



FY20 Sample Grant Answers

Name:

Blessings in a Backpack

Tax ID:

26-1964620

Date organization was Founded:

12/1/2008

Website:

<https://www.blessingsinabackpack.org/>

Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/BlessingsinaBackpack>

Twitter Name:

BlessinBackpack

Number of full-time employees:

25

Number of part-time employees:

3

Number of volunteers annually?

10,900

How many are served by your origination annually?

87,000

Total organizational budget (for current year):

\$12,360,681

Fiscal Year/Dates covered by this budget:

7/1/2019-6/30/2020

List the organization's Board of Directors and other key staff

Mr. Richard Stephens, Chair
Mr. Richard Gordon, Vice Chair
Ms. Teresa McMahon, Treasurer
Mr. Joe DePippo, Secretary
Ms. Ramona Ustian, Immediate Past Chair
Mr. Ulysses Bridgeman, Jr.*
Mr. Paul Colangelo
Ms. Tonya York Dees
Ms. Ana Dutra
Mr. Michael Gouloff
Ms. Ubong Ituen
Mr. Doug Meijer*
Ms. Sara Moores
Ms. Kate Rose*
Ms. Cynthia Ryan
Mrs. Sue Sentell
Ms. Brooke Wiseman, Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Kevin Beam, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Nikki Grizzle, Chief Marketing Officer
Ms. Susan Kane, Chief Program Officer
Ms. Erin Kerr, Chief Development Officer

Organization's mission:

Blessings in a Backpack mobilizes communities, individuals, and resources to provide food on the weekends for elementary school children across America who might otherwise go hungry.

Overview of the organization and describe the major achievements:

Incorporated in 2008 with a goal of providing weekend nutrition to hungry children, Blessings has grown into the only national organization solely dedicated to closing the weekend hunger gap for food insecure students. During the 2017-2018 school year, Blessings provided more than 3 million hunger-free weekends for more than 87,000 kids nationwide. With a bag of food in their backpacks as they left school on Friday, these kids had food to fill the 65-hour weekend nutrition gap. Blessings envisions a world where every school-aged child in America has adequate nourishment to learn and grow.

- The 2018-2019 year marked a major milestone for the organization, Blessings turned 10 years old! We spent the entire year, celebrating our organizational achievements. Since being incorporated, Blessings has provided 20 million hunger-free weekends to 600,000 students across 45 states and Washington D.C., as a result of our 66,000 dedicated volunteers.
- Blessings has maintained its status since 2017 as a four-star rated non-profit awarded by Charity Navigator.
- Blessings maintains its status of being a Platinum-level rated non-profit, the highest recognition designation possible.

Organization summary:

Across the country, 13 million kids are food insecure, and may not know from where they will get their next meal. Throughout the school week, these students depend on the meals they receive through their school's free and reduced-price meal program, but what happens when school closes its doors on Friday? *Who will feed the kids this weekend?*

Blessings in a Backpack will!

Each Friday of the school year, Blessings sends home a bag of kid-friendly, nutritious food with children who face food insecurity, so they can keep hunger at bay and return to school on Monday morning feeling nourished and ready to learn.

As the only national organization solely dedicated to closing the weekend hunger gap for food insecure students across the nation, Blessings has provided more than 20 million hunger-free weekends to over 600,000 kids across 45 states and Washington D.C. since being incorporated in 2008. This past school year, Blessings provided 3 million hunger-free weekends for more than 87,000 kids nationwide.

In April 2017, Blessings was awarded Charity Navigator's four-star rating, the highest score possible, due to Blessings' financial health, accountability, and transparency. In addition, Blessings is now a GuideStar Platinum organization, the highest level of recognition offered.

Please describe the project for which you are seeking funding, clearly defining its objectives.

In «County» County, where «SchoolName» is located, over «FoodInsecure» children are living in food insecure households.

Each Friday of the school year, Blessings sends home a bag full of food with children who face food insecurity. Blessings is working with a national food distributor to help reach the overall objective of providing the best "brain food" possible for students. Working with nutritional advisors, Blessings' is working to maximize proteins, fibers, and nutrients while minimizing sugars. Kid-friendly foods are selected—individual servings that a child can prepare for themselves without a can opener, microwave, or stove. This food keeps hunger at bay so students can return to school after the weekend feeling nourished and ready to learn.

