Sustaining Buncombe County's Local Food Economy

FY 2017 Buncombe County Community Funding

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project

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Application Form

Project Name*
Name of Project

> Sustaining Buncombe County's Local Food Economy

Amount Requested*
Amount Requested

> $30,000.00

Service Area*
Which Commissioner Districts are served by this program?

Access a map of Buncombe County Commissioner districts **here**.

> District 1
> District 2
> District 3

Which county sustainability goal aligns best with the goals of this project?*
Based on the Buncombe County Sustainability Plan, select a <u>Category</u>, <u>Goal</u> & <u>Objective</u> that align with the focus of the project and the specific results that will be achieved.

Access the Buncombe County Sustainability Plan **here**.

> Economy > Sustainable Local Food Systems > Increase demand for locally produced foods

If applicable, select a second sustainability goal that aligns with project goals.
Result 2 is optional - Select if project aligns with more than one Sustainability Category, Goal & Objective.

> *[Unanswered]*

If applicable, select a third sustainability goal that aligns with project goals.

Result 3 is optional - Select if project aligns with more than one Sustainability Category, Goal & Objective.

Project Description

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Description of Project

   Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) requests $30,000 for the project Sustaining Buncombe County's Local Food Economy to continue increasing demand and markets for locally-produced food. This project will directly support Buncombe County's Sustainability Plan for Sustainable Local Food Systems by driving demand for local food and building stronger connections between farms, consumers and food businesses. Implementing proven promotions, outreach strategies, training and technical assistance, this project will also incorporate ongoing research and feedback from farms, businesses and consumers to keep work relevant to supporting Buncombe County's sustainable food system. This project will promote farms and businesses through the 2017 Local Food Guide; promote Buncombe County as a local food and farm destination through ASAP's Farm Tour; train and assist farmers in accessing markets and planning for sustainable businesses; and support direct sales through farmers market promotions, and a community supported agriculture (CSA) Fair.

   This project supports ASAP core program work, for which we have received several years of support from Buncombe County. While numbers have increased over the past several years and will continue to increase in some categories, the basis of the work is strengthening the farms with which we work over time to build stronger and deeper connections with the community, increase farmers' business and marketing skills, and develop diverse and consistent markets for local products that ensure long-term farm viability for a vibrant local food economy. Continued support for this project will ensure that local food numbers remain strong and will sustain success and stability within the marketplace.

How many people will this project serve?*

State the number of individuals or households in Buncombe County that will be served by this project. Also state the number of people that will experience the desired result. For example, if dropout prevention services are being delivered to 100 students, how many will successfully graduate from high school?

   Buncombe County is core to ASAP's local food work because it is a primary location in Western North Carolina (WNC) for local food opportunities and because of the population density for driving demand and making connections between farms, local businesses and consumers.

   Based on the current year's data we project the number of people served by this project as:
   Promotions: Connections through advertising and outreach with the Local Food Guide (LFG) and local media for multiple points of connection: 575,000 (40,000 LFG print copies, web hits to the online LFG, readership distribution of Asheville Citizen-Times, Mountain Xpress, etc)
   Farmers Markets: 15
   Farm Tour participants: 2,500, with over 60% of visitors from Buncombe County
   Appalachian Grown (AG) certified farms: 120
   AG food businesses: 155
   FY2017 Business of Farming (BOF) participants: 200
   FY2017 CSA Fair participants: 14 farms and 250 attendees
   FY2017 Local Food Guide: Buncombe County listings for farms, markets and partners: 290

Describe the people this project will serve.*

Characterize the demographics of the project's target population in terms such as age, gender,

income, race, ethnicity, geographic area, etc. Include information about method of referral/recruitment of the target population.

The goal of this project is to continue increasing demand for local food/farm products in Buncombe County in support of the County's Sustainability Plan. Project activities will provide farmers with support to connect with new customers, build stronger relationships with existing customers and drive demand for local food in the region. The AG program serves more than 100 Buncombe County farmers. Nearly half of AG farmers are female and 40% indicate they fit the USDA's definition of a limited resource farm. The public will be engaged through the Local Food Guide (LFG), Farm Tour, farmers markets, and CSA Fair. Recent community demographics from 2014 indicate an estimated population of just over 250,000 that is about 90% white and 52% female, with about 20% younger than 18 and 18% older than 65. The project will engage tourists through the LFG, Farm Tour, and farmers markets. The County had an estimated 9.8 million visitors in 2014, who spent more than $449 million on food/beverages.

What key steps will you take to achieve the results of this project?*

Describe the core elements of your implementation plan, including milestones that will take place within the funding timeframe.

Local Food Guide: Nov 2016-Feb 2017: conduct 2017 LFG outreach to farms and food businesses. Feb-April 2017: design and print 70,000 copies of the LFG. April-June 2017: distribute copies.

Business of Farming Conference: Nov 2016-Feb 2017: plan and develop logistics and workshop topics, conduct outreach, and host conference.

