

# Infrastructure support for Community Based Doulas supporting Homeless families with their prenatal/postpartum needs in WNC

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

## ***Sistas Caring 4 Sistas, Inc.***

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O: 828-620-9828

## ***Ms. Cindy McMillan***

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# Application Form

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## Question Group

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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. To date, Buncombe County has awarded projects totaling \$23,093,499, leaving a balance of \$27,639,791 available to award.

Visit <http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding> for details.

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](#)

## Organization Type\*

Nonprofit

## Nonprofit documentation

If nonprofit, attach IRS Determination Letter or other proof of nonprofit status.

SC4S Inc IRS Tax Exempt Determination Letter\_.pdf

## Name of Project.\*

Infrastructure support for Community Based Doula supporting Homeless families with their prenatal/postpartum needs in WNC

## New/Updated Proposal\*

Is this a new project proposal or an updated version of a proposal submitted during the earlier (July 2021) Recovery Funding RFP?

New project proposal

## Amount of Funds Requested\*

\$1,157,967.00

## Category\*

Please select one:

- Affordable Housing
- Aging/Older Adults
- Business Support/Economic Development
- Environmental/Climate
- Homelessness
- K-12 Education
- Infrastructure and/or Broadband
- Mental Health/Substance Use
- NC Pre-K Expansion
- Workforce

Homelessness

## Brief Project Description\*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

SC4S offers direct doula services to women of color and supports families in achieving healthcare that is affordable, available, accessible, accommodating, and accepting. Doulas provide non-medical physical and emotional support to women before, during and after childbirth for up to 12 months postpartum. SC4S doulas are community-based and provide culturally sensitive pregnancy and childbirth education, early linkage to health care and other services, labor coaching, breastfeeding promotion and counseling, parenting education while encouraging parental attachment. During Covid, it became obvious stressors related to housing insecurity, safety, and homelessness increased to alarming levels. Of the 40 women SC4S served during the last year, 7 experienced housing insecurity or were homeless. With ARP funding, SC4S doulas will be able to sustain the intensive services that increased during the pandemic and provide limited financial assistance to aid clients and prevent homelessness.

## Project Plan\*

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

This project addresses homelessness prevention for a most vulnerable populations in Buncombe County: pregnant women of color and their newborns. SC4S is the only community doula service explicitly training and employing doulas of color to assist birthing individuals of color in Western NC. Our mission is to reduce adverse birth-related outcomes among individuals of color by providing doula services, advocacy, and education with a vision to eliminate the barriers contributing to birth-related inequities among individuals of color. SC4S is a newly formed nonprofit that grew from the Mothering Asheville initiative led by Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC) and supported by Buncombe County. The SC4S doulas began their work as a program housed at MAHEC. Knowing SC4S needed to be community based and led, the founders began the journey of nonprofit incorporation and strategic planning to sustain funding, leadership, and services. This is one of very few programs actually making an impact on birth-related inequities in Buncombe County. During COVID, demand for SC4S services grew and SC4S now has 9 doulas. Funding will allow the organization to maintain staffing to meet increased demand and to focus on putting new operational systems into place during this growth phase. In March 2022, the Board of Directors completed a two-year strategic plan, which focuses on creating robust IT systems and data collection. Nikita Smart, a certified SC4S doula, talks about relationship building as homelessness prevention: "There are times when you may have no idea of the housing insecurity at first. That is where relationship building comes into play. With a lack of trust for the medical system these women are not readily eager to disclose the fact that she may be homeless; because she may be afraid of being judged or worse having someone call Social Services and report them. We may not find out until halfway through the pregnancy or towards the end where there are established relationships and no fear of Social Services. Specifically, as community based doulas we assist our clients in making connections to address a variety of Social Determinants of Health."

Timeline: SFY 2022-23 – Create/implement a back-end data collection system to work with Maternity Neighborhood. Provide intensive case management to clients with an added focus on housing insecurity. Identify and formalize new housing resources and community partners to better assist clients. Provide furnishings, baby items, and other necessities the birthing person deems important.

