DEMONSTRATION SAMPLE: fictional organization created to showcase writing quality. All data is illustrative.

Riverton Community Table, Marsh County, the Hartwell Family Foundation, and every name and figure below are invented. This sample demonstrates a complete general-operating-support package: a one-page letter of inquiry followed by the full proposal a funder would request after a successful LOI.

Part A: Letter of Inquiry

June 11, 2026

Ms. Eleanor Pryce, Executive Director The Hartwell Family Foundation 210 Commerce Street, Suite 400 Riverton, Ohio 45831

Dear Ms. Pryce:

Riverton Community Table requests $25,000 in general operating support over twelve months to keep food, benefits assistance, and a measure of household stability within reach of Marsh County families.

Our market on Calloway Avenue opens Tuesday evenings at 5:00. Most weeks there's a line by 4:40: retirees, second-shift workers, parents with kids in tow. Last fiscal year we served 4,400 unique households. This year, with three weeks left on the books, we'll pass 4,900. When federal SNAP payments were disrupted in November 2025, our monthly household count jumped 22 percent in one quarter, from 940 to 1,150. It hasn't come back down.

Founded in 2009 in a church basement, the Table now runs a client-choice food market, two refrigerated mobile routes serving six rural townships, and a benefits navigation team, open five days a week from a building we own debt-free. A few facts about how we operate:

- We will distribute 1.62 million pounds of food this year, roughly 1.3 million meals, on a $1.4 million cash budget, with 81 percent of spending going to programs.
- Our navigators helped 640 households apply for SNAP this year. Seventy-one percent were approved, worth an estimated $1.9 million in grocery benefits over twelve months (we explain the math in the enclosed proposal).
- We hold about 3.5 months of operating reserves and have received five consecutive unmodified audit opinions. Our largest single funder, a county emergency-food allocation, is 6 percent of budget; no other funder exceeds 4.5 percent.

Why unrestricted dollars? When the November disruption hit, general operating support is what let us extend Saturday hours and double our produce orders within nine days. Emergency grants arrived in January. Flexible funding covered the gap.

We've long admired the Foundation's practice of giving unrestricted support to basic-needs organizations in our region, and we think the Table fits that portfolio. Our full proposal follows. We'd welcome a visit on any market day.

Sincerely,

Ruth Castellanos Executive Director (555) 014-2206 | rcastellanos@rivertontable.example.org

Enclosure: Proposal and FY2027 budget summary

Part B: Full Proposal

Riverton Community Table Request: $25,000 in general operating support over twelve months (July 2026 – June 2027)

Mission and History

Riverton Community Table exists so that no household in Marsh County has to choose between groceries and everything else.

We began in 2009 as a food closet in the basement of First Lutheran Church on Riverton's east side, incorporated as an independent 501(c)(3) in 2011, and in 2014 bought a shuttered grocery store at 1140 Calloway Avenue. We converted it into a client-choice market where neighbors shop with a cart rather than receive a pre-packed box. We retired the mortgage in 2021. When two rural grocery stores in the county closed in 2018, we added refrigerated mobile routes. In 2020 we added benefits navigation, after watching too many families leave with food but without the SNAP, WIC, or utility assistance they qualified for.

Today the Table employs 12 full-time and 7 part-time staff, supported by 410 volunteers who gave 31,000 hours last year, close to 15 additional full-time positions. The market is open five days a week, Tuesday through Saturday, including Tuesday and Thursday evenings for working households.

The Need in Marsh County

Marsh County's food insecurity rate is 14.6 percent (roughly 17,200 residents, more than one in seven), and 20.1 percent among children, one in five (Feeding America, *Map the Meal Gap* 2025). The county sits in the bottom quartile of the state for social and economic factors (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2026), and Riverton's median household income of $54,300 trails the state median by more than $14,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2020–2024 five-year estimates).

Most of the hunger we see is a budget gap in working households. Forty-two percent of county households earn above the poverty line but below the basic cost of living (United for ALICE, 2025 state report), and a cart of groceries costs about a quarter more than it did in 2021 (USDA Food Price Outlook). The county's average SNAP benefit works out to $6.16 per person per day (State Department of Human Services caseload data, March 2026). When those payments were interrupted in November 2025, the strain showed up at our door within two weeks. Food assistance was the county 211 line's top request category last year: 2,300 calls, up 31 percent (Marsh County 211 annual report, 2025).

The clearest signal is who's new. Of the households that registered with us for the first time this fiscal year, 58 percent reported at least one working adult.

What We Do, and What It Produces

Our three programs function as one system: direct food distribution at the market, delivery routes for the townships that lost their grocery stores, and help securing the public benefits households already qualify for.

The Calloway Avenue market serves about 1,150 households a month. Shoppers choose their own groceries, which cuts waste and tells us what people actually need. Fresh produce, dairy, and protein now make up 38 percent of what we distribute, up from 29 percent three years ago. Fresh food is what shoppers request most and can least afford at retail.

Two mobile routes make twelve stops a month across six townships that lost their grocery stores, reaching about 480 households monthly, mostly seniors and rural families for whom the 25-mile round trip to Riverton is the barrier. Both routes are full and carry a combined waitlist of roughly 60 households; the market itself has no waitlist.

Benefits navigation is our quiet multiplier. Two bilingual navigators sit at the front of the market and help with SNAP, WIC, and utility-assistance applications. This year they assisted 640 SNAP applications with a 71 percent approval rate. We estimate those 454 approved households will receive about $1.9 million in grocery benefits over a full year, calculated at the county's average award of roughly $349 per household per month and assuming each household completes a standard 12-month certification period. Realized totals will run lower where households exit the program early. We also stock weekend food packs at nine elementary schools and deliver monthly senior boxes in partnership with the county Council on Aging.

