

Caring for Children, Caring for the Future

*RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal
Recovery Funds*

Swannanoa Valley Child Care Council (Donald S Collins Early Learning Center)

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Application Form

Question Group

Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

Name of Project.

Caring for Children, Caring for the Future

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$550,000.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Small business and non-profit support

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

The Donald S. Collins Early Learning Center requests funding that will help us serve more children in a safe, caring, educationally appropriate environment. In July, 2021, the Buncombe County Early Childhood Education Fund awarded the Collins Center a \$127,000 grant. \$38,000 of that grant funds a five percent across the board pay raise for FY 2022 and \$22,000 funds a janitorial service for one year. Recovery Funding

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery

will allow us flexibility to fund pay increases through 2026 and continue to fund a janitorial service. We want to retain and recruit staff who are competent in - and committed to - early childhood education. Improved compensation and more professional working conditions will enable us to do that. The Collins Center can serve as many as 170 children. Due to difficulties in hiring staff, our current enrollment is at 80. Recovery Funding will enable the Collins Center to increase services to families most in need as we better serve our staff.

Project Plan*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

The Collins Center wants to continue to provide educationally appropriate child care for Buncombe County children, but we also want to grow to our maximum capacity of 170 children thus serving more parents in the workforce and the businesses who employ them. To do so, we want to build on the funding from our FY2022 Early Childhood Education grant allowing us the funding and flexibility to retain and grow our staff. In August, 2021, we will interview, receive bids from, and hire a janitorial service, thus relieving staff from end-of-day cleaning and providing time for planning and professional development. Our ECE grant for FY 2022 provides our current staff an across-the-board raise. Recovery funds will allow us to comfortably maintain those expenditures through 2026, with the intention of increasing salary levels to a living wage for all full-time employees. Secure salary funding will also allow the Collins Center to provide a benefits package in the future.

The Collins Center also wants to grow staff to serve more children. Our Early Childhood Development grant provides funding for one new teacher and assistant in a classroom projected to serve the Hispanic community to be hired for the 2021-2022 school year. Recovery Funding assistance with payroll will give the Collins Center financial security to advertise higher salaries for our workforce so we can hire staff to serve children on our waiting list. New classes will be added in years 2021 - 2026 as staff is hired.

We request \$30,000 funding per year for years 2022 - 2026 of the grant for part-time staff to serve as leader in economic development. This staff person would have the task of growing financial community support through publicity, community contacts, growing a regular donor list, and assisting the director with reports This will better allow the Collins Center to sustain growth.

An additional \$150,000 in funding, will give the Collins Center the financial support we need to increase salaries and recruit more teachers in FY 2022 - 2026. Thus we serve our staff, which suffered during the pandemic, the workforce, and area employers. This support through 2026 will enable us to pay the loan on our new facility, enhance staff development, and increase community support.

Statement of Need*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

Responses to the Buncombe County survey on use of Recovery Funds showed that a majority of respondents wanted programs that supported "resident well-being" as the way to most effectively impact recovery. Replies supporting an educated and capable community focused on the importance of aging in place (23.45%) and early childhood education (34.17%)

Caring for Children, Caring for the Future addresses those concerns by providing both early childhood education and care for the children of those in the workforce in jobs that enable retirees to age in place.

In January, 2021 JustEconomicsWNC.org reported the living wage for a single person in Buncombe County is \$17.30 an hour, without benefits. Only two of our fifteen Collins Center staff currently make a living wage. Most are single parents. In July, 2021, the Buncombe County Early Childhood Education Fund awarded the Collins Center a \$127,000 grant with funding for increased wages and janitorial services to give teachers planning and prep time. Covid Recovery Funding will allow us the financial flexibility to increase compensation and to continue to attract and retain quality staff.

Data from the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (12/01/2020), shows “the annual losses to the economy due to inadequate child care are now approaching \$2.9 billion a year.” Over 70% of parents surveyed have had difficulty finding satisfactory child care during the pandemic. Of 140,000 jobs lost nationwide in December, almost all were lost by women, as were the jobs lost at the Collins Center.

