

Vocational FIRST - Enhancing Vocational Readiness for Individuals with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in Western North Carolina

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

FIRST at Blue Ridge, Inc.

Mr. Mark J Merrick
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Ridgecrest, NC 28770

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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. 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.

FIRST IRS Determination Letter.pdf

Name of Project.*

Vocational FIRST - Enhancing Vocational Readiness for Individuals with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in Western North Carolina

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*

\$40,000.00

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.

Vocational FIRST is a project designed to incorporate vocational preparedness into FIRST's treatment curriculum for individuals with a history of SUD. The project is a collaborative effort between FIRST, Goodwill NWNC, AB Tech, New Bridge Industrial (NBI), and MAP of Asheville. FIRST will identify substance dependent persons in Western North Carolina, including those who have limited access to treatment resources due to COVID 19, and provide residential treatment services for these individuals at little to no cost to the person. Clients will be referred to Goodwill Career Center and AB Tech for employment preparedness classes, and be placed in apprenticeships at sustainable employment opportunities through New Bridge Industrial. Participants will receive a mentor from MAP of Asheville before completing the program and exit FIRST with full time employment and a safe place to live. The project will provide life-changing support to individuals in communities plagued by SUD due to COVID19.

Project Plan*

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

FIRST's clinical curriculum consists of an array of group and individual counseling sessions that include but are not limited to the list found in the special considerations section of this application. Please reference that section for the proposed project outline and timeline of events. The project's proposed start date is May 1, 2022, with an ongoing end date as participants are admitted to the program.

FIRST screens all clients prior to their arrival on campus. Post admission and after their initial assessment, clients establish a case specific service plan which is the blueprint for their stay at the facility. Next is Phase One and an intensive residential treatment curriculum designed to engage individuals in fundamental recovery skills. This is a stabilization phase set up to break the cycle of active addiction and help clients become grounded in the program before taking on additional responsibilities. Clients are initially referred to Goodwill and AB Tech during Phase One to begin the process of vocational habilitation.

Phase Two is an employment training and education phase for persons ready to begin vocational training initiatives. Participants work toward the development of a skill and attend GED and other continuing education classes while taking on placements at real-world employment opportunities. Clients are positioned in apprenticeships with local employers and become eligible for program leadership responsibilities such as peer leader, house driver, and program support. The mentorship program and MAP of Asheville are introduced, and clients continue at Goodwill and AB Tech with day courses such as Introduction to Manufacturing, Basic Machining, and ServSafe. These classes serve to enhance an individual's skill set making them attractive to employers at program discharge.

Phase Three is a transition phase where clients secure their job, maintain income, and build upon the experiences learned during apprenticeship. FIRST's Case Managers are now heavily involved with the community's continuum of care housing affiliations, working with the client on independent living arrangements. Sustained employment and safe housing are crucial at this time as they are essential to long term recovery and continued success. Our goal is to assist participants in transitioning to independent living when they are ready to live on their own. FIRST has several transitional houses on campus that are also an option for program graduates.

FIRST's mission is to provide opportunity, guidance, and education to those with addictions and assist them to make positive life changes in order to become responsible and productive members of society. Incorporating New Bridge Industrial, Goodwill, MAP of Asheville, and AB Tech into our existing program curriculum enhances our ability to provide long-term career options, ongoing community fellowship, and housing to program participants once they have completed residential treatment for SUD.

Statement of Need*

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

Substance use disorder and addiction constitute a major public health problem, contributing to more than 70 health conditions and to the five leading causes of death. Our failure to prevent and treat it costs society billions each year, driving up costs of government and causing untold human tragedy. The cost to society itself cannot be calculated, as well as to business and industry where impaired workers impact the safety, morale, and productivity of their places of employment.

SUD carries both direct and indirect costs to society. In addition to the direct costs of prevention, treatment, and recovery supports, there are indirect costs associated with motor vehicle accidents, premature death, co-morbid health conditions, disability, lost productivity, crime, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, and a host of other social problems. North Carolina's Managed Care Organizations report that there are more than 250,000 people aged 12 years or older who report illicit drug dependence, and more

550,000 who report alcohol dependence. Yet fewer than 10% of those with drug dependence and fewer than 5% of those with alcohol dependence received treatment from providers funded through the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Disorder Services (DMHDDSAS). This was compounded by the pandemic as resources and agencies were unable to provide services due to COVID-19.

