



FY2024 Grant Guidelines

BC Clean Water Fund

I. Purpose

The Buncombe County Clean Water Fund provides funding to nonprofit and government organizations working to improve water quality in Buncombe County. This fund supports Buncombe County's strategic plan vision of "high quality air, water, farmland and renewable energy for future generations."

II. Overview

The Board of Commissioners set aside \$100,000 in the FY24 budget to support projects that improve water quality in Buncombe County. We anticipate funding 1-3 projects with each project ranging from \$30,000 to \$100,000. Funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis and recipients will be required to provide a site visit, a mid-project update, and a final report.

III. Eligibility

To be eligible for a Buncombe County Clean Water Fund grant, an organization and project must meet the following criteria:

- a. **Nonprofit/Government.** Applicants must be nonprofit or government organizations, including Council of Governments, classified as tax exempt by the Internal Revenue Service. Non-profits must have been in active operation as an incorporated nonprofit for a minimum of two (2) years. Organizations must operate in Buncombe County with service to Buncombe County. If an organization does not meet these criteria, it may partner with another organization to serve as fiscal agent for the purposes of administering grant funding.
- a. **Public Purpose.** Projects must meet a public purpose and fall within County authority to fund per NC General Statutes, to be affirmed by review by Buncombe County legal department prior to grant award.
- b. **Funding.** Minimum request is \$30,000. Maximum request is \$100,000.
- c. **Location.** Project must be located within Buncombe County with most of the impact intended for Buncombe County's waterways.
- d. **Water Quality benefits and impacts.** Projects should describe an existing water quality issue and a proven method for addressing the issue from an existing Watershed Management Plan that adequately meets USEPA's 9-Elements of Watershed planning or implement an alternative to a watershed-based plan in the form of a Summary of Nine Elements compiled from planning documents.
- e. **Focus on Construction.** Funds can be used for new construction, repair, restoration, plantings, etc. Construction drawings and engineering studies are also eligible for funding; however, shovel ready projects are preferred. Proof of site control or landowner access agreement is required. Projects that focus on water quality studies and testing are not eligible.
- f. **Partnerships and project leveraging** – A match from other agencies is required.
- g. **Feasibility and Timing** – Projects should be complete and closed out by June 30, 2025.



- h. **Application.** Organizations must submit a grant application before the application deadline. No late applications will be accepted.

IV. Timeline

November 1, 2023	Grant application reopens
November - January, 2023	Applicant consultations
December 29, 2023	Applicant questions due by 5:00 pm
January 29, 2024	Applications due by 5:00 pm
February 1 - 15, 2024	Application review and evaluation
February 16, 2024	Env Subcommittee meeting- review and recommend awards to full BOC
February 20, 2024	BOC meeting - present recommendations to full BOC
February 21 - March 25, 2024	Contract negotiations
April 2024 - June 2025	Project implementation

V. Application Process

Deadline: Applications are due by 5:00 on January 29, 2024. Organizations are encouraged to apply online through Buncombe County’s grant software, which can be accessed at buncombecounty.org/apply or linked through Buncombe County’s grant website buncombecounty.org/grants. Paper applications are available at and should be returned to 200 College Street, Suite 343, Asheville, NC 28801. No late applications will be accepted.

Applicants may submit questions to Buncombe County by January 29th at 5pm to Jennifer.Harrison@buncombecounty.org. All answers will be published on the Buncombe County website for all applicants to review before the application deadline.

Consultations: Staff is available to answer questions and to provide basic one-on-one support to applicants. Contact Ag and Land Resources Director Jennifer Harrison at Jennifer.Harrison@buncombecounty.org to schedule a session. Staff will also work to match applicants with other community-based grant writing resource support if needed.

Subcommittee Contact: Applicants are asked not to communicate with Env. Subcommittee members regarding their applications. If the Subcommittee decides to ask follow-up questions of applicants or hold interviews for finalists, applicants will be notified by County staff.

VI. Required Elements

The application consists of a questionnaire including the following items. Text boxes are limited to 1,500 characters. Additional documents, such as timelines, maintenance plans, site plans, etc. can be uploaded as attachments.

1. Funding Request Amount
2. Project Name
3. Water Quality Impact and Need for the Project: What is the water quality issue this project is anticipated to address? Use data or qualitative factors to show the need and reference the Watershed Management Plan where the need for this project is described.
4. Primary Location: What is the address for the primary location where the project take place?
5. Geography Served: Where do the people live who are served by this this project? (Refer to data

