

Request for Proposal: Urban Agriculture Conservation Initiative

A. Applicant Eligibility

Wake Soil and Water Conservation District (Wake SWCD)

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B. Project Description

Wake SWCD would like to hire an Urban Agriculture Specialist (UAS). This position will provide technical services to urban agricultural producers and community gardens members, with the primary focus being underserved communities and food deserts. With urban agriculture in its early stages in Wake County, information about resource management is minimal. Providing technical assistance on conservation methods, site design, and supportive best management practices (BMPs) at this early stage will better ensure the long term sustainability of our urban farms.

Between 2010 and 2015 our local governments issued more than 32,000 building permits for new residential, commercial and industrial developments. These permits reflect the range of possible venues for new urban agriculture enterprises.

The UAS will evaluate sites and make specific recommendations addressing resource concerns and needs communicated by the land users. The BMPs identified in the Natural Resource Conservation Service Technical Field Guide and the North Carolina Community Conservation Assistance Program will serve as a toolbox to address the urban resource concerns, such as micro-irrigation or rain gardens. Urban BMP's installed at local urban agricultural sites or community gardens can be used to teach urban producers about natural resource management, addressing higher amounts of impervious surfaces, increased runoff, poor water quality, and soil erosion. The UAS will assist Wake SWCD in applying for grants to provide financial assistance to citizens to install BMPs and encourage the use of conservation practices.

The UAS will help the urban agriculture community set up a forum for networking, providing opportunities for members from all aspects of the system (growers, distributors and consumers) to connect and share ideas. This will encourage the community to discuss what workshops will be beneficial, to share resources and equipment that may be expensive or otherwise inaccessible, and to connect with distributors and consumers in need. As urban agriculture continues to grow in our county, this forum will allow those interested in urban agriculture a good resource to start their process. The UAS will also work with our partners to obtain, develop and distribute conservation related materials and other literature that will be helpful for the urban agriculture community.

The UAS will design and conduct a wide variety of workshops for all aspects of urban agriculture while working closely with our many partners. Wake County will assist the specialist

in translation of information to better reach all interested parties including non-native English speakers. Workshops will include topics such as:

- Nutrient management
- Integrated pest management
- Soil health
- Water quality and quantity practices
- Season extension
- Erosion control
- NRCS programs and how to apply for them
- Designs for beneficial insects and pollinator gardens
- Composting and vermiculture composting
- Cover crops
- Safe food storage with a focus on canning and dehydrating

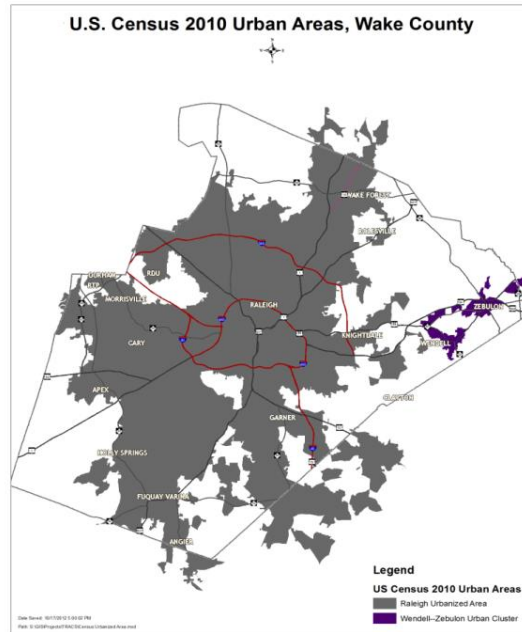
The UAS will reach out to NGO's, nonprofits, and government agencies to supplement our support structure of partners and increase resource availability within our community. These partnerships will also help bring awareness of what resources Wake SWCD and NRCS traditionally provide.

