

Aurora Studio & Gallery - Aurora Crafts Market & Booths

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Aurora Studio & Gallery

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Application Form

Question Group

Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

Name of Project.

Aurora Studio & Gallery - Aurora Crafts Market & Booths

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$108,150.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Small business and non-profit support

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Aurora Studio & Gallery has been hosting weekly workshops for individuals impacted by mental health needs, addiction or being unhoused since 2013. Participants have found the program to offer a safe setting for enhancing skills, creating friendships and building community. The program currently offers weekly therapeutic art workshops to individuals in its new location on Coxe Avenue in Asheville.

Aurora Crafts Market & Booths is a plan to enhance outreach with those who are or have been unhoused in Buncombe County.

Aurora Studio plans to collaborate with Homeward Bound (and other organizations) to create a small cottage industry program, whereby individuals can either create crafts or refinish small pieces of furniture.

This program would be held three days a week for up to ten participants each day. The rehabbed items and crafts, would then be sold at local markets (i.e. Regeneration Station, Sweeten Creek Antiques, the Emporium, etc).

This request is for a two year time frame.

Project Plan*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

If this project is awarded, Lori Greenberg of Aurora Studio & Gallery would recruit, hire and train a staff person to assist with the program's oversight.

Greenberg, is a Licensed Clinical Addiction Specialist, who has worked building the program from the ground up. She has networked with local providers, such as: NAMI of WNC, The Peer Living Room, Seek Healing, Sunrise Peer Support, WNC AIDS Project, Youth Villages and more, in order to obtain referrals. Additionally, she has worked with artists from the River Arts District, with which Aurora Studio & Gallery is an associate member. In doing so, she has positioned Aurora Studio at the crossroads where enhanced support meets artistic enrichment and enhances community awareness.

Feedback from a recent participant from NAMI wrote:

"For eight weeks Aurora Studios offered me an environment where I could: Concentrate on myself; Find joy; Pleasure; Focus; Purpose; Play; Remember what is good in the world and in myself.; Move toward the future; Strive for a better life; Feel safe; Tell the truth; Be with people; Out of isolation; I simply haven't had this much fun in a long time.

I've told a few family members that the workshop is, 'Saving my life.' It is my favorite zooming support group.

Just for me, no one else."

In moving forward, Greenberg would meet with the staff from AHOPE (and other local organizations) to discuss the details of the program including: program criterion, referrals, scheduling, a payment program for participants.

The program is designed for people who have been unhoused at any point in time; who can work among a small group of people; and who would agree to come to workshops sober (along with other criterion that staff of AHOPE feel might benefit cohesiveness among the group).

Once information about the program has been disseminated to members of the community, Greenberg and the Aurora Crafts Market Liaison, would begin interviewing potential candidates.

An orientation session would be scheduled for candidates to learn more about Aurora Studio and to help develop agreements they would like to have in place for the workshops. This orientation would include a description of the program, program guidelines and payment. While participants may not receive a steady income, they will have the opportunity to be part of a collaborative arts program (Aurora Studio) and make a

small side income from sales. Each participant will receive 75-95% of sales, the remainder would go to the costs of the upkeep of the program and booth rent.

The timeframe from when Aurora Studio is awarded the grant to the start of the first workshop is about three months. This time allows for hiring a new staff person, and meeting with crafters.

Aurora Studio & Gallery is requesting funding for the first two years of programming, to assist with the upstart.

Statement of Need*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

The City of Asheville website reported, "The 2021 Point-in-Time count identified 527 people experiencing homelessness in our community, which is a slight decrease from the 2020 count of 547." Local data from the city goes on to report: "That change highlights the impact of COVID-19 on the homeless population and our community's service system. Adhering to COVID protocols such as creating distance between beds, dedicating rooms as quarantine space for incoming clients, and requiring negative COVID tests for entry has resulted in decreased bed capacity throughout our community."

It is generally understood that the underlying causes of homelessness include: mental health, substance use, domestic violence, racial disparity combined with a lack of affordable housing in most communities.

The City of Asheville's Homeless Initiative while stating that "housing solves homelessness", goes on to list the strategies that also improve the lives of individuals impacted. Priority five of the initiative, looks towards employment and education. This goal outlines networking with employers within the greater community, utilizing training opportunities for those who have been unhoused.

