

# Admission Offset and Increased County Outreach

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## *FY 2018 Buncombe County Community Funding*

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

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# Application Form

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## Project Name\*

Name of Project

Admission Offset and Increased County Outreach

## Amount Requested\*

Amount Requested

\$36,000.00

## 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 > Promote programs that supplement equitable educational opportunities for all ages

## 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.

Environment > Partnerships for Conservation/Preservation/Restoration of Natural Resources > Protect ecological systems/wildlife

**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 WNC Nature Center (WNCNC) provides education on the natural resources and wildlife of the region, and works to preserve those resources through conservation programs including the Red Wolf Survival Program and the rainwater catchment system. The Friends of the Nature Center (FRIENDS) supports the WNCNC by creating awareness and providing financial resources for programs and capital needs. . The WNC Nature Center is home to over sixty species of wild and domestic animals and hundreds of species of plants, all representative of this unique bioregion, the Southern Appalachians.

The center's animals are "non-releasable," meaning that for some reason (often injury) they could not survive in the wild. The center not only gives these animals a top quality home; it allows them to help educate the public about the rich heritage of the Southern Appalachian Region and the importance of its conservation.

These experiences are integral to connecting people to their natural world, and to creating empathy and compassion for the wildlife that surrounds us.

As an Asheville City property, The WNCNC provides reduced admission (a discount of \$3.00) to City residents. Generous grants by the Buncombe County Service Foundation to the FRIENDS provided funds to offer that discount to non-City residents of the County in FY20167 FY 2017. The Friends requests consideration for a grant of \$36,000 to continue this program in FY2018 at a rate of \$2.95 per County Resident guest. We request that if funds remain from the budget of \$36,000 at the end of the fiscal year, the Friends be allowed to draw them down to support the marketing of the center throughout the County, and management of essential outreach for the public.

### **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?

Every Buncombe County resident attending the WNC Nature Center during the fiscal year 2017-2018 will receive the lower admission rate of \$7.95 (Adult) \$6.95 (Seniors 65 and older) or \$5.95 (Youth 3-15). The anticipated number of Buncombe County residents attending the Nature Center over that period is 8,200, based on calendar year 2016 County attendance plus calendar year 2015 October-December County attendance. The Nature Center began tracking Buncombe County/non-Asheville City resident attendance in January, 2015. In the first three quarters of calendar year 2016, total attendance of Buncombe County residents was 7,073. Total attendance at the Nature Center in that time was 108,631. With October 2016 total attendance of 12,717, the Center is positioned to experience a sixth record-breaking year of growth in attendance in a row. Attendance in 2015 totaled 121,978 for the year.

## **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 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 November 2015, 49.7% of ticket purchasers were adults, 38.9% were children, 4.3% were seniors, .33% were special need individuals, and 6.8% were school groups. Geographic area is also tracked. Every ticket purchaser is asked to provide their zip code. Racial, ethnic, and income indicators have not been tracked by the Nature Center. The Friends contribute and manage a marketing budget of over \$38,000 to market the Nature center to the public. In FY2017, a major piece of the marketing plan is to utilize outreach opportunities to talk to the local public about the Center. The Friends also increased print advertising in County-specific event publications and advertising materials, and increased investment in location-specific social media advertising. All of this has been an effort to increase attendance by County residents.

## **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.

At the time of ticket purchase, every person is asked to provide their zip code. County residents will be provided the discounted ticket prices immediately. Because the Buncombe County Service Foundation provided support for this offset in FY2016 and FY2017, front desk staff and volunteers are already trained to do this, and it is part of the training of new staff and volunteers. The Friends of the Nature Center will continue marketing the WNC Nature Center throughout the region to reach new County residents, and continue increasing outreach to communities throughout the County.

## **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?

Specialized lower ticket prices are a strong incentive to attract attendees and are used by many Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Association of Science and Technology Centers accredited facilities like the WNC nature Center. Many regional zoos and aquariums offer reduced rates for in-county/in-city residents. The practice is industry standard and proven to be a good benefit to residents as well as beneficial to the parks. The Friends have been raising awareness and funds for the WNC Nature 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.

## **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.

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.

### **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?

RecTrac allows the Nature Center to capture attendance data in real time, and provide reporting swiftly and accurately. There are no limitations within the system for providing age and residency information. Each month, Chris Gentile, Director of the WNC Nature Center provides data tracking of attendance by type to the Friends and each quarter he provides a count of non-City, County residents for the Friends.

## ***Organizational Profile***

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### **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.

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 of the region's rich biodiversity. The Friends of the Nature Center seeks out and provides financial resources to the WNCNC. The WNCNC 2020 Vision, adopted in 2012, names Visibility & Awareness, and Increased Funding as two of five Strategic Focus Areas. The proposed funding for admission offset will directly support Buncombe County residents attending the Nature Center, which will increase visibility. The Friends have made increasing outreach throughout the County a key piece of the 2017 Marketing plan, and knowing County residents will again be able to receive decreased admission in line with City residents will help those efforts.

### **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.

The WNC Nature Center has been providing education and conservation of the region's resources and wildlife since 1973 through school field trips, summer camps, programming, exhibits, and much more. An accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the WNCNC has seen increasing attendance each year for the past six years (from 87,607 in 2010 to 121,978 in 2015, and a projected 126,000 in 2016). Over the past three years, the Friends of the WNC Nature Center have grown the marketing budget for the Center, increased capital fundraising, created and implemented new strategic marketing and development plans, and worked to broaden their outreach efforts. With a new Director brought on board in November of 2015, this year has been a growth year, and with two capital improvement projects breaking ground in

January of 2017 (the new Front Entrance and the Bear Climbing Structure) next year will be an exciting one for the public and our guests!

### **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.

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 & sponsors, including Conrad Industries, Biltmore, Festiva, Karpen Steel, White Oak Financial Management, Carolina Alliance Bank, Brick Street Equity Management, iHeartMedia, Highland Brewing, New Belgium Brewing, Signarama, WNC Parent, Dig Local, and many more. The Nature Center also maintains close working partnerships with Buncombe County Schools, and 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.

## ***Financial Information***

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### **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.

FY2015 990 FRIENDS OF THE WNC NATURE CENTER.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).

Friends of the WNC Nature Center - Financial Statement - 6.30.15.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.

*[Unanswered]*

### 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.

Copy of community-funding-budget-form.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.

Line Item # 17 in Proposed Year Budget reflects a contribution of \$18,000 to the Bear Climbing Structure, and a contribution of \$394,000 to the Front Entrance Project. These are both being contributed out of funds that have been raised over several years and set aside for these projects, and will not affect budget year revenue.

## 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.

The funds requested from Buncombe County will be used to offset reduced ticket prices for non-Asheville City residents of Buncombe County and will not be used for capital needs.

## 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

The Friends of the WNC Nature Center have no employees with employer-provided health insurance.

### 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

Friends of the WNC Nature Center Employees:

\$15.00-\$19.00 per hour with no employer-provided health insurance: 2

\$20.00-\$24.99 per hour with no employer-provided health insurance: 1

The Friends also host an AmeriCorps Member who is paid through the AmeriCorps Program Project Conserve