Vocational FIRST - Enhancing Vocational Readiness for Individuals with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in Western North Carolina offers mobility options for individuals with nowhere else to go. We will provide outreach and access to treatment resources, as well as job placement assistance, guidance, and education, to persons who otherwise are not receiving services. Our goal is to ensure that those we help maintain what they have learned. This fits hand in hand with the County's goals to address substance use disorder, boost employment, end homelessness.

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.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of June 2020, 13% of Americans reported starting or increasing substance use as a way of coping with stress or emotions related to COVID-19. Overdoses have also spiked since the onset of the pandemic. A reporting system called ODMAP shows that the early months of the pandemic brought an 18% increase nationwide in overdoses compared with those same months in 2019. The trend has continued throughout 2020, according to the American Medical Association, which reported in December that more than 40 U.S. states have seen increases in opioid-related mortality along with ongoing concerns for those with substance use disorders. "There's sort of a perfect storm of factors that we know increase drug use," says William Stoops, PhD, a professor of behavioral science, psychiatry and psychology at the University of Kentucky. "People are more stressed and isolated, so they make unhealthy decisions, including drinking more and taking drugs."

FIRST remained operational throughout the pandemic utilizing social distancing, symptom screening, quarantine and isolation protocols, and other measures to reduce the risk of COVID transmission at the facility. This was not the case for other providers who were forced to suspend services. Staff and client monitoring, and creating situations where services could be provided safely, allowed for our admissions to continue in a time of greater need. This project will build upon what is already taking place at the facility and enhance our ability to connect clients with community resources as they begin to return to normalcy. The increased cases of substance use will not go away overnight and this collaboration is essential to support the indirect impacts of COVID-19 on society in terms of how it relates to substance use disorder.

Population Served*

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

FIRST is a NC Licensed Peer Led – Peer driven, 12 Step Based, Modified Therapeutic Community with an Intensive Clinical Overlay. We are a residential therapeutic community for individuals with chronic SUD and provide transitional housing, group counseling, self-help meetings, case management, job-placement assistance, and other services to individuals struggling with addiction, homelessness, unemployment and involvement with the criminal justice system. FIRST has several core program components including short-term and long-term residential treatment for men, women, pregnant women and women with children, transitional housing in conjunction with the NC Department of Public Safety, Veteran's services for homeless Veterans with a history of SUD, services for the Spanish speaking, and access to local DWI resources in both English and Spanish. This project will identify individuals in Western North Carolina fitting these criteria and establish residential stability in a clinically monitored therapeutic setting. FIRST has the capacity to house 203 clients at a time and will identify 500 individuals annually to be admitted to the program.

There is a notable system gap for low-barrier entry programs for individuals seeking treatment who are actively using or without a referral from an inpatient treatment or detox center. This was compounded by COVID-19 and its impact on program availability in the community due to the pandemic. FIRST is an option for such cases as we do not require individuals to have clean drug screens for admission and do not exclude applicants who remain in active addiction until the time of admission. We refer to local medical professionals when necessary to evaluate symptoms of withdrawal or mental instability, but we do not automatically exclude such cases from access to treatment. This project's target population are those in need of SUD treatment, including lower-income uninsured persons impacted by COVID and recent chronic substance use.

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.

This project's major milestones include providing residential stability, increased skill and/or income, and improved self determination for individuals in need of treatment for SUD. FIRST will facilitate admission for these persons into our program, refer to Goodwill and AB Tech for job preparedness, connect clients with a mentor and establish network of individuals in recovery, and guide in the transition from the program with employment and a safe place to live. As such, the following is a list of the direct impacts the project presents for individuals in need of treatment in the community:

