REQUEST FOR FUNDING BY THE TOWN OF WORCESTER
-- 2020Le-- 2021 APPLICATION --
(Please do not overwrite the questions as you enter / insert your data.)

The organization below seeks funding by the Town of Worcester for services provided to the Worcester community. We submit information as requested in support of that funding request.

1. organization name; mailing address; contact person with phone and e-mail; website

Montpelier Senior Activity Center; 58 Barre Street, Montpelier, VT 05602; Janna Clar, 802-262-6283, jclar@montpelier-vt.org; www.montpelier-vt.org/msac

2. Please provide your EIN number and describe your non-profit status. (EX: 501(c)(3); municipal non-profit; using (named) umbrella non-profit agency)

03-6000579; Municipal non-profit (division of City of Montpelier)

3. Please describe your service to the Worcester community.

- What compelling needs does your organization fill? 
The population of Vermont is rapidly aging. Over the next decade, Vermont’s over-65 population will grow ten times faster than Vermont’s total population growth. Vermont’s State Plan on Aging, and the Older Americans Act, both include priorities of increasing socialization, Fall Prevention, volunteering and educational opportunities for older adults.

- In what way has your organization positively impacted these compelling needs?
According to the National Council on Aging, older adults who participate in senior center programs can learn to manage and delay the onset of chronic disease and experience measurable improvements in their physical, social, spiritual, emotional, mental and economic well-being. Our services enable older adults to live healthier, more productive lives in their communities. In our descriptions of programming and services below, we outline some of the ways in which our core programs and services are designed and managed to do just that, and our most recent Annual Survey Report well describes in further detail. It is available here: https://www.montpelier-vt.org/1095/Annual-Survey.

- Is your service aimed at a unique group or is it broad based?  Describe the population served.
Our services are aimed primarily at adults aged 50 and older. The average age of participants currently served is 71 years old. Some of our programs are open to younger people as well.

- What vulnerable population benefits from your services?
Our organization exists to serve adults aged 50 and older - a group often considered vulnerable in the areas of food security, physical, emotional and mental well-being.
Food insecurity acutely affects those we serve through our FEAST Meals program. In non-COVID times, this program includes twice weekly congregate meals at the Center for no cost, take-away meals for low costs for all members of the Central Vermont community, regardless of town of residency, and M-F home-delivered meals in Montpelier and Berlin to those unable to join in person.

We also offer a variety of classes and opportunities which focus on physical, social and mental well-being of older adults.

- **How do you measure or evaluate the impact of your service?**
  Quantitatively, at the end of each class series, we provide a survey to class participants. The survey is very simple but asks for the individuals opinions regarding the value of the class.

  For the past two years, we have also put out a member survey that asks about the quality and impact of what the center provides. The responses received through these surveys inform our Program Committees decisions in terms of how many and of what type of classes to offer each quarter.

  Qualitatively, our ever increasing participation rate, an increase in the number of paid members and the demand for an increase in the number of classes we offer speaks to the benefit that our membership and community find in our programming.

4. If similar services are provided by other local organizations, please specify how your services are unique and/or necessary.

   The Montpelier Senior Activity Center is (in recent years) the only senior center requesting funding in Worcester. We provide a comprehensive array of diverse programs designed to keep seniors healthy in their community, ranging from dozens of weekly movement classes to art programs to foot care clinics to tax preparation to our nutrition program and opportunities for socialization. We provide more services to a larger number of participants than any other senior center in the state. Many of our programs support vital priorities of the State’s Plan on Aging such as Fall Prevention, and we have programs specific to particular populations such as those with Parkinson’s and Arthritis.

   The services we do not provide to Worcester residents, such as a Meals-on-Wheels program, are met within the community by other organizations.

   Our publications such as our weekly e-letter and our monthly newsletter are also a clearinghouse of other community resources and information of benefit to older adults.
Additionally, we partner with many other organizations such as Central Vermont Council on Aging, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and Community Harvest of Central Vermont, all in ways related to serving our community’s older adults.

5. How many Worcester residents were served in the most recently completed fiscal year?

In the past fiscal year, we served at least 40 Worcester residents, which doesn’t include uncounted people who have attended certain events and activities for which attendance/registration is not recorded or is optional. We know that we had 29 paying members, and are aware of at least 11 non-paying members who took advantage of at least one of our free or by donation offerings, such as foot clinics, tax clinics and congregate meals.

6. What percent of your services are at free or reduced cost? If you charge a fee, how much is that fee and how is that fee assessed?

Over a quarter of MSAC programming is offered at no cost. Additionally, there are many services offered at no cost, including: access to the MSAC computer lab, resource room, Savoy DVD collection, books, puzzles, as well as other unscheduled/un-programmed services and opportunities. Some of these services are on-hold during the pandemic.

- 100% of classes with fees, and annual dues for Supporting Town members, are eligible for financial aid, and Worcester members do apply for and receive financial aid.

