

## Violence Interrupters Street Team

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*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

### *The SPARC Foundation*

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# Application Form

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## 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.

Violence Interrupters Street Team

## Amount of Funds Requested\*

\$442,750.00

## Recovery Fund Eligible Category\*

Please select one:

Services for disproportionately impacted communities

## Brief Project Description\*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

SPARC is applying to address safety & health for communities experiencing high rates of violence. In Buncombe County communities of poverty, residents lack access to the things that provide residents with pride, safety, & health. In order to recover from COVID & increasing violence, residents require positive activities for kids, engagement of elders, healing programs, access to economic mobility. Through a multi-

disciplinary team approach, our Street Team addresses these needs through youth mentorship, trauma/resiliency work, connections to jobs. Funding would enhance the capabilities of this team to provide more timely relief from COVID. Recovery will include a scholarship program for young adults focused on economic mobility through educational supports/trade school certifications or small business start up. Funding would also provide stipends for residents who have trust & influence to help rebuild community & the social cohesion required to combat violence & COVID isolation.

## Project Plan\*

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

“The roots of violence reach deep into society, tapping into such complex conditions as poverty, racism, joblessness, and hopelessness” [1]. Violence Interrupters Street Team (VIST) is currently providing direct services to residents in Buncombe County. Daily activities focus on engagement with residents: positive activities with younger children, engagement with elders, healing circles with anyone ready to process the impacts of violence and COVID. Strategies are intended to be long term & varied to match the complexity of the conditions that create violence. In its first year, VIST has been laying the foundation for the work which includes relationship & trust building, surveying of residents & 24/7 response to communities in crisis. Additional funding for this program will enhance its capabilities & better deliver healing & resources to communities deeply impacted by violence and COVID.

A scholarship program for young adults living in poverty will provide financial access to college, programs to support academic success, GED prep, certifications for trade jobs or small business start up. In year one of the grant, partner agencies will develop a Scholarship Committee to include residents, staff, and community members who will design criteria for scholarship, application and determination process. In year two, fifty scholarships will be available in the amount of \$5000.

VIST has determined that an effective strategy in community engagement is utilizing trusted influencers that live in neighborhoods where programming is focused. When the program needs to inform the community of pro-social activities, these influencers help get the word out. When the program has surveys for residents, these influencers conduct interviews. Influencers will combat the pull to gangs/crime with prosocial activities. Ensuring influencers are paid is critical to the strategy rolling out effectively. Funding would pay for one thousand hours of influencer time per year, over 2 years.

Street Team members have reported a need to have mobile devices that can be used to support residents in accessing resources, completing online applications and more. For safety, clothing that identifies staff as VIST staff is necessary. Funding would provide tablets and clothing.

In order to properly administer a scholarship program and the other above enhancements, each partner agency will experience increased staff wages for leadership/staff dedicated to the program. Direct finance of these wages ensures proper implementation over the two year period.

SPARC’s focus on equity and response to COVID includes internal examination & support to staff. The agency has goals to provide an equitable work experience for all staff. In order to achieve, our People & Culture Coordinator is designing a program to support BIPOC staff in professional development & leadership role attainment. Funding would allow implementation of this program & the on going work of our Equity Advocates Team.

## Statement of Need\*

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

Low income neighborhoods experience a lack of resources & higher rates of violence than other neighborhoods. Distrust in police prevents useful policing strategies. Residents fear retribution. "Children exposed to gun violence may experience negative short- and long-term psychological effects, including anger, withdrawal, posttraumatic stress, and desensitization to violence. All of these outcomes can feed into a continuing cycle of violence" [2].

Nationally, homicides & gun assaults are "significantly elevated" in 2020 & first quarter of 2021 compared to previous years [3]. Locally, gun violence reported by APD has similarly increased. Asheville City Schools data shows 82% of black students graduating from high school but only 17% achieve a bachelor's degree compared to 55% of white students. For teenagers, the costs of college applications, tuition, books, school tours are prohibitive. Some young adults desire trade school instead of college. There are no fee waivers for Real Estate classes, Home Inspection certifications or other trades that produce higher incomes. Small business startup loans are not available to families that have no equity or financial assets.

