

## WGAS + SSK Community Kitchen

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

### ***We Give A Share***

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Mr. Mark Krul Rosenstein  
298 Sluder Branch Road  
Leicester, North Carolina 28748

info@wegiveashare.org  
O: 828-335-3328  
M: 828-335-3328

### ***Mr. Mark Krul Rosenstein***

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298 Sluder Branch Road  
Leicester, North Carolina 28748

mark.k.rosenstein@gmail.com  
O: 828-335-3328  
M: 828-335-3328  
F: N/A

# Application Form

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## *Question Group*

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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.

WGAS + SSK Community Kitchen

## **Amount of Funds Requested\***

\$180,000.00

## **Recovery Fund Eligible Category\***

Please select one:

Services for disproportionately impacted communities

## **Brief Project Description\***

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

WGAS + SSK Community Kitchen is the outgrowth the original Kitchen Ready training program started by AIR and Green Opportunities. As a COVID response, under the direction of HACA, the kitchen began producing meals for senior residents of City of Asheville public housing in March 2020. At the same time, a local farm - Gaining Ground - owned by Anne & Aaron Grier redirected their CSA farm share program to support the

efforts of the kitchen by providing funds for the purchase of locally raised foodstuffs. The kitchen has operated continuously, to date, having provided in excess of 100,000 meals prepared with fresh, local, and organic ingredients. The kitchen team is composed of graduates of the Kitchen Ready training program, who lost their jobs when COVID shuttered local restaurants. With the withdrawal of HACA as the managing partner, WGAS has stepped in to continue the program of feeding communities with wholesome, locally sourced meals.

## Project Plan\*

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

WGAS + SSK is a collaborative partnership between HACA, SSK, WGAS, AIR, and AB TECH with the goal to ensure every plate – regardless of an individual’s economic standing -- is the same, providing the most nutritious, nourishing and satisfying local food to everyone. WGAS + SSK will provide jobs and job training as an integral part of the kitchen operation. Through our efforts, we will complete the vital and missing link between the healthful bounty of our local agricultural systems and those communities in greatest need. Our plan is to become the leading organization in providing healthy meals to the communities in need.

Through the continued operation of Southside Kitchen, located in the Edington Center on Livingston Street WGAS + SSK Community Kitchen plans to:

- Provide healthy meals to people in Buncombe County who experience food insecurity in all its manifestations. These meals are to be provided to those people at no cost to them.
- The cooking of these meals will be based on fresh, local ingredients provided by the local farming community. These foodstuffs will be purchased from local farmers at their customary prices. These purchases are supported by funds raised by We Give A Share, a non-profit founded in 2020.
- The Southside Kitchen, formerly managed by Green Opportunities and an out-growth of Kitchen Ready, an initiative of the Asheville Independent Restaurant Association will be the preliminary kitchen for production of these meals. The kitchen will continue after July 2021 under the direction of We Give A Share.
- The Southside Kitchen will provide the following services at the outset: produce community supported meals for distribution to those in need, be a platform for job and life skill training, and provide a nexus for activities in the Southside community.
- Training will be in partnership with AB Tech and open to anyone in Buncombe County needing to improve their life situation. This training will be provided at no cost to the student, with the goal of placement in the food and hospitality sector.
- Through reimbursements from community meals from various organizations, fund-raising events, We Give A Share efforts, and grants this endeavor will be sustainable.

The plan for the remainder of the year is to continue limited meal service to senior residents of public housing, out-lying residents in Buncombe County serviced through The Food Connection and to provide free and reduced school meals to the Peak Academy (a new charter school) and the Verner Early Learning Center. In 2022, we plan to expand meal service to county and city housing shelters.

SSK is currently operating under the umbrella of Asheville Housing Development, Inc, the non-profit arm of the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville. This support will cease at the end of the 3rd quarter of 2021, with a complete transition to WGAS by year's end.

## Statement of Need\*

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

WGAS + SSK Community Kitchen will serve multiple needs - food assistance, job training, public health improvement, early learning and childcare, and homelessness services. As a response to COVID, Southside has

already provided in excess of 100,000 meals to senior residents of public housing. These meals have been produced with locally sourced agricultural products (purchasing \$74,575 of locally produced foodstuffs since the inception).

