

Youth Recovery and Workforce Capacity

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

YMCA of Western North Carolina

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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.

Youth Recovery and Workforce Capacity

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$910,680.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Address disparities in public health outcomes

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

The youth recovery and workforce capacity project will support underserved children and families most in need, steady the essential school-age childcare network for Buncombe County, and provide employment and career opportunities to the largest age group effected by Covid unemployment.

By focusing on teens and young adults, the YMCA's project will create a teen workforce program that puts youth on a trajectory for college and career success. Employment opportunities in childcare, health, wellness, and other fields, will be incentivized for students with educational incentives and receive coaching around the creation of career goals and pathway.

For the YMCA this initiative will stabilize our youth development workforce, provide new employment opportunities, and retain quality young staff members we currently employ. The YMCA is the community's largest provider of childcare, and this project will also support the overall economic recovery of our region over the next 3 years.

Project Plan*

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

The YMCA is seeking support in our efforts to lift up those families and individuals that were hardest hit by the pandemic. This project will utilize teen and young adults in critical service roles, recruited through equitable hiring practices, overseen by a Workforce Program Director, and provided with stipends and development opportunities to strengthen their college and career paths. First and foremost, however, we are seeking to provide quality childcare to more families in need.

In order to best serve our young children and families, the YMCA needs to bring in additional youth counselors to maintain quality child to staff ratios. By providing dedicated time to a recruiter, we can further our efforts to engage the communities we serve and provide employment opportunities to people living in those communities. This will also allow for children in childcare programs to see leaders and role models who look like them.

The Workforce Program Director will be the primary point of contact for the teens and college-aged staff members. The director will work with each employee, in individual and small group settings, on college and career planning, financial literacy, life skills, and other topics pertinent to someone who is new to the labor force. Each staff member within this program will work towards building an individualized career path and goals.

As a non-profit, the YMCA is unable to compete with the higher wages many for-profit businesses are able to offer. With this project, we hope to engage high school and college students who feel called to work in the human services sector, and will incentivize the involvement of our student employees. Over the course of 3 years we will seek to provide stipends to 100 employees who are engaged in their academics. For each semester they are enrolled in either high school, college, or trade program, students while employed at the YMCA, will receive a \$1,000 incentive to be utilized for tuition, books, or other basic needs. These stipends will be capped at \$2,000 a year. While there will be some turnover, this program is critical to our efforts to attract and retain young staff.

Our timeline for this project is to start in the fall of 2021 and run through the end of the 2023-2024 school year. The most immediate benefit will be for young employees currently employed with the YMCA of Western North Carolina. Retention incentives will assist with rebuilding our workforce that is an essential component of the community's economic recovery. As employment numbers rise, particularly in our childcare and youth development team, we will immediately begin enrolling children in our programs. It is our belief that by the end of the 2023-2024 school year, enrollment will return or surpass pre-pandemic levels. A return to this level of enrollment, along with staff retention, will allow childcare programs to become self-sustaining once more.

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 needs that are to be met by the YMCA's youth recovery and workforce capacity project are twofold. First, families with working parents are seeking quality childcare options so that they are able to return to work. Due to the contractions of our childcare workforce, we have been forced to reduce our capacity to serve these. In comparison to pre-pandemic numbers, we have seen a reduction in our ability to serve families of by more than 50%, leaving hundreds of children waiting for a safe and healthy place to spend their afternoons.

An April 2020 brief by the National Women's Law Center concluded that a speedy and equitable economic recovery would require guaranteed access to high-quality, affordable childcare. In particular, women are much less likely to return to the workforce without quality childcare options. In 2013, when the state of North Carolina drastically cut childcare subsidy for school-age children, many programs closed and provided less options for families, so many parents opted to stay home. Likewise, many childcare programs closed in the coastal counties of Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina. The parents of three out of four children who had been in a childcare program had to delay their return to the workforce. These are trends we believe are reappearing now, further delaying the overall economic recovery of our region.