«ProjectTitle» will provide hunger-free weekends to «Kid» children facing food insecurity during the current school year. Program activities include:

- * Training, supporting and retaining volunteers who will receive and pack food to distribute each Friday to «Kid» students at «SchoolName».
- * Developing and managing relationships with partners, including schools, food providers, community groups, businesses and volunteers.
- * Engaging the community and Cigna employees in Blessings' work through volunteer opportunities.

To sustain the program's success long-term, Blessings' national office and community-level volunteers work to engage the community in its efforts to ensure the school's students have access to nutrition every day of the school year. This work includes reaching out to media outlets; engaging businesses, community organizations, and individuals in Blessings' work; and building partnerships with food providers and school administration.

Describe the innovative aspects of your project:

Blessings' approach is innovative in how it mobilizes communities, individuals and resources to provide weekend nutrition to children. Blessings is focused on one thing – ending childhood weekend hunger in America – and its work is malleable to ensure any person, business, community group can do something to feed hungry children. Each program site and the manpower and resources behind it is unique to its community, but the Blessings team helps pull those forces together to help them feed their community's children. This focus and malleability have allowed the organization to rapidly grow while maintaining a streamlined organization structure.

While other organizations and food banks do offer backpack programs, there are three main aspects that differentiate Blessings from those programs:

- Blessings is for elementary school age students only. Many food banks offer backpacks that are intended for the entire family's use. In doing so, children might not benefit as much as when food is given directly to them.
- Blessings brings the food to children in an environment in which children feel safe. There is no need to make a special trip to get the food because children receive it discreetly in a supportive environment.
- Blessings' menus are child-appropriate in both taste and ease of preparation. These two things help ensure children eat and enjoy what is in their backpacks.

Describe how your project will encourage these improvements in the lives of the individuals and community or communities you serve.

At such a young age, food insecurity impacts children's health, social development, cognitive growth, and general well-being. Ensuring consistent access to nutrition for children allows them to come to school every Monday, focused and ready to learn. Better test scores, expanded reading skills, improved health, and increased attendance have all been attributed to consistent childhood nutrition, such as what Blessings helps provide.

There is no better way to describe or understand Blessings' impact than to hear testimonial from those who are hands-on involved in the program. The following quote comes from a school counselor who runs a Blessings program, feeding 50 students, "As you know, we are so grateful for the generosity. This year has been financially difficult for so many of our families. However, because of Blessings in a Backpack, we are able to ease some of the hopelessness that accompanies homelessness, and low income. Your impact has been major for our students and

families. Our test scores have increased because students are not hungry. Parents have been more involved in students' education because they are less stressed, and they are appreciative of your help. Some of our families can see the light at the end of the tunnel because of your kindness."

Population Served:

Blessings defines low to moderate income as those students who are eligible for the government benefits of free and reduced-price meal program. Blessings relies on the schools we partner with to identify students who qualify for the school's free and reduced-price meal program.

Given the nature of Blessings' work, we maintain a high-level of confidentiality, and do not track any child-specific information. Therefore, there is no racial or ethnic data collected regarding those who are receiving the bags.

Program Evaluation:

Blessings has successfully monitored program implementation and children served for the past ten years through a variety of tools, including backpack distribution reports, semester reports, volunteer surveys, and staff management reports. These tools will be used to analyze the project's progress towards its goals, make modifications for future activities, and communicate the project's results with its funding partners and the greater community.

In addition to evaluating program implementation, Blessings participates in more in-depth evaluation of the program's impact from time to time. The most recent evaluation project, completed in partnership with Ipsos and Quaker, found that receiving a Blessings bag does more for children than alleviating hunger pangs. Student survey results show that children fed by Blessings experience the following results:

- 59% find it easier to learn at school
- 60% report fewer behavioral issues and better school attendance
- 78% feel cared for by their community
- 71% feel they are helping their family

As mentioned before, the best evaluation of Blessings comes from those involved, and in particular those receiving the weekend nutrition.

"It makes me very happy to get Blessings in a Backpack. One time my mom cried because she was happy that we had some food now." -Blessings student

"I like the program because it helps me. And it gives my tummy food on the weekend." – Blessings student