

Agricultural and Community Service Initiatives

FY2021 Strategic Partnership Grants

WNC Communities

Mr. L. T. Ward
594 Brevard Road
Asheville, NC 28806

info@wnccommunities.org
O: 828-252-4783
M: 828-318-5656
F: 828-251-9532

Ms. Jennifer L. Ferre

594 Brevard Road
Asheville, NC 28806

info@wnccommunities.org
O: 828-252-4783
F: 828-251-9532

Application Form

INSTRUCTIONS

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 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

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

Project Name*

Agricultural and Community Service Initiatives

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

Educated & Capable Community

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.

WNC Communities Tax ID Letter.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.

WNCC Board and Terms FYE 6.30.2020.pdf

APPLICATION

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.

WNC Communities (WNCC) works with farmers to sustain the economy of agriculture, and with community leaders to sustain rural community vitality. This mission is accomplished through a Program of Work focused on community development, agriculture revenue and forest health. The following are budgeted programs managed to benefit Buncombe County and the region: WNC Honors Awards (awards given to community centers), Journey Scholarship (awards to students for secondary education), WNC Agricultural Hall of Fame (honoring pioneers in agriculture), WNC Regional Livestock Center & the WNC Brewer's Grain Alliance. The following are agriculture groups in which WNC Communities serves as administrator: WNC Beef Cattle Commission, WNC Dairy Commission & Mountain Cattle Alliance. Other programs with dedicated funding are WNC AgOptions (NCTTFC) and Hemlock Restoration Initiative (state, federal and Buncombe county support). Major highlights are delivering services to 20 counties with improvements in agricultural

economy and with sustaining the vitality of rural communities in WNC. Each program/agriculture group has a dedicated staff person assigned to facilitate committees, track progress toward implementation and document outcomes. The Executive Director is Jennifer Ferre, with over 10 years in nonprofit management and agricultural program leadership. The Director of Community and Agricultural Programs, Terri Wells, is a Buncombe County native and has a significant background in community and agricultural development. Director of Hemlock Restoration Initiative, Margot Wallston has successfully managed HRI for 4 years and has a lengthy background in land conservation, restoration, plant ecology, and volunteer management. Officers include long term community leaders K Ray Bailey (President) and LT Ward (Vice President), both who reside in Buncombe County, volunteer and lead the programs of WNC Communities with financial & organization oversight. See the attached Executive Summary.

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?

WNCC has been in existence for over 70 years & is dedicated to creating and maintaining innovative programs to improve the quality of life for rural communities and enhancing the economy of the agriculture sector. Community organizations are the heart and backbone of underserved rural and urban communities, providing hubs for community engagement, as well as the minds and muscle to develop and deliver a wide range of services that address many issues, including exercise & wellness facilities and programs, educational programs, recreation opportunities, Internet services, food distribution and more. Through programs such as the WNC Honors Awards, these communities receive support in the form of cash awards to assist with these vital programs. WNCC also helps these communities by offering assistance with grant writing and educational opportunities. WNCC provides these volunteer organizations with needed resources to ensure they remain vital in their communities. Commissions dedicated to agriculture have been a valuable contribution to the agricultural sector in WNC. These commissions came together to address common needs and advance agriculture as a way of life in the mountains and have laid the groundwork for many innovative ideas currently being implemented. WNC Beef Cattle Commission and Mountain Cattle Alliance strengthen the beef cattle market through educational programming to add value. Members strive to uphold standards in beef cattle through the next generation at the Junior Beef Show at the NC Mountain State Fair. Increasing youth involvement through the Dairy Steer Project and Jr. Beef Show keeps the beef industry strong. Youth participation in these shows increases every year, exemplifying the interest in youth for educational opportunities and the need to keep youth engaged and inspired to become the next generation of farmers in WNC. For more details, see the attached Executive Summary.

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?

