

Facility Equity, Access, Safety, and Usability Upgrades

*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal
Recovery Funds*

Buncombe County Government

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Application Form

Question Group

Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

Name of Project.

Facility Equity, Access, Safety, and Usability Upgrades

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$1,013,500.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

County only

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Replacement and retrofitting of core infrastructure at parks, pools and other facilities to bring them to 21st century standards:

- 3 new outdoor classrooms with free public WiFi at Buncombe County Sports, Park, Charles D. Owen Park and Lake Julian Park

- Replacement of restrooms at Lake Julian Park with single stall facilities
- Replacement of restroom/concession stand buildings at Charles D. Owen Park and North Buncombe Sports Complex
- Additional restrooms at Buncombe County Sports Park
- 8 site-built covered picnic shelter pavilions at Charles D. Owen Park (1), Buncombe County Sports Park (3) and Lake Julian Park (4)
- Replacement of 10 shade structures at five outdoor pools
- Addition of 5 shade structures at Buncombe County Sports Park
- 60 new accessible park benches distributed throughout all 21 facilities in Buncombe County Recreation Services system
- 10 new accessible rocking park benches at Buncombe County Sports Park (4), Charles D. Owen Park (2) and Lake Julian Park (4)

Project Plan*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

Once funds have been approved, an RFP will be issued to multiple vendors pursuant to Buncombe County policy with an emphasis on engaging companies with women and BIPOC owners. (Estimated cost is based on industry averages and previous.)

Installation of benches and shade structures by Buncombe County staff can take place shortly after are delivery.

WiFi access can be turned on within weeks of funding as the network already exists.

Infrastructure requiring subcontractors including outdoor classrooms, restrooms, and picnic shelters will involve a timeline of 18-24 months for completion. Exact timeline will be based on proposals.

Statement of Need*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

Parks and recreation are adaptable infrastructure that make our area resilient in the face of crises, natural disasters, and climate change while promoting equity and inclusion, encouraging health and wellness, fostering childhood and youth development, driving economic opportunity, uniting neighbors, and strengthening communities.

Years of divestment have left many amenities in Buncombe County's aging park system hobbled and dilapidated. These facilities simply do not function in the way community members deserve and need. All of the upgrades and retrofits will affect buildings and equipment that are 25-40+ years-old, far beyond the intended lifetime usage.

New restrooms, additional covered picnic shelter pavilions, and expanded natural play areas with handicap-accessible benches continue to rank as the top requests from park users behind greenways. Single stall restrooms will make parks more welcoming to parents with small children, medical caregivers to those with cognitive and mobility impairments, and members of the LGBTQAI+ community.

Over the past several years, our existing inventory of covered picnic shelters are near 100% occupancy on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays during warm weather months. Adding inventory will allow more local families with a low-cost option to celebrate milestones such as birthdays, anniversaries, family reunions, celebrations of life, and more memorable events.

Shade structures reduce temperatures by up to 25 degrees and provide protection against ultraviolet (UV) rays, the leading cause of skin cancer.

Link to COVID-19*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

When combined with the ability to deliver healthier, happier, equitable communities, parks and recreation's powerful economic impact highlights the fact that our agency's offerings are not merely a "nice-to-have" luxury government service. Instead, parks and recreation transforms our cities, towns, and county into vibrant and prosperous communities for all.

Our reality is that far more people are visiting public spaces than were originally envisioned – and that number will continue to grow as people retain the sense that outdoor gatherings and activities are safest.

While the world shut down, parks stayed open. Not only did we ask our parks to accommodate more people, we asked them to be more things for our community members. The single greatest impact on parks will be whether we pay parks back and make meaningful investment of recovery funds in our public spaces.

Parks build a healthy, active community and aid in the prevention of chronic disease, provide therapeutic recreation services for those who are mentally or physically disabled, counter social isolation by connecting people with nature and each other, and also improve the mental and emotional health of all citizens.

Additionally, parks have been identified by Buncombe County emergency operations leaders as locations that can act as emergency shelter and healthcare locations during times of crisis such as the coronavirus pandemic. In fact, Buncombe County Sports Park was the site of a long-running drive thru vaccination clinic because of the sizable Latinx and Hispanic populations living within a radius of the park.

The Department of Treasury has also clarified that American Rescue Plan funds can be used to address maintenance and upkeep issues because of the increased use parks saw during the pandemic and to improve spaces that have been disproportionately impacted.

Source: <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRPFAQ.pdf>

Population Served*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

Over the past year, it was more apparent than ever that providing safe, equitable, handicap-accessible access to parks is essential for our community's resiliency, health, and wellbeing. Our parks and the staff that manages them are vital to our community as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and bring to light the urgent need for substantive dialogue about systemic inequality with real change in response.

What does this look like in a post-pandemic world? We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. As the coronavirus pandemic shut everything down, the one avenue for maintaining peoples' physical and mental wellbeing were parks, open spaces, greenways, and trails. The increased usage seen has already resulted in increased advocacy; hopefully, it will also result in increased funding as community members expect our leaders to embrace the goal of everyone having access to a quality park within a 10-minute walk of home as a minimum standard.

