

Urban Agriculture Community Food Hub Development

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Bountiful Cities

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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.

Urban Agriculture Community Food Hub Development

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$259,000.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Assistance to households

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Bountiful Cities requests \$259,000 to develop a Community Food Hub (CFH). The CFH will be a shared resource to community growers consisting of a main building with a community education room, value-added kitchen, processing facility, and cold storage, as well as onsite greenhouse space, demonstration gardens, and

equipment storage. The CFH will host Bountiful Cities' Urban Farm School, including a Collaborative Apprenticeship Program.

In 2018 Bountiful Cities received a one acre tract of land in West Asheville. In 2019 seed funding and partners were secured resulting in the development of architectural and land use site plans, City planning consultation, preliminary Capital Campaign materials, building cost estimates, organizing street access, and community input sessions. The project was delayed by COVID-19. This request would support Project and Capital Campaign managers, curriculum development, materials purchasing, engineering consulting, permitting, and administrative oversight.

Project Plan*

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

This is a multi year request. The initial funding will enable Bountiful Cities to hire a Project Manager and a Capital Campaign Manager to support the continued development of the Community Food Hub, and to secure the additional funding necessary to complete construction. It will also support professional services such as engineering, permitting, and other consulting as needed. This will enable the site plans to be redrawn in the building's new location which was changed from the original design for better street access. Additionally, materials and labor will be secured to prepare the site for early construction and mitigation activities including sewer line repair, water management, electrical access, and the development of parking and interior road access.

The second round of funding will combine with funds raised through the first funding round's Capital Campaign and will result in the completed construction of the main building, the installation of all necessary equipment and finishing materials, as well as the finalization of Urban Farm School Curriculum and Bountiful Cities and community partner program integration into the space. During this time the Recovery Funds will support the continued salary of the Project Manager, materials and consultant expenses not covered by the Capital Campaign, and will offset Bountiful Cities staff and administrative expenses related to oversight and organizing of Community Food Hub programming and community outreach and engagement.

Bountiful Cities' three person Leadership Team will provide oversight and direction to the Project and Capital Campaign managers, and will lead efforts along with Bountiful Cities staff to finalize Urban Farm School curriculum development and enact significant community outreach and engagement to continue gathering community input and make community partners aware of the upcoming availability of resources at the Community Food Hub.

Statement of Need*

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

According to the 2018 Buncombe County Community Health Assessment a double-digit growth rate of the overall population in Buncombe County is expected to continue over the next 2 decades. Demand for food increases with population growth, adding extra pressure to existing food systems. Smaller cities often lack basic facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of the growing population (Montgomery, 2008). According to the World Bank (2008), the world will need 70% to 100% more food by 2050 in order to feed 9 billion people.

According to research by the Urban Agriculture Alliance and other researchers, food security was greater within low wealth communities of color prior to the Urban Renewal policies of the 1970's (Mountain Xpress, 2017). Many elders of these communities describe a "foodtopia" in Asheville's historic African American communities, in which there were plentiful backyard gardens, abundant fruit trees and berry bushes, and many who grew and canned food, and fed countless neighbors in their community. As the policies of Urban Renewal decimated many historic African American communities many hundreds of residents' homes were lost, and thousands of people were relocated to public housing, where it was not encouraged or even approved of to grow food for decades to come.

The Community Food Hub will address the need for accessible urban agriculture education, incubation, processing, and storage facilities to support neighborhood growers in feeding their communities. Urban growers within Asheville struggle to access affordable land, cold storage, and the ability to process their harvests into value-added products. Commercially certified kitchens and cold storage facilities are expensive to rent (fee schedule Blue Ridge Food Ventures, 2021). Oberholtzer, Dimitri, and Pressman (2014) conducted a national survey to identify needs of urban farmers in the US and identified production cost as the greatest challenge to urban food production.

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.