- about who is actually served rather than just what locations are eligible to be served, if available.)
6. Population Served: Describe the population that is expected to be most directly (direct impact = site location + 2 miles downstream) impacted by this project. What score does the direct impact area have on the County's Equity Index map (<https://bunco.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/356b402b2b644c519f5224c9bbc01bdc>)? Projects that serve underserved communities with a rank of 94 or greater on our Equity Index map will be scored higher.
 7. Project Plan: Explain the project and how it will work. Explain what the construction, repair, or installation will entail and what the anticipated impact of the project will be. Please include a site plan, scope of work and timeline for completion. What specific activities and milestones are included in the timeline? Project must be complete by June 30, 2025. Please include a maintenance plan and explain the long-term strategy for funding the maintenance.
 8. Results: What impact do you expect to see once the project is complete? How will you measure success?
 9. Leveraging - A match from other agencies is required. Projects with a higher match will receive more points. In-kind should not be included in the match calculation.
 10. Partnership and Community buy-in – Description of community outreach efforts and relevant letters of support, if applicable. Letters of support can be uploaded as attachments in question 19 “Other”.
 11. Other Public Benefit – Describe additional impacts to the community, such as recreational, educational, ecological, economic or other community benefits.
 12. Equity: How does your organization define equity? Describe your organization's equity strategy and activities. Explain how equity is reflected in the proposed project. Equity is one of Buncombe County's values expressed in the strategic plan. Inequities exist across all areas, whether looking at geography, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and many other traits. Racial equity is a priority because of pronounced racial disparities at a community level. Buncombe County defines equity as the state of being just, impartial and fair. We define racial equity as when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, and outcomes for all groups are improved.
 13. Organizational Capacity: Tell us about your organization, including mission and values. Describe the organizational structure and include any success stories and/or examples of your past initiatives that demonstrate your ability to carry out the project plan.
 14. Budget Narrative: Explain how grant funds will be used, including a summary of what expenses will be covered by County funds. Include explanation of matching funds and describe all other sources of revenues associated with this project. A description of in-kind services may be included in the budget narrative, but the costs associated with in-kind services should not be included in the budget form.
 15. Budget Form (attachment) Download a copy of the budget form, complete the form, and upload it. It is important to fully complete the budget form, including: all sources of proposed revenue for the project (committed & pending); all planned expenses for the project (paid for with grant funds & other funds); and 3-year overall organization budget (non-itemized total).
 16. Sustainability: If this is an ongoing project, describe the organization's capacity to raise funds to continue this project beyond the 18-month timeline. Explain how the project will be maintained.
 17. Proof of Nonprofit Status: (attachment) Upload proof of nonprofit or government entity status, such as IRS Determination Letter or documentation from the North Carolina

- Secretary of State. If this documentation is not available, briefly state the reason.
18. Current Board of Directors List: (attachment) 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.
 19. Other: (text and/or attachment) Is there anything else that you want the Subcommittee to know?

VII. Review Process

County staff will analyze and score applications utilizing a standardized, points-based system and forward them to the Energy and Environment Subcommittee for review. The Energy and Environment Subcommittee will recommend awardees to the Board of Commissioners for final approval. Reviews will be conducted independently by members of the committee, and discussion will occur during subcommittee meeting.

The following criteria will be considered by the Committee:

- Need –project addresses an identified need in a Watershed Management Plan
- Project Plan – project includes clear, reasonable actions that will have significant impact on improving water quality and is focused on construction, repair, or installation
- Proposed Results –project clearly states the anticipated results and project demonstrates a clear pathway to completion within the 18-month timeline or preferably sooner
- Partnership and Community Buy-in – Property owners and/or partners clearly in support of project; includes a cash match
- Capacity – Organization is structured to carry out the project as described and demonstrates the ability to maintain the project over time
- Equity – Organization has a demonstrated commitment to equity reflected in the proposed project
- Budget – Includes a clear, reasonable, and efficient budget matched to proposed project

Scoring will be on a scale of 1 to 5 with a maximum total score of 30. Each criterion is weighted equally. See Attachment A.

The committee will recommend projects and funding amounts based on project scores as well as balance within the overall portfolio, taking factors into consideration such as geography, project focus areas and categories.

VIII. Awards

Grant recommendations prepared by the Subcommittee will be submitted for a vote of approval from the Board of Commissioners.

County Commissioners will not serve on any board or organization seeking funding from County Government unless said service is a requirement through legislation or legal agreement.

IX. Performance Contracts

All grant awards will be administered via performance contracts. Contracts will include a scope of work that defines services, deliverables and reporting measures.

All funds must be spent or returned to the County by June 30, 2025. Requests for extensions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Contracts will also include standard indemnification and insurance expectations, which lists the

minimum insurance coverage which Contractors agree to procure and maintain. Required insurances and levels vary depending on the nature of the project and can include types such as: Worker's Compensation; Commercial General Liability; Employer's Liability; Professional Liability; etc. The County will collect and review certificates of insurance as part of contract compliance. Insurance is an allowable expense and can be built into the grant funding budget.

In addition to the standard contract expectations for all organizations doing business with the County, nonprofits receiving grant funds must also:

- a. Submit copies of annual IRS tax filings (Form 990s); and
- b. Submit annual financial statements based on a tiered structure, consistent with industry standard practice:
 - Audit: Organizations with annual revenues of \$300,000 or greater must submit financial statements audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.
 - Review: Those with revenues between \$100,000 and \$300,000 must submit financial statements reviewed in accordance with applicable Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services (SSARS).
 - Compilation: Those with revenues of less than \$100,000 must submit non-disclosure financial statements compiled in accordance with applicable SSARS.
 - Nonprofit agencies may request a waiver to use other third-party provided documents.