C. Geographic Focus

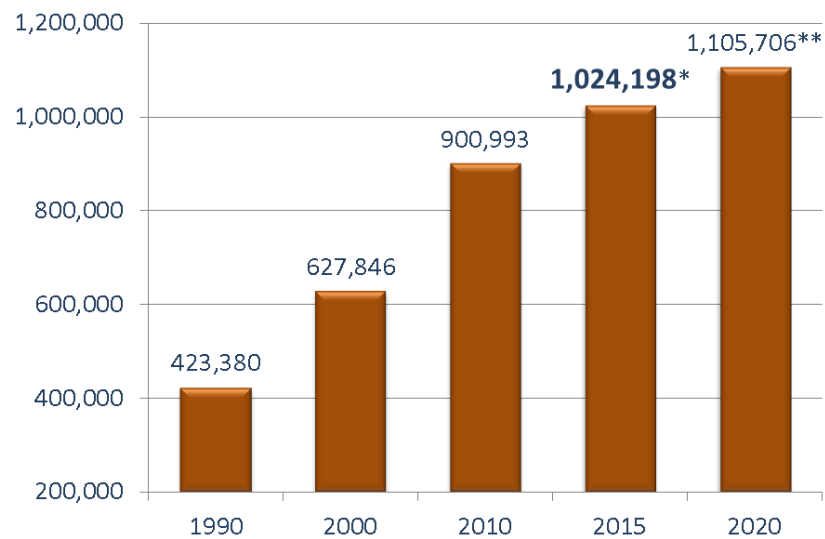
WAKE COUNTY TRENDS AT A GLANCE-URBAN AREAS

Quick Facts

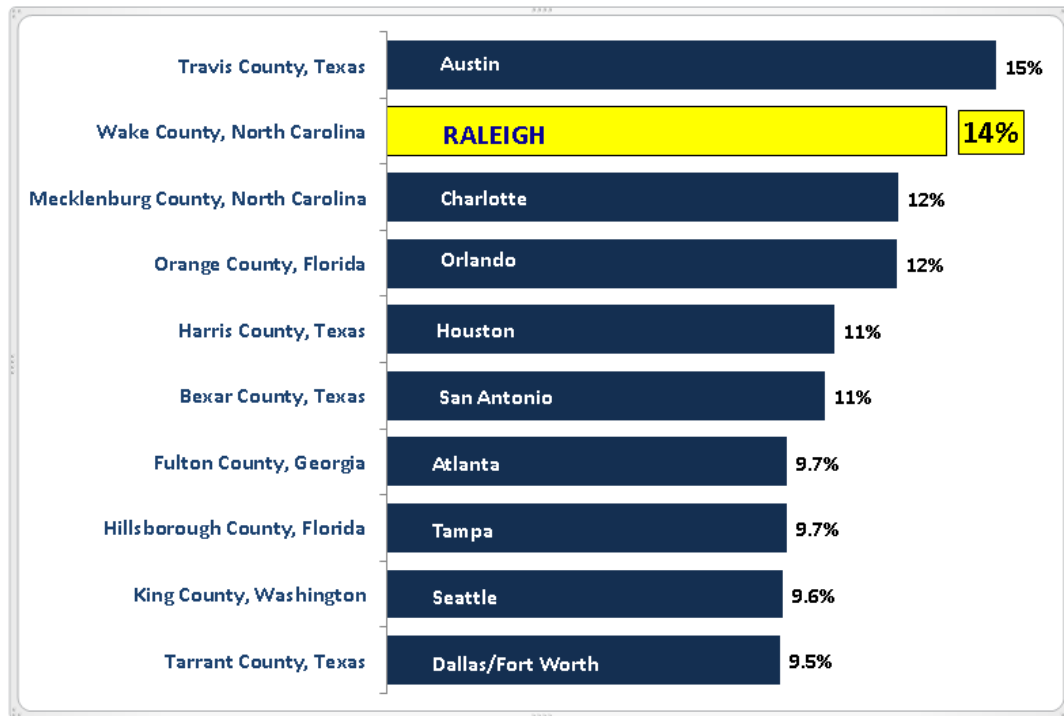
- 2010 Census revealed that 94% of Wake County's population resided in urban areas occupying 52% of the county's land area.
- Wake's July 1, 2015 population 1,024,198 (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Wake is the 2nd most populous county in North Carolina
- *Wake is the 2nd fastest growing nationally among counties with at least 1 million residents and 10% growth rate since 2010*
- *Wake's population has increased by more than 40% each decade since 1980*



Wake County Population Trends



Population Growth Trends 2010-2015 for Counties with at least 1 million residents & 10% growth



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau County Population Estimates, July 1, 2015. 2010 Census Counts used to compute growth rates.

