

Open Grants Program Stage 2 Proposals						
#	Board Abs.	Organization	Project Title	Programs Cmte Recommendation	Comments Special Conditions	Summary
1		Community Land Trust of Western North Carolina	Catawba Hills Workforce Housing Infrastructure	Defer		- Expansion of permanently affordable homeownership via community land trust in Old Fort - Advances Phase One construction for working families in a rural, hurricane-impacted community - Funding requested for road construction enabling site access and initial homebuilding
2	LL	Eagle/Market Streets Development Corporation	Catawba Vale Innovation Market	Defer		- Funds requested for redevelopment of former manufacturing facility into multi-tenant innovation hub. - Business incubation and market access to grow local enterprises and skilled trades employment. - Funding requested for construction-related costs to renovate multi-use innovation facility.
3		Mitchell, County of	Mitchell County Agricultural Center	\$360,000.00	Funding for the livestock and greenhouse components only.	- Conversion of vacant school into multi-purpose agricultural center to expand farm operations. - Outdoor livestock and horticulture demonstration spaces for hands-on training and agribusiness growth. - Funding for construction and equipment including open-sided barn, instructional greenhouse, outdoor infrastructure.
4	LL, JSQ	Robbinsville, Town of	Tallulah Creek Water Treatment Plant	\$500,000.00		- Reactivation of Tallulah Creek plant to increase capacity for industrial growth and community needs - Modernization of obsolete treatment systems to restore reliable operations and enhance system redundancy - Funds requested for rehabilitation and upgrades to the Tallulah Creek Water Treatment Plant

Open Grants Program Stage 1 Proposals					
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5		Cape Fear Community College Foundation, Inc.	Heavy Equipment Workforce Development	Yes	Cape Fear Community College Foundation seeks funding to expand Cape Fear Community College's existing Heavy Equipment Operator training program in response to regional demand for skilled heavy equipment operators. Through this expansion, the College will increase program capacity and strengthen hands-on instruction by training students on industry-aligned equipment. The project is expected to prepare students for high-wage infrastructure and construction careers while sustaining the region's only regularly operating heavy equipment training pipeline. Golden LEAF funds would be used for personnel, equipment, instructional technology and training.
6		Carteret Community College Foundation, Inc.	Energizing Workforce Development Through HVAC and Electrical Education	Yes	Carteret Community College Foundation, Inc. seeks funding to support the construction of a new Workforce Center. The project, which is in response to the rising local demand for skilled trades, aims to expand the capacity of Carteret Community College's HVAC and electrical education programs. Golden LEAF funds would be used for equipment and related installation.
7		Grace-Mar Services Inc	First in Flight: First in Building the Workforce of the Future	Yes	Grace-Mar Services. Inc. seeks funding to provide AI-enabled customer service and cybersecurity training in Robeson, Halifax, Columbus, Scotland, and Northampton counties. The applicant selected these counties based on their rural and persistent-poverty designations, limited employment opportunities, available broadband infrastructure, and limited access to comparable short-term training. Training, which would be offered to SNAP Employment and Training participants would be delivered through in-person and live online cohorts within each participant's county and would lead to either the National Retail Federation customer-service certification or the ISC2 Certified in Cybersecurity credential. Grace-Mar expects to enroll 100 participants, award credentials to 85, and place 68 into remote employment. The applicant highlights its historical placement relationships with Optum, Concentrix, and TTEC as potential hiring sources. Golden LEAF funds would be used for personnel, travel and transportation, instructional technology (hardware/software), equipment, supplies, and furniture.

