

# To & Through College Access and Completion Initiative

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

## *OpenDoors of Asheville*

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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.

To & Through College Access and Completion Initiative

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

\$90,000.00

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

Please select one:

Services for disproportionately impacted communities

## **Brief Project Description\***

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

The 'To & Through' College Access and Completion initiative is a whole-child informed approach to supporting students most impacted by the race-based opportunity and achievement gap in Asheville City and Buncombe County. OpenDoors works alongside parents and educators to ensure that our students can create personal and family stability, while accessing social resources, equity, and inclusion they need to thrive. Our

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery

students move ‘To & Through’ Kindergarten-College and onto sustainable careers to become inspired members of our community by providing academic support and targeted academic interventions along with supporting access to transportation, housing advocacy, an array of diverse enrichment and employment opportunities, and advocating to reduce institutional barriers. Our mission is to strengthen our community by eliminating the race-based achievement and opportunity gap for students through education. We envision a community in which all students thrive.

## Project Plan\*

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

Our 2021-2022 programming focuses on targeted education strategies addressing COVID learning loss and ongoing college readiness. The time frame of this project extends from January of 2021 to the end of the 2022 school year for measurement. Tutoring will continue past the points of measurement. Data collection includes hours that students participate in tutoring sessions and comparison of individual students’ applicable grades at the start and end of their tutoring measurement for improvement outcomes. OpenDoors staff compiled a growing list of students who need tutors in 2020/2021. We keep a dashboard describing our roster of 90 students as “watch,” “warn,” or “alarm” using the ‘Overall Risk Factors’ of the United Way’s shared Early Warning Response System. OpenDoors’ Director of Impact and Program Excellence communicates with students’ families to develop prescriptive summer plans for necessary academic interventions, BestFit school placements, and matching students with trained tutors for the coming school year.

To eliminate summer academic slide and promote academic growth, our education staff coordinates psychoeducational assessments, matches students with experienced, vetted tutors according to holistic, individual needs and supplies supportive technology. We recruit, train, and compensate tutors year-round to reinforce foundational skills and ensure grade level competencies for eventual college readiness.

Staff and volunteers remain in consistent contact with college students, and utilize summer months to prepare rising and returning college students for their post-COVID reentry. We survey students quarterly to ensure they have the resources for housing, nutrition, tuition, class registration, transportation, and are on track to graduate. We identify tuition gaps, support students in researching and applying for scholarships to close these gaps before the Fall semester begins. We also offer our own scholarship program to supplement the cost of living associated with college enrollment. Covid-related closures and shifts to online learning created an increase of cost of living in terms of housing, technology, and transportation expenses. Our college support increased approximately 27% for the first semester under Covid-19, then an additional increase of 54% on top of that when the 2nd semester during Covid-19 hit. Our scholarship program requires students to develop individualized plans and budgets so they can meet their academic and career goals. We uplift and educate students so that they navigate the world with confidence and accountability.

Academic interventions are measured and communicated to staff, Board, and funders as outcomes in our annual report and used for program revisions each academic year.

## Statement of Need\*

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

This initiative addresses critical ways to support students so they can reach their academic and career potential. We acknowledge and attempt to eliminate institutional barriers to uplift families who are disproportionately impacted by the race-based opportunity gap and who historically experience lower educational attainment.

According to the 2018-2019 data revealed in the Racial Equity Report Card by the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, Asheville City Schools indicated 78% of Black students are not proficient and are below grade level, in comparison to 17% of white children who are not proficient in English Language Arts/Reading

Performance (Ruffin 2020). OpenDoors is committed to closing the opportunity gap through education and access to equitable resources, such as food security, housing, transportation, and enrichment opportunities.

OpenDoors seeks to continue to employ our current staff, recruit new staff members to intake students on our waiting list, increase both the number of students served and the number of programs offered, and expand and improve in the depth of services provided. Student success rates improve due to the increase in staffing and greater capacity to track and support student experiences and measure outcomes.

