**GRANT OVERVIEW**

The North Carolina General Assembly appropriated funds to the North Carolina FFA Association to provide materials and supplies necessary for the operation of an agriculture program. House Bill 259, Section 8.9 allocated $2,000,000 in grant funds to agricultural education programs operated in Career and Technical Education middle and high school public school units.

The North Carolina FFA will award grants up to $100,000 for a single agricultural education program, public school unit, or regional partnership of more than one public school unit. The distribution of awards will be determined based upon application requests up to the allocated amount. Priority will be given to applicant programs that have received low-wealth supplemental funding and/or serve a high population of at-risk students in the previous fiscal year . All students within the public school unit are eligible to use grant funded items. Grant funding requests and subsequent awards must support items necessary to support the agricultural education program.

The North Carolina FFA Association appreciates the North Carolina General Assembly for creating the CTE Grants for Agriculture as well as the efforts of the North Carolina Agricultural Teachers Association to endorse this grant program.

**GRANT GUIDELINES**

1. To be eligible for a CTE Grant for Agriculture the program must be a Career and Technical Education middle or high school agriculture program that is classified as a public school or public charter school. Qualifying groups are as follows:
	* A single public school agriculture program. Submissions can be made by the agricultural education teacher or CTE Director.
	* CTE director on behalf of some or all schools in a public school unit where items will be used by multiple agriculture education programs.
	* Regional group consisting of several public school unit agriculture programs. A regional group must designate a point of contact and indicate which district will manage the funds associated with the grant.
2. Applications are judged based on the content of the application. Ensure the project purpose, funding needs, description of the project, how it benefits students and how the project will be completed is explained completely.
3. Anticipated project costs included in the budget need to be real and not inflated.
4. This grant is designed to provide funding for projects that will impact present and future students. The grant application must include a plan to sustain any items purchased. For example, if funds purchase a tractor or equipment, the application should outline the parties that agree to maintain these items.
5. Grant funds may *not* be used to:
	* Pay for employment or internships.
	* Administrative fees/charges.
6. Grant funds can be used to purchase items necessary to the agricultural education program such as:
	* Equipment, computers, textbooks, resource materials, animals, etc. Comprehensive lists of equipment associated with each course are available on the [North Carolina FFA Curriculum](https://ncffa.org/agricultural-education/curriculum/) page. Items included in equipment lists serve as a guide for grant purchases; however, equipment lists are not all-inclusive.
	* Upgrade, repair, modernize, expand, or build indoor or outdoor facilities including a greenhouse or barn.
7. The project should be manageable in scope and size. If there is a question about the merit of a project, do not apply for this grant. Full commitment is needed by the teacher and the school system administration for any project.
8. Projects should have a measurable impact. Please refer to the impact table in the application for the specific list.
9. Permission/approval must be secured for the project from local school administration (principal) and school system administration (CTE Director and Chief Financial Officer) *before* submitting a grant application.
10. Prior to applying for a grant for construction, please work with local and public school unit administration to acquire the appropriate permission and permitting, including Americans with Disabilities Act compliance if applicable.
11. Grant funds must operate through public school unit accounts. Good bookkeeping is a necessity for this grant. These grant funds are subject to be audited by the state auditor.
12. If a project requires more funds than the grant maximum ($100,000), the application should provide the source and reliability of the additional funds. Indicating that funds have been requested from another source is not sufficient. A firm commitment from additional sources detailing the fund amounts and date of delivery of the funds is required.
13. Grant recipients will receive an award offer. No grant funds will be distributed until a signed contract is received.
14. Minor project alterations may be allowed with approval from North Carolina FFA. The intent of the grant cannot change once the grant is awarded.
15. The point of contact for the grant is the person who will correspond with the state FFA office. The point of contact will be responsible for submitting all reports to the state FFA office. *All reports are expected to be on time, complete, and accurate.* It is acceptable for the agriculture teacher to be the point of contact.
16. All individuals serving as point of contact for funded grants are required to attend an orientation meeting prior to the distribution of funds. The meeting will be held via Zoom with the actual date determined soon after grant winners are selected.
17. Grant recipients are required to keep accurate records of all program documents including receipts. Grant reports must be completed on time and all expenditures must be backed up with matching receipts. The point of contact will be accountable for all required/requested documentation.

**GRANT PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**APPLICATION ELIGIBILTIY & VERFICATION**

Each grant proposal application will be reviewed to validate qualification for funding. This review occurs prior to application scoring.

 **Public School Unit Qualification**

* Indicate the type of public school unit associated with the grant application. Provide the agricultural education program name(s) that are included in the application.

 **CTE Director and Chief Financial Officer Endorsement Letter**

* On school/public school unit letterhead, provide a letter of endorsement signed by the CTE Director and Chief Financial Officer approving the grant proposal and agreeing that the school system will meet all timelines, expectations, and financial commitments detailed in the project. The CTE Director and Chief Financial Officer should indicate financial commitment to sustain any items purchased with grant funds.