One ingredient to healthy living is eating healthy meals. Through the efforts of WGAS, we are producing the highest quality, local, fresh, organic ingredients into the meals produced by graduates of the original Kitchen Ready program. By expanding the services of the Southside Community Kitchen we will connect those in need with healthy meals. These meals will be served to people through out the county, served to schools (under contract to provide school meals to Peak Academy and Verner Early Learning Center). In discussion with the City and Homeward Bound we are developing a plan to provide meals for new housing shelters being developed.

In the process of producing these meals, we will provide a job training platform (revitalizing the Kitchen Ready program of Green Opportunities) in collaboration with AB Tech and the Asheville Independent Restaurant Association. It is a proven model.

Through collaborative efforts, volunteers, and "Community Supported Community" WGAS + SSK is building a model that will feed the many, supported by the community, improve the health of the recipients through high quality, healthy meals, train individuals in life supporting work skills, support our local farm community, and provide our children with healthy meals. We will create jobs - witness the return of graduates of Kitchen Ready, working in our local hospitality industry, returning to feed the community from which they emerged. It is a complete circle - Community Supported Community.

### [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 initial response to COVID from We Give A Share was to raise monies from the community through the sale of "farm shares" or a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) to provide funds to the Southside Kitchen to purchase locally grown food, cheeses, grains, and fish. For all of our producing members, this replacement of income was life saving.

The mission of WGAS is to nourish the health and well-being of our community by championing food equity for all, financially sustaining local farms and producers, and incubating economically successful individuals through culinary and entrepreneurial training.

We Give A Share has over 1,000 individuals that have contributed to this effort. With the decision by WGAS to manage and support Southside Kitchen, this community involvement will expand.

Within the same time frame, the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville reopened the Southside Kitchen, asking former graduates to produce meals for their senior residents. Bringing together graduates of the first class and the leadership team that instituted Kitchen Ready, this team has produced over 100,000 meals for those residents, provided additional meals to the greater community through a contract with the Food Connection (which identifies over 500 - 750 families they serve through "chef meals" and the distribution of recovered food. With the return of more normal business conditions, many of their sources of meals has diminished. Under discussion is for Southside Kitchen to become the repacking center for recovered food for redistribution as individual meals.

Reviving the Kitchen Ready/Southside training program, with a focus on the new needs of our institutional and hospitality partners addresses the radical change in employment in the food service sector.

## Population Served\*

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

Currently the Southside Kitchen is serving meals to senior residents living in Asheville City housing, on average the kitchen serves 300 - 350 meals a day five days a week. The kitchen is also contracting with Food Connection to prepare meals once a week for 150 - 200 individuals, which is distributed through a drive up in Swannanoa. There are 1 in 5 of children in that community that are food insecure. In the development phase and scheduled to begin production are meals for school children at the Verner Early Learning Center and at Peak Academy; a new charter school opening in August. Together, 150 children will be provided meals twice a day. In total, the kitchen is or will be producing 400 - 500 meals a day, based primarily on local foodstuffs and a healthy "plant-based" menu.

Beyond the current meals and population served, under discussion (and only possible with additional funding to build capacity) are the following additional populations WGAS + SSK can serve: thru Food Connection -Leicester Community Center, Mobile Home Communities in the Swannanoa Valley , Barnardsville/Big Ivy- rural community, Blue Ridge Apartments in Black Mountain, Woodfin Apartments, and Helpmate, meals to residents of Sunrise Community For Recovery & Wellness, expanded community meals at the Edington Center, in partnership with Homeward Bound, and through the City of Asheville for "low-entry" housing residents.

To date, we have identified no reliable resource that reliably quantifies the total needs of Buncombe County residents that experience food insecurity. Without doubt, it follows the same demographics as Buncombe County residents living in poverty.

WGAS + SSK plans to scale up to 1,000 meals a day, operating 5 - 6 days a week. Presently, we are serving or will be serving 50% of that goal by the end of fall 2021.

## 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.

#1, Produce 500 - 750 healthy meals a day for individuals experiencing food insecurity and the impacts of poverty. These meals will be produced from locally grown and produced foodstuffs, following low-fat, heart healthy, plant based menus. These meals will be provided at no cost to the recipients. This will be accomplished through a variety of mechanisms - cost reimbursement from strategic partners distributing the meals, a "zero food cost" achieved through donations to We Give A Share for the purpose of purchasing locally grown foodstuffs and the USDA Farmers to Families program administered by the NC Department of Agriculture, profits from contracts for food services (see next item), fund raising events sponsored by WGAS and the Asheville Independent Restaurant Association. These meals will be distributed by WGAS + SSK, and a continuing partnership with Food Connection.