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8		Haywood Christian Ministry, Inc.	Growing Local Markets: Strengthening WNC Farm-to-Market Infrastructure	Yes	Haywood Christian Ministry, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization in Haywood County, seeks funding to strengthen Western North Carolina's farm-to-market infrastructure through the new Smokey Mountain Harvest Hub program. HCM would expand refrigerated delivery, offer season-extension and greenhouse capacity to farmers, distribute compost, and provide direct support for small farms. The project addresses barriers that limit small-farm production and access to institutional buyers such as limited cold-chain logistics, short growing seasons, and high input costs by increasing production consistency, wholesale readiness, and retention of economic activity in rural WNC communities. Golden LEAF funds would be used for equipment, construction and renovation, supplies, and participant support.
9		Robeson Community College	Dental Hygiene Program	Yes (Healthcare Leverage opportunity)	Robeson Community College seeks funding to establish a Dental Hygiene program that will be housed within its new 27,000-square-foot Healthcare Education Building. The proposed program is expected to enroll 20 students annually beginning in Fall 2028. The college's existing Dental Assisting program will also utilize the new facility and equipment, allowing the program to double its capacity from 10 to 20 students. Golden LEAF funds would be used for instructional equipment for the dental laboratory.
10		Town of Louisburg	Louisburg Bioeconomy Pipeline	Yes (Stage 2 application may come from the school system or community college.)	The Town of Louisburg seeks funding to launch a bioeconomy workforce pipeline in Louisburg (Franklin County). The initiative is expected to expand local access to BioWork Process Technician training offered by Vance-Granville Community College and to establish a dual-enrollment pathway at Louisburg Magnet High School. The project addresses barriers—including lack of tuition assistance and logistical supports—that have kept local residents from life-sciences careers. The town will coordinate recruitment and supports for both adults and students. Golden LEAF funds would be used for personnel, participant support (tuition assistance and barrier removal), equipment and supplies for instruction, and instructional materials.

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11		Buladean Community Center	Buladean Shared-Use Food Enterprise Expansion	No	Buladean Community Center seeks funding to expand its shared-use commercial kitchen into a stronger rural food-enterprise and agricultural resource for Mitchell County. The Center's shared-use commercial kitchen opened on August 13, 2026, and provides commissary and food-production space for food trucks, caterers, bakers, farmers, food producers and other rural entrepreneurs. The project enables more food producers and other entrepreneurs to scale value-added production and access new market opportunities. Golden LEAF funds would be used for personnel, equipment and technology, including additional refrigeration, food-production and storage equipment, and scheduling/user-management tools.
12		Catawba Riverkeeper	Catawba Riverkeeper Environmental Fellowship Program	No	Catawba Riverkeeper, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) in Gaston County, seeks funding to establish a three-year Environmental Leadership Fellowship. The program addresses workforce gaps and financial barriers to environmental careers in tobacco-dependent, economically distressed, and rural North Carolina counties by providing paid, work-based learning that builds a pipeline of skilled professionals with strong ties to rural communities and long-term stewardship of natural resources. Catawba Riverkeepers will hire and train two full-time paid fellows annually in hands-on water quality monitoring, habitat restoration, environmental education, and nonprofit operations. Golden LEAF funds would be used for personnel, participant support, professional development, and evaluation.
13		Croatan Institute	Free Union Farm Agricultural Enterprise and Workforce Initiative	No	The Croatan Institute is the fiscal sponsor of the Rural Beacon Initiative (RBI). This request seeks funding to support Free Union Farm in Martin County to transform it into productive agricultural infrastructure that expands enterprise, training, and income-generating opportunities for rural residents and landowners as RBI's flagship initiative. The project addresses underused rural assets and limited agricultural infrastructure by establishing a native plant nursery, expanding regenerative crop production, and providing hands-on training to strengthen beginning and existing farmers and prepare residents for agricultural employment and entrepreneurship. Golden LEAF funds would be used for equipment, supplies, training, and professional services.

