

## Positive Opportunities Develop Success (PODS)

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

### *Asheville Housing Development, Inc.*

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# Application Form

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## *Question Group*

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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.

Positive Opportunities Develop Success (PODS)

## **Amount of Funds Requested\***

\$2,203,262.00

## **Recovery Fund Eligible Category\***

Please select one:

Services for disproportionately impacted communities

## **Brief Project Description\***

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Positive Opportunities Develop Success (PODS) is a collaborative, community-led education program for students in K-9th grade that was implemented during the pandemic to bridge the digital divide and offer academic and emotional support to students living within Asheville's public housing communities. PODS ensured that students had access to the internet, academic support, food, and other resources in culturally

responsive spaces that fostered safety. There is community interest to adapt PODS to operate at 3 sites to address the widening opportunity gap, the social-emotional needs of our students, and to offer academic support. As our community recreates our educational system, PODS provides an avenue for students to have their needs uniquely met in a culturally responsive, equity-oriented space with leaders they know and trust. Asheville Housing Development, Inc. is requesting funding to sustain this program for the next 3 academic years and summers.

## Project Plan\*

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

PODS will offer after-school and summer programming to students in grades K-9 in the Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools systems. The program will primarily serve students who are residents of Asheville's subsidized housing developments. The program will be financially administered by Asheville Housing Development, Inc. operationally managed by Positive Opportunities Develop Success Program Manager. Sites will include the Arthur B. Edington Center, Hillcrest Apartments, and Pisgah View Apartments. The Edington Center will serve as a central hub for students who do not have extended learning services in their neighborhoods.

In this program, students will receive meals, transportation, and academic support. Support will be offered by residents from their housing communities, teaching assistants, math and reading tutors, Youth Impact Workers, and Community Health Workers. Youth Impact Workers, teens and young adults, will help facilitate programming while also gaining mentorship and career development opportunities. Asheville Writers in the Schools and Community (AWITSC) and other community partners will offer students experiential learning opportunities. Transportation will be provided to allow for accessibility. Housing Authority residents and Youth Impact Workers have been trained by Asheville City Schools to offer students support with homework and remote learning. Staff received training related to childcare, behavioral health support, and CPR/first aid and they are prepared to apply skills learned during the height of COVID to extended learning offerings.

Unique to PODS is the utilization of Community Health Workers. These frontline health workers are trusted members of a community. They serve as intermediaries between families, housing, school, and additional systems. They track students' behaviors between settings, offer social-emotional support, advocate for quality and trauma-informed services, and educate regarding social determinants of health. Their roles remain flexible to changing needs.

Other inputs will include space rental, supplies, field trip expenses, insurance, and the salary of a Program Manager to oversee daily operations and the evaluation of PODS.

Objectives of the program are to provide culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and individualized care. Outcomes may include consistent program attendance, improved academic outcomes, mitigated learning losses, improved attitudes related to ability to succeed, and decreased behavioral issues.

The project is operational pending continued funding. In Year 1, program administrators will hire a Program Manager, seek additional funding, record baseline data, and be in continued collaboration with community partners. During Years 2 and 3, staff will proceed to evaluate and gather feedback regarding the project's successes, adapt programming as necessary, and advocate for anti-racist policy development as is applicable to students needs.

## Statement of Need\*

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

As our community recovers from the pandemic, our most impacted students deserve to receive trauma-informed, culturally competent, and multifaceted support which requires community collaboration. The pandemic is expected to most negatively effect children who already faced barriers to meeting their needs before. Children may be experiencing the following stressors: economic instability, lack of basic needs, higher exposure to abuse, impaired development due to poorer nutrition and lack of preventative or timely health care, knowledge and life skills lost that could impair developmental transitions, the growing opportunity gap, and issues with children's mood, behaviors, and communication.

