

July 28, 2022

Routt County Board of Commissioners
PO Box 773598
Steamboat Springs, CO 80477

Dear Commissioners Corrigan, Redmond, and Melton,

Enclosed please find the 2022 budget request application from Community Agriculture Alliance (CAA) requesting \$20,000 in financial support from Routt County. As our community has grown and changed over the past several years, CAA has responded with significant expansion in our programs and services. We respectfully request Routt County to consider an increased allocation in support of the increased services provided in the community and CAA's organizational alignment with the updated Routt County Master Plan.

Ongoing growth with the CAA Market program and interest in local food continues to bring opportunities for CAA and local producers. New residents and visitors are connecting with our community via local food and more ag producers are selling products via the CAA Market program increasing the economic impact. CAA has also expanded our leadership and outreach with regards to water education and regional planning projects. The ongoing drought is a critical issue for agriculture and CAA is providing additional resources and connections.

As we have worked to adapt and respond to community needs, CAA's mission to support and provide programs for agriculture in the Yampa Valley remains the same. CAA continues to be flexible and responsive to emerging needs and the opportunity to support local agriculture. We genuinely appreciate Routt County's commitment to agriculture and ask for your expanded support. We look forward to the opportunity to further discuss our application. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michele Meyer, Executive Director

Attachments:

Funding Request Narrative
2023/2022/2021 Organizational Budget
2021 FYE Financial Statements
2021 IRS Form 990



community
agriculture
alliance

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2023 Routt County Funding Request

1. Budget Year	2023
2. Requesting Entity	Community Agriculture Alliance
3. Amount Requested	\$20,000
4. Project Title / Use of Funds	General Operating Program Support

5. Description of Project or Use of Funds

Community Agriculture Alliance (CAA) respectfully requests funding for 2023 general operating support, which provides organizational support for all of CAA's programs. Since 1999, CAA has provided leadership and programs to promote and support local agriculture in Routt County. As community growth and the ongoing drought persists, CAA is being asked to take on expanded roles in support of agriculture. In addition, CAA's local food programs and water outreach work continue to grow to meet increasing demand for services.

CAA Board and staff are committed to adapting and responding to evolving needs with a consistent focus on "ensuring that agriculture thrives as the vibrant core of our Valley". CAA programs work to provide leadership and education that promote agriculture and connect the shared interests of our Valley by:

- Enhancing and promoting local agriculture (food, fiber, products, and services)
- Providing resources, advocacy, and support for local agriculture
- Fostering meaningful connections between agriculture and our community

The CAA Board of Directors updated the organizational strategic plan in February 2022 and have ongoing working groups focused on evaluating existing programs and building for the future. The following are key outcomes and performance measurements for CAA programs, listed by focus area.

Local Food and Products

- CAA developed the **CAA Market** local food program in 2014, providing leadership and connections to local food. Both interest and participation from local producers and consumers has grown significantly, with an almost 300% increase in 2020. The program is unique in that producers determine pricing, and they receive 100% of product sales. 2021 annual sales totaled over \$360,000 providing direct economic impact for local farmers and ranchers. CAA is working to identify a new location for the CAA Market to expand the program and the retail shopping experience for customers while allowing for additional product storage and distribution.
- CAA coordinated three grants in partnership with Lift Up, Routt County Council on Aging, and the Routt County WIC Program to source local vegetable shares. Totaling \$22,000 in direct payments to local farmers and ranchers.
- CAA provides connections to area restaurants, businesses, caterers, and other local organizations to encourage sourcing local ingredients. In 2022 the NW CO Rural Philanthropy Days, Steamboat Food & Wine Festival, and Chamber Women's Summit will feature local food.
- CAA was partnered with the 2021 Steamboat Springs Chamber of Commerce Leadership Steamboat project to develop **cooperative freezer storage** for local meat producers. A 40' freezer container and 10' freezer trailer were purchased and are available for local producers to utilize in local meat distribution and storage. Yampa Valley Electric Association is donating physical location for the storage unit and trailer to be stored. CAA has ownership and provides management of the freezers.

- CAA is a founding member of the **Northwest Colorado Food Coalition**, serving as Chair for the Coalition and providing leadership for the Local Food Task Force and regulatory issues in partnership with CSU Routt County Extension and Routt County staff.

