

North County Food Resources  
310 Wells Avenue  
Virginia, MN 55792  
(218) 555-1212

All letters should go on letterhead, even if it is only a page header you produce on your word processor. This tells a funder where the organization is located and how to contact the organization.

February 25, 2015

Ms. Philomena Dollar  
Executive Director  
The John P. Jones Memorial Trust  
300 Great Lakes Blvd  
Duluth, MN 55802

Address your letter to a specific individual when you can. Most funders provide that information on a website or a 990-PF. Letters addressed "Dear Trustees" or "Dear Director" are less effective.

Dear Ms. Dollar:

We're writing to ask The John P. Jones Memorial Trust to help North Counties Food Resources increase the amount of food available to low-income families in the rural areas of northern Minnesota. North Counties Food Resources began as the St. Ann's Food Bank in 1982. The food bank was founded by volunteers from three local churches to serve the town of St. Ann's and nearby rural areas. Our mission was to provide food to families experiencing unemployment or underemployment due to the declining mining industry.

This first sentence tells the funder what the letter is about: "increase the amount of food...." That accomplishment should align with the funder's interests. Note that the letter does not begin: "We are writing for a \$10,000 grant."

In 2000 the St. Ann's Food Bank became North Counties Food Resources to focus on collecting and distributing food to 30 food programs throughout three rural counties in northern Minnesota. These programs range from food pantries in small churches to community food banks and congregate meal sites. Last year they served 100,000 people, including low-income families and seniors. These program provided just over 800,000 meals. North Counties Food Resources supported these local programs by distributing approximately one million pounds of food to them. Our program runs on a cash budget of \$200,000 and in-kind donations, primarily the food we distribute that would cost well over one million dollars a year to purchase.

The second line of the first paragraph and the next paragraph share the organization's history, mission, and current operations.

The network of food programs we support grew out of the success of the St. Ann's Food Bank. Communities throughout northern Minnesota reached out to St. Ann's for assistance. At first people would drive to St. Ann's from these areas. Over the years St. Ann's helped volunteers set up programs in their own communities. By 2003 these groups had formed a network serving thousands of square miles of rural and isolated communities. North Counties supports this network by collecting and distributing large donations of food. We also make bulk purchases of key items at highly favorable prices in order to supply needed foods that are not regularly donated.

Now you share more about an aspect of your work that is key to your grant request, "...increasing the amount of food...."

The needs of our communities continue to grow. In the 1980s many hoped that the economic downturn in mining would be short-lived. While mining and timber still provide some jobs, our local economy has changed. The tourist industry is now the main employer throughout northern Minnesota. As a result, many people transition between two or three different jobs during the year. Often there are gaps in those transitions and a family needs its local food pantry to help fill that gap.

This paragraph provides background about the community needs. In some cases you might have statistics or other information to bolster your case. In the end, however, make sure to share the information in a way that shows how your observations come from your organization's day to day work.

To keep pace with these needs we must keep pace with the change in the overall food system. Traditionally food banks collected and distributed large amounts of rice, beans, flour,

This paragraph begins to create the link between the community needs and your project.

cereals, and canned goods. These were typical of every family's weekly groceries, whether they purchased those groceries from a store or were given a box of food at a food bank. In recent years the American food system has dramatically increased the amount of fresh and frozen foods available due to concerns about health and a desire for healthier foods. For example, a serving of canned peas contains 310 milligrams of sodium where a serving of frozen peas contains only 145 mg of sodium. You have probably seen the result of this change. In recent years both of our local supermarkets have more than doubled their frozen food and fresh foods sections. This change in the commercial sector has a big impact on donations we receive from the food system.

These lines show that the desire to provide more fresh and frozen produce reflects a societal trend and the shift in the donations available. In addition, it provides examples that most readers have seen for themselves.

We are a key conduit between Feeding America and large food brokers and the local programs we serve. Our ability to handle this donated food has a direct impact on what local food programs can distribute. Ten years ago the ratio of fresh and frozen food to canned and dry food was 1:5. Now that ratio is 1:3; that means 25% of our distributions are now fresh and frozen foods. Since our distributions also grew during that time it means we are now handling 300 % more fresh and frozen foods than we did ten years ago.

