

Benevolence Box Program

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Bounty & Soul

Allison Casparian
999 Old US Hwy 70
Black Mountain, North Carolina 28711

info@bountyandsoul.org
O: 8284190533

Amanda Vollrath

999 Old US Hwy 70
Black Mountain, NC 28711

mandy@bountyandsoul.org
O: 8284190533

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.

Benevolence Box Program

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$145,000.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Assistance to households

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Bounty & Soul (B&S) is guided by the mission to connect, share, and celebrate nutritious food, education, and community. B&S currently actualizes its mission through three main programs and seeks funding to jump start its fourth known as the Benevolence Box program. This program features medically tailored, nutritious food boxes delivered to the homes, neighborhoods and communities of individuals and families that are

homebound, underserved and facing food insecurity in Buncombe County. Participants are referred to B&S through community partners, NCCARE360 and government agencies in a multisector effort to tackle food and nutrition insecurity. Boxes include fresh, healthy food, health education material and nutritional guides to empower and educate. Delivery appointments include a weekly check-in with participants to create relationships, help refer them to other services as needed and gather feedback. B&S plans to internally formalize and manage this program to meet growing demand.

Project Plan*

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

Bounty & Soul's Benevolence Box program has operated as a volunteer-driven initiative since the start of the pandemic. Currently, approximately 320 individuals are served in regions across Buncombe County. It will maintain at this level until B&S has secured the funds necessary to increase capacity. B&S hopes to grow this number to 800-1,000 participants by the end of 2022. This goal is based on individual and partnership requests already received by the organization. B&S plans to achieve this rollout in three stages: Preparation, Standardization and Expansion as outlined below:

Preparation - In September 2021, B&S plans to hire a full-time Benevolence Box Coordinator to manage this program. Initial tasks and responsibilities will include creating new efficient systems for food sourcing and delivery, volunteer management and training, building community partnerships and establishing a sustainable long-term plan. This Coordinator would work directly with the B&S Program Manager and Registered Dietician to create a model for the boxes that include culturally relevant food, nutrition education material, health specific items and additional resources. From September to November 2021, B&S will purchase all equipment needed to successfully implement the program. These include a refrigerated van for transport & delivery of the boxes, a commercial walk-in refrigerator for increased capacity to store perishable foods, and a cooling system for a Benevolence Box designated space within B&S' current food warehouse. Additionally, by the end of the calendar year, a part-time contracted truck driver will be hired and trained as well as a social worker to help facilitate and properly manage the referral process.

Standardization - Between October and December 2021, B&S plans to hire a Deputy Director that will oversee and manage all of its programs and operations, to include the Benevolence Box program. This position will work with the coordinator and social worker to ensure that the program is carried out in alignment with the organization's values and in compliance with its standards of operations. In January 2022, Bounty & Soul will begin to offer the new and improved Benevolence Box program to current participants. The coordinator will also work closely with MAHEC, B&S' current main program partner, to fine-tune and expand the service to its patients. The coordinator will begin to work with long-time B&S evaluation partner, UNCA, to evaluate outcomes through the collection and tracking of data.

Expansion - By March 2022, Bounty & Soul plans to expand the Benevolence Box program to include referrals from additional partner agencies, specifically those who have already expressed interest and a need for their clients to receive this service. B&S aims to be efficiently and effectively operating this program at the proposed full capacity by May 2022. Staff will reevaluate at the end of the year to see if larger capacity is demanded and possible.

Statement of Need*

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

The Benevolence Box program will address the need for equitable access to nutritious food while also tackling social isolation. According to data collected by Feeding America, Western NC has higher rates of food

insecurity than the state and the nation, with 1 in 4 children and 1 in 6 adults facing food insecurity in normal times, in part due to high housing costs, a lack of public transportation, and the centralization of regional jobs. It is projected that in 2021, 15.5% of Buncombe County residents will be deemed food insecure according to Feeding America. Among the various social determinants of health, food insecurity has one of the most extensive impacts on the overall health of individuals. Individuals who are food insecure are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases, including diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, which exacerbates adverse effects on overall health and wellbeing. The current culture promotes consumption of processed, unhealthy foods, contributing to 74% of adults and 42% of children in the US being overweight or obese, according to the CDC.

Food insecurity is caused not only by poverty, but also by other overlapping issues such as lack of transportation, social isolation, location and chronic health issues. Households with limited income often face unwelcome tradeoffs between food and other types of necessities. Currently, there are only two agencies in Buncombe County, besides B&S who deliver food boxes. However, these are only offered to seniors. This leaves out a significant population who are homebound and/or experiencing social isolation due to other reasons such as a disability, no source of transportation, and/or work during free food distribution market hours. In the past six months, B&S has received requests to provide its food boxes to over 200 additional households and over five organizations and agencies have expressed a serious need for this service to be expanded.