An imperative component of our To & Through initiative is providing access to trained tutors, especially for students with learning differences like Dyslexia who need Orton Gillingham or related multisensory methodologies. Students who progress through college need additional scholarship support so that they graduate with less than \$15,000 in student loans. To address the above data related to English Language Arts/Reading Performance proficiency, OpenDoors seeks funding to provide financial aid for best in class tutors for students whose literacy rates are below grade level, who require assessments, and need additional funding to attend and progress through college to a degree and career.

### 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.

It is well documented that COVID-19 disproportionately impacted Black and Brown families in the context of education, health, and economic welfare. Data demonstrates that “the working class Black and Latino neighborhoods being hammered with COVID-19 cases correlate to neighborhoods whose school children lack access to both digital learning devices and broadband, as [schools] roll out remote learning. These neighborhoods have suffered from decades of civic disinvestment and institutional racism, with higher levels of low-income workers—thousands of whom are considered 'essential' and relying on public transportation to get them to their low-wage jobs” (2020). Because economically disadvantaged children, who are disproportionately Black and Latinx, perform academically at lower levels than white and affluent peers, the achievement gap is predicted to worsen (Cesarre, 2020).

The use of this funding works to address the harm of COVID-19 inflicted on communities of color. Funding will allow OpenDoors to support a greater number of staff who in turn will be able to provide access to educational and career opportunities for students served. Because students generally demonstrate learning loss during remote learning, we intend to match students to tutors who are trained to address their specific needs through the summer and school year to stay on track for grade level academic achievement and graduation. College support funding will allow ODA to award more scholarships for college students to close their tuition gaps and allow them to graduate with little to no debt as they enter the workforce. OpenDoors students struggled to make an income during the pandemic and as a result were required to use rollover scholarship funds to provide for their basic needs and tuition; funds which could have gone towards grad school. This funding would position students to have equitable access to an education which their affluent and white counterparts are not struggling to obtain.

### Population Served\*

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

OpenDoors of Asheville prioritizes students most impacted by the race-based achievement and opportunity gap. As a result, we are currently and historically serving only students of color, primarily those families using section 8 vouchers and the Black community within the Housing Authority City of Asheville (HACA) neighborhoods. In 2020, OpenDoors served over 90 students and 45 guardians; our goal is to expand the depth and breadth of students we are able to serve in the coming years. We serve students in both the

Asheville City and Buncombe County School Systems. As a result of this project, we will be able to expand our reach of support in Asheville's Black and Brown communities.

## 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 impact of this project will yield the following outcomes:

### Outcome 1

90% of the active students on the OpenDoors of Asheville student roster progress to the next grade level.

Students' attendance, behavior, and course completion (ABC's) and quarterly grades will be evaluated monthly or at the time of their release to ensure students are receiving the most effective interventions.

### Outcome 2

8 of our 10 enrolled college students remain on track to graduate in no more than five years with less than 15K in accumulated debt, demonstrate awareness of graduation requirements and participate in internships or volunteering in possible career paths, and select a viable major by their 3rd year in a university.

### Outcome 3

85% of the active students on the OpenDoors of Asheville roster demonstrate improvements in meeting academic, financial, or socio/emotional milestones by participating in at least 3 enrichment programs per calendar year and/or attend no less than 80% of their tutoring sessions.

### Outcome 4

OpenDoors Students will experience an increase in hours of one-on-one tutoring from 2020 to present for the duration of the 2021-2022 summer and 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.

Every student enrolled with OpenDoors is reviewed and evaluated at a minimum of twice each year. We measure the success of the program based on:

Improvement in attendance, behavior, and course completion and/or quarterly grades

High school graduation rates of non-OpenDoors students from the same school district or county, as well as nationally

Improved acceptance rate into higher education or trade school

Improved GPA while attending college

Desire to attend and/or acceptance into post graduate level programs

Identity development

Increased self esteem

Ability to maintain a positive attitude toward learning

Cultural and historical awareness

Using a variety of tools (e.g., Learning Circle, Emergency Warning Response Systems, self-reported information, etc.) we evaluate our results by grade level as follows:

To & Through:

**College Graduates Result:** 80% of college students graduate on-time, with little or no debt, ready for the next step of their personal and professional journeys

**College Years Result:** College students demonstrate an understanding of progressing toward graduation, exhibit an in-depth understanding of their financial situation, and feel positive about their performance and experience in college

**12th Grade Result:** All college-bound 12th grade students graduate on-time and ready to enter college with academic and financial skills.

