

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's Farm Fresh for Health - Double SNAP Initiative

*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal
Recovery Funds*

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project

Charlie Jackson
306 West Haywood Street
Asheville, NC 28801

caroline@asapconnections.org
O: 828-236-1282
F: 828-236-1280

Charlie Jackson

306 West Haywood Street
Asheville, NC 28801

charlie@asapconnections.org
O: 828-236-1282
F: 828-236-1280

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.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's Farm Fresh for Health - Double SNAP Initiative

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$519,062.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Assistance to households

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

The economic consequences of the pandemic caused a dramatic increase in food insecurity and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) usage. ASAP's Double SNAP initiative expands access and makes food dollars go further while supporting the local economy. Double SNAP matches SNAP benefits

dollar for dollar at farmers markets. Customers get twice the amount of fresh, local food for their SNAP dollar and that money goes directly to local farmers.

This project builds on ASAP's work over the last decade supporting Buncombe farmers markets to accept SNAP and expand fresh food access. ASAP currently operates Double SNAP at five Buncombe markets. With support from COVID Recovery Funds, ASAP will expand and improve the sustainability of the Double SNAP program. Maximizing impacts, this project assists Buncombe households with access to fresh, local, and nutritious foods and directly supports small farms and food businesses in recovering from the economic impacts of the pandemic.

Project Plan*

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

The project balances short-term needs with long-term solutions. It immediately addresses the acute needs of families experiencing food and nutrition insecurity, while simultaneously building program sustainability, facilitating lasting connections and supporting a culture of health and wellness in Buncombe County.

Double SNAP is a straight-forward program that allows SNAP participants to double their SNAP benefits at participating farmers markets. For example, a customer redeems \$20 of their SNAP benefits and is given \$40 of market tokens to spend on fresh, local fruits, vegetables, meats, cheeses, and breads. This allows a significant portion of the project funding to be passed directly to families who need it most while also benefiting farmers and building social connectivity.

ASAP currently facilitates and supports Double SNAP at five markets in Buncombe County, including the ASAP Farmers Market/Asheville City Market (which we manage), as well as East Asheville Tailgate Market, Enka-Candler Tailgate Market, North Asheville Tailgate Market, and West Asheville Tailgate Market. Support from Buncombe Recovery Funds will increase the funding available to those markets, and expand the program to two additional markets (River Arts District Farmers Market and Weaverville Tailgate Market) as well as enable participation of Buncombe County farm stands in urban and rural areas.

This project will make the most of this one time infusion by building farmers markets long-term capacity, and building and reinforcing a culture of health and wellness in Buncombe County. In addition to the funds used to provide the benefit, farmers markets will get a stipend for implementation and program management. They will also receive outreach and marketing materials, and technical assistance to build community relationships and promote Double SNAP to new customers. This promotional support includes funds for designing and printing flyers, managing website and newsletter communications, and creating social media campaigns. This also includes funding for activities that make markets fun and engaging spaces for all community members to shop and socialize (cooking demos, music, games, demonstrations, etc.), and responsive programming to address challenges families have accessing markets, such as transportation limitations and language/cultural barriers.

These funds would be applied immediately to the existing Double SNAP programs to ensure they continue uninterrupted for the next five years - including outreach and promotional support. Planning and expansions to new markets and eligible farm stands will begin to occur as soon as funds are available.

Statement of Need*

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

This project will address food insecurity and improve health by building connections to local food and farms. Before the pandemic, 25.5% of Buncombe residents were food insecure, 63% were not maintaining a healthy weight (WNC Healthy Impact), and 12% were living below the poverty level (American Community Survey). These numbers have all increased. Improved access to local fruits and vegetables will address not only food insecurity, but nutrition insecurity - leading to a healthier community. A USDA study shows that people who buy direct from farmers, adjusting for all factors, eat more produce than people that only shop at grocery stores. A farm-centered approach to health and food insecurity builds social cohesion that supports local farms, the local economy, and the wellness of residents through the creation of a culture of health.