[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 COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented spike in unemployment across the country and this region. This unexpected loss of income caused hundreds of thousands in Buncombe County to seek social and human services to assist in making ends meet. Food insecurity rates sky-rocketed at a record pace. Bounty & Soul saw a 300% increase in demand for its food distribution services at the height of the pandemic. The pandemic resulted in a disruption in the global food supply chain. According to data from MANNA foodbank, there was a 32% decrease in food donations. The long-term economic harm caused by the pandemic in Buncombe County are still unknown but certainly still playing out. Bounty & Soul is still seeing double the demand from pre-pandemic times.

All at the same time, social isolation was exacerbated unlike any other time in recent history. Seniors, in particular, were and continue to be restricted to their homes and facilities for risk of catching the virus. In addition, thousands more have been forced into being homebound due to lack of income for transportation and/or childcare, greatly limiting the hours and ability to travel to receive needed services and engage in the community.

The Benevolence Box program aims to address both of these issues. Pre-pandemic, B&S delivered food boxes to a few individuals, but when the pandemic hit, the demands and requests for this service reached a new height that has since become unsustainable given the current model. Through turning this project into a full-scale program, B&S hopes to fill a serious gap in Buncombe County while also addressing the root causes of food insecurity. By providing nutritious, locally grown and produced food along with tools to educate participants on their food and well-being, B&S aims to empower individuals to live healthier lives. All of this is paired with the culture B&S has built that treats each person with dignity, respect and compassion, in hopes to create a meaningful community.

Population Served*

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

Bounty & Soul's Benevolence Box program will serve 800 to 1,000 individuals living throughout all regions of Buncombe County, both in Asheville and the outlying rural regions. B&S serves all genders/sexual identities, all racial/ethnic identities, and all education levels. 100% of Benevolence Box participants are food insecure, which by definition are those that struggle to access a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food to feed themselves and their families. This program is specifically offered to those that are considered homebound and/or are not able to attend Bounty & Soul's in-person weekly food distribution markets. There are no demographic restrictions or exclusions other than that main criteria. Participants will need to be referred either through a partner agency or through the Bounty & Soul social worker who will work directly with NCCARE360 to intake clients and record their information. This program is projected to serve a larger percentage of older individuals, people living in rural areas, underserved communities, households below the poverty line and single single parent households, households living AT or BELOW the poverty line.

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.

Through the Benevolence Box program, Bounty & Soul will further the impact of its mission and work in Buncombe County. This program aims to provide the tools, skills, knowledge and resources for people to be able to live healthier lives. In addition, it will extend and create meaningful community relationships for those experiencing social isolation and hardship. Ultimately, the impact will be a better quality of life for thousands in Buncombe County which in turn will create a more vibrant and inclusive region for everyone who resides here. B&S' vision is communities where everyone has the right and opportunity to eat well, be nourished, and thrive. The Benevolence Box program will be another way in which the organization turns this vision into reality.

Bounty & Soul aims to achieve the following and will see this program successful if:

1. Increase the number of individuals served by at least 500 - Currently serving 320 individuals; Goal of 800-1000
2. Establish three new program partners - Currently working with and serving clients of three partners (MAHEC, Asheville Survival Project, and Asheville Poverty Initiative)
3. Serve households in all Buncombe County zip codes
4. 90% of participants increase fruit and vegetable consumption
5. 75% of participants decrease the number of meals skipped due to not having enough food
6. 90% have improved knowledge of healthy eating
7. 75% of participants have a decrease in overall feeling of isolation
8. 95% experience a positive impact on overall health and well-being
9. 97% have increased knowledge/skills in preparing and consuming local foods

Evaluation*

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

Bounty & Soul uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative measurements to assess the impact of its programs. Annually, UNCA develops & analyzes a validated survey from B&S participants assessing knowledge, skill and behavior change. B&S current data set covers four (4) years of programming used for evaluation, plus data from the COVID- 19 response in 2020. B&S also conducts in-house surveys of participants to measure knowledge & behavior change, continually incorporating feedback into programs

using the Results Based Accountability framework. All of these measurements will be utilized to track the effectiveness of the Benevolence Box program.