- a. Increase the number of members in recovery receiving support in a supervised residential setting.
Performance Goal: Admit and serve 500 separate individuals annually.
- b. Promote a social support system for members in recovery who will benefit from the supportive treatment structure.
- c. Support members to begin the process of reintegration with society while still providing monitoring and support.
- d. Stimulate recovery and provide housing for members in recovery who desire to cease use and live in sobriety.
- e. Increase length of sobriety for members in recovery.
- f. Sustain improvement in overall health and psychosocial functioning.
- g. Reduction in psychiatric symptoms and risk of relapse.
- h. Reduction in public health and safety concerns.
- i. Assist members in securing employment and other vocational opportunities.
Performance Goal: 50% of program participants will exit treatment with full time employment.
- j. Assist members in securing housing upon program completion.
Performance Goal: 65% of participants will exit treatment with safe housing outcomes.
- k. Link members to appropriate recovery support – treatment, services, community-based programs by behavioral health care providers, social networks, etc.
- l. Link members to comprehensive care/medical providers as needed within 30 days of engagement.
- m. Assist members to enhance life skill training.

Evaluation*

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

Data collection for this project will be gathered by FIRST's Case Management and Admissions Staff. The information collected will include the number of admissions, program component to which each client is assigned, their length of stay, time at which they were referred to Goodwill, AB Tech, New Bridge, and MAP of

Asheville, employment and housing status upon discharge, and a brief synopsis of their participation in the program. The information will be stored in an internal database administered by Executive Staff.

FIRST will analyze the improvement in self determination by ensuring 100% of clients are engaged in our internal clinical curriculum during Phase One. Clients will have their progress reviewed every 30 days for compliance and adherence to the goals and objectives of their treatment plans. Client counselors, case managers, and program directors will meet with all clients on a regular bases.

Increased skill and/or income will be monitored by ensuring at least 50% of admissions are gainfully employed upon discharge. We will also track the number of individuals referred to Goodwill and AB Tech to continue their education.

FIRST will uphold the harm-reduction model for this project and not systematically discharge participants for instances of relapse or noncompliance. We propose at least 65% of discharges will exit the facility to independent living and/or residential stability with family, friends, or other safe housing environment. This, with employment and a positive recovery network, will greatly increase the chances for long term success minimizing relapse.

Qualitatively, 100% of clients will be introduced to local 12 step fellowships and recovery opportunities, as well as participate in job development classes, case management, and have transportation to and from employment opportunities, and legal and medical appointments. These measures are a core part of the program everyone receives despite their status at discharge and plans for aftercare.

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?

Substance use disorder shares many features with other chronic illnesses including asthma, type two diabetes, and hypertension. These are conditions of maintenance that can be controlled with healthy living and the right daily regimen. As such, SUD knows no boundaries regarding an individual's demographics, culture, religion, or personal identity. It is equally destructive for all backgrounds and upbringings. Similarly, COVID-19 knows no bounds as it impacts the resources available for persons addressing substance use. Like SUD, COVID is culturally indiscriminate and an additional barrier for quick access to treatment services in the community.

FIRST is has written policies and procedures prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. We are committed to ensuring services are available for all cultures equally. Our Executive Staff and Board of Directors uphold diversity and strive to promote inclusivity. In this respect, SUD is a cultural leveler and unifying commonality in terms of it being the primary reason clients are admitted to the program. Our motto is A helps B and A gets better. I can't but we can. This project will identify individuals of all backgrounds and provide stability, case management, vocational support, and housing for those seeking treatment in the wake of COVID-19.

FIRST's treatment plans include addressing a client's SUD diagnosis, but also the mental health, familial, legal, vocational, and other concerns affected by substance use. Only by self-work in each of these areas can an individual achieve sustainable recovery over time. The vocational and housing placements of this project will ensure clients are better prepared for unforeseen situations such as the flu, COVID, family emergency, or other illness. We will seek out the root causes behind the substance use and utilize clinically proven practices to instill recovery-oriented principles in client life.

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.

The key partners critical to this project are:

New Bridge Industrial (NBI) is a division of Mentorship Access Program of Asheville (MAP of AVL). The organization's mission is to coordinate career development resources for people in recovery. Through apprenticeship assignments and one-on-one coaching sessions, NBI assists in overcoming barriers that face persons with a history of substance use disorder.

MAP of AVL provides career guidance for individuals in state-licensed nonprofit recovery centers. MAP partners with Goodwill Industries to establish signature job readiness curriculums that include interviewing tutorials for local placements. This takes shape in the form of linking community mentors and well-established professionals to program participants while they are in treatment, and providing aid in the navigation of employment after completion and exiting the facility. Each mentorship is unique based on the client's individual needs and all offer continued support and aftercare post discharge.

Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina is a nonprofit organization that has served the community since 1926. Goodwill offers employment and training programs that help people find hope, opportunity and jobs. They are recognized as one of the most efficient charities and served more than 38,000 people in Western North Carolina the last year alone.

FIRST's MOU with AB Tech includes on-site GED services for clients in need of high school equivalency. This has extended to FIRST facilitating additional educational opportunities such as servsafe, introduction to machining, and others, which enhance client employability as they move through the program. This is key, and the collaboration amongst these partners is critical as it takes a community to maintain success when an individual finds recovery. FIRST will coordinate the movements between Goodwill, NBI, and MAP, and serve as the centerpiece for ensuring access to the services stated.

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.

FIRST at Blue Ridge is a North Carolina Licensed Peer Led – Peer driven, 12 Step Based, Modified Therapeutic Community with an Intensive Clinical Overlay. Founded in 1991, FIRST provides residential treatment for individuals with chronic substance use disorders, and transitional housing, group counseling, self-help meetings, case management, and job placement assistance to individuals struggling with addiction, homelessness, unemployment, and involvement with the criminal justice system. The program provides opportunity, guidance, and education to those with addictions and assist them to make positive life changes and become responsible and productive members of society.

FIRST's campus is comprised of a five story residential building with the capacity for eighty-five men, a sixty-five bed women's facility, and other administrative, mechanical, landscaping, and transitional housing residences. Each transitional house is self-contained and is reserved for individuals who have completed their specific program's curriculum. Our fleet of vehicles includes several fifteen passenger vans and cars for client transportation. Our campus supply department is stocked with clothing and personal hygiene items provided to clients at no additional cost. Food and utilities are included and complimentary as well as laundry and other basic needs.

FIRST's staff includes several licensed professional counselors, a certified clinical supervisor, licensed clinical addiction specialists, certified alcohol and drug counselors, peer support specialists, and graduates of the program. We work regularly with initiatives in the community and have existing procedures for identifying and admitting clients to the facility. Our agreements with Goodwill, AB Tech, New Bridge, MAP of Asheville, and the partners of this project are current, and we have the ability to launch the project on time. FIRST utilizes universally accepted accounting principles to manage federal funds.

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.pdf

Special Considerations*

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

Program Licenses and Supporting Documentation.pdf

Proposed Project Outline:

Phase I – First 30 days.

- a. Initial assessment
- b. Introduction to the FIRST culture and program expectations
- c. Introduction to the Twelve Steps.
- d. Begin the processing on building a healthy (sober/clean) foundation for living
- e. Phase I groups: Orientation to FIRST, Twelve Step Study Group, Stages of Change, Goodwill - Effective

Workplace Communications

- f. Creation of relapse prevention plan
- g. On site GED if applicable
- h. After 2 - 3 weeks in Phase I, clients will meet with Staff to start their Vocational Readiness program.
- i. Schedule and register clients at Goodwill's Career Center. Outcome from GWCC registration:
 - Pre-FIRST resume development
 - Creating a functioning email and discussing starting with a clean communication slate
 - Introduction of apprenticeship language
 - Registration into AB Tech's Career Connections system
- j. After above, clients will be scheduled into one of three AB Tech Introduction courses

II. Phase II – 30 days to Month 9

- a. Clients receive their apprenticeship assignments
- b. Clients are eligible to start taking day passes
- c. Phase II groups: Relationships in Recovery, Anger Management, Recovery Maintenance, Moral

Reconciliation Therapy

- d. Opportunities for House/Program responsibilities
- e. At day 90, LT clients will be eligible for the MAP of AVL Mentor program: Overview presentation of MAP of AVL Program and Opportunities
- f. At 6 months – Treatment plan review by Clinical
- g. Return to Goodwill to build upon their initial baseline relationship.

