

Buncombe County Sustainability Plan

Annual Update - April 2018



BUNCOMBE COUNTY'S Sustainability Plan was adopted May 15, 2012. The Plan was developed to guide our growing community toward a more sustainable, improved quality of life. The Plan was designed to be implemented within five years of its adoption, and was updated in 2017. This is our sixth Annual Report.

The Plan outlines the process for improving Buncombe County's community, environment, and economy. In 2017, Buncombe County completed the Sustainability Plan Update which incorporated revised objectives, strategies, and indicators established for each goal to continue measuring progress. The Annual Report is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of all progress within the County, but instead focuses on important trends and data for which consistent information is available.

The following pages summarize the 2017 progress for each of the goal indicators, measured in fiscal, calendar, or school year depending on the type of data. The previous year's data is provided as a reference to determine whether progress has been made, and when reliable information is available, cumulative progress over time has been noted. Strategies in italics are new for this year's update.






QUALITY EDUCATION

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

INCREASE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE			Four-year high school graduation rate at Asheville City Schools (ACS) and Buncombe County Schools (BCS)
YEAR	ACS	BCS	
2016-17	88%	88.3%	Provide personalized graduation plans for all students aligned to their career and college planning.
2015-16	85.4%	85.7%	

INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION			Number of students enrolled in college level courses in grades 9-12
YEAR	ACS	BCS	
2016-17	275	2,924	Provide opportunities for students to enroll in college courses during high school.
2015-16	87	2,802	



EXPAND QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS		Number of children enrolled in four- and five-star rated child care centers
2016	2017	
2,766	2,872	Expand accessible, affordable, high-quality preschool for 3 and 4 year olds through a public-private partnership.

INCREASE PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM			Volunteer hours contributed to Asheville City and Buncombe County school systems
YEAR	ACS	BCS	
2016-17	44,689	141,459	Provide a variety of opportunities for parents and families in areas such as academics, career and college planning, and parenting skills.
2015-16	33,500	121,140	

INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN READING AT GRADE LEVEL BY THE END OF 3RD GRADE			Percentage of children reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade
YEAR	ACS	BCS	
2016-17	67.9%	59.3%	Provide research-based, grade level reading instruction supported through high quality professional development and classroom coaching using a variety of digital and print resources. <i>In addition, a district literacy team has formed to develop a new pacing guide for state standards with benchmark accountability measures.</i>
2015-16	67.2%	61.0%	



HEALTHY LIVING

DECREASE INFANT MORTALITY RATE		Infant mortality rate in Buncombe County (Deaths per 1,000 live births).
2015	2016	Promote preconception health and access to adequate prenatal care. <i>Expand health equity and ACE informed community development efforts and clinical practice. ACE represents both adverse childhood experiences, and adverse community environments.</i>
4.6	5.8	

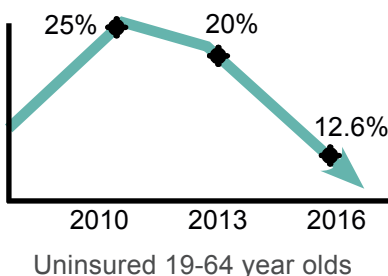
INCREASE THE USE OF RECREATION FACILITIES, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES		Number of adults participating in Buncombe County adult recreation activities and leagues
FY2016	FY2017	Use social media to promote recreation facilities, programs, and services.
260	285	

IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS			Number of traffic related pedestrian and cyclist injuries in Buncombe County
CRASHES	BICYCLE	PEDESTRIAN	
FY2017	26	106*	Educate residents through the Watch For Me safety campaign.
FY2016	27	95	

*National data indicates an increase in pedestrian crashes due to distracted pedestrians and drivers on mobile devices.

INCREASE ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES		Number of Medicaid clients receiving mental health and substance abuse services
FY2015	FY2016	Coordinate with the Local Management Entity (LME) to strengthen mental health and substance abuse services.
9,030	9,372	

IMPROVE THE ABILITY OF PEOPLE WITH DIABETES TO BETTER SELF-MANAGE THEIR ILLNESS		Diabetes mortality rate in Buncombe County
2015	2016	Support the availability of diabetes prevention and management programs. <i>Leverage existing community partnerships in preventing diabetes by expanding access to programs in high needs communities, including access to information, moving more and eating better.</i>
16.8	18.4	



INCREASE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTH INSURANCE		Percentage of uninsured adults between the ages of 19-64
2013	2016	Promote Affordable Care Act information and enrollment assistance.
20%	12.6%	