COVID effects are numerous. Older adults are isolated. Families fear violence & remain in homes. Children have been cut off from after-school activities that provide positive outlets. "The anti-violence efforts of street outreach workers and other non-police actors who engage directly with those at the highest risk for violence must also be strengthened and sustained." [3] Providing opportunities directly to residents of these communities is critical to healing from violence & COVID.

Nationally, the disparities in leadership positions for BIPOC staff are not due to different aspirations, skills or qualifications. BIPOC deserve a level playing field to achieve leadership. "Survey results consistently indicate less than 20% of executive directors/CEOs of nonprofits are people of color" [4].

## 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.

Communities already experiencing high rates of trauma due to violence & lack of opportunity were re-traumatized by an unpredictable pandemic. COVID affected the academic progress of most students while adding more stressors to parents who became unemployed or experienced a loss in childcare. Young adults require work experience, educational opportunities & skill building in order to transition successfully to adulthood. Most of these opportunities were eliminated during COVID.

COVID effects have been well documented across the academic world. Younger students are falling behind academically, while older students were less likely to apply for college.

"Applications for federal student aid were down 16 percent this fall, as were submissions to the Common Application...The drop there was larger from Hispanic and low-income students.." [5].

Young adults perceive an uncertain future exacerbated by COVID. Without direct support, young adults may miss opportunities that provide economic mobility. Funding would offer scholarships to young adults for college expenses, certification programs or small business start up. Investing in healthy transitions to adulthood will provide sustainable progress for families.

To counter the effects of "gang law" which gained traction during COVID, social programs aimed at children, young adults and elders will provide new opportunities positively impacting residents. By investing in the residents within these communities who have relationships with other residents, solutions are built within the community. Stipends will be paid to community members for their participation in developing the social cohesion required to combat the violence and heal from COVID effects.

Leadership support & opportunities to SPARC BIPOC staff will promote economic mobility and equity.

## Population Served\*

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

Residents who live in communities experiencing high rates of violence are at high risk for post-traumatic stress symptoms. The impact of violence creates a negative effect on one's overall health. Appropriately addressing these effects through development of coping skills, education and support can increase resilience of residents to improve their mental health and economic mobility. For the purpose of this funding, the project will focus on residents living in Public Housing in Asheville as that is where high rates of violence are reported. There are 8 public housing developments in Asheville with a total of 1432 units, housing over 2,900 residents.

Data from Housing Authority of City of Asheville reports the following:

88% of residents are deemed extremely low income (0-30% of median income)

39% are female head of household with children

Head of household's race: 39% white; 56% black; 4% other

Of current families, 38% have lived in public housing 5-10 years; 31% for 2-5 years.

1178 children ages 0-17.

The Violence Interrupters Street Team currently focuses activities in Hillcrest and Klondyke Apartments, with expansion to other communities in future years. Scholarships and stipends to residents will be made available to residents of public housing. With high rates of families living in public housing for greater than 5 years, their economic mobility has clearly been challenged. The scholarship program is intended and focused in order to provide a launchpad out of public housing.

SPARC staff identify as 44% BIPOC; 56% white. The leadership team is 33% BIPOC.

SPARC's professional development curriculum is specific to serving BIPOC staff in their pursuit of leadership positions.

## 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. Young adults will experience an increase in economic mobility through access to funding for academic or career advancement.
  - a. A scholarship committee will be formed with members from local non profits, residents from public housing, educators, business leaders and other community members.
  - b. Specific criteria for scholarships will be determined and information canvassed in the community.
  - c. 50 young adults will receive scholarships up to \$5000 each.
2. Residents of public housing communities experiencing high rates of violence will have access to pro-social activities designed to build community cohesion.
  - a. Violence Interrupters Street Team members will identify residents to participate in VIST activities.
  - b. Residents will be paid stipends of \$20/hr for their work in influencing and supporting VIST goals.
  - c. 1000 Total hours will be paid to residents.

3. BIPOC SPARC staff will receive an equitable experience in the workplace and be offered an opportunity to receive coaching on professional development and leadership.
  - a. SPARC's People & Culture Coordinator will complete development of the curriculum.
  - b. 25% of SPARC BIPOC staff will participate in the professional development curriculum.