III. Phase III – 9 Months to completion (12 months)

- a. Complete and submit application for program completion
- b. Final treatment plan with Clinical
- c. If staying with apprenticeship, completing onboarding process with that employer
- d. Return to Goodwill
 - Finalize resume
 - Creation of references for post-FIRST use
- e. Start employment search if not staying local
- f. Aftercare and Discharge to safe housing

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- FIRST IRS Determination Letter.pdf
- Recovery Funds Budget.pdf
- Program Licenses and Supporting Documentation.pdf

Internal Revenue Service

Date: March 21, 2006

FIRST AT BLUE RIDGE INC
PO BOX 40
RIDGECREST NC 28770-0040

Department of the Treasury
P. O. Box 2508
Cincinnati, OH 45201

Person to Contact:
Ms. Edwards 31-07427
Customer Service Representative
Toll Free Telephone Number:
877-829-5500
Federal Identification Number:
58-1946948

Dear Sir or Madam:

This is in response to your request of March 21, 2006, regarding your organization's tax-exempt status.

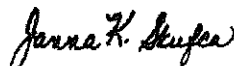
In September 1991 we issued a determination letter that recognized your organization as exempt from federal income tax. Our records indicate that your organization is currently exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Our records indicate that your organization is also classified as a public charity under sections 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Our records indicate that contributions to your organization are deductible under section 170 of the Code, and that you are qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Internal Revenue Code.

If you have any questions, please call us at the telephone number shown in the heading of this letter.

Sincerely,



Janna K. Skufca, Director, TE/GE
Customer Account Services

Total	\$	65,000.00	
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Budget Narrative

Case Manager Salary

The Case Manager provides direct care advocacy for participants in the program. This position is responsible for monitoring clinical activity, internal and external coordination with collaborative partners, and ensuring clients have what they need to meet their vocational and clinical goals. The Case Manager position will include responsibilities for data collection and collaboration with the Project Coordinator for performance measurement.

FIRST is requesting \$30,000 for Case Management. This is 68.6% of the total cost of the position.

Client Educational Expenses

FIRST estimates that the cost for client educational expenses for this project will be \$10,000. This includes registration fees for clients to attend day classes at AB Tech and Goodwill Career Connections, GED materials when applicable, and other job development expenses enhancing an individual's employability. FIRST is requesting \$7,500 for these expenses.

Fuel and Transportation Costs

FIRST has a fleet of more than fifteen vehicles which are utilized for taking clients to and from work functions, medical and legal appointments, job search and interviews, educational and recreational activities, and more. We are requesting \$2,500 to assist in keeping these vehicles on the road and safe.

Project Supplies

If awarded, FIRST will contribute \$1,320 in supplies for the project. This includes drug tests, office and clerical supplies, and participant supplies. FIRST will utilize existing program relationships and in-kind contributions to ensure the project is fully supplied.

Total Recovery Funds Request: \$40,000.00

Total Project Budget: \$65,000.00

State of North Carolina

Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Service Regulation

Effective January 1, 2022, this license is issued to

FIRST at Blue Ridge, Inc.

to operate a mental health facility known as

FIRST at Blue Ridge

*located at 32 Knox Road
Ridgecrest, NC 28770
County: Buncombe*

*This license is issued subject to the statutes of the
State of North Carolina, is not transferable and shall expire
midnight December 31, 2022*

Facility ID: 991019

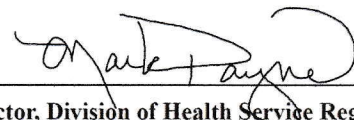
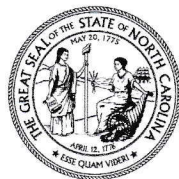
***License Number: MHL-011-264
Capacity: 85***

Program Code	Description	Program Type	Beds
27G.4300	Therapeutic Community	Residential	85

Authorized by:



Secretary, N.C. Department of Health and
Human Services



Director, Division of Health Service Regulation

State of North Carolina

Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Health Service Regulation

Effective January 1, 2022, this license is issued to

FIRST at Blue Ridge, Inc.

to operate a mental health facility known as

Women and Children FIRST

*located at 12 Tupper Road
Ridgecrest, NC 28770
County: Buncombe*

*This license is issued subject to the statutes of the
State of North Carolina, is not transferable and shall expire
midnight December 31, 2022*