The vast majority of classes with fees cost $35-$40 per quarter and run for 10-12 weeks. This averages out to between $2.92 and $4.00 per session. A handful of classes with higher associated expenses have higher fees, with a high range of $5-$7 per class session. Our fees are well below market-rates.

7. Describe the accessibility of your services (transportation, hours of operation, handicap accessible, and location where services are provided) to the Worcester community. In what ways could you improve accessibility for Worcester residents?

The local GMTA Circulator bus stops outside our front door nine times daily and has connections to other local bus routes. We have 24 spaces in an onsite parking lot with five handicapped, and lots of nearby residential street parking. Our facility is fully accessible including bathrooms and inclusion of ramps and an elevator. Our office is open 9am-4pm M-F, and our usual programming extends all weekday evenings until approximately 8pm and on some weekends, depending on the program and weekend, though the extended hours are only offered on-line during the pandemic due to health screening staffing needs.

Historically, we have also offered a quarterly gentle yoga class in Worcester at the Town Hall on Tuesday afternoons with Barb Alpert, open to all adults. (and paid $250 per quarter in rent to the town). In fact, increasingly more of our programs are open to all adults, and some also to youth. We have also offered classes at several other offsite locations, too, including Westview Meadows,
Heaton Woods, Gary Residence, Savoy Theater, Middlesex Town Hall, CVMC, and some restaurants in Central Vermont.

This Fall, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of our paid classes are being offered online via the Zoom platform, but we are also offering many free weekly groups online and some outdoor activities. While in response to less than ideal circumstances, our online classes actually open up opportunities for greater participation. Most of these online courses have no size limit and many are open up to a wider age group, than when offered in-person; there is also no longer a transportation barrier. While we anticipate returning to in-person courses once safe, if online courses are well received, we are open to the idea of continuing to offer them.

At this time, due to health screening needs during the pandemic, we are not currently doing any off-site programs at locations like Worcester’s Town Hall, but we are very open to considering it for Winter/Spring/Summer in the coming year, and we look forward to the time when we can resume previous diversity of locations. If the Worcester community has particular programming interests, we will be thrilled to discuss how we might collaborate to fulfill them!

Additionally, we are currently in the early phase of developing new Village services that will hopefully assist more people with transportation and social connection in the future. While we are starting this initiative in Montpelier, we look forward to the potential for expanding the model into our surrounding towns such as Worcester, in the future.

8. How do you make your service known to Worcester residents? Describe your outreach activity that informs Worcester residents regarding services offered and details steps for residents which are needed to initiate services.

We communicate weekly through our e-newsletter and monthly through our monthly newsletter to approximately 1,650 individuals/entities. We have paid advertisements in the Bridge regularly and a weekly column in the World publication. We post to area front porch forums and regularly update our social media channels and website. When promoting one of our larger events, such as our Rummage Sale, we make sure to hang at least one poster in each of our supporting towns, including Worcester. In non-COVID times, we also usually host at least one class in the Worcester Town Hall and our instructor(s) are able to act as a liason between Worcester residents and the senior center, allowing the center to hear from Worcester residents regularly.


Participation is open to anyone regardless of town, but about 93% of current members are from Montpelier and our six supporting towns (Berlin, Calais, East Montpelier, Middlesex, Moretown, and Worcester).
10. Amount of money requested from Worcester? If you are seeking an increase from last year’s funding level then please explain the increase.

We are requesting $2,750 in funding from Worcester (a decrease of $250 from last year).

11. How did you determine the amount requested from Worcester voters? (formula/methods) Please provide a detailed rational for the funding you request.

For most towns, we used the formula of $85 per person because our expenses are increasing and the number of non-Montpelier residents using our services is on the rise (by number and proportion). However, for Worcester, the ask of $3,400 for 40 people (40x85) seemed un-reachable. In recognizing that we have been able to offer less programming, we have decided to reduce our ask from last year’s $3,000 to this year’s $2,750, despite the overall loss of revenue that we are experiencing. Our ask of $2,750 amounts to about $69 per person, significantly less than what we ask per person in other towns.

12. What is your organization’s overall expense for the year? Please provide a percentage breakdown of your income and expenses for the past year (chart or table of data).

Our budget for the current fiscal year (FY21 – July 2020 – June 2021) is $629,444.58. Attached you will find our FY20 budget report.

13. Please give a short (50 +/- word) description of your services suitable for inclusion in Worcester’s 2020 town report.

Montpelier Senior Activity Center enhances well-being for Central Vermont adults 50+ through in-person and on-line classes and groups, educational and social events, trips (on-hold during pandemic), health clinics, to-go and in-person meals, and intergenerational programming. Affordability is a priority, and financial aid is available to all adults age 50+.

14. In what way do volunteers contribute to your organizations operations? How many Worcester residents volunteer with your organization?

 Volunteers are an integral part of our organization. In FY20, more than 150 volunteers provided over 10,000 hours of volunteer service. Volunteers provide office support, lead classes and activities, support special events, volunteer on committees including our Advisory Council, and support meal production and delivery. 3 Worcester residents volunteered 36 hours of time in FY ’20.

