

# Increased Capacity for Community Mediation

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## *FY2021 Strategic Partnership Grants*

### ***The Mediation Center***

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Asheville, NC 28801

info@mediatewnc.org  
O: (828) 251-6089  
F: (828) 232-5140

### ***Mrs. Laura Jeffords***

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# Application Form

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## ***INSTRUCTIONS***

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As part of the FY2021 Strategic Partnership Grants program, Buncombe County requests proposals for community-based projects working toward outcomes in alignment with Strategic Plan focus areas.

Please refer to the Grant Guidelines published on the Strategic Partnership Grants website at [buncombecounty.org/grants](http://buncombecounty.org/grants) for complete information about the grant program, including: Purpose; Funding; Eligibility; Timeline; Grant writing workshop; Review process; Awards; and more.

**Applications are due by 5:00 on February 14, 2020.**

## ***BASIC INFORMATION***

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**BASIC INFORMATION – Before completing the application, please tell us a little about the request.**

### **Project Name\***

Increased Capacity for Community Mediation

### **Strategy\***

Recognizing that some projects will use more than one strategy, select the strategy that most closely applies to this project:

- Environmental Stewardship - High quality air, water, farmland and renewable energy for future generations
- Educated & Capable Community - A county where all people thrive and demonstrate resilience throughout their lives
- Vibrant Economy - A robust and sustainable economy that builds on homegrown industries/talent and provides economic mobility for all
- Resident Well-Being - A county where residents are safe, healthy, and engaged in their community

Resident Well-Being

### **Funding Request\***

How much funding is this project requesting for FY2021?

\$25,000.00

## Grant Guidelines\*

Have you read and understand the information presented in the FY2021 Grant Guidelines Strategic Partnership Grants?

Click here for the Grant Guidelines.

If no, please contact County staff to request assistance: Rachael Nygaard, (828) 250-6536 or rachael.nygaard@buncombecounty.org.

Yes

## Nonprofit Status\*

Upload proof of nonprofit status, such as IRS Determination Letter or documentation from the North Carolina Secretary of State. If this documentation is not available, briefly state the reason.

501 in PDF.pdf

## Board of Directors\*

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.

200204 ABD Board List.docx

# APPLICATION

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**APPLICATION QUESTIONS – Responses to these questions will be scored by the grant committee. Each question is worth 10% of the final score.**

## Organization\*

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 Mediation Center is to create opportunity from conflict. Conflict is a normal part of life, and sometimes people need help to move successfully through difficult and stressful times. We offer free, neutral, non-judgmental, and confidential conflict mediation services for a broad range of community disputes between family members, neighbors, and other community members.

We also offer supervised visitation and safe child exchange to families with high risk of domestic violence, child maltreatment, child abduction, and trauma via our Family Visitation Program, which allows children to stay connected to their non-custodial parent in a safe and secure environment. All our services help people move through difficult conflict and avoid violence and abuse. In this way, The Mediation Center creates a safer and more peaceful community for everyone.

The Mediation Center was founded in 1984 to provide community mediation and conflict resolution services. We began providing supervised visitation and safe child exchange through FVP in 2007, and in the past 5 years, we have provided more than 4,200 supervised visits and child exchanges and more than 2,500 people have participated in mediation.

Mediation is effective: we survey all participants at the end of mediation. Over the past three years, (1) 84% reached an agreement on some or all of the issues (2) 66% thought that mediation would improve their communication with the other party and (3) 58% reported that mediation would improve their relationship with the other party. These are significant benefits, especially for people who are involved in what is often very heated conflict. By addressing and resolving these important interpersonal issues, relationships are improved and people are able to reconnect with their neighbors, families, and communities.

We serve Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania and Polk Counties. This request is for our Buncombe County Community Mediation services only.

### **Need for the Project\***

What is the main issue this project is established to address? What data or qualitative factors/stories are available to show that need?

This project addresses the need to expand Buncombe community mediation services, especially in rural areas of the county.

In each of the past 2 years, more than 140 Buncombe residents have participated in community mediation. In addition, we have talked with more than 600 people each year about their community conflicts. The Courts and law enforcement make heavy use of this program: 62% of mediated conflicts were referred by Buncombe County courts, 11% were by Pisgah Legal Services, 23% were self-referrals, and 3% were from law enforcement/animal control.

From the late 1980s until 2011, the state provided funding for community mediation programs state-wide in recognition of the fact that it increases the efficiency of the court system and reduces the burden on law enforcement. Funding was eliminated during the recession and is not expected to return; we currently receive no public funding for this program. The program is at capacity and demand is high.

