

Hatch Innovation Hub

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Hatch AVL Foundation

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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. To date, Buncombe County has awarded projects totaling \$23,093,499, leaving a balance of \$27,639,791 available to award.

Visit <http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding><http://www.buncombecounty.org/recoveryfunding> for details.

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](#)

Organization Type*

Nonprofit

Nonprofit documentation

If nonprofit, attach IRS Determination Letter or other proof of nonprofit status.

Hatch AVL Foundation EIN.pdf

Name of Project.*

Hatch Innovation Hub

New/Updated Proposal*

Is this a new project proposal or an updated version of a proposal submitted during the earlier (July 2021) Recovery Funding RFP?

Updated version of previously submitted proposal

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$473,500.00

Category*

Please select one:

- Affordable Housing
- Aging/Older Adults
- Business Support/Economic Development
- Environmental/Climate
- Homelessness
- K-12 Education
- Infrastructure and/or Broadband
- Mental Health/Substance Use
- NC Pre-K Expansion
- Workforce

Business Support/Economic Development

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

The Buncombe startup community is fragmented and confusing for entrepreneurs to navigate. It is difficult to identify where to find needed support such as mentorship, financing, peer support groups, education, and events. Our community's assets are impressive, but without a central hub for entrepreneurial activity in the region, we cannot achieve the critical mass, racial parity, or productivity of ecosystems such as Raleigh/Durham or Charlotte.

The non-profit Hatch AVL Foundation has established the Hatch Innovation Hub to address these challenges. The Hub is a 36,000 square foot facility in downtown Asheville that brings together entrepreneurs, mentors and entrepreneur support organizations. The Hatch AVL Foundation, Venture Asheville, Mountain BizWorks, and Black Wall Street AVL have agreed to use the Hub to co-locate key staff, build a single event and programming calendar, co-create and cross-share programming, cross-share mentors, and build a capital marketplace.

Project Plan*

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

The goal of the Hatch Innovation Hub(HIH) is to build more powerful entrepreneur support offerings and pursue high growth startups, the strongest path to jobs and revenue for the region. By bringing the many siloed offerings into focus in a single physical and virtual Hub the support for entrepreneurs will be more powerful and founders will be able to find the offerings simply and easily.

Our BIPOC community has not historically created high growth businesses due to lack of awareness that it can be done or lack of access to the full range of education, mentorship & funding needed. Our partnerships will resolve this.

To achieve these goals, the HIH project has these key building blocks:

1) The HIH is located at 45 S French Broad Ave. The facility opened in 2016 with 12,000SF of space and is expanding in the 1st half of 2022 to 36,000SF. Major use of the expanded space is to house local startups, using small offices for fewer than 10 employees, and co-working desks for founders who have just formed companies and need less space. By co-locating, founders can more easily support each other by literally “running into each other in the hallways,” providing real-time advice and networking in ways that don't happen when working in isolation.

2) Further use of the expanded space is to co-locate staff from local entrepreneur support organizations. This will enable daily interaction and simplify co-creation of support offerings, and the ability of entrepreneurs to find that support. This way, key organizations can more easily build the support infrastructure the County needs, creating more synergy and avoiding duplication of efforts.

3) The Hub will enable development of strong coordinated efforts. Hub members will build one event/programming calendar to simplify founders' access to support, co-create and cross-share programming, education offerings, and mentors and build more effective training for mentors. Key program to be acquired: DEI Training.

4) Entrepreneurs complain that they cannot find investors and investors complain that they cannot find deal flow. The Hub will create a Capital Marketplace, where founders have easier access to investors & investors see a broader range of potential deals. Note: the goal of the Marketplace is to create a powerful tool for the County, not to make for-profit investments in startups.

5) Another goal of the Capital Marketplace is to develop & operate a match program to encourage private investment in growth-stage companies in Buncombe County. NC Dept of Commerce has decades of matching SBIR and STTR funding for private companies through the One NC Small Business Program. Similarly, the NC Angel Tax Credit (being debated in the Fin Comm; sponsored by Rep. Brian Turner) created a 7.4X return on state dollars through follow-on investments. This approach can be further implemented by matching private investment from Angel and Venture Groups.

This is a 2 year project, with some front end loading of the efforts.

Statement of Need*

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

Creating a new business is tough. The odds of startup success are daunting with only 1 of 10 startups surviving their 1st year. When a startup has little or no revenue, it's tough for a founder to attract the support

they urgently need to improve these odds by attracting talent, mentors and investors, and finding affordable space. The success rate for minority and female founders is also low, with 8 out of 10 black-owned businesses failing within the first 18 months. Recent stats show that less than 3% of venture capital funding goes to women or minority founders.