You can increase your credibility by sharing a concrete example of ideas you're sharing. This example both reinforces the impact of the trend on your organization and its place serving the community.

This shift presents a challenge for local food programs. Many have only limited space to store fresh and frozen foods. That is where North County Food Resources plays a critical role. We coordinate deliveries so that fresh and frozen food can leave our warehouse in the morning and be distributed by local food programs that afternoon, some of which are over 100 miles from our warehouse.

This paragraph links the impact of the trend to a practical solution at the heart of your grant request. This approach shows how the request has grown out of your work.

This work requires cooler/freezer space for the fresh and frozen food donations we receive. By adding 4,000 cubic feet of cooler/freezer space we can continue our present level of service and distribute another 100,000 pounds of food each year. That will translate into approximately 80,000 more meals through local programs each year.

Here you share the tool(s) need to respond to the needs you've outlined. Also, you set an outcome (200,000 lbs. more food and 250,000+ meals), by stating what you plan to accomplish with the tool(s).

We've gotten some very good help on this project from our volunteer Roger Crittenden. Roger recently retired from a refrigeration wholesaler and has worked with several refrigeration equipment vendors. Our budget for purchase and installation is \$53,460. In addition we have some minor work that needs to be done on our facility to make the installation workable. With the cost of that work the total budget is \$60,000.

This paragraph outlines the budget. Citing your volunteer's qualification bolsters the credibility of the budget. Remember, a budget is a plan.

We began fund raising for this project last fall. Our funding plan has three aspects: government grants, individual donors, and foundation and corporate gifts. As of last week we've raised just over one-half of the \$60,000. St. Clare County has committed \$15,000. Two past board members have committed a total of \$5,000 while other individuals have added another \$10,000 to date. Finally, we have a commitment to donate a part of the bid cost of the equipment, motor, and condenser from the bidder we've chosen. That in-kind donation is worth \$3,200.

These two paragraphs outline the plan for raising the needed resources, report on the progress towards that goal, and the work planned to garner the remaining resources needed.

These amounts total \$33,200. The remaining \$26,800 will come from \$5,000 we are confirming with the City of St. Ann's, another \$5,000 from past individual supporters, and grants. We've sent requests to seven foundations and businesses to raise the remaining \$16,800 from that sector.

We request that the John P. Jones Memorial Trust consider a grant for \$10,000 towards the project. Some funds are already designated to specific portions of the project due to both the

Here you make a specific request to the funder, including how the grant would be used. That use can be as general as support of the entire project or as specific as a budget line item, depending upon the funder

nature of the in-kind gift and government restrictions. If the grant is made we would use it to meet costs as they arise towards completing the entire project.

This paragraph shares a timeline for funding and for carrying out the project. Like the budget, these are plans which may change as your work progresses.

While we haven't raised all the funds yet, we believe that we are on a timeline that will allow us to commit to the vendor by August 1<sup>st</sup>. The equipment would be onsite for installation by mid-September and put into service in early October.

This project is a priority for our board because it promises to increase our distributions of food to rural communities throughout our area. Since fresh and frozen foods are such a key component of the donated and bulk purchase foods available to feeding programs, we feel that this project is an investment in our work for many years to come.

This paragraph expresses the organizations commitment to the project.

Please contact me if I can provide any further to evaluate this request. My direct phone line is (555) 555-5555 and my email is [JWBonaparte@northcountyfood.org](mailto:JWBonaparte@northcountyfood.org). I hope we have the opportunity to speak with you more about this project.

The purpose of a letter is to get a funder interested in the project. An interested funder may have questions or may want to contact you about the next step in its process. This contact needs to be both available and able to answer questions about the project.

Sincerely,

*John W. Bonaparte*

John W. Bonaparte  
Chairman

Letters must be signed by the executive director or board chair to demonstrate the organization's commitment. A letter signed by a program director or a grant writer fails to convey that level of commitment. Another person can be the contact, but top leadership must be present on the signature line. And while it may seem obvious, make sure that the signer of the letter has read it, understands it, and is committed to the project.