Buncombe County Recreation Services provides critical access to outdoor recreation and healthy, active living amenities to all of Buncombe County's residents through efforts to lower barriers to access and insure

the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized population. In addition, several of our facilities serve as regional attractions and multipliers of tourism. We build our facilities to accommodate our citizens but also serve the area's tourism community thus helping to fuel Buncombe County's economic engine.

As the overall rate of those covered by health insurance in Buncombe County is lower than the national average, the fitness courses, trails, playspaces, sports fields, and access to wellness-focused amenities are a particular draw for senior residents and families from low-income pocket neighborhoods near the park and help neighbors connect with one another to combat isolation. Buncombe County parks had over 2.5 million visits last year.

Results*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

Many community members changed lifestyles to greater incorporate recreation and active living as daily staples within their lives as a result of COVID-19's effects. Now that the public has a renewed awareness of recreational opportunities, it is imperative that Buncombe County capitalize on this momentum to build and encourage healthy habits within those who live within the county boundaries. Buncombians are engaging in lifestyle changes that will ultimately save the County money in the coming decades and this is a chance to show leadership as a local government.

- Increase or decrease in visitation to parks
- Satisfaction scores on surveys (optional demographic information will be added to collected data on future surveys to track equity impact and community engagement)
- Increase or decrease in reservations of covered picnic shelter pavilions (optional demographic information will be added to collected data on future reservations to track equity impact and community engagement)
- Amount of usage of outdoor classrooms
- Number of visitors who access WiFi

Evaluation*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

Digital car counters at parks will measure overall visitation. Covered picnic shelter pavilion and outdoor classroom usage will be tracked through a reservation system, though it will not be inclusive of all usage as visitors often occupy these spaces when not reserved.

The number of WiFi users on Buncombe County's visitor network can already be tallied.

Buncombe County Recreation Services is currently working with UNC Asheville to better track demographics of park visitors and measure the value of various community engagement measures.

Equity Impact*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

It is not enough to build a park and expect people to come. For-profit amusement and recreation entities such as Biltmore, Navitat, and local outdoor outfitters are focused on user experience, but those are not

options for many residents from low-income households. Buncombe County's public parks (and safe connections to nearby low-income and majority minority neighbors via greenways, sidewalks, bike lanes, and natural trails) represent the promise of welcoming spaces and equal access for all. In many communities that have seen disinvestment, parks are ground zero for civic commitments to be made or broken. We demonstrate care through asking residents and delivering on those commitments.

What does this look like in a post-pandemic world? We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. It is well documented that years of neglect and disinvestment have saddled our lowest income neighborhoods more exposed to pollution, natural disasters such as flooding, and health disparities. By reducing litter and greenhouse gas emissions at these large regional parks, we seek to deliver the proven environmental, health, economic, and social impacts of greener parks and open spaces for low-income households and BIPOC park users.

Project Partners*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

Supplies and some labor will be provided by subcontractors. Whenever possible, Buncombe County staff will perform labor (see below for list of departments).

Roughly 50% of work will be performed by subcontractors.

Buncombe County departments involved in this project include General Services, Information Technology, Library, Planning, and Recreation Services.

Capacity*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

Buncombe County Recreation Services has been the trusted steward of the county's parkland for decades and continues to serve the public by providing, protecting, and preserving a unique collection of 21 outdoor and indoor recreational facilities – which we see as a core service to the people of Buncombe County. We believe our community is a better place when everyone from infants to retirees have the opportunity to be strong, healthy, and successful. Our projects and programming represent a primary goal of low-cost, equitable, inclusive wellness and therapeutic opportunities that are accessible to all residents regardless of cultural, physical, cognitive, or socioeconomic background to create a livable, healthy, and vibrant community.

Budget*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Facility_Equity_Access_Safety_and_Usability_Upgrades.xlsx

Special Considerations*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

A 2018 Penn State study examining the impact of the Great Recession found that local park and recreation agency funding plunged 21% between 2009 and 2013. No local government service — public safety, education, or transportation — suffered as much. Equitable and accessible parks, recreation, and active living spaces are essential to addressing the Buncombe 2025 focus areas of an educated and capable community, environmental and energy stewardship, resident well-being, and a vibrant economy:

- Promote community resiliency and wellness by providing better mental health, improved physical health, and increased physical activity by providing safe multigenerational spaces for popular sports, adaptive and inclusive play, greenways and hiking trails, swimming pools, and many other activities designed to promote active lifestyles.
- Critical to childhood development and foster mountain spirit, imagination and creativity, healthy habits, teamwork, social equity, emotional stability, mutual trust, and environmental responsibility.
- Drive economic opportunity by expanding the local tax base through support of the outdoor recreation economy, increased tourism, and attraction and retention of businesses.
- Build healthy, active communities that aid in the prevention of chronic disease, provide therapeutic recreation services for those who are mentally or physically disabled, counter social isolation by connecting people with nature and each other, and also improve the mental and emotional health of all citizens.
- Provide cost-effective and sustainable environmental solutions while preserving the culture, beauty, and well-being of our region.
- Improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, preserve ecological splendor, improve the quality of the air we breathe, provide vegetative buffers to development, and produce habitat for wildlife.
- Have the transformative power to connect communities, preserve culture, and change lives.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Facility_Equity_Access_Safety_and_Usability_Upgrades.xlsx

List expenses here			\$	-		
			Total	\$	1,013,500.00	