Click on the question-mark icons to display help windows.
The information provided will enable you to file a more complete return and reduce the chances the IRS has to contact you.

Form **990-EZ**

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

Short Form
Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax

Under section 501(c), 527, or 4947(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code (except private foundations)

▶ **Do not enter social security numbers on this form as it may be made public.**

▶ **Information about Form 990-EZ and its instructions is at *www.irs.gov/form990*.**

OMB No. 1545-1150

2016

Open to Public Inspection

A For the 2016 calendar year, or tax year beginning January 1 **, 2016, and ending** December 31 **, 20** 16

B Check if applicable:
- ☐ Address change
- ☐ Name change
- ☐ Initial return
- ☐ Final return/terminated
- ☐ Amended return
- ☐ Application pending

C Name of organization ?
Growing Rural Opportunities

Number and street (or P.O. box, if mail is not delivered to street address) ? | Room/suite
PO Box 339

City or town, state or province, country, and ZIP or foreign postal code
Columbus, NC 28722

D Employer identification number ?
47-5091675

E Telephone number
828-436-0040

F Group Exemption Number ▶ ?

G Accounting Method: ☐ Cash ☑ Accrual Other (specify) ▶

H Check ▶ ☐ if the organization is **not** required to attach Schedule B ? (Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-PF).

I Website: ▶ www.growrural.org

J Tax-exempt status (check only one) — ☑ 501(c)(3) ☐ 501(c) ( ) ◀ (insert no.) ☐ 4947(a)(1) or ☐ 527

K Form of organization: ☑ Corporation ☐ Trust ☐ Association ☐ Other

L Add lines 5b, 6c, and 7b to line 9 to determine gross receipts. If gross receipts are $200,000 or more, or if total assets (Part II, column (B) below) are $500,000 or more, file Form 990 instead of Form 990-EZ . . . . . ▶ $

Part I Revenue, Expenses, and Changes in Net Assets or Fund Balances (see the instructions for Part I) ?

Check if the organization used Schedule O to respond to any question in this Part I . . . . . ☑

Revenue	1	Contributions, gifts, grants, and similar amounts received			1	81,372
	2	Program service revenue including government fees and contracts			2	
	3	Membership dues and assessments			3	
	4	Investment income			4	
	5a	Gross amount from sale of assets other than inventory	5a			
	b	Less: cost or other basis and sales expenses	5b			
	c	Gain or (loss) from sale of assets other than inventory (Subtract line 5b from line 5a)			5c	
	6	Gaming and fundraising events				
	a	Gross income from gaming (attach Schedule G if greater than $15,000)	6a			
	b	Gross income from fundraising events (not including $ _____ of contributions from fundraising events reported on line 1) (attach Schedule G if the sum of such gross income and contributions exceeds $15,000)	6b			
	c	Less: direct expenses from gaming and fundraising events	6c			
	d	Net income or (loss) from gaming and fundraising events (add lines 6a and 6b and subtract line 6c)			6d	
	7a	Gross sales of inventory, less returns and allowances	7a			
	b	Less: cost of goods sold	7b			
	c	Gross profit or (loss) from sales of inventory (Subtract line 7b from line 7a)			7c	
	8	Other revenue (describe in Schedule O)			8	
	9	**Total revenue.** Add lines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5c, 6d, 7c, and 8 ▶			9	81,372
Expenses	10	Grants and similar amounts paid (list in Schedule O)			10	0
	11	Benefits paid to or for members			11	0
	12	Salaries, other compensation, and employee benefits ?			12	47,574
	13	Professional fees and other payments to independent contractors ?			13	0
	14	Occupancy, rent, utilities, and maintenance			14	6,845
	15	Printing, publications, postage, and shipping			15	656
	16	Other expenses (describe in Schedule O) ?			16	17,950
	17	**Total expenses.** Add lines 10 through 16 ▶			17	73,025
Net Assets	18	Excess or (deficit) for the year (Subtract line 17 from line 9)			18	8,347
	19	Net assets or fund balances at beginning of year (from line 27, column (A)) (must agree with end-of-year figure reported on prior year's return)			19	128
	20	Other changes in net assets or fund balances (explain in Schedule O)			20	
	21	Net assets or fund balances at end of year. Combine lines 18 through 20 ▶			21	8,475

Part II Balance Sheets (see the instructions for Part II)

Check if the organization used Schedule O to respond to any question in this Part II . . . . . ☐

		(A) Beginning of year		(B) End of year
22	Cash, savings, and investments	5	22	8,475
23	Land and buildings	0	23	0
24	Other assets (describe in Schedule O)	0	24	0
25	**Total assets**	5	25	8,475
26	**Total liabilities** (describe in Schedule O)	0	26	0
27	**Net assets or fund balances** (line 27 of column (B) **must** agree with line 21)	5	27	8,475

Part III Statement of Program Service Accomplishments (see the instructions for Part III)

Check if the organization used Schedule O to respond to any question in this Part III . . ☐

What is the organization's primary exempt purpose? To promote local food and support local farmers.