AFFORDABLE, GREEN, AND LIVABLE HOUSING

OBJECTIVES:

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

SUPPORT QUALITY RENTAL DEVELOPMENTS THAT ARE REQUIRED TO REMAIN AFFORDABLE		Number of affordable rental units assisted with Buncombe County funding
FY2016	FY2017	Participate with the HOME Consortium Board to prioritize rental development.
1	70	
<i>184 total units assisted since FY2012</i>		

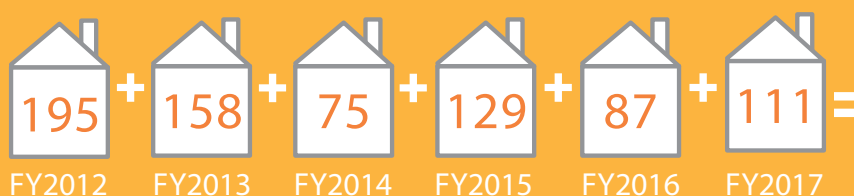
INCREASE FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES FOR PEOPLE TO INCREASE KNOWLEDGE, BUILD SAVINGS, AND IMPROVE CREDIT		Number of participants in financial education classes through OnTrack Financial
FY2016	FY2017	Provide money management, credit education, and counseling.
1,066	1,300	



EXPAND HOUSING REPAIR PROGRAMS		Amount of funding supporting emergency repair programs
FY2016	FY2017	Partner with organizations that complete emergency home repairs.
\$100,000	\$150,000	
<i>41 repairs resulting from 2017 funding</i>		

CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THE CONSTRUCTION OF GREEN BUILT NC CERTIFIED HOMES		Number of Green Built NC (Formerly Healthy Built) certified homes
FY2016	FY2017	Increase the amount of Buncombe County Affordable Housing Services Program application points awarded for Green Built NC certified units.
148	145	
<i>1,261 total homes certified since 2011</i>		

Provide housing assistance for affordable and workforce housing.



755 Number of units assisted through Buncombe County funding

Continue to fund the Buncombe County Affordable Housing Services Program.



CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

INCREASE VOTER REGISTRATION IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY		Number of registered voters
FY2016	FY2017	Conduct outreach to community groups, libraries, and high schools with registration drives.
194,728	190,300	

INCREASE THE USE OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES		Number of Buncombe County residents attending library programs
FY2016	FY2017	Increase social media advertising of programs in each of the branch library areas.
115,465	121,812	

INCREASE THE USE OF THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY WEBSITE		Total page views on Buncombe County website
2016	2017	Include the web address on all print and online media, and keep web information current.
1,721,470	1,710,686	

INCREASE VOLUNTEERISM IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY		Number of volunteers through Asheville-Buncombe United Way Initiatives
FY2016	FY2017	Advertise volunteer opportunities online and through school and employer Resource Teams.
2,544	2,032	
12,330 volunteer hours. (Changes to volunteer tracking at the U.W. resulted in a drop in volunteers reported.)		

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CITIZENS WILLING TO SERVE ON BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARDS		Number of applications received for Boards
2016	2017	Create a virtual online academy to inform citizens about the County, service opportunities on boards and commissions, and how to volunteer.
81	53	

INCREASE THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA		Number of views of Buncombe County social media
FY2016	FY2017	
4,875	6,432	Invest advertising funds in social media marketing with strategic posts encouraging citizen involvement.
231,185	273,731	
4,605	5,486	





EQUITY IN ACCESS

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

EXPAND ACCESS TO INFORMATION		Number of new videos produced and played on BCTV
FY2015	FY2016	Improve the quality of video and social media content, and publicize community events, resources and programs.
281	318	

EXPAND PROVISION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION		Number of Mountain Mobility passenger trips
FY2016	FY2017	Promote Mountain Mobility services through presentations to communities and agencies and distribution of Trailbrazer brochures and flyers to existing and potential markets.
158,932	146,079*	

*Reduction in passenger trips is a result of the loss of volume from contract changes with N.E.M.T (Medicaid).



IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE		Number of patients served through Western North Carolina Community Health Services
2015	2016	Promote medical care home model for integrated health care.
14,740	15,448	

CONTINUE OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH WHICH CITIZENS RECEIVE EDUCATION IN FOOD CHOICES, NUTRITION, AND FOOD SAFETY		Number of participants in Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Family & Consumer Science (FCS) classes
2015	2016	Ensure the continuation of the EFNEP and FCS programs by coordinating with partners (HHS, WIC, and faith based organizations) to identify qualified participants.
2,500	6,329	

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY		Number of participants in Buncombe County Recreation Services activities, programs, or facilities
FY2016	FY2017	Plan new recreation programming in response to customer feedback and community trends.
834,811	882,119	

EXPAND THE PROVISION OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES IN COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS		Number of Buncombe County contracts with government entities, nonprofits, and the private sector to provide health and human services
FY2015	FY2016	Partner with a broad array of community organizations to deliver health and human services.
172	177	



SAFE RESILIENT COMMUNITY



ENSURE PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL ARE TRAINED AND PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES		Number of training hours for public safety personnel through the Buncombe County Public Safety Training Center
2016	2017	Offer training each year that is focused on current issues and officer needs such as defensive tactics, taser use, firearms, active shooter, and driver training.
3,926	4,861	

OFFER ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION, INCLUDING SPECIALIZED COURTS AND DIVERSION PROGRAMS		Number of alternatives to incarceration supported through Buncombe County
FY2016	FY2017	Partner with the courts, law enforcement, and local agencies to implement programming based on nationally recognized best practices.
11	13	

PROMOTE CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH SITE ASSESSMENTS FOR RESIDENCES AND BUSINESSES		Number of assessments made to improve safety and security of property and businesses
FY2015	FY2016	Continue to meet with the community using productive analytics including RMS to identify problem areas and offer safety assessment services.
26	15	

ENSURE TIMELY EMERGENCY SERVICE RESPONSE		Average response time for Buncombe County Sheriff's Department emergency calls
FY2015	FY2016	Provide deputies with adequate training and equipment to efficiently answer calls and use Resource Management Systems (RMS) to predict and schedule staff for high volume call times.
8.42 minutes	9.38 min.*	

*Officers are spending more time at the scene on domestic and other priority calls, and less time for officer initiated calls (i.e. usually traffic stops that are logged as "0" response time).

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY AS A PARTNER THROUGH COMMUNITY POLICING ACTIVITIES		Number of Community Oriented Problem Solving (COPS) teams community meetings
FY2015	FY2016	Use COPS teams to identify and problem solve in areas with increased crime.
11	14	
<i>47 total meetings since 2012</i>		

ENCOURAGE THE LOCATION OF CRITICAL FACILITIES OUTSIDE HIGH HAZARD AREAS		Critical facilities newly permitted to be located in the 100-year floodplain
2016	2017	Require a pre-application meeting for critical facilities locating in the 100-year floodplain to explain risks and requirements.
0	0	



CONSERVATION & RESTORATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

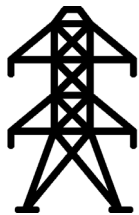
INDICATOR

STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

CONSERVE AND PROTECT WATER RESOURCES		Linear feet of streams restored by the Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and partners
FY2016	FY2017	Utilize state programs (e.g. NC Agricultural Cost Share Program (NCACSP), Community Conservation Assistance Program, and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs) to restore stream banks and riparian areas.
0	3,465	
<i>8,478 total linear feet since FY2011</i>		

PROTECT ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AND WILDLIFE		Acres of plans by SWCD and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with wildlife habitat improvement
FY2016	FY2017	Partner with the NRCS to write plans for private lands that contain provisions for wildlife habitat improvement.
365	127.01	



PROMOTE ENERGY CONSERVATION		Energy intensity measurement (kBTU/sf) for Buncombe County facilities
FY2016	FY2017	Execute commodity-saving initiatives through the existing Buncombe County portfolio to promote the conservation of energy.
59.48	53.89	

ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE LAND USE		Number of acres of conservation plans by SWCD and NRCS
FY2016	FY2017	Maximize the tools available through the NC Conservation Partnership to write and implement conservation plans on rural lands in the County.
1,567	434	
<i>6,857 total acres since FY2012</i>		

EDUCATE THE PUBLIC IN REDUCING THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT			Number and reach of environmental education programs by SWCD
	FY2016	FY2017	
PROGRAMS	146	205	Utilize existing state and local environmental education programs (e.g. NC Envirothon, Food Land & People, Conservation Contests, Environmental Education Field Days) and other activities/programs outlined in the District's Annual Plan of Work.
POPULATION REACHED	73,653	76,605	
<i>310,227 total reached since 2012</i>			



POLLUTION AND WASTE PREVENTION



IMPROVE AIR QUALITY		Current Design Value for Ozone in the County
2015	2016	Partner with local, regional, and state agencies to facilitate air quality improvements.
63 ppb	63 ppb	

IMPROVE WATER QUALITY		Number of NC Agricultural Cost Share Program projects
FY2016	FY2017	Work with citizens who have NC Agricultural Cost Share Program contracts to provide services to expedite installation of projects.
8	6*	
<i>48 total projects since FY2012.</i>		
*While there were fewer total contracts reported in FY2017, those contracts had a larger scope than in previous years.		

