

North Carolina Cooperative Extension WNC AgOptions



WNC Agricultural Options

2015 Application for Individual Farm Businesses

Instructions for Applying

Thank you for your interest in the WNC Agricultural Options Program. *WNC AgOptions builds sustainable farming communities in our mountain region by providing resources directly to farmers who are diversifying or expanding their operations.* Funded projects offer demonstration of alternative farm income to transitioning tobacco growers.

WNC AgOptions is exclusively supported by the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission and works in partnership with WNC Communities. For more information on the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, visit: <http://www.tobaccotrustfund.org/>

Members of the WNC AgOptions steering committee include: representatives from the N.C. Cooperative Extension, N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project and other agricultural business leaders.

Who should apply? Applicants are farmers who demonstrate the economic viability of farms in Western North Carolina. Support is provided to farmers who are diversifying or expanding their operations to increase farm income and encourage the sustainability of the farm businesses. WNC AgOptions awards grants to a variety of farm operations, including: fruits & vegetables, livestock, nurseries, agri-tourism, beekeeping and value-added processing. While agriculture is a varied and diverse industry that can be defined in many ways, WNC AgOptions favors applicants who operate a business and manage land for the purpose of producing crops for harvest and sale. Any funding requests should be for items directly related to the growing and harvesting of crops for sale, including livestock. WNC AgOptions also favors agri-tourism operations that are for the purpose of inviting the public on farm to increase sales of farm products.

Current employees and their spouses of N.C. Cooperative Extension, NCSU, NCA&T, NCDA&CS, WNC Communities; members of the WNC AgOptions Steering Committee and their spouses; board members of WNC Communities and their spouses are not eligible to receive WNC AgOptions grants.

Priority will be given to applicants who:

- Are diversifying or expanding their operations so that they remain sustainable for this and future generations;
- Currently or previously grew tobacco, particularly during or after 1997;
- Show they follow typical procedures of a legitimate farm business, such as acquiring a NC Department of Revenue E-595EA Tax Exemption number, having a Farm Service Agency farm number; and filing a Schedule F or equivalent Schedule C (or equivalent) with the Internal Revenue Service;
- Generate more than one-half of their household income from crops or products produced on farm;
- Have sufficient experience and expertise to accomplish the projects and/or have identified the proper cooperators to supplement gaps in their skills and abilities;
- Actively participate in grower associations or other commodity group meetings;
- Have sufficiently researched the production methods, markets, expenses and timeline for their projects;
- Are proposing projects that demonstrate successful farming practices, methods, and/or markets to the agriculture community;
- Exhibit working relationships with their local Cooperative Extension Agents;
- Have included two quality letters of support from additional cooperators, which can include purchasers, advisors, consultants, agricultural specialists, other granting agencies or loan officers;
- Have NOT received funding from WNC AgOptions from 2004 to 2014 and have NOT received funding from the Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund offered through RAFI, USA from 2009-2011. Recipients who have previously received a total of three WNC AgOptions/RAFI grants are not eligible for a fourth.

Farmers who do not meet all of these criteria are still encouraged to apply.

How are applications reviewed? Projects are ranked via a numeric scoring system based on the strength of the answers in the application. Approximately 25 leaders in the agriculture field throughout Western North Carolina participate in the review process, and a team of reviewers score each application. The WNC AgOptions Steering Committee uses these scores as the primary guide in determining final grant recipients.

How can the grant be spent? Suitable expenses are those associated with the production and marketing of diversified farm enterprises and agri-tourism endeavors. Examples include, but are not limited to: seeds, fertilizer, plants, amendments, livestock, trainings, advertisements, packaging, fences, signage, facilities, supplies, tools and specialized equipment. Items that *cannot* be funded by the award include: farmer labor, pre-existing farm debt, and expenses that are dated outside of the grant period from January 5, 2015 through November 27, 2015.

Funds must be used as stated in the applicant's proposal. Use of funds inconsistent with the proposal will result in forfeiture of award and repayment of funds.

How much is awarded? The amount of award can be: \$3,000 or \$6,000

WNC AgOptions will provide cash awards to projects with budgets that are at least 10% higher than the amount of the award request. An award request of \$3000 would require a project budget of at least \$3300 and a \$6000 award request would require a budget of at least \$6600.

The \$6,000 awards are only available for farmers who write a business plan for their project. Plans are due August 1, 2015.