Also being addressed by this project is workforce development of young workers. According to youth.gov, unemployment rates between ages 16 to 24 rocketed to 26.9%. While these rates have begun to come down, unemployment in this age group has stayed 5% high than any other age group, with youth from low-income families and Black youth having the highest unemployment compared to their peers. By applying a targeted workforce development program to our out-of-work, coming-of-age, youth we can provide jobs that have been eluding these underserved workers, while ensuring childcare opportunities for students and families in need.

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 required drastic changes to childcare settings, at the same time that the shuttering of businesses was requiring caregivers to keep their children home for an inability to pay for childcare. The pandemic created a dramatically protracted period of inconsistent engagement for students needing support services, which disproportionately affect students from low-income and socially underprivileged populations. The extended out-of-school and virtual learning periods, coupled with the trauma of the pandemic, will affect children in innumerable ways, but the report on Preparedness and Response for Catastrophic Disasters claims that the restoration of infrastructure that meets basic needs can mitigate the amplification of a crisis so the healing process can begin more quickly.

The academic and social emotional learning (SEL) gaps that have been widen during the pandemic are being exacerbated by parents who cannot work due to an inability to find quality childcare options. Funds used to incentivize employment of our young workforce will create more capacity for childcare and assist with getting teens and young adults established, or reinstated, in our regional labor force.

Population Served*

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

Population Served (1,500 characters)

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

Pre-pandemic families within the YMCA childcare programs were approximately 30% receiving state subsidy and 30% seeking financial assistance provided by the Y, with the remaining 40% families that were able to pay for childcare themselves. Since the onset of the pandemic we have seen subsidy rates remain the same, but the reliance on financial assistance has increased to 50%. This increase represents the working poor, those families struggling to make ends meet, but continuing to see hours dwindle and the costs of basic needs rise. Race or ethnicity data is provided on a self-reporting basis, with more than two-thirds of families wishing to not provide this information. Likewise, gender information is also self-reported, but what is reported shows an almost 50-50 split between identifying as male or female.

Young adults and teens represent a third of our workforce, with 18% of our recent hires having been from a race or ethnicity that is not white. Our recruitment efforts for this project will specifically target unemployed youth between ages 16 and 24, a group where almost 6 out of 10 youth are living in a home that has experienced a loss of employment during the pandemic.

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 is far reaching and multigenerational. By providing healthy and safe childcare to our working families, we are meeting the academic and social needs of our most vulnerable students, allowing their parents and caregivers to know their children are secure while they seek meaningful employment, and we are creating job opportunities for first jobs, or engaging college-age youth in strengthening their work experience.

Our first goal of the YMCA's project is to show growth in childcare enrollment. Currently, our childcare enrollment is serving XXX children. Our pre-pandemic enrollment reached more than 1,000 children. At the end of 3 years we would like to see our enrollment return to those pre-pandemic numbers.

Recruitment, retention, and development of young staff is our second goal. This project would provide stipends to 100 high school and college students, with a retention goal of 70% remaining employed with the YMCA for 2 years or longer.

In order to provide career guidance to young staff members, the Youth Development and Workforce Program Director will offer workshops and enrichment opportunities for these teen and young adults. These workshops will conclude with the building of a career path and setting career/educational goals, with 85% of participants completing this step.

Evaluation*

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

Our ability to appropriately collect, analyze, report, and maintain quality of program and employment metrics is visible through our continued success with grants from a variety of sources, including state and federal funds. The YMCA of Western North Carolina maintains strict controls in our human capital, finance, and grant administration departments in order to ensure the highest standards of ethics are maintained for each award. Having a wealth of talented teams available internally allows us to be nimble enough to meet the requirements for each grant we receive and program we operate.

With regards to these specific Covid recovery funds, our finance team will track budgets and expenditures, while our human capital department maintains records of applicants and employees. Youth development staff will work in conjunction with our business center and the director of grants to ensure program quality and track pertinent demographics and outcomes for each child enrolled in our childcare program.

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?