When we look at our clients served from the past 4 years by zip code compared to 2018 census population data, we find that we are under-serving rural areas overall by 10%. In particular, the number of people served from Barnardsville is 32% lower than would be expected; Black Mountain is 93% lower; Fairview 40%; Weaverville 10%; Swannanoa and Candler are both 8% lower. The only rural community over-represented in our data is Leicester, much of which is relatively close to our office in downtown Asheville. We are not, however, able to use zip code data to differentiate between clients who live just over the line in Leicester from those who live much further out. The census data also tells us that these under-served rural communities have high rates of poverty, residents on food stamps, and people with disabilities.

We know that residents of rural areas have different needs and that we need staffing resources to address these needs, which include transportation barriers and discomfort with downtown Asheville.

## Project\*

Explain the project and how it will work. Include the overall purpose and any models or evidence-based practices that will be included. What specific activities and milestones are included in the project plan?

Unresolved conflict between neighbors, friends, co-workers, and family members causes stress, trauma, and violence in neighborhoods and communities. Community mediation helps people move through these difficult and stressful conflicts by talking about what matters, being heard by others, resolving conflict without violence, and moving ahead with relationships intact. Volunteer and staff mediators facilitate a neutral, non-judgmental process that helps the people involved find their own solutions. Mediation is a powerful tool for resolving conflict: when people sit down together and walk through the mediation process, more than 80% reach an agreement, improving relationships and reducing violence.

A 2017 study on the use of mediation in court cases in the state of Maryland found that all mediation participants, whether or not they reached an agreement, were 5 times less likely to return to court about the same issue. Mediation also had a positive impact on interpersonal relationships; those who participated in mediation instead of court were more likely to report an improved relationship with the other party and to report that the dispute had been resolved long-term.

A 2005 study found that community mediation participants called the police 76% less often in the 6 months following mediation. When law enforcement officers are repeatedly called to homes about the same interpersonal conflicts between neighbors or family members, already scarce resources are stretched. Community mediation, therefore, increases community safety by resolving interpersonal conflicts and allowing law enforcement officers to focus on their primary responsibilities.

We will carry out this project by increasing our staffing for this program by 20 hours per week so that we can more quickly return calls and schedule mediation. We will also establish one pilot site in rural Buncombe County where we will hold mediation sessions at a community location near where participants live.

## People Served\*

How many people will be served by this project? Describe the people served, including demographics such as geography, income, race & ethnicity, age, etc.

In each of the past three years, more than 140 Buncombe County residents have participated in mediation to address an interpersonal conflict. The program is at capacity: clients often must wait several days for an initial intake phone call and even longer for an appointment. This project will allow us to increase the capacity of the program by 25% and serve 175 Buncombe County residents in mediation. We will see a 20% increase in the total number of mediation participants from the county's rural zip codes (defined here as a population density of less than 350 people per square mile).

Conflict is a normal part of life and all kinds of people participate in community mediation. Our clients are widely distributed as far as age, race, and ethnicity. Our clients also have lower average income than the overall population of the county.

Because community mediation is based on the idea that the mediators must be like the mediation participants, we will focus this year on recruiting and training new volunteer mediators specifically to serve these rural communities. We will work to identify barriers to having more rural residents volunteer as mediators and will use feedback and input from volunteers and community partners to overcome these barriers. New volunteers participate in 40 hours of initial training and then an additional 20 hours of training per year. We will use some of the additional staffing resources to recruit and train more volunteer mediators, which will increase the available appointment times and the speed with which we can schedule appointments.

## Results\*

What results do you hope to achieve with this project? Be specific about how much impact the project will have in line with Commissioner focus areas.

Commissioner goals for Justice Resource Support include (1) enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system (2) focus on law enforcement approaches informed by best practices for serving people with mental illness, addiction, homelessness, poverty and trauma, and (3) offer diversion and alternatives to incarceration for low-level, first-time nonviolent offenders and people with mental illness and substance use disorders.

Community mediation enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system by diverting cases – especially misdemeanor criminal cases and 50-C non-domestic restraining orders – from the court system. The court system is not the ideal venue to handle these interpersonal issues; the judges, district attorneys, magistrates, public defenders, and clerks who refer the 62% of our total cases that come from the court system agree. These referrals allow the court system to focus its limited resources on felony criminal issues and other matters of law. In addition, many of the defendants in cases diverted to mediation are first-time nonviolent offenders with substance use disorders and mental illness.

