

FY2021 Buncombe County Strategic Partnership Grant Report

Organization Name:	Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation		
Project Name:	Volunteers for Recreation, Conservation and Economic Development		
Reporting Quarter: (Check one)		Quarter 1 (July 1, 2020 - September 30, 2020)	
		Quarter 2 (October 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020)	
		Quarter 3 (January 1, 2021 - March 31, 2021)	
	X	Quarter 4 (April 1, 2021 - June 30, 2021)	

Narrative summary of grant related activities

Overall project updates:	Utilizing grant funds, Foundation staff supported two key Parkway-related volunteer efforts in Buncombe County in Q4. 1 - Craggy Rovers - Foundation and Parkway staff coordinated CPR, First-Aid, and bloodborne-pathogen training for a group of volunteers known as the Craggy Rovers. Grant funds paid for this training. In May and June, 11 Craggy Rover volunteers had over 4,500 visitor contacts at Craggy Pinnacle, assisting with inquiries, sharing valuable resource information, offering basic First Aid and CPR services, providing radio communications with park dispatch in emergency situations, and helping in other ways as needed. Their presence at the Pinnacle overlook is invaluable, as they actively engage in conversations with visitors that help preserve park resources on the Pinnacle by keeping visitors from going over the wall and onto the surrounding rocks where numerous imperiled plants are located. Rovers help at the Pinnacle 10-4 daily from May to October each year; their efforts will continue. 2 - Trail surface improvements - Grant funds were also utilized to purchase supplies to help maintain and improve trails on or connecting to the Parkway. Volunteers from the Carolina Mountain Club used these tools to improve trail surfaces on the Mountains to Sea Trail and the Snowball Trail. These rakes, mattocks, drills (for busting up rocks), and rock carrying slings will continue to be used in the months and years ahead to maintain trails and improve the trail experience.
COVID-19 impacts:	The impacts of COVID-19 diminished considerably in Q4 as more people became vaccinated and restrictions on indoor and outdoor gatherings were reduced. However, the substantial impacts of COVID-19 in the first three quarters essentially turned this one-year effort into a three-month effort. To that end, the project partners can be proud about how much was achieved in such a short time, but we must also wonder how much could have been accomplished in a "normal" year.
Activities related to increasing equity, diversity and inclusion:	The Foundation continues to work on multiple projects to increase its understanding, abilities, and impact related to equity, diversity, and inclusion, including weekly discussions during staff meetings, fiscal sponsorship of Pathways to Parks, participation in the Everybody's Environment coalition, bringing diverse people and programming to the Blue Ridge Music Center, and broadening the resources of the Foundation's award-winning Kids in Parks program. Efforts to engage diverse audiences as Parkway visitors, trail users, volunteers, Foundation advisors, and more will continue.

Activities related to increasing operational excellence:	The activities in Q4 affirmed the great value of partnerships. Buncombe County provided funding. Volunteers provided their dedication, time, and labor. The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, Carolina Mountain Club, and the National Park Service continued to work with each other to develop Plan A, then Plans B, C, and D. Every person and agency stayed adaptable, while also remaining focused on the purposes and goals of the grant. Partnership, flexibility, and focus will continue to serve as some of the keys to operational excellence, whether or not there's a pandemic or other emergency.
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Progress toward annual goals

Measure	Annual Goal	Actual Results (Enter Data)				Progress toward Annual Goal
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
# of volunteers	40	20	1	0	16	37
# of volunteer hours	250	35	58	0	261	354
# of linear feet of trails impacted by volunteers	6,000	0	0	0	4,000	4,000

Comments:

This project faced considerable challenges, including COVID-19 and related restrictions on volunteer activities, as well as COVID-related impacts on NPS staff responsible for project planning, compliance, and volunteer management. Even a simple effort like buying trail supplies ran into obstacles (i.e., a partial backorder, and receipt of a chain saw instead of the rock drill that was ordered). With perseverance and determination, the pieces finally came together in 4QFY2021. The Foundation helped train volunteers, purchase supplies, and most importantly improve park resources and the visitor experience. The Foundation spent only 35% of the approved grant amount, but still achieved 93%, 142%, and 67% of the project goals. Importantly, thanks to many dedicated volunteers, the training and supplies will continue to positively impact recreation, resource conservation, and Parkway-related economic activity long after the official end of the grant period.

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Use of funds to date and any budget considerations

Spending Category	Starting Budget	Total Spending (Enter Data)				Amount Remaining
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Personnel	\$ 9,040.00	\$ 437.50	\$ 218.75	\$ 437.50	\$ 262.50	\$ 7,683.75
Training	\$ 2,540.00				\$ 1,394.95	\$ 1,145.05
Supplies/Materials	\$ 2,460.00	\$ -			\$ 2,160.92	\$ 299.08
Meetings	\$ -					\$ -
Equipment/Furniture	\$ -	\$ -				\$ -
Printing/Marketing	\$ -					\$ -
Licensing/Memberships/Dues/Subscriptions						\$ -
Client Support						\$ -
Contracts						\$ -
Professional Services						\$ -
Insurance and Bonds						\$ -
Building Maintenance						\$ -
Total	\$ 14,040.00	\$ 437.50	\$ 218.75	\$ 437.50	\$ 3,818.37	\$ 9,127.88

Comments:

The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation's volunteer coordinator spent 12 hours in Q4 working with Foundation staff, Parkway staff, associated organizations, and volunteers to develop and implement volunteer training and volunteer-led trail projects. The Foundation asked for and received approval to adjust the grant budget to match those needs/opportunities, which were all consistent with the grant proposal and agreement (i.e., moving some of the allocation from supplies/materials to training). The resulting expenditures helped train the Craggy Rover volunteers for their visitor and resource protection work and helped equip Carolina Mountain Club volunteers for trail improvements. These expenses will continue to reap benefits for Buncombe County trails and trail users, because these volunteers will utilize this training and equipment for many months or years to come.