

Building Students of Color Capacity and Resiliency through SEL and Mental Health Initiatives (Enhance Behavioral and Mental Health Support)

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Asheville City Schools

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Application Form

Question Group

Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

Name of Project.

Building Students of Color Capacity and Resiliency through SEL and Mental Health Initiatives (Enhance Behavioral and Mental Health Support)

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$800,000.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Services for disproportionately impacted communities

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

This initiative is a combination of social/mental wellness, resource coordination and case management services that positively impacts students and communities of color. We pride ourselves in providing relatable support services to those faced with complex needs that traditional school based services and case

management has not adequately addressed. Our teams focus on decreasing the academic & opportunity gaps of individuals who have increased hardships due to racial and systematic barriers, which have been exacerbated by COVID. Achievement and opportunity gaps in ACS will reduce as evidenced by decreased suspensions & increased mental support and resources for people of color. The students ability to navigate systems and improve functioning in familial, social, educational and other life domains strengthens as well. Currently ACS has 5 team members who served well over 200 students last year. Our proposal is to enhance this support initiative by adding additional staff/teams.

Project Plan*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

The school and community wellness program administrator will post and hire for team members. The teams shall include a team lead, and 2 support staff each. Teams will be assigned a school and community according to wellness needs; determined by wellness and school needs assessments. The team will train all staff in Trauma Informed Care, SEL and Restorative Practices. We will begin work 3-4 weeks after awards are distributed, giving time to hire and train the new team members.

Implementation:

The process for a student to be assigned a team will be determined by the coordinator and team lead; assessments will demonstrate service necessity. The wellness assessment shall be completed prior to team assignment, once complete and the coordinator will assign the beneficiary a team. The team lead will schedule a community based and school based team meetings. Support members shall include but are not limited to students, guardian, staff, coaches, administration, teachers, other school support staff. The wellness team members meet with the coordinator to create the beneficiaries goals. Notes will be taken daily on the purpose, interventions used and effectiveness of the interventions. Bi-weekly meetings will be scheduled for the beneficiary until/unless it's decided that there is a need to increase/decrease services. The intensity of the support interventions will decrease as the beneficiary gradually transitions into wellness. Teams will be available to participants for wrap around support and remain in communication with community and school teams on the students behalf as long as the team deems necessary. Team members will continue with:

- *Coordinating the delivery of the service plans to reduce disengagement of care and maximize progressive outcomes to be guided by case consultation, school and community team meetings, mentorship and advocacy by the health and wellness team members

- *Facilitating access to/connecting students to services and supports identified in their wellness plan; simultaneously growing the support team members as they pursue and explore their work/career goals and aspirations

- * Making referrals by triaging services to other community providers for needed services/supports and facilitating communication/collaboration among all service providers and the student and families

- *Assisting the beneficiary in establishing and maintaining wellness goals and continuum of care plans

- *Monitoring and follow-up, including activities and contacts that are necessary to ensure that the wellness plans are effectively implemented and adequately addresses the needs of the students

- *Education related to skills development, in addition to the practicing of skills and interventions that are introduced to teams through training and reinforced by team coordinators.

- *Attend student community enrichment programs

- *Advocate on the behalf of the students well being in relation to educational and opportunity gaps

Statement of Need*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

There has been a need to intentionally support the disproportionalities of our students, staff and communities of color for decades. The achievement and opportunity gaps are evidence that what we have done in the past does not work as those numbers are on a continual incline. The wellness of people of color has been negatively impacted even more since the pandemic. We will continue to address the wellness of those impacted by the pandemic with a primary focus on the people and communities of color. It has been shared with the public numerous times over the last 10 years that the achievement gap in Asheville City Schools is one of the highest in the state. Students of color make up only 18% of the entire Asheville City Schools student body but are the majority in regards to the achievement gap; this continues to be a horrific and true reality for many and both the achievement and opportunity gaps were widened even more so because of the pandemic.

Data from Buncombe County showed the racial achievement gaps at Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools. In 2018, 20% of black students at Asheville City Schools met grade level proficiency compared to more than 80% of white students. WLOS Apr 19, 2021

Our team will intentionally address these disproportionalities and poor outcomes by enhancing the districts mental health program by adding additional supervision, training and more school and community health workers and teams within the district.