Multiple Wake municipalities among fastest growing in state

NC cities with largest population increases 2010-2015

Rank	Name	Total Population		Population Growth, 2010-2015	
		April 1, 2010	July 1, 2015	Numeric Change	Growth Rate
Largest Population Gains since 2010					
1	Charlotte city	735,770	827,097	91,327	12.4%
2	Raleigh city	404,001	451,066	47,065	11.6%
3	Durham city	228,418	257,636	29,218	12.8%
4	Cary town	135,360	159,769	24,409	18.0%
5	Greensboro city	268,877	285,342	16,465	6.1%
Largest % Population Increase since 2010					
1	Rolesville town	3,786	6,289	2,503	66.1%
2	Holly Ridge town	1,280	2,096	816	63.8%
3	St. James town	3,175	4,922	1,747	55.0%
4	Waxhaw town	9,860	13,495	3,635	36.9%
5	Fuquay-Varina town	17,994	23,907	5,913	32.9%

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Two of the top five municipalities with the largest numeric increases are in Wake County, as are two of the top five fastest-growing municipalities. Among the next five-fastest growing municipalities (#6-10), four are in Wake County: Morrisville (28.2%), Holly Springs (27.1%), Wake Forest (26.9%), and Knightdale (25%). Wake Forest was also #9 statewide for numeric growth and another Wake municipality, Apex, was #10 for numeric growth.

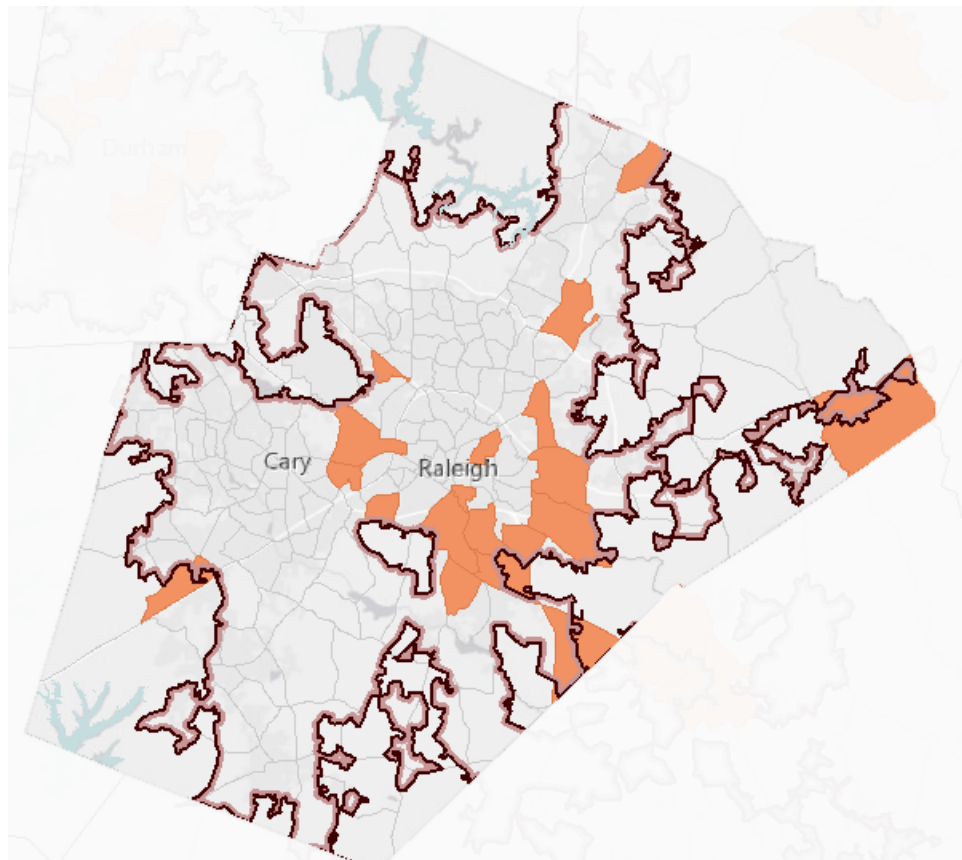
WAKE COUNTY TRENDS AT A GLANCE – TARGET COMMUNITIES

While life is good for the majority of our residents, it is our responsibility to address the areas where others are struggling. Some of our Wake County communities, families and neighbors are facing numerous challenges, including poverty, unemployment, obesity in adults and children, an increasing wait list for mental health services, and a shortage of affordable housing, health insurance, transportation, childcare and healthy food options.


