

Abilities FIRST Microenterprise Coaching Program

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

FIRST

Janet Price-Ferrell
PO Box 802
Asheville, North Carolina 28802

info@firstwnc.org
O: 8282771315
M: 8282167745
F: 8282771321

Janet Price-Ferrell

PO Box 802
Asheville, North Carolina 28802

janet@firstwnc.org
O: 8282771315
M: 8282167745

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. To date, Buncombe County has awarded projects totaling \$23,093,499, leaving a balance of \$27,639,791 available to award.

Visit <http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding> for details.

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](#)

Organization Type*

Nonprofit

Nonprofit documentation

If nonprofit, attach IRS Determination Letter or other proof of nonprofit status.

updated 501c3 letter Jan 2021.pdf

Name of Project.*

Abilities FIRST Microenterprise Coaching Program

New/Updated Proposal*

Is this a new project proposal or an updated version of a proposal submitted during the earlier (July 2021) Recovery Funding RFP?

New project proposal

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$40,825.00

Category*

Please select one:

- Affordable Housing
- Aging/Older Adults
- Business Support/Economic Development
- Environmental/Climate
- Homelessness
- K-12 Education
- Infrastructure and/or Broadband
- Mental Health/Substance Use
- NC Pre-K Expansion
- Workforce

Business Support/Economic Development

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Abilities FIRST is a coaching program to support persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) to create a microenterprise or self-employment opportunity. A microenterprise is defined as a business operating on a very small scale, one with a sole proprietor and fewer than six employees. Many people define themselves by their job, but only 19 % of persons with disabilities are employed as reported by US Dept. of Labor. Microenterprises are emerging as an employment option for people with IDD, including those who have the highest support needs. While some microenterprises have been created for persons with disabilities, they are usually limited to persons with parents who have the business ideas and the ability to support the idea financially and the person with the day to day tasks. Abilities FIRST will assist persons with IDD to create and run their own business to be viable without relying solely on the parent or one person such as a direct support person.

Project Plan*

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

Abilities FIRST Microenterprise Coaching Program has three components.

1. Business Plan created including a Work Plan with daily tasks and matrix for measuring success.
2. Startup funding.
3. Tools or resources to support the microenterprises owners.

Abilities FIRST will have staff with a background supporting persons with IDD and microenterprise model. Additional knowledge is required to ensure success for individuals with IDD including an understanding of SSI/SSDI benefits and their limits, Innovation Waiver and Medicaid rules, Small Business Administration and funding opportunities. Their job will be to connect with the various community organizations including but not limited to Vaya Health, Arc of North Carolina, Arc of Buncombe County, and Autism Society of North Carolina to identify individuals to would be interested in becoming a business owner.

Once identified, staff will work to determine a business idea with a feasibility assessment before completing a business plan. Person-centered business planning will be beneficial to determine the reasonableness of the business. Also part of the business plan will be a Work Plan to outline the tasks needed to support the business and identify who will complete those tasks. The Work Plan will be a living document, a day to day tool used by the individual and their support team (paid or unpaid) to accomplish the tasks to support the microenterprise. Many business plans do not include this component which is critical for person with IDD to maintain the completion of tasks. The Work Plan is the component that will help to create a business that is sustainable with the changes that come in the life of a person with IDD. Natural supports age and new direct care workers are hired. The business plan will also include a matrix to be used to evaluate the success of the business. The team can use that matrix to tweak parts of the Work Plan to continue to improve outcomes.

Abilities FIRST will use some of the funds from this proposal to support the new business owners with up to \$1,000 in startup costs. We do estimate that most microenterprises may only need \$500 or less which is what we included in our budget proposal. We will also support them accessing other funds such as SBA loans, Coop, and Vocational Rehabilitative Services funds.

The last component of this business plan will offer resources to the business owners such as a common online page (i.e. Etsy) and coordinating community events for booths for our Abilities FIRST business owners. By offering these tools for the businesses, it will decrease some costs and overhead expenses as well as create a community for the business owners to work together such a manning booths and sharing ideas or bundling common services or products. Our program will connect with them individually on a monthly basis. At these monthly check in there will be time to evaluate for changes in Work Plan, or updating it with new ideas, or to address new issues.