Programmatic short- and long-term outcomes will be measured by the validated annual survey tool and monthly data reports. The Benevolence Box Coordinator will track total participant numbers, household size, age and zip code. In addition, they will work to collect data on qualitative outcomes such as improved quality of life, decreased sense of social isolation, increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, etc. For those individuals referred to the program for medical reasons, B&S will work with the referral partner to track overall health outcomes.

Programmatic evaluation results will be used to improve program delivery and design, inform curriculum development, and help connect participants to the appropriate community resources. In 2021, B&S will begin to produce an annual report that will include these results and be shared broadly with partners and funders.

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 Benevolence Box program at the heart of it, is about equitable access to nutritious food and the inclusion in a caring community. All Bounty & Soul programs work at the intersection of food, farms and health in order to address the root causes of food insecurity in Buncombe County. This program is a way for B&S to further its impact throughout the county by breaking down economic, geographic and transportation barriers. This will allow for hundreds of more Buncombe County residents, particularly those most isolated, to be provided food, health and community resources to help them to actually build a better life.

Bounty & Soul knows food insecurity is not just a lack of food but rather a systemic problem that intersects with all other social determinants of health. Therefore it addresses the root causes of hunger through a 'hand-up' rather than a 'hand-out' approach. B&S is set apart from the typical food pantry and free meal delivery service for several reasons: 1) It is the only consistent, 'as needed' food resource in Eastern Buncombe - operates 51 weeks/year with no eligibility requirements, allowing participants to feel safe and welcomed 2) It is the only food resource that focuses solely on fresh, local, nutritious foods; and 3) Provides educational opportunities that empower participants to take agency over their health & wellbeing. Improved health and wellbeing allows for increased productivity & confidence, as well as reduces personal healthcare costs, contributing to people having more money to spend on food instead of making tradeoffs.

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.

B&S will hire two new full-time staff that will work on this program: the Benevolence Box Coordinator and Deputy Director. B&S will have a contracted social worker who will work across the organization to both intake referrals for B&S services as well as connecting B&S participants to other community resources. The social worker will work directly with MAHEC referrals to the Benevolence Box program that require a medically tailored food box. The Benevolence Box Coordinator and social worker will also work with the contracted Registered Dietitian for consultation on specific requirements for medically tailored boxes. Approximately 50% of their time will be spent on this program. They will work to connect participants with

other needed resources in the community while also building a meaningful relationship with clients that will reduce social isolation.

B&S will contract Buncombe County farmers to provide specific food and herbs for the boxes. B&S program, Farmers Alliance, is a reciprocal partnership network with over 35 local farmers that provide food to its weekly food distribution markets. The Benevolence Box program will expand on these already established relationships. B&S will work with long-time partner, MANNA Foodbank, to supplement boxes with additional staples.

The Benevolence Box program will run primarily on referrals from and in partnership with community organizations, agencies and NCCARE360. B&S is in partnership with and delivers boxes to patients from MAHEC. It has recently entered into a partnership with Buncombe County through its Community Engagement Markets and will be added to its roster of Community Connectors. Other organizations and communities that have expressed interest in partnering are The Social Bridging Project, Verner Center for Early Learning, Blue Ridge Apartments, Donald S. Collins Early Enrichment Center, Deaverview Apartments, Council on Aging, Asheville Survival Project and Asheville Poverty Initiative.

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.

Bounty & Soul has been successfully operating its core programs since its inception in 2014 and is growing at a financially healthy rate. The organization has seen a substantial increase in community and donor support recently, while at the same time strategically planning and transforming its structure, staff, leadership and operations to meet the increased demand that has come out of the recent pandemic. The B&S Board of Directors consists of a robust roster of dedicated community leaders to include a retired business executive, Family Physician and the Founder of Lantern Health, and the Director of Vault Consulting, an accounting firm. Executive Director, Ali Casparian, founded the organization after spending over 25 years as a director in the food industry in New York. She is a registered Health and Wellness Coach and serves in various leadership roles throughout Buncombe County. She, along with the Program Manager and Development Director, are active members of the WNC Food and Justice Planning Initiative, an 18-county collaborative focused on food systems change. The organization plans to leverage partnerships within this collaborative to establish mutually beneficial strategies and to seek collaborative funding opportunities.

Program Manager, Rachel Lubitz will oversee this program and the proposed coordinator position. Rachel is new to the organization and comes with 7 years of experience working with nonprofits in administering successful programs.

Managing these funds, along with the Executive Director, will be B&S Business Manager, Linda Cohen and Development Director, Amanda Vollrath. Linda came to B&S with over 35 years of nonprofit finance and business management experience across the country. She is the organization's accountant and manages the yearly audit process. Amanda has grown financial capacity for organization's across the state for seven years, most notably the North Carolina Symphony where she directly managed state and federal 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.

