

SUMMARY
Forklift, Automation, and Safety Training (FAST)
and General Education Development (GED)

The FAST and GED programs are designed to provide marketable skills to individuals within Hopkins County who are currently living at or below the established poverty level and are currently unemployed. The specific goal is to provide long-term solutions to families who are currently unable to successfully compete for jobs in the manufacturing and administrative fields and thereby meet their family's basic needs. The basis of any solid employment job search is the actual skill base a worker presents to potential employers. Training on forklift operation, OSHA safety requirements, office automation and GED preparation provide students with classroom instruction, on-line training, hands-on training and eventual certification and/or High School equivalency for the purpose of obtaining employment with major manufactures.

The TRC grant of \$8,950 will provide 6 training stations with computers, software and on-line connectivity for the classroom training of forklift operators, OSHA safety, Microsoft Office, Quickbook, Internet research, and GED training (see enclosed program budget).

According to the latest Map the Gap survey, Hopkins County currently has 1,580 persons who routinely go to bed hungry. The Community Chest assists 2,400 persons each month, with incomes at or below the poverty level, with food and assistance with shelter and medications. This amounts to approximately 600 families who are unemployed or under-employed. These individuals are struggling to get out of poverty and can with our help. The program targets those adults, with families, who do not possess the education or skills to get and hold a job in our high unemployment market.

The expected outcome of the FAST Program is providing approximately 75-85 clients with the skills most sought after in today's market. While employment is a mark of success, the ultimate benchmark is clients who become self sufficient and no longer need our social services (food bank, rent assistance, etc).

GRANT APPLICATION
FAST Program

SECTION 1: Contact Information

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SECTION 2: Organizational Description

The Hopkins County Community Chest serves individuals and families within Hopkins County that are at or below the national poverty level and who are struggling to meet the basic human needs of food and shelter and access to medical/dental care. Many of our clients are the neediest of the needy with incomes that are less than 25% of the poverty level! Typically clients are on fixed incomes such as the elderly or disabled; those who have no/low income such as single parent homes or are unemployed; and the homeless. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit agency that has assisted those in crisis for over 34 years; assisting with rent, utility bills, medication, food, and hygiene items. Our agency sees over 2400 people and distributes over 10,000 meals each month.

We are also a training sight for the Senior Community Service Employment Program and the Mental Health Mental Retardation Services where unemployed disadvantaged clients learn job skills through assignments within our organization. In addition to hands-on training, participants needs are accessed, employment skills updated, and a job search plan is developed. The goal is preparing seniors and mentally challenged clients for the modern work force.

SECTION 3: FAST Program Description

- a. The Forklift, Automation, Safety Training Program and add-on GED course will provide the third leg of our training emphasis, complementing the Senior and Special Needs programs described above, by training the unemployed 20-40 age group clients who simply need marketable skills. Many of our clients seeking help with food or housing are motivated and hard working adults who simply do not have the skills to compete in our high unemployment market. The basis of any solid employment job search is the actual skill base a worker presents to potential employers. At the most fundamental level, soft skills like interpersonal communication, the ability to speak and write correctly and present ideas clearly, are the areas most often cited when employers discuss the downside of hiring persons without skills or a high school diploma.

- b. FAST will offer classroom and hands-on training to increase the marketability of clients in those fields of employment which are commonly hiring in Hopkins County. The local major employers are manufactures of plastics, food products, manufactured homes, drainage pipes, shutters, windows, doors, technical aerospace, surveillance & navigation aids and custom steel fabrication. Many of these employers are tightening their budgets by drastically reducing their employee training programs and hiring applicants who already have the required skills. FAST is designed to bridge that gap for low income households. The specific goal is to provide long-term solutions to families who are currently unable to successfully compete for jobs in the manufacturing and administrative fields and thereby meet their families basic needs.
- c. We currently have 480 clients who, as head of households, are reporting their education levels at or below the 9th grade. Approximately 48% of those are identified as ethnic minorities. While these numbers reflect current clients, the number will explode with the recent addition of a satellite at the previously subserviced Peerless Community, the poorest community in Hopkins County. FAST classes will be offered each quarter and two GED preparatory classes will be offered each year. Class sizes will be determined by available funds but will generally be 6-8 students per class and student selection will include a review of household size.
- d. While classroom instruction is offered at many locations, FAST will offer a rich hands-on experience. With a 7,000 square foot warehouse that receives and moves more than 8,000 pounds of food products weekly, frequently by forklift (Forklift Course), and distributes food to more than 1,000 clients (Automation Course), safety (Safety Course) is absolutely a hands-on endeavor. With certification training, clients will have not only certificates, but experience in the skill areas most sought after by local employers
- e. The agency already has some of the necessary capital, such as forklifts and hydraulic lift trucks. This grant would provide the FAST classroom with computers, projection, books, software and trainer courses needed to certify students. The annual operational budget for FAST would be outside of this grant and the number of courses or students trained could be adjusted to match each budget cycle. The agency budget and profit/loss statements are at attachment.
- f. The expected outcome of the FAST Program is providing approximately 75-85 clients with the skills most sought after in today's market. While employment is a mark of success, the ultimate benchmark is clients who become self sufficient and no longer need our social services (food bank, rent assistance, etc).
- g. With the expensive capital already in place, the classroom could be operational within 45 days of grant approval. Instructors would be identified and 'train the trainers' completed within 2 months for each of the 4 emphasis areas. The first course offered would be Forklift Certification, with each subsequent course brought up monthly.
- h. No previous TRC grant has been awarded.