Statement of Need*

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

At FIRST we believe the concept of a good life means that every person:

- Knows the loving support of nearby family and friends;
- Contributes to, and participates in, a caring and inclusive community;
- Is respected and empowered to make choices;
- Lives in a place they call home;
- Enjoys a meaningful and financially secure life; and
- Has a well-planned future, enabling their family to have peace of mind.

Everyone includes persons with IDD. Most adults define themselves by their jobs. But with more than 80% of adults with disabilities unemployed the concept of a meaningful day is limited.

In 2021, 19.1 percent of persons with a disability were employed, up from 17.9 percent in 2020, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported. Many companies are finding good employees in persons with disabilities but still over 80% are not employed. News Release Feb 24, 2022, Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor. Employment for persons with IDD specifically is not tracked but is definitely lower. Abilities FIRST will give a person with IDD a meaningful day, connections to community, and income to support them to buy the everyday items many take for granted.

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.

Persons with IDD were impacted more than persons of the same age without disabilities by COVID, the shut downs, and limited services that resulted. The unemployment of persons with disabilities is higher than that of persons without disabilities. Having a meaningful day is important to everyone, even persons with IDD. Creating a meaningful day for a person with IDD was even more challenging during COVID. All community programs were shut down, events were cancelled, and jobs were limited due to COVID protocols.

During COVID-19, many individuals left their jobs and started their dream jobs, but persons with IDD were not part of this movement. With limited financial resources of persons with IDD and their families, low expectations of them, and society's lack of understanding and even pity, persons with IDD are not introduced to microenterprises. Some persons with IDD may have worked in sheltered workshops or crafts classes in school where they might have "sold" their wares but these type of endeavors were mostly charity. This does not create a meaningful day or the pride that a microenterprise creates with a person interests in mind. A microenterprise creates community connections, pride in a job well done and income. A person with IDD will not have to rely on others to for meaning and have satisfaction of a job well done.

Population Served*

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

Abilities FIRST staff will work with at least 10 persons with IDD in Buncombe County to plan and open a business designed with them. NCDHHS uses the federal definitions and defined among the national groups, consistent with the clinically-determined criteria:

"Intellectual disability" is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18. The term intellectual disability covers the same population of individuals who were diagnosed previously with mental retardation in number, kind, level, type, duration of disability, and the need for individualized services and supports.

"Developmental disability" is defined as severe, chronic disability attributed to a mental/cognitive or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments diagnosed or that become obvious before the age of 22. Likely to continue indefinitely and limits the individual in 3 or more of the following areas: Self-care, Receptive and expressive language, Learning, Mobility, Self-direction, Capacity for independent living, and Economic self-sufficiency.

Many of the individuals we will serve could not work a "job" in the community due to their medical needs on top of their cognitive needs. Most do not have the stamina to work but short parts of the day. They will most likely have services through the Innovations Waiver or be on the waitlist. With Innovation Waiver services the individual with IDD will have access to the direct support staff to help the individual complete the tasks needed to run their business including creating of a product or service, distributing a product or service, or helping with the administrative side of the business. Abilities FIRST will be the coach/consultant to give the individual the tools and resources to create a viable business.

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 Abilities FIRST is to give persons with IDD an opportunity to have a vocation that they will enjoy for a lifetime. This opportunity will improve their quality of life along with creating a business that is a viable by supporting the needs of the individual. With the support of this funding 10 microenterprise owners with IDD will have the resources and tools to run a viable business that meets their needs.

- 10 new microenterprises will have business plans including living Work Plans designed for a person with intellectual disabilities.
- 10 microenterprise business owners with intellectual disabilities will have the startup funds needed to open their business.
- 10 microenterprises will follow the businesses plan and living Work Plan, including the marketing plans and financial plan over the year of funding.

