

# Rebuilding LEAF as a hub for education & experiences serving local artists, business and families

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

## ***LEAF Global Arts***

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Jennifer Pickering  
19 Eagle Street Suite 120  
Asheville, NC 28801

info@theleaf.org  
O: 828-686-8742

## ***Heather Deifell***

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19 Eagle St, Suite 120  
Asheville, NC 28801

development@theleaf.org  
O: 8286868742

# 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.

Rebuilding LEAF as a hub for education & experiences serving local artists, business and families

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

\$205,000.00

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

Please select one:

Small business and non-profit support

## **Brief Project Description\***

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

LEAF Global Arts (LEAF) requests \$205,000 to support building LEAF's Global Arts Center (Global) as a community arts hub after the untimely hit from COVID. This will give LEAF time to rebuild diverse revenue streams and reestablish LEAF as the premiere, local arts organization that serves artists, arts and entertainment businesses, and families across WNC with global arts education and experiences.

LEAF's mission is connecting and creating community through music and arts education, preservation, and experiences. LEAF's mission survived COVID because of dedicated Members and critical grant support. Our operating budget was depleted so we pivoted programming and scaled back staff. We are working to rebuild LEAF's economic engine that was exhausted due to health and safety restrictions on in-person events. We want to support our collaborators in the arts and entertainment industries in new ways and solidify Global as the local cultural arts hub on "the Block" in downtown Asheville.

## Project Plan\*

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

Our local community values LEAF's mission. LEAF's project focuses on rebuilding the financial stability of LEAF from now through 2022, when in-person events are expected to fully recuperate to 100% capacity. Rebuilding will take until the fall of 2022 to satisfy debt from COVID and reestablish financial security through restoring stable and diverse revenue streams, specifically around in-person events. The financial hit from the necessary, government-mandated safety restrictions on in-person events not only devastated ticket revenue and dramatically affected sponsorships but also halted strategic plans to establish Global as the central hub for local artists and community partners.

Recovery funds will be used to support LEAF Global fully reopening. The large overhead from accumulated debts limits our capacity to book artists, promote events, complete installations, update infrastructure needed, and even staff the facility. Global reopened to the public on June 16, 2021, after being shut down within the first month of the original opening on February 14, 2020. The development of Global's programming and installations were approximately 80% complete upon initial opening and it was expected to take three months to become fully operational as a resource for our community and connection for visitors. LEAF had to cancel all performances, arts education classes, field trips, and community engagement events like Learning Journeys. LEAF events created mission-critical revenue that would have supported establishing Global as a community arts hub. LEAF's limited revenue from Membership and grant funds have been needed to focus on keeping LEAF alive through the COVID pandemic.

LEAF will utilize Recovery funds to build up Global events and programming safely through 2022 to employ and engage locals from impacted industries. Over the last 26 years, LEAF events have employed and engaged artists, vendors, local independent contractors, and small production businesses, all of whom have been significantly impacted because of the limitation on in-person events due to 14 months of significant health restrictions. LEAF's track record for collaborating with local community members and organizations is well established to support LEAF's long-term sustainability.

Funds will be used to hire staff to coordinate and facilitate all activities at Global from classes to performances to facility rental and recording studio rental to exhibits and openings, and more. A sound engineer is also needed to support performances and studio recording sessions. LEAF will use funds to update the website to function for class registration, rentals, and information for locals and visitors. Marketing will need to be built from scratch again due to the untimely closing. Funds will also support operational costs to keep Global consistently open by supporting overhead until LEAF's in-person events can recover and establish a consistent revenue stream.

## Statement of Need\*

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

The Asheville Area Art Council's recent arts sector survey highlighted that the protection of our local artists and the organizations that employ them is an outstanding need post-COVID. In the "Summary of

Qualitative Findings - Biggest Concerns/Needs in 2021” they state that the biggest concerns and needs for Nonprofits Arts Businesses are affordable marketing/PR to relaunch business, maintaining employees at current hours and salary, mental health uncertainty, recession, affordable spaces to work, rehearse, and perform post-COVID, and continuing inability to perform/hold live events. It is imperative that LEAF provides affordable spaces for artists to work, rehearse, record and perform through Global.

LEAF critically needs funds for marketing and website updates for their location downtown on “the Block.” LEAF has the opportunity to create a thriving location in a non-thriving part of downtown. This location will not only be an arts educational hub for the community and tourists, but will also be a venue reaching a diverse group of demographics. Marketing funds will allow LEAF to bring awareness of Global and create job opportunities for local artists recovering from the impact of COVID.