Globally, the COVID-19 outbreak led to a massive change in market demand and introduced unexpected stresses on food systems. Large scale farmers dumped vegetables, livestock, dairy and poultry due to labor shortages and lack of drivers to move the products from one place to other (Deaton & Deaton, 2020; Gray, 2020). This has amplified the need for building up our local food system within Buncombe County and supporting urban farmers and growers. Supporting urban agriculture in Buncombe County can reduce food insecurity, increase employment opportunities, improve land, water and air quality, as well as improve the preparedness of neighborhoods and our City as a whole to respond to emergencies in the future.

According to MANNA Foodbank, food insecurity is at an all-time high and the impact in the Asheville-metro area has been particularly hard. Between March of 2020 and May of 2021 they saw the average rate of food distribution climb 30% as compared to the same time period in the previous year. Many urban growers have increased their production in the last 15 months but still lack the resources to process, store and distribute the food. This has resulted in the development of hurried makeshift and unsustainable community solutions to meet these increased food access needs such as coolers in front of people's apartments for perishable food storage for the purpose of charitable distribution. The Community Food Hub would provide infrastructure to support these efforts in a centralized and sustainable manner, thereby increasing food distribution potential, and supporting communities in meeting their own food access needs.

Population Served*

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

The Community Food Hub primarily serves community growers located in Buncombe County. These growers are located in neighborhoods both within the City of Asheville and outside of city limits. Resources and accessibility will be prioritized to neighborhoods and growers with limited access to resources such as community gardeners located within legacy neighborhoods and low wealth communities, as well as both urban and non-urban growers with limited access to processing and storage infrastructure. Through a combination of free educational workshops and Urban Farm School activities, value-added kitchen production, processing activities, and the use of propagation and cold storage facilities, we estimate that the Community Food Hub will serve over 200 people per year. However, these 200 growers in turn will likely impact many more hundreds or even thousands of individuals experiencing food insecurity in our community.

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.

Result 1: Construction of Community Food Hub will be completed, as measured by the receipt of a Certificate of Occupancy, and the approval of the hub's Value Added Kitchen by NC State or other licensed partner.

Result 2: Community Food Hub will support 200 community growers annually through access to propagation, processing, storage, or educational infrastructure and programming.

Result 3: 80% of community growers who have received support from the Community Food Hub through one of the available resources named above report an increase in one or more areas of production: amount of food grown/distributed, number of people served by food distribution, square footage of growing space utilized, and/or number of varieties of crops produced and distributed.

Evaluation*

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

All paid expenses will be tracked through receipt filing, internal spreadsheet accounting methods, and external bookkeeping services. Construction progress will be monitored by Bountiful Cities' Leadership Team through monthly progress updates and reports provided by the Project Manager. All attendance and participation in Community Food Hub infrastructure and programming will be recorded through sign-in sheets. Increases in food production will be measured through annual surveys completed by participating growers. Quality of Community Food Hub programming will be measured through annual participation surveys as to the effectiveness and accessibility of the hub and its resources.

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?

The Community Food Hub supports a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery by providing ongoing resources to address food insecurity (which was amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic), and also by providing local under-resourced growers with opportunities to increase sustainability in their production through long-term access to infrastructure and support. Many local community growers are volunteer based, unable to monetize any portion of their production, and thus their gardens' sustainability is uncertain. By providing local growers with infrastructure for propagation, processing, cold storage, and a value-added kitchen facility, in addition to educational opportunities the Community Food Hub offers options for growers to improve, diversify, and even monetize portions of their crops, ensuring their operations are able to weather the economic and food security challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and future crises which will undoubtedly emerge over time. By prioritizing these resources to those experiencing systemic and economic inequities we help to create a more level playing field for the growers who need the most support, and who are also able to make the most positive community impact by nature of the neighborhoods and families their growing operations serve.

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.

10% - Kellie Adkins and Amy Meier already completed work for the development of the Capital Campaign. We will hire a Capital Campaign Fundraising Manager who will be seeking private and individual donations for the construction of the Community Food Hub.

20% -We will hire a Project Manager who will be responsible for coordinating all of the activities required overseeing the operations on site for the Food Hub. This includes communications with contractors, permitting process, and Bountiful Cities Leadership team.