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14		Freedom House Recovery Center	Transportation Expansion to Improve Access to Residential MH/SUD Treatment and Workforce Stability	No	Freedom House Recovery Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Orange County, seeks funding to expand transportation services to improve access to residential mental health and substance use disorder treatment and workforce supports for adults across Orange, Person, Granville, Chatham, and Alamance counties. The project addresses lack of reliable transportation and support systems which impedes attendance at treatment, medical appointments, workforce training, employment interviews, and court obligations, thereby supporting treatment retention, recovery, and long term economic stability. Golden LEAF funds would be used for vehicles and related maintenance and driver safety training.
15		The Glitter Sisters Inc	Collective Courage Student Pathway	No	The Glitter Sisters Inc., a nonprofit organization in Buncombe County, seeks funding to launch a secondary-school pathway to address gaps in workforce preparedness and career-readiness. The pathway would extend a cooperative economics curriculum into an industry-aligned credential track for students in Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools and provide a Foundation-tier certification that combines cooperative economics with career training. The training would be delivered through partnerships with local cultural and community organizations. Golden LEAF funds would be used for curriculum development, instructional materials, professional development, and operating costs.
16		Her Story the Gathering Inc	P.A.T.H.S. Workforce Initiative: Pathways to Employment & Economic Mobility	No	Her Story the Gathering, Inc. seeks funding to support a workforce development initiative in Forsyth County to address employment barriers in economically distressed communities by strengthening job readiness, improving digital skills, and connecting participants with employers and community resources to advance economic mobility. The project will provide career assessments, résumé and interview preparation, digital literacy, workplace-readiness training, and individualized career navigation for adults facing barriers to sustainable employment. Golden LEAF funds would be used for program delivery, technology, participant support, and employment-navigation services.

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17		Murphy Healthy Connections	Community Microgreens	No	Murphy Healthy Connections, a nonprofit serving Cherokee County, seeks funding to establish a controlled-environment agricultural production facility and a mobile fresh-food enterprise to produce year-round microgreens and serve locally grown meals. The project addresses limited year round access to fresh, nutrient-dense produce in rural Cherokee County by increasing local food production, offering discounted healthy meals to residents in need, and creating new employment and small-business opportunities. Golden LEAF funds would be used for construction, equipment (including a food truck), and personnel.
18	JH	North Carolina Dental Society Foundation	Robeson County Dental Workforce Development Program	No	North Carolina Dental Society Foundation seeks funding to launch a dental workforce development initiative in partnership with Robeson Community College. The initiative would support Dental Assisting and Dental Hygiene students through career exploration, applicant readiness, mentorship, job shadowing, apprenticeships, and other student support activities. The project is intended to address barriers to program completion, strengthen the local dental workforce, and improve access to dental care. Golden LEAF funds would be used for personnel, participant support and professional development, and supplies and materials.
19		Our Future Youth Center	Our Future Youth Career Pathways Program	No	Our Future Youth Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in Pitt County, seeks funding to launch a career pathways program to address barriers to youth employment. The program will prepare teens from low-income, rural, and economically distressed communities for employment by developing job-readiness skills, facilitating employer connections and work-based learning placements, and removing practical obstacles such as lack of interview clothing and transportation. Golden LEAF funds would be used for personnel, materials, supplies, and participant support.
20		Outreach Mission Inc	OMI Pathways to Purpose & Stability Development Program	No	Outreach Mission, Inc. seeks funding to implement a workforce development program at its 76 bed emergency shelter in Lee County. The project addresses barriers faced by individuals experiencing homelessness by providing employment readiness, financial literacy, career planning, and individualized case management tied to industry-recognized training through Central Carolina Community College. Golden LEAF funds would be used for personnel, participant support, tuition assistance, instructional materials, and professional services.