LEAF is the primary, local nonprofit organization to support arts and arts education through in-person events which draw over 50,000 participants over a typical year. We ordinarily support more than 160 artists and 150 small businesses/vendors through our events including local musicians, dancers, actors, circus artists, healing arts instructors, and visual artists who gain income through vending our large events. LEAF also employs 400 local contractors to facilitate our large, in-person events. LEAF needs to grow large in-person events to help these impacted industries and reestablish this mission-critical revenue stream.

During COVID we lost critical members of the LEAF team including teaching artists. This project will help LEAF create job opportunities and support artists.

### [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.

COVID-19 interrupted LEAF’s trajectory as it has many local organizations. Celebrating our 25th year, LEAF opened a Global in downtown Asheville in February 2020 to provide a year-round location for LEAF’s unique, immersive experience to deepen our impact, support artists, and create financial sustainability beyond festival events. With Global, we added part-time jobs, contracted curator positions, local residential artist classes, an intimate music venue for local bands, DJs, poets, and songwriters, and a recording studio for local musicians and storytellers. When we opened Global, LEAF was on track with fundraising goals but was critically interrupted in March 2020 because of COVID. LEAF took on the overhead of a facility (Global) at an unfortunate time. LEAF also had a “rainy day” fund with the Community Foundation of WNC over the last 15 years which had never needed to be activated but unfortunate weather-related events depleted these funds in 2019.

In April we pushed back our 50th Festival scheduled for May 2020 and by mid-April 2020 further cost reduction measures were necessary with half our full-time staff being furloughed and the other half reducing hours by 25%. All our events in 2020 and so far in 2021 have been restructured to become hybrid events that paired virtual with very limited in-person events but this shift did not cover the \$500,000+ of mission-critical revenue lost from the extended closure of large, in-person events.

These Recovery Funds are critical in helping LEAF rebuild the infrastructure necessary to facilitate safe, effective arts programming at Global as an arts hub on the historic “Block.” Funding support will give LEAF events time to rebuild large in-person events that connect cultures and create community by engaging artists, vendors, small production businesses, and local independent contractors, which will reestablish necessary revenue streams to support Global as a cultural arts hub.

## Population Served\*

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

Through its core events and programs, LEAF served approximately 50,000 adults and youth across the globe annually prior to COVID. Our large festival event participants include local artists and families as well as a large influx of tourists from the region. Our local arts education program, LEAF Schools and Streets (LSS), served 9,000 Buncombe County youth, making it the largest provider of arts enrichment education across the county. We estimate that Global will draw from our large festival population as well as engage local students with field trips throughout a typical school calendar year.

LEAF Downtown became a celebrated and highly attended FREE event in the heart of Asheville. This two-day music and arts event has grown to over 25,000 attendees of all ages, demographics, and economic backgrounds. Of the 60% local audience, LEAF targets families and persons of color populations that are traditionally underrepresented in mainstream culture.

Our market will initially consist of LEAF Festival, Retreat, and Downtown attendees but will also market through community partners, including schools. We expect this to expand as Global gains traction in regional and national markets. LEAF maintains a mailing list of over 24,000 households across the Southeast and beyond. Our marketing plan will increase online marketing within a 275-mile radius of Asheville representing 3.7 million individuals.

Because of the location of Global as part of the Block, a historically African American community, we expect and hope for more diversity of attendees than that found across the Asheville area population. Although our first 16 months of operations were highly unusual, the demographics of visitors at Global were 39% BIPOC, 45% white, and 16% other. In 2022, we expect 7500+ visitors to Global with 2000-2500 locals served in some capacity through visits, classes, workshops, and/or Global events.

## 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.

Goal 1: to support LEAF Global, an impacted local nonprofit, by building a consistent revenue stream through programming to establish an arts and culture hub that engages artists, vendors, independent contractors, & visitors year-round. Visitor numbers will increase from 812 in 2020 to 7500 visitors for all of 2022 and increase engagement of artists from 4 currently to 48 in 2022.

Goal 2: to support impacted arts and festival industry community members by engaging artists, vendors, independent contractors, & participants at 4 events building LEAF's Festival events back by October 2022 to 100% capacity, which is 10,000 participants with full performance and vending capacities supporting 160 artists, 150 vendors, and employing 400 local independent contractors. The outcome of this goal would be a return to bringing in \$275,000+ needed to support critical mission revenue.