REDUCE THE USE OF HARMFUL CHEMICALS		Number trained in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) by Cooperative Extension
2015	2016	Pursue additional funding for Integrated Pest Management education.
8,175	8,421	
<i>42,715 total trained since 2012</i>		

REDUCE BUNCOMBE COUNTY GOVERNMENT'S CARBON FOOTPRINT		Metric tons of CO ₂ e (carbon dioxide equivalents)
FY2016	FY2017	Implement low cost/no cost facility conservation measures and capital improvement projects to reduce carbon emissions.
14,653	14,025	

MANAGE WASTE - REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE			Amount of recycled goods (household, commercial, household hazardous waste, special waste) in Tons
	FY2016	FY2017	
HOME HAZARD. WASTE	69	60	Educate the public about their options to recycle through website, brochures, quarterly newspaper inserts, tours of the landfill facility, school education, and media outlets.
WHITE GOODS	365	450	
TIRES	2,552	2,733	
USED OIL & FILTERS	26.93	23.64	
ANTIFREEZE	2.38	2.9	
LEAD BATTERIES	1.6	1.7	
ELECTRONICS	163	157.41	
USED COOKING OIL	1.11	1.18	
RECYCLING	5,881	7,006	
CARDBOARD	2,346	2,591	
<i>34,460 tons since FY2012</i>			



ACCESSIBLE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

OBJECTIVES:

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

REDUCE THE RATE OF INCREASE OF ANNUAL VEHICLE MILES TRAVELLED (VMT)		Percent change in VMT within Buncombe County
2015	2016	Promote awareness and use of Park-and-Ride lots.
-0.01%	2.92%	
The NCDOT suggests that low gas prices and an improved economy are factors in the increase.		



INCREASE COMMUTING CHOICES		Number of Facebook followers on Go Mountain Commuting website
FY2016	FY2017	Partner with the regional Transportation Management Demand Program to increase participation in commuting options like carpools, vanpools and transit.
228	622	

INCREASE FIXED ROUTE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION RIDERSHIP		Annual passenger trips provided by Asheville Redefines Transit (ART)
FY2016	FY2017	Conduct collaborative outreach efforts with the City of Asheville's ART fixed route system.
2,156,236	2,135,775	

EXTEND GREENWAYS FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS		Miles of greenways added throughout Buncombe County and all municipalities
2016	2017	Work with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to integrate multi-use paths into highway construction and road upgrade projects.
0	0.5 miles	
14 total miles of greenways. 101.5 miles of proposed future greenways		

ENCOURAGE LAND DEVELOPMENT CONNECTED TO EXISTING TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS			Percent of County households within 1/4 mile of transportation options (Greenways, bus stops, Mountain Mobility Trailblazer route, and sidewalks)
	2016	2017	Promote the Community Oriented Development option under the County's Zoning Ordinance that allows density bonuses for affordable housing along existing transportation corridors.
COA	96%	96%	
BC	25%	26%	



THRIVING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

PROMOTE FARMLAND PRESERVATION IN ORDER TO DECREASE LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL LAND		Acres added in land protection programs (Voluntary Agricultural District program (VAD), Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District program (EVAD), conservation easements)
FY2016	FY2017	Increase public awareness of the need to conserve local farmlands and the availability of local and state programs (e.g. the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD), Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD), and conservation easements).
295	469	
<i>3,877 total acres protected since FY2012</i>		



PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND COMMUNITY GARDENING		Number of citizens who obtained knowledge or developed new skills in farming, gardening, agritourism, farm marketing and related areas as a result of Cooperative Extension training and information
2015	2016	Maintain training programs in agricultural production and community gardening disciplines (e.g. farming, gardening, agritourism, farm marketing, and related areas).
112,000	195,338	

INCREASE DEMAND FOR LOCALLY PRODUCED FOODS		Number of local outlets (restaurants, retail, tailgate markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, and other outlets)
2016	2017	Expand the Health & Human Services Pop-Up Markets to provide local and healthy food at four additional community sites.
283	277	

Data indicates the demand for local food and vendors has increased, while the number of outlets has decreased.