Community mediation also supports law enforcement efficiency and effectiveness by providing a resource for law enforcement officers who encounter interpersonal disputes in the community. Law enforcement officers are frequently called to residences to address conflicts between neighbors and family members, many of which are not legal issues. When these cases are referred to mediation, conflicts are more likely to be resolved and law enforcement calls for service decrease.

For this project, we will increase the number of people served from 140 to 175 and increase the number of rural residents served to be in line with the 40% of the county that lives in rural areas. Finally, post-mediation survey data will show that 80% of participants reach an agreement on some or all issues.

## Evaluation\*

How will you know you have succeeded? Explain the project evaluation process, including specific measures that will be tracked.

We will track the number of mediation participants in our cloud-based case management software. We will collect zip code data on all clients, so that we are able to see an increase in rural residents served. At the end of all mediation sessions, we will give clients a survey (which is a validated tool) to measure whether they reached an agreement on some or all issues as well as the impact of the process on their relationship with the other party. These responses are entered into a spreadsheet which allows to calculate the percent of respondents who chose each survey response.

## Collaboration\*

List any formal and/or supportive partners. Describe their roles in the project. How will they make it stronger?

In order to ensure that people who need mediation are referred, we work closely with Buncombe County Court personnel, including the district attorney's office, district court judges, public defenders, and the criminal magistrates. These personnel identify and refer interpersonal conflicts to mediation, especially misdemeanor criminal cases and 50-C non-domestic restraining orders. We also work with the Buncombe

County Sheriff's office and the Asheville Police Department to help officers identify conflicts that might benefit from referral to mediation. We work especially closely with animal control around barking dog issues, which often turn into heated neighbor disputes. Pisgah Legal Services (PLS) is a key partner; our services are complementary but do not overlap. Often community members who contact PLS but do not fit PLS case criteria can benefit from mediation. Each year we provide training for PLS intake workers to help them identify screened-out cases that can be referred to mediation. Finally, we work with Helpmate and District Court Judges to ensure that non-domestic 50-C retraining orders, which are often neighbor disputes, are referred to mediation when appropriate so that the court system is able to focus instead on the 50-B domestic violence retraining orders which are handled in the same courtroom at the same time.

## Budget\*

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Explain how grant funds will be used, specifically what type of expenses will be covered by County funds. Describe other sources of revenue, including type of funding, source, restrictions and status.

200214 ADV BCSF Community Mediation Budget.xlsx

Grant funds will be used to add 20 hours of additional staffing to the Buncombe County community mediation program. This person will do intake, schedule mediation, coordinate volunteer mediators, and work with community partners and referral sources. This will be a 29% increase in our overall staffing for the program. This will allow us to better meet the already overwhelming demand for this program. Grants funds will also be used to cover the increase in training cost and travel for the additional staffing, and to pick up a portion of the program's shared expenses, like insurance and the cost of printing brochures.

We have a three-year grant from the United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County. A portion of this grant is used for the Buncombe County Community Mediation Program. The exact amount of the grant for the 2020-2021 fiscal year will vary with the overall amount of money raised by the United Way, but is not expected to decrease by more than 10-15%.

As mentioned below, The Mediation Center provides training to professionals in the community including attorneys and mental health professionals. Fees from these training programs generate unrestricted income which supports our programming. We continue to grow this side of our work in order to become more sustainable. We also receive funding from private family foundations and individual donors in the community.

## Other County Funding\*

List all other Buncombe County funding that is provided to your organization. For each item, list the project being funded, amount of funding, source (grant, departmental contract, etc.) and whether funding is to be renewed for FY2021.

We currently receive \$10,000 from the Buncombe County Service Foundation for the Family Visitation Program. That is the only county funding provided to The Mediation Center.

## Sustainability\*

How will the project continue to succeed after the funding of the grant? Explain your plan for making this an ongoing effort.

Over the past few years, we have been developing our training program which provides for-fee training in mediation, conflict resolution, and related topics to professionals in a variety of fields including attorneys and mental health professionals. This program is growing into a new and substantial source of unrestricted funds for the agency. Funding from these activities is not adequate to support the entire Community Mediation program, but we are dedicated to continuing to grow unrestricted sources of funding so that we can be more sustainable.

## **OPTIONAL INFORMATION**

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**OPTIONAL INFORMATION – This information will not impact grant scoring but will be helpful to the committee.**

### **Partial Funding**

If the project were to be offered a grant for partial funding, what factors would need to be considered?

