

Connecting with Survivors: Improving Access, Building Resiliency, and Creating Safe Communities Through Collaboration Post-COVID-19

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Buncombe County Government

200 College St Suite 300
Asheville, NC 28801

Tiffany Iheanacho

tiffany.iheanacho@buncombecounty.org

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.

Connecting with Survivors: Improving Access, Building Resiliency, and Creating Safe Communities Through Collaboration Post-COVID-19

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$498,894.93

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Address disparities in public health outcomes

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

In 2013 Buncombe County (BC) tied for the 2nd highest number of domestic violence (DV) homicides in NC. We lost 8 lives to DV that year; this served as a wakeup call and began our community's conversation about how to improve access to victim services. In response, we established the Family Justice Center (FJC)

providing access to free, high quality, trauma-informed services from 10 different partner agencies in 1 location. Partners provide efficient, integrated services so victims of crime can get holistic support in a safe environment. The impact of COVID has increased the needs of survivors and the FJC is experiencing a post-COVID boom. We are seeing a steady increase in the number of survivors we are serving, as well as an increase in the intensity/complexity of the cases. This project is to meet the post-COVID need so that we can maintain our levels of service and increase our outreach efforts on high-risk and underserved groups that have been the most impacted by COVID.

Project Plan*

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

We are seeking funds to maintain our level of service for survivors during this post-COVID boom where we are seeing our intakes not only increase in quantity but also increase in levels of complexity due to the pandemic. Before the FJC, in the 1st 3 days after victimization, a survivor in BC filled out 61 forms, traveled 8 times, made 5 phone calls, talked to 21 people, waited 12 times, & received 30 referrals. Due to the many barriers that presented themselves, many never got help. Fortunately, the FJC has made these services free & more accessible to survivors through our co-located model: many partners, one location.

This structure is proving to be invaluable to survivors experiencing the fallout of COVID and the plan is to help fund positions that are necessary to carry out this work. Without additional funding, we will not be able to adequately address the needs of survivors. Justice Services Department will serve as fiscal agent and will coordinate collaboration between Project Partners. Contracted Partners will provide free services including intake, court advocacy, counseling, outreach, case management, legal services, child supervision, & assistance in victims' compensation claims to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, & child abuse at the FJC. Community prevention educators will promote services available at the FJC & focus outreach efforts on high-risk & underserved groups that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID.

Additionally, Our VOICE will assist victims of sexual violence & human trafficking with emergency housing through hotel stays when no other safe option can be identified. Pisgah Legal will advise and represent survivors in securing protection orders, child custody & support, divorce, property division, access to healthcare & public benefits, safe housing, & other legal remedies to help meet their basic needs. Helpmate will provide case managers to survivors identified at intake to have ongoing needs relating to housing, employment, childcare, etc.

Marginalized communities are at higher risk of suffering detrimental health and financial impacts of COVID. The FJC will create and implement a strategic plan through an equity & inclusion lens, creating more accessibility to those most impacted. The plan will include how to address the complex trauma that has only intensified during COVID.

The FJC is our community's spearhead in the effort to reduce domestic & sexual violence. Partners will collaborate regularly to ensure comprehensive services for victims. The model is proven to eliminate duplication, increase arrest and prosecution of offenders, & reduce fear & anxiety for victims, ultimately increasing victim safety & reducing violence. At this pivotal moment, Partners are committed to providing trauma-informed care that goes beyond the immediate impacts of violence, and will address the complex and tangible needs that survivors are experiencing in these pandemic and post-pandemic conditions.

Statement of Need*

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

FJC Partners efficiently provide essential services ensuring the needs of our community are met when it comes to this public health & safety crisis. Without our Partners, it would be impossible for the County to provide these essential services, opening dangerous gaps in our community that would create barriers for

survivors. Many of our Partners have been informed that they will experience significant funding cuts due to a national shortfall in Victims of Crime Act funding. The FJC is directly impacted by this cut which directly funds essential FJC operations. Our Partners have proven to be resilient, adaptable, & innovative & our doors at the FJC have stayed open during the pandemic. Although resilient, adequate funding is needed to support the increase in survivors seeking services & to adapt to changing needs. The FJC's Partners provide a range of services to victims, including crisis support, case management, counseling, legal advocacy, shelter, & onsite child supervision. These services are needed more than ever post-COVID.

