

**Buncombe County FY2019 Strategic Partnership Grants  
Application Summary Sheet**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Admission and School Group Admission Offset</b>
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Friends of the WNC Nature Center</b>

<b>Amount Requested</b>	\$35,000	<b>Strategic Priority or Sustainability Goal</b>	Environment/Community
<b>New or Renewal Request</b>	Renewal	<b>Area Served</b>	Districts 1, 2 and 3

<b>Organization Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The mission of The WNC Nature Center is to connect people with the animals and plants of the Southern Appalachian Mountain region by inspiring appreciation, nurturing understanding, and advancing conservation. The Friends provides financial support and create awareness for the Center. The Center has been providing education and conservation of the region’s resources and wildlife since 1973, and has seen increasing attendance each year for the past seven years (from 87,607 in 2010 to 144,906 in 2017).</li> </ul>
<b>Key Steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grants by Buncombe County provided funds to offer the admission discount to non-City residents of the County in FY16 and 17. The request is to continue this program in FY2018, and begin offering reduced field trip rates to Buncombe County School groups.</li> <li>Through this grant, every Buncombe County resident attending the WNC Nature Center during the fiscal year 2018-2019 will receive the lower admission rate of \$7.95 (Adult) \$6.95 (Seniors 65 and older) or \$5.95 (Youth 3-15). Additionally, every Buncombe County School group attending a program at the Center in that academic year will receive the lower group admission rate of \$4.</li> </ul>
<b>People Served</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In FY 2017, total attendance of County residents was 9,019, and in the first 2 quarters of FY 2018, Buncombe County attendance has been 4,608. Total visitors to the Nature Center in calendar year 2017 was 144,906, which was the seventh year in a row of record-breaking admissions. In Calendar year 2017, 2,546 Buncombe County students attended programs at the Center, and we expect more (3,500) due to lowered prices and increased marketing.</li> <li>The demographics of attendees to the Nature Center are reflective of those of the County. All ages, from children to the elderly purchase tickets. From January through December, 2017, 48% of ticket purchasers were adults, 38% were children, 4% were seniors, and 9% were school groups. Zip codes are also tracked. Racial, ethnic, and income indicators are not tracked by the Center.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The biggest indicator of success is growth in daily attendance by Buncombe County residents, and by an increase in Buncombe County school groups.</li> <li>Part of this project has been and will continue to be an increase in local advertising. Will add increased direct “marketing” to school throughout Buncombe County to let teachers know about the reduced group rates.</li> </ul>

<b>Budget</b>			
<b>Amount Funded FY2018</b>	\$30,000	<b>Increase Request</b>	\$5,000
<b>Administrative Budget</b>	45% (from 2016 IRS Form 990)	<b>Total Organization Budget</b>	\$621,594 (projected FY2019)
<b>Other Funding Sources:</b> Grants, Individual donations, Membership Program, Corporate Sponsorship, Penny Press, Private foundations, Gift Shop & Retail Operations, Fundraising Programs, Investment & Sales Tax Refund, Special Events			

<b>Strengths</b>
Strong implementation plan
Diverse/Balanced funding sources
Well-linked, creative, and/or non-traditional partnerships

# Admission and School Group Admission Offset

---

## *FY2019 Strategic Partnership Grants*

### ***Friend of the Nature Center***

---

Ms. Kelly Christianson  
PO Box 19151  
Asheville, NC 28802

friends@wildwnc.org  
O: 828-298-0182  
M: 828-337-5036

### ***Ms. Kelly Christianson***

---

PO Box 19151  
Asheville, NC 28802

friends@wildwnc.org  
O: 828-298-0182  
M: 828-337-5036

# Application Form

---

## Question Group

---

### Project Name\*

Name of Project.

Admission and School Group Admission Offset

### Amount Requested\*

\$35,000.00

## PROJECT NARRATIVE

### Area Served\*

Which areas of the County will be served by this project? Which Commissioner District(s) will be served?

A Buncombe County Commissioner district map is available at [THIS LINK](#).

The Admission Offset, and proposed Buncombe County School group admission offset are available to every County, non-city resident. All Commissioner districts are served.

### Organization Description\*

Tell us about your organization. What is your mission? Highlight two or three key facts and accomplishments that best define your organization.

