**Proposal for Funding to Implement a SOAR Program**

**SOAR Program Overview:**

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) assists individuals that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with applying for Social Security disability benefits. Nationally, the average approval rate for individuals making initial applications for benefits without assistance is 29 percent. For those who are homeless, returning from incarceration or hospitalization, and those with mental illness, substance use issues, or other disorders that impair cognition, the rate is even lower at 10-15 percent. The approval rate for SOAR-assisted applicants is 65 percent for initial applications and 55 percent for appealing applications that were initially denied.

**Needs/Benefits of SOAR in Franklin County:**

-SOAR serves individuals that are homeless or near homeless. Between the county PATH program, the Point in Time Counts, and the SSVF program, 213 homeless individuals were served in some manner in Franklin County in 2015. The majority were identified as having a mental health, physical, cognitive, or substance use issue, however less than 25 % were identified as receiving SSI/SSDI benefits.

-SOAR reduces the average number of days from initial application submission to approval for individuals from a period of over one year to an average of 94 days. It reduces the average number of days from appeal submission to approval from over a one year to an average of 119 days.

-SOAR increases access to housing, as well as access to health, mental health, food/clothing, social, and disability support services.

-SOAR provides increased income to individuals, reducing the burden on Public Assistance programs. In 2014, SSI/SSDI brought at least $227 million into the state and local economies of the 48 states that report their outcomes.

-SOAR provides access to Medicaid services for individuals approved for SSI/SSDI.

**Proposed Model:**

Franklin County has a variety of agencies that provide services to individuals who are homeless or near homeless. The proposed model will involve getting an individual from a selection of these agencies trained as SOAR case workers so the program can be initiated. Franklin County PATH staff will serve as the county lead/coordinator for the SOAR program, as well as a consultant, and centralized referral point for the program. Data will be collected by the coordinator and assessed to determine the success of the program and the need for possible expansion/funding over this initial funding period. Sustained funding will be applied for once need is assessed. The following agencies are suggested for having at least one staff trained as a SOAR case worker for the initial implementation of the program: PATH (County Coordinator), Supportive Services for Veterans Families, Veteran’s Affairs Department, 3 area shelters, a residential life recovery program, homeless assistance programs, mental health case management, social worker at the local hospital, and county jail in-reach/adult probation.

Under the proposed structure, Franklin County will provide funding to participating agencies for a set amount for staff training hours, as well as a designated contract amount for completing the SSI/SSDI application with an individual (from initial contact through submission of the application). The training amount is based on the SOAR indicated average of 16 hours for the online course and 6 hours for the in-person follow-up class. The application contractual amount is based on the SOAR indicated average of 40 hours per application.

**Budget Details:**

Staff training:

-Training of 8 outside agency case workers (@24 hours per case worker X $\_\_/hour average case worker rate)=$\_\_\_\_\_

-Snacks/Lunch for the in-person training day-$\_\_\_\_\_

Application Completion:

-Completion of 20 applications (@40 hours per application X $\_\_/hour average case worker rate plus + $\_\_ per application to offset office supply cost of paper, ink, etc.)=$\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Total Requested: $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_