

Improving the Mental Health of Physicians and Physician Assistants

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Western Carolina Medical Society Foundation

Amy Barcomb
304 Summit Street
Asheville, NC 28803

ceo@mywcms.org
O: 828-274-2267
F: 828-274-2093

Amy Barcomb

304 Summit St
Asheville, NC 28803

amy@mywcms.org
O: 828-274-2267 x1310

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. To date, Buncombe County has awarded projects totaling \$23,093,499, leaving a balance of \$27,639,791 available to award.

Visit <http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding> for details.

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](#)

Organization Type*

Nonprofit

Nonprofit documentation

If nonprofit, attach IRS Determination Letter or other proof of nonprofit status.

tax-exempt letter 2014.pdf

Name of Project.*

Improving the Mental Health of Physicians and Physician Assistants

New/Updated Proposal*

Is this a new project proposal or an updated version of a proposal submitted during the earlier (July 2021) Recovery Funding RFP?

New project proposal

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$761,245.00

Category*

Please select one:

- Affordable Housing
- Aging/Older Adults
- Business Support/Economic Development
- Environmental/Climate
- Homelessness
- K-12 Education
- Infrastructure and/or Broadband
- Mental Health/Substance Use
- NC Pre-K Expansion
- Workforce

Mental Health/Substance Use

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

The Western Carolina Medical Society's (WCMS) Improving the Mental Health of Physicians and Physician Assistants project will enable us to better support providers in Buncombe County by increasing the educational and supportive programs, services and resources of our Healthy Healer Program (HHP) as we work to improve the mental health of physicians and physician assistants, and also to improve recruitment and retention of providers in our county.

Funding for this project will provide 180 individual coaching sessions and four group coaching sessions each year of the project. Funding from this grant will also allow the HHP to put on two events each year with speakers talking about burnout and self-care. HHP will also be able to greatly expand and add new services to address burnout, reduce stress, depression and anxiety, increase mindfulness and self-care, and improve the overall mental well-being of physicians and physician assistants who work or live in Buncombe County.

Project Plan*

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

The Healthy Healer Program (HHP) is a wellness program for physicians and physician assistants. Western Carolina Medical Society (WCMS) started the HHP in 2017 in response to the number of physicians and physician assistants who reported feeling burned out. The mission of the HHP is to promote well-being for physicians and physician assistants through advocacy, education, and supportive resources and services including workshops on self-care and wellness and free and discounted therapy and coaching.

The HHP is guided by a Steering Committee of medical and mental health providers, including a member of the WCMS Board of Directors, Dr. Jeffrey Garris, who serves as a co-chair, with Dr. Mark Jaben.

WCMS has seen firsthand the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of physicians and physician assistants as the pandemic has gone on. The Improving the Mental Health of Physicians and Physician Assistants project will greatly expand and enhance the offerings of the WCMS Healthy Healer Program (HHP). The grant project budget includes hiring a full-time person at the beginning of the grant period. This person will plan and coordinate all the events and activities of the grant project. Additional responsibilities will include securing speakers and venues, managing all the logistical details of events from conception to execution including promotion and registration, continuously researching new and additional options for supportive services, managing all evaluation including ensuring that participants are surveyed and interviewed and tracking all the data captured from program activities. Additionally this person will create content for the WCMS website and social media platforms to provide educational resources around burnout and self-care for physicians and physician assistants. WCMS hopes to become a resource regarding for wellness promotion and strategies to address burnout among our health providers, so they will continue to offer quality care to all the communities in Buncombe County.

With funding from this grant, starting in fall 2022 HHP will increase the number of individual and group coaching sessions available to physicians and physician assistants. Also beginning in fall 2022, HHP will add other supportive services and workshops like yoga, meditation, equine therapy, and guided hikes to provide a wider and more diverse selection of supportive services to reach more Buncombe County physicians and physician assistants. Starting in 2023, HHP will hold two events a year, one in the spring and one in the fall, featuring speakers on physician well-being, burnout, stress management, work-life balance or other self-care topics. All of these activities and programs will serve to better support the mental health of physicians and physician assistants living and working in Buncombe County.

Statement of Need*

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

WCMS created the Healthy Healer Program (HHP) in 2017 in response to the number of physician and physician assistants who reported feeling burned out.

The most recent all-member WCMS Survey from March 2022 highlights that our local burnout rates are higher than national average and that local resources are necessary.

- 71% of physicians surveyed by WCMS in 2022 say they are burned out sometimes, often or always. This rate is 24% higher than national average, and 3% higher than the previous survey in January 2020, before the onset of the COVID pandemic.

- 71% of survey respondents indicated that it is “important” or “extremely important” for WCMS to continue offering resources and services through the HHP.

- 68% say that if they were feeling burnout, they would be likely or very likely to seek help.

- 62% reported that they had used the HHP, and that helped decrease their symptoms or feelings of burnout.

According to the 2022 Medscape National Physician Burnout, Depression & Suicide Report, 47% of physicians report feeling burned out.