One measure that reflected COVID's impact was a significant dip in attendance by minority and low-income students in Asheville City Schools. The Asheville Citizen Times reported that over 300 students did not engage in school in Spring of 2020. Many of these students were Housing Authority residents. Prior to the pandemic, minority and low-income students historically faced barriers to achieve academic success. The United Way of Asheville-Buncombe County reported that Asheville City Schools had the 5th largest racial opportunity gap in our country. The agency reported that 12% of Black children, compared to 73% of White children, in grades 3-8 received proficient or better scores on their end-of-year tests. The NC Department of Public Instruction's data revealed that in the 2015-2016 academic year 66% of Asheville City Schools suspensions were of Black students despite Black students only making up less than 20% of the student body.

Experts in the field of child development recommend addressing these issues with targeted programming and focuses on offering food and primary health care, protective measures, enrichment activities, behavioral health care, and equitable learning interventions to address the digital divide, learning losses, and social-emotional development.

## 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.

The negative, long-term impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as chronic illness, premature birth and death, diabetes, lung disease, and heart disease, are known to disproportionately impact BIPOC populations and people who experience low socio-economic status (Sander, 2020). According to Sander (2020), society's response to the pandemic and its ecological harms can intensify ACEs due to stress related to parental job loss, food and housing insecurity, school closures, loss of loved ones, etc.

McManus and Ball (2020) pointed out that it is inappropriate to assume all of our children will simply "bounce back" from their experiences during the height of COVID. Researchers and advocates have debated labeling COVID itself as an ACE. Expecting all children to experience the pandemic in the same way implies no inequality existed before and does not account for children's protective factors (McManus & Ball, 2020). The impacts of ACEs can be lessened through helping children know their needs will be consistently met, opportunities for family and community connection, and opportunities to develop secure attachment (Sanders, 2020).

Funding PODS will allow students to receive continuum of care, a sense of predictability and safety, individualized attention to behavioral health needs, and community connection. Community Health Workers engaged in the program will be in positions to observe children's physical and behavioral health changes and respond with unique support. Finally, families will be able to rely on PODS for free childcare and community connection which has potential to offer economic and stress relief.

## Population Served\*

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

In anticipation of continued needs as well as the return of more youth programming, PODS plans to serve 75 students per academic year who reside in public housing at 3 learning sites within their neighborhoods. Residents from all public housing developments will be eligible to participate in programming.

Many of these students identify as BIPOC. As of April 29, 2021, 18% of Asheville City Schools students are Black. Additionally, 71.8% of people who reside in the city's subsidized housing developments are Black. The average annual household income of Asheville Housing Authority residents is \$7,775. 88% of Asheville Housing Authority Residents are considered Extremely Low Income, 0%-30% of Median Income. 39% of these families are Female Head of Household, with Children.

## 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.

The vision of PODS is to ensure every child and youth has access to high quality positive youth development programming within their community. Academic attainment and an enhanced well-being through positive youth development services are key factors in ensuring youth successfully transition into young adulthood, particularly youth of economically disadvantaged communities. Through school check-ins and out-of-school time programs, parents and caregivers can ensure their youth have a safe, culturally responsive and enriching environment when the traditional school day ends, as well as during holiday and summer breaks. To measure program outcomes in alignment with this vision, student participation, academic gains, and attitude changes will be explored.

As the trend of academic learning pods is rapidly evolving in response to the pandemic and students' academic progress was up-ended, there is a lack of baseline data. The first year of this program will allow for program administrators to assess students' baseline academic functioning, attendance, and attitudes as they return to in-person learning.

The program will seek to complete the following performance measures:

- 1) PODS programming will serve 75 students per academic year and 60 students during summer programming.
- 2) Seventy-five percent of PODS participants, for whom data can be tracked, will see improved academic performance in one or more core subject areas.
- 3) Seventy-five percent of PODS participants, for whom data can be tracked, will report a positive change in attitude regarding their ability to achieve academic success per academic year.

## Evaluation\*

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

Program administrators will keep daily attendance to measure the total number of students served during after-school and summer programming. Administrators will additionally assess program drop-out rates to target outreach and attempt to re-engage families as well as adopt additional feedback related to changes in student participation.

In order to track and assess the program's accomplishments, program facilitators will receive parental permission to acquire grades and other applicable academic performance measures related to each participant to denote a student's baseline in the fall semester/first half of the 2021-2022 academic year.

Grades of participants will be observed quarterly and student progress will be compared to their baseline and successive grades to assess for academic improvement that may be correlated with their involvement in the PODS programming.