5% -Tim Ormond, Blue Earth Planning, Engineering & Design, Inc. will be the engineer used for the development of water resources on the site.

5% -Ellwood Meyers III, Engineer will be used for overall development and site planning.

5% -Surveyor,TBD, will be hired to complete a new survey of the property.

20% -Joe Dofflemyer- Bloodroot Builders- building general contractor.

10% -Steve Brodmerkel, Building Contractor, already completed work on the design classroom, kitchen, office space.

5% -Ian Snider, Mountain Works Sustainable Development, Inc will provide construction timber for the project.

20% -Remaining work will be undertaken by Bountiful Cities staff.

Below is a list of non-funded key partners critical to the project:

-Robert Wood, adjacent landowner and financial investor in the project.

-William Langdon, adjacent landowner and real estate developer. Will be responsible for installing Free Street giving Bountiful Cities access to our property for the Food Hub construction.

-NC State/Cooperative Extension will consult with Bountiful Cities for the legal requirements of construction of the value- added kitchen.

Current partners collaborating around program development and implementation of educational curriculum and program delivery: Southside Community Garden, Bounty and Soul, Root Cause Farm and Patchwork Alliance

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.

Bountiful Cities' mission is to be the urban agriculture resource of Asheville and Buncombe County. Our work is to create self-sufficiency, health, and food security. We were founded in 2001 to develop urban agriculture projects. By 2003 our work had evolved to focus on supporting low wealth communities of color, women, and youth by teaching sustainable agriculture skills, advocating for policy change, supporting entrepreneurial opportunities, and creating urban agriculture systems.

Since that time we have supported the development, maintenance, and/or expansion of over three dozen local community gardens, have held countless series of community-placed, youth-based agriculture education programs, have transformed hundreds of private yards into edible agriculture spaces, have provided business incubation support to multiple start-up food and agriculture based businesses owned and operated by people of color, and have implemented a free resource and information sharing Community Garden Network. In January 2018 we merged with FEAST, and now provide FEAST youth gardening and cooking education programming within multiple elementary schools and seven afterschool programs in Asheville and Buncombe County. In 2019 this work expanded to a school in Madison County, as well. We co-founded and continue to provide ongoing leadership to the Asheville Buncombe Food Policy Council, the WNC Food Justice Planning Initiative, and the Asheville Buncombe Community Land Trust, and participate actively in CoThinkk, Southside Rising, and other food security based collaborative initiatives.

Our three person Leadership Team has nearly 60 combined years of experience in urban agriculture, community organizing, educational program development, and nonprofit management. We have a track

record of successfully managing grant dollars of all sizes and sources, including CDBG federal HUD funds and contributing to the attainment and management of USDA funds.

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-Bountiful-Cities.pdf

Special Considerations*

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

Bountiful Cities Food Hub proposed map.pdf

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on Bountiful Cities' staffing, programming, and funding. As programs were halted due to social distancing requirements, staff were furloughed, and several funding sources were paused or redirected to emergency pandemic response. This also resulted in the interruption of the Community Food Hub's Capital Campaign, which was underway at the time of the onset of pandemic. Bountiful Cities is now recovering from these impacts, bringing staff back into their previous roles and restarting programming as social distancing restrictions are easing around the country. Additionally, the Community Food Hub planning and development is now able to move forward, and this request for BC Recovery Funds will enable that important work to receive the jumpstart it needs to re-launch.

According to Just Economics, Data entered into the universal living wage formula in November, 2020 and indicates an increase in the Buncombe County Living Wage Rate from \$15.50 to \$17.30/hour without employer provided health benefits. Due to this increase 9 Bountiful Cities employees received an increase in their hourly rate in March, 2021. A portion of these funds will go to cover the additional one time expense of this pay increase within our current budget as our current grants had the pay rate at \$16/hour. New grant funding will reflect the increased rate. The increased payroll expense is \$15,000 to ensure all Bountiful Cities staff members are paid a living wage.

