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Soil & Water

# **DURHAM COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM**

## **2025 Fiscal Year Guidelines**

The Durham County Board of County Commissioners has approved an Agricultural Economic Development Grant Program and allocated \$250,000 for this fiscal year. The program's purpose is to offer cost share grants to assist farmers, nonprofits that impact the local food system, along with promoting Agriculture Development and Outdoor Environmental Learning Centers in schools.

The County has a successful economic development plan that offers cash incentives to businesses that create jobs in the community. This incentive program mimics the same outcome but is directed to support farms, new and beginning entrepreneurs, and agriculture education in schools.

This program will provide two types of grants:

- **Small grants for Agriculture Development in schools: Up to \$1,500.00**
- **Grants for farmers or nonprofits: Up to \$10,000.00**

This grant is administered through the Ag Economic Development (AED) Grant Committee. This is a subcommittee of the Durham Soil and Water Conservation District Board. It is made up of nine (9) members including:

- Two Soil & Water Conservation District Board Representatives
- Two Farmland Preservation Advisory Board Representatives
- Durham Cooperative Extension Director or their designee
- Executive Director of Farmer FoodShare Inc. or their designee
- One Durham County Farm Bureau Representative
- USDA Farm Service Agency Executive Director or their designee
- Durham Soil & Water Director or their designee

**A Training session** will be offered to assist interested applicants with the application process details:

**Tuesday, July 16 at 6 pm – Durham Farm Bureau Meeting Room, 1901 Hillandale Rd**

This meeting will be recorded and may be requested for review.

Please contact Sherry Scully ([sscully@dconc.gov](mailto:sscully@dconc.gov) or 919-560-0558) to attend or receive recording.

**Application Deadline: August 23, 2024 at 11:59 pm**

**Notification:** Award recipients will be notified by **September 15, 2024**.

### **Eligibility**

- **The applicant/organization must reside in Durham County and serve Durham County residents and/or farmers.**
- **Applicants are not eligible to apply if they are currently under contract with this grant program**
- **Applicants are not eligible to apply if an active grant is not completed and fully paid before contract deadline. You will NOT be eligible to apply for two years.**

### **Application for Farmers or Nonprofits**

The grant program assists farmers in developing new sources of agricultural income through the provision of 85% cost-share grants, or 95% cost-share grants for M/WBE and/or New & Beginning Farmers (see definitions on page 5). 15% match required for non-M/WBE applicants; 25% match may be made to increase ranking score of Application; 5% match required for M/WBE or New & Beginning applicants. Applicants can be reimbursed for the cost of farm improvements or other eligible expenses listed in the grant. **Grants awarded for up to \$10,000.00 to Farmers or Nonprofits**

The Grant funds to **farmers** would be used to assist in:

- Infrastructure improvements to the farm
- Food Safety Compliance
- Socially disadvantaged and underserved farmer financial assistance
- New and beginning farmers small startup funds
- Specialized farm equipment
- Subcontractors and off farm services
- Supplies and Materials
- Outreach expenses associated with the production and marketing of diversified farm enterprises, value-added and Agritourism endeavors

### **Application for Schools**

The grant program assists by providing financial support for program implementation through the provision of 85% cost-share grants (15% match). Schools can be reimbursed for the cost of improvements or other eligible expenses listed in the grant.

**Grants awarded for up to \$1,500.00 for Schools**

The Grant funds to **schools** would be used to assist in:

- Ag Development in schools
- Build Outdoor Environmental Learning Centers or programming (Ag. Related)
- Support student recruitment for Ag Ed programs

### **Application Procedure**

1. Three ways to acquire an application:

a) Find the application on the Soil & Water Conservation Department website after July 1, 2024:

[Ag Economic Development | Durham County \(dconnc.gov\)](https://www.dconnc.gov/ag-economic-development)

b) Pick up application at the Soil & Water Conservation Department office: 201 E. Main Street, 5<sup>th</sup> floor

c) Request a copy through the mail by calling 919-560-0558 or emailing [sscully@dconnc.gov](mailto:sscully@dconnc.gov).

2. Applicants should submit application to the Durham Soil and Water Conservation District either by email to Sherry Scully, [sscully@dconnc.gov](mailto:sscully@dconnc.gov) or at the office at 201 E. Main St; Durham, NC 27701 **by**

**August 23, 2024 at 11:59 pm.**

3. All personal information will be redacted from applications before being presented to the AED Committee for review.

4. Once all applications are received and redacted, Committee members will review and rank all applications.

5. At its scheduled meeting, the committee shall evaluate the application to determine the disposition of the application. Grant awardees are selected based on evaluation criteria listed on the application.
6. The applicant will be informed in writing by County staff of the committee's determination of the disposition of your application. If the committee denies a grant request, staff will provide feedback on the application to the applicant.
7. All applicants will be notified by mail of the funding outcome of their proposal by September 15, 2023.