#2. Produce 150 - 200 breakfasts and lunches a day for the Verner Early Learning Center and Peak Academy. These meals will be based on the Verner Rainbow in My Tummy program. Rainbow In My Tummy® is a comprehensive nutrition education program designed to help early care and education centers improve the quality of food they serve and improve the food culture surrounding young children. The program ensures children ages 0-5 have access to a wide variety of nutritious foods These menus will be adapted to the needs of child of elementary school age. This is a contract for services.

#3. In partnership with AB Tech, complete 3 - 4 cycles of job training and self-esteem for a 8-10 students per cycle. Each cycle will be 14 weeks long, based on a curriculum developed by AB Tech, Catalyst Kitchens, and the advisory board for WGAS. The goal is to graduate and place in jobs 80% of class enrollment.

#4. Expanded meal production for profit. WGAS + SSK will expand, when and where possible, a for profit contract food services to support operations.

## Evaluation\*

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

#1 - Community Meal Production - A daily record will be kept: # of meals, menus & menu cost, where meals were distributed/communities served. Cost records of food purchased and donated including a breakdown of purchases from individual local farms, commercial suppliers, and where food donations were sourced. Labor cost records for the production of meals: # of kitchen production hours/wages, associated administrative costs of meal production. Quality assurance: regular evaluations provided by partner agencies on meal quality and client satisfaction. Health Department: a record of all health department inspections, refrigeration logs, pest control inspections. Combined, these records will serve as the basis for evaluation of performance by the WGAS food service advisory committee, which will be comprised of food service industry professionals.

#2 School Meals. The same data, analysis and quality assurance measures will be applied as in item #1. Additionally, all data required by Verner, Asheville City schools, and Buncombe County schools, the State of NC and the Federal government will be maintained.

#3. Training Program. AB Tech will maintain records of enrollment, performance & evaluation and graduation rate of students. AB Tech, WGAS + SSK, and AIR will evaluate on an annual basis the relevance and efficacy of the training and track job placement. Students upon enrollment and graduation will be surveyed, to include goals, satisfaction, and recommendations for improvement. AIR and other employment partners will be surveyed on a regular basis, to determine the success of the job training.

#4. Records of other contract food services will be tracked to include clients, foods produced, costs associated with this food service and gross margins contributed to operations.

## 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 impact of WGAS + SSK on a just, equitable, and sustainable response to COVID-19 is currently being demonstrated. First, with the combined efforts and resources of HACA, WGAS, Green Opportunities, and the first graduates of the Kitchen Ready training program, we have provided healthy, quality meals to individuals living in poverty whose access to food was substantially cut off. These meals relieved that insecurity, provided healthy food, increased access to a resource previously unavailable (our local farm system) and provided jobs to individuals that are graduates of the program aimed to raise them out of poverty. Second, in the course of the past year, this model has continued to expand, providing meals through Food Connection to other individuals also experiencing food insecurity. Third, through contracts with an early learning center and a charter school, additional healthy meals will be provided at the most important, formative period of an individual's life - the early years. All the children served by these contracts qualify for free or reduced lunches. Fourth, the kitchen team is undertaking the challenge to operate and manage the kitchen - a unique opportunity for their leadership development. Fifth, the reinstated training program will provide these same opportunities to others.

The WGAS + SSK model is sustainable and scalable. It is based on the emerging concept of "Community Supported Community". With a foundation of contract meal services whose costs are underwritten by "farm shares", we will become the premier low-cost high quality provider of meals to those in need. We have connected the community at large, the farming community, those experiencing food insecurity, and individuals (like our kitchen team) who are seeking a way for self-improvement and out of poverty. Using this production we have a basis for real life training and can involve those students in the solution.

The kitchen is the keystone.