Goal 3: Promote DEI through (a) LEAF's year-round Global experience on the Block, (b) LEAF Downtown 2022 event, and (c) year-long "Legends of Africa" theme for Black Mountain Festival events throughout 2022. All three DEI initiatives will combine to reach a total audience of at least 44,000 (up from 28,600 expected in-person attendees in 2021 and 944 in-person attendees in 2020).

## Evaluation\*

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

LEAF utilizes a data tracking system called File Maker which collects information from all attendees of LEAF events. Through File Maker, surveys are collected from attendees for quality assurance measures. Grant funds will be used to upgrade File Maker software to integrate Global events and arts education classes in order to track data for analysis and surveys to effectively monitor grant requirements and outcomes.

Global currently collects information of all visitors including age, demographics, and locals vs. tourists to analyze trends and community interest. LEAF is currently strategizing effective ways to collect additional pertinent information including visitor surveys and ways to encourage repeated engagement. LEAF's Navigator leadership team will also regularly analyze Global's data during regular team meetings to proactively seek trends and assess feedback from visitors, artists, vendors, contractors, and partners.

Art classes, field trips, and Summer camps engage local youth and utilize the Creative Youth Development model by empowering local youth using lesson plans and evaluations driven by Search Institute's Developmental Assets®. The Search Institute has identified 40 assets which consist of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful, contributing adults by building assets to prepare youth for college &/or career and citizenship. LSS' program goals, curriculum, teacher and student evaluations align with the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) by targeting and assessing 6 specific assets which include Community Values Youth, Adult Role Models, Creative Activities, Cultural Competence, Personal Power, & Self-Esteem.

## 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?

LSS brings arts & culture to local communities with limited access such as neighborhoods managed by Mountain Housing Opportunities (MHO), Asheville Parks & Recreation programs, and other community partners with diverse, underserved populations. By meeting people in their context, our Teaching Artists bring art in an accessible, relatable way through all art forms. Our commitment to employing artists from diverse backgrounds supports our desire to address inequities. Over 80% of our program staff are BIPOC which include Teaching Artists and Culture Keepers who lead youth. Approximately 60% of the youth audience identify as BIPOC.

LEAF illustrates the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion through our long-standing equity Learning Journeys. As we create LEAF Global within "the Block" community we seek to break down "isms," bring people together and channel creativity. Our intention is to address local problems and deliver meaningful, globally-minded programs. Through LEAF Global, we work with communities to amplify the voices of those who are transforming societies and create space for timely & meaningful discussion.

LEAF Global exists within a local affordable housing complex, created by MHO, owned by Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation (EMSDC). The priority of the Eagle Market Place apartments is to create space for Black community members who have been displaced by urbanization to have a welcoming place to celebrate their culture and history. LEAF collaborates with EMSDC, MHO, the YMI Cultural Center, and other Block businesses to (re)establish "the Block" as a multi-cultural destination of downtown Asheville. LEAF is committed to engaging minority-owned businesses and subcontractors to support just and equitable business practices. For example, D Davis Construction, the only local Black-owned construction company that has generational roots specific to the Global facility, which will forever hold the title of the historic "Club Del Cardo".

## 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.

Global has two different types of subcontractors: performers/teachers and operational. Performers/teachers include teaching artists, performers (musicians/poets/writers), buskers, and small event musicians.

- Our goal for LEAF Global Experience in 2022 is to host 3 workshops/classes per week (156 for the year). These would all be taught by local artists and hosted at Global. While we anticipate some repeat artists, we estimate that at least 30 different artists would be contracted to bring 15% of the overall scope of the work.

- We also anticipate hosting live performances weekly focusing on artists that are local to the Asheville area. We expect a handful of repeat performances but would have 30+ local performers to bring 30% of the overall scope of the work.

- We'd also like to host different buskers as we are able throughout the warmer months but anticipate a smaller selection of about 10-15 to bring 5% of the overall scope of the work.

- We'll also host quarterly events that will feature various themes and 3-4 local musicians/bands. We expect these local-focused initiatives to account for 50% of the overall scope of the work.

For operations, we also want to continue utilizing local companies including:

- Marketing is 3% of the overall project budget and includes Jawbreaking, Dig Local, & Love Asheville.
- The facility is 49% of the overall project budget and includes D Davis Construction for facility upgrading and Image Solutions and Interactive Knowledge for tech services.

Our 2022 goals are to partner with 90 different artists and 35 local business partners to serve at least 7500 visitors in 2022.

See a list of community partners (non-funded) in "Special Considerations."