The Hatch Innovation Hub (HIH) can increase these odds of success. We understand the power of “paying it forward” to fledgling companies by providing support through a non-profit foundation, rather than founders relying on for-profit venture groups or incubators. Founders need this support, and our community needs founders, as startups and small businesses are the only reliable means of new job creation.

We also know that Western North Carolina counties lag behind other NC counties in economic development. The region lacks a clear large city hub such as Charlotte or Raleigh-Durham that catalyzes economic development. Similar lags occur due to the lack of a large research university. The HIH addresses these issues by providing a critical mass of founders and resources as a hub and network, with the clout to attract talent and funding.

Finally, lack of generational wealth is a large deterrent to founders and small business owners. Early investments nearly always come from friends and family, and if a founder grows up lacking this generational wealth, they are at a huge disadvantage. This is especially true for founders of color where generational wealth is roughly 1/10 that of white founders.

Sources:

Berkeley University Small Business Boot Camps: BIPOC-owned business success
 CNBC “Why Black-owned businesses are struggling to stay afloat”
 Mountain BizWorks Sept 2019 Survey re Pandemic Impact

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.

The current challenges driving us to move with urgency:

The COVID pandemic has hurt the regional economy. Mountain BizWorks research shows that only 1/3 of regional businesses have returned to pre-COVID revenues. The research also shows that financial recovery is even worse for rural businesses (21%) or businesses run by people of color (23%). AEO Tapestry Report finds that historically, black owned businesses are targeting market segments with low purchasing power, leading to lower income potential for the business; this runs counter to white owned businesses. Only 4% of Black owned businesses are employer firms. The Hub can offer BIPOC founders much needed support.

The pandemic has also pointed out the over-reliance of the region on tourism and the need to grow businesses across key business sectors such as digital tech, clean energy tech, climate tech, health tech, bio tech, and outdoor tech.

And while Buncombe County is fortunate to have many entrepreneur organizations with the ambition to support founders, the many offerings are siloed and disconnected, and have proven difficult for entrepreneurs to navigate.

The region needs more jobs now, and historically these jobs have come from startups and small businesses. We believe that now is the time for the Hatch Innovation Hub to scale and to support regional business growth and job creation. The good news is that with the recent impact of COVID, North Carolina is

experiencing record rates of entrepreneurship, making this a key moment to harness the momentum into long-term economic recovery, resilience, and diversification.

The Hatch Innovation Hub is Buncombe County's non-profit resource for innovation, serving the needs of ALL entrepreneurs seeking to build high growth businesses. The Hub represents the best of the region's entrepreneur support organizations, such as the Hatch AVL Foundation, Venture Asheville and Mt Bizworks, with other organizations being asked to join the Hub in an ongoing campaign.

Population Served*

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

The Hatch AVL Foundation is a non-profit based in Asheville, NC. The Hatch Innovation Hub seeks to drive economic opportunity and job creation in WNC by mentoring and educating ANY entrepreneur who seeks to build high-growth businesses. Hatch proactively seeks out BIPOC and female entrepreneurs, to increase the diversity of the entrepreneur community, which has been historically white and male. Hatch seeks to use the power of this economic growth to make a significant impact on the community, its vibrancy and inclusiveness.

The Hatch AVL Foundation currently delivers its mission across the region from its drawing from the strength of its physical location in Asheville. Hatch delivers this mission with a team of experienced mentors and founders, using world class programming and expertise. Most recently, our Pressure Test program was conducted for Charles Long (Black founder) and Bob Williams, co-founders of the Swift App School. This school is focused on teaching software coding to historically under-resourced kids. In the Pressure Test event, 22 high school students, of which ½ were female and ¼ diverse, spent a week learning to code. (See attached article)

Since inception in 2016, the Venture Asheville and Hatch AVL Foundation education and mentorship programs have facilitated over \$82M in revenue, 276 net new jobs with an average salary of \$61K (the county average is \$41K), and \$25.5M in capital investment.

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 Hatch Innovation Hub has the following 5-year goals by supporting the establishment or scaling of high growth potential startups. These will be measured on a semi-annual basis. These goals are incremental vs 2021 and data will be captured via interviews with Hatch Innovation Hub (HIH) members and program participants.

