

Introduction

Hello, my name is Eric Rehmann and I am the Vice president of the Jackson County Farmers Market. We, the Jackson County Farmers Market, would like to thank you for previous year's grants and the opportunity to speak to you today about our upcoming grant with a requested value of \$10,000.

Mission

The Jackson County Farmers Market's mission is to provide a safe, pleasant and educational venue for residents and visitors to access locally grown and produced food products, handicrafts and artwork that showcase our region's unique culture and history, to foster economic opportunity for our vendors and to collaborate with other public and private organizations to promote greater understanding of food and health issues through information and resources.

History

The Jackson County Farmers Market was founded by Karen and Johnny White along with Christy Bredenkamp, NCSU Extension Agent, after Karen White, a WCU nutritionist, recognized the need for a local farmers market and served as its first Market Manager for seven years.

For the first five years, the market remained small, with no more than 10 booths. There were no vendor fees, just a voluntary contribution basket. By 2004, the market became fully vendor-led, and in 2007 its first official managers developed formal guidelines and applications.

Under later leadership, the market expanded to more than 30 members, launched a winter crafts market, established a Board of Directors, incorporated in 2012, and began accepting SNAP/EBT in 2013. Today, the Jackson County Farmers Market continues to serve as a vibrant Saturday gathering space at Bridge Park in downtown Sylva, supporting local farmers, artisans, and the surrounding community.

We still have 2 vendors from the original market. Mr. Neil Dawson and Ms. Cathy Calabrese. Our in-season vendor list hovers around 25 vendors but grows some weeks to 30+.

Tourism & Business Growth

The Jackson County Farmers Market is a spot often visited by tourists who are trying to explore local culture, crafts, and produce. These tourists often make a morning out of it exploring downtown, grabbing a coffee, having lunch and visiting our many great downtown businesses and retail shops. Our newest sponsorship brochure provides a map of all things Jackson County. Promoting hikes, waterfalls, greenway spaces and of course local businesses for visitors to discover while in the area.

We put on a few events each year, Tomato Day, Salsa Showdown are now staples and last year we did a 25-year anniversary Harvest dinner. This years Salsa Showdown will be the 3rd annual, and I believe to be the fan favorite. Events like this support our market and the community by bringing people downtown who will most likely visit other businesses while in the area.

The JCFM is a great starting spot for business growth and development. Just to name a few, Little Cove Bread, Snake Song, Breadheads Tiki Shak, Jam Glass and Jarr Farms are all brick-and-mortar businesses in Sylva that had a start at the Jackson County Farmers Market.

The Numbers & Spending

Last year, 2025, the vendors of the market accumulated a total sales number of \$175,000 dollars. According to The American Farm Trust and The Independent Business Alliance, money spent in an agricultural space such as a farmers' market is passed/circulated around the community up to 7 times!! If that \$175k circulated in our county just 5 times, that would be a total of \$875,000. The tax for the county on that circulated money totals \$19,687.50. That tax revenue for the county almost doubles the grant we request each year.

Last year the grant was used for many operating expenses, from Marketing for our events, insurance, professional services, everyday materials, entertainment(music) and a storage unit. That grant was not used for our manager's salary. Vendor fees and events pay the managers salary. Which allows us to keep our vendor fees low. Last year our total spend was roughly \$24,000, this grant is 42% of that spend.

Last year, 2025, we provided \$1,735 in Snap Double ups. With a total EBT spend of \$3,470.

I foresee the same avenue of spending by the market for the upcoming grant cycle. We, as a market, are trying to continue to grow and provide space for farmers, entrepreneurs and the community to gather.

Closing

In closing, I would like to thank you again for the previous year's grants we received and the consideration for the upcoming grant cycle. We believe the Jackson County Farmers Market is stronger than ever, which will help us continue to grow and provide for this great county we all love and hold dear.

- **Economic Drivers for Small Farms:** Markets are crucial for small, new, and beginning farmers to sell directly to consumers, bypassing middlemen.
- **Community & Local Food Access:** They provide access to fresh, local produce and are considered cornerstones of community, often offering educational events.
- **Food Security & Equity:** Many markets accept SNAP/EBT and utilize "[Double Bucks](#)" programs to make fresh food more accessible to low-income residents.
- **Resilience and Growth:** Despite challenges, the number of year-round and winter markets is increasing, reflecting a high demand for locally grown products.
- **Support for Local Economy:** Purchasing at these markets supports local, often family-owned, businesses directly



Jackson County Farmer's Market Letter of Support

February 28, 2026

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to offer my enthusiastic support for the Jackson County Farmer's Market (JCFM). As a downtown Sylva business owner, there are few things in this town that benefit my business more than the Jackson County Farmer's Market. Not only does the JCFM draw people to downtown on a regular basis to the benefit of all our businesses, but it also functions as a major resource for my business. A large portion of my vendors are also JCFM vendors, and a large portion of my customers also support the Market – and it perfectly illustrates the kind of community networking and relationships for which our small mountain town is renowned.

The JCFM has weathered many seasons, literally and figuratively, in support of our local farmers, crafters, and other entrepreneurs, and they continue to support the community in a variety of ways: other businesses are now supporting mid-week pop-ups from market vendors, the market hosts booths not only for local growers but also area non-profits to expand their reach, and they provide performing opportunities for local musicians in order to create a more welcoming atmosphere.

As a small mountain town and a tourist destination, it has become an expectation for there to be a Farmer's market, but JCFM goes above and beyond, constantly seeking to better the Saturday morning experience, the entire downtown area, and the sustainability and strength of our county's farmers and crafters.

Sincerely,

Julie Fox Jones

Julie Fox Jones

Owner, Wildkitchen Supply

567 W. Main Street

Sylva, NC 28779

Dear Commissioners,

We wanted to write and show our support for the Jackson County Farmers Market, not only for the business they bring to Sylva or the access to locally grown and handcrafted products but because of the opportunities they provide for growers and makers to earn a living. We own and operate Snake Song in downtown Sylva, a floral and Appalachian retail shop. Years ago we had the privilege of selling our farm grown florals at the Market, connecting with the community and finding a niche that propelled us to open our own brick and mortar shop which is in its fifth year. Snake Song would not exist as a business today without that opportunity. There's no greater way to keep our money circulating through town than the direct connection between consumer and vendor. I would love to see this market grow and will continue to support my neighbors as they support me.

Best,

Megan, Bryan and Jacque

Snake Song Crew

"We love the Jackson County Farmers Market. Many of our customers on Saturdays are noticed carrying their items they bought at the market earlier in the day.

Thank you,

Shane Bennett

Breadheads' Tiki Shak

561-385-994