 **Principal Endorsement Letter**

* On school letterhead, provide a letter of endorsement signed by the building principal/director that approves the grant proposal. The principal should indicate the school’s commitment to sustain any items purchased with grant funds.

**APPLICATION GUIDELINES**

**Section I: General Information & Project Summary**

**Applicant’s General Information (5 points)**

* Information provided should be complete for maximum points.

**Project Summary (10 points)**

* Information provided should be a short, concise summary of the project.

**Section II: Project Justification & Goals**

**Project Justification (5 points)**

* Indicate if at least one school within the public school unit received low-wealth supplemental funding in the previous fiscal year. Indicate the source of this information.
* Provide the percentage or ratio of the student population within a school unit that is classified as at-risk students or students with disabilities in the previous school year. Indicate the source where this information was obtained.

**Project Goals and Objectives (30 points)**

* The goals and objectives of the project should be provided in a bulleted list. The goals and objectives of the project should establish alignment with current or future curriculum programming to improve student learning in agricultural education programs. Grant funds may not be used to pay for employment or internships.
* What will the project accomplish and what will be the short-term and long-term impacts of the project?

**Evaluative Measures (20 points)**

* This section should completely answer the following questions:
	+ What evaluation method(s) will be used to measure these impacts?
	+ What will be the benchmarks for measuring the project’s success?

**Intended Beneficiaries (10 points)**

* A list of individuals, groups, organizations, etc. that will benefit from the project should be included.

**Section III: Project Budget & Timeline**

**Project Budget (25 points)**

* A detailed budget showing line-item project expenses for the entire project should be included. Items paid by grant funds should be fully described and relative to the goals and objectives of the grant.

**Matching Funds Partners (0 points)**

* This section should describe and include realistic value estimates of any in-kind contribution such as personnel, services, equipment, etc.
* Are funds identified and verified to support project costs over the grant?
* For each additional funding partner/grant organizations, the following should be provided:
	+ Name of the funding organization.
	+ Type of funding (grant, loan, private contribution)
	+ Amount received.

**Project Maintenance (10 points)**

* Explain (if applicable) the plan to repair and/or maintain items purchased with grant funds. Describe how the project will continue to be funded and/or self-sustaining. The CTE Director and Chief Financial Officer should indicate financial commitment to sustain any items purchased with grant funds in their endorsement letter. The principal should indicate the school’s commitment to sustain any items purchased with grant funds in their endorsement letter.

**Project Timeline (15 points)**

* A detailed timeline that outlines when significant events will happen during the project. It should include the period during which the project will operate, when the requested grant funds will be used, as well as major milestones. The timeline should begin after March 1, 2024, and end by October 15, 2024.

**Section IV: Project Impact & Endorsement**

**Project Impact Table (15 points)**

* Economic Impact/Benefit Information should be relevant to the project goals and objectives. Estimated numbers can be used as not all impacts may be realized by all applicants.

**Additional Information (0 points)**

* Any additional information that is relevant to the project proposal may be included in this section. Examples include feasibility studies, photos, site plans/architectural drawings, specifications on needed equipment, etc. Some applications may not have additional material; therefore, there are no points awarded for this section. Additional information submitted should be helpful to the review committee to help them better understand the project. Contact Joshua Bledsoe (joshua\_bledsoe@ncsu.edu or 919-513-1205) with questions.

**SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION**

The completed application is due by 11:59 pm on February 1, 2024.

Hand-written signatures are required. Digital signatures are not permissible.

Please scan signed documents clearly and include them with the application document.

The completed application (including endorsement letters) should be submitted electronically as one PDF document to: ncffagrant@gmail.com

**GRANT TIMELINE**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **DATE** | **EVENT** |
| October 30, 2023 | Notify Agricultural Education Programs of funding and open the CTE Grants for Agriculture application. |
| January 2024 | Convene selection committee to review applications |
| February 1, 2024 | Close Program Grant Application submission – Applications due by 11:59 pm |
| March 1, 2024 | Notify program grant recipients |
| March 2024 | Orientation meeting with recipients via Zoom |
| April/May 2024 | Grant award distribution  |
| August 1, 2024 | Interim progress report due to North Carolina FFA |
| March 2024 – October 2024 | Projects in progress |
| October 15, 2024 | Recipient progress report due to North Carolina FFA.  |

**SCORING PROCESS**

* At least three independent reviewers will score all applications.
* A scoring rubric along with this application and scoring guide will be used to assess each section of each application.
* Once all applications are scored, the scores for each application will be entered into a scoring summary spreadsheet.
* The state staff will compile the scores from all reviewers.
* All applicants will be ranked and funding levels will be determined for projects.
* The application review committee will meet to discuss the applications and compile the results.