Resources, Advocacy and Support for Ag

- **Ag Appreciation Week**, led by CAA is a local effort tied to National Ag Day, which provides community education and experiences to connect with and learn more about agriculture. Since 2013 CAA has used the theme “Naked and Hungry. Where would you be without agriculture?” to raise awareness about the impact of agriculture. 55 area businesses sponsorships totaled over \$32,000 in 2022.
- **Land Stewardship Course**, in partnership with CSU Routt County Extension since 2003, had a record number of 31 participants in 2021 with the majority new landowners. Over 1,800 continuing education credits have been provided to local realtors. 2022 class is being planned as a 200-level course with more in-depth content held at Legacy Ranch.
- **Water Education and Outreach** – Since 2014, CAA has provided contractual support for Yampa White Green (YWG) Basin Roundtable and Colorado Water Conservation Board to provide water education forums, workshops and outreach in Routt, Moffat, and Rio Blanco counties to increase the awareness of local, regional, state, and federal water issues. More than 4,000 people have attended meetings and events in NW Colorado. CAA provides coordination and support for regional water education and outreach with partnerships, support for local agriculture and the ability to bring diverse audiences together to work on common water related issues. CAA also provided support and coordination to share information about Division of Water Resources meetings related to the Over Appropriation Designation and Measurement Rule Making.
CAA is providing in-kind support and leadership for the Yampa Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) and working to connect agriculture with multi-purpose water planning projects. Current work is focused on identifying multi-benefit projects in the Yampa River basin. In April 2021, CAA was awarded a CO Water Plan grant as a pilot project, to hire an Ag Water Coordinator who is responsible for implementing multi-beneficial water projects in support of local ag producers.
- **CAA Micro Loan Fund** launched fall 2019, with the goal of providing direct economic support to local ag producers with low interest micro loans; *Note: all loan funds are from private donations, no CAA operating funds are used for this program. CAA Board awarded two new loans in 2022 to local agriculture producers for business expansion. 100% of loans have successfully been repaid on time and in full.
- **Weekly newspaper column** and **monthly Ag Journal**, since 2008 CAA has coordinated 12 local ag-related organizations to provide education, information, and resources in the Steamboat Pilot/Today and via the monthly e-newsletter.

Meaningful Connections

- **Cycling Events**, with both the SBT GRVL and Moots Ranch Rally Ride, CAA provides connections and education about local agriculture. 2021 included sourcing local food for events with over 3,000 riders. 2022 Moots ride included lunch, conversations about agriculture, and ranch tours at Rockin C Bar Ranch. CAA also connected with the over 300 riders at the wrap up event and donation check presentation. SBT GRVL event will be held August 2022.
- **Ranch Tour** and **Farm Tours** in 2022 includes coordination of five tours with over 120 guests sharing a hands on, learning experience at area farms and ranches.
- **Farm to Table Events** in 2022 include a new partnership with Yampa Valley Kitchen owner Hannah Hopkins hosting three dinners at the restaurant featuring elevated local food. CAA

also coordinated a dinner at Elkhead Creek Ranch featuring their local wagyu beef. Over 200 guests have attended the dinners and heard presentations from local farmers and ranchers who sourced the ingredients for the meals.

- CAA staff provide **representation for agriculture and working relationships** with a variety of community organizations. CAA staff currently serve on the following Boards: Steamboat Springs Chamber of Commerce, Yampa River Fund, Colorado Cattlemen Ag Land Trust Local Advisory Committee, Routt County Economic Development Council, Routt County Conservation District, Yampa River Legacy Committee, Yampa River Scorecard Project, Yampa Integrated Water Management Plan, and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Renewal Steering Committee.
- CAA **shared office space** at 743 Oak Street, with Friends of the Yampa, CO River Network, Tsokyi Lineage Nuns, NW CO Cultural Heritage Program and Historic Routt County. The common office space provides economic savings, shared resources, and collaboration opportunities.

6. Other Sources of Funding

CAA is a membership based, nonprofit organization with diverse revenue streams. The majority of funding traditionally comes from individual donors, area business sponsorships, general donations and special events (cycling event sponsorships, farm to table events) Water education programs are grant funded from the CO Water Conservation Board and Walton Family Foundation. The CAA Market provides program revenue from customer and producer annual membership fees and a 10% mark up to customers. Overall CAA funding distribution for 2021/22 is as follows:

General Donation/Membership/Sponsorships/ Special Events	57%
Public Funds/Grants	34%
Other: Program Revenue	9%

7. Grant Funding

CAA received grants in 2021/2122 noted below:

- General Operating Grants: Routt County, Yampa Valley Community Foundation, City of Steamboat Springs, Moniker Foundation, Craig Scheckman Family Foundation
- Water Education and Outreach Programs: Yampa-White-Green Basin Roundtable, CO Water Conservation Board, Walton Family Foundation, CO Water Plan Grant
- Local Food: Anonymous (2), Yampa Valley Electric Association

Justification

Since 1999, CAA has served Routt County with a commitment to support and promote local agriculture. The organization has developed a reputation as a leader for agriculture and willing partner in developing community-based programs. CAA has a proven capacity to address a wide range of issues including the leadership for local food, economic development, and outreach to the agriculture community. CAA has an extensive network of partnerships with both public and private sector organizations that cross perceived differences. Developing partnerships with recreation and environmental organizations or groups is rooted in the belief that as a community, we all have more in common than differences. Working to keep Routt County a vibrant rural community is our shared value.