- *Wake's poverty rate has increased by more than 110% since 1999*
- 1 in 5 Wake County children are food insecure
- 18 USDA Food Deserts exist in Wake County
- Over 100,000 people in Wake live in a food desert
- 34% of Wake County children are enrolled in free or reduced lunch programs
- 15% of Wake residents eligible for SNAP participate in SNAP
- 9 of Wake County's 16 farmers' markets and 1 mobile market accept EBT
- 192 grocery stores, 338 convenience stores, 840 fast food restaurants in Wake (2012)

- 65,000 Wake residents with limited finances (up to 200% of poverty level) lived more than 1 mile from a supermarket or large grocery store in 2010 (USDA Food Access Research Atlas. FARA).
- 25,000 Wake seniors age 65 years and over lived more than 1 mile from a supermarket or large grocery store, regardless of income (USDA Food Access Research Atlas. FARA).


Food Deserts within Wake County's Urban & Rural Areas (14 of 18 in Urban Area)




Map Legend

 Urban Areas / Urban Clusters, TIGER 2013

Food Desert Census Tracts, 1 Mi. / 10 Mi. by Tract, FARA 2010

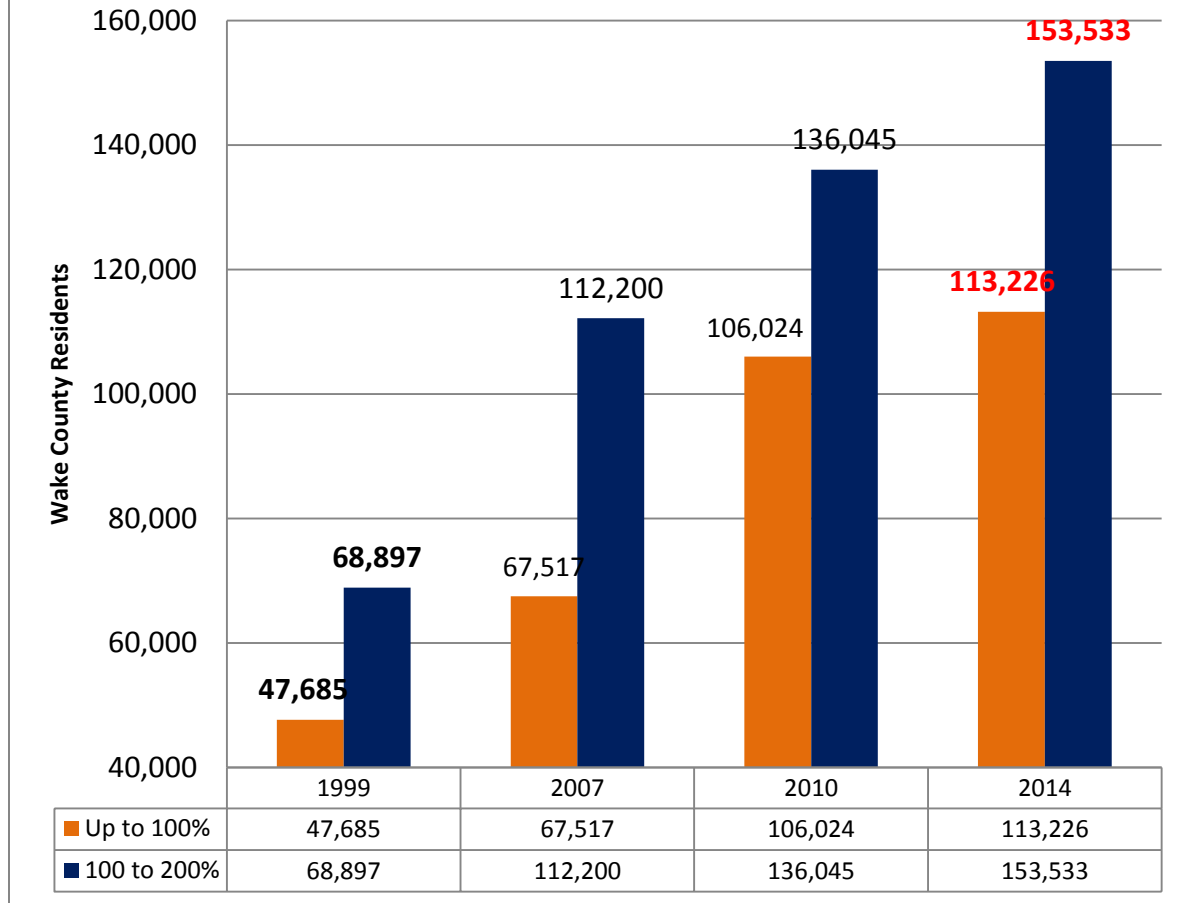
 Food Desert

 Not a Food Desert

 No Data

Source: Community Commons (2016). Retrieved June 24, 2016, from www.communitycommons.org

