

Graduation Initiative

*FY 2017 Buncombe County Community
Funding*

Eblen Charities

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Application Form

Project Name*

Name of Project

Graduation Initiative

Amount Requested*

Amount Requested

\$75,000.00

Service Area*

Which Commissioner Districts are served by this program?

Access a map of Buncombe County Commissioner districts [here](#).

District 1

District 2

District 3

Which county sustainability goal aligns best with the goals of this project?*

Based on the Buncombe County Sustainability Plan, select a Category, Goal & Objective that align with the focus of the project and the specific results that will be achieved.

Access the Buncombe County Sustainability Plan [here](#).

Community > Educational Resources that Match the Needs of the Community > Increase high school graduation rate

If applicable, select a second sustainability goal that aligns with project goals.

Result 2 is optional - Select if project aligns with more than one Sustainability Category, Goal & Objective.

[Unanswered]

If applicable, select a third sustainability goal that aligns with project goals.

Result 3 is optional - Select if project aligns with more than one Sustainability Category, Goal & Objective.

Project Description

Project Description*

Description of Project

The Graduation Initiative is a unique partnership that brings together the Buncombe County School System, Buncombe County Government and the Eblen Charities Center for Social Enterprise to reach out to students in Buncombe County who may be at risk of leaving school before graduation. The major focus of the Graduation Initiative is to help remove barriers that may be preventing a student from being successful in school which may result in them dropping out. The partnership allows the Graduation Initiative to access the vast community resources available through the Eblen Charities and Center for Social Enterprise along with Buncombe County community services.

How many people will this project serve?*

State the number of individuals or households in Buncombe County that will be served by this project. Also state the number of people that will experience the desired result. For example, if dropout prevention services are being delivered to 100 students, how many will successfully graduate from high school?

The Graduation Initiative serves all of Buncombe County (Six districts and 42 schools). The project impacts every resident of Buncombe County in that lowering the dropout rates has a tremendous impact on the economic health of our community. We project than 1,200 students and their families will be served and our goal is that at least 85% of those students will continue to be enrolled in school or graduate through the outreach and support efforts of the Graduation Initiative.

Since the inception of the Graduation Initiative we have seen an 83% success rate in the four year (cohort) graduation rate. Our immediate goal is to increase this rate to 86% with the long-term goal of 90% by 2020.

Describe the people this project will serve.*

Characterize the demographics of the project's target population in terms such as age, gender, income, race, ethnicity, geographic area, etc. Include information about method of referral/recruitment of the target population.

The Graduation Initiative serves all students in that the program aims to have all students in Buncombe Schools graduate. Specifically, the Graduation Initiative works with homeless students, students with mental health issues, first generation immigrants, teenage parents, students with substance abuse issues, students in foster care, students and families in poverty, disengaged students, families in crisis, students who move frequently from district to district, and all students in danger of dropping out. Students are identified and referred through several methods. Each high school has an "at-risk" committee that meets weekly and identifies and tracks students at risk of dropping out. Parents can also refer their child if they are having difficulty keeping their child engaged in school. Students can also self-refer.

Students are identified using research-based predictive criteria (including attendance, behavior, and course completion).

What key steps will you take to achieve the results of this project?*

Describe the core elements of your implementation plan, including milestones that will take place within the funding timeframe.

Personally seeking out, visiting, and working with students and their families who may be in danger of dropping out, or if they have dropped out, to re-engage them and get them back into school. Work to develop a personalized path to graduation using hand-scheduling, credit recovery options, online courses through NC Virtual School among other strategies and monitoring their progress on a regular basis to ensure success.

Providing additional resources and assistance through the programs of the Eblen Charities ensuring that students can remain in school and not drop out due to having to help provide resources for their families. This includes such support as clothing, food, transportation vouchers to night and summer educational opportunities offered by the Graduation Initiative which allows students to make-up credits or earn new credits toward graduation. Milestones include mid-year graduation and end-of-year graduation for the students with whom we work.

Describe the evidence of success that backs this project's approach.*

What evidence of success (i.e. evidence-based research, practice model, accreditation, industry standards, and/or other framework) are you using as a basis for your project design?