File Attachment Summary

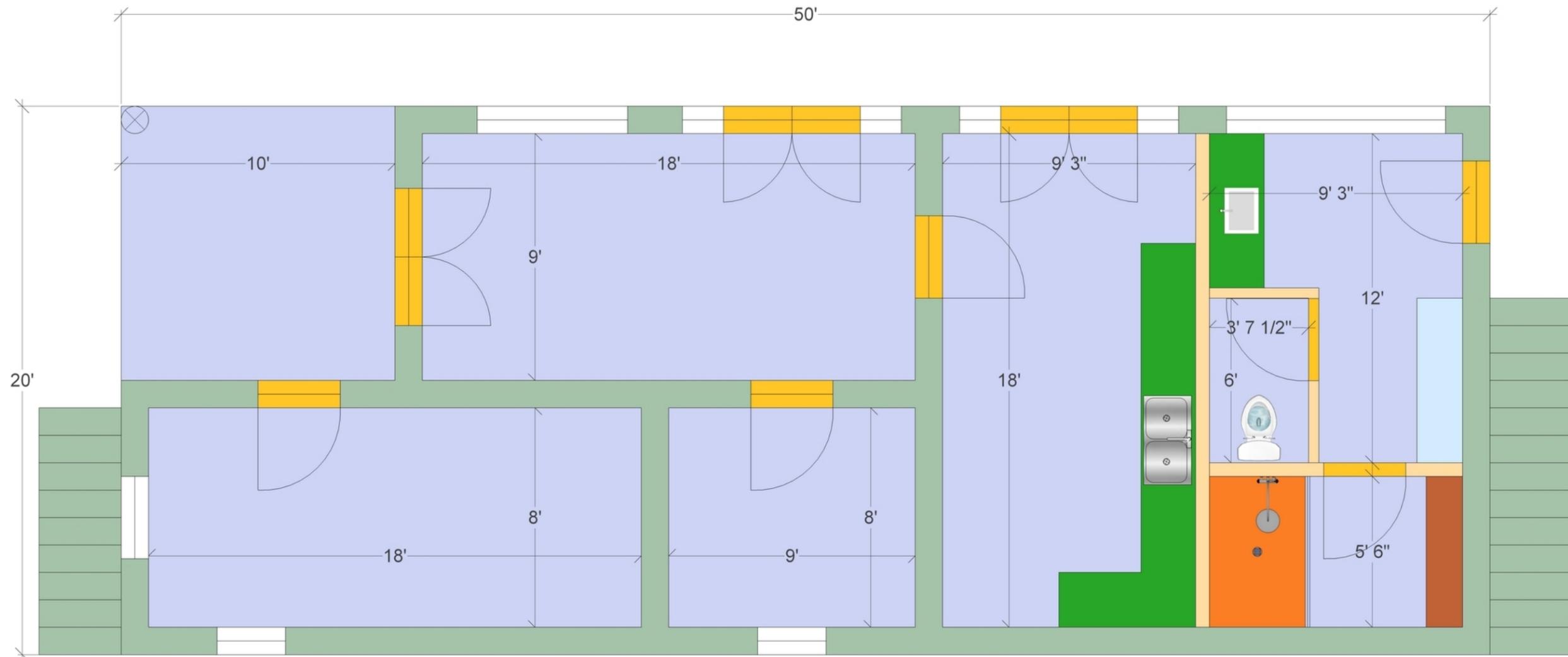
Applicant File Uploads

- Recovery-Funds-budget-Bountiful-Cities.pdf
- Bountiful Cities Food Hub proposed map.pdf

Lower level Floor Plan:

- Cold storage in the form of a cold cellar and a walk-in cooler for onsite-grown or community-grown produce.
- Freezer space for longer term storage of lightly processed onsite-grown or community-grown produce.
- Light processing space for onsite-grown or community-grown produce including counter space, shelves, and a triple wash sink.
- Storage space for growing supplies, tools, and equipment.
- A gender neutral bathroom.

**Design will need to be altered based on the proposed change of location*



Upper level Floor Plan:

- Value-added kitchen
- A gender neutral bathroom
- Open space for education workshops, meetings, celebrations.
- Small storage space for tables and chairs.
- Possible deck (not sure about the size yet)