On July 9, 2021, the Black Mountain – Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce listed over one hundred job openings from partner businesses with positions ranging from executive director to kitchen manager to housekeeper to graphic designer.

The Collins Center will use Recovery Funding to support current staff, work towards a living wage for our staff, and supply Buncombe County workers and employers with quality child care and education.

Link to COVID-19*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

During the Covid Pandemic shutdown in the spring of 2020, the Collins Center (then known as Children and Friends) was licensed by the state of North Carolina to serve children of essential workers. Our enrollment immediately dropped from capacity at 72 children to five to ten children, due to the shutdown and parents being at home. Our staff necessarily dropped from fifteen to four or five, depending on needs. Our director and other essential personnel worked on at risk to themselves, dealing with Covid cases among children, staff, and family members of staff. In the months since the shutdown ended, enrollment and staff have returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, we are constantly dealing with staff who have to be out due to cautionary measures. In August, 2020, the Center moved to a brand-new facility which can serve up to 170 children. We opened a K-2 classroom with a certified teacher to assist working parents with constantly changing school schedules and virtual learning needs. As of July, 2021, we have an enrollment of 80, and we have a waiting list of children. With funds to raise staff salaries and to release teachers from after-school cleaning duties, we can recruit and retain the staff to serve more children. The Collins Center focuses on preventing and mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences. The cultural competency and mental health components of our staff educational programs will give our staff more tools to address these experiences. Our director has had to report more families to DHS in the last nine months of the pandemic than ever before. Recovery Funding for staff salaries will give the Collins Center the flexibility to provide additional staff training and support to deal with children who are suffering from the pandemic.

Population Served*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

The Collins Center serves the children of working parents, many of whom live in eastern Buncombe County. Families who reside in neighboring counties are part of the Buncombe County workforce. Our parents work as CNAs, teachers, attorneys, medical assistants, and in local businesses and industries.

U. S. Census data estimates from 2019 show that 89.5% of the Black Mountain population is white, 6.9% African American, and 1.3% Hispanic. 56.3% of the population is female and 9.6% of the population is over 65. Women make up 46.2% of the civilian labor force, and it is women who are most affected by the lack of childcare.

At the Collins Center, 90% of the children served are white and 10% are people of color. One component of our FY2022 Early Childhood Education grant is a plan to recruit staff and students from the Hispanic community by hiring a Spanish speaking teacher and advertising in the Hispanic community. Those efforts will begin August 1, 2021 now that our Early Childhood Education grant is approved.

The Black Mountain Neuro-Medical Center and Givens Highlands Farms, as well as other smaller long-term care facilities, and the mercantile establishments that cater to retirees and tourists require a service-oriented labor force.

All the data points to the need for a quality child care and pre-school educational work force to serve both working parents and employers.

Results*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

1. Goal: Double the number of children that the Collins Center serves. We currently have 80 children enrolled. Our capacity is 170. Performance measured by increased enrollment.
2. Goal: Retain the fifteen well-trained, dedicated staff members we have through increasing salaries and enhancing professionalism. Increase staff to serve increased enrollment. Measured by staff retention and recruitment.
3. Grow community and dedicated financial support. Hire a part-time development coordinator. We had successful one-time donations for our building and landscaping projects. Success measured by increased donations and community support.

Evaluation*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

The Director and Board will compile information on janitorial services, get bids, hire a service, evaluate performance and make decisions about continuing with that service or hiring a new one if necessary. Staff will also be surveyed on the efficacy of the service. The Board's Finance and Building Committees will also evaluate the service and assist in decision making.

The Director and Board will list current staff, staff performance evaluations, and staff compensation. After the initial across the board increase funded by \$38,000 of the ECD Fund grant, the Board's personnel committee will evaluate staff performance in May of each calendar and make salary increase recommendations based on each staff member's performance and any change in educational status, with a goal of having all full-time employees at the Buncombe County living wage level by 2026,

The Board's Personnel Committee and the Advisory Board will search for and hire a part-time development director, whose job will be to advertise the Center in the community and build a data base of donors.

