



## Early Childhood Grants

### I. Purpose

The purpose of the Early Childhood Education and Development Fund is to ensure that every child in Buncombe County has an equal opportunity to thrive during their first 2,000 days, including access to quality early childhood education. The Fund was established in response to a well-documented local shortage of quality early childhood education programs, barriers that families face in accessing existing programs, including affordability, and a well-documented shortage of qualified teachers and staff in classrooms and centers.

### II. Funding

The amount for FY2022 is \$3,745,440 (subject to budget adoption). On October 30, 2018, the Board of Commissioners for Buncombe County voted to create the Early Childhood Education and Development fund for the purpose of annually investing \$3.6 million beginning in the FY2020 budget with an annual increase of 2% in future years.

### III. Priority

Funding is earmarked to support early care and education for children birth through kindergarten. This includes the following categories:

- infants/toddlers – ages six (6) weeks to three (3) years old
- preschoolers – ages three (3) to five (5) years old
- pre-kindergarteners (pre-k) – 4 year old rising kindergarteners (4 years old by August 31<sup>st</sup>)

Emphasis in the fund is given to preschool and pre-kindergarten. This is not associated with “NC Pre-K,” which is a program of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development and Early Education.

### IV. Eligibility

To be eligible for an Early Childhood Grant, an organization and project must meet the following criteria:

- Organization.** All organization types are eligible to apply. This includes public/governmental agencies as well as private organizations, including nonprofits and private businesses. Organizations must operate in Buncombe County with service to Buncombe County. If an organization does not meet this criteria, it may partner with another organization to serve as fiscal agent for the purposes of administering grant funding.
- Public Purpose.** Projects must meet a public purpose and fall within County authority to fund per NC General Statutes, to be affirmed by review by Buncombe County legal department prior to grant award.
- Application.** Organizations must submit a grant application through the online grant software before the application deadline. No late applications will be accepted.



- d. **Strategies.** Funding will be allocated for projects working toward the following strategies:
  - Increase slots for enrollment
  - Increase quality
  - Develop/diversify early childhood workforce
  - Support families
  - Enhance effectiveness of overall system of early care and education
- e. **Funding.** There are no restrictions on the amount of funding that can be requested or granted to an organization or project. Multi-year requests will be considered, up to 3 years.
- f. **Capital.** Requests for capital projects will be restricted to the public school systems. Capital outlay projects are defined as planning, construction, reconstruction, enlargement, improvement, repair, or renovation of buildings and for the purchase of land for early childhood care and education purposes.

**V. Timeline**

December 14, 2020	Grant application opens
January 12, 2021	Grant writing workshop (optional for applicants) 6:00 to 7:00pm Virtual meeting (sign-up info below)
February 12, 2021	Applications due by 5:00
February 15 – April 23, 2021	Grant review by committee
April 30, 2021	Committee funding recommendations due to County budget office
May 18, 2021	Committee grant recommendations published with County Manger’s budget message
June 1, 2021	Public hearing on budget as part of Board of Commissioners regular meeting
June 15, 2021	Grant awards finalized with County budget adoption during Board of Commissioners regular meeting
July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022	Funding year

**VI. Application Process**

Applications are due by 5:00 on February 12, 2021. Organizations are encouraged to apply online through Buncombe County’s grant software, which can be accessed at [buncombecounty.org/apply](http://buncombecounty.org/apply) or linked through Buncombe County’s grant website at [buncombecounty.org/grants](http://buncombecounty.org/grants). Paper applications are available at and should be returned to 200 College Street, Suite 343, Asheville, NC 28801.

A grant writing workshop (optional for applicants) will be held on January 12, 2021 from 6:00 to 7:00. This will be a virtual meeting. This purpose of the session is to provide in-depth information about the grant process for applicants and potential applicants. Contact [Angelyn.Johnson@buncombecounty.org](mailto:Angelyn.Johnson@buncombecounty.org) to register.

Staff is available to answer questions and to provide basic one-on-one support to applicants. Contact [Angelyn.Johnson@buncombecounty.org](mailto:Angelyn.Johnson@buncombecounty.org) to sign up for a session. Staff will also work to match applicants with other community-based grant writing resource support if needed.

Committee Contact: Applicants are asked not to communicate with Early Childhood Grants committee members regarding their applications. If the Committee decides to ask follow-up questions of applicants or hold interviews for finalists, applicants will be notified by County staff. Staff do not participate in the grant scoring process.