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21		Touch of Healing Hands Foundation	Southeastern North Carolina Adult Health Workforce Pipeline	No	Touch of Healing Hands Foundation seeks funding to launch a workforce preparedness initiative to respond to documented workforce shortages and barriers to stable employment in Robeson County and neighboring rural communities. The initiative will recruit, connect, and prepare candidates for high-demand healthcare and direct-care support careers. Participants will have expanded access to approved training, industry-recognized credentials, and employer pathways. Golden LEAF funds would be used for personnel, equipment, participant support, and professional services to expand training capacity and employer engagement.
22		Trail of Faith Farms	Covered arena to support agribusiness	No	Trail of Faith Farms, a 501(c)(3) in Jones County, seeks funding to construct a covered arena on its property to support equine training and broader agribusiness programming. The current programs offered by Trail of Faith Farms are therapeutic riding sessions, horse training, and wild horse gentling and training. The covered arena will allow students to obtain PATH International equine certifications on-site instead of traveling several hours to other facilities, while also supporting equine services, farm business and cattle management instruction, and specialized therapeutic programs for mental, emotional, and physical health. Golden LEAF funds would be used for construction, equipment, and professional services.
23		The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Simulation Funding for Nursing Education	No	The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing seeks funding for a new simulation lab slated to open in fall 2027. Projected enrollment is expected to reach approximately 760 students by the 2029-2030 academic year, up from approximately 723 students in the 2026-2027 academic year. This increased enrollment is placing additional pressure on the school's existing clinical training resources. UNC-CH expects the expanded simulation capacity to prepare more nurses and nurse practitioners for high-demand careers and help address healthcare workforce shortages in economically distressed and rural North Carolina communities. The school reports that approximately 95% of its students are from North Carolina, including 31% from Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties, and estimates that approximately 110 graduates annually practice in these communities. Golden LEAF funds would be used for simulation lab equipment.

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24		UNC-G Excellence Foundation	Clinical Readiness Simulation Program: Strengthening North Carolina's Rural Nursing Workforce	No	The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) School of Nursing seeks funding to expand its simulation-based Clinical Readiness Program. Approximately 600 prelicensure BSN and entry-level MSN students are expected to use the expanded simulation resources annually to practice assessment, clinical judgment, communication, and team-based responses to high-risk conditions before entering clinical placements. UNCG expects the additional equipment to increase simulation capacity, support its substantially expanded nursing enrollment, and prepare graduates to address healthcare workforce needs in economically distressed and rural communities. The proposed project will ensure that simulation capacity does not become a limiting factor in educating the larger nursing workforce. Golden LEAF funds would be used for simulation lab equipment.
25		Wingate University TSoE	Anson County STEM Workforce Pipeline: Securing Rural Instructional Capacity through Wingate University	No	Wingate University seeks funding to launch a two-year workforce pipeline to address chronic shortages of qualified STEM educators in Tier 1 rural communities. The University's Thayer School of Education will recruit and engage local high school students in hands-on STEM labs and support them in their transition into Wingate's education program. Wingate would provide scholarship assistance and would also enforce a 4-year post-graduation commitment to teach STEM in Anson County or high-need NC public schools. Golden LEAF funds would be used for equipment, technology, instructional materials, travel, and personnel.

Scholarships					
#	Board Abs.	Organization	Project Title	Programs Cmte Recommendations	Comments Special Conditions
26		North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority	Golden LEAF Colleges and Universities Scholarship (2027 - 2028)	Award a programmatic contract of \$2,888,773	1.The term of the agreement is 16 months, commencing on the Approval Date unless NCSEAA proposes a later Start Date that is accepted by Golden LEAF. Golden LEAF may extend the term of the agreement. All project-related expenses must be incurred during the term of the agreement. The provisions of this agreement that by their nature extend beyond the term of the agreement will survive the end of the term of the agreement. 2.Funds are to be used to support 215 new scholarships and 538 renewal scholarships of \$3,500/year, 20 half-year renewal scholarships of \$1,750 each, and \$218,273 for operational costs, unless otherwise agreed by the Foundation. No Golden LEAF funds may be used for overhead costs. 3.Scholarship recipients must demonstrate financial need and be from a rural and/or economically distressed or tobacco dependent county. Golden LEAF will designate qualifying counties and inform NCSEAA of them. 4.NCSEAA will gather and provide Golden LEAF contact information regarding scholarship applicants and recipients on request, including mailing addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers, and updated contact information that NCSEAA may receive. NCSEAA will also cooperate with Golden LEAF to develop a process, including gathering necessary student consents and data, that will allow, to the extent practical, Golden LEAF or an evaluator retained by Golden LEAF to evaluate the outcomes of the program, including student graduation, employment, and location of post-graduation residence. 5.Provided NCSEAA is otherwise in substantial compliance with its obligations under this agreement, the Foundation will release funds for scholarships in advance of each academic semester but may retain up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) of funds until NCSEAA completes its obligations under this agreement, including submission of a final report regarding the project.