The Double SNAP program continues to expand in popularity and need. In 2020, SNAP sales at markets tripled. 2021 sales are projected to double compared to 2020. In May alone, the ASAP market matched \$8,221 in SNAP dollars (\$16,442 total in food for families and sales for vendors). We project this program to double nearly \$200K across five markets this year. These increases are a result of both new customers shopping at markets and existing customers spending more of their SNAP benefits at farmers markets.

ASAP's Local Food Research Center surveyed Double SNAP participants to learn how the program has impacted their families. One shopper explained, "It has significantly reduced the stress of managing the little amount of money given per month for EBT. I can make choices that allow me to eat more vegetables and eggs than I otherwise could afford." Bringing new shoppers to Buncombe farmers markets through Double SNAP also increases farmers market viability. Every market manager surveyed reported that the program has increased their market's customer base and over half said the program also changed their market's demographics.

[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.

The economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on Buncombe County resident's ability to afford healthy, nutritious food. According to MANNA, the region's largest foodbank, the number of people needing food assistance has grown by more than 60 percent since the pandemic began. Lower-income households - those eligible for SNAP - have experienced a disproportionate burden during the pandemic. The Double SNAP program made a tremendous difference to people when they needed it the most, allowing them to obtain healthy fresh foods for their families in a safe environment. One shopper interviewed in September 2020 by the Asheville Citizen-Times newspaper (in a story on the increase in grocery prices since the start of the pandemic) told them that "[Double SNAP] is the only way we can afford our produce."

This project not only addresses economic harm experienced by low income households during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it also addresses the harm experienced by Buncombe County farmers and small businesses who are still recovering from the pandemic. COVID-19 had an immediate and dramatic impact on farms, markets, food businesses, and foodservice in Buncombe County. Fifty-two percent of farmers reported fewer local market outlets for their products in 2020. Additionally, the pandemic also caused an overall increase in costs, such as more expensive materials and storage, additional labor requirements, investments in new technology like websites, online stores, and credit card swipers, additional packaging materials, and greater advertising needs to communicate with customers about frequently changing conditions and about where to find their products. Sustainable farmers markets with diverse, regular, and committed customers offer farmers opportunities to rebound from the economic impacts of the pandemic and maintain viable farm businesses in Buncombe County. Double SNAP provides hundreds of thousands of dollars of extra revenue directly to farmers.

Population Served*

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

The Double SNAP program increases access to healthy, nutritious food for food insecure families using SNAP/EBT in our county. The most recent data on Buncombe County SNAP participants is pre-pandemic in 2019. At that time, nearly 9% of households in Buncombe County received SNAP. This population has grown dramatically with the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent rise in unemployment. These households reported a median income of \$19,700, compared to a \$52,200 median income for all of Buncombe County. SNAP participants include a greater percentage of BIPOC families than the county as a whole, including 14.6% Black, 7.4% Hispanic, 2.5% multiple races, 0.7% Asian, 0.2% American Indian, 0.2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 0.8% other race. 74.5% of SNAP households are white alone, compared to 87.3% of white households in Buncombe generally.

The program is currently offered at five markets in Buncombe County. On average, over 200 families currently participate in the program each month. We anticipate this number will increase with the expansion into new markets and especially with the increased promotional and outreach efforts this funding could provide each market.

Additionally, this program benefits local farms and small food businesses selling at farmers markets that have also faced financial uncertainty due to pandemic-related disruptions. ASAP currently works with 135 farms (310 total farm operators) in Buncombe County, ranging in size from 0.25 acres to over 1,600 acres. The farmers we work with in the county are younger and more diverse than farmers nationwide. Approximately 45% are women, 38% are limited resource farmers, 35% have farmed for 10 years or less, and they have an average age of 48. Offering Double SNAP at seven Buncombe County farmers markets will benefit approximately 75 farmers selling SNAP-eligible products.

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.

Economic recovery for families, small businesses, and communities will take time, as the ripple effect of the pandemic continues to evolve. A multi-year project offers the opportunity for adaptive and ongoing support, meeting the current and emerging needs of farmers markets to support Double SNAP, expanding to additional Buncombe County farmers markets, and onboarding other partner businesses such as farm stands in accepting SNAP.

