



Strategic Partnership Grants

I. Purpose

Strategic Partnership Grant funding is granted to nonprofit organizations working toward outcomes in alignment with Buncombe County's strategic plan. Buncombe County envisions a caring community in harmony with its environment where citizens succeed, thrive and realize their potential. We promote a healthy, safe, well-educated, and thriving community with a sustainable quality of life through a focus on: an Educated & Capable Community; Environmental & Energy Stewardship; Resident Well-Being; and a Vibrant Economy.

II. Funding

Strategic Partnership Grants are supported through general county funds, which are budgeted as part of Buncombe County's annual budget. The amount for FY2023 is estimated to be \$889,305 (subject to budget adoption).

III. Eligibility

To be eligible for a Strategic Partnership Grant, an organization and project must meet the following criteria:

- a. **Nonprofit.** Organizations must be incorporated as nonprofit organizations, classified as tax exempt by the Internal Revenue Service, in active operation for a minimum of two (2) years. Organizations must operate in Buncombe County with service to Buncombe County. If an organization does not meet this criteria, it may partner with another organization to serve as fiscal agent for the purposes of administering grant funding.
- b. **Projects.** Funded projects must align with focus areas in [Buncombe County's Strategic Plan](#), which include:
 - Educated & Capable Community - A county where all residents thrive and demonstrate resilience throughout their lives
 - Environmental & Energy Stewardship - High quality air, water, farmland, and renewable energy for future generations
 - Resident Well-Being - Our residents are safe, healthy and engaged in our community
 - Vibrant Economy - A robust and sustainable regional economy that builds our homegrown industries and talent and provides economic mobility for residentsWe promote organizational excellence, and funds may be used for capacity building in addition to project delivery.
- c. **Public Purpose.** Projects must meet a public purpose and fall within County authority to fund per NC General Statutes, to be affirmed by review by Buncombe County legal department prior to grant award.
- d. **Application.** Organizations must submit a grant application through the online grant software before the application deadline. No late applications will be accepted.



- e. **Funding.** Strategic Partnership Grant funding is limited to no more than three (3) years for a single project. The beginning date for the 3-years is July 1, 2020. Funding must represent less than thirty percent (30%) of an organization’s annual budget.
- f. **Other County Grants.** Projects that more closely align with other Buncombe County grant programs will be referred to those processes. Projects will not be considered for funding by more than one County grant program. Details about Buncombe County grant programs are listed at buncombecounty.org/grants including the following: Affordable Housing Services Program; Aging Services Funding; Community Recreation Grants; Early Childhood Fund; Isaac Coleman Grants; Juvenile Crime Prevention Council; Strategic Partnership Grants; and Tipping Point Grants.

IV. Timeline

December 13, 2021	Grant application opens
January 12, 2022	Optional Grant Writing Workshop 1:00 pm Virtual meeting (sign up info below)
February 11, 2022	Applications due by 5:00
March 4, 2022	Strategic Partnership Grants Committee meeting (grant review)
February 14 – April 26, 2022	Grant review by committee
April 30, 2022	Committee funding recommendations due to County budget office
May 2022	Committee grant recommendations published with County Manger’s budget message
June 2022	Public hearing on budget as part of Board of Commissioners regular meeting
June 2022	Grant awards finalized with County budget adoption during Board of Commissioners regular meeting
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023	Funding year

V. Application Process

Applications are due by 5:00 on February 11, 2022. Organizations are encouraged to apply online through Buncombe County’s grant software, which can be accessed at buncombecounty.org/apply or linked through Buncombe County’s grant website at buncombecounty.org/grants. Paper applications are available at and should be returned to 200 College Street, Suite 343, Asheville, NC 28801. A grant writing workshop (optional for applicants) will be held on January 12, 2022 from 1:00-2:00 pm. This will be a virtual meeting. This purpose of the session is to provide in-depth information about the grant process for applicants and potential applicants. Contact Angelyn.Johnson@buncombecounty.org to register.

Staff is available to answer questions and to provide basic one-on-one support to applicants. Contact Angelyn.Johnson@buncombecounty.org to sign up for a session. Staff will also work to match applicants with other community-based grant writing resource support if needed.

Committee Contact: Applicants are asked not to communicate with Strategic Partnership Grants committee members regarding their applications. If the Committee decides to ask follow-up questions of applicants or hold interviews for finalists, applicants will be notified by County staff. Staff do not participate in the grant scoring process.

