



## Framingham State University: Nonprofit Giving Course Grant Proposal

**Natick Service Council**  
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**Project:** Case Management and Food Security Programs

**Organization Information:** Natick Service Council (NSC) is an advocacy, referral, case management, and information center serving the most economically disadvantaged members of the Natick community. NSC helps clients meet basic needs for food, housing, and access to health care with the goal of promoting self-sufficiency.

NSC was founded in 1962 by the organized efforts of local faith and civic communities who took action to help their less-fortunate neighbors. The charitable organization they established extended a lifeline to help meet the basic needs of those in financial crisis. Today, NSC has a long-standing and proud tradition of engaging the community to serve the most vulnerable members. A staff of eleven employees relies on the support of more than 400 volunteers who play key roles in NSC's governance, programming, and service delivery.

NSC does not receive any government funding. Instead, NSC relies on the generosity of the local community, including individual donors, local businesses, and foundations.

### **For what purpose do you plan to utilize these funds?**

This proposal respectfully requests funding to support NSC's unique and critical Case Management and food security programs. NSC's Case Management program is integral to the NSC mission of supporting clients as they overcome barriers to self-sufficiency and economic independence. Far from "complementing" NSC's mission, Case Management lies at the very heart of all NSC programs. To qualify for programming, all clients go through an intake process where they are screened and assessed by one of three NSC Case Managers. The intake process fulfills two main purposes: 1) ensure those receiving services meet NSC's income eligibility requirements, and 2) identify clients' various needs (e.g. financial, physical/behavioral health, family, educational, work history/experience, etc.) to determine how to best support them as they work towards improved health, economic independence, and self-sufficiency.

NSC is unique among MetroWest human services agencies in that all clients are required to receive ongoing Case Management support, thus ensuring each client and their families are carefully supported, their overall needs are understood, and access to community programs and services are readily available. NSC's Case Managers are all experienced, licensed and certified human services providers. They are intimately familiar with all available community resources and vigorously advocate on their client's behalf.

NSC serves clients who earn up to 300% of the federal poverty line and the Case Managers currently serve 650 client families, comprising 1,385 Natick residents of all ages, including 459 children (under

18 years of age), 555 adults, and 371 elders (aged 60 and over). 70% of clients are Caucasian, 16% are Hispanic, 5.6% are Asian, 3.5% are African Americans, and 4.9% are of mixed race.

Case Management Staff: NSC's Case Management team consists of one (1) full-time and two (2) part-time case managers.

- Kathie Fair Chandley has a BA in English from the College of the Holy Cross and a Masters Degree in Counseling from Framingham State University. Prior to joining NSC, she was an NSC volunteer and served as Secretary and Vice President on NSC's Board of Directors. In 2009, she joined NSC's staff as a Case Manager and is presently Director of the Case Management program and Interim Director of Operations.
- Amy Conwell is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW). She holds a B.A. from Clark University and a M.S.W. from Boston University. Amy has several years of experience working as a social worker in various mental health settings. Amy joined NSC's staff in 2012.
- Gayle joined the NSC in 2017 and is now part of the Case Management team. She has years of experience as a school teacher and holds a Master's Degree in Education. Gayle's strong administrative background stems from over 10 years as a Paralegal.

NSC also seeks funding to support the Heart Healthy Food Pantry (Food Pantry) to help alleviate growing food insecurity among Natick's low income population.

Regionally, according to MetroWest Health Foundation's (MWHF) Hunger Stats (updated, February 2018), 8.7% of households in Middlesex County are food insecure. Natick is considered an "affluent" community; however, the cost of living continues to increase at a rapid rate and an ever increasing number of people, including the disabled and elderly - those who are on "fixed incomes", are at risk of being "squeezed out" of Natick as it becomes increasingly unaffordable. Family wages are simply not keeping pace with the cost of living and NSC's clients must choose, on a daily basis, whether to pay for food, housing, or heat for their homes. The end result is more families become food insecure or lack the means to pay for basic necessities.