In March 2020, the FJC saw 37 intakes when compared to 15 intakes in March 2021. As restrictions loosened, intakes in April 2021 rose 444% from April 2020 & increased 714% for May 2021 when compared to May 2020. During January-March 2020, 19% of new intakes saw more than one agency during their first visit compared to 78% in January-March 2021 showing the increased complexity of our cases. More complexity means the need for more capacity. And with the eviction moratorium set to expire at the end of July, Partners anticipate a continued need to adapt. Many survivors in BC experiencing housing insecurity will be forced to face evictions while there is a strain on emergency shelter making them more vulnerable. Historically, BC residents have relied on other county shelters for overflow but the current pressure on shelters in adjacent counties is likely to increase the number of survivors from other areas who seek emergency shelter in BC.

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.

During COVID, domestic and sexual violence was described as a "shadow pandemic." While these crimes were underreported during COVID, there is nothing new about this violence and it should not live in the shadows. What is significant about the domestic and sexual violence during COVID is that all of the deleterious effects were amplified.

Stay-at-home orders, while designed to keep people safe, unintentionally put others in danger especially those living with their abusers. Prolonged social isolation, job loss or reduction, disruption of social supports and services, caring for school-aged children, increased substance use, and general stress created specialized high-stress environments. In a research study, it was found that these stressors in addition to intimate Partners being in close proximity predicted a 20% increase of violence in the household (Buttelle et al., 2020). The intensity of the violence also increased and the mental health of survivors was also significantly impacted.

Dillon et al., 2013 cites studies that look at mental health impacts of intimate partner violence (IPV) and found that survivors of IPV are 2.3 times more likely to develop PTSD. Depression and anxiety are also prevalent in survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Not having access to care, isolation, and/or living with an abuser exacerbated or re-triggered past trauma to unmanageable levels.

When the world started opening back up, so did the floodgates.

As children went back to school and people were able to get away from their abusers, our Partners saw a surge in new cases that increased in severity and complexity. This complexity is best addressed with a co-located model like the FJC where victims have a clear path to safety or access to coordinated services. This funding would ensure the FJC is adequately resourced to meet the influx of survivors seeking services.

Population Served*

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

Buncombe County, North Carolina encompasses an area of 660 square miles with an estimated population of 261,191 as of July 2019. The City of Asheville is the county seat, with a population of 92,870 as of July 2019. Other municipalities in the County include: Town of Biltmore Forest; Town of Black Mountain; Town of Montreat; Town of Weaverville, and Town of Woodfin. BC is the project's primary service area but victims from surrounding, rural mountain communities may be served as well. This project will serve victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, dating violence, and stalking within BC, located in the Appalachian Mountains of WNC. The community is 89.4% white, 6.3% black, and 6.8% Hispanic or Latinx. An estimated 12.2% of the population lives in poverty.

Throughout the planning of BC's FJC, Partners have paid special attention to groups that are known to be underserved in the areas of domestic and sexual violence. Included in these groups are LGBTQ+, immigrant, and male victims. All of the Partners provide services to these communities. Helpmate also serves clients identified as Intensive Clients meaning they have additional substance abuse and mental health barriers in addition to their victimization and trauma. Many survivors that seek services at the FJC experience multiple types of victimizations and have experienced intergenerational trauma and/or violence.

The FJC provides essential services that address the social determinants of public health and public safety which align with local government's role in creating safe and healthy communities where all residents have opportunities to thrive.

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.

1. Project funded Intake Specialists will serve 800 new survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence or stalking annually through a trauma-informed, integrated intake process that supports survivors in understanding available services and resources including COVID-19 related services and resources. This represents a 50% increase from intakes completed during the pandemic, accounting for the spike in service demand precipitated by COVID.

