

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

<b>Project</b>	<b>Provision of free civil legal services in Buncombe County</b>
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Pisgah Legal Services</b>

<b>Amount Requested</b>	\$130,000	<b>Strategic Priority or Sustainability Goal</b>	Equity in Access
<b>New or Renewal Request</b>	New	<b>Commissioner Districts Served</b>	All

<b>Organization Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pisgah Legal Services (PLS) pursues justice by providing legal assistance and advocacy to help low income people in WNC meet their basic needs and improve their lives. PLS helped more than 16,000 low income people in WNC in 2018, including more than 6,000 children. Helped more than 2,900 people through Homelessness Prevention Project, 6,400 through Domestic Violence Prevention Project, and 1,772 people through Health Justice Project.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PLS will provide free civil legal services to Buncombe residents to help stop domestic violence and abuse, stabilize housing and prevent homelessness, secure vital income, access healthcare, and meet other basic needs. We prioritize cases for families with children in the household, due to the lifetime effects that adverse childhood experiences such as homelessness and domestic violence. Roughly half of our Buncombe cases last year involved children. PLS believes that everyone deserves access to the civil justice system regardless of income. Studies show that litigants have a much higher rate of getting a positive outcome in their case if they have an attorney. PLS's own assessment showed that litigants with an attorney had a 50% higher chance of obtaining a protective order than those without.</li> </ul>
<b>People Served</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2018, Pisgah Legal Services helped 8,635 residents of the County, 3,577 of whom were children under 18. Serves vulnerable people including victims of domestic violence, veterans who are struggling, families on the verge of homelessness or bankruptcy, people in need of health care, and senior citizen victims of fraud or abuse.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pisgah Legal Services will measure success both by how many people we serve and how well we serve them. To measure quality, will assess the outcomes we are obtaining for clients in our closed cases, such as obtaining or enforcing civil protective orders for abuse, preventing or delaying evictions, and obtaining, preserving or increasing Medicaid benefits. Of the clients who receive legal representation, PLS will have a positive legal outcome for 90% of them.</li> </ul>

<b>Budget</b>			
<b>Amount Funded FY2019</b>	n/a	<b>Increase Request</b>	n/a
<b>Project Budget</b>	\$3,220,908	<b>Total Organization Budget</b>	\$5,404,208
<b>Other Funding Sources:</b> United Way, City of Asheville, Governor's Crime Commission, HCCBG			

<b>Additional Information</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization received a County HHS contract of \$230,000 for FY2019. The department is reducing the contract to \$100,000 for FY2020 as a purchase of needed legal services for HHS clients. PLS is seeking this grant of \$130,000 to help sustain the availability to the general public of civil legal aid for low income people.</li> <li>Other County funding includes: \$60,000 Behavioral Health contract for SOAR Disability Services, \$29,662 Justice Resource contract for Expungement services, and Family Justice Center pass-through funds from a NC Governor's Crime Commission grant.</li> </ul>

# Provision of free civil legal services in Buncombe County

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*FY2020 Strategic Partnership Grants*

## ***Pisgah Legal Services***

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Mr. James Barrett  
P.O. Box 2276  
Asheville, NC 28802

[katiern@pisgahlegal.org](mailto:katiern@pisgahlegal.org)  
O: 828-253-0406  
F: 828-252-8977

## ***Valerie True***

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[valerie@pisgahlegal.org](mailto:valerie@pisgahlegal.org)

# Application Form

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## Question Group

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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.

Provision of free civil legal services in Buncombe County

### Amount Requested\*

\$130,000.00

### 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](#).

Equity in Access – Expand the provision of health and human services in collaboration with community partners

## Organization Description\*

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

Pisgah Legal Services (PLS) pursues justice by providing legal assistance and advocacy to help low-income people in WNC meet their basic needs and improve their lives. PLS helped more than 16,000 low income people in WNC in 2018, including more than 6,000 children.

We helped more than 2,900 people through our Homelessness Prevention Project, 6,400 through our Domestic Violence Prevention Project, and 1,772 people through our Health Justice Project.

## Project Description

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

PLS will provide free civil legal services to Buncombe residents to help stop domestic violence and abuse, stabilize housing and prevent homelessness, secure vital income, access healthcare, and meet other basic needs. We prioritize cases for families with children in the household, due to the lifetime effects that adverse childhood experiences such as homelessness and domestic violence. Roughly half of our Buncombe cases last year involved children.

PLS believes that everyone deserves access to the civil justice system regardless of income. Studies show that litigants have a much higher rate of getting a positive outcome in their case if they have an attorney. PLS's own assessment showed that litigants with an attorney had a 50% higher chance of obtaining a protective order than those without.

PLS was recently told to anticipate a \$130,000 cut in our FY20 contract with Buncombe County DHHS. We are asking the Buncombe County Strategic Partnership fund to help sustain our services.

## Key Steps\*

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

Individuals requesting legal services are interviewed in person at one of PLS' offices or by phone by staff or volunteers. They check for conflicts-of-interest and gather information about the nature of the client's case. Safety planning is provided to victims of domestic violence or sexual assault.

Client screening is followed by a more thorough intake process by a staff or volunteer attorney who gathers in-depth information about a client's case, makes an initial assessment of her/his legal needs, and provides initial legal advice as appropriate.

The legal needs for our clients vary based on their legal problems. At times a client simply needs legal advice to resolve the problem on their own and other times our staff will provide representation, such as creating a power of attorney for an ill client, appearing in front of a judge for a contested domestic violence protective order, or sending a cease and desist letter to an unlawful creditor.