Evaluation*

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

Abilities FIRST staff will collect data on the individuals, their business including successes and failures. Our team will connect monthly, once the business is open with the business owner and their support team to check in, support the person in evaluating the business progress or success. The Business Plan, Work Plan and Matrix will be reviewed to keep them current.

The use of the grant funds for startup costs will be tracked and all resources such as online selling platforms or festivals will be documented and evaluated for success. We will use the evaluation to create better supports and businesses for persons with intellectual disabilities.

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?

Persons with IDD identify with all races and all socioeconomic levels at birth but once adults, the majority of persons with IDD live well below poverty level. Currently a person with SSI receives \$841 per month to live on their own in the community or in a group setting. Those living in settings that are not their own like a group home or living with family are required to turn over their monthly check and may only have access to \$68 per month for personal items such as clothes, personal items and activities. A person receiving a SSI or SSDI check can work and continue to receive their checks when their earnings are below a certain amount, currently \$794 per month. While this would mean a person could have \$19,620 per year to live on which is over the poverty level of \$12,800 per year. With the cost of living and a living wage requirement \$17.70 in Buncombe County, persons with intellectual disabilities are living below poverty unless their families are subsidizing them.

In Buncombe County, the 2020 census data shows there are 8,952 persons with cognitive disabilities between the age of 18 to 64 years which is 5.7% of the population and those between the age of 18 and 34

years is 2,491 or 4.5% of the population. In data pulled in 2020 from Vaya Health who serves persons with IDD in a 22 county region, it shows that 29% are living in Buncombe County and over 75% of those served are between the ages of 22 to 64. Since the data is for the whole catchment area the diversity is not limited to Buncombe County but shows that 3% are Latinx and 7% are Black. Research shows that persons with disabilities that are Black are 20% less likely to be employed. With this funding, Abilities FIRST will engage at least 20% of the persons we serve to be persons of color.

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.

Abilities FIRST staff will connect with entrepreneurial business support agencies to create awareness and increase support in our community about microenterprises owned by persons with IDD. These include Mountain BizWorks, NC IDEA, and SBTDC. FIRST has worked with SBRDC and the Western Carolina University program to update our own personal policies so we know the value of the work they can support.

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.

FIRST is a resource center for persons with disabilities and their families that has been serving individuals and families in Western North Carolina since 2002. We provide persons with disabilities and their families with programs and advocacy to support and foster healthy, inclusive and self-determined lives. Started by a group of parents and professionals with a goal to inform and support families of children with disabilities, today is still lead by a board and staff made up by a majority of parents of children with disabilities and special healthcare needs. Over the years we have added more programs to support these persons as they age. FIRST currently supports 10 individuals with IDD living in their own home, some with 24/7 staff, provides Outpatient therapy for persons with IDD, and offers clinical supports to teams about behavioral supports and staff training to meet the individual's needs.

FIRST meets the standards of Non-Profit Management, including:

- Insurance – General Liability, Professional, Workman's Compensation, EPLI (sexual harassment) and Hired and Non-owned Auto as required as a provider agency.
- Financial – maintains accounts at First Bank with a credit line and contracts with Corliss & Solomon, PLLC for IRS 990 and independent review of accounts.
- The Executive Director has the Non-Profit Management Certificate from Duke University, Office of Continuing Education and all staff receive continuing education opportunities.
- Funding Management – FIRST has managed funding from US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs; NC Children's Trust Fund, NC Department of Safety, Division of Juvenile Justice, Buncombe County JCPC; Buncombe Health and Human Services; Buncombe Partnership for Children; and Community Foundation of WNC. FIRST is a provider for NC Infant Toddler Program. Partners Behavioral Health, Vaya Health LME/MCO. We have experience in developing budgeting, fiscal monitoring and managing.

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.