All grant recipients will be required to attend a new recipient orientation and are encouraged to attend at least one WNC AgOptions workshop on local agriculture updates, business planning education, and new marketing opportunity information.

It is the intent to award grants throughout a 22-county/unit area, which encompasses the following: Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Clay, Cherokee, Cleveland, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey. Each county/unit will host at least one recipient in 2015 if one or more *qualifying* applications (i.e. earning sufficient points to qualify for a grant) are submitted from each county/unit.

When are applications due? Proposals must be postmarked by November 21, 2014. Only one application per farm will be accepted. To be sure your application reaches WNC Communities, a traceable mailing method is suggested.

Completed applications should be mailed to:

**WNC AgOptions Project Coordinator
WNC Communities
594 Brevard Rd.
Asheville, NC 28806**

Tips for writing a successful proposal:

1. Plan and research your topic and market thoroughly. Review the WNC AgOptions website at <http://www.wncagoptions.org> to gather ideas.
2. Arrange an appointment with an N.C. Cooperative Extension Agent by the October 24, 2014 Intent to Apply deadline and receive assistance on developing your project proposal. Those who do not meet the Intent to Apply deadline may not receive all points possible from reviewers.
3. Include two quality letters of support from partners or cooperators who will help you complete your goals. (You are welcome to submit more than two letters, but you will only receive points for two). *Please include original signed letters with your application.*
4. Write the proposal as if the reader is not familiar with your particular type of farming operation. Be as concise yet thorough as possible.

5. If you plan to apply for \$6,000, visit the Whole Farm Planning & Management webpage <http://transylvania.ces.ncsu.edu/content/wholefarmplan&source=transylvania> for tips on business planning. For additional resources, visit: <http://www.wncagoptions.org/links-resources/#business-planning>.

Procedures and Timeline for WNC AgOptions Proposals

- October 24, 2014: Intent to Apply Deadline. All applicants should contact their county Cooperative Extension Agents to set up an appointment to discuss their projects.
- November 21, 2014: Postmark deadline for applications. Mail to WNC AgOptions Project Coordinator at WNC Communities. **Applications with incomplete information will not be considered for review.**
- The week of December 8, 2014: WNC AgOptions representatives may contact finalists for phone interviews if additional information is required to determine the grant recipients.
- The week of January 5, 2015: Letters of acceptance or regrets will be mailed to all applicants.
- Thursday, February 12, 2015: Recipients are required to attend a one-day program orientation/educational workshop. Details will be mailed with acceptance notification.
- August 1, 2015: Business plans, required for \$6,000 recipients, are due.
- November 27, 2015: Receipts for project expenses, final income and expense reports, and surveys are due. All grant funds must be spent by this date.

Requirements of 2015 WNC AgOptions Grant Recipients:

1. Recipients must provide a financial contribution of 10% or more of their total grant award towards their total project budget.
2. Recipients must keep accurate production and financial records on the project and supply a copy of those records at the completion of the project. Copies of receipts for project expenditures will be required. Recipients' project expenditures must be at least 10% higher than their award amount.
3. Recipients must be available via mail and/or phone calls throughout the year. Email access is very helpful.
4. Recipients must attend the WNC AgOptions orientation and will receive their first allotment of the grant there.
5. A WNC AgOptions representative will visit each of the recipients' farms at least once to discuss progress on the projects.
6. The \$6,000 recipients must submit business plans for their project to the WNC AgOptions Project Coordinator by August 1, 2015 to receive the next \$2,000 allotment.
7. Recipients must complete final income and expense reports, plus a survey that provides feedback about the program and results of their project, by November 27, 2015 to receive the final \$500 allotment.
8. Recipients will recognize WNC AgOptions and the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission as the funders/supporters of the project in all materials/marketing/advertising used to promote the project (WNC AgOptions will provide appropriate logos and usage guide).
9. WNC AgOptions will include the recipients' projects in public relations, outreach, demonstration and education in 2015 and future years.

Still have questions? Contact the WNC AgOptions Project Coordinator at 828-252-4783 or admin@wncagoptions.org



**WNC Agricultural Options
2015 Application for Individual Farm Businesses**

Please type or print legibly all sections of this application.

Project Name: _____

Grant request amount (please check one): \$3,000 \$6,000

Total project budget amount: \$ _____

Section I. APPLICANT INFORMATION

Note: The grant funds are considered taxable income, and WNC Communities will file a 1099-Miscellaneous with the IRS in the name of the check recipient at the end of 2015. You will be required to fill out a W-9 form requesting an Employer Identification Number or a Social Security Number if you are awarded the grant.