We will use this funding to hire an additional staff person for 20 hours per week. We find that it is very difficult to hire, train and supervise someone for a small number of hours. For example, it's difficult to recruit, train, and retain a person to work just 8 or 10 hours a week. Very part-time jobs often turnover frequently, which is inefficient. It would be very helpful to have the full amount of funding so that we can have a dedicated and longer-term staff person to expand our capacity and to develop our services to rural areas of the county. However, if partial funding is provided we will use the resources provided to expand to the greatest extent possible.

### **Resource Support**

Beyond this grant request, how can Buncombe County support your organization with this project and in strengthening your work?

While we already work with law enforcement and the courts, we imagine that many other county departments are contacted about interpersonal disputes in the community, especially involving animals and neighbors. We would appreciate opportunities to communicate with a broader range of county staff about our services so that staff can refer these cases to mediation as appropriate. We could do this in person, or could provide written information to share with county staff via the county's internal communication system. Unresolved conflict affects everyone in our community.

### **Other**

Is there anything else that you want the committee to know?

Survey data from community mediation participants over the past three years shows the effectiveness of program for resolution of interpersonal disputes: (1) 87% of participants report they were able to talk about all or most of the issues that were important to them (2) 84% reached an agreement on some or all of the issues (3) 66% thought that mediation would improve their communication with the other party and (4) 58% reported that mediation would improve their relationship with the other party. These are significant benefits,



especially for people who are involved in what is often very heated conflict. By addressing and resolving these important interpersonal issues, relationships are improved and people are able to reconnect with their neighbors, families, and communities.

## File Attachment Summary

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

- 501 in PDF.pdf
- 200204 ABD Board List.docx
- 200214 ADV BCSF Community Mediation Budget.xlsx

**Internal Revenue Service**

**Date:** July 25, 2007

MEDIATION CENTER  
40 NORTH FRENCH BROAD STE B  
ASHEVILLE NC 28801

**Department of the Treasury**  
**P. O. Box 2508**  
**Cincinnati, OH 45201**

**Person to Contact:**

Viola Wahoff 31-07420  
Customer Service Specialist

**Toll Free Telephone Number:**  
877-829-5500

**Federal Identification Number:**  
56-1424025

Dear Sir or Madam:

This is in response to your request of July 25, 2007, regarding your organization's change of address. We have updated our records to reflect the change as shown above.

In February 1985 we issued a determination letter that recognized your organization as exempt from federal income tax. Our records indicate that your organization is currently exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Our records indicate that your organization is also classified as a public charity under sections 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Our records indicate that contributions to your organization are deductible under section 170 of the Code, and that you are qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Internal Revenue Code.

If you have any questions, please call us at the telephone number shown in the heading of this letter.

Sincerely,



Janna K. Skufca, Director, TE/GE  
Customer Account Services



The Mediation Center Board of Directors – Updated February 4, 2020

Board Member	Office and/or Committee	Term of Service End Date	Primary Affiliation	Mailing Address	Email	Phone
Bill Brazil	<i>President/Executive</i> , Nominating, Governance, Continuing Education	March 2022*	Attorney/Brazil & Burke	77 Central Ave, Suite E Asheville, NC 28801	<a href="mailto:bill@brazilburkelaw.com">bill@brazilburkelaw.com</a>	C: (828) 777-9997
Lynn Cook	<i>Treasurer/Finance</i> (chair), Executive	November 2021**	VP, Commercial Relationship Manager/HomeTrust Bank	312 Vista Falls Road Mills River, NC 28759	<a href="mailto:lynn.cook@hometrustedbanking.com">lynn.cook@hometrustedbanking.com</a>	C: (828) 318-7700 W: (828) 251-7526
Sarah Corley	Fundraising, Finance, Continuing Education	November 2022*	Mediator/Mediation Works NC	338 Stratford Rd Asheville, NC 28804	<a href="mailto:sarah@mediationworksnc.com">sarah@mediationworksnc.com</a>	C: (828) 779-9327
Jeanne Cummings	<i>Secretary/Executive</i> , Nominating, Continuing Ed	June 2021**	Clinical Psychologist	647 Town Mountain Rd Asheville, NC 28803	<a href="mailto:cummingsjd@yahoo.com">cummingsjd@yahoo.com</a>	H: (828) 299-9887
Deborah Grey	Governance	January 2021*	Licensed Clinical Social Worker	PO Box 2112 Fairview, NC 28730	<a href="mailto:debgraync@gmail.com">debgraync@gmail.com</a>	C: (336) 749-0903
Laura Jeffords	Ex Officio	(N/A)	Executive Director/The Mediation Center	40 N French Broad Ave, Ste B, Asheville, NC 28801	<a href="mailto:laurahj@mediatewnc.org">laurahj@mediatewnc.org</a>	W: (828) 251-6089 C: (828) 280-0263
Todd Lester	Fundraising, Finance	January 2021*	Community Volunteer	37 Fairfax Ave Asheville, NC 28806	<a href="mailto:tlester33@gmail.com">tlester33@gmail.com</a>	C: (646) 220-1810



