

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

<b>Project</b>	<b>The Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN)</b>
<b>Organization</b>	<b>The Environmental Quality Institute</b>

<b>Amount Requested</b>	\$8,000	<b>Strategic Priority or Sustainability Goal</b>	Environment
<b>New or Renewal Request</b>	Renewal	<b>Area Served</b>	District 1, 2 and 3

<b>Organization Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental Quality Institute (EQI) is a research institute whose mission is to provide objective scientific analyses to help communities, government agencies, and nonprofits understand complex environmental issues. Core programs are the Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN) and the Stream Monitoring Information Exchange (SMIE). VWIN is a 28-year-old program in which trained volunteers collect samples monthly at 160 fixed stream and lake locations in WNC. Samples are analyzed at EQI's state-certified laboratory for eight chemical parameters. EQI's main role as the facilitator of these projects is to provide objective data using standardized protocols throughout the region.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EQI staff will continue to recruit, train, and coordinate VWIN volunteers, and deliver monthly samples to the lab.</li> <li>At least 27 community volunteers will contribute approximately 300 hours in-kind sampling and traveling to the project. Lab staff will test each sample for ammonia-nitrogen, nitrite-nitrate-nitrogen, orthophosphate, total suspended solids, turbidity, conductivity, pH, and alkalinity.</li> <li>Analytical results will be assured by the completion of all NC Wastewater Certification requirements. Proper methodology, equipment, and quality control procedures will ensure accurate and defensible data.</li> </ul>
<b>People Served</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VWIN focuses on natural resource protection rather than a particular population.</li> <li>Volunteers are trained by EQI staff to collect monthly samples and receive information about local water quality. Community collaboration and citizen education are critical to the long-term success of local stream monitoring.</li> <li>All county residents benefit from efforts to conserve and protect water resources.</li> <li>Children and adults of all incomes, gender, and ethnicity participate in recreational opportunities that healthy waterways provide.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EQI will share chemical data with partners each month after testing is completed, with values exceeding set limits highlighted.</li> <li>EQI will also produce an annual report summarizing the county data within a regional framework.</li> <li>These reports include stream scores and ratings, summary statistics, letter grades for each analytic, graphs, trends with time and stream flow, and comparisons with all WNC monitoring sites.</li> </ul>

<b>Budget</b>			
<b>Amount Funded FY2018</b>	\$6,000	<b>Increase Request</b>	\$2,000
<b>Administrative Budget</b>	0% (from 2016 IRS Form 990-EZ)	<b>Total Organization Budget</b>	\$111,000 (projected FY2019)
<b>Other Funding Sources:</b> Individual donations, Government funding, Private foundations, Annual Renewal Service Fees from regional partners			

<b>Strengths</b>
SMART Outcomes (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and, time-bound)
Well-linked, creative, and/or non-traditional partnerships
Project design is evidence based, replicating a structured model, and/or best practice

# The Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN)

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*FY2019 Strategic Partnership Grants*

## ***The Environmental Quality Institute***

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## ***Mrs. Ann Marie Traylor***

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# Application Form

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## Question Group

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### Project Name\*

Name of Project.

The Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN)

### Amount Requested\*

\$8,000.00

## 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](#).

EQI currently performs monthly chemical stream water monitoring at 46 sites in communities throughout Buncombe County. The Buncombe County Strategic Partnership funds 12 of these sites, which fall into all three Commissioner Districts. These sites include rural watersheds such as Newfound and Sandymush Creeks in the northwestern part of the county, Bent Creek in the south, Ivy River in the northeast, and the French Broad itself. We also monitor urban streams such as Town Branch, Smith Mill Creek, Reed Creek, and several other tributaries to the Swannanoa and French Broad Rivers. Five sites were discontinued due to County funding decreases last year, including Ashworth Creek, Cane Creek, Ox Creek at Reem's Creek, Ivy Creek at Buckner Branch Road, and Grassy Branch (Swannanoa River tributary). We are requesting the reinstatement of these sites in this proposal. A map of EQI's monitoring sites and water quality ratings can be found online at [maps.eqilab.org](http://maps.eqilab.org).

### Organization Description\*

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

EQI is a research institute whose mission is to provide objective scientific analyses to help communities, government agencies, and nonprofits understand complex environmental issues. Core programs are the Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN) and the Stream Monitoring Information Exchange (SMIE). VWIN is a 28-year-old program in which trained volunteers collect samples monthly at 160 fixed stream and lake locations in WNC. Samples are analyzed at EQI's state-certified laboratory for eight chemical parameters. SMIE is a 13-year-old program in which trained volunteers collect and identify invertebrates in WNC streams to detect water quality issues. EQI's main role as the facilitator of these projects is to provide objective data using standardized protocols throughout the region. Data from both projects are shared with 30 partner groups such as municipalities, county governments, community groups, and nonprofits in 12 NC counties.

## 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](#).

CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## Shared Vision\*

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

Water is critical to the economy and quality of life for people in Buncombe County. Fishing, kayaking, swimming, and boating are popular sports. If the water isn't used locally for drinking water, it is further downstream. Neighborhood streams and lakes are the focal points of many communities, whether rural or urban, wealthy or low-income. People want to take ownership and protect natural resources. Watershed managers, such as Buncombe County SWCD, put considerable effort and money into improving impaired waterways and preserving high-quality ones. EQI operates under the principle that local problems are best solved with local solutions. We are uniquely able to provide frequent and high-quality monitoring at many sites throughout the WNC region. In recent years, VWIN data have been used for several county projects, for example, to inform formal watershed plans for the Ivy River, Mills River (a drinking water source for Buncombe County), Smith Mill Creek, and the upper Swannanoa River.