- 1) Facilitate 500 well paying jobs
- 2) Deliver \$100 Million in combined annual revenue to the regional economy
- 3) Startups receive \$20 Million in capital investment
- 4) Do this in a welcoming and inclusive way for ALL founders and their teams, as measured by qualitative and quantitative surveys among HIH founders, chief executives, and employees.

Evaluation*

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

The Hatch Innovation Hub plans annual assessment of progress vs the performance measures listed above, as well as salaries, entrepreneurial competencies, and connectivity. We will survey our member companies on:

- * The number of jobs created, demographics of employees, and salaries. The demographics of founders and owners
- * The amount of companies' revenue
- * The amount of companies' capital investment
- * The ripple effect of company revenue and salaries on community capitals, such as financial, social, political and human; assessed by community demographics
- * The member company founder/owner satisfaction with the Hatch Innovation Hub offerings

Tracking:

- * Demographics of founders and owners
- * Number of member companies; market sector the company participates in.
- * Office space/coworking occupancy
- * Number of each program delivered, for how many companies and founders/owners
- * Number of entrepreneur organizations adding to and visiting the cross-organization programming and event calendar
- * Number of mentors, mentor skills, and demographics
- * Event space utilization

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?

The Hatch Innovation Hub project will be the first and only entrepreneur support organization (ESO) in the region to intentionally connect and network with other support organizations and business owners with the specific intent of:

Creating partnerships across diverse groups such as Black, White, and Latinx. This will be done in partnership with existing ESOs focused on businesses run by people of color, such as Black Wall Street AVL, Eagle Market Streets and YMI.

Creating connections between urban and rural. We can begin immediately by virtually networking the existing Hatch site in Asheville with Buncombe County entrepreneurs and supporters. In the future, Hatch will promote development of as many physical sites as practicable across WNC. Note: Funding for additional WNC physical sites is to be determined and not included in the plans or budget for the current phase of the project.

Creating connections between college students and working professionals through Hatch programs such as Pitch Parties and Hatch This.

A lack of generational wealth is a large deterrent to founders and the startups they seek to create. Early investments typically come from friends and family, and if a founder grows up in a network lacking this generational wealth, they are at a huge disadvantage. This is especially true for founders of color where

generational wealth is roughly 1/10 that of white founders. Additionally, for-profit investors are typically reluctant to invest in a startup that is pre-revenue or with low revenue.

Using its non-profit approach, the Hatch Innovation Hub specifically focuses on these historically under-resourced founders. The Hub seeks to close this resource gap by providing space, programs, education, mentorship, and access to a capital. Access to capital will be directly addressed through the Capital Marketplace, with expected participation from support organizations described above.

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 Hatch AVL Foundation, Venture Asheville, and Mountain BizWorks are acting as “subcontractors” to each other by signing operating agreements to deliver key parts of the Hatch Innovation Hub (HIH) scope, such as coordinating and streamlining already existing programs, calendars, and mentoring programs. In addition, Hatch is partnering with Mountain BizWorks and Black Wall Street AVL to expand programming and mentoring opportunities to the underserved community. Specifically, and as an approach to be expanded to other entrepreneur support organizations, Mountain BizWorks is interested in supporting this effort a number of ways:

- 1) Maintain an office in the HIH
- 2) Use of classroom space
- 3) Host ScaleUp program and possibly Waypoint and Catalyst Cohort as well
- 4) Partner with Hatch on a Catalyst Growth Cohort - a cohort of 5-8 companies per year that would ideally include Hatch pressure tests and mentoring
- 5) Establish an inclusive entrepreneurship working group that would meet at the Hub to promote referrals and alignment among resource partners

Hatch is also pursuing partnerships with Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation, Grind, NC BioTech, SBTDC, The Collider, The Pisgah Fund, Supportedly, UNC Asheville, Western Carolina University, and AB Tech to best centralize the entrepreneurial support organizations in Buncombe County.

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.

After 5 years of piloting & test marketing our offerings, we have two experienced organizations, and an experienced board. The Hatch AVL Foundation has expanded its board from 6 to 13 diverse members, and added 5 part-time paid contractors, 1 as operations lead, 2 for community and event management, 1 for bookkeeping, and 1 for fundraising. The Hatch AVL Foundation has standing committees for Executive Operations, Fundraising, Programming and Storytelling; these committees are all staffed by experienced and successful entrepreneurs and executives. Our building landlord (Ball Properties) has a proven track record of upfitting commercial buildings, including the initial upfit of the Hatch building in 2016) and has access to his

experienced team of contractors and subcontractors. Our learning to date has built a solid operating team that can be scaled to deliver the expanded mission of the Hatch Innovation Hub.