WNCC works in a collaborative relationship to improve the agricultural economy, preserve the forests, and provide support and incentives to rural communities to encourage self-help programs that enrich community life. We do this with a full program of agricultural and community work, including the Hemlock Restoration Initiative (HRI), which works towards restoring ecological balance to WNC by establishing wilderness preservation areas for the endangered Carolina hemlocks and building the population of predator beetles, specifically monitoring Buncombe County release sites. The goal of our traditional and ongoing community and agricultural initiatives is to stimulate and contribute to the overall economic profile of the county. Our plan is to use this vital county funding to continue and strengthen programs and to remain "opportunity ready" for future initiatives, which can only be done by remaining fiscally healthy. Our typical timeline includes:

ONGOING: Execution of HRI; Weekly markets at WNC Regional Livestock Market (RLC); Educational Programs for Beef Cattle Commission (BCC) & Mountain Cattle Alliance (MCA)

JANUARY: Planning meetings for the BCC & MCA, Journey Scholarship Committee (JS), WNC Ag Hall of Fame (AHF)

FEBRUARY: JS applications distributed; MCA steering meeting

MARCH: JS applications due; BCC education sessions/meetings; AHF nominations in, reviewed & determined

APRIL: JS determine youth receiving scholarships; Planning for Jr. Dairy and Beef Shows

MAY: Induct 2 pioneers into regional AHF; Requests out for sponsorships for Honors

JUNE: Honors applications updated & distributed; Requests for \$ for Jr. Dairy and Beef Shows

JULY: BCC annual tour

AUGUST: BCC raise \$ for Jr. Beef Show

SEPTEMBER: Jr. Beef & Jr. Dairy shows at Mountain State Fair, WNC Honors applications due

OCTOBER: BCC steak supper

NOVEMBER: 71th WNC Honors Luncheon; MCA educational program

DECEMBER: Publicity for WNC Honors

For more details, see the attached Executive Summary.

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.

WNC HONORS: Approximately 12 rural communities with ~25,000 households and include Avery's Creek, Big Ivy, Buckeye Cove, Cane Creek, Fairview, Leicester, Newfound, Ox Creek, Rosscraggon Wood, Sandy Mush, Shiloh (largely African American community in Asheville) and Spring Mountain. Each community is unique, but collectively, they include a wide range of diverse people in terms of age, neighborhoods, race, sex, veteran status, socioeconomic status, disability status, education levels and more.

JOURNEY SCHOLARSHIP: Over 29 youth in Buncombe have received \$30,000 in scholarships since the inception of this award. We anticipate that 1-2 will receive scholarships in 2020. In 2019, both Buncombe County recipients were young women.

WNC REGIONAL LIVESTOCK CENTER: In 2019 over 14,000 head were sold through the arena for ~\$10 million in revenue, with 25% of the cattle coming from farmers in Buncombe.

BEEF CATTLE: During the current fiscal year the membership list represents 200 active members with an entire third of those in Buncombe.

DAIRY: The Dairy Steer Project has 20 active members with a goal of organizing and increasing youth participation in the Jr. Beef Show.

BREWERS GRAIN: currently providing an efficient and sustainable supply of low-cost feed of spent brewers grain to 15+ area dairies and smaller beef cattle operations for feeding livestock.

HRI: Buncombe County Forest Managers, users of County forests and homeowners.

For more details, see the attached Executive Summary.

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.

WNCC works in a collaborative relationship with many partners to improve the agricultural economy, preserve the forests, and provide support and incentives to rural communities to encourage self-help programs that enrich community life. Funding will support the full program of agricultural and community work, including the Hemlock Restoration Initiative, ensuring that the following traditional and ongoing initiatives will continue to stimulate and contribute to the vibrant economic profile of the county, strengthen communities well-being, ensure residents remain educated and capable and protect the natural environment for future generations. For more details on the below outcomes, see the attached Executive Summary.

- Maintain a market for the sale of livestock in the mountain region; Work with NCSU Cooperative Extension Agents in developing & educating livestock producers and the engagement of youth in agriculture
- Manage the distribution of grant funds for NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to help offset the loss of tobacco income by encouraging farm innovation and new farmers
- Supply farmers with brewery industry by-product (wet brewer's grain) for cattle feed at a price lower than the cost of market
- Conduct a hemlock restoration program to save and restore this crucial conifer that is vital to the health of the forest and to wildlife
- Continue the 71 year old Community Development program to support resilient communities; with guidance from WNC community leaders, conduct annual "self-help" programs to improve quality of life and educate community members; provide assistance and cash awards for success and achievements of residents engaged in their communities
- Conduct a scholarship program available to Community members that encourages youth to pursue higher education
- Maintain a posture of "readiness" for opportunity as it comes from time to time; with the history and reputation of WNCC, these opportunities come more frequent than not.