Like other programs offered at Aurora Studio, Aurora Crafts Market & Booths will provide a supportive community, which helps break some of the isolation for those who have experienced homelessness. Our workshops enhance individual's confidence. For some this may simply be working within a small group, while refinishing a piece of furniture, for others, they may go on to look for other employment.

Link to COVID-19*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

Overcrowded, unsanitary conditions and the mental stress of living on the streets, experienced by individuals who are unhoused can exacerbate psychiatric symptoms. Barriers including stigma and access to treatment increase this risk, for these members of our community. Such factors, as well as a possible lack of adequate health information or correct understanding of the pandemic set the stage for a greater risk, which needs increased planning. (Information from a study by National Center for Biotechnology Information, NCBI).

The marginalization that is often felt by those living on the streets can be psychologically more damaging. The social disparities include basic necessities needed by all to survive. These disparities include diminished: sleep, access to meals and a place for hygiene and shelter. It is therefore important to look for as many places where individuals can feel a sense of acceptance and have access to supports as possible.

The benefits for those who participate in this therapeutic groups include enhanced communication skills; increased self confidence and a sober nonjudgmental social outlet. Aurora Studio requests that participants sign a Release of Information so that it may maintain communication with its partnering organization in order to access services while promoting continuity, communication, retention and enhance outcomes by offering

a positive therapeutic social outlet. Aurora Studio & Gallery offers one place where individuals can gather, access support and the tools they need to feel like they are contributing members of society.

Population Served*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

This project will support adults who have been impacted due to housing issues combined with other co-occurring disorders, such as, mental health, addiction or physical health needs. The goal is to allow up to 30 creative community members to engage in crafts and small furniture refinishing workshops held over three days per week.

Aurora Studio & Gallery Inc., (also referred to as Aurora Studio) provides a supportive art space to artists who are part of an underserved population; those in recovery from addiction, mental health needs and/or who are unhoused in Buncombe County. The program was founded in order to offer a safe, holistic space for participants to: create art, while building community. It is a place where participants may utilize the arts to enhance expression and self-confidence; and to network with local artists as a stepping stone for those who are not ready nor able to afford to participate independently in other area arts programs.

In July of 2013, the program began offering weekly eight to ten week workshops for up to ten attendees. Classes are facilitated by a licensed clinical addiction specialist, peer support specialists, volunteers and UNCA interns. The workshops are four hours in length and include a light lunch for participants.

Starting its programming in 2013 at four hours a week, Aurora Studio was able to provide support to fifty to eighty participants per year. Aurora Studio has successfully collaborated with other local organizations including: NAMI of WNC, Seek Healing, WNCAP and Youth Villages (and continues to have dialogue with other area organizations around outreach).

In May of 2021, Aurora Studio began leasing its own space for the first time and looks forward to hosting daily workshops for up to forty plus individuals a week. Thirty a week from this proposal.

Results*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

*Aurora Studio will host a total of three new classes a week in the twelve months following the grant distribution.

*Aurora Studio will serve up to sixty new individuals within the first year of grant distribution.

The performance measures for the group include, attendance, participation and personal goal attainment.

*Participant participation is an important part of the program. (The program manager takes attendance which includes, "Did participants engage in group activities?").

*Each group member will write one personal goal that they wanted to achieve over the course of the workshop. The question that will be asked of participants will be, "Did you meet your personal goal?"

*Another question which will be part of the evaluation is: Were participants able to use any of the skills taught in the program outside of the workshop?

Every eight weeks, participants complete an anonymous class evaluation which provides useful testimonials on personal achievements they feel they have gained from the program.

Evaluation*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

Data collection is obtained through a simple weekly rubric that aids with attendance and group participation. Each participant is given a journal which they use weekly, at the end of each meeting, that will assist them in tracking their own personal goal in the group. This data is monitored by the Aurora Studio staff during each meeting session.

Participation will be recorded on a rubric; which includes group discussion and participation in art projects.

Personal goals will be reviewed during the group's weekly "check in" time.

After eight weeks an anonymous evaluation will ask participants, "Did you meet your personal goal? How did you feel about creating this goal?"

In the anonymous evaluation, participants will also be asked: "Were you able to use any of the skills taught in the program outside of the workshop? If so, please describe."

Equity Impact*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

Aurora Studio offers a therapeutic art program to individuals who have been isolated, due to mental health (sometimes physical health), addiction and lack of housing. Inviting individuals to a place with art materials, time, companionship and local artists is magical.