Dr. Clark Gaither, medical director for the North Carolina Physicians Health Program, reports that in 2021 “We have definitely seen an uptick in referrals for mental health issues, substance abuse disorders, burnout, and behavioral problems.”

A study from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health and Harvard Medical School, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in September 2021 found that physicians are leaving the profession at four times the rate compared to years before the pandemic.

This project aims to provide additional supportive services to physicians and physician assistants to assist them in addressing burnout and improving their mental well-being. Supporting physicians’ mental health also means addressing resident well-being by ensuring that the providers in Buncombe County are staying in their profession and able to deliver high-quality healthcare.

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.

We are now over two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, and the frontline medical providers who contribute to our healthcare safety net are experiencing disparate impacts on their mental well-being as a result of this ongoing crisis. A study from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health and Harvard Medical School, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in September 2021 found that physicians are leaving their profession at four times the rate compared to years before the pandemic.

The continuing COVID crisis places additional pressure on physicians and physician assistants and on the healthcare system in general, and research shows that such pressure brings a greater risk of psychological distress.

Supporting the mental health of physicians and physician assistants also means supporting resident well-being by ensuring that the providers in Buncombe County are staying in their profession and able to deliver high-quality healthcare. This project will support the mental health of physicians and physician assistants.

Population Served*

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

This project addresses the mental health of physicians and physician assistants in Buncombe County. According to the UNC Sheps Center for Health Services Research, in 2019 there were 1,185 physicians in Buncombe County, and 35% were female and 65% were male, 4% were from an underrepresented minority, and 12.5% were over 65 years of age. For the 306 physician assistants in Buncombe County, 59% were female and 41% male, 5% were from an underrepresented minority, and 5% were over 65 years of age.

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.

The project, Improving the Mental Health of Physicians and Physician Assistants, will address the mental health needs of physicians and physician assistants in Buncombe County. Success of this project will be measured by a decrease in physicians and physician assistants reporting feelings of burnout and reporting an increase in their overall mental well-being. This will be tracked with a survey of each participant at the beginning of their coaching or supportive service and then again at the completion of their program or service. Additionally, the WCMS Annual Survey from March 2022 will be used to determine a baseline in reports of feelings of burnout. In that survey 71% of respondents reported feeling burned out sometimes, often or always. A goal of this project is to see those numbers decrease to be lower than the pre-pandemic levels. In January 2020, 68% of respondents reported feeling burned out sometimes, often or always.

The WCMS Healthy Healer Program (HHP) will measure the success of this project by the number of physicians and physician assistants served by this grant project. Specifically, we'll track and report on the number of physician and physician assistants who take advantage of individual or group coaching sessions, the number who attend the large speaker events, and the number who participate in one of the other supportive services offered.

Additionally, we'll also measure and report on participant satisfaction with the project programs, speakers and services.

Evaluation*

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

WCMS surveys its members annually to track the number reporting that they are experiencing burnout. The Annual WCMS survey from March 2022 will serve as a baseline for burnout and the likelihood that they would seek help for burnout.

During this grant project, the Annual surveys from 2023 through 2026 will be compared to 2022 to assess if we are successfully working towards our goal of improving the mental health of physicians and physician assistants in Buncombe County.

At the beginning of each activity and event that a physician or physician assistant participates in as part of this project, we'll survey each participant, and then survey them again at the completion of that activity or event as well to compare reported levels of burnout, depression, anxiety, stress, self-care behavior, and job satisfaction as it relates to that activity, event or service.

Additionally, the HHP will interview 25 participants each year, which we estimate to be about 5% of total participants, to collect data about them and hear about program satisfaction or any observed gaps.

The HHP will track participation, attendance and satisfaction in each of the offered activities and events ongoing and make adjustments throughout the grant period based on this data. HHP will add more of the popular offerings, make adjustments or look for other options to the less popular, and add options to fill any observed gaps in the program offerings.

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?

A goal of this project is to help physicians and physician assistants be in a strong position to continue providing quality healthcare to everyone in Buncombe County in an effort to build towards a just, equitable and sustainable COVID-19 recovery.

Additionally, the root causes and disproportionate impacts of inequities in access to health and in the healthcare system as a whole will be addressed through annual workshops HHP will put on about the historical context of Black providers in Buncombe County and WNC and cultural humility. This will have an equity impact of informing physicians and physician assistant of ways to provide health care in an equitable, inclusive way, focusing on both the impact to marginalized and minoritized patients and the physicians and physician assistants who care for them.

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.

Dr. Robyn Tiger and other certified coaches:

1. Will provide 180 individual and 4 group coaching sessions per year for four years of the grant project.

An additional 2 group coaching sessions will be provided in fall 2022.

2. 22%

Dr. Sharon West

1. Will teach workshops annually on cultural humility and how to practice medicine through an equity

lens.