Simply stated, the evidence of the success of the Graduation Initiative lies in the reduction of students dropping out. Research supports the Graduation Initiative's approach to increasing the graduation rate through developing an intense collaborative focus on removing the barriers that are preventing students from being successful. Research also strongly supports the importance of that anchor relationship that encourages and supports students in their day to day struggle to remain in school. Our program follows both of these evidence-based research premises.

Describe your data collection, tracking, and reporting procedures.*

Explain your methods for documenting project, service and client information. Include a description of any software or other tools utilized.

Data collection and tracking of our program efforts and student progress is essential to our ongoing success. Each Graduation Initiative Specialists tracks the at-risk students at the schools assigned to them using Google docs that are protected due to confidential content. We also utilized the NC student information management system - PowerSchool to access up-to-date grades and attendance records.

Explain your technological resources and capacity.*

Explain your current technological strengths and barriers and how this impacts your ability to track data and report outcomes. Who is responsible for adaptation and use of technology within your organization?

The use of technology is critical to collecting data and tracking our progress as an intervention program as well as tracking the up-to-date status of the students we serve. The use of computers and the sharing of documents allows us to work collaboratively to maintain a current picture of individual students and their status toward graduation. We are also able to track improved grades and improved attendance on a timely basis using technology.

The Graduation Initiative is a small team of four individuals but we are supported by the Technology Department of Buncombe County Schools in regards to our technology needs. Currently we each have a refurbished laptop and a smart phone.

Data is also collected and reviewed through the Power School software system (the state's student information management system) to which we have access.

Organizational Profile

How does the proposed project support your mission and strategic plan?*

State your mission and the date of your most recent strategic plan, and explain how the proposed project helps advance your organizational goals.

Our mission is to have every student in Buncombe County remain in school and successfully graduate. The Graduation Initiative has that one single mission and is the vehicle for accomplishing that goal. Our most recent strategic plan was developed during the 2014-15 school year. Our goal is to have a 90% graduation rate by 2020 and we have achieved steady progress toward reaching that goal.

Lowering the dropout rates has a tremendous impact on the economic health of our community. Recent research shows that each additional graduate confers a net benefit to taxpayers of about \$275,000 over the graduate's lifetime due to increased tax revenue, fewer health care costs, reduced criminal justice costs, and less need for public assistance. Using this figure, the decrease in dropout numbers from 2006 to 2015 in comparison to the average high in the six years prior to the start of the Graduation Initiative represents a potential savings of \$284,350,000 for Buncombe County

What expertise/accomplishments do you have that are relevant to the proposed project?*

List your organization's strengths as well as accomplishments from the past 3 years that position the organization to be successful with the proposed project.

Since the inception of the Graduation Initiative in 2006-2007 we have made great strides in reducing the number of students who dropout each year. In 2006-2007 we had 452 dropouts compared to 189 dropouts in the 2014-2015 school year. This is a 58% reduction in the number of dropouts and the first time in recorded history that our dropout number has been below 200 students.

Our Mini-mester and Twilight program served 379 students during the 2014-15. Most of these students completed courses needed to keep them on track for graduation. We graduated 38 students at the end of Mini-mester this past summer.

Our overall four year cohort rate for 2014-15 was 85.1%, an increase of 1.9% over the previous year. We had three of six traditional high schools with rates above 90% - AC Reynolds, North Buncombe and TC Roberson, while Owen HS was extremely close at 89.8%. Erwin had a 82.6% rate, up 6.2% from the previous year. Enka HS was at 80.2%

Describe partners that are critical to the success of your organization.*

List any external partners, intermediaries or advisors important to your success, and describe their role and evidence of their commitment. Describe successful collaborations with these people or groups.

Eblen Charities and Eblen Center for Social Enterprise - partnership, support and assistance in securing the necessary items or financial support to remove barriers experienced by our students preventing their

attendance and success in school. Items such as food, clothing, school supplies, and services such as dental and vision screening and much more are secured through our partnership with Eblen.

Asheville Merchants Association - Last year we secured a grant from the AMF for \$50,000 over two years to help support our program expenses such as salaries for our Twilight and Mini-mester programs.