In addition, we know that the Hub approach will work, because we have test marketed all of its parts and pieces for the past 5 years.

Since its founding in 2017, the Hatch AVL Foundation, as a stand-alone incubator, has supported founders in building businesses with a combined annual revenue of over \$23,000,000, and over 130 new well paying jobs.

Since 2016, the Venture Asheville mentorship program has facilitated over \$83,000,000 in revenue, over \$27,000,000 in capital investment, and 276 new jobs with an average salary of \$65,000 per year (compared to a Buncombe County average of \$41,000).

In short, existing Hub partners have already supported businesses in creating companies with a combined revenue of over \$105,000,000 and 406 well paying jobs with an average salary at 1.5X the county average.

We intend to scale this impact as a Hub, partnering with multiple organizations to make world class support available to ALL entrepreneurs in WNC, especially female founders, founders of color, and founders in rural areas.

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-template-3.xlsx

Special Considerations*

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

The Swift App School article 2022.pdf

While our outreach is just beginning, several high leverage strategies are emerging:

1) Seek to get as many startups and support organizations under one roof as possible. By co-locating, we expect day-to-day collaboration and ease of navigating the support system to significantly increase. The Hatch headquarters at 45 South French Broad Avenue will expand by Summer of 2022, from 12,000sf to 36,000sf. The building currently houses several startups, a co-working space, event space, and conference rooms. We look forward to adding more classrooms, a student incubator, pitch studio, and pop-up retail space.

2) Combine and expand our virtual footprint to reach entrepreneurs throughout Buncombe County. This includes virtual mentoring, events, classes, and workshops with expanded founder-to-founder dialogue.

3) Double support by aligning and expanding the programs and educational offerings between multiple support organizations, combine existing programs, and offer new programs to meet the post-COVID needs of entrepreneurs. This will also allow merging of our mentor lists to provide the right mentor to each founder. These offerings cover the range of “initial contact” with entrepreneurs, to “in the trenches” learning and problem solving.

4) Create a single marketplace to provide access to capital which makes it easier for founders to find capital and easier for investors to get deal flow.

5) Coordinate fundraising efforts of multiple non-profit organizations which will make Buncombe County more competitive and compelling as we seek out private, state and federal grants.

6) Share back-office support needed to make each organization work.

We expect to achieve the above goals through operating agreements with existing companies and foundations, rather than mergers or acquisitions. This approach, fast and simple, has already been taken by Hatch AVL Foundation and Venture Asheville. If we find future synergies from mergers or acquisitions, we can take that step later.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Hatch AVL Foundation EIN.pdf
- Recovery-Funds-budget-template-3.xlsx
- The Swift App School article 2022.pdf

Date of this notice: 12-16-2016

Employer Identification Number:
81-4712143

Form: SS-4

Number of this notice: CP 575 A

HATCH AVL FOUNDATION
PO BOX 5199
ASHEVILLE, NC 28813

For assistance you may call us at:
1-800-829-4933

IF YOU WRITE, ATTACH THE
STUB AT THE END OF THIS NOTICE.

WE ASSIGNED YOU AN EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

Thank you for applying for an Employer Identification Number (EIN). We assigned you EIN 81-4712143. This EIN will identify you, your business accounts, tax returns, and documents, even if you have no employees. Please keep this notice in your permanent records.

When filing tax documents, payments, and related correspondence, it is very important that you use your EIN and complete name and address exactly as shown above. Any variation may cause a delay in processing, result in incorrect information in your account, or even cause you to be assigned more than one EIN. If the information is not correct as shown above, please make the correction using the attached tear off stub and return it to us.

Based on the information received from you or your representative, you must file the following form(s) by the date(s) shown.

Form 1120

04/15/2017

If you have questions about the form(s) or the due date(s) shown, you can call us at the phone number or write to us at the address shown at the top of this notice. If you need help in determining your annual accounting period (tax year), see Publication 538, *Accounting Periods and Methods*.

We assigned you a tax classification based on information obtained from you or your representative. It is not a legal determination of your tax classification, and is not binding on the IRS. If you want a legal determination of your tax classification, you may request a private letter ruling from the IRS under the guidelines in Revenue Procedure 2004-1, 2004-1 I.R.B. 1 (or superseding Revenue Procedure for the year at issue). Note: Certain tax classification elections can be requested by filing Form 8832, *Entity Classification Election*. See Form 8832 and its instructions for additional information.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR S CORPORATION ELECTION:

If you intend to elect to file your return as a small business corporation, an election to file a Form 1120-S must be made within certain timeframes and the corporation must meet certain tests. All of this information is included in the instructions for Form 2553, *Election by a Small Business Corporation*.

