

County of Ashe

150 Government Circle, Suite 2500

Jefferson, North Carolina 28640

County Manager

Adam Stumb

Phone: 336-846-5501

August 23, 2021

Valerie Moore
CDBG Section Chief
NC Department of Commerce
4346 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4346

Re: Ashe County Direct Utility Assistance Project CDBG-CV #20-V-3509
Program Service Adjustment

Dear Ms. Moore:

Ashe County would like to make adjustments to the services to be provided in the Ashe County Direct Utility Assistance Project CDBG-CV #20-V-3509. When the original application was submitted, citizens were in crisis regarding utility payments. In September 2020, there were over 2,000 past due utility accounts, including water, sewer, electricity, and natural gas. It was estimated that the majority of these delinquencies were from LMI individuals affected by COVID-19, and the County hoped to aid up to 1,000 households.

Between September 2020 and June 2021, when the CDBG-CV funds were released, other resources were used to assist most of those with past-due utility bills. Since the CDBG-CV funds have been released, the County has only received 12 applications for assistance, with only four of these being eligible for CDBG-CV funds. At this point, the County does not see that it will be plausible to expend its entire \$900,000 award within the grant period with the restraints of the original application.

Without moving funds from the Public Services line item, the County would like to add the following activities to its CDBG-CV grant to better assist LMI residents affected by COVID-19:

1. Rental and Mortgage Assistance to help prevent evictions and/or foreclosures
2. Assistance with payments to stay connected to the internet – especially homes with students and people with underlying conditions
3. Assistance to connect households to existing internet
4. Food Distribution – Ashe Services for the Aging provides home-delivered meals to those quarantined and/or with underlying conditions that keep them at home. Additional funding would expand the program so they could offer their services to more households in need.
5. Food Bank/Pantry Services – the Ashe County Food Pantry and Ashe Outreach would like to provide the following special programs to assist approximately 750 LMI households in the County with a budget of about \$70,000:
 - a. Thanksgiving meal boxes with a turkey and the trimmings (about \$30 per box) to feed approximately 750 families (Ashe County Food Pantry)

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- b. Generations Ashe Mobile Pantry – weekly food backpacks are delivered to 100 seniors enrolled in the meals-on-wheels program. The Ashe Food Pantry would like to do a special delivery of non-food necessities (toiletries, first aid kits, flashlights, disinfecting wipes, etc.).
- c. The Ashe Food Pantry provides, through Operation Backpack, backpacks to 40-50 students each week with frozen meat, fresh vegetables, and fresh milk and eggs. The program covers Mountain View Elementary, Westwood Elementary, and the Ashe County Middle School. Ashe Outreach provides the same type of service to Blue Ridge Elementary, serving 50 students each week. The total amount requested to supplement both programs is \$20,000.
- d. The Ashe Food Pantry's WCC Prowler Pantry provides food for students in need. About 175 students receive food like individual pasta (heat and eat), trail mix, breakfast bars, individual cereals, and other foods to supplement their at-home meals. The Pantry would like to spend about \$10,000 to purchase better, healthier items for the students.

Ashe County feels that these activities will be necessary to better distribute the CDBG-CV funds to eligible citizens in the County that need assistance during this time of crisis. The County was fortunate to have been able to help those with utility delinquencies using other programs between the CDBG-CV application submission and the release of funds. Now, the requests for help have shifted to things like rent/mortgage, internet, and food assistance. Ashe County hopes that the Department of Commerce will agree with the proposed activities and approve the above additions to the program.

If you need further information concerning the proposed program adjustment, please feel free to contact Michelle Ball at the High Country Council of Governments at (828)-265-5434, extension 115. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Adam Stumb,
County Manager