

WAKE COUNTY COVID-19 FOOD RELIEF

REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF INTEREST

Wake County has received federal funding that is dedicated to responding to the COVID-19 Crisis. Known as the “CARES Act”, it provides additional flexible funding to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and public agencies, through familiar and new programs that can be used to address a variety of food relief efforts. The NC Cooperative Extension – Wake County Center will be utilizing a portion of these funds and is seeking non-profits and other partners to assist in implementing its COVID-19 Food Relief plan.

This funding is the second round of assistance that will be provided to build upon, continue, or develop new outreach strategies to increase food security and enhance food access in communities most impacted by the economic downturn resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan will run through the end of the 2020 calendar year and will utilize federal funding to address food insecurity through collaborative partners and strategies built upon regional needs and available resources.

Wake County will select partners who implement programs built upon collaborative networks capable of addressing a variety of food access issues, including, but not limited to, lack of transportation/mobility issues of certain residents/families. There are three distinct components of this plan that will require partners at this time:

1. Develop & Launch Regional Food Hubs in Food Insecure Regions

Wake County seeks to build upon current food infrastructure success, by building out regional hubs to provide a location for a food insecure individual/family to pick up 1-2 weeks-worth of food and to access additional support. Some examples of additional supports includes: provision of PPE, Chrome books and school supplies for WCPSS children, toiletries/sanitary items and WIC/SNAP/F&R application assistance. A hub lead would manage procurement of food, supplies, and partners and offer bi-monthly food distribution events. The hub leader would work with other non-profit partners in the region to build effective distribution & volunteer networks for target populations or underserved areas. Additionally, the hub leader will collect and share data with the food security team. Data to be collected includes meal counts, volunteers & volunteer hours, number of boxes/pounds of produce distributed, distribution locations, and additional services provided. We anticipate having 12-15 hub locations across the county, each with spokes reaching out into areas with gaps in food service providers, or those experiencing significant transportation barriers (e.g. Southern, Eastern, & NE Wake). The hubs will operate from September 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020. Regional Food Security hubs will be aligned where possible with Human Service zones and will take into consideration the unique assets and challenges in each geographic area.

Goals of Regional Hubs:

- Address decreases in daily meals available to community sites.
- Provide data on regional food relief efforts to inform county-wide decision making.
- Condense distributions & amount of food going out into less days to reduce volunteer needs.
- Increase access to produce & shelf stable pantry items alongside healthy recipes to give families the autonomy to cook their own meals that meet their specific dietary and cultural needs.
- Provide a one stop shop for other resources (E.G. Chrome Books for WCPSS students, SNAP Outreach, F&R Lunch Application Assistance, School Supplies, PPE, Sanitary items, etc.).
- Provide accessible locations in food insecure neighborhoods experiencing gaps in service providers.
- Provide regional pick up sites for community partners to obtain resources to deliver to nearby community members experiencing mobility and/or transportation barriers.
- Provide services that align with the needs of working families (e.g. Weekends & Evenings).
- Reduce redundancy of services in regions by encouraging partnership among regional partners (e.g. faith groups, food pantries, civic organizations, school staff, etc.).

The Opportunity:

Wake County seeks contracts with nonprofit partners to provide the administrative and community development support needed to plan, launch, and manage regional distribution hubs. This could be a local food pantry partner, faith organization, non-profit, etc. Applicants should share information on their anticipated partners, facility capacity, including refrigeration & storage space available, neighborhoods and/or target populations they will serve in their region, services to be provided, and an overview of the operational structure of their hub design. Partners may seek funds to support:

- Transportation costs
- Food Costs
- PPE & Food Distribution Supply Costs
- Outreach costs
- Facilities costs
- Staff to assist with distribution & program evaluation/monitoring

2. Enhance Food Resources for Targeted Populations

Food security is not simply about access to any food, it is about access to foods that are healthy, culturally appropriate, and provided in a way that meets an individual's transportation and mobility needs. The Covid-19 Food Security Strategic Plan seeks to ensure target populations such as seniors, LatinX, vegetarians, and homebound citizens have equal access to food.