**Wake County Residents Living in Poverty
1 year - 2014 American Community Survey Estimates
U.S. Census Bureau**



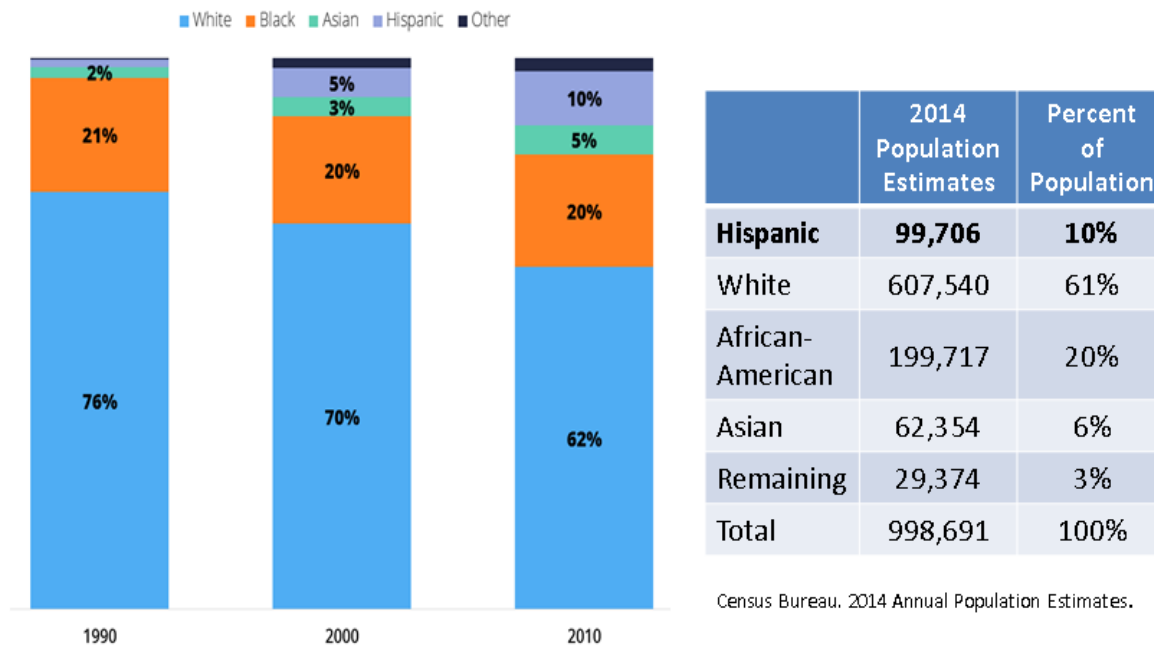
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES – 2013 Wake County Community Assessment Report

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) is a federal food assistance program for low-income families with the goal to increase food security and reduce hunger. The program assists eligible low-income households to buy food needed for a nutritionally adequate diet. The number of FNS recipients in Wake County has increased each year since 2007.

NCFAST state records indicate 98,743 Wake County residents received Food and Nutrition Services benefits in May 2015. Wake FNS benefits totaled over 11 million dollars in May – the median monthly benefit valued at \$194.

As with poverty, the percentage of recipients of racial and ethnic minorities receiving FNS benefits far exceed their presence in the larger county population.