Describe the organization's program service accomplishments for each of its three largest program services, as measured by expenses. In a clear and concise manner, describe the services provided, the number of persons benefited, and other relevant information for each program title.

Expenses (Required for section 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations; optional for others.)

28	The Farmers' Market: Support of local farmers' markets thru operational consultation, physical support, marketing, and event management. Support 50+ farmer vendors & educating a customer base over 2,000. Launching Mobile Farmers' Market program to provide more opportunities for access to local food. (Grants $) If this amount includes foreign grants, check here ▶ ☐	28a	4,213
29	Barnraising: Providing direct support thru marketing consultation, crop selection, selling opportunities, and access to resources & networking for farms. Help over 65 farms. This program also includes Tool Share program which provides means to access equipment and resources specifically targeted at new ag ventures. (Grants $) If this amount includes foreign grants, check here ▶ ☐	29a	3,444
30	GFWPL (Grow Food Where People Live): Low income gardening and farming program designed to alleviate & relieve some of the burden of home food budget with gardening and microfarming project. Includes installation of edible landscape of fruit, berry, and etc plants throughout living areas. (Grants $) If this amount includes foreign grants, check here ▶ ☐	30a	2,056
31	Other program services (describe in Schedule O) (Grants $) If this amount includes foreign grants, check here ▶ ☐	31a	
32	**Total program service expenses** (add lines 28a through 31a) ▶	32	9,713

Part IV List of Officers, Directors, Trustees, and Key Employees (list each one even if not compensated—see the instructions for Part IV)

Check if the organization used Schedule O to respond to any question in this Part IV . . . . . ☐

(a) Name and title	(b) Average hours per week devoted to position	(c) Reportable compensation (Forms W-2/1099-MISC) (if not paid, enter -0-)	(d) Health benefits, contributions to employee benefit plans, and deferred compensation	(e) Estimated amount of other compensation
Lee Mink, Chairman	5	0	0	0
Doug Harmon, Vice Chairman	5	0	0	0
Jason Craig, Secretary Treasurer	5	0	0	0
Sarah Hodges. Board Member	5	0	0	0
Bill Barker. Board Member	5	0	0	0
Frank Lilly, Board Member	5	0	0	0
Daryl Nelms, Board Member	5	0	0	0
Patrick McLendon, Executive Director	40	40,615	4,728	0

Part V **Other Information** (Note the Schedule A and personal benefit contract statement requirements in the instructions for Part V) Check if the organization used Schedule O to respond to any question in this Part V . . ☐

			Yes	No
33	Did the organization engage in any significant activity not previously reported to the IRS? If "Yes," provide a detailed description of each activity in Schedule O	33		✔
34	Were any significant changes made to the organizing or governing documents? If "Yes," attach a conformed copy of the amended documents if they reflect a change to the organization's name. Otherwise, explain the change on Schedule O (see instructions)	34		✔
35a	Did the organization have unrelated business gross income of $1,000 or more during the year from business activities (such as those reported on lines 2, 6a, and 7a, among others)?	35a		✔
b	If "Yes," to line 35a, has the organization filed a Form 990-T for the year? *If "No," provide an explanation in Schedule O*	35b		
c	Was the organization a section 501(c)(4), 501(c)(5), or 501(c)(6) organization subject to section 6033(e) notice, reporting, and proxy tax requirements during the year? If "Yes," complete Schedule C, Part III	35c		
36	Did the organization undergo a liquidation, dissolution, termination, or significant disposition of net assets during the year? If "Yes," complete applicable parts of Schedule N	36		✔
37a	Enter amount of political expenditures, direct or indirect, as described in the instructions ▶ 37a			
b	Did the organization file **Form 1120-POL** for this year?	37b		✔
38a	Did the organization borrow from, or make any loans to, any officer, director, trustee, or key employee **or** were any such loans made in a prior year and still outstanding at the end of the tax year covered by this return?	38a		✔
b	If "Yes," complete Schedule L, Part II and enter the total amount involved 38b			
39	Section 501(c)(7) organizations. Enter:			
a	Initiation fees and capital contributions included on line 9 39a			
b	Gross receipts, included on line 9, for public use of club facilities 39b			
40a	Section 501(c)(3) organizations. Enter amount of tax imposed on the organization during the year under: section 4911 ▶ _____ ; section 4912 ▶ _____ ; section 4955 ▶ _____			
b	Section 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and 501(c)(29) organizations. Did the organization engage in any section 4958 excess benefit transaction during the year, or did it engage in an excess benefit transaction in a prior year that has not been reported on any of its prior Forms 990 or 990-EZ? If "Yes," complete Schedule L, Part I	40b		✔
c	Section 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and 501(c)(29) organizations. Enter amount of tax imposed on organization managers or disqualified persons during the year under sections 4912, 4955, and 4958 ▶ _____			
d	Section 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), and 501(c)(29) organizations. Enter amount of tax on line 40c reimbursed by the organization ▶ _____			
e	All organizations. At any time during the tax year, was the organization a party to a prohibited tax shelter transaction? If "Yes," complete Form 8886-T	40e		✔