SFY 2023-24 – Debrief year 1 outcomes, refine back-end data collection systems as needed. Identify additional housing partners. Track prior year clients. Seek additional funding for household items.

SFY 2024-25 – Debrief year 2 outcomes, refine program offerings. Identify sustainable funding streams to continue housing work. Track prior year clients and evaluate project results. Explore creation of SC4S housing.

## Statement of Need\*

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

SC4S is literally saving the lives of Black mothers and babies in Buncombe County. Black babies are 4 times more likely than White babies to die before their 1st birthday in Buncombe County (NCDHHS 2017), regardless of parent socio-economic background. Per the CDC, Black women across the country are 320% more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than White women (2019).

The mission and vision of SC4S aligns with County HHS 2020 proclamation of racism as a public health crisis. Its work helps to decrease infant mortality for African American babies, a 10-year goal of the Buncombe County Community Health Improvement Plan.

Studies show that doulas help reduce the rate of cesarean surgeries, which is higher among Black women, and other costly interventions. Doulas increase breastfeeding, which improves the health of moms and babies, and is less common among Black or low-income women. Doulas can alleviate some socioeconomic factors contributing to poor maternal health, such as limited access to education or social support networks. Yet only 6 % of American women give birth with the help of a doula. Their services are not usually covered by

insurance. Postpartum hemorrhaging is a leading causes of pregnancy-related death in the U.S., and Black women who hemorrhage are at higher risk of serious injury/death than their White counterparts (Politico).

Distrust of the medical community among Black women has deep historical roots, from the experimental surgery conducted on enslaved women to state-sponsored sterilization thru the 1970s in NC. Even in 2016, a study of 222 White medical students found half believed there were biological differences between Black and White people (Politico). In addition to systemic racism, Buncombe's shortage of affordable housing and Asheville's highest home rental prices in the state make for a rocky start for mom and baby. In 2021, almost 20% of SC4S clients experienced unstable, unsafe housing or homelessness.

## 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.

COVID has increased the stresses SC4S mothers experience and highlighted the significant impact that housing insecurity and homelessness on healthy pregnancies and healthy births. COVID impacted the jobs and housing situations of many SC4S clients. According to NC DHHS, African Americans continued to be disproportionately impacted during the recent Omicron surge. From Jan. 1 through Jan. 17, 2022, hospitalization rates were highest among Blacks, followed closely by American Indians, at nearly double the rate of Whites. About 20% of the mothers that have been served during the pandemic experienced housing insecurity, with some not having a safe option for themselves.

"We served a birthing person from the time she was 22 weeks pregnant, and we worked with her until she was 9 months postpartum. During that time, she lived in a violent, abusive, and household with active addiction. By visiting several agencies together, we realized that because she had a place to sleep she did not fit the County's definition of homeless. We later made trips to the magistrate's office where she would display signs of not being healthy during the pregnancy. At the end of the pregnancy, she was supposed to move away with family and did not go. She moved from shelter to shelter then with her newborn child. With funding that we had acquired we are able to put her in a hotel for few weeks. During that time we connected her with other community partners and got on the housing list. ...Once she was at the top of the list and offered funding, we assisted her in securing the apartment and they have been living there for 4 months now." - Nikita Smart, Certified Doula

Unfortunately, the housing insecurity and homelessness faced by SC4S clients often falls in a gap of local services as they do not qualify for HUD definitions of homelessness and few options exist that can shore up resources in optimal ways to reduce stress during pregnancy and postpartum.

## Population Served\*

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

In addition to being a bridge between its clients and service providers, SC4S focuses on addressing the Social Determinants of Health, or SDOH, which according to the CDC, are the "conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality-of-life-risks and outcomes." ([www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/index.htm)). This includes access to safe, affordable housing; access to transportation; and access to healthy foods.