To measure changes in academic attitudes, students will receive an age appropriate Likert scale survey questioning their levels of confidence in their own ability to succeed at the beginning and end of the academic school year or participation in PODS, whichever comes first. Qualitative data regarding students' potential changes in attitude will also be discovered through student, parent, and teacher interviews/observations. Adult input will help validate student responses.

The Program Manager and additional administrators will be responsible for compiling this data and tracking it over the extent of the funding period.

Assessment of data related to these project objectives will be used to inform adaptations to program delivery and prompt staff advocacy for improved student well-being in the multiple systems and environments students interface with that hold power over them.

## 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?

PODS is a program that was strategically built to meet the needs of minority and low-income students. It is known that minority families were hit harder by the illness, experienced greater losses, and struggled more financially than their White counterparts. This discrepancy within how members of our communities experienced the pandemic also greatly impacted our educational system and children's well-being.

In response to social distancing and school closures, medium and upper income families paid for private tutors, enrichment programs, and mental health services for their children. They may have also had more flexibility to work from home and/or more educational resources and access to technology to support their children's ability to benefit through remote learning. The price tag of these interventions and a lack of basic needs prohibited low-income families from accessing these services thus increasing the opportunity gap.

PODS aims to offer BIPOC and low-income students who are residents of the city's subsidized housing developments free opportunities to positively impact their academic growth, confidence, physical and social-emotional well-being and their long-term ability to succeed in this recovery. PODS acts under the following guiding principles that are listed below.

PODS Guiding Principles:

1. Equity with Positive Impact
2. Change the Narrative
3. Revolutionary Love
4. Student-centered Approach

PODS will offer students quality and culturally relevant services that will focus on their strengths rather than deficits. It will work to ensure each student has resources they need to succeed and that approaches will prioritize our children's wellness and give families options. This effort will be inclusive of residents of housing communities who are trusted and offer invaluable insights. These efforts will be student-focused and community-driven.

## 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.

Despite its short existence, PODS already has a rich history of operating due to the collaboration of multiple community partner organizations, public entities, and stakeholders. PODS is seeking funding to support direct-services staff and program administrators.

At this time, we anticipate collaboratively offering services in partnership in a non-funded capacity with the following organizations to ensure youth have access to technology, Asheville's community centers, enrichment and academic support services, school supplies, meals and snacks, and additional materials and mentorship in support of after-school and summer programming:

The Asheville Housing Development, Inc., the Asheville Housing Authority, CHOSEN, Asheville City Schools, City of Asheville, Buncombe County Schools, My Daddy Taught Me That, Read2Succeed, Western Carolina Rescue Mission, and Asheville Writers in the Schools and Community. Asheville Housing Authority will charge a proportional share of building, utilities and operating expenses.

## 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 facilitation of this program, its evaluation, and the allocation of funding will be overseen by Shaunda Sandford. Shaunda is the Housing Authority Resident Services Director. She was a co-creator and coordinator of PODS as she recognized the needs of students living within subsidized housing developments and the challenges they faced to remain connected to their schools and engage in remote learning. Sandford will support project management and attend to the reporting requirements and mandates associated with federal funding.

## 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.

PODS Budget.docx

## Special Considerations\*

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

Asheville Housing Development, Inc. thanks the Buncombe County Government for the opportunity to apply for COVID recovery funding. We believe our multi-year proposal will uniquely and equitably serve students in our community who have been the most impacted by the pandemic. Staff and community volunteers are actively seeking additional, sustainable funding for this program. Receiving this funding, all or in-part, would support the program to offer consistent services to students and build a foundation for future work and community collaboration. Thank you for the consideration of this application.

# File Attachment Summary

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## *Applicant File Uploads*

- PODS Budget.docx

## **Budget Sheet**

The following information are provided to help clarify a budget for Positive Opportunities Develop Success Afterschool Program. The costs listed is for three years, 2021-2024, and all three sites. The justification of the budgeted line items is as follows:

**Program Manager:** The program manager's responsibilities are to provide direct oversight to the two facilitators, and to ensure that the intervention is implemented with fidelity.