15. How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your operations? Please address:

   • Did you suspend or limit services in 2020, and if so for how long?  ongoing?
The COVID-19 pandemic, and a city furlough affecting many of our staff hours, forced the senior center to temporarily shut its doors to the public for its spring and summer quarters (aside from delivery and distribution of FEAST senior meals), and we only began a very slow re-opening of our facility in mid-August with bimonthly foot care clinics. We continue to limit what is offered today compared with our usual busy atmosphere of multiple simultaneous offerings!

Throughout the pandemic, the Center continued to offer at home meal delivery and meals to-go. The center also was able to provide technical support as well as equipment to instructors and members for online offerings during the center’s closure. This fall quarter, the center is offering 29 classes – 4 in-person and 25 online courses and has begun to invite people back into the building for in-person drop in groups such as our crafters group. Very recently we held our first in-person congregate meal since March. These limited in-person offerings as well as online courses will continue at least through the end of December, 2020. They may very well continue into our Winter quarter, depending on the status of COVID incidence rates in our community.

- How are your services being provided now? Describe how provision of services may have changed or been limited by your current Covid-19 response. Describe your plans for continued operation through the end of the Covid-19 crisis.

The center is currently offering 4 in-person and 25 online courses and has begun to open up its doors for more opportunities to the public. In-person opportunities are limited in size number and all participants and instructors must undergo health screenings before being allowed into the building. The senior center continues to offer at home meals delivery and meals to go, although delivered meals are currently only once a week as opposed to everyday in pre-COVID times. Only recently, has the center offered its first in-person dining opportunity. However, due to the state COVID-19 protocols, the maximum number of attendees is dramatically less than those who usually are able to attend. If COVID incidence rates continue to remain low and the state gives the green light for expanded services, MSAC plans on continuing to open up very slowly and increase its offerings – however, the safety of our members and participants remains our top priority and so the center will err on the side of caution.

Meanwhile, we are taking this opportunity to create many remote opportunities online in addition to our weekly classes, including six weekly “drop in” groups (French, Italian, writing and more), monthly “call-in” and video meals, and educational offerings such as Medicare education, Nutrition education, and Composting education. Finally, we are doing wellness calls to our oldest members and creating Village services to support those aging at home to connect more with community.

- Did you or will you receive federal or state grants/funding related to Covid-19?
We received some extra reimbursements for FEAST meal expenses from the Council on Aging, which were sourced from CARES act funds they were given earlier in the pandemic. MSAC will be receiving some state-distributed CARES Act funding to help cover April-June 2020 FEAST Senior Meals Programming expenses, although the exact amount is not yet known, nor is it known how much additional help we might get from the Council on Aging for July-December 2020 (and beyond) expenses. We are also waiting to hear if the City (or which we are a small division) will receive any funding from the federal Covid relief funds. So, at the time of writing, MSAC has only received very limited federal/state funds that help cover general operational costs and/or make up lost revenue.

- How have your finances been impacted?

  During the pandemic, we have had to reduce the number and nature of our programs. After a full closure for five months, we gradually began a slow re-opening with some in-person and on-line classes, but our class fees revenue has been greatly reduced, an impact of thousands of dollars per quarter. We have also been unable to host many fundraising events, such as a fundraising dinner, silent auction, and annual rummage sale, reducing our projected revenue last year by close to $10,000. Further, we have been unable to rent out our facility space, a loss of close to $6,000. Finally, at a time when the services we offer are so reduced, we felt it inadvisable to do our membership renewal and instead are waiving the membership dues for the programs we are offering, resulting in further delay or loss of up to $30,000 in revenue this year. Together, these impacts are significant, and we expect them to continue through this fiscal year and possibly into next.

Other comments that support your request? Feel free to provide additional documentation.

A great source of current information about MSAC is our current newsletter, which can always be found at https://www.montpelier-vt.org/304/Newsletter. Additionally, we welcome subscriptions to our weekly e-letter by email request to msac@montpelier-vt.org.

After the lively discussion at the 2020 Worcester Town Meeting (which two of our volunteer members attended, and we understand there was some confusion), our MSAC Advisory Council voted to prioritize improving the mutual understanding between the Worcester community and MSAC. Staff agreed!

To that end, our Advisory Council requested on March 9 that we endeavor to hold our May meeting in Worcester (perhaps at the Town Hall?) and invite the community at large to attend and have a conversation. Four days later, on March 13, the pandemic lock-down orders came, and we had to pause in that effort. However, we look forward to the opportunity to pursue something like this in the future.
Additionally, we have now created a new document attached with our application (also on our website): “MSAC’s Tiered Fee Structures, Explanation.” We hope this helps answer questions that were raised without accurate answers at Town Meeting in March.

Finally, we would be happy to answer questions of the Social Concerns Committee and/or any other community members.

We thank the residents of Worcester for your longtime support of MSAC and for the participation of your community as participants, instructors, volunteers and donors for our operations.