The Double SNAP program will generate benefits throughout the local food system in Buncombe County. First, it will provide immediate assistance to households facing food and nutrition insecurity, by increasing their ability to afford healthy, local food. Second, every SNAP dollar spent at farmers markets goes directly to farmers and food entrepreneurs, improving the viability of small farms and food businesses. Third, the project increases farmers market capacity and long-term sustainability by improving their promotional and outreach efforts and increasing their customer base. Finally, increasing the number of families shopping at farmers markets will have a reverberating impact on community health. Research conducted by ASAP's Local Food Research Center shows that local food and farm centered experiences influence and support healthy eating behaviors. These experiences introduce people to new fruits and vegetables; provide skills in food preparation and cooking; and influence participants to eat differently (eating more and/or a wider variety of fruits and vegetables); share their experiences and influence the way others shop and eat; and learn more about food and healthy diets. Moreover, these experiences strengthen participants' sense of community and inspire them to act in ways they feel support the people and businesses where they live.

Performance Measures:

- # of SNAP participants served

- # SNAP dollars matched
- # Farmers markets supported to improve project sustainability
- # Farmers and food businesses supported

Evaluation*

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

Project evaluation will be achieved through existing data collection and analysis systems. All participating farmers markets and farm stands will provide ASAP with monthly transaction reports, allowing ASAP to track the number of unique SNAP participants served, the number of transactions, and the value of each transaction. In addition, ASAP will survey farmers market managers, vendors, and shoppers annually to understand their experience with the Double SNAP program and its impact. Market managers will report on increases to their customer bases, vendors will report on increased sales, and SNAP participants will report on changes to their shopping habits.

Project effectiveness will be tracked through a project timeline that will allow staff to monitor activities, outputs, and expected outcomes on an ongoing basis. Spreadsheets will be used to track outreach efforts and the participation rates over the course of the grant.

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?

Inequities in the food system affect farmers, workers, children, and consumers. Farmers face barriers to land access, global competition, isolation, and limited market access and control. These barriers can be particularly acute for BIPOC and limited resource farmers. For consumers, the current food system makes unhealthy food cheap and ubiquitous and information about nutrition confusing, leading to higher rates of diet-related disease. The impact is especially hard on children in the region, who face higher levels of food insecurity than adults. These inequities were heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic which disproportionately and negatively impacted the health and economic well-being of people of color and low-income communities.

Double SNAP addresses these inequities by increasing access to fresh, local food for food and nutrition insecure families. Double SNAP also addresses inequities for farmers by building the capacity of Buncombe County farmers markets to increase their ability to accept SNAP, broaden the customer base, and offer increased sales to individual market vendors. Farmers markets are incubators for small and emerging businesses. The relatively low barrier of market entry enables farmers and other entrepreneurs to create and introduce new products, build customer loyalty, and expand into other market venues. Thriving local farmers markets support the community in engaging in the local food system wherever they eat and shop for food.

Double SNAP programming also offers opportunities to engage with communities of color through partnership with other social service organizations who support food security and collaboration with urban community garden programs who can sell goods, table, or engage in other ways with Buncombe County farmers markets. These collaborations can promote health, wellness, outdoor recreation, and community connectivity as ASAP works towards a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery.

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.

ASAP manages the ASAP market (alternative to Asheville City Market during COVID restrictions) and we partner with a network of 6 other farmers markets (managed independently) across the county to share best-practices and meet shared goals through county-wide promotions. Our work to increase the capacity of farmers markets is directly tied to improving the economic viability of farms and food access in the county.

The Asheville City Market is a strategic event partner with the City of Asheville, making it possible to close North Market Street on Saturdays and host a large market downtown. This prominent location has increased the visibility of the market, along with the number of customers and sales. ASAP also partners with the city through a workplace wellness program and community engagement initiatives such as a BIPOC entrepreneurs program at the market.

Buncombe County Health and Human Services was instrumental in helping raise awareness of the Double SNAP program available at the Asheville City Markets and ART (Asheville Rides Transit) worked with ASAP to develop a bus map including farmers markets across the county. Partnerships like these expand outreach and engagement across the county and make local fresh foods more accessible to all members of our community.