### **Contract Procedures**

At its discretion, the AEDG committee may impose any additional terms to a grant request. But in general, once an application has been approved for an individual or organization the following steps will be implemented:

- A) Installation and purchases made before having an approved contract and all necessary paperwork will not be eligible for reimbursement.
- B) A Durham Soil & Water Conservation District staff representative will visit the farm, school, or nonprofit organization to conduct a preconstruction meeting or site visit.
- C) Awardee will be provided the required documents to become a Durham County Vendor. These documents must be complete and returned by November 15.
- D) Grant awardee must attend the grant administration training prior to December 1. If procedures C and D are not complete by these dates, the Ag Economic Development Committee must be notified in writing concerning any delays due to special circumstances. Committee will review on case-by-case basis.
- E) The grant awardee will enter into a contract with Durham County.
- F) Contract will state that Grantee agrees to utilize grant funds for their intended use and to **maintain the proposed project in Durham County for 3 years from the date of payment.**
- G) Each individual or organization receiving a grant must provide an accounting of how all funds will be used and key milestones reached **within 180 days of the receipt of the grant award.**
- H) If an applicant fails to complete item [F] or fails to begin the work within **180 days of the receipt of the grant award, the County reserves the right to rescind the grant award so that the funds may be reallocated to others in the community.**
- I) Once the project has been completed, Durham Soil & Water Conservation District staff will certify the project as complete.
- J) This is a reimbursement grant. After installation of the approved farm improvements are completed/installed according to the predetermined specification, the Applicant will submit all paid receipts to the Durham Soil and Water Staff.
- K) Staff will complete a request for reimbursement and submit the request to the Durham County Finance office. At that time, Applicant will be issued a payment reimbursing for the approved expenses stated on Application.
- L) A three-year Maintenance period of project begins at the time of final payment. If project is not properly maintained or fails to be used for the intended use for the life of the project during this three-year period, the Grantee shall repair or reimplement the project within 60 days of issuance of a noncompliance notice from Durham Soil and Water Department OR repay Durham County a percentage of the Durham County AED Grant Payment at a prorated amount.
- M) Maintenance checks will be performed annually to determine compliance.

The committee shall provide annual reports to the Soil & Water Conservation District Board and the BOCC of the number of grants requested and awarded, and an analysis of the program's success metrics.

## **Policies and Definitions**

### **Statement of Confidentiality**

Documents, including but not limited to financial statements, business plans, customer and supplier lists, description of inventory or assets, contractual obligations, and existing liabilities, submitted during the application process shall be treated as confidential information.

### **Durham County M/WBE Ordinance adopted in November 2016**

Minority means an individual who is a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States and who is:

1. African American-A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
2. Asian American-A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, Asia, Indian continent, or Pacific Islands.
3. Hispanic American-A person of Spanish or Portuguese culture having origins in Mexico, South or Central America, or the Caribbean islands, regardless of race.
4. Native American- A person having origins in any of the original Indian peoples of North America.
5. WBE means an M/WBE which is a woman-owned business enterprise.

**New & Beginning Farmer**-A Beginning Farmer or Rancher means an individual or entity who: has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years.

### **Specialized Farm Equipment**

A farm implement that performs a specialized mechanical function, and which is identifiable as a specific piece of equipment that is not ordinary and customarily used on a farm.

**Grant funds cannot be used for:** purchase of livestock, general-use farm equipment or salary for the applicant.

*Updated 5/30/2024*

## Farmer & Nonprofit 2025 Evaluation Worksheet – Part I

|   | <u>Pts.</u> |
|---|-------------|
| ▪ Improvements for food safety compliance                   | ____ 15     |
| ▪ Infrastructure improvements                               | ____ 15     |
| ▪ M/WBE (Durham County Ordinance)                           | ____ 15     |
| ▪ New & Beginning Farmer                                    | ____ 15     |
| ▪ Farmers purchasing specialized equipment                  | ____ 15     |
| ▪ Project Match: applicant match to the grant >25%          | ____ 10     |
| ▪ Farmland is participating or applying for the VAD program | ____ 5      |
| ▪ Farm has a conservation plan                              | ____ 5      |
| ▪ The farm is following watershed rules                     | ____ 5      |

## Farmer & Nonprofit 2025 Evaluation Worksheet –Part II

- Purpose: (20 points) – Project is in line with the program goals.
- Feasibility: (20 points) – Applicant has a good plan in place and skills to successfully complete the project.
- Project Fit: (20 points) – Project has good fit with existing farm infrastructure.
- Project Viability: (20 points) – Likelihood that the project will enable successful agricultural production.
- Project Support: (20 points) – Potential of applicant to garner support to assist with project.

## Grant Program 2025 Evaluation Worksheet for Schools

*This section is used for AED Committee Review only*

|  | <u>Pts.</u> |
|--|-------------|
| ▪ Agriculture Development in schools   | ____20      |
| ▪ Grant support FFA programs in schools  | ____20      |
| ▪ School supports intern opportunities for youth   | ____20      |
| ▪ Project related to NC EOG. Can be incorporated and/or<br>enhance the NC DPI Standard Course of Study | ____20      |
| ▪ School Partners with other Ag Agencies   | ____20      |