NSC's Food Pantry continues to serve a growing number of families with nutritious foods and personal care items. NSC recently completed an expansion and redesign of the food pantry to be MetroWest's first "heart healthy" food pantry. During scheduled food pantry appointments, clients receive up to two weeks of nutritious foods and personal care items, including fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products. In addition to direct provisioning of foods, NSC also offers home delivery service for isolated residents who are elderly, disabled, or lack transportation. Food is sorted and the pantry is stocked and staffed 100% by community volunteers during typical operations.

The Natick Service Council normally hosts regular farmers markets both at the NSC office and at the community center at Cedar Gardens Housing (owned and operated by the Natick Housing Authority). During these farmers markets, clients have additional opportunities to access fresh produce, lean meats, low-fat dairy and personal care items. These markets serve families with young children as well as seniors, who are oftentimes the most vulnerable populations experiencing food insecurity. Over the last year, NSC served 744 individuals during 204 farmers market visits.

The Food Pantry is usually open four days (three hour windows) per week and serves more than 240 families on a monthly basis. Over the past year, NSC facilitated 2,656 separate food pantry visits providing 5,076 people with over 100,000 pounds of nutritious foods. Over the past fiscal year, approximately 70% of NSC clients (nearly 500 families) relied on the Food Pantry and related nutrition programs – a clear indication of significant food insecurity in the community.

Along with nutritious foods, the Food Pantry consistently strives to inform clients about the benefits of healthy eating and often suggests nutritious food alternatives, healthy recipes and nutritional data and advice to clients.

In order to continue to protect the health and safety of staff, volunteers and clients, NSC has banned all volunteers and all donations of food and clothing from the public during these uncertain times. Food donations normally make up a significant portion of the food distributed to clients; typically, each month NSC receives over 17,000 pounds of donated food via community food drives and food rescue partners (i.e., Lovin' Spoonfuls & local grocery stores) and purchases almost 3,000 pounds of food. To ensure clients' most basic needs are continuing to be met by the Food Pantry, NSC will need to purchase more food than usual through the Greater Boston Food Bank. This is a huge unanticipated expense but is critical to ensuring that there will be no disruption in Food Pantry services.

Food Pantry Staff: NSC's Food Pantry team consists of one (1) part-time Director, one (1) part-time Food Pantry Manager, one (1) part-time Food Rescue Coordinator and hundreds of dedicated volunteers.

- Kelsey Hampton joined NSC in July 2016 as NSC's Director of Food Pantry and Volunteer Services. Kelsey is responsible for overall operations of the expanded Food Pantry and volunteer programs (nearly 600 volunteers). Kelsey earned a Bachelor's Degree in Social Services from Providence College.
- Frank Kobbs is the Food Pantry Manager and he oversees and coordinates daily food pantry operations including food deliveries from Lovin' Spoonfuls and other food donations. He is a jack of all trades and helps things run smoothly for our pantry users. Frank is a graduate of Boston College and a long-time Natick resident. He is also an active volunteer at the Senior Center and Morse Institute Library.
- Devin Giles, Coordinator is the Food Rescue Coordinator. Devin is responsible for coordinating and accepting the deliveries from Lovin' Spoonfuls, our food rescue program. Fresh and perishable foods that are close to expiring are rescued from grocery stores and farms and delivered to NSC daily. Devin volunteered at NSC with Natick High School's ACHIEVE program prior to joining our staff.

### **What are your other sources of funding?**

NSC Fiscal Year is April 1- March 31. The pending grant amounts for FY21 are listed below. The balance of the expense will be covered by various fundraising activities including new grant opportunities, events, donation appeals and corporate donations.

- MetroWest Health Foundation - \$15,000
- MutualOne Charitable Foundation - \$10,000

- Hopkinton Country Club Foundation - \$5,000
- Digital Federal Credit Union Foundation - \$5,000
- Foundation for MetroWest - \$2,000

**What are your short-term and long-term goals?**

The overarching goal of the case management program is to support clients through sudden crises and advocate on their behalf as they strive to overcome barriers preventing them from reaching economic independence and self-sufficiency. Case managers work closely with clients on additional programmatic goals, including:

- Developing client "road maps" outlining goals and barriers to self sufficiency;
- Advocating for clients as they work towards economic independence and self sufficiency;
- Accessing basic human needs, including food, housing, heat, and healthcare services; and
- Advocating and supporting clients as they navigate complex government service programs.