Facility ID: 090450

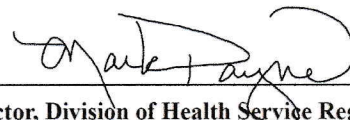
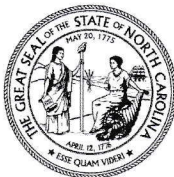
***License Number: MHL-011-339
Capacity: 65***

Program Code	Description	Program Type	Beds
27G.4300	Therapeutic Community	Residential	65

Authorized by:



Secretary, N.C. Department of Health and
Human Services



Director, Division of Health Service Regulation

Growth Strategy | Mentorship Access Program of Asheville

Our primary focus is career guidance for people in state-licensed nonprofit recovery centers. And we plan to advance our service offering in 2022 by partnering with Goodwill Industries of NWNC to establish a signature job-readiness curriculum that will include online tutorials (e.g., Résumé Writing, Interview 101, First 90 Days), one-on-one coaching sessions, and group introductions to our Second-Chance Employment Resource Page. In addition, we will look to form a collaborative relationship with Everyday Financial Sense LLC to deliver an ongoing series of interactive money management seminars.

Growth Strategy | NewBridge Industrial Employment Connections

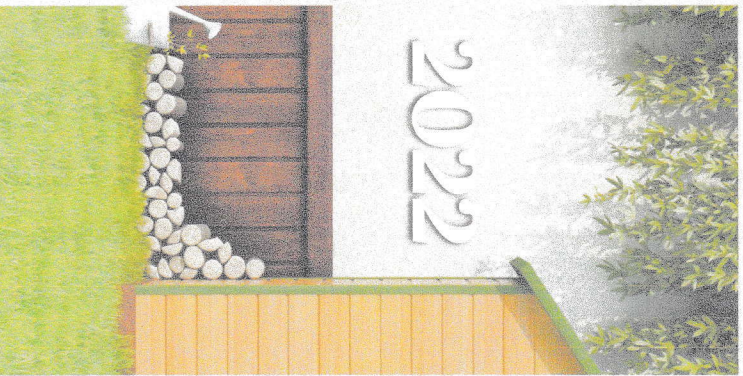
Our fundamental purpose is to facilitate production-level apprenticeships and temp-to-hire assignments for second-chance candidates referred by state-licensed nonprofit recovery centers. And we plan to advance our service offering in 2022 by pursuing the following initiatives:

Lean Six Sigma Black Belt Certification – Gaining the knowledge to design custom analytical tools that can measure an employer’s effectiveness at recruiting, onboarding, training, developing and promoting workers will enable us to share real-world best practices with local manufacturers on a continuous basis. This will not only enhance our professional reputation and economic value, but also position our company as the region’s leading advocate of industrial career opportunities for second-chance candidates. Because our core objective is to optimize post-apprenticeship retention ratios.

Skill Assessment Implementation – We will blueprint and build present-day adaptations of the evaluative exercises that brought ITS Group to the forefront of temp-to-hire staffing in 2014. The aim is not to eliminate any candidates from consideration, but rather to gauge technical aptitude. In tandem with our MAP of AVLSM Job-Readiness Curriculum, these assessments will help our recovery partners coordinate placements based on demonstrated proficiencies. Further, the data points will serve as a testament to our enduring dedication to conscientious labor force development. Which is a hallmark that many employers respect and appreciate.

- o **Assessment Examples:** Quality Inspection, Component Assembly, Machine Operation

UNC Asheville Internship (Fall Semester) – Project Name: “Review It & Outdo It.” We will post a marketing outline based on MAP of AVLSM and NBI growth strategies, and invite DMA students to critique our proposed game plan. Ultimately, the candidate we choose will be tasked with drafting an improved outline and making informed recommendations regarding social media content and business-to-business networking platforms.



Goodwill

Industries of Northwest North Carolina, Inc. 

December, 2, 2021

Joseph Martinez
First at Blue Ridge

Dear Joseph,

This has been a particularly difficult year for all of us because of the pandemic. However, we believe that important work needs to be supported by those in position to help. At Goodwill, we believe in your mission at First at Blue Ridge and want to help you succeed.

Please accept this check for \$10,000 as a one-time investment. You may use these funds in the best way you choose to further the important work of First at Blue Ridge.