## 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.

WGAS + SSK is a collaborative partnership between HACA, SSK, WGAS, AIR, and AB TECH:

- SSK - The Southside Kitchen will be the preliminary kitchen for production of these meals. The kitchen will continue after July 2021 under the direction of We Give A Share. SSK will become a free-standing operation, organized under a co-op model to allow for future entrepreneurial activities. The Southside Kitchen will provide the following services at the outset: produce community supported meals for distribution to those in need, be a platform for job and life skill training, and provide a nexus for activities in the Southside community. In operation, on going. 100% of production responsibilities. 50% of training.
- AB Tech - Training will be in partnership with AB Tech and open to anyone in Buncombe County. They will establish standards of training, be responsible for recruitment, review and certify training, and provide financial and administrative support to the Southside Kitchen for its training programs. 50% of training
- HACA – The Housing Authority of the City of Asheville will provided the facility for Southside Kitchen. In exchange for re-establishing the training program, providing HACA residents priority enrollment in this training, and providing regular events for the Southside community, HACA will offset most or all occupancy expenses of the kitchen. Current and on going.
- WE GIVE A SHARE - WGAS will provide leadership and administration for the Southside Kitchen. 100% of management & fund raising
- ASHEVILLE INDEPENDENT RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION - AIR will be a partner providing guidance for job training needs and provide a gateway into the job market.
- MANNA FOODBANK - Southside Kitchen is currently a Manna FoodBank approved agency. In process and under consideration:  
City of Asheville, Buncombe County, Food Connection & Homeward Bound - exploring potential partnerships for expanded meal distribution

## 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.

Aaron Grier and his wife own and operate Gaining Ground Farm outside of Asheville. For 20 years they have grown vegetables for sale through CSA program, tailgate markets, and downtown restaurants. A Buncombe County native with deep roots in the community.

Elizabeth Sims is a communications professional with a background in strategic marketing, brand management, advertising, public relations, journalism and published writing. She began her communications company in 2009, following her role as Vice President of Marketing Communications for The Biltmore Company in Asheville, NC. She is past president of the Southern Foodways Alliance, a board member of the Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity and past board member of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Association.

John Flear is chef-owner of Rhubarb, Benne on Eagle and Rhu bakery. His restaurant, Benne is founded on the principle of creating equity and diversity in the restaurant community by focusing operations under the leadership and management of minority populations. At the outset, he hired a number of graduates of the Kitchen Ready/Southside Kitchen training program.

Mark Rosenstein is the Co-Founder of Kitchen Ready. Co-leader of a Federal CED Grant of \$876,326.00 awarded in 2013. Successfully completed the Community Kitchen portion of the grant, exceeding the employment goal by 266% - creating 40 jobs.

Dan Murrey is a physician executive and community leader. Previously from Charlotte, Dan served as Mecklenburg County Commissioner At-Large overseeing a county budget of over \$1.5B. He chairs the board of two food-related nonprofits -- Seventh Street Public Market in Charlotte and the Piedmont Culinary Guild. He previously served as Executive Director of Charlotte in 2012 which hosted the 2012 Democratic Convention in Charlotte raising and expending over \$45M on behalf of the City.

## 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.

WGAS+SSK Community Kitchen COVID RECOVERY.xlsx

## Special Considerations\*

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

WGAS + SSK Community Kitchen is the result of a long range vision. Initial support for this endeavor came from Buncombe County on February 21, 2012 with a grant sufficient to start the Kitchen Ready program. In the interceding years, Kitchen Ready/Green Opportunites trained many individuals, who have found meaningful work. With the transition of GO away from culinary job training, a small group was poised to reignite this training. COVID provided the crisis to move certain people to action. Within a week's time under the direction of HACA to resume kitchen operations - Southside Kitchen produced its first 100 meals and within days began producing 350 meals a day, 5 days a week for people at risk from COVID, to date totaling more than 100,000 meals. While this collaboration is complex, it rests on a simple truth - the health of a community depends on how it feeds itself. Bringing together all levels of the community - government, educational institutions, business organizations, local farms, a kitchen team emerging from poverty, volunteers and the greater community of Buncombe County - each doing an important and appropriate piece - WGAS + SSK Community Kitchen has built a sustainable and scalable model.

The very success of what has been achieved in the year of COVID was built on that commitment in February 2012 and upon the efforts of those students that were brave enough to step up.

WGAS + SSK has built a model that connects the resources of local farms (12 farms to date) with a kitchen that serves meals to those in need, provides a platform for training and job creation and engages the greater Buncombe County community to support these endeavors. We will succeed in reaching a point of sustainability. This will happen through the collaborative relationships we have forged and tested. This is a project that fills a short term need and can grow into stronger, lasting connections for the future.

Our destiny is set - we will succeed by making all plates equal.

## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- WGAS+SSK Community Kitchen COVID RECOVERY.xlsx



<b>Total</b>	\$	567,263.00		
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