Wake County Population Continues to Diversify: 1990 to 2014



D. Time Line

- **August 1- August 15, 2016:** Post Urban Agriculture Specialist position
- **August 15 - August 30, 2016:** Review applications and interview candidates
- **September 7, 2016:** UAS hiring start date
- **September 7 - October 7, 2016:** UAS becomes integrated into community, networks with partners in the urban agriculture sector, and begins to compile a list of communities and groups to reach out to as well as work shop priorities. The UAS will rank and prioritize outreach needs through conversations with partners and interested parties.
- **October 7 - November 7, 2016:** UAS coordinates with partners to plan workshops, compiles a list of resources needed, and begins creating a forum for multi-community collaboration and communication.
- **November 7, 2016 - June 1, 2017:** UAS incorporates forum feedback, conducts workshops, provides individual technical assistance, works to engage new participants, and encourages application to pertinent Wake SWCD and NRCS programs. UAS applies for grants to help support producers and provide cost assistance for BMPs while continuing to network and plan workshops.
- **December 7, 2016:** UAS completes first quarterly report for Wake SWCD and starts working on a model to be used as a program guide in other communities.
- **March 7, 2017:** UAS completes second quarterly report for Wake SWCD and updates the program guide.

- **June 1, 2017:** UAS completes third quarterly report for Wake SWCD and updates the program guide.
- **June 1 - September 7, 2017:** UAS begins working closely with Wake SWCD Natural Resource Conservationists to transition current and ongoing projects to Wake SWCD staff. Continue conducting remaining workshops and providing technical assistance.
- **September 1-7, 2017:** UAS completes final report, including an updated program guide and map of completed, in-progress, and potential urban ag projects.
- **September 7, 2017:** Program turned completely over to Wake SWCD technical staff to continue to provide the technical expertise on urban agriculture needs, maintain the relationships built and offer workshops as requested.

E. Project Sustainability

The purpose of hiring an Urban Agriculture Specialist (UAS) is to establish working relationships with a variety of organizations throughout the County. The UAS will do the initial outreach, informing members of the urban agriculture community about the resources and technical advice that Wake SWCD can provide. The development stage of a program is the most cumbersome stage and current district employees will not be able to launch this program without additional assistance. The UAS will be hired as a consultant focusing strictly on the needs of the Urban Agriculture Community. With a 100% focus on urban agriculture, the UAS will be able to create a vast network crossing all aspects of the community; assess all the needs and conservation issues that are being observed; and reach out to new producers to help them utilize conservation practices that ensure their long-term sustainability. The UAS will build the program throughout the year with the funding this grant provides, and then transition the established program to Wake SWCD's full-time employees.

Wake SWCD has reached out to a wide variety of individuals and organizations, all of whom think that this is a necessary and extremely important project that they are eager to support. The City of Raleigh and other municipal governments will help us explain their UDOs and required codes that need to be followed inside of their municipality. [InterFaith Food Shuttle](#) will help with the distribution of products from producers to those in need. IFFS, along with others partners, will assist with workshops that focus on nutrient management, water quality, soil sustainability, and hands-on instruction for hoop house and composter construction. The citizens attending these workshops will be able to go out and assist other neighbors with their own projects afterwards, encouraging everyone to share knowledge and resources.

Wake County's Cooperative Extension Service is beginning to work on programs to expand the local markets, and more specific methods to treat water quality in underserved communities. [Triangle Land Conservancy](#) is able to host workshops in order to demonstrate the various conservation practices that they have implemented. [Capital Area Food Network](#) (CAFN) is creating a 50 acre campus of community gardens, teaching farms, and agricultural incubator programs, with interest in Wake SWCD assisting in natural resource conservation technical assistance and education. CAFN has, also, expressed an interest in partnering with Wake SWCD and others to develop a comprehensive food plan. Several Wake County schools-- [Longview](#), [Enloe](#) and [Broughton](#) High Schools-- have urban gardens where the students grow and provide

produce for families in need. These schools provide an opportunity to teach our youth population about conservation methods that they can utilize and share for years to come. The UAS will work closely with our partners to create and distribute literature on conservation practices. These will include but are not limited to, items such as fact sheets, signs, posters, NRCS contact information, NRCS program information, and supportive articles. These materials will help remind urban farmers of conservation methods throughout the years.

F. Project Budget

Expense Item	NACD FUNDS	NON-NACD FUNDS
Salary and Benefits	\$35,000 salary for a 30 hours/ week position for 12 months	Support from Wake SWCD Staff Use of Wake County as a contract employer. Wake County will encumber the grant money for the salary and then cut semimonthly checks
Consultant/Contractor	\$2,000 to bring in specialty consultants/contractors to expand expertise in innovated agricultural methodologies.	Most of the expenditures for consultants will be covered by Wake SWCD. We partner with a wide variety of groups and organizations to help supplement project needs.
Training	\$9,000 to cover material for training, transportation, brochures and scholarship opportunities for specialized trainings.	Wake SWCD will work with its partners to bring in experts in the topics being covered.
Supplies and Equipment	\$2,000 to cover miscellaneous and/or specialized supplies.	Wake SWCD will provide computer, office, phone, auger, survey equipment, GIS, office supplies, etc.
Other	\$2,000 for outreach, PSAs, communication, and social media.	Wake SWCD will work to come up with funds for unexpected items need for project.