The Mission of The WNC Nature Center is to connect people with the animals and plants of the Southern Appalachian Mountain region by inspiring appreciation, nurturing understanding, and advancing conservation. The Friends provides financial support and create awareness for the Center. The Center has been providing education and conservation of the region's resources and wildlife since 1973, and has seen increasing attendance each year for the past seven years (from 87,607 in 2010 to 144,906 in 2017).

In 2017 construction began on the new Front Entrance Complex (scheduled opening: April, 2018) and the new Red Panda habitat (scheduled opening: November, 2018). Additionally, in 2017 the Friends began an Outreach Education program, taking free and low-cost classes and education ambassador animals to schools, retirement centers, and other organizations who cannot afford to come to the Center. This program has already served over 7,000 people in nine counties, including Buncombe.

### Strategic Priority\*

Which of the following priorities best reflects the primary goal of your project?

Buncombe County Commissioners are dedicated to strengthening the quality of life for everyone by setting new fiscally, socially and environmentally responsible goals that will guide decisions and improve our community for future generations. The Board has committed to strategic priorities as a guide to shape partnerships and investments of resources to insure a healthy, safe, well-educated, thriving and sustainable community.

Details about the Strategic Priorities are available at [THIS LINK](#).

Other Sustainability Goal

## Strategic Priority - Other Sustainability Goal

If you selected "Other Sustainability Goal" from the list of Strategic Priorities, please list it here.

Details about the Sustainability Goals are available at [THIS LINK](#).

**Environemtn & Community:** The WNC Nature Center provides education about and conservation of our natural resources. Kids who learn about the natural world and its resources grow into adults who protect it.

## Shared Vision\*

What critical community problem or challenge are you hoping to improve through this project?

We are addressing two needs with this proposal: the need to continue offering an admission offset to Buncombe County residents; and to provide Buncombe County Schools with reduced rates for field trips. The past two years of offering the admission offset has proven that County residents gratefully take advantage of the opportunity.

The addition of reduced school group rates for County schools addresses a need expressed by teachers repeatedly. Approximately 20% of school groups come to the Center from County schools, and they come from nearly every public elementary school within the County. Teachers from County schools, especially Title 1 schools, often express frustration that the fees are higher for County schools than for City schools. Many times these costs are passed directly on to the students.

Because the Center is a City facility, this discount is offered to City schools. We are seeking assistance to offer this same reduction in fees to County schools.

## Key Steps\*

How will the project work? What are specific activities and milestones that your project entails?

The WNC Nature Center (WNCNC) provides education on the natural resources and wildlife of the region to guests and groups of all ages. As an Asheville City property, The WNCNC provides reduced admission (a discount of \$3.00) to City residents, and a discount of \$1 to everyone from Asheville City Schools attending an education program/field trip at the Center. Grants by Buncombe County provided funds to offer the admission discount to non-City residents of the County in FY16 and 17. We would like to continue this program in FY2018, and begin offering reduced field trip rates to Buncombe County School groups.

Through this grant, every Buncombe County resident attending the WNC Nature Center during the fiscal year 2018-2019 will receive the lower admission rate of \$7.95 (Adult) \$6.95 (Seniors 65 and older) or \$5.95 (Youth 3-15). Additionally, every Buncombe County School group attending a program at the Center in that academic year will receive the lower group admission rate of \$4.

## People Served\*

Who are the members of our community this project will serve? How many people will be served? Include demographics, including age, area median income, race, neighborhood and/or school.

The anticipated number of Buncombe County residents attending the Nature Center over that period is 10,000. This number is based on current attendance and projected growth. In FY 2017, total attendance of County residents was 9,019, and in the first 2 quarters of FY 2018, Buncombe County attendance has been 4,608. Total visitors to the Nature Center in calendar year 2017 was 144,906, which was the seventh year in a row of record-breaking admissions. In Calendar year 2017, 2,546 Buncombe County students attended programs at the Center, and we expect more (3,500) due to lowered prices and increased marketing.

The demographics of attendees to the Nature Center are reflective of those of the County. All ages, from children to the elderly purchase tickets. From January through December, 2017, 48% of ticket purchasers were adults, 38% were children, 4% were seniors, and 9% were school groups. Zip codes are also tracked. Racial, ethnic, and income indicators are not tracked by the Center.

## Partners\*

Which other organizations are you working with to reach your goals? What other local organizations provide similar services or serve similar beneficiaries, and how do you work together?