Goodwill does not require or expect any media notification of this grant. We do, however, ask that you inform your Board and anyone else you deem appropriate (e.g. staff, etc.). Please ask your Board Chair to send me a letter of acknowledgement within the next 30 days.

Everyone at Goodwill wishes you the best of luck in continuing the great work at First at Blue Ridge!

Sincerely,



Art Gibel

CEO, Goodwill NWNC

Cc: Linda Wood, Board Chair, Goodwill NWNC
Curtis Bland, CFO
Sherry Carpenter, VP, WFD

2021-2022

**Memorandum of Understanding
Between
The Board of Trustees of Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech)
And
FIRST at Blue Ridge, Inc. (Partner)**

A-B Tech has a long history of partnering with community businesses and organizations to provide learning opportunities for the residents of Buncombe and Madison counties at locations throughout the service area. Regardless of the location, A-B Tech must ensure that all classes are operated according to College policy and procedure. To this end, it is understood that classes offered through A-B Tech at off site locations will adhere to the following expectations:

Instructor approval: All instructors must meet the College's requirements to teach the respective course(s). If the partnership involves utilizing a partner's employee to teach the class, A-B Tech will have access to individual's application, resume, certifications, and all other documents required for credentialing the individual to teach A-B Tech classes. A-B Tech has final approval of any personnel teaching College classes. The class shall not commence until the instructor and A-B Tech have met to review required documentation for the course to run successfully. If required, the partner will ensure that the College receives official copies of transcripts, and any additional required documentation/credentials, to document the instructors' qualifications prior to the first day of class. In all circumstances, A-B Tech will supervise all instructors teaching College courses.

Instructor Reporting: The instructor will be required to submit attendance and student assessment/course/grade information in accordance with College and State policies. If the College is reimbursing the partner for instructional time, no reimbursement will be approved until all paperwork is received and verified by College personnel.

Class Content: All content provided to the students during instructional/classroom time by the instructor will be reviewed and approved by A-B Tech prior to the beginning of class. Any additions, enhancements, or modifications to classroom content suggested by the partner, must be approved by A-B Tech prior to implementation.

Liaisons: In order to ensure the success of the partnership, A-B Tech and the partner will identify a single point of contact for all communications related to the MOU.

Student Eligibility: Students enrolled in A-B Tech classes must meet established criteria for the respective classes. When A-B Tech classes are in session, individuals not registered in the respective course may not be present in the classroom without prior approval of the College.

Student Conduct and Academics: When students are enrolled in A-B Tech courses, or when they are present at any A-B Tech campus or site, they are subject to A-B Tech's academic policies and procedures, including but not limited to A-B Tech's grade appeal policy; academic progress and academic probation; and full Student Code of Conduct, which includes policies and procedures related to academic dishonesty.

Attendance: Students must attend classes regularly as scheduled for the full period. Excessive absences, late entries, or early departures may result in removal from the course.

Program Success Measures: A-B Tech's Transitional Studies programs are evaluated by the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) according to Measureable Skills Gains (MSGs). Programs that fail to meet minimum MSG requirements may be discontinued by the College.

Primary Contacts

A-B Tech

Todd Barbee, Coordinator, Adult Basic Ed. & High School Equivalency Programs
(828) 398-7131 office, (828) 400-3361 cell, or todddbarbee@abtech.edu

Mindy Bloom, Adjunct Instructor, HSE Prep.
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FIRST

Mark Merrick, Executive Director
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Drew Amburn, Contract Coordinator
drewa@firstinc.org, office (828) 669-0011

Allen Foiles, Case Management
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Executive Affirmation of Support

We affirm that we have read and approved this Memorandum of Understanding representing a joint venture between Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College and FIRST at Blue Ridge, Inc. We are prepared to support all assurances and program commitments made in this agreement.



John D Gossett (Jan 29, 2022 08:28 EST)

Jan 29, 2022

Signature, Dr. John Gossett
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College President

Date



Jan 27, 2022

Signature, Dr. Dirk Wilmoth
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College Vice President of Business & Finance

Date



Mark Merrick (Jan 29, 2022 09:46 EST)

Jan 29, 2022

Signature, Mark Merrick
FIRST at Blue Ridge, Inc. Executive Director

Date