Evaluation*

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

In our framework as a nonprofit service group, we follow a consistent model of strong board leadership who work with numerous partners in state, county and local governments toward common goals. Historically, in addition to sustainability, this has led to significant pieces of infrastructure like the WNC Ag Center, WNC Farmer's Market, NC Mountain State Fair, The North Carolina Arboretum, Agricultural Research Stations and the WNC Regional Livestock Center. We measure success by the numbers of communities, youth, farms/farmers and healthy hemlock forests we support. This is measured by participation in monthly commission meetings, numbers of communities participating in the Honors Awards program, the number of Journey Scholarship applications received and number of cattle sold through the WNC Livestock Market. Within HRI's grant programs are measurements which include site monitoring, tracking and reporting. Success is confirmed with improved health of hemlock. Opportunities like these would not be possible without the long-term support of the Buncombe County government.

Collaboration*

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

Collaborative partners of our programs are NC Department of Agriculture, county governments and other agencies located throughout the region. Specific to each program:

WNC HONORS funding comes from private industry to provide 100% of cash awards to rural communities.

REGIONAL LIVESTOCK CENTER supported by NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, Golden LEAF Foundation, NCDA&CS, NC Rural Center, ARC, International Paper, county governments, Farm Bureaus, legislators and area producers, with NC Cooperative Extension offering educational opportunities.

WNC BREWERS GRAIN program partners with New Belgium Brewing to provide spent-grain at a cost below market to farmers while NCSU provides research and NC Cooperative Extension agriculture agents provide appropriate criteria on mixing and feeding livestock.

HRI's collaborative network share an interest in the preservation and restoration of threatened hemlocks, and receives state, federal and county funding to accomplish its goals and works with towns, cities, land trusts and colleges.

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.

FY21_SPGrant_Budget_FormWNCC.xlsx

This request is a component of an annual budget which, along with funds from other counties, helps to make up the full operational budget as identified as the Proposed Project Revenue and Expenses in the attached budget form. Other funding comes from the NC Department of Agriculture, NC General Assembly, grant fees and related business income. The funding timeline includes receipt of county funds spread as committed over the 12 month budget period. Other funding made available by the NC General Assembly, NCDA&CS and foundations are received as stipulated in each agreement.

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.

No other funding from Buncombe County is provided to our organization.

Sustainability*

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

WNC Communities Board and Staff have worked diligently to create sustainable funding sources (including Buncombe County) to underwrite the organizational budget to ensure proven rural community development, agriculture and forestry programs can continue. Another strategy has been to develop reasonable program fees to generate income. It is also critical to maintain funders interested in supporting specific programs like NC Tobacco Trust Fund underwriting the WNC AgOptions program or the State funding the Hemlock Restoration Initiative. It is important to be a viable regional nonprofit service group, so that when state funds are available, they can be utilized for programs in the west. What impresses state legislators

is the willingness of county governments to put some skin in the game. This support has been critical to the longevity of WNC Communities and our programs.

OPTIONAL INFORMATION

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?

If total requested funding is not approved, WNCC would seek other sources of funds to make up the difference to complete our budget.

Resource Support

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

Buncombe County has been a supportive partner with WNC Communities in working on various projects such as the recent collaboration with Steve Duckett (NC CES) and Rachael Nygaard to create a community center webpage to spotlight Buncombe County's community centers. Tim Love has also been helpful in encouraging WNCC to join the Buncombe County Census Counts Committee to create a communication and outreach strategy for unincorporated areas. Support such as this strengthens our impact on small organized communities and we would welcome any opportunity to further work in a collaborative way to make our communities stronger.