Since 2016, SC4S have successfully assisted 261 birthing individuals of black and brown communities within WNC in delivering healthy, thriving children. Of those 261, 245 have been women of color and an estimated 98% were considered low income at the time of pregnancy. 45% were more likely to get prenatal care in their first trimester than other Black women in Buncombe County. None of the infants in the program died.. 4 owned their own homes, and 250 were renters. 93% of clients received Medicaid.

Funding from this grant will provide opportunities to develop more robust data collection systems related to housing in/security and other social determinants of health. SC4S is literally saving the lives of Black mothers and babies in Buncombe County. Black babies are four times more likely than White babies to die before their first birthday in Buncombe County (NCDHHS 2017), regardless of parent socio-economic or educational background. According to the CDC, Black women across the country are 320% more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than White women (2019).

The mission and vision of SC4S aligns with County HHS 2020 proclamation of racism as a public health crisis. Its work helps to decrease infant mortality for African American babies, a 10-year goal of the Buncombe County Community Health Improvement Plan.

## 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.

SC4S has achieved positive birth outcomes in its first few years. The 90 clients served by SC4S from May 2018 to May 2019 were 12.4 percent more likely to get prenatal care in their first trimester than other Black women in Buncombe County in 2018. Only 6.8 percent of Black children born within the doula program were low birthweight compared to 12.7 percent of Black children born in the county overall. None of the infants in the program died, while two of the 181 Black children born in the county died in 2017. Building on our proven track record of success and with additional funding, doulas will be able to provide housing supports that address social determinants of health.

### Projected Outputs:

- 120 total clients served over 3 years (Baseline 40 clients in 2021)
- 20 housing insecure clients will receive case management for stabilized housing (Baseline 20 clients in 2021)
- 2 new community housing partners and 2 new funding sources will be identified

### Projected Outcomes:

- The infant mortality rate for SC4S clients will be maintained at zero (Baseline, 0 infant deaths in 2021)
- 90% (54/60) of housing insecure clients will have found stabilized housing within 12 months postpartum (Baseline, 100% in 2021)
- 80% (48/60) of previously housing insecure clients tracked at the end of the grant (year 3) will continue to have stabilized housing (Baseline unknown)

## Evaluation\*

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

Maternity Neighborhood is the data software used by SC4S to track client demographics. The software includes HIPAA compliant tools that support midwives, obstetricians, doulas, childbirth educators, lactation consultants and community based health programs. The charting software houses all client information from demographics, activities, appointments, messaging, and encounters.

However, all client case management notes, client request forms, and required documents that need signatures are still being collected initially on paper and transferred to Maternity Neighborhood. Funds from this grant will support the building of a paperless internal IT infrastructure to create a seamless back-end system. Doulas will be able to use iPads and other mobile devices with clients in the field to enter information and process electronic signatures without delay.

Executive Director Cindy McMillan, is responsible for oversight of data collection and analysis. Program data is provided to the Executive Team on a regular basis for review as a quality assurance measure. The Board is a working board with executive members responsible for supporting operational functions in addition to governance.

SC4S is fortunate to have been conceived out of MAHEC's Mothering Asheville collaborative with support from UNC Asheville as a strategy to address Buncombe County's racial disparities around infant mortality. We received early support from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, Community Foundation Of NC, Robert Wood Johnson and CSII to fund and study our early work. These funding partners helped us create solid evaluation systems that are now poised for growth.

## 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?

SC4S was founded in November of 2016 by three women of color who wanted to serve their fellow women and families with birthing support with a lens on social justice. Through the pandemic, SC4S doulas have not waived from their personal commitment to improve Black maternal and child health and delighted in 261+ successful births. Unlike most doulas, these women understand intimately what it means to give birth in a country where the color of a woman's skin can determine the quality of her medical care. Many years ago, Executive Director McMillan gave birth to twin boys in St. Petersburg, Florida. After a C-section, she awoke from the anesthesia feeling like hot blades were slicing through her abdomen. She tried to yell, then started hemorrhaging. "The doctor told me that if I didn't stop bleeding, then I wasn't gonna make it," McMillan said. "He told me to stop bleeding." McMillan resented the implication that she was somehow responsible for the situation. As she lay fighting for her life, she learned that one of her twins needed a blood transfusion due to a heart defect. The doctor saved McMillan, but her baby died before she left the hospital (Politico). By stabilizing and investing in SC4S's success with COVID relief funding, the County reaffirms its commitment to address racism as a public health crisis and its Community Health Assessment goals related to Black maternal health improvement. This positions our County to build towards a just, equitable and sustainable recovery that offers a strengthened resource for BIPOC mothers. SC4S leads the way in innovation and offers a pathway to new careers for women, as many become doulas themselves, that center resiliency and equity.