This pandemic has pulled into focus the stark disparities that must be addressed for everyone to succeed. Chief amongst these are access to needed services, such as childcare, for women, people of color, and families living in poverty. Our dedication to protecting our most vulnerable children can be seen throughout our childcare program. Prior to pandemic, 60% were requesting financial assistance or receiving state subsidy, these families were either living in poverty or living on the margins, 48% identified as a minority, 10% were identified as having a special need, and 40% were from single caregiver homes, most often a single mother who needed childcare to maintain employment.

According to McKinsey and Company, the pandemic had a near-immediate effect on women's employment. One in four women are considering leaving the workforce or downshifting their careers versus one in five men. While all women have been impacted, three major groups have experienced some of the largest challenges: working mothers, women in senior management positions, and Black women. This disparity came across as particularly stark with parents of kids under ten: the rate at which women in this group were considering leaving was ten percentage points higher than for men.

During the pandemic, the YMCA had to reduce our workforce by 400 employees, many of them our younger, more inexperienced staff. Recovery will be continual, but slow over the next 3 years. 18% of applicants we have hired this year identify as a race or ethnicity other than white, 7% higher than the demographics of Buncombe County. However, this still does not mirror the percentages of students we see in our childcare programs, so we are continuing to focus on equitable hiring practices.

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.

This project does not have any subcontractors attached to it. However, non-funded partners will be essential to its success. The project will deepen our relationships with our current partners in youth development, including Buncombe County Schools and Asheville City Schools. We will also be able to work closer with longtime collaborators such as UNCA and ABTech for student services. Hola Carolina and the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville, both of which have longstanding partnerships for health programing, nutrition, and school-age outreach that will only be deepened through this project.

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 YMCA of Western North Carolina has been deeply engaged in youth development throughout our history. Our largest and most successful aspect began in 2006 when our association met community need by opening school-based, licensed childcare sites. At that time, we also expanded our afterschool programs to include middle schools through the federal 21st Century grant program. Over the years we have maintained sites in good standing with all state and federal requirements, meeting the demands of licensing and the federal grant program where many other organizations have been unable to meet these standards resulting in a massive loss of funding. In the 2017 funding cycle for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, we were the only organization in our region to receive renewed funding. And going into the 2019 school year, we were the only YMCA in North Carolina still running school-based licensed childcare at any scale.

The YMCA of Western North Carolina has filled the space between school and home life for children for almost 15 years, with approximately 1,432 students attending our programs each year. We work diligently to make sure every child not only survives the normal stressors of youth but comes away from our programs better equipped for the social, educational, and environmental challenges they will face throughout their lives. This has led to the growth of our elementary-based programs in Buncombe County, despite declining school enrollment.

Another critical component of meeting the needs of children and families has been the YMCA's ability to leverage third-party funding to expand into underserved communities. We have experience in managing large foundation, state, and federal grants, including awards from Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

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.

Buncombe Covid Recovery Budget (YMCA of WNC).xlsx

Special Considerations*

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

In 2013, the state changed the income threshold for families receiving childcare subsidy for a child in school-age programs from 200% of the poverty line to 150% of the poverty line. This removed 50% of working families from eligibility and resulted in a 300% increase in the amount of financial assistance families were requesting. While the YMCA was able to accommodate this request, many providers were unable to serve the community at such a reduced rate. The loss of programs in the area left the YMCA as one of the few providers remaining in the region. With the state currently not allowing new voucher requests, and families in need of childcare so that they can work, we are once again seeing a dramatic spike in demand for our services that we will be unable to meet without additional staff members and funding.

Being the largest provider of school-age childcare in the state, the YMCA has been able to weather financial and policy created crises of the past. Our childcare programs have served as a safe haven for families for more than 15 years, due in part to our stable financial positioning and our agility in answering when the community calls. We have grown our elementary and middle school programs to provide coverage for families countywide, but this pandemic has placed an undue strain on every organization and family in our county. We see a path back to full recovery over the next several years, and it is a path where we connect our children with leaders from their own communities, continue to provide safe and healthy childcare to families, and offer quality employment and enrichment opportunities for teens and young adults.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Buncombe Covid Recovery Budget (YMCA of WNC).xlsx

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