Other

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

WNCC Executive Summary.pdf
See attached Executive Summary

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- WNC Communities Tax ID Letter.pdf
- WNCC Board and Terms FYE 6.30.2020.pdf
- FY21_SPGrant_Budget_FormWNCC.xlsx
- WNCC Executive Summary.pdf

Internal Revenue Service

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

Date: September 8, 2003

WNC Communities
594 Brevard Rd
Asheville, NC 28806-2300

Person to Contact:

Ms. E. Eckert ID 31-07436
Customer Service Specialist

Toll Free Telephone Number:

8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. EST
877-829-5500

Fax Number:

513-263-3756

Federal Identification Number:

56-0797766

Dear Sir or Madam:

This is in response to your request of August 28, 2003 regarding your organization's tax-exempt status. We have updated our records to reflect your name as shown above.

In July 1953 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.

Based on information subsequently submitted, we classified your organization as one that is not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code because it is an organization described in section(s) 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

This classification was based on the assumption that your organization's operations would continue as stated in the application. If your organization's sources of support, or its character, method of operations, or purposes have changed, please let us know so we can consider the effect of the change on the exempt status and foundation status of your organization.

Your organization is required to file Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax, only if its gross receipts each year are normally more than \$25,000. If a return is required, it must be filed by the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of the organization's annual accounting period. The law imposes a penalty of \$20 a day, up to a maximum of \$10,000, when a return is filed late, unless there is reasonable cause for the delay.

All exempt organizations (unless specifically excluded) are liable for taxes under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (social security taxes) on remuneration of \$100 or more paid to each employee during a calendar year. Your organization is not liable for the tax imposed under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA).

Organizations that are not private foundations are not subject to the excise taxes under Chapter 42 of the Code. However, these organizations are not automatically exempt from other federal excise taxes.

Donors may deduct contributions to your organization as provided in section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to your organization or for its use are deductible for federal estate and gift tax purposes if they meet the applicable provisions of sections 2055, 2106, and 2522 of the Code.

WNC Communities
56-0797766

Your organization is not required to file federal income tax returns unless it is subject to the tax on unrelated business income under section 511 of the Code. If your organization is subject to this tax, it must file an income tax return on the Form 990-T, Exempt Organization Business Income Tax Return. In this letter, we are not determining whether any of your organization's present or proposed activities are unrelated trade or business as defined in section 513 of the Code.

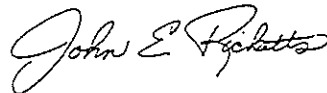
Section 6104 of the Internal Revenue Code requires you to make your organization's annual return available for public inspection without charge for three years after the due date of the return. The law also requires organizations that received recognition of exemption on July 15, 1987, or later, to make available for public inspection a copy of the exemption application, any supporting documents and the exemption letter to any individual who requests such documents in person or in writing. Organizations that received recognition of exemption before July 15, 1987, and had a copy of their exemption application on July 15, 1987, are also required to make available for public inspection a copy of the exemption application, any supporting documents and the exemption letter to any individual who requests such documents in person or in writing. For additional information on disclosure requirements, please refer to Internal Revenue Bulletin 1999 - 17.

Because this letter could help resolve any questions about your organization's exempt status and foundation status, you should keep it with the organization's permanent records.

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

This letter affirms your organization's exempt status.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John E. Ricketts".

John E. Ricketts, Director, TE/GE
Customer Account Services

WNC COMMUNITIES BOARD OF DIRECTORS FYE 6.30.2020

WNC Position	First Name	Last Name	Term	County of Residence
President	K. Ray	Bailey	2022	Buncombe
Vice President	L. T.	Ward	2022	Buncombe
Chair	Randy	Rogers	2022	Haywood
First Vice Chair	Dean	Kanipe	2020	McDowell
Second Vice Chair	Jimmy	Cowan	2020	Henderson
Treasurer	Karen	Hammett	2020	Haywood
Secretary	Jeffrey	Owen	2022	Buncombe
Immediate Past Chair	Roger	Wiggins	2020	Jackson
Board Member	Chivous	Bradley	2022	Rutherford
Board Member	Craig	DeBrew	2022	Henderson
Board Member	Lumpy	Lambert	2021	EBCI
Board Member	Bruce	Peterson	2020	Buncombe
Board Member	Harris	Prevost	2021	Avery
Board Member	Jerry	Sutton	2020	Macon
Board Member	Bill	Yarborough	2022	Haywood
Board Member	Ross	Young	2022	Madison

