

**Buncombe County FY2020 Strategic Partnership Grants
Application Summary Sheet**

Project	Buncombe County Residents and School Group Admission Offset
Organization	Friends of the WNC Nature Center

Amount Requested	\$35,000	Strategic Priority or Sustainability Goal	Environment
New or Renewal Request	Renewal	Commissioner Districts Served	All

Organization Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mission of the WNC Nature Center is to connect people with the animals and plants of the Southern Appalachian Mountains by inspiring appreciation, nurturing understanding and advancing conservation of the region's rich biodiversity. The Friends provides financial resources and creates awareness of the Nature Center. The Educational Outreach Program provides free and low cost traveling programs to schools and retirement centers in Buncombe County and 8 other counties, reaching over 9,000 people in 2018.
Project Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing two needs with this proposal: the need to continue offering an admission offset to Buncombe County residents; and to provide Buncombe County Schools with reduced rates for field trips. The past three years of offering the admission offset has proven that County residents gratefully take advantage of the opportunity. The addition of reduced school group rates for County schools addresses a need expressed by teachers repeatedly. Approximately 20% of school groups come to the Center from County schools, and they come from nearly every public elementary school within the County. Teachers from County schools, especially Title 1 schools, often express frustration that the fees are higher for County schools than for City schools. Many times these costs are passed directly on to the students. Because the Center is a City facility, this discount is offered to City schools. Seeking assistance to offer this same reduction in fees to County schools.
People Served	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The anticipated number of Buncombe County residents attending the Nature Center in FY 19 - 20 is 9,500. This number is based on current attendance and projected growth. In Calendar year 2017, 2,546 Buncombe County students attended programs at the Center, and we expect more in calendar year 2019, due to lower cost and the added red panda attraction.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The biggest indicator of success is growth in daily attendance by Buncombe County residents, and by an increase in Buncombe County school groups. Part of this project has been and will continue to be an increase in local advertising. We will add increased direct "marketing" to school throughout Buncombe County to let teachers know about the reduced group rates.

Budget			
Amount Funded FY2019	\$30,000	Increase Request	\$5,000
Project Budget	\$35,000	Total Organization Budget	\$767,089
Other Funding Sources: Grants, donations, memberships, corporate sponsorships & special events			

Additional Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Late Submission Inconsistent progress toward performance targets for FY2019 grant

LATE SUBMISSION

Karen Babcock

Friend of the Nature Center

Buncombe County Residents and School Group Admission Offset

FY2020 Strategic Partnership Grants

Friend of the Nature Center

Ms. Karen Babcock
PO Box 19151
Asheville, NC 28802

friends@wildwnc.org
O: 828-298-0182

Ms. Karen Babcock

PO Box 19151
Asheville, NC 28815

friends@wildwnc.org
O: 828-298-0182

Application Form

Question Group

Please complete the form below and upload the required files for your application. Organizations submitting more than one project must complete one submission form for each project. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Priority is given to nonprofit organizations with projects that contribute to Buncombe County's strategic priorities or sustainability goals.

For FY2020, no Strategic Partnership Grant applications will be considered for the strategic priorities "Affordable Housing" or "Early Childhood Education." Funding for affordable housing projects is managed through Buncombe County's Affordable Housing Services Program. Funding for early childhood projects will be managed through the newly forming Early Childhood Education and Development Fund.

Project Name*

Name of Project.

Buncombe County Residents and School Group Admission Offset

Amount Requested*

\$35,000.00

Strategic Priority*

Which of the following priorities best reflects the primary goal of your project?

Buncombe County Commissioners are dedicated to strengthening the quality of life for everyone by setting new fiscally, socially and environmentally responsible goals that will guide decisions and improve our community for future generations. The Board has committed to strategic priorities as a guide to shape partnerships and investments of resources to insure a healthy, safe, well-educated, thriving and sustainable community.

Details about the Strategic Priorities are available at [THIS LINK](#).

Other Sustainability Goal

Strategic Priority - Other Sustainability Goal

If you selected "Other Sustainability Goal" from the list of Strategic Priorities, please list it here.

Details about the Sustainability Goals are available at [THIS LINK](#).

