutrition or healthy eating and only about 30% are eating dinner regularly with their families. Van Go will help address these issues by having 6 Family Dinners in 2015.

**Healthy Living:** Providing a healthy snack when kids arrive at Van Go will stave the hunger and help prepare them for their daily work, but the accompanying healthy living lessons fortify them for a lifetime of smart decision-making. Topics such as healthy relationships, stress management, weighing alternatives, resisting peer pressure, what to do to negotiate with family/friends about food choices (and many other choices) will be covered.

Health measurements will be conducted by Lawrence Memorial Hospital. Aynsley Anderson, Community Education Coordinator, will also provide health and nutrition

education lessons. It is Van Go's hope that parents will use this free screening tool to make healthcare or lifestyle decisions.

**Physical Activity:** Youth in the summer will engage in exercise an average of 4 times per week, while school-year youth will have the opportunity for exercise 2 times per week. Community volunteers come to Van Go to teach yoga, fitness training, strength and conditioning, and stress management.

**Mental Health Services:** Van Go's social workers will provide individual sessions and lead small groups, and they will also refer youth to community resources, as needed. They assess the mental health of all youth every day during the Opening Meeting, providing individual help if a youth indicates they're having a difficult day. They make sure all youth are aware of mental health services available in town (85% of youth recently self-reported their knowledge of these services increased after working at Van Go) and coordinate those services when necessary.

**In a typical year, Van Go's social workers hold nearly 700 individual meetings with kids and another 350 with former participants through follow-up outreach. They also make nearly 500 referrals/year.**

**Job Training:** *All of these activities will be happening within the context of the job training JAMS and The Arts Train programming that are at the core of Van Go's mission.* Staff and volunteers will stress how being physically and mentally healthy leads to good lifestyle decisions, including having what it takes to find work and be a good employee: getting enough sleep, staying healthy so you don't miss work, making good decisions at key times in your life and on a daily basis, feeling good about and being respectful of yourself, your co-workers, and your bosses - and especially being proud of who you are and what you're doing in your work and the rest of your life. It's important to remember that since 70% of the kids served at Van Go live in poverty, making the connection between physical health and economic health may not be evident or modeled in the home. That's why it is such an important part of the Van Go message kids receive every day.

**5B.** Van Go is the only agency in the community exclusively serving at-risk teens and providing comparable depth of care.

## **Section 6. Program Objectives**

1. Workforce training through the arts will be provided to 100 at-risk teens and young adults, ages 14-21 in 2015.
2. In 2015, 85% of the participants will show an improvement in their pre/post Workplace Evaluation scores and/or Individual Life Plans.
3. Van Go will provide 5,000 healthy snacks and 850 healthy lunches in 2015.
4. Van Go will provide 65 healthy living lessons in 2015