Strategic Partnership Grants Proposed FY2021 Project Budget (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021)

Organization Name:	WNC Communities
Project Name:	Agricultural and Community Service Initiatives
Grant Amount Requested:	\$25,000

FY2021 Proposed Project Revenue	Amount	Committed or Pending?
Proposed Buncombe County Strategic Partnerships Grant	\$ 25,000	Pending
Other county funding and funding from NC General Assembly	\$ 196,960	Partially committed
Earned income from services	\$ 52,000	Committed
Income from Endowment	\$ 10,000	Committed
All other grant fees and service fees	\$ 62,840	Committed
List other sources:		
List other sources:		
List other sources:		
Total	\$ 346,800	

FY2021 Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Grant	Other Funds	Total	Notes
Personnel	\$ 25,000	\$ 121,500	\$ 146,500	
Training			\$ -	
Travel		\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000	
Supplies / Materials		\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000	
Meetings (Food, Interpreting, Child Care, etc.)		\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	
Equipment / Furniture		\$ 5,500	\$ 5,500	
Printing / Marketing		\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000	
Licensing / Memberships / Dues / Subscriptions			\$ -	
Client Support			\$ -	
Contracts		\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	
Professional Services (Legal, Accounting, etc.)		\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	
Insurance and Bonds		\$ 4,500	\$ 4,500	
Building Maintenance (Rent, Utilities, Repairs, etc.)		\$ 2,500	\$ 2,500	
Agricultural Programs		\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	
Community Programs		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	
Hemlock Resoration Initiative		\$ 138,300	\$ 138,300	
List other costs:			\$ -	
Total			\$ 346,800	

Overall Organization Budget	Amount	Notes
FY2019 Actual Year-End Revenue	\$ 331,860	
FY2019 Actual Year-End Expenses	\$ 345,700	
FY2020 Adopted Budget Amount	\$ 346,800	
FY2021 Proposed Budget Amount	\$ 350,000	



594 Brevard Road • Asheville, NC 28806 • Phone 828.252.4783 • www.wnccommunities.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WNC Communities (WNCC) works in a collaborative relationship with many partners, including Cooperative Extension, as we collectively work to create a vibrant agricultural economy, preserve the forests through environmental stewardship, and provide education, support and incentives to rural communities that make Buncombe County a place where its residents are safe, healthy and engaged. The requested \$25,000 is intended to support the full program of agricultural and community work, including the Hemlock Restoration Initiative (HRI).

WNC Communities is a 71 year-old nonprofit service organization serving the twenty westernmost counties of North Carolina, with Buncombe County as the “model” county among the twenty.

The following are traditional and ongoing initiatives (some direct and others indirect) that stimulate and contribute to the overall economic profile of the county. WNC Communities’ services:

- **Maintain a market for the sale of livestock in the mountain region; Work with NCSU Cooperative Extension Agents in developing and educating livestock producers and the engagement of youth in agriculture**
 - **WNC Regional Livestock Center:** In 2019, 14,780 head of cattle, goats and sheep were sold through the arena for approximately \$10 million dollars in sales. (**Buncombe and Haywood counties are responsible for 50% of the annual livestock production**). At the end of 2019 the total revenue since opening in March 2011 reached an impressive \$111 million from arena sales. The regional producers continues to improve the quality of local beef, as well as ensure producers will earn the highest price possible per head through added value programs and educational sessions (BQA) available through the Mountain Cattle Alliance and the WNC Beef Cattle Commission.
 - WNCC conducts livestock programs at the WNC Agricultural Center, including the Youth Livestock Shows at the Mountain State Fair. WNCC serves as custodian of funds and awards youth prize money for the Fair.
 - WNCC serves a support role for assisting N.C. Cooperative Extension in conducting educational programs such as Beef Quality Assurance (BQA). Some 300 regional producers (50 in Buncombe County) have become certified in BQA production since the livestock center opened in 2011. Other development initiatives for livestock producers include support for FFA, 4H and other development programs.
- **Manage the distribution of grant funds for NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission to help offset the loss of tobacco income by encouraging farming innovation and new start-up farmers**

