

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

Project	The Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN)
Organization	The Environmental Quality Institute

Amount Requested	\$6,000	Strategic Priority or Sustainability Goal	Environment
New or Renewal Request	Renewal	Commissioner Districts Served	All

Organization Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EQI is a nonprofit laboratory whose mission is to collect scientific data that informs environmental understanding and decision-making. One core program is the Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN). For 29 years, trained volunteers have collected samples monthly at fixed stream and lake locations throughout WNC. Samples are analyzed at EQI's state-certified lab in Black Mountain for eight chemical parameters. EQI also operates a 14-year-old program in which trained volunteers collect invertebrates in WNC streams to detect additional water quality issues.
Project Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The VWIN program performs chemical monitoring on approximately 160 stream and lake sites in WNC monthly. Forty-six of these sites are located in Buncombe County. Through this proposal, EQI is requesting \$6,000 of financial support to continue monitoring 12 Buncombe County stream sites through the VWIN program. Individuals and communities want to take ownership and protect natural resources. Watershed managers, such as Buncombe County SWCD, put considerable effort and money into improving impaired waterways and preserving high-quality ones. EQI operates under the principle that local problems are best solved with local solutions. Are uniquely able to provide frequent and high-quality monitoring at many sites throughout WNC. In recent years, long-term VWIN data have been used to inform several county projects, such as formal watershed plans for the Ivy River, Mills River (a drinking water source for Buncombe County), Smith Mill Creek, Penland Creek, and the upper Swannanoa River.
People Served	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All county residents benefit from efforts to conserve and protect drinking and recreational water resources. Ultimately, the entire county enjoys financial benefits from ecotourism centered on Buncombe County's streams and rivers.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VWIN promotes volunteerism and educates county residents about local water resources. The data are backed by a strong quality control program and voluntary state laboratory certification. EQI will share chemical data with partners each month, highlighting values exceeding regulatory limits. EQI will also produce an annual report summarizing the county data within a regional framework.

Budget			
Amount Funded FY2019	\$6,000	Increase Request	n/a
Project Budget	\$33,100	Total Organization Budget	\$123,147
Other Funding Sources: Service fees, partner organization, nonprofits, town and county governments			

Additional Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting/exceeding performance targets for FY2019 grant

The Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN)

FY2020 Strategic Partnership Grants

The Environmental Quality Institute

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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.

The Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN)

Amount Requested*

\$6,000.00

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](#).

CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Organization Description*

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

EQI is a nonprofit laboratory whose mission is to collect scientific data that informs environmental understanding and decision-making. One core program is the Volunteer Water Information Network (VWIN). For 29 years, trained volunteers have collected samples monthly at fixed stream and lake locations throughout WNC. Samples are analyzed at EQI's state-certified lab in Black Mountain for eight chemical parameters. EQI also operates a 14-year-old program in which trained volunteers collect invertebrates in WNC streams to detect additional water quality issues.

EQI's main role as the facilitator of these projects is to provide objective data using standardized protocols throughout the region. Data from both projects are shared with 30+ partner groups such as municipalities, counties, community groups, and nonprofits. EQI is also collaborating with the NC Aquatic Data Hub to promote standardized stream monitoring protocols and develop a unified database for statewide data sharing.

Project Description

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

The VWIN program performs chemical monitoring on approximately 160 stream and lake sites in WNC monthly. Forty-six of these sites are located in Buncombe County. Through this proposal, EQI is requesting \$6,000 of financial support to continue monitoring 12 Buncombe County stream sites through the VWIN program. Individuals and communities want to take ownership and protect natural resources. Watershed managers, such as Buncombe County SWCD, put considerable effort and money into improving impaired waterways and preserving high-quality ones.

EQI operates under the principle that local problems are best solved with local solutions. We are uniquely able to provide frequent and high-quality monitoring at many sites throughout WNC. In recent years, long-term VWIN data have been used to inform several county projects, such as formal watershed plans for the Ivy River, Mills River (a drinking water source for Buncombe County), Smith Mill Creek, Penland Creek, and the upper Swannanoa River.

Key Steps*

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

EQI staff will continue to recruit, train, and coordinate VWIN volunteers, and deliver monthly samples to the lab for 12 stream sites. At least 27 community volunteers will contribute approximately 300 hours of sampling and traveling in-kind for Buncombe County stream monitoring. EQI's lab staff will test each sample for ammonia, nitrates, orthophosphate, total suspended solids, turbidity, conductivity, pH, and alkalinity. Analytical results will be assured by the completion of all NC Wastewater Certification requirements. Proper methodology, equipment, and quality control procedures will ensure accurate and reliable data. The results will be sent monthly to county partners to show current water quality conditions. EQI's director will write an annual report to communicate spatial and temporal trends in water chemistry, as well as interpret the data in a historical, regional, and ecological context. The report will be distributed to all interested parties and be publicly available.

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](#).

