



August 30, 2021

Adam Chapdelaine
Town Manager
Town of Arlington
730 Massachusetts Avenue, Annex
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Adam,

On behalf of Food Link, we are honored to be considered by the Town of Arlington for funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). For the past nine years, Food Link has served a critical role in contributing to the overall health of Arlington and surrounding communities by providing those facing food insecurity with access to fresh, nutritious food. Food Link is requesting \$250,000 this year and an additional \$250,000 in years two through four as part of the \$1 million in ARPA funding allocated by the Town of Arlington for combating food insecurity.

As a community partner, Food Link provides food to numerous social service organizations in Arlington: Arlington Eats, the Arlington Housing Authority, STEPS Young Adult Resources, the Arlington Boys and Girls Club, and (prior to COVID-19) the Arlington Youth Counseling Center, Caritas Communities, and others. These community organizations distribute rescued food to residents who do not have access to enough food for three healthy meals a day. Simultaneously, Food Link contributes to the environmental wellbeing of our community by rescuing food that would typically be discarded, ensuring it does not end up in area landfills, contributing to climate change.

Approximately 3,500 (7.6%) of Arlington's 46,000 residents were food insecure prior to the onset of the pandemic; that number climbed by roughly 19% in 2020. Food Link supports both those regularly

experiencing hunger and those facing emergent situations, such as sudden job loss, unexpected healthcare expenditures, increased housing costs, or homelessness. Food Link especially focuses on providing Arlington's food insecure residents with access to fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy -- foods that are highly sought after and often challenging to obtain.

In 2020 Food Link doubled the amount of food rescue throughout the region, rescuing 258,000 lbs. of food from Arlington retailers and grocers -- including Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, Magic Bites, Breadboard Bakery -- and distributing over 110,000 lbs. here in the community. A total of nearly 6,000 residents of Arlington received food rescued by Food Link. The majority were those facing economic challenges, in many cases exacerbated by COVID-19.

For the last nine years, Food Link has partnered with Arlington EATS to ensure that Arlington residents have access to high quality fresh foods in addition to the non-perishable foods typically provided to food pantries. In 2020, Food Link offered budget relief of approximately \$50,000 to Arlington EATS by providing over 31,000 lbs. of free food. An additional 50,000 lbs. of Food Link's rescued food in 2020 went directly to residents of Menotomy Manor, many of whom did not have access to grocery stores during the pandemic.

Food Link is now operating out of the permanent Hub at 108 Summer Street, once considered a blighted building, now a community resource. The Hub is an energy-efficient building equipped with walk-in refrigeration. Thanks to anticipated CDBG funding, we will soon also have a generator. Food Link owns a fleet of four vehicles, including two refrigerated vans and a refrigerated box truck. These investments allow the Hub to serve as a community resource in the event of a weather emergency or infrastructure failure. Indeed, just this summer, Food Link stepped in to save 300 frozen meals from Minuteman High School's culinary program when their electricity went out overnight. Food Link staff mobilized first thing the next morning, dropped the temperature in the van from refrigeration to freezing, and, between the van and the walk-in freezer, helped save an entire summer's worth of prepared meals.

Food Link requests the following funding, as outlined in the chart below:

	Total Request	Strategic Planning	Development Planning	Operations Staffing	Budget Stabilization
Year 1	\$250,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$65,000	\$85,000
Year 2	\$100,000			\$65,000	\$35,000
Year 3	\$100,000			\$65,000	\$35,000
Year 4	\$50,000			\$32,500	\$17,500
	\$500,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$227,500	\$172,500

Strategic Planning & Implementation

Investment in strategic planning is critically important to Food Link as the organization looks to its future growth and sustainability. Food Link will use the planning process to examine foundational questions of mission and intended impact. These include determining the optimal balance of direct service work to educational and policy efforts; how best to scale (e.g., via replication, becoming a demonstration site, etc.); how to prioritize among geographies and recipients; and Food Link’s ideal role within the Greater Boston ecosystem of food justice and waste reduction work. Leadership and staff will also address organizational structure, efficiency, and effectiveness to develop a pragmatic implementation plan aligned with Food Link’s refreshed focus.

Development Planning

Development support will help Food Link hone its fundraising strategies, prospect research, and messaging to donors. Over the next year, with guidance from a consultant, Food Link will shift from funding capital investments to securing ongoing donor commitments for basic infrastructure and general operating expenses. Food Link has a robust pipeline of donors, established over the past three years. The coming year's work will expand the development committee and strengthen

existing donor relationships while building a broader base of support to stabilize the annual fund and sustain the organization long-term. This work will include applying for multi-year commitments from donors and foundations (currently in process), establishing giving circles and planned giving programs, and launching a comprehensive publicity campaign to broaden donor reach outside of Arlington/Lexington.

Staffing

As part of the strategic planning process, Food Link is taking a critical look at its staffing model to find the best configuration of paid staff, temporary and consulting staff, and volunteers. Food Link has already identified a need for a new paid position in Operations to support partnership management, on-the-ground fieldwork, and our expanding measurement and evaluation efforts. This junior-level position would enable the elevation of two existing roles, optimizing staff expertise.

Budget Stabilization

In 2020 Food Link benefited from a systemic shift among funders toward donations to support basic needs, including \$300,000 from one foundation explicitly targeting the food crisis. On the strength of this surge of Covid-responsive funding, Food Link staffed up to meet demand. We will utilize funding under the category of Budget Stabilization to maintain and modestly expand this heightened level of throughput. Food Link requests funding in this category for debt reduction or general operating expenses. This support will be reduced every year over the next four years as Food Link builds its fundraising infrastructure to become fully self-sufficient.

We look forward to working with the Town of Arlington, Arlington EATS, the Arlington Housing Authority, and other local organizations to continue to alleviate food insecurity in our community. We are honored to have this opportunity to partner with you in addressing the social determinants of health as we work together to make Arlington a better, healthier, more equitable community for all of our residents.

Sincerely,
Rachel Albert
Interim Executive Director