## Key Steps\*

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

EQI staff will continue to recruit, train, and coordinate VWIN volunteers, and deliver monthly samples to the lab. At least 27 community volunteers will contribute approximately 300 hours in-kind sampling and traveling to the project. Lab staff will test each sample for ammonia-nitrogen, nitrite-nitrate-nitrogen, orthophosphate, total suspended solids, turbidity, conductivity, pH, and alkalinity. Analytical results will be assured by the completion of all NC Wastewater Certification requirements. Proper methodology, equipment, and quality control procedures will ensure accurate and defensible data. The results will be sent monthly to county partners to show current water quality conditions. EQI's director will write an annual report to communicate spatial and temporal trends in water chemistry, as well as interpret the data in a historical,

regional, and ecological context. The report will be distributed to all interested parties and posted on EQI's website to maximize public access.

## 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.

VWIN focuses on natural resource protection rather than a particular population. In Buncombe County, EQI collaborates with staff at the SWCD, Metropolitan Sewerage District (MSD), the City of Asheville, Ivy River Partners, MountainTrue, and RiverLink, all of which contribute to the project costs. Data is available to the public (technical reports or spreadsheets) at EQI's website or upon request. Volunteers are trained by EQI staff to collect monthly samples and receive information about local water quality. Community collaboration and citizen education are critical to the long-term success of local stream monitoring. All county residents benefit from efforts to conserve and protect water resources. Children and adults of all incomes, gender, and ethnicity participate in recreational opportunities that healthy waterways provide. The entire county also enjoys the financial benefits from tourists attracted to Buncombe County's streams and rivers.

## 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?

VWIN chemical monitoring in Buncombe County is primarily supported by MSD, the Buncombe County Strategic Partnership, Ivy River Partners, the City of Asheville's Stormwater Services Division, RiverLink, and MountainTrue. Buncombe County SWCD uses the data to inform their technical assistance and sedimentation/nutrient management programs, stormwater and erosion control efforts, and environmental education programs. The data enable MSD to quickly respond to unreported sewer line ruptures. The City monitors data from urban streams to manage stormwater pollution. Regional VWIN partners contribute funding for monitoring in other counties. Rather than competing with or duplicating the efforts of other organizations, our work complements, justifies, and helps fund their work. EQI's technical assistance and objective data help them to assign their limited staff and financial resources to conservation projects that can have the greatest positive impact on water quality.

## 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?

EQI's has a small staff of 1.5 FTE employees. Executive Director, Ann Marie Traylor oversees EQI's monitoring programs, focuses on communicating with partners, and is the laboratory supervisor. Assistant Director, Gracia O'Neill conducts the lab operations and supervises part-time college interns and Federal Work Study students. EQI is a host site for an AmeriCorps Project Conserve member who coordinates the volunteers and leads outreach and educational programs. EQI's Board of Directors includes university professors, nonprofit leaders, fishing and paddling enthusiasts, and stream-monitoring volunteers, bringing a wide range of expertise in water quality.

## 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.

EQI has a 28-year history of water monitoring in WNC. VWIN promotes volunteerism and educates county residents about local water resources. The data are backed by a strong quality control program and voluntary state laboratory certification. EQI will share chemical data with partners each month after testing is completed, with values exceeding set limits highlighted. EQI will also produce an annual report summarizing the county data within a regional framework. These reports include stream scores and ratings, summary statistics, letter grades for each analyte, graphs, trends with time and stream flow, and comparisons with all WNC monitoring sites. These monitoring results are used to demonstrate need, justify restoration projects, and provide an edge in fundraising efforts focused on improving water quality in county streams.

## 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?

The VWIN project operates almost solely on laboratory service fees from partner organizations that request monitoring assistance. EQI was granted \$6,000 of \$8,000 requested from Buncombe County for the FY2018. The lower level of funding resulted in the discontinuation of five monitoring sites. This proposal is again requesting \$8,000 (\$470/site/year) for 17 sites. In 2016 the lowest commercial lab prices for the same analyses amounted to \$780/site/year and did not include sample collection, delivery, bottle washing and replacement, or detailed reporting. Buncombe County VWIN revenue pays for EQI staff, occupancy, and laboratory supplies. As mentioned before, our partner organizations (MSD, Ivy River Partners, City of Asheville, RiverLink, MountainTrue) provide financial support for the remaining 34 Buncombe County VWIN sites.

## Sustainability\*

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

VWIN is a long-term regional stream monitoring project and this longevity is where the real value lies. In fact, VWIN monitoring began in Buncombe County in 1990, with partial funding from the County. EQI applies for the Buncombe County grant each year with the support of Buncombe County Soil & Water Conservation District. If the County does not fund the program, EQI will discontinue monitoring at those sites unless another partner organization is able to sponsor them.

## 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.

EQI-strategic-partnership-grants-FY2019-budget.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.

EQI 2016 Final Compilation Report.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.

EQI Signed 2016 990ez.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.

EQI Board list 2018.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

Ann Marie Traylor