Farmers Markets and CSA's: July 2016-June 2017: Promote farmers markets and CSAs through LFG, advertising and events. March 2017: Host a CSA fair.

Farm Tour (FT): March - June 2017: conduct farm outreach for participation in the 2017 FT. Provide farms with best practices, training and preparation materials. Conduct FT promotion. Host tour in June 2017.

Appalachian Grown: Ongoing: certify farmers and food business partners, provide training, technical assistance and market connections, offer AG materials/promotional support. Drive consumer demand for AG products through the LFG, advertising and promotions.

Describe the evidence of success that backs this project's approach.*

What evidence of success (i.e. evidence-based research, practice model, accreditation, industry standards, and/or other framework) are you using as a basis for your project design?

Using evidence based research from across the country and its own projects, ASAP conducts ongoing evaluation and uses constituent feedback to refine and improve its program work and AG branding program. Based on ASAP survey results from trainings conducted in 2015, 95% of workshop attendees agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops provided information and resources to help build their farm businesses. Farmers indicated in the 2014 AG survey that the AG program benefits their businesses with new customers/increased sales; increased and effective exposure of their farm to customers; increased customer/community awareness and support; education, trainings, events, and resources; and affordable packaging and materials. On average, survey participants attributed 22% of their total gross sales to the AG program. The top two most valued items identified in the survey for success were ASAP's Local Food Guide and the Appalachian Grown program.

Describe your data collection, tracking, and reporting procedures.*

Explain your methods for documenting project, service and client information. Include a description of any software or other tools utilized.

AG: Use Salesforce, an information management system, to document AG farm/business outreach, track material distribution, track farmer training participation.

BOF: Track farmer/business registration. Use surveys to evaluate workshop content (and how farmers will use information), Grower-Buyer meeting effectiveness (for building local food relationships), and quantify number of market connections.

CSA Fair: Document farms participating in the CSA Fair. Measure public attendance. Survey participants on the impacts of their experiences. Use post-CSA Fair surveys to measure the impacts on CSA businesses.

Farm Tour: Use surveys to determine best practices for training farmer participants and measure FT impacts on farm businesses. Track FT public participation through sales of passes. Survey FT goers about the impact of the FT on their thinking about food/farms.

Local Food Guide: Document outreach through the number of Buncombe County listings in the online LFG database. Track distribution.

Explain your technological resources and capacity.*

Explain your current technological strengths and barriers and how this impacts your ability to track data and report outcomes. Who is responsible for adaptation and use of technology within your organization?

ASAP has extensive experience with tracking data and reporting outcomes. Implementing numerous federally funded projects from programs like Risk Management Agency, Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program, and Farmers Market Promotion Program has given ASAP a thorough understanding of outcomes-based reporting and a solid track record for achieving deliverables using various types of online reporting systems.

Internally, ASAP uses a relational database (Salesforce) to track activity types, deliverables, number of people impacted, and qualitative data relevant to activity impacts. Regular training is provided to staff to ensure proper and consistent data collection and entry. All staff at ASAP are required to use the same software and technology systems such as Google Drive and Windows 10. ASAP strives to use the most current technology to its greatest advantage in conducting its programs and ASAP's operations team is responsible for adaption and implementation of technology.

Organizational Profile

How does the proposed project support your mission and strategic plan?*

State your mission and the date of your most recent strategic plan, and explain how the proposed project helps advance your organizational goals.

ASAP's mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. In June 2015 ASAP embarked on a one year strategic capacity building project to identify opportunities to increase self-sufficiency of core program activities. This process will inform annual planning and longer-term strategic program development. It is through the programming of the Local Food Campaign, Growing Minds' Farm to School, and the Local Food Research Center that ASAP fulfills its mission. Project activities will strengthen and grow local farms, expand access to locally grown food, grow the local economy, and increase community engagement. For FY2017, activities of this project will contain a research element to examine the impact of local food/farm experiences, including the CSA fair and

FT. This will help ASAP better understand the impacts of our work and inform strategies for connecting consumers with local food/farms.

What expertise/accomplishments do you have that are relevant to the proposed project?*

List your organization's strengths as well as accomplishments from the past 3 years that position the organization to be successful with the proposed project.

ASAP's work sustains and improves market opportunities and builds connections around local food. ASAP's impacts include:

- over 700 certified farms and 350 food business partners in 60 Southern Appalachian counties in the AG program in 2015.
- publishing/distributing 200,000 copies of the LFG in the last three years. Launched updated online LFG with 1100 listings and improved functionality.
- 12 successful annual BOF conferences. FY2016 will represent the 13th year of offering training, technical assistance, farmer-buyer networking which draws 200+ farmers.
- 82 vendors over the last five years who have promoted their CSAs and sold a total of 253 CSA shares (estimated at $88,800) through the CSA Fair in Asheville.
- more than 10,400 people attending the FT since 2008, spending $130,000 on farm products. The potential impact of avian flu cancelled the 2015 FT. The next tour will be June 2016, when the virus is not as transferable.

