

Ashe County CDBG-CV Grant 20-V-3509 Closeout Hearing November 6, 2023

The purpose of this public hearing is to give the opportunity for citizen input concerning the closeout of the Ashe County's CDBG-Coronavirus project #20-V-3509 the Ashe County Direct Utility Assistance Project. The County was awarded \$900,000 in Community Development Block Grant-Coronavirus Funds (CDBG-CV) in December 2020 to provide assistance to low- and moderate-income residents within Ashe County affected by COVID-19.

The County initially directed the funding to assist eligible households with utility payments including water, sewer, electricity, and gas. Eligible households, those with income under 80% of the county median household income (as determined by HUD) that were affected in some way by COVID-19 and were having problems paying their utility bills. The program could provide up to 6-months of assistance to each household.

Approximately halfway through the project the County found not as many requests were coming in for assistance as was anticipated in the application. A reason for the overestimation in applicants may be due to the fact that at the same time the Ashe County CDBG-CV program received release of their funding, there were several other programs already in place to also assist with utility payments.

In October 2021, the County asked for and was granted permission to use the CDBG-CV funding to assist with Rental and Mortgage Payments as well as help with internet service. The county received a few new applicants and helped some of the utility applicants with rent/mortgage payments.

A total of 63 households, which included 202 individuals, were assisted through this program. On average, there was \$775.84 spent per household on utility assistance and \$3,977.01 on rental/mortgage assistance.

Ashe County DSS was responsible for all of the day to day administration of the project including application intake and processing. High County COG was responsible for preparing the grant application, CDBG compliance, preparing reimbursements requests to the State and reporting.

Ashe County received \$900,00, spending a total of \$159,590.61 during the project including:

- **\$79,142.08** for Public Services Activities (average of **\$1,256.22** per household (or **\$391.79** per individual).
- **\$80,448.53**, or **8.9%** of the total grant award, was spent on planning and administration.

A little over 17% of the total funding was expended before the program ended. Unfortunately for the program (but fortunately for residents), the applications for assistance decreased over time as the pandemic waned; other agencies received Federal and State funding to provide the same services; and many households used their maximum 6-months assistance and could not apply again.

Unexpended grant funds in the amount of **\$740,409.39** will be deobligated (or returned to the NC Department of Commerce) to be used for other CDBG funded programs.

This public hearing for reporting the project accomplishments is a requirement of the official closeout procedure. The final closeout documents are expected to be submitted to NC Dept of Commerce before December 15, 2023.