Bounty & Soul Recovery Funds Budget 2021.xlsx

Special Considerations*

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

Bounty & Soul addresses the underlying causes of food insecurity with a systems-change approach by providing nutritious plant-based foods, creating a culture of inclusivity and abundance, intentionally connecting people to their food and community, and educating individuals to be confidently equipped to live healthier lives. It is from this place and vision that the Benevolence Box project started. It grew naturally from a community wanting to help their neighbors in need during an unforeseen worldwide health crisis. B&S is proud to have been a catalyst for such generosity and care. The organization sees this program as mission-centric and hopes by way of larger capacity and funding that it can bring this much needed service to hundreds in Buncombe County.

Bounty & Soul's manifesto speaks to why this program is important to its work: We believe food is a human right. Food is love. Food is medicine. Food is justice. We celebrate and honor that food is a thread between land, culture, and life. We believe in the power of plants and whole foods. We are here to learn from each other and share wisdom. Everyone brings something to the table. Everyone has a right to feel good and define their own well-being on their own terms. Education is a way for us to remember the magnificence of who we are. We already have the wisdom and the knowledge we need within us. We are here to remember together. We believe communities know what they want. Communities are knowledgeable, communities are wise, communities have resources and wisdom to care for each other. Everyone has a right to abundance. We are working to change a system where resources have been disproportionately distributed. We seek to create a just and equitable food and health system. Everything we say and do is infused with deep intention. We are embodying the world we want to create.

Bounty & Soul appreciates the time and resources taken to consider this request, both by the Buncombe County Commissioners and employees.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Bounty & Soul Recovery Funds Budget 2021.xlsx

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	Bounty & Soul
Project Name:	Benevolence Box Program
Amount Requested:	145000

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 142,160.00	Pending	
WNC Bridge Foundation	\$ 6,000.00	Pending	Previous funder; decision will be made in October
Dogwood Health Trust	\$ 100,000.00	Pending	
Individual Donors	\$ 1,906.00	Confirmed	
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
Total	\$ 250,066.00		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
Benevolence Box Coordinator	\$ 33,000.00	\$ 6,923.00	\$ 39,923.00	Operating	
Deputy Director		\$ 10,531.00	\$ 10,531.00	Operating	Portion of salary and time allocated to this program
Volunteer management		\$ 1,989.00	\$ 1,989.00	Operating	Portion of Volunteer Manager pay - position currently exists
Rooted in Health program curriculum development & delivery		\$ 11,500.00	\$ 11,500.00	Operating	Other B&S program that provides health and wellness resources for all other programs
Benevolence Box food sourcing, sorting and production		\$ 16,956.00	\$ 16,956.00	Operating	Portion of Food Distribution Manager pay that is related to this program
Truck operations		\$ 4,230.00	\$ 4,230.00	Operating	Fuel for food pickup and delivery; vehicle maintenance, repair & insurance.
Contracted part-time driver for Benevolence Box initiative	\$ 8,160.00	\$ 16,320.00	\$ 24,480.00	Operating	PT driver 20 hrs/wk @ \$16/hr for 51 wks
Consultation with registered Dietitian for medically tailored boxes		\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	Operating	Nutrition counseling with registered dietitian
Contracted social worker		\$ 3,840.00	\$ 3,840.00	Operating	case work support for selected households in need
Translation of all resources and materials into Spanish		\$ 1,872.00	\$ 1,872.00	Operating	
Program supplies		\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	Operating	PC for referral intakes; other technology as required
Warehouse supplies and equipment		\$ 3,650.00	\$ 3,650.00	Capital	
Rental of warehouse space for storage, processing, & distribution of food for the Benevolence Box program	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 9,980.00	\$ 19,980.00	Operating	\$1,500/mo Warehouse and 15% of reduced green house rent for admin & program staff
Printed recipes, nutrition and wellness information in English and Spanish		\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	Operating	
Other program resources		\$ 240.00	\$ 240.00	Operating	
Food purchased to supplement distribution boxes	\$ 16,000.00	\$ 15,875.00	\$ 31,875.00	Operating	
Refrigerated van for transport & delivery boxes	\$ 35,000.00		\$ 35,000.00	Capital	
Commercial Walk-in refrigerator for increased capacity	\$ 25,000.00		\$ 25,000.00	Capital	
Cooling system for designated warehouse space	\$ 15,000.00		\$ 15,000.00	Capital	Portion of warehouse will be dedicated to production of Benevolence Boxes
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
Total			\$ 250,066.00		