If you are required to deposit for employment taxes (Forms 941, 943, 940, 944, 945, CT-1, or 1042), excise taxes (Form 720), or income taxes (Form 1120), you will receive a Welcome Package shortly, which includes instructions for making your deposits electronically through the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS). A Personal Identification Number (PIN) for EFTPS will also be sent to you under separate cover. Please activate the PIN once you receive it, even if you have requested the services of a tax professional or representative. For more information about EFTPS, refer to Publication 966, *Electronic Choices to Pay All Your Federal Taxes*. If you need to make a deposit immediately, you will need to make arrangements with your Financial Institution to complete a wire transfer.

The IRS is committed to helping all taxpayers comply with their tax filing obligations. If you need help completing your returns or meeting your tax obligations, Authorized e-file Providers, such as Reporting Agents (payroll service providers) are available to assist you. Visit the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov for a list of companies that offer IRS e-file for business products and services. The list provides addresses, telephone numbers, and links to their Web sites.

To obtain tax forms and publications, including those referenced in this notice, visit our Web site at www.irs.gov. If you do not have access to the Internet, call 1-800-829-3676 (TTY/TDD 1-800-829-4059) or visit your local IRS office.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- * Keep a copy of this notice in your permanent records. **This notice is issued only one time and the IRS will not be able to generate a duplicate copy for you.** You may give a copy of this document to anyone asking for proof of your EIN.
- * Use this EIN and your name exactly as they appear at the top of this notice on all your federal tax forms.
- * Refer to this EIN on your tax-related correspondence and documents.

If you have questions about your EIN, you can call us at the phone number or write to us at the address shown at the top of this notice. If you write, please tear off the stub at the bottom of this notice and send it along with your letter. If you do not need to write us, do not complete and return the stub.

Your name control associated with this EIN is HATC. You will need to provide this information, along with your EIN, if you file your returns electronically.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	Hatch AVL Foundation
Project Name:	Hatch Innovation Hub
Amount Requested:	\$473,500

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 473,500.00	Pending	
Truist Foundation Grant	\$ 50,000.00	Pending	To be used for programming
Asheville ARPA Grant	\$ 97,000.00	Pending	
Hatch Major Gift Campaign	\$ 85,000.00	Confirmed	Cumulative funds raised in 2021 and 1Q 2022
Hatch Sponsors and Community Partners	\$ 35,000.00	Confirmed	Cumulative funds raised in 2021 and 1Q 2022
List other sources here			
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Total	\$ 740,500.00		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating	Notes
Programming, Education & Events	\$ 247,500.00	\$ 62,724.00	\$ 310,224.00	Operating	
Cross-Organization Programming & Event Calendar	\$ 13,000.00	\$ 3,295.00	\$ 16,295.00	Operating	
Cross-Organization Co-Location Space at Hatch Innovation Hub	\$ 48,000.00	\$ 12,165.00	\$ 60,165.00	Operating	
Mentor Team Coordination & Training	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 4,815.00	\$ 23,815.00	Operating	
Marketing, promotion & administration of Event, Office & Coworking spaces	\$ 24,000.00	\$ 6,082.00	\$ 30,082.00	Operating	
Capital Marketplace Program Development	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 4,815.00	\$ 23,815.00	Operating	
DEI Training Program Acquisition & Delivery	\$ 29,000.00	\$ 7,350.00	\$ 36,350.00	Operating	
Marketing, promotion & administration of Hub Success Stories & Programs	\$ 24,000.00	\$ 6,082.00	\$ 30,082.00	Operating	
Project Evaluation & Quality Assurance	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 22,809.00	\$ 72,809.00		
List expenses here			\$ -		
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List expenses here			\$ -		
Total			\$ 603,637.00		

Column Totals \$473,500 \$130,137

The Swift App School: A Pressure Test Success Story

They're in a vintage movie theater, but the screens they're focused on aren't silver. Situated among rows of velvet seating, these students are completely absorbed in their computers. Peals of laughter and outbursts of "Cool!" punctuate busy click-clacking. The room's energy hums with new possibilities, and for good reason: This is the Swift App School. These teens are the next generation of tech trailblazers.

