

Change Agent Reentry Team (CART)

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Operation Gateway

Philip Alex Cooper
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Asheville, NC 28803

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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.

OG IRS Letter.pdf

Name of Project.*

Change Agent Reentry Team (CART)

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?

New project proposal

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$651,182.00

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

Mental Health/Substance Use

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

Operation Gateway (OG) is applying for funding to address the gaps in services for those who are newly released from prison. Those individuals who are released from prison in Buncombe County experience tremendous hurdles as returning citizens.

The Change Agent Reentry Team (CART) will address gaps in services as the citizens re-enter society. CART leverages lived experience of certified Community Health Workers (CHW) to assist in navigating the barriers faced when reentering society.

Building trust enables the worker to serve as a liaison between social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A community health worker also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities.

CHW's will connect with the individual prior to their release to begin to build that relationship of trust.

Project Plan*

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

CART members will make contact with those citizens who are preparing to return home to begin the process of reentry.

Phase I - Immediate Needs

Upon release the CHW will welcome the person home in order to ensure continuity of care. Prior assessment of the citizens needs would have been conducted by the CHW and will make available the needed resources such as the following

- Providing transportation to the first appointment (including mental health follow up)
- Establish a sustainable transportation plan for future appointments
- Assist with applications (jobs, education, SNAP Benefits [aka food stamps], and services through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act [WIOA]).

We recognize that there might be some barriers upon release such as a returning citizen might not qualify for SNAP benefits. At this point the CHW will work closely with food pantries and ensure that the returning citizen does not go without food.

Phase II - Building Foundations

Upon meeting those immediate needs in Phase I, the CHW will to serve as peer mentor for the returning citizen. This service will not only be made available to the citizen but all to the family unit, if needed. Also during this phase, CHWs will facilitate support groups for returning citizens in Buncombe County. These groups will be held at Virtelle Hospitality Group, as they have agreed to provide a space. CHWs will also connect returning citizen to recovery community.

Phase III - Stability

Stability is crucial in the success of returning citizens. With that said, under CART will cover 6 weeks of housing for returning citizens for a total of \$980/mo. If a returning citizen is not entering a halfway house but returning home instead that monies would go to paying for housing with their family/family member going to a halfway house, the family member or person who has agreed to house will receive the \$980. Citizen would also have access to the work readiness courses at A-B Tech Community College, NC Works, or Goodwill and will be connected with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors for career counseling.

Phase IV - Sustainability

Finally we want to ensure that Program participants will be directly referred to employer partners by way of leveraging existing relationships established by the Executive Director. CHWs will work closely with Career Advisors at NC Works and assist program participants with gathering the necessary documentation for WIOA resources, including On-the-Job Training contracts.

Finally, the CHW will assist the citizen with opening a bank account and will be referred to OnTrack Financial for financial literacy education whenever necessary, bridging the gaps.

Overall, the first 90 days will be very intensive, with multiple contacts made that first week and weekly check-ins for up to 90 days. Follow-up will be provided for up to a year.

The requested funding would cover the program needs for 2 years.

Statement of Need*

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

Between February 1, 2021 and February 28, 2022 a total of 310 people were released from state prison with two notable facts (1) Buncombe is noted as the county of conviction and (2), Buncombe County was the county of residence.

Out of those 310 who were released the breakdown is as follows:

89 were African American,
86 of the 89 were African American Males

Currently there are reentry programs that focus mainly on the people being released from the Buncombe County Detention Center. There is a marked difference between those obtaining reentry services from the detention center and those coming home from prisons.

The marked difference is the period of time many returning citizens have been incarcerated in prison versus jail. These individuals require a more individualized approach for a safe reentry into society. .

In order to meet the needs of our clients we have partnered with VAYA Health . VAYA schedules outpatient follow-up appointments for returning citizens with mental health diagnoses. VAYA has shared data which shows that less than 40% of these citizens make it to their first outpatient appointment.

At this time, Buncombe County does not have a FIT Program to serve those with Chronic Illnesses so many people fall through. This provides a recipe for disaster as creates a level of stress due to the gaps and the failure in having a seamless connection to the Federal Qualified Health Centers for Continuity of Care. A result of not being able to navigate the healthcare system on their own.

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.

Being able to obtain identification and access to vital records was a challenge for returning citizens prior to the pandemic, considering the current operations at the DMV.

