

## PROGRAM NARRATIVE

1 History: Hour Exchange Portland (HEP) is a non-profit, 501©3 organization founded in 1996 and governed by a nine member volunteer board of directors. HEP's members exchange services based on the currency of time. Every service is valued equally, hour for hour, selected among a list ranging from the practical everyday needs of transportation to work, to more specialized services such as a medical appointment with a doctor. In 2008 over 20,000 hours of service were exchanged, which, in the market economy would be valued at approximately \$400,000 according to United Way Volunteer rate of \$20/hr. The exchanges are tracked by software as time dollars.

HEP has three staff, one consultant and 700 members. The IRS does not recognize HEP's members as volunteers; however, it is relevant to note that its members contribute service hours that favorably impact the operation of HEP.

Current Programs & Services: In addition to its daily operation of connecting its mostly lower income members to services, HEP is lauded as a national model for Time Banks/Exchanges. HEP operates a national training center for Immersion Training for startup Time Banks and manages a regional Americorps\*VISTA contract to place VISTA Workers within Time Banks in the Northeast Cluster. Its extensive service menu (1800 choices) also includes health care, small business development, adult education classes and access to the arts. These cash saving exchanges enhance the quality of life for its members while building social capital in our shared community. The top two consistently requested services for HEP are consistent: health care (we have 100 providers who accept time dollars for health care) and home repair. This new program addresses both needs, plus the additional opportunity of job training and small business development.

2. Project In January, 2009, HEP launched a pilot initiative, the Hour Weatherization Cooperative, for the purpose of providing home energy audits and weatherization. Hour Weatherization is the first hybrid Time Bank-Cooperative in the country. Members may receive energy saving benefits for their homes paid by in part by time dollars, or they may earn time dollars helping other members receive benefits.

Statement of Need: Maine has the oldest housing stock in the nation and energy prices are expected to rise again this winter. There is a one to three year waiting list for weatherization for income eligible Mainers through federal grants administered by the local community action agency (PROP). Additionally, fuel assistance is provided only to individuals at 125% of the federal poverty guideline. HEP's membership is 70% low income and 50% of its members own their homes. The demand for simple winterization and full weatherization of homes is very high.

Significance of this Project: Hour Weatherization was created to weatherize houses in Greater Portland, Maine in the form of a community co-op. In February, 2009, Hour Weatherization held an Open House to present the concept of its program and receive feedback. This resulted in an immediate application list of 32 members in need of weatherization and 12 members willing to join the "Green Team" to work on its member homes. It will create additional jobs as the co-op grows. The HEP Facilitator serves the essential role of recruiting members who want to have their homes weatherized or to work on homes of other members. HEP members earn time dollars in service to others, and spend time dollars for weatherization or any other needed service. The overall cash price for the home improvements is reduced through application of time dollars for a portion of the work, thereby saving the client for home improvements, *and* related energy heating bills.

3. Use of Existing Community Resources: Hour Weatherization Co-op is managed by a Certified Energy Technician, an experienced and qualified carpenter and a business consultant with twenty years as a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity in addition to owning a construction business. The HEP Facilitator is a seven year member who was one of the first Hour Weatherization clients. This team has recruited two energy auditors and two certified energy technicians from within HEP membership. Agreements with PROP, the City of Portland, The United Way of Greater Portland and Earthlight, a private weatherization company, to create pathways for

HEP members to have their homes weatherized are now in place as both group alliances (United Way) and one-to-one partnerships (Earthlight). There is a shared concern to address this energy crisis.

It is important to distinguish the First Step Weatherization Project from the Hour Weatherization Co-op. The Co-op is an affiliate of HEP, with a service menu that ranges from energy evaluations, to complete audits, to full scale home weatherization. The First Step Project is a program of HEP by which HEP members work under the supervision of the Co-op to learn skills, energy saving techniques and earn hours improving the homes of fellow members and/or their own homes.

By combining the resources of the parties listed above with HEP Members providing social capital, we will address the basic winterization needs for a minimum of seventy homes this winter, possibly more.