## 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.

LEAF has 26 years of experience working with artists to produce events. LEAF has completed 56 signature events and facilitated 17 years of LSS classes with over 17,000 artists. LSS has provided year-round arts education programming led by local teaching artists to more than 80,400 local youth (LSS) since 2004 and globally to more than 3,250 youth in 10 different countries (LEAF International) since 2006.

The locations of LEAF events are complex in nature and require an extensive system of staffing and volunteers. In addition to our full-time staff, LEAF contracts 300-400 festival staff and schedules over 500 volunteers for a typical LEAF Festival. Approximately 150 performances occur at typical LEAF Festivals. In 2015, LEAF debuted another signature event, LEAF Downtown AVL, a two-day event hosted in the heart of downtown Asheville free to the public. The new LEAF Retreat format was a product of our COVID pivot which had limited in-person activities to keep safety protocols but also introduced our virtual festival (VLEAF.org). This pivot resulted in the creation of an intimate atmosphere enthusiastically embraced by LEAF patrons so LEAF will continue to provide this smaller format. LEAF also hosts LEAF Love events that are intimate performances around the southeast, sometimes in the homes of Members. The versatile background and understanding of producing LEAF events support our capability to program a year-round location with a variety of experiences that engage and support local artists, small businesses, and the local economy.

LEAF has received, implemented, and reported on numerous federally-funded government grants including 12 grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), six NC Arts Council State, and an NC Department of Commerce grant. We are confident in the delivery and management of this funding opportunity.

## 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-LEAF.xlsx

## Special Considerations\*

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

As mentioned above in our Project Plan, our local community values LEAF's mission. This is evident from LEAF sponsors, funders, and community partners who have supported LEAF and the expansion of Global as a year-round hub.

Direct sponsors: Explore AVL, Bank of America, Togar Rugs, Sunnyside Trading, Dan Lucas Foundation, and Ben Gradison Foundation

Indirect sponsors: Echo Mountain, GoPro, CPCC Central Piedmont Community College, Vinnies Italian, Interactive Knowledge, Eckerd Foundation, and The Glass Foundation

Community Partners: Mountain Housing Opportunities (MHO), Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation (EMSDC), YMI Cultural Center, Buncombe County Schools, Asheville City Schools, Christine W. Avery Learning Center, YMCA of Western North Carolina, Asheville Parks & Recreation, Children First/Communities in Schools, Asheville Area Arts Council, Hola Carolina, Beloved, East End/Valley Street: Neighborhood Association, Open Doors of Asheville, Asheville Downtown Association, and more.

We hope that Buncombe County will consider the duration and investment LEAF has made in our local community over the last 26 years and the lasting relationships LEAF has built. These funds will be managed effectively by LEAF and have a lasting impact to support our community recovering from the COVID pandemic and its negative economic impacts, especially on the arts and entertainment industries. LEAF is aligned with the county's priorities, committed to equitable outcomes for artists and small businesses, and continuing to seek and coordinate with other funding sources to make the best use of these timely and much-needed resources.

# File Attachment Summary

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## *Applicant File Uploads*

- Recovery-Funds-budget-LEAF.xlsx

## Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

<b>Organization Name:</b>	LEAF Global Arts
<b>Project Name:</b>	Building LEAF Global
<b>Amount Requested:</b>	\$205,000

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 205,000.00	pending	grant support until revenue streams built/consistent
Admissions	\$ 20,000.00	pending	Based on current trends and experience plus expanded hours
Special Events	\$ 40,000.00	pending	Expanding ticketed shows, activities and events at Global
Facility Rentals	\$ 15,000.00	pending	Private rentals of the Global facilities for community groups,
Merchandise	\$ 15,000.00	pending	Should increase as visitor numbers increase
Concessions	\$ 12,000.00	pending	Should increase as visitor numbers increase
Sponsorships	\$ 40,000.00	partial confirmed/partial pending	Indirect Sierra Nevada, Empire, French Broad Brewing, Devils Foot Beverage Co
List other sources here			
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List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 347,000.00</b>		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating	Notes
Artist programs	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	operating	local artists performances, workshops etc
Marketing	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	operating	partial costs from local providers: Jawbreaking, Dig Local, Love AVL, etc.
Performance Fees	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	operating	Artists for Special ticketed events
Production Costs	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 10,000.00	operating	Sound, lighting, streaming, etc costs for live events
Staffing	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	operating	etc
Supplies	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 15,000.00	operating	materials, equipment, backline, etc for events
Facility costs	\$ 92,000.00	\$ 78,000.00	\$ 170,000.00	operating	rent, utilities, maintenance, tech, necessary upgrades, etc
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List expenses here			\$ -		
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<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 347,000.00</b>		