



The FARM Center

2063 Sandifer Blvd.

Seneca, SC 29678

PO Box 130 Richland, SC 29675

05/23/2023

To whom it may concern:

Our planned use of the \$560,000 in funding proposed from the State of South Carolina includes:

- \$200,000 for additional covered space for our rapidly growing farmers' market, The Foothills Heritage Market. The market expansion would include a small cold storage space for fruits and vegetables in order to extend market availability for these products in the summer months. The planned expansion would require some earth moving in order to attach it to our current facility and provide safe access for both shoppers and vendor vehicles. The current market has space for approximately 20 vendors under roof. To date, we have 42 applicants for vendor spots.

- \$250,000 for an educational building that would include a small commercial kitchen to expand the market season for locally grown fruits and vegetables as well as a training facility for food safety and preservation classes. It would also meet the needs for a local food system outlet similar to the one currently set up in Eastanollee, Georgia that serves lower income families in surrounding counties (including Oconee SC). This building would also include a classroom/conference/meeting room that is ADA accessible where farmers could participate in trainings regarding GAP and other certification programs. Our current extension building where most of these trainings are held is not ADA accessible and our citizens must travel as far as Columbia for training. ADA restrooms would also be included that would serve both the educational building, the farmers market and the arena.

- \$110,000 for upgrades to our 200X400 open arena that currently serves for multiple youth events including FFA rodeos and fundraisers, 4-H shows and community riding clubs who host shows and educational programs. The arena is in need of additional sand to improve the footing for the safety of both horses and riders as well as backpens and livestock handling equipment to increase the number of events we can host for the youth of our community. We currently have to rent this equipment which costs us over and over and increases annually. Last year, rental on rodeo equipment was \$1500 per event...the same equipment this year will cost \$2300 for each planned event. Although our long term goal is to cover the arena (\$3 to \$5 Million), the addition of sand (\$15 to \$20,000 depending on hauling costs), a pneumatic roping chute (\$7,000), rodeo chutes (\$25,000) and back pens (\$25,000) will greatly increase the opportunities for us to host small, community based groups who cannot afford to rent a facility such as Garrison Arena. The balance of the funds (\$33,000 +/-) would go towards moving/reconstructing the arena in order to provide space for expansion of the market, additional lights for the arena to eliminate hazardous shadows in corners that don't currently have sufficient lighting and earth moving to set up camper hook-ups for families who are participating in multi-day youth events.

Our volunteers work tirelessly to provide events and activities for our community but raising this kind of money is extraordinarily difficult.

Your support of our 501c3 organization will be deeply appreciated.

Regards,

SJ Gibson

Chairman, The Foothills Agricultural Resource and Marketing Center