

Legislative Item No. 071001

**Alachua County Senior Recreation Center
Application Narrative for the DoEA CFAL Mini-grant
Submitted by the City of Gainesville on behalf of Local Community Partners
February 14, 2008**

General Project Goal:

Senior centers are highly visible focal points that offer programs and services for older individuals in five main categories, providing a place for renewal of the body, mind and spirit. Programs generally fall into one of these five categories; health, social, nutrition, education, and recreation. Nationally and locally, population projections for seniors between the ages of 65 and 80+ are expected to double in the next 15-20 years. Thus, the need to create centers that address the needs of this rising population.

Alachua County is one of the few counties in the state of Florida that does not have a senior center. The overall project goal is to have a Senior Recreation Center in Alachua County by the fall of 2010. Once complete the center will be a safe and active place for seniors to come and participate in programs specific to the needs of the community.

Specific Project Milestone:

This application is a request for funds to be used during the initial planning phase of the senior recreation center project.

The initial phase of the project is critical to the success of the overall program. This stage will lay the ground work for a campaign that will provide the funding, volunteer opportunities and community collaboration. This application is a request for funds to generate the following; print materials such as brochures, videos, posters and any additional marketing collaterals needed to promote the Alachua County Senior Recreation Center in the community. Once established, this center will continue to enhance this community by improving healthcare, accessibility, community education, employment, volunteer activities, and recreation.

Once this phase of the project is complete (in 90 days), the collaterals that have been produced will be used in the community through town hall meetings and other community events to increase the community involvement in this initiative.

The cost of this phase of the program is estimated to be \$2500.

Building Community Partnerships:

This entire project centers on community partnerships. The first is the Community Coalition for Older Adults (CCOA), which is a grass roots organization made up of concerned citizens who are interested in bringing the Alachua County Senior Recreation Center to our county. The CCOA has been in place for more than 5 years. In October 2007, the CCOA co-sponsored a community forum on creating a senior center, with more than 150 community volunteers and businesses attending. The forum had one common goal which was a desire to move forward with the planning for a senior center in Alachua County.

The CCOA and the City of Gainesville have created a partnership that will make land available for this project. There have been three parks identified as potential sites for the Alachua County Recreation Center. In addition the University of Florida School of Architecture has been asked to develop the plans for the building.

There are four working committees (made up of volunteers) that will be working closely with partners in the community to achieve their objectives. These include working with city, county, state and federal governments, local health care providers, social service organizations and local media. During this initial phase of the work plan the items purchased with the funds from this grant will be used to promote the work plan. We will be holding town hall meetings as well as meetings with employer groups to introduce the Alachua County Senior Recreation Center concept and work plan.

Incorporating Community Volunteers:

As indicated above, during the initial phase of the work plan, there will be four volunteer committees working on separate initiatives that will bring this plan together. The four committees are legislative, community awareness, fundraising, and campaign. There are a total of 70 volunteers that make up the membership. This list of volunteers will continue to grow as this plan moves through each of the phases.

Once the Alachua County Senior Recreation Center is built it will continue to rely heavily on volunteers, as the center will have few paid staff. On the plus side, this will ensure that seniors, especially, will have opportunities to use their knowledge and experience in creating programs offered at the center.

Projected Impact on the Community:

This center will improve the quality of life for seniors. This center will give seniors a sense of contributing to the community and having a lifestyle that is both productive and useful. It will give them a place to come to as often as the need exists. It will offer seniors refuge from isolation and offer educational programs to enhance their cognitive skills.

In addition to meeting needs of seniors the center will offer the opportunity to have a positive impact on the economic development of Gainesville and Alachua County. As families decide where they would like to live, Gainesville may be disqualified as a choice due to there being no senior center. Once it is completed, Gainesville and Alachua County can compete head to head with the other cities in Florida that offer a similar center to seniors and their families.

The project that we are requesting funding for is the most critical phase of the work plan; without the much needed collaterals we will be limited in our ability to discuss this center in the community. In summary, we need these tools to get the job done correctly.