Abilities FIRST budget.xlsx

Special Considerations*

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

FIRST's goal in starting Abilities FIRST is to meet the needs of persons with IDD who have not been given the same opportunities to those without intellectual disabilities. Most are living at home with their family, unemployed and maybe going to day programs to occupy their day. At FIRST we know that they can accomplish so much more. Our supported living program, My FIRST Key supports 10 individuals with IDD to live in their "own" some with roommates, some with 24/7 staff but all with tenant rights. They plan their day, cook or help cook their meals, do their laundry, just like others of the same age. A few have jobs bagging groceries or washing dishes at a local restaurant but all want to have a meaningful day.

With the funding of this proposal, FIRST will hire a coach to work with many individuals focusing on starting 10 microenterprises in Buncombe County and grow from our successes to support persons with IDD in the counties of Western North Carolina. These microenterprises can be viable businesses but the support Abilities FIRST will offer to elevate them from a hobby or charity. With the Business Plans, the living Work Plan and Matrix, the person with IDD will be able to carry on their business when new staff is hired, parents age or die and other changes that currently mean an end to their business. Abilities FIRST is the missing piece to creating a microenterprise for a person with IDD. Persons without IDD or cognitive disabilities have access to programs in our community like Mountain BizWorks. But a person with IDD is not able to access them and needs a more wrap around approach which Abilities FIRST will offer.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- updated 501c3 letter Jan 2021.pdf
- Abilities FIRST budget.xlsx



Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

P.O. Box 2508
Cincinnati OH 45201

In reply refer to: 0752822342
Jan. 28, 2021 LTR 4168C 0
56-2278402 000000 00

00019741
BODC: TE

F I R S T
% SPECIAL NEEDS F I R S T INC
6 ROBERTS RD 105
ASHEVILLE NC 28803-8699

Employer ID number: 56-2278402
Form 990 required: Yes

Dear Taxpayer:

We're responding to your request dated Jan. 19, 2021, about your tax-exempt status.

We issued you a determination letter in May 2002, recognizing you as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(03).

We also show you're not a private foundation as defined under IRC Section 509(a) because you're described in IRC Sections 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

Donors can deduct contributions they make to you as provided in IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts under IRC Sections 2055, 2106, and 2522.

In the heading of this letter, we indicated whether you must file an annual information return. If you're required to file a return, you must file one of the following by the 15th day of the 5th month after the end of your annual accounting period:

- Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax
- Form 990EZ, Short Form Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax
- Form 990-N, Electronic Notice (e-Postcard) for Tax-Exempt Organizations Not Required to File Form 990 or Form 990-EZ
- Form 990-PF, Return of Private Foundation or Section 4947(a)(1) Trust Treated as Private Foundation

According to IRC Section 6033(j), if you don't file a required annual information return or notice for 3 consecutive years, we'll revoke your tax-exempt status on the due date of the 3rd required return or notice.

You can get IRS forms or publications you need from our website at www.irs.gov/forms-pubs or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

If you have questions, call 877-829-5500 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.,

008303

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Jan. 28, 2021 LTR 4168C 0
56-2278402 000000 00
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F I R S T
% SPECIAL NEEDS F I R S T INC
6 ROBERTS RD 105
ASHEVILLE NC 28803-8699

local time, Monday through Friday (Alaska and Hawaii follow Pacific time).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,



Teri M. Johnson
Operations Manager, AM Ops. 3



Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	FIRST
Project Name:	Abilities FIRST Microenterprise Coaching Project
Amount Requested:	40,825

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 40,825.00	pending	
FIRST	\$ 33,825.00	pending	Confirmed once other funding approved
List other sources here			
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List other sources here			
Total	\$ 74,650.00		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
Salary required taxes	\$ 33,825.00	\$ 33,825.00	\$ 67,650.00	Operating	.5 FTE dedicated to serving Buncombe County.
Startup funds to participants	\$ 5,000.00		\$ 5,000.00	Operating	average of \$500 per microenterprise but limited to \$1000
Laptop and other items for new employee	\$ 1,000.00		\$ 1,000.00	Capital	Items for new staff including laptop and onboarding
Marketing costs	\$ 1,000.00		\$ 1,000.00	Operating	Online selling platform annual cost, marketing for and to the community
List expenses here			\$ -		
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Total			\$ 74,650.00		