## Evaluation\*

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

In our current project, the Violence Interrupters Street Team is collecting data on numbers of residents receiving services, such as Healing Circles, youth engagement activities, engagement activities for elders, resource connection. The above goals will be added to tracking forms for collection of data.

While survey fatigue is a current challenge for residents in public housing, it is also an important indicator of health as experienced by residents and a useful quality assurance tool. With support from residents earning stipends, resident surveys will be utilized to assess the impacts of violence on residents; and the usefulness of VIST strategies in improving health, particularly in response to COVID recovery.

Scholarship awards will track age, sex, income level, and purpose.

Project leadership meet on a weekly basis to assess activities, make adjustments to meet needs, and plan for future activities. Quarterly, the leadership meet to review data and report to the funder.

For SPARC's equity plan, SPARC conducts staff surveys focused on equity in the workplace. Data will track staff responses and be used to identify training and support needs.

## 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?

A just, equitable and sustainable COVID recovery recognizes the disparate impacts of the pandemic on low-income communities, particularly communities of color. Economic mobility for people of color will be addressed through activities focused in low income communities as well as internal SPARC activities for BIPOC staff. Resources and opportunities will be provided with greater emphases on the people most impacted by COVID.

56% of public housing head of household identify as black while only 11% of Asheville's population is black. Black residents have experienced a loss in generational wealth due to racist policies. Disparities in school data from academic success to suspensions highlight the challenges for black students and results in the disparities seen in college attendance and ultimately economic wealth. Isolated communities cut off from resources breed violence. Added together, these inequities equal up to poorer health outcomes and less wealth for black Ashevillians.

To counter these disparities, funding provides direct resources to the people most negatively impacted by COVID. Providing an alternative pathway to young adults is critical to detouring them away from violence and gang life. Promoting positive influencers not only puts money directly into the hands of people who need it most, but also provides them with pride and the motivation to continue to rebuild the community.

Within SPARC, providing more resources and support to BIPOC staff builds a pathway to leadership. At the same time, SPARC has been on a journey to understand the white culture that subtly exists. The more

diverse, equitable and inclusive the agency, the more comprehensive our approach will be to serving our communities.

## 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.

The Violence Interrupters Street Team is comprised of staff and leadership of SPARC Foundation, My Daddy Taught Me That and Umoja. This project will enhance and expand our capabilities to bring healing and recovery to low-income communities experiencing high rates of violence. Partners will provide staff to participate in the Scholarship committee which involves designing the specifics of criteria, how people will apply, reviewing and decision making of awards. Project staff will build relationships with residents to gain support for programming and enlist residents to become paid influencers in their communities. Project staff will continue to provide pro-social activities for all ages from young children to elders.

Non funded partners are:

- Housing Authority of the City of Asheville who provide support in programming. HACA staff participate in some community engagement activities and coordinate use of buildings.
- Asheville Police Department
- Chamber of Commerce's Inclusive Hiring Partners who provide access to sustainable jobs regardless of criminal background.

## 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.

SPARC was founded on the belief that communities are healthier when its citizens are empowered with knowledge & resources to live in their home communities. The antidote to institutional care (prisons, residential placements for children) is trauma-informed support services that allow individuals to create the behavior change necessary to become stronger community members. SPARC has been engaged in initiatives addressing gun violence since 2014 when SPARC began coordination of Focused Deterrence. This year, SPARC partnered with other local non profits to address the increasing gun violence in Asheville, as has been described in this application.

SPARC manages funds from the Governor's Crime Commission in our domestic violence prevention services. Project Safe Neighborhoods has funded violence reduction work. Beginning in October 2021, SPARC will be managing SAMHSA funds focused on serving families where parental substance misuse has put the family at risk for disruption.

SPARC culture is driven by a set of values that describes how we function. Direct Communication is a key value that allows us to learn from our colleagues the ways in which we perform well and where to adjust. No one is perfect and that it takes courage and support to change. We expect this as much from ourselves as we do from our clients.