Applicant Name: _____

Farm Business Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ **County:** _____ **State:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Phone and/or Cell Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Website/Facebook/other social media address: _____

Physical Location of Proposed Project (if different than above): _____

1. Do you have a N.C. Department of Revenue E-595EA Tax Exemption number? YES NO

2. If applicable, what is your Farm Service Agency number? _____

3. Do you file a Schedule F or equivalent Schedule C to the IRS? YES NO

If so, which years did you file? _____

4. What percentage of your household net income is generated from farm products produced on your farm? _____ %

5. Briefly describe your participation/ leadership in grower associations, commodity meetings or other agricultural events. If possible, name the last three activities (or affiliations) in which you participated, including dates.

For example, *2014 ASAP Business of Farming Conference February 22, 2014, Organic Growers School Spring Conference March 9-10th, 2013, Member North Carolina Tomato Growers Association, etc.*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

6. Farming History

(Feel free to add or delete rows in the table depending on the number of ventures at your farm.)

Farm Venture: Products and/or Services <i>Include # of acres and/or livestock</i>	Description of Markets or No. of Customers*	Dates of Business

**If you have not sold agriculture products thus far, please state the year you expect to do so. Feel free to elaborate in the space provided for question #7.*

7. Elaborate on the farming history listed above, along with any other relevant professional and educational experience. How significant of an impact does your farm make to you, your family and your community, including food supply, quality of life and income? Which years, if any, have you farmed full-time? (375 words maximum)

8. Please answer the following questions about your tobacco growing history. If you owned an allotment but did not farm the crop, please do not include those years or acres.

Are you presently growing tobacco? YES NO

Have you ever grown tobacco? YES NO

If yes, which years (for example, 1968 to 1997)? _____

Approximately how many acres of tobacco did you farm? _____

Did your family grow tobacco on the same land that you are farming now? YES NO

Section II. THE PROJECT AND PROPOSAL

1. Please provide a description of your proposed farm project. How will the project fit into your existing farming operation? How will you handle the additional workload? Include any research into production methods that you will be introducing to your operation. (750 words maximum)

2. What are the anticipated outcomes of your project? (500 words maximum)

3. How do you plan to market or sell your farm business, product and/or experience? (250 words maximum)

4. How will this project enhance or increase your capability to continue farming and increase the long term economic viability of your farm? (250 words maximum)

5. Explain how your project could provide demonstration of exemplary practices to your county's agriculture community, including transitioning tobacco farmers. Provide context for your project, i.e. how unique is your operation in your county? (250 words maximum)

6. Please provide a timeline for your project. Indicate the project activities you will accomplish.

<i>Month</i>	<i>2015 Project Activities</i>
January	
February	Attend WNC AgOptions orientation.
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	
November	Final grant reports due.

Expected Income for Year One (2015)

<i>Product/Market</i>	<i>Estimated Income</i>
TOTAL	\$

Expected Income for Year Two (2016)

<i>Product/Market</i>	<i>Estimated Income</i>
TOTAL	\$

Section III. COOPERATORS

Who is your local Cooperative Extension Agent that will be working with you on this project?

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Other Cooperators: Please list any other cooperators who have agreed to help you with your project. They may include purchasers, other farmers, marketing and production specialists, neighboring county or Area Extension Agents, crop consultants, non-profit organizations, businesses and other agriculture advisors. You will receive points for two quality letters of support that **clearly state the cooperator's participation in the project, i.e., production assistance, marketing assistance, etc.**

Cooperator's Name	Affiliation	Phone/Email
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Section IV. PRIOR GRANT FUNDING

1. Have you ever received funding from a past or current project supported by the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, i.e. cost-share assistance for marketing from ASAP, grants/cost-share for energy efficiency from Farm Bureau, etc.? (Do not include past WNC AgOptions/RAFI-USA grants here —previous recipients see Section V).

YES NO

If yes, list the grant(s) you received, the amount you were awarded, and the date of the award(s).

2. In the past 5 years, have you received any other grant funding from any other source?

YES NO

If yes, list the grant(s) you received, the amount you were awarded, and the date of the award(s).

Section V. FORMER WNC AGOPTIONS AND RAFI, USA (Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund) RECIPIENTS ONLY

1. Have you, your spouse or farm business partner received a WNC AgOptions grant any year between 2004 to 2014 or a grant from RAFI, USA’s Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund in the years 2009-2011?

