Buncombe County Hybrid Meeting Technology

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Buncombe County Government

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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)i, 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.

Buncombe County Hybrid Meeting Technology

Amount of Funds Requested*

$129,200.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*
Please select one:

County only

Brief Project Description*
Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

When COVID-19 hit western North Carolina, Buncombe County leadership found that telework enabled County employees the ability to provide critical services to the community throughout the pandemic. Telework allowed the County to be nimble in terms of preparedness and business continuity, as well as

providing opportunities for collaboration that didn't formerly exist. County staff quickly adapted structures and technologies during the emergency telework time period.

The County has continued to have instances of staff infection or exposure requiring quarantine and isolation of employees. Having a telework structure in place has given Buncombe County the ability to provide a safe work environment for staff, while continuing to provide necessary services to the community. On July 1, 2021, Buncombe County implemented a formal telework policy but doesn't currently have hybrid meeting technology to fully support remote meetings. This is a request for that technology.

Project Plan*

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

The new normal of a telework environment for Buncombe County requires innovative solutions for meeting with teammates – either remote or in the office. An optimal hybrid conference room experience requires a special type of system to accommodate multiple people in a room while also interacting with remote coworkers. The difference between a personal device and a dedicated conference room setup is in the hardware. The combination of dedicated conference room hardware along with a Meetup console creates a hybrid meeting room.

A hybrid meeting room combines a camera system with crystal clear optics, a wide-angle view and AI viewfinder that can keep all participants in the frame; a beamforming microphone array with optional extendable mic pods that ensures all voices heard; and a loud speaker system that guarantees everyone that is remote can be heard clearly by all.

There are currently 40 conference rooms that have been identified for this technology install. The departments with the largest impact from telework (# of staff documented with a telework status in Workday) will have their conference rooms prioritized first. General Services staff will need to mount equipment and perform other minor tasks at an estimate of 2 hours per conference room. Information Technology staff will acquire, configure, and test the equipment in each conference room at an estimate of 2 hours per conference room. Information Technology and Human Resources staff will create and provide all training and communication around this initiative.

Assuming all requested dollars are granted, the intent is to complete all technology installs by the end of FY22.

Statement of Need*

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

The COVID-19 global pandemic ushered in a new reality on the feasibility of remote work. Buncombe County is a forward-thinking organization, and it is understood that evolving to a new set of expectations for employees and employers is the best way to maximize productivity while maintaining our existing workforce and remaining competitive in a changing job market. As of July 1, 2021, Buncombe County has a formal flexible workplace arrangement policy, however there is not hybrid technology set up throughout County buildings that can accommodate flexible workers ability to join remote meetings with in-office staff.

There are currently 40 conference rooms that need hybrid meeting technology. Having this technology in place allows continuity of operations regardless of a pandemic and any variants that may emerge over the course of the year. Additionally, hybrid meeting technology provides opportunities to accommodate staff, customers, and community partners with additional possibilities to interact and collaborate.

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 2020, North Carolina state mandates as well as Buncombe County restrictions related to COVID-19 required that a large percentage of Buncombe County's workforce move to a virtual environment. This resulted in a scramble to determine appropriate and safe technology platforms that provided continuity of operations. While roughly 70% of the County's workforce has now returned to in-office operations, Buncombe County has chosen to remain innovative in allowing the remaining percentage to function in a telework capacity. If we are unfortunate in experiencing another pandemic, the likelihood of a COVID-19 resurgence, or any other emergency, the County nearly has the infrastructure in place to accommodate social distancing for continuity of operations. The largest missing link is a hybrid meeting technology that allows safe distancing and/or multiple locations of staff participants.

The requested funding will be utilized to provide hybrid meeting technology so Buncombe County is ready and has the infrastructure in place to better handle collaboration in future emergencies.

Population Served*

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

All active Buncombe County staff will be served by the requested technology and benefit from its existence. Additionally, the nature of County operations benefits from community collaboration. Having meeting technology in place allows safe virtual meetings for all attendees and also provides flexibility for attendees who many not have the capacity or ability to physically join County meetings. The population served includes all County staff as well as community partners, vendors, and members.

Currently, Buncombe County employees average over 200 meetings per day in the Microsoft Teams environment alone. Additionally, Buncombe County averages over 90,000 video minutes per week between video meetings and calls. These calls and meetings represent communication between employees, partners, vendors, and community members.

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.

The impact of this project will be realized with Buncombe County meetings are flexible and inclusive of all invited attendees. Information Technology staff has researched and tested multiple hybrid meeting platforms. The proposed solution integrates seamlessly with the County's existing infrastructure and is an affordable option that also minimizes technology support. The proposed performance measures for this project include:
# of conference rooms connected to hybrid technology: baseline = 0/40, Goal = 40/40
# of hybrid meetings that utilize new technology weekly: baseline: 0, Goal = 1 per week/conference room
# of training materials created for County staff: baseline: none, Goal = 1 how to video, 1 self-help guide

Evaluation*

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

We will utilize Microsoft and other virtual platforms to ensure that the installed hybrid technology is being utilized and maximized. This will be done on a twice a year basis by Information Technology staff.

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?

This project is critical to the success of a COVID-19 recovery. The requested technology helps Buncombe County ensure continued collaboration as well as the ability to meet people where they are. Hybrid meeting technology eliminates barriers for individuals that cannot attend in-person meetings due to health, transportation, or other difficulties. It also solidifies Buncombe County's commitment to being innovative, inclusive and collaborative.

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.

There is currently no intent to utilize subcontractors for this project and requested funding.

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.

Information Technology staff has researched and tested devices that would be proposed for this initiative. General Services has all the needed skills to perform any work related to installation. Buncombe County staff feel confident in the background, experience, and capabilities of the organization to deliver on this request and to properly manage federal funds.

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.

Conference Room - Recovery-Funds-budget.xlsx

Special Considerations*

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

It should be noted that this project request can move forward with partial funding if that is a more viable option due to competing requests for federal dollars. If such a case arises, County staff would prioritize hybrid meeting technology in the conference rooms with the heaviest volume and commit to outfitting additional conference rooms as budget allows.

Having a telework option and related technology support strengthens Buncombe County's commitment to its vision and values. By offering a flexible workplace environment, Buncombe County is committed to alignment with its compensation philosophy by supporting a healthy work-life balance and providing opportunities in an innovative environment. This policy also supports the goals within the County's Strategic Plan focused on Operational Excellence and Resources.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Conference Room - Recovery-Funds-budget.xlsx

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds
Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	Buncombe County
Project Name:	Buncombe County Hybrid Meeting Technology
Amount Requested:	$129,200

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	$ 122,000.00		
General Fund	$ 7,200.00		
Total	$ 129,200.00		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
Logitech Meetup Camera and Audio device	$ 49,000.00		$ 49,000.00	Capital	40 x Conference room AV setups
Lenovo MeetHub	$ 72,000.00		$ 72,000.00	Capital	40 x Teams, Zoom, WebEx compatible meeting hub.
Accessories	$ 1,000.00		$ 1,000.00	Capital	Miscellaneous cables, accessories
Licensing	$ 7,200.00		$ 7,200.00	Operating	Licensing, Conference line, direct dial number, etc
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	Total		$ 129,200.00		