The SC4S model proved itself even amidst the pandemic through dedication of its founding doulas. This is the moment the County has a once in a generation relief fund that aligns with SC4S at a time where its sustainability and impact on the County's health trajectory is at a pivotal moment.

## 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.

Collaborative partners: MAHEC, Mothering Asheville, UNC-Asheville, Children First/Communities in Schools, YWCA MotherLove, Buncombe County DHHS, Buncombe Partnership for Children, Buncombe County Nurse Family Partnership, Buncombe County Community Engagement, Mt. Zion Project NAF, Others?

Housing partners: Housing Authority of the City of Asheville, Mountain Housing Opportunities, Asheville Land Trust.

## 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.

On February 14, 2022, a seven-member team that included staff, doulas, legal counsel, and past clients met at the offices of Pisgah Legal from 10 AM to 2 PM to participate in an activity that would help the, identify the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). The strengths and weaknesses were to identify internal components affecting the organization such as culture, resources, staff, services, etc. On the other hand, the opportunities and threats looked at external factors such as competition, legislation, brand awareness, etc.

The analysis output helped the two leadership team members who participated in the experience uncover the organization's critical-to-success factors and the challenges SC4S must address as top priorities during the next two years. In March 2022, the two-year strategic plan was presented to the full Board.

In addition to focusing on critical housing needs of SC4S clients, funding from this request will directly support the SC4S operational objectives identified in the two-year plan:

- Project Management
- Financial Management
- Human Capital
- Processes & Metrics
- IT Infrastructure

SC4S has been operating with an 11 member board of directors since 2020. This number also includes our Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. To date SC4S is now managing 1 grant with Buncombe County for \$50,000, that focuses on Social Determinants of Health. SC4S is a Doula lead partner with UNC Chapel Hill on a federal PCORI award ( Acure4Moms) that totals \$10,000,000,00 for a 5 year term of the grant. Within that award, Cindy McMillan will support with training, implementing, and overseeing Doulas across Western NC. SC4S is also in negotiations with MAHEC OB GYN for ongoing doula services and has been selected for the pilot program for medicaid reimbursement for doula services for 3 insurance payers.

## 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.

Budget.xlsx

## Special Considerations\*

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

Doulas make a difference! According to recent research on doulas, "Birth outcomes of two groups of socially disadvantaged mothers at risk for adverse birth outcomes, one is receiving pre-birth assistance from a certified doula, and the other representing a sample of birthing mothers who elected to not work with a doula were compared. All mothers were participants in a prenatal health and childbirth education program. Expectant mothers matched with a doula had better birth outcomes. Doula-assisted mothers were 4 times less likely to have a low birth weight (LBW) baby, 2 times less likely to experience a birth complication involving themselves or baby, and significantly more likely to initiate breastfeeding. Communication with and



encouragement from a doula throughout the pregnancy may have increased the mother's self-efficacy regarding her ability to impact her pregnancy outcomes." (Gruber, K. J., Cupito, S. H., & Dobson, C. F. (2013). Impact of doulas on healthy birth outcomes. *The Journal of perinatal education*, 22(1).