**Three Site Leads/ Community Health Workers:** Unique to PODS is the utilization of Community Health Workers. These employee's roles are based on the larger Community Health Worker model. Within this model, frontline health workers are trusted members of a community and hold unique knowledge of the needs and lived experiences of those they are serving. They will serve as intermediaries between families, housing, school, and additional resources/systems. They will track student's behavioral health between settings, offer social-emotional support, advocate for quality and trauma-informed services, and offer outreach and education regarding social determinants of health.

**Youth Impact Workers (15):** teens and young adults, who will help facilitate programming and enrichment services while also gaining mentorship and career development opportunities.

**Administrative Assistant:** To conduct administrative activities (mailing, copying, reception, collating, marketing and advertisement, communication, etc).

**Custodian:** Maintain the cleanliness of spaces used by children, staff and community.

**Tutors:** To provide curriculum support, as needed.

**Fringe:** For full time employee benefits; calculated at 20%

**Facility Costs:** Facility expenses have been included to ensure that adequate space can be provided.

**Equipment:** Equipment may be needed to facilitate activities.

**Other Equipment:** Includes equipment to conduct office work such as computer, copy machine and equipment maintenance.

**Office Supplies:** Includes pens, paper, paper clips, staples, markers, tape, post-its, etc.

**Other Expenses:** Emergency assistance or resources needed by students..

**Experiential Opportunitites:** Field trips and project based activities.

**Day to day operations:** Cost of meals, refreshments and transportation assistance.

**Educational Materials:** Additional educational materials may be purchased to help localize and augment the materials provided.

**Legal and admin:** Liability insurance and legal fees.

# Positive Opportunities Develop Success P.O.D.S. 2021-2024 Estimated Expenses

Sites: Arthur Edington Center, Hillcrest and Pisgah View Apartments

<b>Personnel Costs</b>						<b>\$1 468 728</b>
	<b># of staff</b>		<b># of months</b>	<b>salary per month</b>	<b>total</b>	
Program Manager	1		36	\$3467	\$124812	
Lead Site Facilitators	3		36	\$9360	\$336960	
Tutors	3		36	\$1625	\$58500	
Youth Impact Workers	15		36	\$20800	\$748800	
Administrative Assistant	1		36	\$2773	\$99828	
Custodian	1		36	\$2773	\$99828	
<b>Fringe Benefits</b>						<b>\$132 284</b>
(29% of personnel)	20% of salary				\$132 284	
<b>Staff training</b>						
<b>Facility Costs</b>						<b>\$54 000</b>
		<b>cost per month</b>				
Office rent, utilities		\$1500	36		\$54000	
<b>Equipment</b>						<b>\$5 550</b>
			<b># needed</b>	<b>cost each</b>	<b>total</b>	
Bluetooth speaker			2	\$250	\$500	
Easel			3	\$100	\$300	
Computer			3	\$500	\$1500	
Shreder			1	\$250	\$250	
Copier			1	\$3000	\$3000	
Equipment Maintenance						
<b>Office Supplies</b>						<b>\$15 000</b>
(pens, paper, paper clips, staples, ink, markers, tape, post-its, etc)						

<b>Educational materials</b>						<b>\$3 600</b>
		<b>cost per month</b>	<b># of months</b>		<b>total</b>	
Educational Materials		\$100	36		\$3600	
<b>Day to day operations</b>						<b>\$293 500</b>
		<b># needed</b>	<b>cost each</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>total</b>	
Meals and refreshments		75/day	\$5/youth	5 days/ week x 52weeks x 3 years	\$2925 00	
Transportation assistance					\$1000	
<b>Experiential opportunities</b>						<b>\$225 000</b>
			<b>cost</b>	<b># needed</b>	<b>total for 3 years</b>	
			\$1000/ year/ youth	75	\$2250 00	
<b>Legal and admin</b>						<b>\$ 3 600</b>
		<b>cost per month</b>	<b># of months</b>		<b>total</b>	
Insurance		\$100	36 months		\$3600	
Fees						
<b>Other</b>						<b>\$ 2000</b>
Emergency assistance					\$2000	
<b>TOTALS</b>						<b>\$2 203 262</b>