In addition to good relationships with Buncombe County and the City of Asheville, The Friends of the WNC Nature Center are proud to count many local businesses as our partners, including Biltmore, White Oak Financial, Brick Street Equity, Festiva, Carolina Alliance Bank, Highland Brewing, Asheville Savings, iHeartMedia, and many more. Other partners include the Tourism Development Authority who provided funding for the Front Entrance Complex, and DigLocal/FoodConnection, with whom we work to deliver unused food from the Center to those in need in Buncombe County. The Nature Center also maintains close working partnerships with Buncombe County Schools, and currently provides discounted admission for parents and siblings accompanying a school group. The WNC Nature Center has a long history of connection to this region and will continue to forge strong partnerships throughout the County.

## Personnel\*

Who is responsible for the project? Briefly describe project leaders and the role each will play in the project. How do these leaders reflect the population or community that you serve?

The grant funds requested will be overseen by the Friends of the WNC Nature Center, and Executive Director Kelly Shanafelt, who has served in this role since 2015. The Friends is overseen by a Board of Directors from throughout the WNC region. The education programs and guest registration (gathering zip codes to ensure all Buncombe County attendees are counted) are overseen by Keith Mastin, Education Curator, and Mischa Trinks, Guest Services Coordinator at the WNC Nature Center.

## Success\*

How will you measure results? What will success look like? How will you document the impact of your project? Include whether there is a model that serves as basis for project design.

The WNC Nature Center uses RecTrac as its Point of Sale system. Each ticket purchaser is asked to provide their zipcode, which is entered into the system. RecTrac also keeps record of the type of ticket sold (child,

adult, senior, school group, etc.) to capture age demographics. The data is immediate and accurate for reporting purposes.

The biggest indicator of success is growth in daily attendance by Buncombe County residents, and by an increase in Buncombe County school groups. Part of this project has been and will continue to be an increase in local advertising. We will add increased direct “marketing” to school throughout Buncombe County to let teachers know about the reduced group rates. The Education Department at the Center began rolling out an extensive marketing plan in January promoting a brand-new slate of school class offerings to area schools.

## **Funding\***

What is your plan for finding the balance of the project budget? What is your funding timeline and what are your other sources of support?

If the requested funds are granted and we are fortunate enough to have enough Buncombe County guests and school groups attend that expend that amount prior to the end of the fiscal year, the Friends of the WNC Nature Center will extend any additional fund needed to continue the offset through June 30th, 2019.

## **Sustainability\***

How will this project be maintained? Please describe funding sources and how you plan to sustain the project in future years.

The Friends of the WNC Nature Center have been raising awareness and funds for the Center for over four decades and are well-positioned to continue this success with the support of constituents throughout the County who are committed to the long-term strength of this organization. Specialized lower ticket prices are a strong incentive to attract attendees. From Disney World offering Florida residents discounted rates to many regional zoos and aquariums offering reduced rates for in-county residents, the practice is industry standard and proven to be a substantial benefit to residents.

The Friends and the Center are proud of the partnership with Buncombe County that has allowed us to offer reduced rates to County residents, and look forward to offering the same incentive to County Schools in the coming year. We will continue to be a good partner to the County.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

### **Project Budget\***

Download the budget form at [THIS LINK](#).

Complete the budget form for this project and the overall organization.

Save it to your computer, then upload it.

FriendsofWNCNatureCenterFY2019Budget.xlsx

## Financial Statements\*

Upload a copy of the most recently completed financial statements.

All financial statements must be audited, reviewed or compiled by a certified public accountant and include a full balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statement.

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

Friends of WNC Nature Center - 6.30.16 Financial Statements - ISSUED.pdf

## IRS Form 990\*

Upload a copy of the 990 nonprofit tax reporting form that you most recently completed.

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

Friends of the WNC Nature Center, Inc. 6.30.16 990 Tax Return.pdf

## Board of Directors List\*

Upload a current list of your organization's Board of Directors.

If your organization does not have a board of directors, briefly state the reason.

FY2018 Board EXTERNAL USE.pdf

## Authorized Signatory

By typing in below the name of the authorized signatory and date of submittal, you acknowledge that your governing body has authorized this application, that it is true and current to your knowledge. As a condition of any grant awarded, this organization will provide all information in the manner described in the contract to be executed between the organization and Buncombe County or its designee, including program and financial reporting.

Name & Date