Link to COVID-19*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

Health equity is when all members of society enjoy a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Public health policies and programs centered around the specific needs of communities can promote health equity. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought social and racial injustice and inequity to the forefront of public health. It has highlighted that health equity is still not a reality as COVID-19 has unequally affected many racial and ethnic minority groups, putting them more at risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19. [1], [2] The term “racial and ethnic minority groups” includes people of color with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. Negative experiences are common to many people within these groups, and some social determinants of health have historically prevented them from having fair opportunities for economic, physical, and emotional health. [3] Social determinants of health are the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, play, and worship that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. (Stokes EK, 2020; Killerby ME 2020; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Social Determinants of Health 2020)

Health equity includes mental health. We will address the mental/social/emotional health of our beneficiaries as well as the economic strain on people of color living in the city of Asheville. The wellness of our students will be addressed by offering community health mentors/teams for those of us who need resource guidance, and social/emotional and mental health supports. During the pandemic several mental health services ended for our students of color or those experiencing poverty; causing an even wider health equity divide for POC and their counterparts. Our community wellness teams will push into the housing communities and schools allowing for a more relatable and seamless service delivery.

Population Served*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

Our teams will serve students, families and communities that have been negatively impacted mentally and economically by systematic barriers and racism which have been exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic. Our primary focus is to serve the school and home communities of color and those experiencing mental and social emotional issues also due to systematic injustices and lack of access to resource. We plan to hire relatable staff to make up a minimum of 5 wellness team (each team consist of 3 members) who will offer the disadvantage students an opportunity to see themselves differently through them, in a system that has not been favorable or supportive currently or in the past. Each team will have the capacity to serve up to 15 students at a time within the school and community settings.

Currently ACS has a mental health team made up of 6 staff who are responsible for supporting the entire district. Recently our school based agency shared with us that they have decided to support our district in a different capacity and will no longer offer school based therapy; thus leaving our most venerable students without the mental and social wellness support that they need to be successful. While we had a 97% success rate of triaging services and providing social and mental health supports to students and families, five staff for a district of over 4,000 students is not equitable or realistic. We appreciate the opportunity to possibly serve our most marginalized and disadvantaged students at a much higher capacity in the near future, it is especially exciting as we return from the pandemic year.

Results*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

* Increase the social and mental wellness of students within the schools and home communities by 75-80%

*Aggressively decreasing the achievement and opportunity gaps of our beneficiaries as evidenced by a high wellness participation and goal completion rate

*Between 75-80% percent of beneficiaries will see improved academic and behavior performance in one or more subject areas as evidenced by a decrease in discipline referrals and an increase in in classroom seat time, grades and school attendance.

The teams will work very closely with the rest of the student service school teams and families and administration to make sure there are common, realistic wellness goals that are shared, agreed upon and has student, family and community buy in. Each team member will complete PIE (purpose, intervention and effectiveness) notes for students to track their progression or lack thereof of their personal and team wellness goals. Each team will also track the number of enhanced services referrals, discipline referrals, will attend school team meetings that are addressing students on their caseloads; offering suggestions and interventions etc. Teams will meet weekly with coordinators to discuss progression of their professional and student goals. Team member will meet and work with students a minimal of 3 days a week, with goal completion or regression driving the students service time.

Evaluation*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

Wellness team coordinators will review weekly wellness goal data/notes to measure the total number of students making progress. Coordinators will additionally offer training and guidance to team members when deemed appropriate and necessary. Coordinators and teams will work to re-engage students and families into mental and social wellness services by offering additional support, advocacy and guidance when necessary.

Wellness teams and swill review the academic performance of students consistently and frequently as well as guide families and community members in regard to their goals. The families goals will be measured and documented as well, as we know if we grow and guide parents; the students will achieve.

Grades and discipline referrals will be constantly reviewed in order for the student progress/regression to be compared to their baseline and for the opportunity to assess and document for social, emotional, academic, and economic improvement that may be correlated with their participation in the ACS wellness program.