Add the dynamics of COVID-19 coupled with staffing issues within the prisons created a a negative impact on the reentry plans for returning citizens. Due to increase in safety protocols, prisons have ceased allowing volunteers inside the prisons. With this change and challenges of the ongoing pandemic, there is a need for an “all hands on deck” approach. Again, the process of reentry has never been an easy one. The pandemic increased the barriers felt by returning citizens. It is important to develop a process/program that will allow a smoother process for returning citizens and work to reduce the anxiety that comes from this transition.

One of the most notable issues that needs to be pointed out is that individuals with chronic illnesses must continue to prioritize safeguards, including continuity of care post incarceration. When it comes to employment, many employers are requiring virtual interviews and many returning citizens are struggling with navigating the technological side of things and need hands-on support with navigating workforce development resources.

Population Served*

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

We are serving returning citizens from both state and federal prisons. We will predominantly serve Black Males that do not qualify for the other Reentry Programs. Although our focus is predominately serving African American returning citizens that do not qualify for other Reentry Programs, we will not turn anyone away.

As noted under the statement of need Between February 1, 2021 and February 28, 2022 a total of 310 people were released from state prison with two notable facts (1) Buncombe is noted as the county of conviction and (2), Buncombe County was the of conviction or county of residents. Out of those 310 who were released the breakdown is as follows:

89 were African American
86 of the 89 were African American Males.

Of the 86/89 that returned home over the past year of African American descent, a notable amount of them have not engaged in Mental Health or SUD treatment.

Operation Gateway will hire a returning citizen from the BIPOC community who is active in addiction recovery to address the mental health stigma that is prevalent in the Black community. The CHW model presented here is one solution in addressing the lack of diversity in the mental health workforce.

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 results you can expect to see from CART's work is returning citizens will have access to safe housing, Continuity of Care which includes a connection to primary care services, securing vital records, employment opportunities, connecting with families and community (support groups), various trainings completed at the local community college.

Evaluation*

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

In order to track progress, pre and post assessments will be conducted.

Pre assessments will focus on the needs of the individual as they exit prison. These needs include driver licenses restoration, housing, employment and health needs just to name a few. These assessments will provide a baseline for our CHW's.

A plan will be created by the CHW for the individual to assist in getting these needs met. Resources will be provided and a hands on approach is imperative to ensure success in the initial navigation of their transition.

The returning citizen will check in with the CHW on a regular basis to assess their program. Once the individual has completed the program which could run anywhere from 1 to 2 years a post assessment will be conducted to determine the success of the program and the individual.

Data from the assessments will track, age, ethnicity, education level, employment history and history mental health and substance use disorder.

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?

As noted under the statement of need Between February 1, 2021 and February 28, 2022 a total of 2/1/21 and 2/28/22, 310 people were released from state prison with two notable facts (1) Buncombe is noted as the county of conviction and (2), Buncombe County was the of conviction or county of residents.

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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 will be partnering with VAYA Health for mental health services and referrals. (20%)

Land of Sky Regional Council and Mountain Area Workforce Development Board will provide workforce development resources. (10%)

MAHEC will provide trainings and mental health resources. (10%)

Western Carolina Medical Society will connect with primary care providers. (5%)

Chamber of Commerce (Inclusive Hiring Partners) will provide workforce development support. (10%)

NC Works and A-B Tech will provide education and training resources. (5%)

Goodwill Project Reentry will provide referrals. (10%)

United Way will provide office space. (20%)

Vocational Rehabilitation (10%)

These are a rough estimate.

We also have Letters of Support from several of these organizations in support of our work.

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.

Although Operation Gateway is a fairly new non-profit, we are not new to this work.

The Executive Director, Philip Cooper has lived experience when it comes to prison re-entry and navigating the waters of being a returning citizen. His breadth of experience doing this type of work reaches far and wide.

The CART will consist of two full-time CHW's to walk returning citizens through this process - providing much needed support and guidance through this process for the next 2 years.

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.xlsx

Special Considerations*

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

LetterOfSupport_OperationGateway_04112022.pdf

Change Agent Philip Cooper is a WNC Native who was released from prison on March 5, 2011. He started working as a Peer Counselor during his period of incarceration between the years of 2010-2011. Upon his release he connected with the Faith Community and the Recovery Community and began his journey of navigating re-entry.