Goals of Targeted Resources:

- Reduce food waste by providing familiar food items to families from diverse backgrounds (e.g. vegetarian items, rice, masa flour, dried beans, etc.)
- Provide innovative distribution mechanisms for those who experience transportation difficulties or are homebound for health purposes.
- Ensure equitable access to food across Wake County.

The Opportunity:

Wake County seeks partners who can provide food products tailored to specific community needs at a rate comparable to USDA reimbursement for the same population. This may include fresh produce boxes, shelf stable boxes tailored to specific community needs (seniors, LatinX, vegetarian), provide prepared meals for families lacking cooking equipment/refrigeration, etc. Partners will contract with Wake County directly; but must coordinate delivery with Regional Hub Directors.

3. Increase Pantry, Partner, & Food Bank Purchasing Power & Storage Capacity to Meet Increased Demand

The supply chain has been disrupted far beyond the borders of our county, with items selling at higher prices to try and keep supply in check. Items of greatest issue continue to be meat, dairy, and eggs. It is anticipated after the season of farm gleaning and increased produce supply dies down in the fall, produce will also be more expensive to procure for both food banks and pantry partners. For food banks, food pantries, and other non-profit partners providing emergency food to have a standing in the current market, we will need to provide financial support to increase their purchasing power. Additionally, as pantries serve more clients, the need for increased freezer and refrigeration storage capacity will also be of importance, and funding to upfit locations will help to increase overall availability of free foods around Wake County.

The Opportunity:

Partners may apply for funding to support any of the following areas:

- Increase the amount of product available to food pantries.
- Increasing access to proteins, dairy, eggs, produce and shelf stable products for food insecure Wake County residents.
- Enhancing storage capacity for refrigerated & frozen items to meet increased demand
- Provide continued support for provision of fresh produce (preferably sourced locally when possible) should the Farm to Family program discontinue.
- Expand resources to support streamlined distribution to partners across the county, including outlying areas.

NEXT STEPS:

Agencies whose current organization missions falls within the parameters outlined in this Request for Letters of Interest are strongly encouraged to evaluate their programs to see how they can best increase their current capacity and/or initiate new programs to work with Wake County and Extension in responding to the COVID-19 Crisis. The County's preference is for agencies to bundle multiple services and work with relevant partners to provide the most complete range of services possible to food insecure populations in their region. Strategic alliances and partnerships with other entities is acceptable and encouraged. **The county is looking to fund projects that can begin as soon as possible.** The county is seeking to have grant awards/contracts in place on or before September 1, 2020.

Wake County will accept questions and proposals at Sydney.klein@wakegov.com with COVID-19 Food Relief in the subject line. For proposals please provide the following information by noon on August 14, 2020:

Program Narrative

- Who you are: brief organizational bio & key staff
- Primary contact person;
- Types of services proposed;
- Service region (s);
- Distribution methodology;
- Whether these are new or existing services;
- Facility capacity, including refrigeration & storage space available
- The capacity/number/type of clients to be served;
- Neighborhoods/communities planning to serve (including name, address, and demographic make up of community);
- Relationship with current communities (if applicable);
- Vendors anticipating contracting with If applicable, based on service response;
- Target population attempting to serve;
- A timeline for implementation;
- Outreach strategies;
- How social equity will be insured;
- Staff needs;
- Program costs/resources needed;
- Tracking accomplishments and recording demographic data;
- Agreements/MOU's if partnering with other entities; and
- Plans for continuing program after December 2020

Cost Allocation Budget

- If an expansion of a current program, include a copy of the current budget;
- Define/delineate separate programs;

- Identify direct and indirect costs;
- Allocation of staff salaries, benefits, and taxes;
- Identify program specific categories

Funded agencies should maintain complete program records demonstrating compliance and use of funds and will be required to allow Wake County access to all records. Progress reports with set indicator data collection will be required monthly. All funded programs will be monitored by federal, state, and local regulatory compliance as well as programmatic accomplishments.