## 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](#).

Districts 1, 2, and 3.

## 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.

In 2018, Pisgah Legal Services helped 8,635 residents of the County, 3,577 of whom were children under 18. We serve vulnerable people including victims of domestic violence, veterans who are struggling, families on the verge of homelessness or bankruptcy, people in need of health care, and senior citizen victims of fraud or abuse.

Of our 3,762 legal services clients:

- 74% identified as women
- 49% were households with children under age 18
- 29% had a disability
- 13% were seniors
- 12% identified as Black
- 22% identified as Hispanic
- 5% were veterans

Pisgah Legal provides free civil legal services to low income people. We generally serve households below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$26,663 for a family of 3), however the average household income of our clients in 2018 was far less, \$12,672.

Our legal services reduce foster care costs and other social services costs for the County. Our work for disadvantaged children increases the odds that they will thrive in school and life.

## 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?

Pisgah Legal Services has been serving Buncombe County since its inception in 1978. We use a holistic approach to help clients develop a plan to solve their underlying problems, not just deal with the immediate symptom. We frequently collaborate with organizations such as domestic violence protection agencies, consumer credit counseling agencies, housing programs, and health care providers.

We currently partner with the following organizations that serve the same population, among others: DHHS, Homeward Bound, MAHEC, Mission Health, Eblen Charities, ABCCM, RHA Health Services, Helpmate, the Buncombe County Bar, and On Track Financial Education and Counseling.

Pisgah Legal handles many cases with staff, but we also refer cases to three hundred or more volunteer attorneys.

We serve on numerous community and local government task forces, as well as non-profit boards of directors. Our community economic development work promotes affordable housing and increased job opportunities.

## 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?

Pisgah Legal Services has been led by Executive Director James (Jim) Barrett for 25 years, after serving ten years as an attorney doing community economic development and housing work at Pisgah Legal. Three Managing Attorneys; Robin Merrell, Jackie Kiger and Julia Horrocks, provide support and oversight of the organizations' programs and serve as liaisons to the community.

PLS' board of directors is currently made up of 17 members. The board is comprised of half attorneys and half community representatives. We strive for geographic and racial representation on our board and staff.

## 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.

Pisgah Legal Services will measure success both by how many people we serve and how well we serve them. If we replace the lost Buncombe DSS funding, we anticipate being able to serve more than 8,000 adults and children in Buncombe County during the grant period in closed and pending cases. We prioritize cases with children in the household and anticipate helping more than 3,000 children in the county.

To measure how well we are doing, we will assess the outcomes we are obtaining for clients in our closed cases, such as obtaining or enforcing civil protective orders for abuse, preventing or delaying evictions, and obtaining, preserving or increasing Medicaid benefits.

Of the clients who receive legal representation, PLS will have a positive legal outcome for 90% of them. The outcomes will be recorded in our case management database and documented in case notes, court documents, executed wills, end-of-life plans, settlements, and court decisions.

## 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?

In 2017, PLS' \$230,000 contract with the county got moved to the Dept. of Health and Human Services. We recently learned that due to restructuring and reduced state funding, DHHS will be reducing our FY2020 contract to \$100,000 and narrowing the scope to just DHHS clients rather than all low-income Buncombe residents. This adds \$130,000 to the roughly \$900,000 deficit PLS is facing in 2019.

PLS is pursuing renewed and/or increased funding from:

- United Way of Asheville & Buncombe County,
- Asheville Strategic Partnership and Asheville CDBG to support our Homelessness Prevention Project,
- Governor's Crime Commission for our Domestic Violence Prevention Project,
- Buncombe County for our SOAR/Disability Assistance Project, and
- Buncombe HCCBG for our Elder Law Project.

PLS will look for additional funding from private foundations and individuals to help fill any remaining budget gaps. We need support from the Strategic Partnership Fund to help fill the funding loss from Buncombe DHHS.

## Sustainability\*

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

PLS has developed a diverse funding base, including federal, state and local government sources, foundation and United Way grants, donations from individuals, faith and civic groups, corporate sponsorships, and contracts for services. PLS also has strong staff and volunteer leadership that is essential to its sustainability. The local attorney community provides more leadership and support to PLS than most other legal aid programs receive.

PLS continues to ask the General Assembly to restore its previous funding for legal aid across the state. PLS has lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in state funding since the funding cuts after the recession. After such cuts, funding from our counties has been crucial to continue our effective, anti-poverty services. We have grown our annual campaign by \$100,000 or more for several years, but that increase is necessary just to retain staff. Replacing large chunks of funding such as the \$130,000 cut planned by HHS is very difficult.

## 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.

Pisgah Legal strategic-partnership-grants-FY2020-budget.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.

2017 PLS Audit Report.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.

PLS 2017 Form 990 PUBLIC INSPECTION COPY.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.

PLS Board Roster January 2019.pdf

## 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

James Barrett, 02/07/19

Other attachments or supplemental information may be submitted to Rachael Nygaard at [rachael.nygaard@buncombecounty.org](mailto:rachael.nygaard@buncombecounty.org)



## File Attachment Summary

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### ***Applicant File Uploads***

- Pisgah Legal strategic-partnership-grants-FY2020-budget.xlsx
- 2017 PLS Audit Report.pdf
- PLS 2017 Form 990 PUBLIC INSPECTION COPY.pdf
- PLS Board Roster January 2019.pdf