**11th Grade Result:** All college-bound 11th grade students demonstrate an understanding of the college admissions process, maintain personal and academic progress toward college enrollment, ACT/SAT test-prep and success, and have initiated the college inquiry process.

**Grades K - 10 Result:** Students achieve above expected yearly academic growth, sustain an express commitment to HS graduation and higher education, and are promoted to the next grade level.

**Enrichment: All Ages Result:** Students gain measurable Social and Emotional Skills through OpenDoors programming, sports teams, and/or after school and summer offerings.

## 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 To & Through College initiative works to build an equitable and sustainable recovery from COVID-19. We also address ongoing systemic inequities by providing opportunities and access for students who otherwise do not possess the resources to do so. We add resources such as an individualized support team for students, Orton Gillingham trained tutors who specialize in dyslexia and other learning differences, and scholarships and financial aid and financial literacy training for students to confidently move To & Through college. OpenDoors cultivates a community where all students thrive and become well-resourced adults with sustainable careers. In the OpenDoors community, the pandemic's impact perpetuates the impacts of systemic racism and is addressed by educating and supporting the whole child. As a result of academic and enrichment interventions, students experience improved access and greater academic achievement.

OpenDoors values equity and inclusion and we recognize that there is deep and wide systemic work to be done to dismantle social and economic injustices, including racial inequities in education that have a significant negative impact, and contribute to other discrimination-based injustices. Our staff is committed to listening, asking questions, and collaborating with students, families, individual supporters, and community partners.

## 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 intend to maintain and continue to build relationships with tutors to specifically support the academic component of our To & Through College Completion Initiative. Tutors develop individualized lesson plans and provide their time weekly with, or sometimes at a greatly discounted, compensation. We ask partners to provide 50% of their services pro bono to OpenDoors students, and we match them, so that we promote

community investment in the success of our students. Tutors will perform 11% of the scope of work for these components of the overall To & Through program.

Non-funded key partners who are critical to the project include, but are not limited to, Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools, United Way's Early Warning and Response Systems (EWRS), and other Best-Fit private and Charter schools.

## 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.

OpenDoors of Asheville incorporated in 2009 to ensure that every child has the individualized support needed to thrive. We celebrated our first college graduate this spring, and she is continuing on to graduate school. Our two rising college seniors are also headed to graduate programs in the fields of health and human services.

Five of our direct service staff members identify as Black and grew up in Asheville with connections to the community whom we serve, and two of our staff are former OpenDoors students. Key staff who support this program possess classroom teaching experience, Racial Equity Training, degrees and academic training in Child Development, Sociology, Human Rights, and Africana Studies, and have long standing relationships with Asheville's Black and brown communities.

While it is important to enter this work with experience, it is equally important that staff and volunteers be curious and approach the work with a growth mindset. OpenDoors supports professional development for all staff through financial assistance, goal setting, and various certificate or credentialed offerings. Examples of scheduled in-house training topics for 2021 include: Racial Equity Institute training for all staff and key volunteers, Key Learning Center's Annual Best Practices in Multisensory Teaching and Learning Symposium, and eCornell's Diversity and Inclusion Certificate program.

## 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.

Budget for Covid Relief Grant - FINAL.pdf

## Special Considerations\*

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

ODAnnualReport2020.jpg

Attached is our 2020 Annual Report for your review.



## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- Budget for Covid Relief Grant - FINAL.pdf
- ODAAnnualReport2020.jpg



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			<b>Total</b>	\$ 1,125,635.99		



## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



*Invest in a student & strengthen our community.*