Performance Measure: Number of new intakes of survivors completed by GCC funded Intake Specialists at contracted partner agencies.

2. Project funded contracted staff at partner agencies located at the FJC will provide services including counseling, legal services, advocacy, case management and other support to 3,000 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking annually.

Performance Measure: Number of survivors served by project funded staff at contracted nonprofit partner agencies located at the Family Justice Center. Contracted Partners will utilize their individual databases to record and track services provided to survivors.

3. Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking will have a plan to keep themselves safe, understand how to access resources, including emergency housing funded by this request, and experience decreased fear and anxiety after accessing intake services at the Family Justice Center.

Performance Measure: 80% of survivors reporting they have a plan to keep themselves safe on post-intake feedback form.

4. Survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking will be provided with emergency shelter through hotel stays for 43 nights annually, when no other emergency shelter option is available.

Evaluation*

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

1. Contracted Partners utilize software systems to record and track new FJC intakes.
2. Aggregate data from all partner agencies will be reported and clients may be served by more than one agency within a report period.
3. Percentage of survivors reporting decreased fear and anxiety after accessing intake services at the FJC will be captured by client feedback survey responses.
4. Partners will track project activities, project impact and expenditures including outlining the number of shelter nights provided and number of people served.

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?

Equitable efforts lift up those that are the most impacted. According to the 2020 'me too' and FreeForm report "Measuring the Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Survivors of Color," survivors of color have an elevated risk of facing food and housing insecurity during the pandemic. In fact, "among survivors, 8 out of 10 essential workers of color are facing food [and housing] insecurity under COVID-19 compared to 5 out of 10 white essential workers." Survivors experiencing this makes them more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. The report notes that "Survivors who experienced landlord sexual coercion were by 38.7% more likely to experience food and housing insecurity than those who did not." Immigrant survivors are already more isolated than others in the community, making services more difficult to access. Immigrants have also suffered higher rates of COVID. According to Immigration Court data, NC ranks last for the likelihood of having legal representation in an immigration case, and only 23.5% of immigrants have legal representation in NC. Survivors of domestic and sexual violence, especially those in marginalized groups, are among the most impacted in our community thereby more at risk of returning to the harm-doer. The FJC is building toward equitable outcomes by using an equity lens in our strategic planning process and outreach efforts and reducing barriers to those seeking services. Applying an equity and inclusion lens through our strategic planning process will allow us to identify and address root causes when it comes to race, gender identity, socio-economic status, and so on. There are many aspects to our identities and an equity and inclusion lens allows us to approach things holistically. We will use a modified toolkit from the Government Alliance on Race and Equity to ensure that we are asking the right questions and operationalizing equity. Being intentional with our outreach efforts will also ensure that we are reaching those that are the most impacted.

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.

All Partners are committed to integrated services. These Partners also have the ability to provide services in multiple languages through bilingual staff and interpretation services

Helpmate provides services to domestic violence victims, Mountain Child Advocacy Services to child victims, Our VOICE to sexual assault victims, Pisgah Legal Services provide general victims legal aid, and the YWCA of Asheville provides onsite child supervision.

Helpmate is responsible for the integrated intake that occurs at the FJC, navigating the connection of survivors presenting for services with partner agencies on-site. Helpmate case managers are assigned for ongoing needs post-intake. ~32%

Mountain Child Advocacy Center is an area nonprofit that provides prevention services, counseling and support to children and their families who have experienced abuse. ~21%

Our VOICE, the nonprofit sexual assault services provider and FJC partner, also has a program working to end human trafficking in NC. The program provides support to survivors, raises awareness through outreach and education, and works to address underlying causes through an anti-human trafficking task force. ~19%

Pisgah Legal Services provides legal assistance and advocacy to help low-income people in WNC meet their basic needs and improve their lives. They are a nonprofit law firm that provides free civil legal advice and representation to low-income people to help meet their basic needs. ~20%

The YWCA of Asheville is a nonprofit that has been serving BC for 114 years. Through the FJC partnership the YW offers free on-site child supervision for survivors seeking crisis services at the FJC. ~8%

Non-funded Partners include Asheville Police Department, BC Health and Human Services (HHS) is the County department that includes Social Work Services such as Child Protective Services (CPS), BC Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, HCA/Mission Forensic Nurses, and The SPARC Foundation.