To measure changes in students opportunity thresholds, surveys questioning their levels of achievement and their abilities to succeed will be administered at the beginning and end of their service time. Qualitative data regarding students' progression or lack thereof will be evaluated through student, guardian, support staff (coach, aunt, counselor etc.) feedback, observations and meetings. We will also review and discuss the students academic, behavioral and attendance data frequently. The students involvement in developing and tracking their own goal plan is imperative and expected. The coordinator will be responsible for compiling and keeping track of this data over the extent of the funding period. Assessment findings related to program initiatives shall be used to inform the coordinator and team members of possible changes needed to strengthen the program and/or service delivery. The teams will move and document accordingly.

Equity Impact*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

Our teams will offer students quality and relevant support services. We will work to ensure each student has access to wellness resources that are needed for the beneficiaries to be successful. Staff will always keep the students and families at the forefront of our minds, offering opportunities for alternative outcomes and increased mental and academic wellness. The teams will encourage mental wellness and excellent achievement by changing the ideas and stigma associated with such in the communities of color. Teams will be made up of people with lived experiences who can support students and families to see themselves differently being modeled by them and their leadership. By offering the students and communities a voice around the table, we will create equitable dialogue and a realistic baseline to guide our goals and outcomes. Relatable support, raised expectations and equitable opportunities will create an chance for positive and impactful change within spaces that feel genuine and where everyone can be their authentic selves without judgement.

Project Partners*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

We will continue to work very closely with non funded key partners such as Asheville Housing Authority, Community Mental Health Agencies, Local Mentor Groups, to name a few. It is our responsibility to continuously seek support and resources from our communities that will be beneficial to helping participants

reach their wellness goals. With that being said we will reach out to others such as United Way, AB-tech, Asheville City School Foundation, City of Asheville and others as the opportunities present themselves.

Capacity*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

The mental health service team at Asheville City Schools is currently under the direction of myself, the Executive Director of Student Services. I have both my clinical and school licensures. I am a native of Asheville and a product of the Asheville City School system. Our Mental Health liaison is also a licensed clinician, a native of Asheville and an alum of Asheville City Schools. Our lead social worker, who would continue to work very closely with us, holds a master degree in social work, and is also an alum of ACS and a native of Asheville. Our SEL trainer has over a decade of experience in counseling, SEL and administration practices. Together we are trained trainers in trauma informed care, restorative practices and social and emotional learning. All current team members have relevant lived experiences and have the capacity to guide other school and community health team members to deliver impactful support services to our beneficiaries. ACS has a employee who is responsible for managing all federal funds. If awarded, the finance department in collaboration with the student service department will manage all funds ensuring that they are used ethically and effectively.

Budget*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Building Students of Color Capacity and Resilency through SEL and Mental Health Initiatives _Proposed Budget_.xlsx

Special Considerations*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

I would like to take the time to thank everyone involved for offering this opportunity to address the mental wellness of some of our most vulnerable students and families; particularly those who make up the achievement and opportunity gaps. I am elated that the state is paying close attention to the correlation between mental wellness and academic achievement. It has forced us to take a closer look at the epidemic people of color are asked to "live with" daily. The truth of the matter is without resources and professional support we can't live; we just do our best to simply survive.

With Asheville City Schools' challenging achievement gap, it's discipline disparities and the lack of resources, I could not let this once in a lifetime opportunity pass me by. The pandemic has heightened these deficits and there doesn't seem to be any long term sustainable solutions available. Our teams would like to change that narrative. If given the chance, we could, with additional staff, aggressively work on closing the achievement and opportunities gaps by building the students capacity and resiliency through SEL and mental health initiatives. While I may not be an expert at writing proposals, I am an expert at supporting our most

disenfranchised student populations, as I too am apart of that number. Our data shows that the mental health work we currently do for Asheville City Schools has had a positive impact within our school and home communities. To double the number of students and families served next year would life changing for many. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Building Students of Color Capacity and Resiliency through SEL and Mental Health Initiatives _Proposed Budget___.xlsx

List expenses here			\$	-		
			Total	\$	797,000.00	