DHHS has funded the Voices of Affrilachia initiative and the focus is on multiple counties. Gaps in services are still being identified for returning citizens of Buncombe County, in the areas of identification, reentry housing, healthcare, and employment. The multi-county approach is not able to sufficiently serve Buncombe County because Buncombe has significantly more prison releases than the other counties (Transylvania, Rutherford, Polk, Henderson, Burke, and McDowell).

We have found that it is not appropriate to combine both Jail Reentry Services with Prison Reentry Services due to the difference in the needs of the populations because the needs are not the same. These individuals coming out of prison have served more time and need a more hands on approach when

addressing the social determinants of health and. And the social determinants of health must be addressed if returning citizens are to obtain and maintain gainful employment.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- OG IRS Letter.pdf
- Recovery-Funds-budget.xlsx
- LetterOfSupport_OperationGateway_04112022.pdf



Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service
Tax Exempt and Government Entities
P.O. Box 2508
Cincinnati, OH 45201

OPERATION GATEWAY INC
C/O PHILIP COOPER
150 PORTER RD
ASHEVILLE, NC 28803

Date: 01/12/2022
Employer ID number: 86-2870516
Person to contact:
Name: Customer Service
ID number: 31954
Telephone: 877-829-5500
Accounting period ending:
June 30
Public charity status:
170(b)(1)(A)(vi)
Form 990 / 990-EZ / 990-N required:
Yes
Effective date of exemption:
March 24, 2021
Contribution deductibility:
Yes
Addendum applies:
No
DLN:
26053625004671

Dear Applicant:

We're pleased to tell you we determined you're exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donors can deduct contributions they make to you under IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522. This letter could help resolve questions on your exempt status. Please keep it for your records.

Organizations exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3) are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined you're a public charity under the IRC Section listed at the top of this letter.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that you're required to file Form 990/990-EZ/990-N, our records show you're required to file an annual information return (Form 990 or Form 990-EZ) or electronic notice (Form 990-N, the e-Postcard). If you don't file a required return or notice for three consecutive years, your exempt status will be automatically revoked.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that an addendum applies, the enclosed addendum is an integral part of this letter.

For important information about your responsibilities as a tax-exempt organization, go to www.irs.gov/charities. Enter "4221-PC" in the search bar to view Publication 4221-PC, Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, which describes your recordkeeping, reporting, and disclosure requirements.

Sincerely,

Stephen A. Martin
Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements

Letter 947 (Rev. 2-2020)
Catalog Number 35152P

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	Operation Gateway
Project Name:	Change Agent Reentry Team
Amount Requested:	651,682

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 651,682.00	Pending	
List other sources here			
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List other sources here			
Total	\$ 651,682.00		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
Emergency Housing	\$ 325,000.00		\$ 325,000.00	Operating	
Two FTE CHW	\$ 166,400.00		\$ 166,400.00	Operating	
Fringe 2 CHW	\$34,362		\$ 34,362.00	Operating	
Mileage 2 CHWs	\$7,920		\$ 7,920.00	Operating	
Supplies	\$6,000		\$ 6,000.00	Operating	
Office Space	\$ 12,000.00		\$ 12,000.00	Operating	
Executive Director Salary	\$ -	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	Operating	
Client Support Funds	\$ 100,000.00		\$ 100,000.00	Operating	
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
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Total			\$ 751,682.00		



Vaya Health
200 Ridgefield Court, Suite 206
Asheville, NC 28806
1-800-893-6246
www.vayahealth.com

April 11, 2022

Philip Cooper
CHW Capacity Builder

RE: ARPA proposal for Operation Gateway

Dear Mr. Cooper:

Vaya Health is excited to offer its support for Operation Gateway. Operation Gateway's vision of utilizing Community Health Workers and CPSS's with lived experience with prison to help connect returning citizens to resources both before and upon release to assess their needs is something that Vaya is in strong support of. Our members re-entering communities need access to resources and support as they navigate life after incarceration. Operation Gateway ensures that our members in western North Carolina continue to receive continuity of care. Vaya is committed to continuing its support for this program which offers a way for members to receive assistance with employment, housing, education, and other assessed needs.

