

Buncombe County Family Farms: Assistance to Farm Businesses

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

WNC Communities

Mr. L. T. Ward
594 Brevard Road
Asheville, NC 28806

info@wnccommunities.org
O: 828-252-4783
M: 828-318-5656
F: 828-251-9532

Ms. Jennifer L. Ferre

594 Brevard Road
Asheville, NC 28806

info@wnccommunities.org
O: 828-252-4783
F: 828-251-9532

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.

Buncombe County Family Farms: Assistance to Farm Businesses

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$57,500.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Small business and non-profit support

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Farm businesses in Buncombe County have faced a number of hardships due to the pandemic. These businesses have been creative in shifting their business models to accommodate changes in markets, methods and operations. This program will allow small family farms in Buncombe County to apply for a one-time cash infusion to support additional costs as they set up new systems, modify operations and complete projects that

have been put on hold due to the pandemic. These businesses support the Local Foods movement and are integral to supplying Asheville's finest restaurants, breweries and tourist-related retail businesses, as well as providing a healthy source of locally grown produce and products to the residents of Buncombe County. This much needed assistance will allow them to adjust to new conditions and help them in this time of transition and recovery.

Project Plan*

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

Based on our decades of experience with other competitive application programs, such as the WNC AgOptions program, an application process will be set up for existing/established farm businesses to apply for a one-time grant. The funding will be made to any farm business located in Buncombe County in operation as of February 29, 2020. The intent is to offer up to \$2000 per farm. At this level, the requested \$50,000 would directly impact at least 25 farm businesses in Buncombe County. Farmers will provide a statement of need, a detailed budget and other information that shows they are a legitimate farm business and a brief statement of outcomes they expect to achieve as a result of this one-time cash infusion. Grants funds will pay for farm expenses that are directly connected to the pandemic including, but now limited to, maintenance of online ordering systems, additional costs for PPE, supplements to increased costs associated with supply chain disruptions, marketing, completion of projects put on hold due to COVID-19, etc. We would streamline this process so that the monies could be distributed as soon as possible, as these businesses are in dire need now. Although the exact schedule would be based on the actual receipt of funds, we envision the application, selection and distribution process to take place in the course of 6-8 weeks. Because we have so many contacts with myriad farm businesses in the county through our agricultural and community programs and partners (WNC AgOptions, Beef Cattle Commission, Honors Program, NC Cooperative Extension, ASAP), promotion and outreach of this opportunity will be condensed and targeted to existing farm businesses. We imagine:

Promotion/Outreach: 2-3 weeks

Application window: 2-3 weeks

Review, Selection and Distribution: 1-2 weeks

Applications will be reviewed by a team of agriculture professionals and will be evaluated based on criteria such as level of need, impacts to farm business and overall strength of budget and request.

Grantees will sign a simple agreement that will outline their responsibilities, which will include participation in a mandatory introductory meeting to review grant guidelines, proof (in the form of receipts) to show grant money was spent on appropriate expenses and the commitment to provide follow-up data showing impacts of the funding.

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 project will provide one-time cash infusions to farm businesses in Buncombe County who were directly impacted by the pandemic. These small businesses were tasked with changing methods, protocols, markets and delivery systems to accommodate business practices in the past year. Many of the costs required an unexpected investment that has placed these businesses in a vulnerable position. A one-time cash infusion will help these businesses bridge the gap as they adapt to the new realities of production post-pandemic.

WNC Communities works closely with small family farms in WNC through our programs such as WNC AgOptions (a cost-share grant program funded by the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission), our work with the WNC Beef Cattle Commission, Dairy Commission, Mountain Cattle Alliance and others. This totals more than 500 farms throughout the region, including a significant number in Buncombe County. These farms represent a cross section of many different kinds of farms, and we feel that the need presented in this proposal is an accurate representation of the status of small family farm businesses. From data collected

from farmers in our network of partners and programs, we know that farm businesses experienced a number of challenges that were a direct result of the pandemic.

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.

When restaurants, cafes, breweries and tailgates markets closed in 2020, small family farm businesses in WNC were directly impacted. Some of these thriving farm businesses were solely supplying the hospitality industry in Buncombe County and beyond, and the closure of those businesses had a domino effect on the farms. Crops were planted pre-pandemic and not only did these farmers need to do the work of tending their fruits and vegetables, they were now tasked with finding completely new markets for their products. Many quickly pivoted to address these changing markets in order to survive. However, this mid-season shift required extra time, money and resources to pull off. Online ordering systems were created. On-farm farm stands were built. CSAs were formed. All of this was happening as these businesses also were also forced to spend more money of PPE, change production methods to account for the public health emergency, and keep workers employed throughout the crisis. Miraculously, these resilient businesses made it through the crisis. However, they are now saddled with debt, have put into place expensive protocols and, as demand picks back up, need some additional assistance to get them back up to full pre-pandemic production. Many hemorrhaged money in 2020, and over a year later, have yet to fully recover. The good news is that things are getting better and these farm businesses have the potential to come out of this crisis with renewed enthusiasm. This opportunity for a one-time cash infusion to alleviate some of the new “costs of doing business” would be a bridge to get them to the other side of the pandemic.