Describe partners that are critical to the success of your organization.*

List any external partners, intermediaries or advisors important to your success, and describe their role and evidence of their commitment. Describe successful collaborations with these people or groups.

Relationships and building connections are the story behind ASAP's work and farmers and businesses featuring local food are key partners in telling that story. Much of our work is driven by input we receive from farmers and partners through our research and we draw on their knowledge and experiences as presenters for ASAP trainings and workshops. Food buyers are integral to the farmer-buyer meetings held annually at BOF and since Asheville is the region's largest market, Buncombe County buyers are especially critical. ASAP relies on relationships with multiple agencies and organizations including Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water, FSA, Organic Growers School, and NC Choices to increase farmer outreach and training. An ASAP-Mountain Bizworks partnership ensures that farmers have access to farm business planning. ASAP also works with the Asheville Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote Asheville as a food and farm destination to tourists.

Financial Information

Nonprofit financial assurance requirements:

Financial statements, prepared using a recognizable basis of accounting (i.e., modified accrual) and IRS Form 990s must be submitted to Buncombe County annually.

- Organizations with annual revenues of $300,000 or greater must submit financial statements <u>audited</u> in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.
- Those with revenues between $100,000 and $300,000 must submit financial statements <u>reviewed</u> in accordance with SSARS 19.
- Those with revenues of less than $100,000 must submit non-disclosure financial statements <u>compiled</u> in accordance with SSARS 19.

All financial statements must be reported on by a certified public accountant and include a full balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statement.

These requirements are considered minimum requirements. Organizations may submit a higher level of assurance than is required.

IRS Form 990 - Upload Here
Click Choose File to upload a copy of the 990 form you most recently completed.

> 2014 Form 990 Final - for Public Inspection.pdf

If your organization does not have a 990, briefly state the reason.
Include a statement of intent to comply with nonprofit financial assurance requirements as listed above.

Financial Statements - Upload here
Click Choose File to upload a copy of the most recently completed financial statements (audit, compilation or review).

> Financial Statement - ASAP 2014 Audit Report-Final.pdf

If your organization does not have financial statements, briefly state the reason.
Include a statement of intent to comply with nonprofit financial assurance requirements as listed above.

Complete Budget Worksheet - Upload Here*
Download the budget form **Here.**
Complete the budget form for this project/program and the overall agency. Save it to your computer, then upload it by clicking Choose File.

> ASAP - BCSF Budget form - Community Funding Budget Form.pdf

Budget Narrative*

Describe all differences between current year and proposed year. List all pending funding sources with expected date of notification. Please detail any other information that may help clarify the budget.

There are no significant differences between the current FY2015 and proposed FY2016 budgets for the organization. There are no pending grant funding sources for 2016. Other pending sources of funds include our consulting and earned program income, sponsorships and donations. All of these estimates are based on prior year achievements and have been consistently conservative in comparing budget to actual. On the budget spreadsheet, the project for which the funding is requested reflects the last two years of Buncombe County support. The total organizational budget is for all program activity of the organization.

What (if any) portion of requested funds will be used to support capital expenses?*

Capital projects are defined as those used to acquire or upgrade physical assets such as property, buildings, or equipment. Please detail.

Not applicable

Employee Wages

Please provide information about the wage breakdowns of your employees. Living wage for Buncombe County has been identified as $11.00 per hour for employees with employer-provided health insurance and $12.50 per hour for employees without.

Employees with employer-provided health insurance*
List the number of employees in your organization with employer-provided health insurance in each wage category. For salaried employees, use hourly wage equivalents.

$7.25 - $10.99 per hour

$11.00 - $14.99 per hour

$15.00 - $19.99 per hour

$20.00 - $24.99 per hour

$25.00 - $29.99 per hour

$30.00 - $34.99 per hour

$35.00 - $39.99 per hour

$40.00+ per hour

Not applicable

Employees without employer-provided health insurance*

List the number of employees in your organization <u>without</u> employer-provided health insurance in each wage category. For salaried employees, use hourly wage equivalents.

$7.25 - $12.49 per hour
$12.50 - $14.99 per hour
$15.00 - $19.99 per hour
$20.00 - $24.99 per hour
$25.00 - $29.99 per hour
$30.00 - $34.99 per hour
$35.00 - $39.99 per hour
$40.00+ per hour

Number of ASAP employees without employer-provided health insurance in each wage category
$7.25 - $12.49 per hour = 0 employees
$12.50 - $14.99 per hour = 0 employees
$15.00 - $19.99 per hour = 12 employees
$20.00 - $24.99 per hour = 4 employees
$25.00 - $29.99 per hour = 1 employee
$30.00 - $34.99 per hour = 0 employees
$35.00 - $39.99 per hour = 1 employee
$40.00+ per hour = 0 employees