The Director and Board will track student enrollment from April, 2020, when the Center was open to serve children of essential workers through December, 2026 to show growth in enrollment.

The Director and Board will also track numbers of subsidy and full-pay families served.

Equity Impact*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

Covid-19 disproportionately affected essential workers. Caring for Children, Caring for the Future will allow the Collins Center to pay Early Learning staff more equitably and treat staff more professionally as pay increases continue. Staff relieved of janitorial duties will have time for planning and professional development beyond the state requirements. Funds to continue to subsidize pay increases will provide the Collins Center with flexible funding for hiring staff to oversee development and to fund additional professional development.

The North Carolina Early Childhood Education Fund and its partners surveyed 802 working parents with young children in North Carolina with findings that include:

55 percent of working parents lost jobs or hours due to the COVID-10 pandemic.
70 percent have had difficulty finding a satisfactory child care arrangement—and about 10 percent couldn't find one at all.

15 percent of rural families were accessing formal child care mid-pandemic, down from 44 percent pre-pandemic.

“There has been so much disruption during COVID-19 that we are seeing that the early care and education system is fragile, and it has also provided us an opportunity to see what great programs we have in our state that work...having a healthy supply of affordable, accessible childcare within our childcare system is a critical infrastructure in and of itself,” said Muffy Grant, Director. (nc.early.childhood.foundation@mx-usa.keela.co)

Supporting the Collins Center with operating funds will go far in addressing the root causes and inequities that working parents face.

Project Partners*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

1. When the Collins Center receives funding from the Early Childhood Education Fund, we will get bids from local janitorial services to provide cleaning services for the Center. That decision has not yet been made as of July 15, 2021, but we expect to hire locally.

2. Buncombe County Early Childhood Education Committee and the Buncombe County Partnership for Children.

Capacity*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

The Collins Center applied for a PPP Loan of \$70,560.00, and the SBA approved this loan on April 28, 2020. The loan was funded on May 5, 2020. Our forgiveness application was submitted on June 21, 2021 under the guidelines of the First Draw PPP loan forgiveness application, and forgiveness was granted.

The Collins Center (formerly Children and Friends) received funding from the Buncombe Early Childhood Development Fund for FY 2022, and we have delivered the projects and managed grants from the ECD Fund

in past years as well as grants from the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, the Cannon Foundation, and the Bridge Foundation.

Budget*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

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

Recovery-Funds-budget-template.xlsx

Special Considerations*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

Recovery-Funds-budget-template.xlsx

The Swannanoa Valley Child Care Council was founded by Church Women United in 1970 as a 5013C to serve working families in Buncombe County. Until 2020, the center, known as Children and Friends, was located in various Black Mountain locations. The most recent site was a rented, former storefront on US Highway 70. The building size and configuration limited growth, and the building flooded in every heavy rain. During the years 2018 to 2020, the organization raised over one million dollars from grants and community donations for the construction of a new facility which opened in August, 2020. The new facility, The Donald S. Collins Early Learning Center, is on land leased from First Baptist Church, Black Mountain. During the pandemic, the state approved the Collins Center to serve children of essential workers. In shutdown, enrollment fell from seventy to ten. Since the move to the new Center, enrollment is back at seventy plus. The new 12,000 square foot building houses new equipment and furnishings. We continue to serve children aged six weeks to kindergarten. Licensed to serve children to age twelve, we opened a virtual support classroom this year for grades K-2. All of the fifteen staff members are female, most are single parents. The Center is governed by a volunteer Board of community members which includes a parent and local professionals from the fields of science, business, and education. Six Board members are female and three are male. One Board member is African American.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Recovery-Funds-budget-template.xlsx
- Recovery-Funds-budget-template.xlsx

List expenses here			\$	-	
List expenses here			\$	-	
List expenses here			\$	-	\$60,000.00 of the total budget is from our Buncombe Early Childhood Development Fund grant for FY 2022
Total			\$	620,000.00	

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