WNC AGOPTIONS GRANT YES NO If yes, which year(s)? _____

RAFI, USA GRANT YES NO If yes, which year(s)? _____

2. Briefly describe your previous grant project(s). What did you learn from your successes and your challenges? Did you achieve your intended goals? Did your income increase as a result of the project? (400 words maximum)

FORMER WNC AgOptions and RAFI, USA recipients ONLY, please answer the following:

3. Explain your outreach plan to farmers in your community. Outreach includes field days, articles, one-on-one mentoring, Cooperative Extension workshops, etc. (250 words maximum)

Section VI. SUB-GRANTEE STATE CERTIFICATION

Applicant must sign and **have notarized** ATTACHMENT A (page 14): State Certification of No Overdue Taxes/Conflict of Interest form.

Section VII. VERIFICATION

The applicant **MUST** sign the following statements.

- Applicant possesses all legal rights/permissions to use resources (including land, equipment, etc.) as indicated in this application to complete the proposed project.
- The funds granted will be used exclusively for the project as described in this request. The requirements of WNC AgOptions award recipients have been read and agreed to.
- The information provided in this application is correct and complete to the best of my ability.
- Applicants being considered for funding may be contacted for more information about their projects. Site visits and/or telephone interviews may be requested.
- The applicant understands that this application and all attachments submitted are public records.

Applicant's Signature: _____

Signed by (Please Print): _____ Date: _____

OPTIONAL INFORMATION—DOES NOT AFFECT APPLICATION SCORE

If awarded a WNC AgOptions grant, what types of additional information would assist you with your project?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Assistance (pest management, disease identification, agency networking, soil and water, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Foods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify_____) |

Section VIII. CHECKLIST

To review, please make sure the following items are included with your application. Applications with incomplete information will not be considered for review.

Please do not use notebooks or other binders. Typed applications are preferred.

- Section I. APPLICANT INFORMATION
- Section II. THE PROJECT AND PROPOSAL
- Section III. COOPERATORS
- Section IV. PRIOR GRANT FUNDING
- Section V. FORMER WNC AGOPTIONS/RAFI GRANT RECIPIENTS ONLY
- Section VI. STATE CERTIFICATION FORM (signed and notarized)
- Section VII. VERIFICATION (signed and dated)
- Letters of Support
- Optional Information

Instructions: Grant applicants should complete this certification and conflict of interest statement.
The completed, signed and notarized form should be attached to your application.

**ATTACHMENT A:
State Grant Certification – For Sub Grantees
No Overdue Taxes¹ and Conflict of Interest**

_____ ***[Insert Date of Certification]***

**To: NC TOBACCO TRUST FUND COMMISSION
WNC COMMUNITIES & WNC AGOPTIONS PROGRAM**

Certification:

I certify that I, _____ ***[Insert Your Name]***, do not have any overdue tax debts, as defined by North Carolina G.S. 105-243.1, at the federal, state, or local level. I further certify that I will not use funds awarded by this grant to satisfy any subsequent tax obligations.

Additionally, I _____ ***[Insert Your Name]***, certify that I do not have any personal and/or professional relationships with the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, WNC Communities, WNC AgOptions program and/or any of its' employees or governing Board, as defined by North Carolina G.S. 143C-6-23(b) (c), that have been used to in any way influence the potential of an award or an official award of funds to me. I further understand that a false statement made is in violation of North Carolina G.S. 143C-6-23 and such false statement would be a criminal offense punishable as provided by North Carolina G.S. 143C-10-1.

Sworn Statement:

I, _____ ***[Insert Your Name]*** certify that I am a resident of _____ ***[Insert Name of Town or City]*** in the State of North Carolina. I also acknowledge and understand that any misuse of State funds will be reported to the appropriate authorities for further action.

[Signature of Individual]

Sworn to and subscribed before me on the day of the date of said certification

[Signature of Notary]

My Commission Expires: _____

¹ G.S. 105-243.1 defines "Overdue tax debt. – Any part of a tax debt that remains unpaid 90 days or more after the notice of final assessment was mailed to the taxpayer. The term does not include a tax debt, however, if the taxpayer entered into an installment agreement for the tax debt under G.S. 105-237 within 90 days after the notice of final assessment was mailed and has not failed to make any payments due under the installment agreement."