Case Managers also assess client barriers to self-sufficiency, act as client coaches and advocates, and connect clients with support services - both internal and external to NSC.

The initial intake is a starting point to evaluate and measure client progress over time. Case managers work closely with clients to track progress, ensure they're using the services to which they were referred, and to identify and overcome obstacles to service utilization. If referrals to external services are denied or delayed, case managers advocate on their client's behalf.

Food security programs continue to fulfill a vital basic need among NSC's client base. With a goal of alleviating hunger in the community, NSC takes a holistic approach towards serving clients. Food is one component of basic needs, but a critical one that affects the overall health and well-being of people of all ages. Primary goals include ensuring families have enough food, but also understand how to shop on a budget, especially for healthy foods, and the importance of proper nutrition, especially for children and elders.

Making the community hunger free is an ambitious but achievable goal, but it must be a collaborative effort among food providers, social service agencies and the support of the greater community. NSC believes there is enough food for everyone, it's simply a matter of leveraging the community's great assets to create an even greater capacity to serve less fortunate neighbors.

**Why are staff members passionate about the work they do?**

NSC has a staff of eleven, mostly part-time employees that, with the help of hundreds of volunteers, make it possible for NSC to help hundreds of families each year. Staff are dedicated to NSC clients for a multitude of reasons, but foremost to make a real difference in the lives of families in the community. Whether families are experiencing a job loss, a death in the family, a medical issue, a divorce, or more, NSC staff can not only provide for their basic needs, but also provide resources to help families move out of crises.

The past couple of weeks have really demonstrated the passion and dedication of the NSC staff. With restrictions in place banning all volunteers and all food and clothing donations from the public, all of

the work of providing services to clients has fallen to the staff. They are working tirelessly to make sure families have food and other emergency supplies. Staff has been sorting, organizing, packing and distributing food to over 50 families, for a total of 5,000 pounds of food in just one week. This includes non-perishable groceries such as canned goods, perishable produce, meats, and dairy. The NSC staff has taken on this extra work while continuing to answer phones, calm scared clients, and maintain parts of their usual workloads.

### **What impacts have you made in the local community?**

NSC is guided by the motto "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" and serves community members with dignity, compassion, and confidentiality. NSC is part of the fabric of the Town of Natick. NSC volunteers, monetary contributions, and in-kind donations all are the result of the impact NSC has on the community and that same community continually gives back to support their friends and neighbors.

In Fiscal Year 2019 (April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019), volunteers provided 16,336 hours of help to make all of NSC's programs a success:

- 660 families were supported through NSC's myriad of programs;
- 457 children, teens and elders received holiday gifts and 260 families received Thanksgiving meals;
- 267 families received financial assistance to pay for rent, home heating, utilities and after school enrichment;
- 244 children received backpacks filled with school supplies;
- 201 career development appointments at the the Brack Career Development Center; and
- 191,908 pounds of food were distributed by the Heart Healthy Food Pantry.

NSC functions as a vital community safety net and continues to serve generations of vulnerable families. NSC connects people with means - with people who struggle. NSC is proud of its long history of serving the community and has grown to become known as the "go to" agency in Natick for families in need and others who want to give back.

### **What makes your organization stand out as distinct?**

NSC is unique, as there are no other area agencies offering a similar breadth and scope of human services to low income residents of the Natick community. NSC has established partnerships with a wide range of other local non profits, including: A Place to Turn food pantry; St. Vincent DePaul, which provides financial assistance for rent, utilities and home heating fuel; and Family Promise MetroWest (serves 6-9 families annually). To collaboratively support the community, NSC also partners and advocates for clients among a wide range of civic/religious organizations, including the Town of Natick, Natick Rotary Club, Charles River Rotary Club, South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC), Advocates, Edward M. Kennedy Health Center and many others.