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 FJC had its ribbon cutting on August 16th, 2016. The road to get there involved years of relationship building, intentional planning, and deep collaborative partnership. Since then, we have successfully managed multiple federal funds through the Department of Justice and Governor's Crime Commission grants. Project Partners are well-established victim services providers. They are founding on-site Partners of the FJC, and are well-positioned to understand the critical nature of maintaining the full scope of services for BC victims. All Partners have experience with managing, reporting, and tracking federal funds and are prepared to track and report on the use of BC Recovery funds in compliance with federal standards. Helpmate has been providing safety, shelter & support to domestic violence survivors for 42 years. For 47 years, Our VOICE has provided crisis support, case management, individual and group counseling, medical accompaniment and advocacy for survivors of sexual violence, as well as offering prevention education and outreach to the community. The Mountain Child Advocacy Center is a fully accredited CAC that provides evidence-based programs for prevention, advocacy, therapy, forensic interviewing and child medical exams. Several staff are national trainers in specific evidence-based models. Founded in 1978, Pisgah Legal has a capable Board, staff leadership, and vast volunteer expertise. The executive director of PLS, Jim Barrett, is one of the longest-serving ED's in WNC with almost 28 years as ED and 10 additional years as a housing and community development attorney. The YWCA of Asheville, established in 1907, is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. The YW offers programs and advocates for policy change to bridge gaps in education, health, childcare and earning power for women and families in our community and beyond. They currently serve more than 3,000 families annually.

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.

Recovery-Funds-budget-FJC.xlsx

Special Considerations*

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

The FJC is seeing a short-term pinch in funding caused by the aforementioned dramatic reductions in Victims of Crime Act funds. The shortfall in this funding was exacerbated by closures in federal courts during the pandemic. There is a bipartisan, federal fix in the works that should address this issue within the next 3-4 years. In the meantime, this project provides a critical opportunity for the County to ensure continuity of essential, non-duplicated services at a time when need is escalated by pandemic and post-pandemic conditions. With the influx of survivors seeking services, as well as the increased complexity of the cases post-pandemic, it is essential that the FJC's Partners are fully staffed and operational. The FJC cannot exist without our Partners. Our services provide a clear path towards resources, healing, and justice that will aid in COVID-19 recovery for survivors.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Recovery-Funds-budget-FJC.xlsx

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	Buncombe County Family Justice Center
Project Name:	Connecting with Survivors: Improving Access, Building Resiliency, and Creating Safe Communities Through Collaboration Post-COVID-19
Amount Requested:	\$498,894.93