Vaya understands that Mr. Cooper has led other pivotal projects in our region such as the ARC INSPIRE award for their project titled WNC Recovery to Career: A Collective Impact Ecosystem which addressed the need for support and continuity of care for members seeking employment that had a substance use disorder diagnosis. In Buncombe County, Vaya has noted that members released back into the community with mental health and/or substance use diagnoses numbered 60 in 2021 and currently has had 17 appointments thus far into 2022. Operation Gateway will help our members connect with support such as crucial outpatient appointments.

Vaya Health is looking forward to working with Operation Gateway to serve our members and ensure that they receive the support and resources they need as they return to our communities.

Should you have any questions, please call the Provider Services Line at 828-225-2785 ext 1512.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald Reuss".

Donald Reuss
VP Behavioral Health and I/DD Network Operations
Vaya Health

339 New Leicester Hwy., Suite 140
Asheville, NC 28806
p. 828.251.6622 | 800.727.0557
f. 828.251.6353 | w. landofsky.org



April 11, 2022

Buncombe County – Recovery Funds
ATTN: Angelyn Johnson

RE: Letter of Support – Operation Gateway
Change Agent Reentry Evolution (CARE)

To Whom it May Concern,

Land of Sky Regional Council has been advised that Operation Gateway is seeking to apply for grant assistance through Buncombe County's from funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act. They are seeking assistance to address some of the negative impact that has affected the "Workforce" due to Covid-19.

We have been collaborating with Operation Gateway to support "recovery to career" efforts in Western North Carolina. We understand the importance of working collaboratively to develop and implement programs that focus on best practices and ways to be successful in our community. Many individuals with justice involvement are impacted by poverty, trauma, mental illness and/or substance use disorders.

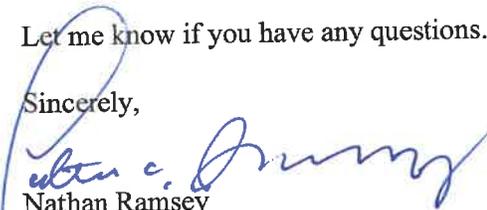
With this said, we currently provide recovery to career services through our INspire team to those re-entering society. This program is funded by Appalachian Regional Commission, Dogwood Health Trust and VAYA Health serving 11-counties in Western North Carolina in partnership with Southwestern Commission.

We support the work that Operation Gateway is leading and with this letter are providing our continued support and assistance with the work they do. Land of Sky Regional Council is fully committed to joining in with Operation Gateway and the rest of their partners to provide assistance and resources to this population.

As a matter of full disclosure, Philip Cooper is employed by Land of Sky Regional Council as the INspire Project Coordinator. We believe his work with Operation Gateway is aligned with our mission and program of work and consistent with our policies.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Nathan Ramsey

Executive Director, Land of Sky Regional Council



Mountain Area Health Education Center, Inc.

April 12, 2022

Phillip Cooper, CPSS, CHW
Executive Director
Operation Gateway
150 Porter Road
Asheville, NC 28803-9690

Dear Phillip,

Mountain Area Health Education Center, Inc. (MAHEC), is honored to provide this letter of support for Operation Gateway's application to Buncombe County for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Operation Gateway's mission of decreasing recidivism by addressing the social determinants of health among returning citizens, is critical for advancing health equity for some of our community's most vulnerable population. Reducing incarceration rates is recognized in Healthy Carolina 2030 as one of the priority public health indicators for North Carolina.

MAHEC has an over 48-year history of providing healthcare services to people living in Western North Carolina, including Buncombe County. Our mission is to provide and support educational activities and services with a focus on primary care in rural communities and those with less access to resources to recruit, train, and retain the workforce needed to create a healthy North Carolina. Our clinical services include dentistry, family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, and substance use prevention and treatment services. We also provide technical assistance and training to the WNC Community Health Worker (CHW) Coalition, of which Operation Gateway is a participating member. Operation Gateway's proposal to provide CHW services to Buncombe County residents returning from prison in order to assist them with accessing housing, identification, employment, support communities, and healthcare aligns well with some of MAHEC's existing work.

MAHEC is committed to supporting Operation Gateway's proposal by serving as a clinical partner, receiving referrals from Operation Gateway for clinical services across our clinical departments. We also will support Operation Gateway as a WNC CHW Coalition member, which provides member organizations and CHWs with access to trainings and professional development opportunities. We strongly endorse this work and hope to see it move forward.

Sincerely,

William R. Hathaway, MD
Chief Executive Officer

WRH/yp