- **WNC AgOptions:** This program, funded by the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, is designed to supplement the loss of tobacco income by redistributing funds in the form of grants to individual farms with innovative ideas. Since 2004, an impressive \$3 million has been distributed throughout 22 counties of western North Carolina. **Since 2014, Buncombe County farmers have received \$355,500 in funds awarded** for innovative farm projects. WNCC is honored to be the administrator of the WNC AgOptions program to benefit our mountain farmers.
- **Supply farmers with brewery industry by-product (wet brewer’s grain) for cattle feed at a price lower than the cost of market**
- **WNC Brewers Grain:** This program connects a large local brewery with area livestock producers to create an efficient and sustainable supply of low-cost feed of brewer’s grain and provides area dairies and smaller beef cattle operations access for feeding livestock. Partnership with New Belgium Brewing has been paramount in developing this program to not only provide brewers grain to producers, but develop processes for the elimination and/or use of other brewing waste. In addition, facilitating livestock producers’ access to spent grain can help them convert current crops dedicated to field corn to other crops, increasing and diversifying farm revenue. **For example, Ramsey Farms in Fairview is a large Buncombe County dairy farm that benefits from this program by receiving a lower than cost of market for cattle feed.**
- **Conduct a hemlock restoration program to save and restore this crucial conifer that is vital to the health of the forest and to wildlife**
- **HRI:** Buncombe County Board of Commissioners awarded WNCC contracts for a total of \$72,500 over a three year period to manage the “Bringing Beetles to Buncombe” Hemlock Preservation Project.

HRI Program Objectives

The primary goal of the program is to work toward restoring ecological balance to WNC by:

1. Establishing wilderness preservation areas for the endangered Carolina hemlocks
 - a. Prioritize the last remaining old-growth hemlock groves
 - b. Protecting hemlocks urban and non-urban areas of Buncombe County
2. Building up the population of *Laricobius* beetles to reduce the adelgid population
 - a. Securing *Laricobius* beetles from the Pacific Northwest
 - b. Releasing *Laricobius* beetles into Buncombe County

Results:

Approximately 13,000 *Laricobius* beetles were released in Buncombe County between 2015 and 2018 as part of the County’s “Bringing Beetles to Buncombe” Hemlock Preservation Project. Releases occurred on nine Carolina hemlock stands, nine eastern hemlock stands, and two hedges.

Positive beetle recoveries have occurred at over 34 sites around Buncombe County. Multiple recoveries have occurred at several of those sites over that three-year period.

Approximately 80 days dedicated to scouting and monitoring sites within Buncombe during FY2015-FY2018. HRI held 35 educational events featuring biological control of HWA within Buncombe during FY2015-FY2018.

In this fiscal year, over 20 days of scouting and monitoring have occurred at 13 sites in Buncombe County. Seven educational events have taken place, with at least 4 more scheduled in locations such as Montreat, Black Mountain and the NC Arboretum.

Hemlock chemical treatments were performed at the NC Arboretum and in the Sandy Mush Game Land to ensure a percentage of the hemlock stands remain healthy while beetle populations are becoming established. HRI also assisted the USFS Southern Research Station and Camcore to install a hemlock restoration study on federal land near Bent Creek. HRI recruited volunteers for the project, which provided an opportunity to engage local residents in an additional aspect of hemlock management.

- **Continue the 70 year old Community Development program to encourage wholesome community life; with guidance from WNCC community leaders, conduct annual “self-help” programs to improve quality of life in their specific community; provide assistance and cash awards for success and achievements as measured under a competitive review process**
 - **WNC Honors Awards:** Last November, rural leaders gathered for the 70th awards program to receive \$37,500 in cash awards for 65 rural communities. **Eleven rural communities in Buncombe County were honored with a total of \$7,000 in cash awards with Shiloh Community Association, Leicester, Sandy Mush and Big Ivy obtaining the *Community of Promise* awards, Avery’s Creek, Cane Creek, Ox Creek, Rosscraggon Wood and Spring Mountain being recognized at the *Engaged Community* level and Fairview and Newfound awarded as *Participating Communities*. Since 2014, the Honors Awards have distributed \$36,650 to rural communities in Buncombe County.** This voluntary program is designed to recognize rural communities for implementing a variety of best practices to enhance the quality of life in their communities—everything from senior meal sites to improving health care to protecting rural farms and farm jobs and after school programs, as well as numerous festivals and educational opportunities to keep our mountain’s great art, craft, and music traditions alive.