From Politico –

In a recent survey of 2,700 women of all races across the country, 22.5 percent of Black women reported being mistreated by a healthcare provider during pregnancy or childbirth. Women of color were twice as likely as White women to report "that a health care provider ignored them, refused their request for help, or failed to respond to requests for help in a reasonable amount of time," the study states. Separate studies show that Black people are under treated for pain in America. After Wakina Norris's second pregnancy, her doctor told her she didn't need to have any more children. He convinced her to have her tubes tied when she was 24 years old. "That was a form of racism. I just didn't think about it," Norris told me. "I wanted a big family, but it was stopped because I trusted that individual."

## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- SC4S Inc IRS Tax Exempt Determination Letter\_.pdf
- Budget.xlsx



Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service  
Tax Exempt and Government Entities  
P.O. Box 2508  
Cincinnati, OH 45201

SISTAS CARING 4 SISTAS INC  
28 SPRINGSIDE RD  
ASHEVILLE, NC 28803-3365

Date:  
01/14/2022  
Employer ID number:  
86-3419996  
Person to contact:  
Name: Customer Service  
ID number: 31954  
Telephone: 877-829-5500  
Accounting period ending:  
June 30  
Public charity status:  
170(b)(1)(A)(vi)  
Form 990 / 990-EZ / 990-N required:  
Yes  
Effective date of exemption:  
November 9, 2020  
Contribution deductibility:  
Yes  
Addendum applies:  
No  
DLN:  
26053628005251

Dear Applicant:

We're pleased to tell you we determined you're exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donors can deduct contributions they make to you under IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522. This letter could help resolve questions on your exempt status. Please keep it for your records.

Organizations exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3) are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined you're a public charity under the IRC Section listed at the top of this letter.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that you're required to file Form 990/990-EZ/990-N, our records show you're required to file an annual information return (Form 990 or Form 990-EZ) or electronic notice (Form 990-N, the e-Postcard). If you don't file a required return or notice for three consecutive years, your exempt status will be automatically revoked.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that an addendum applies, the enclosed addendum is an integral part of this letter.

## Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

<b>Organization Name:</b>	<b>Sistas Caring 4 Sistas, Inc.</b>
<b>Project Name:</b>	<b>Infrastructure Support for Community Based Doulas supporting Homeless Families</b>
<b>Amount Requested:</b>	<b>\$1,157,966 over 3 years (FY 2022-23, FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25)</b>

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$1,157,966	Pending	
Dogwood Health Trust	\$45,000	Confirmed	\$20,000 is confirmed, \$25,000 is pending for client assistance
MAHEC Contract	\$254,175	Confirmed	\$100,000 confirmed for FY 2022-23, contract under negotiation
UNC-CH PCORI (Federal) Grant	\$294,280	Confirmed	3 years of salary support
Other Grants	\$1,068,617	Pending	Applications in progress with Goldman Sachs, Chick Filet
Donations	\$111,780	Pending	First major fundraiser is underway now
Insurance Billing	\$80,000	Pending	Doula reimbursement is in pilot phase now with BCBS, United
Other Contracts	\$240,262	Pending	In negotiations with Quilted Health to provide doula services
List other sources here			
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List other sources here			
List other sources here			
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,252,080.00</b>		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
Client Assistance Fund	\$42,000	\$55,780	\$ 97,780.00	Operating	Funds to cover immediate client needs for back rent, etc..
Contract & Professional Fees	\$100,080	\$64,800	\$ 164,880.00	Operating	Accounting, bookkeeping, IT Infrastructure
Doula Reimbursement	\$101,700	\$306,300	\$ 408,000.00	Operating	Fees to contract doulas
Doula Mentee Stipends, Certifications	\$0	\$165,000	\$ 165,000.00	Operating	Doula training costs
Staff Training, Professional Development	\$0	\$26,000	\$ 26,000.00	Operating	Ongoing professional development courses
Office Expenses	\$51,000	\$35,089	\$ 86,089.00	Operating	Computers, General Liability & other insurance, supplies
Payroll Expenses	\$863,186	\$1,441,145	\$ 2,304,331.00	Operating	Full part time staff including ED, COO, Dir of Mentoring, Admin
List expenses here			\$ -		
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<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 3,252,080.00</b>		