Number of participants in Buncombe County Recreation Services activities, programs, or facilities and
Number and reach of environmental education programs

Organization Description*

Tell us about your organization. What is your mission? Highlight two or three key facts and accomplishments that best define your organization.

The mission of the WNC Nature Center is to connect people with the animals and plants of the Southern Appalachian Mountains by inspiring appreciation, nurturing understanding and advancing conservation of the region's rich biodiversity. The Friends provides financial resources and creates awareness of the Nature Center. The Nature Center has been drawing the public to its 40-acre wildlife park since 1973. Since 2010, Nature Center attendance has increased by 40% and just saw the highest one-day attendance ever recorded for the recent opening of the Red Panda habitat in February 2019.

Since we last applied for this grant in 2018, the new Front Entrance has also opened, improving the visitor experience with enhanced access to the Nature Center. The Educational Outreach Program, begun by The Friends in 2017, provides free and low cost traveling programs to schools and retirement centers in Buncombe County and 8 other counties, reaching over 9,000 people in 2018.

Project Description

What do you propose to do? What is your plan? What are your goals?

We are addressing two needs with this proposal: the need to continue offering an admission offset to Buncombe County residents; and to provide Buncombe County Schools with reduced rates for field trips. The past three years of offering the admission offset has proven that County residents gratefully take advantage of the opportunity.

The addition of reduced school group rates for County schools addresses a need expressed by teachers repeatedly. Approximately 20% of school groups come to the Center from County schools, and they come from nearly every public elementary school within the County. Teachers from County schools, especially Title 1 schools, often express frustration that the fees are higher for County schools than for City schools. Many times these costs are passed directly on to the students.

Because the Center is a City facility, this discount is offered to City schools. We are seeking assistance to offer this same reduction in fees to County schools.

Key Steps*

How will the project work? What are specific activities and milestones that your project entails?

The WNC Nature Center (WNCNC) provides education on the natural resources and wildlife of the region to guests and groups of all ages. As an Asheville City property, The WNCNC provides reduced admission (a discount of \$3.00) to City residents, and a discount of \$1 to everyone from Asheville City Schools attending an education program/field trip at the Center. Grants by Buncombe County provided funds to offer the admission discount to non-City residents of the County FY16 - 18. We would like to continue this program in FY 2019-2020, and continue offering \$1 reduced field trip rates to Buncombe County School groups.

Through this grant, Buncombe County residents attending the Nature Center during the fiscal year 2019-2020 will receive the lower admission rate of \$7.95 (Adult) \$6.95 (Seniors 65 and older) or \$5.95 (Youth 3-15). Additionally, every Buncombe County School group attending a program at the Center in that academic year will receive the lower group admission rate of \$4.

Area Served*

Which areas of the County will be served by this project? Which Commissioner District(s) will be served?

A Buncombe County Commissioner district map is available at [THIS LINK](#).

The Admission Offset, and Buncombe County School group admission offset are available to every County, non-city resident. All Commissioner districts are served.

People Served*

Who are the members of our community this project will serve? How many people will be served? Include demographics, including age, area median income, race, neighborhood and/or school.

The anticipated number of Buncombe County residents attending the Nature Center in FY 19 - 20 is 9,500. This number is based on current attendance and projected growth. In FY 2018, total attendance of County residents was 8,611, and in the first 2 quarters of FY 2019, Buncombe County attendance has been 4,064. Total visitors to the Nature Center in calendar year 2017 was 144,906, which was the seventh year in a row of record-breaking admissions. In Calendar year 2017, 2,546 Buncombe County students attended programs at the Center, and we expect more in calendar year 2019, due to lower cost and the added red panda attraction.

Attendees to the Nature Center are reflective of those of the County. All ages, from children to the elderly purchase tickets. From January through December, 2017, 48% of ticket purchasers were adults, 38% were children, 4% were seniors, and 9% were school groups. Zip codes are also tracked. Racial, ethnic, and income indicators are not tracked by the Center.

Partners*

Which other organizations are you working with to reach your goals? What other local organizations provide similar services or serve similar beneficiaries, and how do you work together?

In addition to good relationships with Buncombe County and the City of Asheville, The Friends of the WNC Nature Center are proud to count many local businesses as our partners, including Biltmore, White Oak Financial, Brick Street Equity, Festiva, Carolina Alliance Bank, Highland Brewing, Asheville Savings, iHeartMedia, and many more.