- **Conduct a scholarship program available to Community members that encourages youth to pursue higher education**
 - **Journey Scholarship:** This scholarship program was created to support mountain youth in their pursuit of higher education. Last year, we were able to award \$11,000 in scholarships to ten students. The students that apply for this scholarship live in or participate in the communities that are active in the WNC Honors Awards program. **In the past five years, 16 Buncombe County youth have received a total of \$18,500 in scholarships.**

- **Maintain a posture of “readiness” for opportunity as it comes from time to time; with the history and reputation of WNC Communities, these opportunities come more frequent than not.**

Examples include:

- ❖ WNC Communities having the unique opportunity to facilitate the **distribution of over \$2 million** in TVA settlement funds throughout the 17-county area. These funds were distributed through three programs; School Energy Efficiency (of which **Buncombe received \$141,000** over two years), TVA Ag & Forestry Fund and the Hemlock Restoration Initiative.
- ❖ **WNC Farmers Market Restoration** which was recently completed wherein WNCC was serving as Project Leader and Fiscal Agent for NCDA&CS and Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority for **\$380,000**.
- ❖ **Raised > \$200,000** to save **Blue Ridge Food Ventures (BRFV)** from failure. Accepted and succeeded in the challenge to build BRFV into a profitable operation and establish it as a stand-alone 501(c)3, saving a vital operation for the community and an incubator for start-up companies, and 19 jobs.
- ❖ Completed an **up fitment at WNC Ag Center** of a youth show area in the covered arena with new show facilities and new lighting for youth shows at Mountain state fair at the WNC Ag Center with a budget of ~ **\$150,000**.
- ❖ **Dupont State Forest Education and Visitor Center** – With a budget of some **\$400,000** completed a up fitment of an existing log structure to create a destination for visitors that attracts thousands of visitors annually.
- ❖ **\$25,000** investment in Canola bean research as an second crop for farmers
- ❖ **\$100,000** capital investment on campus of **Warren Wilson College** for a compost facility
- ❖ **And others**

These opportunities were possible because county and state leaders have been willing to invest in our future with annual contributions to this regional nonprofit, focused on serving rural community and agriculture.

As a means to clarify the cost and benefit of our service relationship we offer the following for the past six years:

Funding

- Buncombe County grant contributions equal \$62,960 for the 6 years.

Return to the Buncombe County economic profile

- ~ \$20 Million in livestock sales
- ~ \$200,000 to sustain Blue Ridge Food Ventures
 - Saving 19 jobs
 - Saving the shared kitchen for 70 local clients
 - Maintaining a start up incubator (Graduates include Lusty Monk Mustard, Munki Foods, No Evil Foods and Roots Hummus.
- \$380,000 capital investment in renovation of WNC Farmer’s Market
- ~ \$ 141,000 to Buncombe County Schools for energy cost savings whose saving is estimated at \$47,000 annually
- \$100,000 grant funds - Warren Wilson College compost facility
- \$25,000 grant funds – Canola bean joint research

- \$90,000 Ag Options funds to start up farmers in Buncombe (\$355,500 since 2012)
- \$29,650 in awards to 11 organized communities through the Honors Program
- \$16,500 to Buncombe County high school graduates for scholarship
- Numerous dollars in youth prize money at the Mountain State Fair.

And as a reminder, over its lifetime of 71 years, WNCC is responsible for the creation of significant county infrastructure including the WNC Farmer's Market, the WNC Agriculture Center, the Mountain State Fair, the NCSU Research Station, the NC Arboretum, the WNC Regional Livestock Center and the Interstate connector (I-26 connector to TN).

While we have focused on the benefits to Buncombe County, we must acknowledge we represent the twenty westernmost counties of North Carolina. The outlying counties are always impressed with the leadership of Buncombe County and will usually follow suit. It is our desire to use this "Service" model to ensure continuation of funding from outlying counties. Currently, the annual sum of funds received from the outlying counties is approximately three times the average annual funding from Buncombe County.

Thank you for considering this request. If you require any additional information please let us know.