Programs Committee Recommendations (September 30th- October 1st, 2026)

#	Board Abs.	Organization	Project Title	Programs Cmte Recommendations	Comments Special Conditions
27		Barton College	Barton College School of Health Sciences- Phase 1	Y	
28		East Carolina University	ECU Brody School of Medicine Center for Medical Education	Y (with conditions)	No funding for Distinction Tracks Program support or student wellness equipment; Release of funds is contingent on ECU providing reasonable evidence that State funding is not available for the expenses to be paid for with Golden LEAF funds.
29		Madison County	Upgrade and Expansion of Madison County Extension Value Added Center and Kitchen	Y	
30		Town of Mocksville	Project Shed	Y	Approve payment of clawback over five years, first payment March 31, 2027, no interest accruing
31	DF	NC IDEA	Rural Entrepreneurship Regional Constellations	Y	Authorize the President, Chair of the Programs Committee, and Chair of the Board to approve revisions to the Grantee Acknowledgment and Agreement.
32		Town of Spring Lake Stormwater Administration	Spring Lake Flash Flood Mitigation	Y	

Strategic Planning				
#	Board Abs.	Topic	Programs Cmte Recommendations	Comments Special Conditions
33		Golden LEAF Schools Update	Update only	Staff will provide an update regarding Golden LEAF Schools, including information from recent reports submitted by DPI.
34		NC Ag Leads Update	Update only	Staff will provide an update regarding NC Ag Leads.

Other Business			
#	Board Abs.	Topic	Comments Special Conditions
35		Digital Ag Innovation Hubs	Discussion regarding updated information from NCSU
36		Outcomes Information	

The Foundation's Grantee Acknowledgment and Agreement used for these awards will contain the following standard conditions on the release of grant funds in addition to any special conditions recommended above:

- a) Release of grant funds is contingent on Grantee attending a Golden LEAF grants management workshop or participating in satisfactory discussions with Golden LEAF staff to gain training in the management of Golden LEAF grants and reporting requirements.
- b) Release of funds is contingent on Grantee returning a fully executed copy of this Agreement no later than forty-five (45) days after the Award Date, unless Golden LEAF agrees to extend the deadline for its submission.
- c) Release of funds is contingent on Golden LEAF's approval of activities and outcomes that will be used to monitor and assess Grantee's implementation of the project. Unless otherwise directed by Golden LEAF, Grantee must submit proposed outcomes and activities for approval within forty-five (45) days of the Award Date.
- d) Release of funds is contingent on the Grantee submitting a project budget for approval by Golden LEAF. The project budget must be submitted for approval within forty-five (45) days of the Award Date unless Golden LEAF agrees to extend the deadline. Unless otherwise approved, the project budget must be submitted on Golden LEAF form(s).
- e) If the approved project budget includes funds from other sources that are required for project implementation, Golden LEAF grant funds will not be released until Grantee demonstrates that it has secured those funds.
- f) Golden LEAF grant funds may not be used for acquisition of interests in real property or for costs of grant administration.
- g) If the Grantee fails to comply with its obligations under this Agreement, no further grant funds will be released unless such noncompliance is resolved to the satisfaction of Golden LEAF.