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 498,894.93	Pending	
Governor's Crime Commission VOCA Grant	\$ 971,279.01	Confirmed	Federal funded money distributed by the state. Some of the amount is an in-kind match for building space and a part of the FJC Coordinator salary.
Total	\$ 1,470,173.94		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating	Notes
Sexual Violence Counselor (Year 1)	\$ 15,824.90	\$ 48,694.05	\$ 64,518.95	Operating	Our VOICE
Sexual Violence Court Advocate (Year 1)	\$ 12,355.24	\$ 37,935.72	\$ 50,290.96	Operating	Our VOICE
Sexual Violence Community Prevention Educator (Year 1)	\$ 13,500.00	\$ -	\$ 13,500.00	Operating	Our VOICE
Intake Specialist 1 (Year 1)	\$ 15,145.45	\$ 46,564.70	\$ 61,710.15	Operating	Helpmate
Intake Specialist 2 (Year 1)	\$ 17,059.44	\$ 52,499.25	\$ 69,558.69	Operating	Helpmate
Domestic Violence Counselor/Case Manager (Year 1)	\$ 16,941.96	\$ 52,088.05	\$ 69,030.01	Operating	Helpmate
Domestic Violence Case Manager (Year 1)	\$ 15,184.61	\$ 46,685.10	\$ 61,869.71	Operating	Helpmate
Domestic Violence Community Prevention Educator (Year 1)	\$ 27,500.00	\$ -	\$ 27,500.00	Operating	Helpmate
Attorney (Year 1)	\$ 20,608.39	\$ 63,360.50	\$ 83,968.89	Operating	Pisgah Legal Services
Legal Assistant (Year 1)	\$ 15,380.42	\$ 47,287.10	\$ 62,667.52	Operating	Pisgah Legal Services
Outreach, Collaboration, & Prevention Strategy (Year 1)	\$ 13,500.00	\$ -	\$ 13,500.00	Operating	Pisgah Legal Services
Onsite Child Supervision Provider (Year 1)	\$ 11,518.18	\$ 34,412.65	\$ 45,930.83	Operating	YWCA
Onsite Child Supervision Relief Staff (Year 1)	\$ 7,500.00	\$ -	\$ 7,500.00	Operating	YWCA
Child Prevention Educator (Year 1)	\$ 38,500.00	\$ -	\$ 38,500.00	Operating	Mountain Child Advocacy Center
Part-Time Child Prevention Educator (Year 1)	\$ 13,500.00	\$ -	\$ 13,500.00	Operating	Mountain Child Advocacy Center
Emergency Shelter for Survivors (Year 1)	\$ 6,500.00	\$ -	\$ 6,500.00	Operating	Our VOICE - Human Trafficking Survivors
			\$ -		
Sexual Violence Counselor (Year 2)	\$ 16,357.48	\$ 50,332.85	\$ 66,690.33	Operating	Our VOICE
Sexual Violence Court Advocate (Year 2)	\$ 12,536.36	\$ 38,543.05	\$ 51,079.41	Operating	Our VOICE
Sexual Violence Community Prevention Educator (Year 2)	\$ 13,500.00	\$ -	\$ 13,500.00	Operating	Our VOICE
Intake Specialist 1 (Year 2)	\$ 15,556.64	\$ 47,828.90	\$ 63,385.54	Operating	Helpmate
Intake Specialist 2 (Year 2)	\$ 17,524.47	\$ 53,879.00	\$ 71,403.47	Operating	Helpmate
Domestic Violence Counselor/Case Manager (Year 2)	\$ 17,397.20	\$ 53,487.70	\$ 70,884.90	Operating	Helpmate
Domestic Violence Case Manager (Year 2)	\$ 15,600.70	\$ 47,964.35	\$ 63,565.05	Operating	Helpmate
Domestic Violence Community Prevention Educator (Year 2)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	Operating	Helpmate
Attorney (Year 2)	\$ 21,636.36	\$ 66,521.00	\$ 88,157.36	Operating	Pisgah Legal Services
Legal Assistant (Year 2)	\$ 16,148.95	\$ 49,649.95	\$ 65,798.90	Operating	Pisgah Legal Services
Outreach, Collaboration, & Prevention Strategy (Year 2)	\$ 13,500.00	\$ -	\$ 13,500.00	Operating	Pisgah Legal Services
Onsite Child Supervision Provider (Year 2)	\$ 11,518.18	\$ 35,412.65	\$ 46,930.83	Operating	YWCA
Onsite Child Supervision Relief Staff (Year 2)	\$ 7,500.00	\$ -	\$ 7,500.00	Operating	YWCA
Child Prevention Educator (Year 2)	\$ 39,600.00	\$ -	\$ 39,600.00	Operating	Mountain Child Advocacy Center
Part-Time Child Prevention Educator (Year 2)	\$ 13,500.00	\$ -	\$ 13,500.00	Operating	Mountain Child Advocacy Center
Emergency Shelter for Survivors (Year 2)	\$ 6,500.00	\$ -	\$ 6,500.00	Operating	Our VOICE - Human Trafficking Survivors
Total			\$ 1,372,041.50		