Aurora Studio's face to face workshops are four hours in length for up to ten participants. Its structure invites: individuals to check in at the beginning of the workshop; participants to create agreements for group norms; introduces participants to local artists who provide instruction. Workshops offer a light meal as most of the participants live below the poverty level; participants journal at the end of each class and share their artwork. Each of these steps help to create a nurturing environment which invites personal growth. Some participants may be exploring varying art materials for the first time.

Root causes addressed through programming include; dismantling the isolation and stigma created for individuals who are unhoused. Offering an environment that respects individuals, while enhancing community and allowing for a side income. Participants will be introduced to several crafts opportunities. From this individuals enhance skill development, but more importantly, gain self-confidence.

One of the successes I have observed is that people come back. They participate and they reach out to others. As one participant wrote:

“In the beginning, I thought that Aurora would be, in a sense, a consolation prize for being a mentally unwell artist...On one shore I have treatment options: therapy, medication, nutritional practices, general directives of self-care. On the other shore is the world...Aurora is a bridge I am traveling over which is providing me with opportunities and experiences that I never would encounter in my isolation, and the growth that I have experienced has contributed greatly to my being a more integrated, balanced, happy, contributing and responsible person; a thriving person” ...

Project Partners*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;

Aurora Studio & Gallery often subcontracts with artists and crafters from the area to teach a particular medium. At this point, the program has been in contact Friends of Furniture who will offer classes on furniture restoration.

- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Aurora Studio & Gallery hosts a Visiting Artists Program, where artists come in and teach workshops in a specific area. For Aurora Studio’s art classes, there have been workshops on: watercolor, acrylic painting, pastel painting, collage, ceramics, etc. For this program, it may include: furniture restoration, stain glass light catchers and other handicrafts. This is a small percentage of the programming and comes from Visiting Artists Funds that our organization raises each year.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

Peer Support Specialists, Volunteers and UNCA Students.

Capacity*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

Aurora Studio & Gallery has successfully been hosting therapeutic art workshops to small groups for the last eight years. During this time, the understanding of the needs of running a nonprofit has grown. While the program initially operated one day a week it has now growing to three half days a week, and has managed to support up to eighty participants.

Aurora Studio will be recruiting and hiring a Crafts Market Liaison to assist with the oversight of this program. This person will work closely with the Executive Director in obtaining referrals. They will also help set up the market place sites and schedule Visiting Artists/Craftpersons.

Other regular communication that will take place is between the staff at AHOPE and Aurora Studio. One aspect of this coordination will be around referrals, coordination and consultation with the AHOPE staff. The second will be around a payment system for individuals who have sold a handcraft at the market. This may be

a check made out by Aurora Studio staff and delivered to AHOPE for distribution to appropriate parties, if the crafter is no longer attending Aurora Studio classes.

Aurora Studio plans to increase its capacity to help manage this grant financially. The program will be increasing the use of its accountant to ensure that the financial record keeping is well recorded and up to date.

Budget*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Recovery-Funds-budget-template.pdf

Special Considerations*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

My computer had difficulty with the Budget Form. I have uploaded it as a PDF. It may be hard to read as I needed to type over the list of 0's. I hope you can read it!

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Recovery-Funds-budget-template.pdf

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	Aurora Studio & Gallery	
Project Name:	Aurora Crafts Market & Booths	
Amount Requested:	108,150 over two years	

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	108,150	Pending	
List other sources here Budget 2021 - and then another 16,000+ in 2021	16,395	Confirmed	
List other sources here North Carolina Healing Communities Grant - not included in budget	30,000	Pending	
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Total	0		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
List expenses here Admin Salary	50,000	8000	58,000	Operating	
List expenses here Program Liaison Salary	40,000	3720	43720	Operating	
List expenses here Bookkeeper	800	400	1200	Operating	
List expenses here Booth Rental	7200	800	8000	Operating	
List expenses here Insurance	200	1100	1300	Operating	
List expenses here Office Supplies	250	50	300	Operating	
List expenses here Postage	100	225	325	Operating	
List expenses here Printing & Copying	600	500	1100	Operating	
List expenses here Professional Development	500	100	600	Operating	
List expenses here Supplies	1500	500	2000	Operating	
List expenses here Consultants/Visiting Craftspersons	7000	1000	8000	Operating	
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Total			108,150		