4. Hour Weatherization was initiated in January and formally launched in August. It works with HEP and independently. As an independent cooperative it will charge market rate fees to private customers. From this revenue source, a percentage of the profits will be granted to HEP to support the salary of the HEP Facilitator, thereby creating long term fiscal sustainability for HEP. This social venture has remarkable potential to be a permanent source of revenue for the operation of HEP, and to seed development of other cooperatives such as home repair, health care and food security. Additionally, we have been asked to create a curriculum of the Hybrid Model. HEP has already been solicited by the national organization, Time Banks USA, the Cooperative Development Institute (CDI) and The Eastern Conference of Workplace Democracy to prepare and conduct training for other time banks and cooperatives. Training will provide an additional source of revenue for HEP, adding to its current national training menu.

#### 5. Goals:

- a. Ongoing employment training and employment in fair wage positions related to Home Energy. This alliance expedites existing waiting lists with PROP, may employ additional tradespersons for Earthlight and serves as a training site for Hour Weatherization Co-op. The Hour Weatherization Co-op Green Team members will be eligible to attend ME State offered Certification for Energy Technician classes after they have worked (earned hours) for a minimum of 48 hours per month, for six months. Training is available locally at Goodwill/TRC, or at Maine State Housing Authority. Our first Co-op Worker has been certified at MSHA and our first Green Team member is scheduled for basic energy certification at Goodwill/TRC. This job training creates a ladder for employment with a pay it forward approach for HEP members helping themselves *and other members* reduce their energy costs and live in warmer homes.
- b. Reduced home heating bills, increasing disposable income for other essential needs.
- c. Increase in the number of social capital hours exchanged among HEP members. The earned hours can be spent for winterization, accumulated for more concentrated weatherization, or applied for any other service desired or needed by the family, including health care.

#### 6. Objectives:

- a. Warmer homes for our members, easing the burden for families, elders and people of all persuasions during the cold Maine winters. This means warmer in terms of capturing heat, and equally important, warmer because of the kindness of neighbors helping with this important aid.
- b. Pathways that will become roads between unemployed, or under skilled Green Team members and viable employment through the combination of work experience and credentialing in a formal job training program.
- c. Deepening of connections among members who “cluster” to work in this cooperative, as well as help define and assemble for new cooperatives in the future.

This grant will insure that this first winter of this well defined, managed and community integrated initiative will be successful in serving its target population of recipients for weatherization, and for employment training and economic development.

7/8. Monitoring and Evaluation:

Hour Weatherization provides monthly reports to the HEP Executive Director and quarterly reports to the HEP Board of Directors. Additionally it will comply with all investor and funder evaluations and will be audited as part of the HEP financial review process.

Tools-- Clients are asked to submit a pre-weatherization energy document displaying annual fuel costs. These will be measured against post-weatherization fuel costs. All HEP clients utilizing time dollars for a portion of their bill must have fifty percent of the estimated hours in their personal bank accounts prior to job commencement and have earned the full balance of time dollars by the conclusion of the work. This data will be tracked in the HEP reports.

Finally, HEP is currently researching and will seek a federal grant to evaluate the program in greater depth. We would like to track data that demonstrates the correlation between healthy homes and healthier home dwellers.

9. We are pleased to share that this project addresses all three of the questions posed from the Rines Thompson Fund.

- a. The extensive collaborative relationships already in place are proudly listed in #3. We anticipate building relationships with other private businesses including Warm Tech and Horizons, with whom we are in contact
- b. This has also been addressed in the proposal. We are delighted that the concept for this initiative came from the members themselves. The first Co-op Worker is a former Americorps\*VISTA worker who had limited work skills. He is now a certified energy technician, trainer and valued mentor for the Green Team.
- c. Local leadership is woven throughout this project. Green Team members have the option of working toward a position within the Co-op, or to advance as Team Leaders within HEP. Networking with businesses and non-profit partners through trainings, meetings, at events, work sites and outreach (fairs and festivals) affords easy access to recruiting new clients and members.

This is an organic process that arose out of need, was co-created by people with skills of varied levels, and is driven by passion and responsibility. We hope you agree and will choose to be an investor. Thank you.