Contract performance will be monitored and evaluated by the County throughout the year, including review of financial and programmatic reporting.

X. Minority Business

Buncombe County's adopted Minority Business Plan encourages participation by minority and women owned businesses. Buncombe County policy is to provide minority contractors an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of its contracting and procurement programs, and to prohibit any and all discrimination against persons or businesses in pursuit of these opportunities. Minority Business Plan questions may be directed to Buncombe County Procurement at (828) 250-4154. Sources for certified minority firms are available at <http://www.doa.nc.gov/hub>.

XI. Lead Department/Division

Staffing for this grant program is provided by Ag and Land Resources Department. For more information, contact Ag and Land Resources Director Jennifer Harrison at Jennifer.Harrison@buncombecounty.org or (828) 250-4786.

Attachment A - Scoring Criteria

Scoring will be on a scale of 1 to 5 with a maximum total score of 30. Each criterion is weighted equally.

Proposal Evaluation	Incomplete <u>1 Point</u>	Insufficient <u>2 Points</u>	Adequate <u>3 Points</u>	Good <u>4 Points</u>	Excellent <u>5 Points</u>	
1	Need for the Project: Project addresses a water quality issue outlined in a Watershed Management Plan	Little to no info regarding the importance of this project on water quality.	Presents limited info about the need and/or has weak alignment to needs outlined in a Watershed Management Plan.	Presents basic info demonstrating need and alignment to a Watershed Management Plan.	Presents qualitative and/or quantitative justification for levels of need and aligns to a Watershed Management Plan.	Presents significant need with a compelling argument and multiple qualitative or quantitative data points that align to a Watershed Management Plan.
2	Project Plan: Project includes clear, reasonable actions that are focused on eligible construction activities that are likely to address the need	Project explanation is unclear and lacks mention of a specific goal, how the project will work, or who will be served.	Project is not thoroughly or clearly explained or is missing key information about implementation.	Project structure is clear and is aligned to the goals of the grant funds but may be missing details about models, activities, and/or milestones.	Project structure is clear, including model and implementation plans, and is aligned to the goals of the grant funds.	Project is very well designed with specific activities and milestones, based on proven model(s), includes implementation steps, and is well aligned with the goals of the grant funds.
3	Proposed Results: Project includes quantifiable results, a plan for measuring success, and a realistic timeline	Little to no description of results or ways to measure performance of the project and no clear timeline	Description of what will be achieved by the project is unclear and/or lacks explanation about performance measurement or timeline	Proposed results are adequately described, aligned to the goals of the grant and project plan, but more information is needed about performance measurement and timeline	Proposed results are well described, aligned to the goals of the grant and project plan, and there is a clear plan for measuring success and the timeline is realistic	Proposed results are clearly described and likely to have a high impact in alignment with goals of the grant funds, including specific measures and methods for effectively measuring results of the funded project and the timeline is detailed and realistic
5	Capacity: Organization structured to complete and maintain the project as described	Organization does not appear to be structured to complete the project as described and does not include a clear plan for long-term maintenance.	Organization has not sufficiently demonstrated capacity to carry out proposed plan through record of success and/or collaborative partnerships and the plan for long-term maintenance is incomplete.	Proposed project scope and scale appears to be reasonably within organizational capacity to carry out and has the ability to provide long-term maintenance.	Organization demonstrates a good likelihood to succeed with the of proposed project, including organizational history and collaborative partnerships to leverage necessary project support and has a history and clear plan to carry out long-term maintenance	Organization demonstrates strong ability to realistically manage the scope and scale of proposed project, including organizational history and collaborative partnerships to leverage necessary project support and shares a resource plan for ensuring long-term maintenance.

Attachment A - Scoring Criteria

Scoring will be on a scale of 1 to 5 with a maximum total score of 30. Each criterion is weighted equally.

Proposal Evaluation		Incomplete 1 Point	Insufficient 2 Points	Adequate 3 Points	Good 4 Points	Excellent 5 Points
4	Equity: Organization has a demonstrated commitment to equity reflected in the proposed project	Very limited or no explanation of approach to equity or inclusion.	Equity definition and/or strategy is vague.	Provides an organizational definition of equity and strategy that is understandable and reasonable.	Clear organizational definition of equity, and concrete description of how equity strategy is reflected in the proposed project.	Clear organizational definition of equity. Concrete, tangible description of how equity strategy is reflected in proposed project, including examples of activities and accountability measures.
6	Budget: Includes a clear, reasonable, and efficient budget matched to proposed project	Project budget is incomplete, unrealistic, and/or poorly aligned with the budget narrative.	Budget lacks sufficient detail is unclear or includes items that do not seem reasonable.	Budget is complete, clear, realistic, and reasonably aligned with the narrative and project plan, but there are questions on some items.	Budget is form is complete with explanatory notes, clear, reasonable and matched to the community need and project plan.	Budget is complete with explanatory notes, clear, detailed, realistic, comprehensive, efficient and clearly aligned with the narrative and project plan.