Other partners include the Tourism Development Authority who provided funding for the Front Entrance Complex. The Nature Center also maintains close working partnerships with Buncombe County Schools, and currently provides discounted admission for parents and siblings accompanying a school group. The WNC Nature Center has a long history of connection to this region and will continue to forge strong partnerships throughout the County.

Personnel*

Who is responsible for the project? Briefly describe project leaders and the role each will play in the project. How do these leaders reflect the population or community that you serve?

The grant funds requested will be overseen by the Friends of the WNC Nature Center, and Executive Director Karen Babcock. The Friends is overseen by a Board of Directors from throughout the WNC region. The education programs and guest registration (gathering zip codes to ensure all Buncombe County

attendees are counted) are overseen by Keith Mastin, Education Curator, and Jordan Rutherford, Guest Services Coordinator at the WNC Nature Center.

Success*

How will you measure results? What will success look like? How will you document the impact of your project? Include whether there is a model that serves as basis for project design.

The WNC Nature Center uses RecTrac as its Point of Sale system. Each ticket purchaser is asked to provide their zipcode, which is entered into the system. RecTrac also keeps record of the type of ticket sold (child, adult, senior, school group, etc.) to capture age demographics. The data is immediate and accurate for reporting purposes.

The biggest indicator of success is growth in daily attendance by Buncombe County residents, and by an increase in Buncombe County school groups. Part of this project has been and will continue to be an increase in local advertising. We will add increased direct “marketing” to school throughout Buncombe County to let teachers know about the reduced group rates.

Funding*

What is your plan for finding the balance of the project budget? What is your funding timeline and what are your other sources of support?

If the requested funds are granted and we are fortunate to host enough Buncombe County guests and school groups that expend the grant amount prior to the end of the grant period, The Friends of the WNC Nature Center will extend additional funding through June 30, 2020.

Sustainability*

How will this project be maintained? Please describe funding sources and how you plan to sustain the project in future years.

The Friends of the WNC Nature Center have been raising awareness and funds for the Center for over four decades and are well-positioned to continue this success with the support of constituents throughout the County who are committed to the long-term strength of this organization. Specialized lower ticket prices are a strong incentive to attract attendees. From Disney World offering Florida residents discounted rates to many regional zoos and aquariums offering reduced rates for in-county residents, the practice is industry standard and proven to be a substantial benefit to residents.

The Friends and the Center are proud of the partnership with Buncombe County that has allowed us to offer reduced rates to County residents and school groups. We will continue to be a good partner to the County.

ATTACHMENTS

Project Budget*

Download the budget form at [THIS LINK](#).

Complete the budget form for this project and the overall organization.

Save it to your computer, then upload it.

FriendsofWNCNatureCenterFY2020Budget.xlsx

Financial Statements

Upload a copy of the most recently completed financial statements.

All financial statements must be audited, reviewed or compiled by a certified public accountant and include a full balance sheet, income statement, and cash flow statement.

If your organization does not have financial statements, briefly state the reason.

Friends FY17 Audited Financial Statements.pdf

IRS Form 990

Upload a copy of the 990 nonprofit tax reporting form that you most recently completed.

If your organization does not have a 990, briefly state the reason.

FRIENDS OF THE WNC NATURE CENTER 990 6.30.17.pdf

Board of Directors List

Upload a current list of your organization's Board of Directors.

If your organization does not have a board of directors, briefly state the reason.

FY2019 Board EXTERNAL USE.xlsx

Authorized Signatory

By typing in below the name of the authorized signatory and date of submittal, you acknowledge that your governing body has authorized this application, that it is true and current to your knowledge. As a condition of any grant awarded, this organization will provide all information in the manner described in the contract to be executed between the organization and Buncombe County or its designee, including program and financial reporting.

Name & Date

Karen E Babcock, February 22, 2019

Other attachments or supplemental information may be submitted to Rachael Nygaard at rachael.nygaard@buncombecounty.org

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- FriendsofWNCNatureCenterFY2020Budget.xlsx
- Friends FY17 Audited Financial Statements.pdf
- FRIENDS OF THE WNC NATURE CENTER 990 6.30.17.pdf
- FY2019 Board EXTERNAL USE.xlsx