G. Applicant Qualifications

Wake SWCD works closely with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture/ Division of Soil and Water Conservation on the [Community Conservation Assistance Program](#) (CCAP). CCAP is a voluntary, incentive-based program designed to improve water quality through the installation of various BMPs directed largely at urban and suburban lands. Wake SWCD has an increasing interest from Wake County residents for CCAP assistance. The technical staff currently averages two CCAP site visits per week. Most site visits offer technical advice on water quality and erosion issues on individual homeowner's property. As of this year, Wake SWCD has spent over 168 hours on CCAP projects and technical advice with six projects currently in the design stage ranging from stream restoration, to rain gardens, and critical area plantings.

As a Conservation District, we pride ourselves as being an active member in our agricultural community and urban community, by working and partnering with a wide variety of organizations. Wake SWCD's Director is the Vice President on our local [Agribusiness Council](#) which includes members who represent a large diversity of agricultural commodities and agribusiness ventures in the community and across the state. Wake SWCD is a member of the [Piedmont Conservation Council](#), a nonprofit organization spanning 10 counties. As a member, Wake SWCD brings viable projects to their attention that can be partnered on to increase success rates of potential projects. One such example is the AM Howard Farm Park, a 30-acre property that will offer plots for urban farmers to utilize. We work closely with all 12 of our municipalities, to help guide our citizens on understanding their UDOs and zoning restrictions. Our staff members regularly attend local community meetings throughout the county to bring attention to the resources and programs we have to assist their natural resource needs. We also update our Facebook page and website on a regular basis, to keep the Wake Community informed of projects we have worked on and new opportunities as they become available. The Wake SWCD Board of Supervisors and staff are prepared and excited to begin expanding our focus on urban agriculture issues. Wake SWCD has already begun meeting with several organizations involved in urban agriculture to better understand the natural resource concerns in more developed areas in preparation for expanding our involvement and outreach.

H. Project Promotion

On a local level, Wake SWCD will promote the Urban Agriculture Conservation Initiative through our website, Facebook page, Wake County's website homepage, and our many partners' websites. The program will be mentioned in our newsletter and our partners' newsletters, as well as discussed at related workshops and meetings such as Capital area Food Network's [\(CAFN\)](#) Food Summit. Public service announcements will be recorded for television and radio and can be translated for broadcast on minority stations. Pamphlets will be created to provide information about Wake SWCD, NRCS's programs, our local programs, and the technical assistance that Wake SWCD offers. These pamphlets will be distributed at local farmer's markets, nurseries that support [Plant a Row for the Hungry](#), local community centers, churches, and schools.

Wake SWCD is looking to use this opportunity to help other districts across the state, and across the nation, with urban populations. Wake SWCD will establish a model based on the processes the UAS undertakes to start this program in order to share and expand the assistance available for urban agriculture in other districts in the future. The model will be created and added to throughout the program's pilot year, with a final draft submitted by the UAS at the end of the program's pilot year. This program model will be introduced and shared at the statewide Annual Conservation Employees Training and the newly established step-by-step guide will be distributed to other Districts as a ready to go reference, including a section on the barriers and lessons learned, as well as the steps that proved successful. To broaden outreach and accessibility the completed model will be posted on the following web sites and blogs: NACD, , NRCS, NCDA&CS/ Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Wake SWCD, and Friends of Wake

SWCD. Wake SWCD will gladly provide short write ups about successful workshops to include on all interested parties' webpages and in their newsletters.

While our technical assistance is open to all Wake County citizens and communities, we will be promoting and targeting our technical services in areas of underserved populations. To promote the program, the UAS and Wake SWCD will ask our partners that already have relationships with at-need communities to pass out literature, post information on workshops and trainings, and provide forum information. With some members of the community or some communities not being native English speakers, Wake SWCD will work with partners and other Wake County departments to translate promotional and workshop materials and provide translators if needed for workshops.