Buncombe County Commission -The salaries of the Graduation Initiative staff (4) are paid by Buncombe County Schools and the state of North Carolina. However, our program expenses typically are funded totally by grant support. This fact makes the contribution of the County Commissioners extremely vital to our continued focused efforts and the success of reaching our 90% graduation rate goal.

Financial Information

Nonprofit financial assurance requirements:

Financial statements, prepared using a recognizable basis of accounting (i.e., modified accrual) and IRS Form 990s must be submitted to Buncombe County annually.

- Organizations with annual revenues of \$300,000 or greater must submit financial statements audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.
- Those with revenues between \$100,000 and \$300,000 must submit financial statements reviewed in accordance with SSARS 19.
- Those with revenues of less than \$100,000 must submit non-disclosure financial statements compiled in accordance with SSARS 19.

All financial statements must be reported on by a certified public accountant and include a full balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statement.

These requirements are considered minimum requirements. Organizations may submit a higher level of assurance than is required.

IRS Form 990 - Upload Here

Click Choose File to upload a copy of the 990 form you most recently completed.

Eblen 990 - 2014 copy.pdf

If your organization does not have a 990, briefly state the reason.

Include a statement of intent to comply with nonprofit financial assurance requirements as listed above.

Financial Statements - Upload here

Click Choose File to upload a copy of the most recently completed financial statements (audit, compilation or review).

Draft Financial Statements 2013 copy 2.pdf

If your organization does not have financial statements, briefly state the reason.

Include a statement of intent to comply with nonprofit financial assurance requirements as listed above.

2014 financial statement is being finalized by Burleson and Earley and will be finished in the next two weeks. We will provide it as soon as we receive it.

Complete Budget Worksheet - Upload Here*

Download the budget form [Here](#).

Complete the budget form for this project/program and the overall agency. Save it to your computer, then upload it by clicking Choose File.

Draft of Community Development Funding Budget 2016.xlsx

Budget Narrative*

Describe all differences between current year and proposed year. List all pending funding sources with expected date of notification. Please detail any other information that may help clarify the budget.

As the work of the Graduation Initiative increases \$25,000 Asheville Merchants Assoc (Confirmed) and Sisters of Mercy \$75,000 (notification - late February). Eblen Charities is also increasing their assistance through new programs such as the Arby's Eblen Joyfull Holidays at Home and all other assistance outreaches.

What (if any) portion of requested funds will be used to support capital expenses?*

Capital projects are defined as those used to acquire or upgrade physical assets such as property, buildings, or equipment. Please detail.

N/A

Employee Wages

Please provide information about the wage breakdowns of your employees. Living wage for Buncombe County has been identified as \$11.00 per hour for employees with employer-provided health insurance and \$12.50 per hour for employees without.

Employees with employer-provided health insurance*

List the number of employees in your organization with employer-provided health insurance in each wage category. For salaried employees, use hourly wage equivalents.

\$7.25 - \$10.99 per hour

\$11.00 - \$14.99 per hour

\$15.00 - \$19.99 per hour

\$20.00 - \$24.99 per hour

\$25.00 - \$29.99 per hour

\$30.00 - \$34.99 per hour

\$35.00 - \$39.99 per hour

\$40.00+ per hour

Eblen (Total Employees)	Buncombe County Schools (Graduation Initiative Employees)
\$35-\$39.99 0	2
\$30-\$34.99 1	1
\$25 - \$29,99 1	1
\$15-\$19,99 2	

Employees without employer-provided health insurance*

List the number of employees in your organization without employer-provided health insurance in each wage category. For salaried employees, use hourly wage equivalents.

\$7.25 - \$12.49 per hour

\$12.50 - \$14.99 per hour

\$15.00 - \$19.99 per hour

\$20.00 - \$24.99 per hour

\$25.00 - \$29.99 per hour

\$30.00 - \$34.99 per hour

\$35.00 - \$39.99 per hour

\$40.00+ per hour

Eblen	
\$7.25-\$12.49	2
\$12.20 - \$14.99	1
\$15.00 - \$19,99	3

These employees all have coverage through other providers and have not opted for our coverage.