The Routt County Master Plan update has identified agriculture as an area of focus in every category from land use to historical resources and the economy. CAA is specifically named as a partner in **14 Action Items within the Master Plan**. CAA is proud to continue to work on

behalf of agriculture in Routt County and create positive impact with the noted Action Items. The challenge remains with increasing demand for programs and services, CAA's organizational capacity needs to also increase. Funding for additional staff time to provide leadership and program implementation is necessary to meet all the noted Action Items.

The Master Plan Appendix Input shows strong support for local food production.

The CAA Market program continues to expand to meet growing consumer interest in local food and provide retail sales for local producers. The program provides a unique connecting point for community members to learn more about agriculture. As more producers are selling via the CAA Market, increased retail and storage space are needed to accommodate additional producers and products.

CAA has also greatly expanded water education and outreach programs. State and private funders have allowed CAA to hire local community members as contractors to provide outreach and project management for multi beneficial river projects. Directly connecting with ag producers and soliciting individual feedback is critical to providing inclusive representation for agriculture in water planning projects. CAA has taken a leadership role in five of the Yampa Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) recommendations and action items.

A changing climate provides challenges for the entire community, with the ongoing drought having severe impacts for local agriculture. While there is no easy solution, CAA is dedicated to providing connections, resources and support for agriculture. Another example of CAA's impact is current work with the Steamboat Springs Chamber to enhance agri-tourism opportunities and promotion as part of diverse economic development for agriculture.

CAA Board and staff completed an update to the organizational strategic plan in February 2022. As Routt County continues to grow, change, and adapt, agriculture remains at the core of the rural community providing a connection to our western heritage and bringing current economic and environmental impacts. One cannot imagine a future in Routt County without agriculture. Continuing work to promote and support local ag is vital to the entire community and CAA is committed to leading this effort.

8. Consequences of Postponement or Denial

As CAA continues to expand programs and services, financial support of the Routt County Board of Commissioners is vital to Community Agriculture Alliance operations. General operating support remains challenging to secure but is critical to supporting staff time and leadership that make program implementation possible. Denial or postponement of this request would cause CAA to re-evaluate, scale back or cancel organizations programs and reduce staffing as a consequence.

9. Alternatives to the Request

An alternative to the request would be reduced or limited services provided by CAA. Other ag organizations could be asked to expand their organizations services and programs to meet the gap in community needs but are not currently positioned to take on additional programs. While CAA partners extensively with CSU Routt County Extension on many programs, the Extension does not have the capacity nor the structure to absorb programs if CAA must reduce services.

10. Describe who will benefit from the request, how many people will benefit and why support from Routt County taxpayers is appropriate?

CAA programs, events, activities, and services are open to the entire community. Different programs target specific audiences, while others are more broad reaching. CAA has the opportunity and ability to touch every resident, and many visitors to Routt County. The CAA Market directly impacts the 55+ producers who list/sell products via the program. Over 2,500 customers shop on the

CAA Market site or in store. This program has the ability to impact everyone in Routt County with a resilient, diverse local food system.

Another program to consider when looking at beneficiaries is water education. Every person who lives, works, and visits Routt County is impacted by water. From the very basics of a clean, safe water source, the regions' watershed is vital to agriculture, recreation, industry, skiing, tourism, fishing, and environmental groups. Providing education, resources and connections relating to water is a unique and critical role for CAA.

In looking at the Routt County Master Plan update, CAA's support and advocacy for agriculture connects directly with land use and goals to preserve agricultural uses and open space from working landscapes. This also directly connects to historical and cultural resources that agriculture brings to the desired authentic western culture. Connections with recreation and tourism are another way CAA provides benefits and services to the people of Routt County. Education specific to gravel cycling on County roads and building partnerships with recreation is an important role for CAA to bridge the ag and rec communities.

We can only be successful in meeting growing current and future needs with the continued support of the community. Support from Routt County is appropriate and reinforced in the Routt County Master Plan update. Programs and direct impact from CAA not only support the Master Plan but directly align with Routt County's goals.