VI. Required Elements

The application consists of a questionnaire, primarily of questions requiring a narrative response. Applicants are also required to complete and upload a budget form along with a list of members of the Board of Directors. Proof of nonprofit status, such as IRS Determination Letter or documentation from the North Carolina Secretary of State, will be required at the time of application.

VII. Review Committee

Grant recommendations will be prepared by the Strategic Partnerships Grant Committee. The committee consists of nine (9) members, three (3) members per each of the Commissioner Districts, who:

- Applied for membership through the Office of the Clerk to the Board of Commissioners;
- Are appointed by the Board of Commissioners;
- Serve three (3) year staggered terms;
- Represent expertise in the Strategic Plan focus areas;
- Represent the geographic diversity of the County;
- Abide by conflict of interest policies, to include not serving on the Board of Directors or staff of an applicant organization within the past year;
- Hold open meetings and comply with public records requirements;
- Utilize a standardized, points-based scoring system to review grants;
- Recommend a portfolio of grants for approval by the Board of Commissioners; and
- Meet throughout the year to monitor grants and review progress.

A committee meeting schedule, along with meeting materials and announcements are posted on buncombecounty.org/grants. All meetings are open to the public.

VIII. Review Process

Applications are reviewed by the Strategic Partnership Grants Committee utilizing a standardized, points-based system. Reviews will be conducted independently by members of the committee, and discussion will occur during committee meetings.

The following criteria will be considered by the Committee:

- Need for the project – project meets essential community need and fits with the County’s strategic plan focus areas and/or goals
- Project plan – project includes clear, reasonable actions that are likely to meet the need

- Proposed results – project includes quantifiable results and plan for measuring success
- Equity – organization has a demonstrated commitment to equity and reflected it in the proposed project
- Organizational capacity – is structured to complete the project as described and budget is clear, reasonable and matched to community need and project plan

IX. Awards

Grant recommendations prepared by the Committee will be submitted for a vote of approval from the Board of Commissioners. The list will be published as part of the County Manager’s recommended budget as presented to the Board of Commissioners at their regularly scheduled meeting in May 2022. Grant awards will be finalized with budget adoption in June 2022.

County Commissioners will not serve on any board or organization seeking funding from County Government unless said service is a requirement through legislation or legal agreement.

X. Performance Contracts

All grant awards will be administered via performance contracts. Contracts will include a scope of work that defines services, deliverables and reporting measures.

FY2023 contracts will be for the period July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. All funds must be spent or returned to the County by June 30, 2023. Requests for extensions will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Contracts will also include standard indemnification and insurance expectations, which lists the minimum insurance coverage which Contractors agree to procure and maintain. Required insurances and levels vary depending on the nature of the project and can include types such as: Worker’s Compensation; Commercial General Liability; Employer’s Liability; Professional Liability; etc. The County will collect and review certificates of insurance as part of contract compliance. Insurance is an allowable expense and can be built into the grant funding budget.

In addition to the standard contract expectations for all organizations doing business with the County, nonprofits receiving grant funds must also:

- a. Open their books for the contracting department;
- b. Submit copies of annual IRS tax filings (Form 990s); and
- c. Submit annual financial statements based on a tiered structure, consistent with industry standard practice:
 - Audit: Organizations with annual revenues of \$300,000 or greater must submit financial statements audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.
 - Review: Those with revenues between \$100,000 and \$300,000 must submit financial statements reviewed in accordance with applicable Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services (SSARS).
 - Compilation: Those with revenues of less than \$100,000 must submit non-disclosure financial statements compiled in accordance with applicable SSARS.

- Nonprofit agencies may request a waiver to use other third-party provided documents.

Contract performance will be monitored and evaluated by the County throughout the year, including review of financial and programmatic reporting. Performance results will be published online in a funded projects dashboard. Approval of renewal grant funding requests shall be contingent on meeting performance criteria.

XI. Minority Business

Buncombe County's adopted Minority Business Plan encourages participation by minority and women owned businesses. Buncombe County policy is to provide minority contractors an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of its contracting and procurement programs, and to prohibit any and all discrimination against persons or businesses in pursuit of these opportunities. Minority Business Plan questions may be directed to Buncombe County Procurement at (828) 250-4154. Sources for certified minority firms are available at <http://www.doa.nc.gov/hub>.

XII. Lead Department/Division

Staffing for this grant program is provided by Buncombe County's Strategic Partnerships Department. For more information, contact Strategic Partnerships Director Rachael Nygaard at Rachael.Nygaard@buncombecounty.org or (828) 250-6536.