Population Served*

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

These funds would target farm businesses in Buncombe County. These are comprised of people representative of the communities where the farms are located. From the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Website: “Buncombe County is home to a variety of farms, from tiny productive spaces to large acreage. Agricultural enterprises are equally varied, ranging from cattle farms and livestock operations to mixed vegetable farms, herb and flower farms, greenhouse facilities, and an endless blend of crop diversity. Farms are located in every community, from our beautiful rural areas to the vibrant city hub of Asheville where crops are grown in intensively managed plots within city limits. Every small farm is unique in topography, land resources, and the products they raise and sell.”

The funding will be made available to any farm business located in Buncombe County were in operation as of February 29, 2020. The intent is to offer up to \$2000 per farm. At this level, the requested \$50,000 would directly impact at least 25 farm businesses in Buncombe County.

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.

The goal of this cash assistance to farms is to help them bridge costs as they return to a normal level of operation. Performance measures include:

- Number of completed projects (examples include equipment upgrades, construction projects, online ordering systems, marketing campaigns, etc.)
- Employees hired or retained
- Increase in income six months after cash infusion is received

Evaluation*

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

Using processes similar to those already in place for other grant programs managed by WNC Communities, granted farm businesses will be legitimate farm businesses (businesses selling goods/services for profit) and will be required to sign a binding agreement that outlines responsibilities of the grantee. This will include: regular reporting of progress, proof (receipts) showing expenditures in line with their requests, and commitment for survey data to be collected at the 6-month end point.

Again, WNC Communities already has established protocols in place for grant programs and manages over \$200,000 per year in grants to small family farms through these programs.

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?

Based on our interactions with our network of farmers, PPP loans and other COVID assistance opportunities were not equally provided to farm businesses. Some were able to secure PPP loans to help retain employees, but many of these farms did not have the time or ability to apply for these targeted assistance programs. Many are just too small to have the resources to obtain the assistance. Many farms would not risk going into debt. This small cash assistance offered through this opportunity would fill a hole and provide an infusion right at the time when farm businesses will be planning for next year's season -- a critical juncture for the farming industry.

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.

We will rely on our network of partners for help with promoting this opportunity, but also to serve on a voluntary committee to assist with making decisions. These partners could include members of the WNCC Board of Directors, NC Cooperative Extension, ASAP (Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project), NCDA&CS and other agri-business leaders.

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.

For over 71 years, WNC Communities and its predecessors have helped to launch numerous projects with positive and measurable impacts on the region, including the WNC Farmers Market, WNC Ag Center, the NC Mountain State Fair, NC Arboretum, Agricultural Research Stations, the WNC Regional Livestock Center and the Hemlock Restoration Initiative. For the past 10 years, WNC Communities has managed a cost-share grants program, WNC AgOptions, which has been responsible to awarding over \$3 million in grants to farmers in WNC. WNC Communities has a long history of managing grant funded projects and has the personnel, resources and experience to handle multiple projects.

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.

CSLFRF Budget Form from WNCC.xlsx

Special Considerations*

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

Although there are a multitude of ways that WNC Communities could help utilize this recovery money to assist those in our county who are in need, helping our small family farm businesses seems the most vital. These businesses are so important to supporting the local economy, both in the hospitality and tourism industry, as well as serving our local residents. In the past year, we have seen these resilient businesses reach to the depths of their creativity and ingenuity to navigate multi-faceted hardships. Farmers are used to long hours and hard work, and in this past year, they put everything effort into saving their businesses and were, for the most part, successful in their endeavors. However this wasn't without costs, both to their finances and mental well-being. As we have managed a small cost-share grant program for many years, we know firsthand how much a small cash contribution can make to these businesses. Overall, the family farms are run by honest, hardworking men and women who love what they do and will make sacrifices to make sure they can keep doing what they are doing. This small investment in the future of our farms will have lasting impacts on Buncombe County.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- CSLFRF Budget Form from WNCC.xlsx

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	WNC Communities
Project Name:	Buncombe County Family Farms: Assistance for Farm Businesses
Amount Requested:	57500

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 57,500.00	Pending	One time immediate payemnts and adminstrative support for COVID impact relief to small family farm businesses
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			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
Total	\$ 57,500.00		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
One-time payments to offset COVID related impacts	\$ 50,000.00		\$ 50,000.00		Direct cash payments to affected small farm businesees
Admistration	\$ 7,500.00		\$ 7,500.00		Support for the promotion and implementation of the application process, tracking of grantees and all fiscal adminsitration of program
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
Total			\$ 57,500.00		