## **VII. Required Elements**

The application consists of a questionnaire, primarily of questions requiring a narrative response. Applicants are also required to complete and upload a standard budget form.

## **VIII. Review Committee**

Early Childhood Grant recommendations are prepared by the Early Childhood Education and Development Committee. The Committee consists of fifteen (15) members which serve two (2) year staggered terms and are appointed by the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners upon application as follows:

- three (3) members of the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners;
- one (1) business community or economic development professional;
- one (1) funder or community investment professional;
- one (1) parent;
- one (1) pediatrician or medical professional in service to young children;
- one (1) professor or higher education professional;
- one (1) retiree from the field of early childhood education; and
- six (6) members of the public representing the community at large.

The Committee holds regular meetings on the first (1<sup>st</sup>) Tuesday of each month. A committee meeting schedule, along with meeting materials and announcements are posted on the Early Childhood Grants website at [buncombecounty.org/grants](http://buncombecounty.org/grants). All meetings are open to the public and include a public comment period at the end of every regular meeting limited to three minutes for any individual or representative addressing the committee.

## **IX. Review Process**

Applications are reviewed by the Early Childhood Committee utilizing a standardized, points-based system. Reviews will be conducted independently by members of the committee, and discussion will occur during regular meetings.

The following criteria will be considered by the Committee:

- Need – project meets an essential community need
- Project Plan – clear, reasonable steps connected to meeting need
- Proposed results – impact on selected strategy
- Capacity – ability of this organization to carry out this plan
- Equity – approach is informed by diversity, equity and inclusion
- Budget – clear, reasonable and matched to community need and project plan
- Overall – project value and fit with Early Childhood Fund

**X. Awards**

Grant recommendations prepared by the Committee will be submitted for a vote of approval from the Board of Commissioners. The list will be published as part of the County Manager's recommended budget as presented to the Board of Commissioners at their regularly scheduled meeting on May 18, 2021. Grant awards will be finalized with budget adoption on June 15, 2021.

County Commissioners will not serve on any board or organization seeking funding from County Government unless said service is a requirement through legislation or legal agreement.

**XI. Performance Contracts**

All grant awards will be administered via performance contracts. Contracts will include a scope of work that defines services, deliverables and reporting measures.

FY2022 contracts will be for the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. All funds must be spent or returned to the County by June 30, 2022. Requests for extensions will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Contracts will also include standard indemnification and insurance expectations, which lists the minimum insurance coverage which Contractors agree to procure and maintain. Required insurances and levels vary depending on the nature of the project and can include types such as: Worker's Compensation; Commercial General Liability; Employer's Liability; Professional Liability; etc. The County will collect and review certificates of insurance as part of contract compliance. Insurance is an allowable expense and can be built into the grant funding budget.

In addition to the standard contract expectations for all organizations doing business with the County, nonprofits receiving grant funds must also:

- a. Open their books for the contracting department;
- b. Submit copies of annual IRS tax filings (Form 990s); and
- c. Submit annual financial statements based on a tiered structure, consistent with industry standard practice:
  - Audit: Organizations with annual revenues of \$300,000 or greater must submit financial statements audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.
  - Review: Those with revenues between \$100,000 and \$300,000 must submit financial statements reviewed in accordance with applicable Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services (SSARS).
  - Compilation: Those with revenues of less than \$100,000 must submit non-disclosure financial statements compiled in accordance with applicable SSARS.
  - Nonprofit agencies may request a waiver to use other third-party provided documents.

Contract performance will be monitored and evaluated by the County throughout the year, including review of financial and programmatic reporting. Performance results will be published online in a funded projects dashboard. Approval of renewal grant funding requests shall be contingent on meeting performance criteria.

**XII. Minority Business**

Buncombe County's adopted Minority Business Plan encourages participation by minority and women owned businesses. Buncombe County policy is to provide minority contractors an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of its contracting and procurement programs, and to prohibit any and all discrimination against persons or businesses in pursuit of these opportunities. Minority Business Plan questions may be directed to Buncombe County Procurement at (828) 250-4154. Sources for certified minority firms are available at <http://www.doa.nc.gov/hub>.

**XIII. Lead Department/Division**

Staffing for this grant program is provided by Buncombe County's Strategic Partnerships Department with support from a cross-departmental team including staff from the Communications and Public Engagement, Health and Human Services, and Performance Management departments. For more information, contact Strategic Partnerships Director Rachael Nygaard at [Rachael.Nygaard@buncombecounty.org](mailto:Rachael.Nygaard@buncombecounty.org) or (828) 250-6536.