	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026 (proj.)
Unique households served	3,400	3,900	4,400	4,900
Pounds distributed	1.18M	1.34M	1.51M	1.62M
Fresh share (produce, dairy, protein)	29%	33%	36%	38%
SNAP applications assisted	350	410	540	640

Household counts are unduplicated: each household registers once in our shared intake database regardless of how many programs it uses, so a family reached through the market, a mobile stop, a school food pack, and a senior box counts once. The total is large relative to the county's officially food-insecure population because many of the working families we serve sit above the federal food-insecurity threshold but below a survival budget, and most use us episodically rather than weekly.

Why General Operating Support

Restricted grants buy food. They rarely pay for the refrigeration technician, the truck driver, the bilingual navigators who staff our evening hours, or the data system that tells our board whether any of it is working. Those are the things that make the food matter, and they're funded almost entirely by flexible dollars.

Two recent examples. In March, the compressor on our main walk-in cooler failed. We paid the $14,000 replacement from operating cash and never closed the market for a day. And last November, when SNAP payments stalled, unrestricted funding let us extend Saturday hours and double produce purchasing within nine days, two months before the first emergency grant check cleared.

General operating support is how a $1.4 million organization responds like a larger one. Your $25,000 would fund about six days of everything we do: every program, all 19 staff, both trucks, five market days. We think that beats a restricted sliver of any single line item.

Financial Health

Our revenue mix has been stable for three years and is deliberately diversified: individual giving 38 percent (2,900 donors, median gift $90, 64 percent retention), foundation grants 22 percent, corporate gifts 11 percent, special events 9 percent, congregations and civic groups 7 percent, local government 6 percent, and earned and other income 7 percent. The local government line is county emergency-food funding only; we hold no federal contracts. That county allocation, at $84,000, is our largest single funding source, just under 6 percent of budget; no other funder exceeds 4.5 percent. Earned and other income consists mainly of cold-storage and trucking fees paid by two smaller pantries that share our refrigerated logistics, plus modest interest income.

We hold a $415,000 operating reserve, about 3.5 months of expenses against a board-set floor of three months and a target of four months by FY2029, plus a $75,000 board-designated vehicle replacement fund. The Calloway Avenue building is owned outright. Our audits, performed by Calder & Maas LLP, have produced unmodified opinions five years running, and our audits and Forms 990 are posted on our website. Donated food, valued at roughly $2.1 million this year, is recorded as in-kind revenue and excluded from the cash figures above.

Leadership and Governance

Executive Director Ruth Castellanos is in her eighth year leading the Table, after eleven years at the regional food bank, where she directed its 70-agency partner network. Our finance director, a CPA, closes the books monthly. The board's finance committee reviews actuals against budget at every meeting.

The board has 15 members, including a pediatric nurse, a grocery distributor's regional operations manager, an attorney, a retired school superintendent who serves as chair, and two members who first came to the Table as clients. Board giving is 100 percent. Directors sign the conflict-of-interest policy annually, and the board adopted a leadership succession plan in 2024.

How We Measure Success

The board reviews a quarterly dashboard: unique households and visits, pounds distributed and fresh share, average market wait time (24 minutes this fiscal year), SNAP applications and approval rate, and months of reserve. Once a year we ask the people we serve. Last fall's neighbor survey, offered on paper and by text in English and Spanish, drew 612 responses: 87 percent said the Table helped them avoid skipping meals, and 64 percent said it freed up money for rent, utilities, or medicine.

By June 2027, success looks like this:

- 5,100–5,300 unique households served, with the market still waitlist-free and the current 60-household mobile-route waitlist eliminated;
- fresh share held at or above 38 percent despite volatile produce costs;
- 700 SNAP applications assisted with an approval rate at or above 70 percent;
- average market wait time brought under 20 minutes, down from this year's 24;
- reserves held at or above the current 3.5 months, keeping us on track for the board's four-month target by FY2029.

We'll report against each of these in a single 12-month report. Hartwell trustees are welcome at the market any day; Tuesday evenings are the busiest.

FY2027 Operating Budget Summary

July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027 (cash basis; balanced)

Revenue	Amount	%
Individual giving	$540,000	38%
Foundation grants	$315,000	22%
Corporate gifts and sponsorships	$158,000	11%
Special events (net)	$128,000	9%
Congregations and civic groups	$96,000	7%
Local government (county emergency food funds)	$84,000	6%
Earned and other income	$100,000	7%
Total revenue	**$1,421,000**	**100%**

Expenses	Amount	%
Food market and distribution	$618,000	43%
Benefits navigation and family services	$192,000	14%
Mobile pantry routes	$186,000	13%
School and senior food partnerships	$155,000	11%
Program services subtotal	*$1,151,000*	*81%*
Management and general	$156,000	11%
Fundraising	$114,000	8%
Total expenses	**$1,421,000**	**100%**

Notes: Donated food (approx. $2.1 million at fair value) is recorded as in-kind and excluded above. Operating reserve: $415,000 (3.5 months). Board-designated vehicle fund: $75,000. No long-term debt.

Closing

A $25,000 unrestricted grant from the Hartwell Family Foundation will join the flexible funds that kept the market open through a compressor failure and a federal benefits disruption while households served rose 44 percent in three years. We'd be glad to begin that partnership this year.

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