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.

ASAP's mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. With over two decades of experience, expertise, and accomplishment, ASAP is the backbone organization for food and farm centered activity in the region. ASAP is a pioneering organization in building resilient local food systems, guiding and serving as a model and resource for others to reconnect with food through local food campaigns. ASAP works with 45 farmers markets and nearly 600 area farms in WNC to build capacity, increase consumer demand and access, and provide connections and opportunities for engaging in place-based activities. ASAP led the region through a major change from an agricultural economy dependent on and known for tobacco to a nationally-recognized food destination, fueled by farms and entrepreneurs producing a wide diversity of food and farm products. That change has brought tremendous economic and health benefits and continues to provide opportunities for new farmers, all while supporting a healthy community and preserving scenic farmland.

This project will be led by ASAP's Co-Director, Molly Nicholie. Her responsibilities include guiding the marketing efforts of ASAP's local food campaign, supporting farmers markets, and providing farmers with training, resources and technical assistance around market planning and promotions. She has worked at ASAP for over 15 years connecting farmers to market opportunities, from wholesale distributors that supply county wide school systems to independent restaurants and direct markets. ASAP has extensive experience managing multi-year and federally funded projects. Through current and past projects, ASAP has a demonstrated track record of achieving project deliverables and outcomes.

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.

ASAP Proposed Project Budget - State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.pdf

Special Considerations*

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

ASAP's Double SNAP program is part of a larger Farm Fresh for Health wellness initiative to holistically improve the health and wellbeing of Western North Carolinians. This initiative includes providing farm fresh prescriptions to be redeemed at farmers markets, subsidizing local farmers to sell their products to food banks and feeding sites, and supporting farmers to meet an increased demand for local food.

ASAP is funded by diverse sources ranging from large federal grants to individual donors. Over the last few decades we have had significant support from major foundations such as WK Kellogg, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and NC Golden LEAF as well as from regional foundations such as the Community Foundation of WNC and the Pisgah Health Foundation. We are regularly supported through various USDA and other state and federal programs. Thus, these Buncombe County COVID Recovery Funds will be leveraged to shift the county towards a healthier and more equitable food system as we recover from the pandemic.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- ASAP Proposed Project Budget - State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.pdf

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)
Project Name:	Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's Farm Fresh for Health - Double SNAP Initiative
Amount Requested:	\$519,062

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 519,062.00	Pending	
Dogwood Health Trust	\$ 21,075.00	Pending	
Double SNAP benefits dollars spent	\$ 505,000.00	Pending	
Appalachian Grown Farmer Relief Fund	\$ 195,000.00	Confirmed	
Nantahala Health Foundation	\$ 10,000.00	Confirmed	
Dogwood Health Trust	\$ 18,000.00	Confirmed	
Total	\$ 1,268,137.00		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
Personnel	\$ 101,466.00	\$ 22,500.00	\$ 123,966.00	Operating	Salaries and related expenses for staff time to execute project implementation and milestones
Fringe	\$ 9,409.00	\$ 2,250.00	\$ 11,659.00	Operating	
Double SNAP Match Funding	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 205,000.00	\$ 505,000.00	Operating	Direct support matching SNAP benefits dollar for dollar
Double SNAP Benefits		\$ 505,000.00	\$ 505,000.00	Operating	SNAP benefits dollars spent
Printing	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	\$ 20,000.00	Operating	Printed supplies for program including tokens, informational signage and handouts, etc..
Promotions	\$ 20,000.00		\$ 20,000.00	Operating	Outreach and Marketing materials including brochures, promotional signage and supplies for market activities
Farmers Market Support	\$ 21,000.00		\$ 21,000.00	Operating	Stipends for Farmers Markets for program implementation and management. \$600 stipend per market per year.
Indirect	\$ 47,187.00	\$ 14,325.00	\$ 61,512.00	Operating	Expenses including rent, utilities, support staff and related indirect costs to support the project
Total			\$ 1,268,137.00		