EQI currently performs monthly chemical stream water monitoring at 46 sites in communities throughout Buncombe County. Buncombe County has been funding 12 of these sites, which fall into all three Commissioner Districts. These sites include rural watersheds such as Newfound and Sandymush Creeks in the northwestern part of the county, Bent Creek in the south, Ivy River in the northeast, and the French Broad itself. We also monitor urban streams such as Smith Mill Creek, Reed Creek, and several other tributaries to the Swannanoa and French Broad Rivers. A map of VWIN monitoring sites and water quality ratings is attached to this proposal.

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.

VWIN focuses on natural resource protection rather than a particular population. In Buncombe County, EQI collaborates with staff at the Soil & Water Conservation District, Metropolitan Sewerage District (MSD), the City of Asheville, Ivy River Partners, MountainTrue, Biltmore Lake Association, and RiverLink, all of which contribute to the project costs. Data and reports are available to the public at EQI's website or upon request. Volunteers are trained by EQI staff to collect monthly samples and receive information about local water quality. Community collaboration and citizen education are critical to EQI's mission. All county residents benefit from efforts to conserve and protect drinking and recreational water resources. Ultimately, the entire county enjoys financial benefits from ecotourism centered on Buncombe County's streams and rivers.

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?

VWIN chemical monitoring in Buncombe County is primarily supported by MSD, Buncombe County (SWCD), Ivy River Partners, the City of Asheville's Stormwater Services Division, RiverLink, and MountainTrue. Buncombe County SWCD uses the data to inform their technical assistance and sedimentation/nutrient management programs, stormwater and erosion control efforts, and environmental education programs. The data enable MSD to quickly respond to unreported sewer line ruptures. The City monitors data from urban streams to manage stormwater pollution.

Regional VWIN partners contribute funding for monitoring in other counties. Rather than competing with or duplicating the conservation efforts of other organizations, our work complements, justifies, and helps fund their watershed management work. EQI's technical assistance and objective lab data help them to assign their limited staff and financial resources to conservation projects that can have the greatest positive impact on water quality.

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?

EQI's has a small staff of 1.5 FTE employees. Executive Director, Ann Marie Traylor oversees EQI's monitoring programs, focuses on communicating with partners, and is the laboratory supervisor. Assistant Director, Gracia O'Neill conducts the lab operations and supervises part-time college interns and Federal Work Study students. EQI is a host site for an AmeriCorps Project Conserve member who coordinates the volunteers and leads outreach and educational programs. EQI's Board of Directors includes university professors, nonprofit leaders, educators, fishing and paddling enthusiasts, and stream-monitoring volunteers, bringing a wide range of expertise in water quality.

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.

EQI has a 29-year history of water monitoring in WNC. VWIN promotes volunteerism and educates county residents about local water resources. The data are backed by a strong quality control program and voluntary state laboratory certification. EQI will share chemical data with partners each month, highlighting values exceeding regulatory limits. EQI will also produce an annual report summarizing the county data within a regional framework. These reports include stream scores and ratings, summary statistics, letter grades for each analyte, graphs and data visualizations, trends with time and stream flow, and comparisons with all WNC monitoring sites. These monitoring results are used to demonstrate need, plan restoration projects, and provide an edge in fundraising efforts focused on improving water quality in county streams. This, in turn, helps protect clean water for all the ways it is used, such as for wildlife, drinking, recreation, growing food, and brewing beer.

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?

The VWIN program operates largely on laboratory service fees from partner organizations that request monitoring assistance. This proposal is requesting \$6,000 (\$500/site/year) for 12 sites tested monthly. In 2016 the lowest commercial lab prices for the same analyses amounted to \$780/site/year and did not include sample collection, delivery, bottle washing and replacement, or detailed reporting. Buncombe County VWIN revenue pays for EQI staff, occupancy, and laboratory supplies. As mentioned before, our partner organizations (MSD, Ivy River Partners, City of Asheville, RiverLink, MountainTrue) provide financial support for the remaining 34 Buncombe County VWIN sites, with other nonprofits, towns, and county governments funding more than 100 additional sites in a dozen WNC counties.

Sustainability*

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

VWIN is a long-term regional stream monitoring project and this longevity and geographic scale is where the real value lies. The information is critical for helping our partners focus their technical and financial resources in Buncombe County and beyond. Clean water is protected and money is invested local water quality projects because grant funders have data to help understand the issues.

VWIN monitoring actually began in Buncombe County in 1990, with partial funding from the County. EQI has applied for the Buncombe County grant each year with the backing of Buncombe County Soil & Water Conservation District staff. If the County does not renew funding this portion of the program, EQI will discontinue monitoring at those sites unless another financial sponsor steps forward.

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.

EQI strategic-partnership-grants-FY2020-budget-template.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.

EQI 2017 Compilation Report-FINAL.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.

Signed EQI 2017 990EZ.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.

EQI Board list 2-2019 & VWIN map.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

Ann Marie Traylor 2/8/2019

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

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- EQI strategic-partnership-grants-FY2020-budget-template.xlsx
- EQI 2017 Compilation Report-FINAL.PDF
- Signed EQI 2017 990EZ.pdf
- EQI Board list 2-2019 & VWIN map.pdf