In just one week, they've picked up enough code to program their own apps, and thanks to the interface they're using, they've watched these apps come to life in real time. "You can pretty much create anything you want," Katrayl, an 8th grade Swift App School participant explains, "[Coding is] like a superpower. You can change the future."

Which is exactly what the organization's founders, Charles Long and Bob Williams, want participants to do. By teaching middle and high school students how to code in week-long Swift App School summer camps, they hope to empower WNC teens — especially those who are disadvantaged — to take charge of their futures *and* shape the technology of tomorrow.

The camp's founders met in 2003 at the Asheville School, where Long worked as a technology facilitator and Williams as the associate director of communications. The two had complementary skill sets, were both passionate about education, *and* shared a love for software development, so they teamed up quite a bit. When Apple released its easy-to-learn programming language — Swift — in 2014, they converged on the opportunity.

"I noticed I could teach Swift to kids in a couple of weeks," Long remarked. This prompted Williams to suggest they do so through a summer camp. The two approached Mr. Cowen — VP of the Stonecutter foundation and Asheville School alumnus — for funding. He loved the idea, and he granted the school \$40,000 for Mac laptops that could be used to launch their initiative.

With these laptops and the help of Jack Hamilton, a former student who was then studying computer science at Georgia Tech, Long and Williams opened their camp in 2015. During their first session, they had 11 campers, most of whom were boys. Over the next four years, the program grew in popularity until in 2019, 45 teens enrolled, half of whom were girls.

"Both of us want to see more young women take part in coding," Williams explained. "At the first Apple conference we attended, [almost] everyone looked like me. Not many looked like Charles at all. We wanted to change that." Promoting diversity in tech has always been at the heart of Long and Williams's mission, a mission which was almost thwarted by the pandemic and a change in The Asheville School's leadership in 2020.

Rather than give up on what they'd built, Long and Williams decided they would run their camp on their own. They established their LLC, The Swift App School, then held a scaled-back, virtual version of the program out of a Chick-Fil-A. This experience taught them two things: First, there

was real opportunity to expand their impact digitally. Second, they needed some help, both in the form of business development and in the form of funding.

This led them to Hatch, which could offer The Swift App School founders space for an in-person camp — the organization had repurposed the Grail Moviehouse's old theaters for entrepreneurial use — and guidance in developing a sustainable, scalable business model. Mr. Cowen was eager to continue supporting Long and Williams, and he was especially keen to do so by investing in services from a local non-profit such as Hatch.

"There was a lot of synergy, and things just started happening. We felt like we were in the right place at the right time," said the Swift App School founders. Mr. Cowen donated the funds they needed to rent Hatch's theater space and take part in its Pressure Test program. This program is geared towards early stage start-ups that need assistance in scaling their operations. It's a "proven 90-day sprint with experienced mentors to discover and walk the path of scalability together," Hatch team members explain.

Participants draft business models in alignment with their goals, then place those models under intensive scrutiny to identify potential impediments to growth. "Anyone who wants to start a business would very much benefit from the Pressure Test," Long and Williams remarked. "It helped us figure out a realistic way to build our company to scale."

One realization the Swift App School founders had during this process was that adult instructors with strong coding skills would be both expensive to hire and difficult to retain. Instead, Long and Williams decided to fill their need for teachers by employing graduates of the camp as technical assistants. This TA incubator system would keep them from having to compete with the Ubers or Dropboxes of the world for talent. It would also give students paid work experience they could use to jumpstart their careers. Win-win.

In addition to identifying strategies for scaling sustainably, Long and Williams determined how they could continue serving underprivileged youth. They made plans to fundraise through Hatch for scholarships, and they started forming partnerships with organizations such as My Daddy Taught Me That and Young Eisner Scholars to reach more teens in need.

"These guys were born to be teachers," Mr. Cowen remarked about The Swift App School founders. It's true. The characteristics that make Long and Williams exceptional teachers are the same that make them phenomenal business owners: They're driven, community-oriented, adaptable, persistent, excellent communicators, and willing to ask for help.

In today's world, the importance of that last quality often gets overlooked. But if there's one thing nurturing students and building businesses have in common, it's this: They both take a village. Hatch is honored to be counted among the people and organizations that make up The Swift App School's support system.

Long and Williams look forward to developing YouTube and Teachable content, building their own educational app, and continuing to run their camps, both at KidSense in Rutherfordton and at Hatch in the repurposed movie theaters. They will be offering two summer sessions in 2022, and if you know a teen that might be interested in enrolling, you can learn more by visiting the camp's website, SwiftAppSchool.com.