2. 1%

Two Speakers per year, for a total of eight

1. Will talk on such topics as burnout, mindfulness and self-care
2. 10%

Local providers of mindfulness and self-care services in Buncombe County

1. Will provide yoga classes, meditation workshops, pet therapy, equine therapy, sound therapy and similar programs.

2. 12%

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.

The mission of Western Carolina Medical Society Foundation (WCMSF) is to advocate for a healthy community, increase access to quality healthcare, fight health inequities, and promote wellness in Western North Carolina. Our values are integrity, equity, and innovation. WCMSF lives its mission and values through the programs we operate, including Project Access® which provides medical care to thousands of uninsured, low-income Buncombe County residents annually. WCMSF is always looking for additional opportunities to fulfill its mission of promoting wellness, particularly in physicians and physician assistants.

The mission of the WCMSF Healthy Healer Program is to promote well-being for residents, physicians and physician assistants through advocacy, education, and supportive resources and services including workshops on self-care and wellness and free and discounted therapy and coaching.

WCMS is led by a CEO who reports to our Board of Directors. The Healthy Healer Program is led by a steering committee made up of medical and mental health providers, including a member of the WCMS Board of Directors, Dr. Jeffrey Garris, who serves as a co-chair, with Dr. Mark Jaben. The WCMS Director of Development is the staff member responsible for overseeing the HHP. This grant project includes funds for a full-time person to execute the grant project plan who will report to the Director of Development. Our organizational chart is uploaded under the "other" section.

2021 WCMS Accomplishments Include:

- 2,602 Project Access® patients served and screened for Social Determinants of Health.
- WCMS and partners held 19 COVID vaccine clinics and vaccinated 1,346 people.
- The WCMS Interpreter Network scheduled 4,520 appointments in 13 languages.
- The Healthy Healer Program provided 138 free therapy sessions to physicians and physician assistants, thanks to a grant from the NC Healthcare Association Foundation.

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.

Recovery-Funds-budget-template MH.xlsx

Special Considerations*

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

22 Staff Structure - January.doc

COVID has impacted us all, but it has affected physicians and physician assistants particularly hard. This project primarily falls under the category of mental health/substance abuse as it will provide support for the mental health of providers. This project also addresses the categories of business support/economic development and workforce, as the Healthy Healer Program and its services work to support the recruitment and retention of physicians and physician assistants to Buncombe County.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- tax-exempt letter 2014.pdf
- Recovery-Funds-budget-template MH.xlsx
- 22 Staff Structure - January.doc

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
P. O. BOX 2508
CINCINNATI, OH 45201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: MAR 28 2014

WESTERN CAROLINA MEDICAL SOCIETY
FOUNDATION INC
C/O MIRIAM SCHWARZ
304 SUMMIT ST
ASHEVILLE, NC 28803

Employer Identification Number:
45-5586998
DLN:
17053333390022
Contact Person:
NICHOLAS R HINDS ID# 31662
Contact Telephone Number:
(877) 829-5500

Accounting Period Ending:
December 31
Public Charity Status:
170(b)(1)(A)(vi)
Form 990 Required:
Yes
Effective Date of Exemption:
November 1, 2011
Contribution Deductibility:
Yes
Addendum Applies:
No

Dear Applicant:

We are pleased to inform you that upon review of your application for tax exempt status we have determined that you are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to you are deductible under section 170 of the Code. You are also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Code. Because this letter could help resolve any questions regarding your exempt status, you should keep it in your permanent records.

Organizations exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Code are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined that you are a public charity under the Code section(s) listed in the heading of this letter.

Please see enclosed Publication 4221-PC, Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, for some helpful information about your responsibilities as an exempt organization.

WESTERN CAROLINA MEDICAL SOCIETY

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tamara Ripperda". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'T'.

Director, Exempt Organizations

Enclosure: Publication 4221-PC

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	Western Carolina Medical Society Foundation, Inc.
Project Name:	
Amount Requested:	\$706,405

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 706,405.00	Pending	to support project July 1, 2022 through December 31, 2026
List other sources here			
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List other sources here			
Total	\$ 706,405.00		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
Salaries & benefits	\$ 332,164.00		\$ 332,164.00	Operating Expense	
Contract Services	\$ 252,450.00		\$ 252,450.00	Operating Expense	direct Mental Health services
Event Expenses	\$ 115,100.00		\$ 115,100.00	Operating Expense	Speaker honorarium/travel, event venue, food, CME, survey tool for 8 events
Postage	\$ 3,000.00		\$ 3,000.00	Operating Expense	to mail postcard invites to 8 different events
Printing	\$ 4,200.00		\$ 4,200.00	Operating Expense	to print postcard invites to 8 different events
Supplies	\$ 8,800.00		\$ 8,800.00	Operating Expense	Speaker's books for each attendee and supplies in order to put on the events
Marketing	\$ 7,623.00		\$ 7,623.00	Operating Expense	graphic designer to create postcard invites, digital and print ads; running ads
Overhead	\$ 37,908.00		\$ 37,908.00	Operating Expense	
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
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Total			\$ 761,245.00		

WCMS Organizational Structure – January 2022