Over the past five years, the Board of Directors has grown to eleven members. The Board has completed Board Best Practices training, the CCAT survey (Core Capacity Assessment Tool) to understand organizational and board functioning, and received Organizational Coaching through WNC Pathways. This year SPARC hired a People and Culture Coordinator who will not only support HR functions, but also lead our Diversity, Equity

& Inclusion (DEI) Committee to ensure all staff receive an equitable experience. This staff is assessing SPARC policies, developing staff surveys and recommending adjustments to ensure SPARC provides an equitable experience for staff/clients.

## 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-SPARC.xlsx

## Special Considerations\*

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

COVID impacts on SPARC revenue were felt immediately, continuing throughout the '20-'21 year. From March-June 2020, we experienced a reduction in revenue from BC contracts that were a direct result of COVID. Temporary staffing services were reduced by \$40,400; Visitation Services by \$21,000; Home Assessments by \$2000. SPARC's Domestic Violence Intervention Program eliminated co-payments from participants from March-June to ensure access was available regardless of ability to pay, resulting in a loss over \$10,000. The program moved to virtual services which increased costs but allowed service delivery with a focus on victim safety to continue. The indirect costs associated with this application reflect the increase in costs of doing business during COVID.

SPARC continues to focus on the agency's financial recovery while providing services to individuals/families whose needs increased. Community safety is the driver of programs and a challenge complicated by COVID. Community partnerships have created a diverse team developing innovative solutions. The team is experiencing violence along with the residents as they are on site after violent incidents to grieve with families and begin the healing process. Team members receive warnings when the tension and violence is highest. Shifting services to safer locations has been required to keep team members and residents safe. These strategies focused on rebuilding community trust and cohesion are intended to be long term.

### CITES:

1. <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/jbulletin/9804/community.html>
2. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12194614/>
3. <https://covid19.counciloncj.org/2021/05/21/impact-report-covid-19-and-crime-4/>
4. <https://racetolead.org/race-to-lead/>
5. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/students-falling-behind/2020/12/06/88d7157a-3665-11eb-8d38-6aea1adb3839\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/students-falling-behind/2020/12/06/88d7157a-3665-11eb-8d38-6aea1adb3839_story.html)

## File Attachment Summary

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### *Applicant File Uploads*

- Recovery-Funds-budget-SPARC.xlsx

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

Organization Name:	SPARC Foundation
Project Name:	Violence Interrupters Street Team
Amount Requested:	\$442,750

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 442,750.00	Pending	2 year project
Buncombe County Safety and Justice Initiative	\$ 115,511.67	Confirmed	July '21-Jan '22
List other sources here			
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Total	\$ 558,261.67		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
Full time staff wages		\$ 29,166.67	\$ 29,166.67	operating	July '21-Jan '22
Payroll taxes		\$ 3,208.33	\$ 3,208.33	operating	July '21-Jan '22
Communication		\$ 1,050.00	\$ 1,050.00	operating	July '21-Jan '22
Supplies		\$ 583.33	\$ 583.33	operating	July '21-Jan '22
Community Engagement Activities		\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00	operating	July '21-Jan '22
Community Beautification Project		\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00	operating	July '21-Jan '22
Sub contractors		\$ 64,166.67	\$ 64,166.67	operating	Umoja; My Daddy Taught Me That; RJC (July '21-Jan '22)
Administrative		\$ 10,336.67	\$ 10,336.67	operating	July '21-Jan '22
Scholarship Program	\$ 250,000.00		\$ 250,000.00	operating	2 year project
Stipends for residents	\$ 40,000.00		\$ 40,000.00	operating	2 year project
SPARC equity leadership program	\$ 25,000.00		\$ 25,000.00	operating	2 year project
Mobile devices & data plan	\$ 5,120.00		\$ 5,120.00	operating	2 year project
Safety clothing	\$ 4,880.00		\$ 4,880.00	operating	2 year project
SPARC staff wages	\$ 20,000.00		\$ 20,000.00	operating	2 year project
Subcontractors staff wages	\$ 40,000.00		\$ 40,000.00	operating	Umoja; My Daddy Taught Me That (2 year project)
Indirect costs	\$ 57,750.00		\$ 57,750.00	operating	2 year project
List expenses here		\$ -			
List expenses here		\$ -			
List expenses here		\$ -			
List expenses here		\$ -			
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List expenses here		\$ -			
List expenses here		\$ -			
List expenses here		\$ -			
Total	\$ 558,261.67				