41 List the states with which a copy of this return is filed ▶ North Carolina

42a The organization's books are in care of ▶ Patrick McLendon Telephone no. ▶ 828-436-0040

Located at ▶ 156 School Rd, Ste 207, Mill Spring, NC ZIP + 4 ▶ 28756

			Yes	No
b	At any time during the calendar year, did the organization have an interest in or a signature or other authority over a financial account in a foreign country (such as a bank account, securities account, or other financial account)? If "Yes," enter the name of the foreign country: ▶ _____ See the instructions for exceptions and filing requirements for FinCEN Form 114, Report of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts (FBAR).	42b		✔
c	At any time during the calendar year, did the organization maintain an office outside the United States? If "Yes," enter the name of the foreign country: ▶ _____	42c		✔

43 Section 4947(a)(1) nonexempt charitable trusts filing Form 990-EZ in lieu of **Form 1041**—Check here . . . . . ▶ ☐ and enter the amount of tax-exempt interest received or accrued during the tax year . . . . . ▶ 43

			Yes	No
44a	Did the organization maintain any donor advised funds during the year? If "Yes," Form 990 must be completed instead of Form 990-EZ	44a		✔
b	Did the organization operate one or more hospital facilities during the year? If "Yes," Form 990 must be completed instead of Form 990-EZ	44b		✔
c	Did the organization receive any payments for indoor tanning services during the year?	44c		✔
d	If "Yes" to line 44c, has the organization filed a Form 720 to report these payments? *If "No," provide an explanation in Schedule O*	44d		
45a	Did the organization have a controlled entity within the meaning of section 512(b)(13)?	45a		✔
b	Did the organization receive any payment from or engage in any transaction with a controlled entity within the meaning of section 512(b)(13)? If "Yes," Form 990 and Schedule R may need to be completed instead of Form 990-EZ (see instructions)	45b		✔

			Yes	No
46	Did the organization engage, directly or indirectly, in political campaign activities on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for public office? If "Yes," complete Schedule C, Part I	46		✔

Part VI **Section 501(c)(3) organizations only**

All section 501(c)(3) organizations must answer questions 47–49b and 52, and complete the tables for lines 50 and 51.

Check if the organization used Schedule O to respond to any question in this Part VI ☐

			Yes	No
47	Did the organization engage in lobbying activities or have a section 501(h) election in effect during the tax year? If "Yes," complete Schedule C, Part II	47		✔
48	Is the organization a school as described in section 170(b)(1)(A)(ii)? If "Yes," complete Schedule E	48		✔
49a	Did the organization make any transfers to an exempt non-charitable related organization?	49a		✔
b	If "Yes," was the related organization a section 527 organization?	49b		

50 Complete this table for the organization's five highest compensated employees (other than officers, directors, trustees, and key employees) who each received more than $100,000 of compensation from the organization. If there is none, enter "None."

(a) Name and title of each employee	(b) Average hours per week devoted to position	(c) Reportable compensation (Forms W-2/1099-MISC)	(d) Health benefits, contributions to employee benefit plans, and deferred compensation	(e) Estimated amount of other compensation
None				

f Total number of other employees paid over $100,000 ▶ 0

51 Complete this table for the organization's five highest compensated independent contractors who each received more than $100,000 of compensation from the organization. If there is none, enter "None."

(a) Name and business address of each independent contractor	(b) Type of service	(c) Compensation
None		

d Total number of other independent contractors each receiving over $100,000 ▶ 0

52 Did the organization complete Schedule A? **Note:** All section 501(c)(3) organizations must attach a completed Schedule A ▶ ☑ Yes ☐ No

Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have examined this return, including accompanying schedules and statements, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true, correct, and complete. Declaration of preparer (other than officer) is based on all information of which preparer has any knowledge.

Sign Here

Signature of officer | Date

Patrick McLendon, Executive Director

Type or print name and title

Paid Preparer Use Only

Print/Type preparer's name	Preparer's signature	Date	Check ☐ if self-employed	PTIN
Firm's name ▶			Firm's EIN ▶	
Firm's address ▶			Phone no.	

May the IRS discuss this return with the preparer shown above? See instructions ▶ ☐ Yes ☐ No