The Mediation Center Board of Directors – Updated February 4, 2020

James Robinson-Long	<i>Immediate Past President</i> Executive, Finance, Continuing Education	June 2021**	Biltmore Company	307 10 <sup>th</sup> Street Black Mountain, NC 28711	<a href="mailto:jrobinsonlong@biltmore.com">jrobinsonlong@biltmore.com</a>	C: (828) 777-9620
Sabrina Rockoff	Executive, Nominating, Fundraising	June 2021*	Attorney/McGuire, Wood, & Bissette	9 Saddle Ridge Fletcher, NC 28732	<a href="mailto:srockoff@mwblawyers.com">srockoff@mwblawyers.com</a>	C: (828) 254-8800
Philip (PJ) Roth	Fundraising, Governance	October 2020*	Attorney/Marshall, Roth, & Gregory	P.O. Box 769 Asheville, NC 28802	<a href="mailto:proth@mrglawfirm.com">proth@mrglawfirm.com</a>	C: (828) 279.7319
Beth Vogler	Fundraising	December 2020*	Mars Hill University	117 David Biddle Trail Weaverville, NC 28787	<a href="mailto:bvogler@mhu.edu">bvogler@mhu.edu</a>	C: (828) 279-5295
Kevin Young	Nominating, Fundraising	April 2022*	Biltmore Company/Strategic HR Business Partner	11 B Rathfarnham Rd Asheville, NC 28803	<a href="mailto:kyoung@biltmore.com">kyoung@biltmore.com</a>	H: (828) 225-1365 C: (828) 777-7147

\*first term, \*\*second term

- How many Board Members are serving on the Board of Directors at the time of this application? 11 members What is the minimum 7 and maximum 16 allowed by your bylaws?
- How many Board Members have made a personal financial contribution to the organization in the past 12 months? 100%
- How many Board Meetings are scheduled yearly? 9 meetings How many have occurred with a quorum of members in the past 12 months? 9 meetings
- What is the length of your Board's term of service? 3 years What is the maximum number of successive terms? 2 terms

## Strategic Partnership Grants

### Proposed FY2021 Project Budget (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021)

<b>Organization Name:</b>	<b>The Mediation Center</b>
<b>Project Name:</b>	<b>Increasing Capacity for Community Mediation</b>
<b>Grant Amount Requested:</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>

FY2021 Proposed Project Revenue	Amount	Committed or Pending?
Proposed Buncombe County Strategic Partnerships Grant	\$ 25,000	pending
List other sources: Buncombe United Way	\$ 17,247	committed
List other sources: Private Foundation	\$ 5,000	pending
List other sources: Donations	\$ 12,000	pending
List other sources: Earned Income from Training Programs	\$ 28,326	pending
List other sources:		
List other sources:		
List other sources:		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 87,573</b>	

FY2021 Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Grant	Other Funds	Total	Notes
Personnel	\$ 22,000	\$ 42,206	\$ 64,206	
Training	\$ 250	\$ 500	\$ 750	
Travel	\$ 751	\$ 1,400	\$ 2,151	
Supplies / Materials	\$ 455	\$ 1,642	\$ 2,097	
Meetings (Food, Interpreting, Child Care, etc.)		\$ 250	\$ 250	
Equipment / Furniture		\$ -	\$ -	
Printing / Marketing	\$ 200	\$ 255	\$ 455	
Licensing / Memberships / Dues / Subscriptions		\$ 175	\$ 175	
Client Support		\$ -	\$ -	
Contracts		\$ -	\$ -	
Professional Services (Legal, Accounting, etc.)		\$ 1,599	\$ 1,599	
Insurance and Bonds		\$ -	\$ -	
Building Maintenance (Rent, Utilities, Repairs, etc.)	\$ 1,344	\$ 14,546	\$ 15,890	
List other costs:			\$ -	
List other costs:			\$ -	
List other costs:			\$ -	
List other costs:			\$ -	
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 87,573</b>	

Overall Organization Budget	Amount	Notes
FY2019 Actual Year-End Revenue	\$ 614,090	
FY2019 Actual Year-End Expenses	\$ 611,108	
FY2020 Adopted Budget Amount	\$ 667,676	
FY2021 Proposed Budget Amount	\$ 675,593	