27

CSA'S



18

TAILGATE
MARKETS



31

ROADSIDE
STANDS



17

U-PICK
FARMS



22

RETAIL
GROCERIES



97

RESTAURANTS



65

OTHER
OUTLET

=

277

Number
of local
outlets



ROBUST LOCAL ECONOMY

OBJECTIVES:

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NEW JOBS IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY		Number of new jobs announced through the Chamber of Commerce
FY2016	FY2017	Promote Asheville-Buncombe as a centralized hub for entrepreneurship to efficiently connect entrepreneurs, talent, and investors to one another, and to startup resources.
58	566	
<i>1,750 total new jobs announced since 2012</i>		

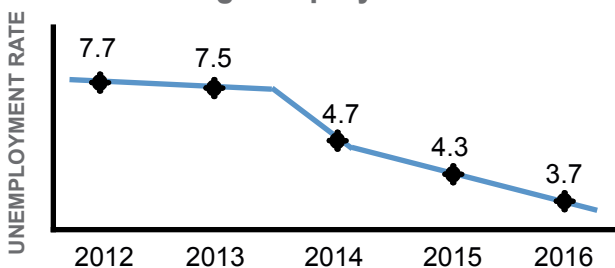
INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NEW JOBS WITH EARNINGS ABOVE \$50K		Number of new jobs with earnings above \$50k announced through the Chamber of Commerce
FY2016	FY2017	Promote Asheville-Buncombe's new target industries and explore targeted niche opportunities such as Micro-electromechanical systems (MEMS).
4	264	



RECRUIT NEW BUSINESS		Number of new businesses successfully recruited by the Chamber of Commerce
FY2016	FY2017	Target high growth and Inc. 5000 firms from major East Coast markets where there are existing business ties to Asheville for expansion/relocation into Asheville-Buncombe County.
1	0	
<i>8 total businesses recruited since 2012</i>		

SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF EXISTING BUSINESSES		Number of expansions of existing businesses reported by the Chamber of Commerce
FY2016	FY2017	Work with partners to ensure real estate options, infrastructure, and other attraction components that meet the needs of current and prospective employers, and evaluate gaps with respect to the needs of target and expanding industries.
2	2	
<i>922 total jobs created through expansion since 2013</i>		

Maintain high employment.



Unemployment rate in Buncombe County

Host the Annual Homecoming Career Fair, the region's largest career fair connecting employers with job seekers.



RESPONSIVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SPECIALIZED TRAINING COURSES OFFERED FOR BUSINESSES IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY		Number of specialized training courses offered for businesses by Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College Economic and Workforce Development/Continuing Education Program
FY2016	FY2017	Increase the number of state funded Customized Training Program (CTP) projects as businesses locate or expand in Buncombe County through local economic development efforts.
155	161	
<i>589 total courses since FY2012</i>		

PROVIDE JOB APPLICANT ASSESSMENT AND JOB TRAINING THAT FITS ANTICIPATED AND CURRENT JOB SKILLS DEMAND		Number of NC Career Readiness Certifications in Buncombe County
2017		Achieve Work Ready Community status.
747		
<i>5,802 certifications since January 2012</i>		

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF COMPANIES PARTICIPATING IN TRAINING AND/OR SERVICES FOR JOB CREATION OR ADVANCEMENT		Number of companies participating in training and/or services through A-B Tech Economic and Workforce Development/Continuing Education Program
FY2016	FY2017	Connect Economic & Workforce Development (EWD) staff with local businesses and industry to analyze training needs and provide specialized training events.
70	74	
<i>345 total companies participating since FY2012</i>		



CONCLUSION

Buncombe County's Sustainability Plan is now closing its sixth official year. In describing this past year within the community, and looking ahead, two themes emerge: progress and commitment.

The changes that were made in the Plan Update last year helped to provide a more solid structure this year. Much of the indicator information for this past year was readily supplied by our sustainability partners. Our firm commitment in providing accurate and timely information through our annual reporting remains, and progress from last year to this year has been made in each of the 12 goal areas.

Within this year of implementation, the Board again formalized its commitment to sustainability by creating the Office of Sustainability. The Sustainability Officer serves as a resource and an advocate for environmental sustainability. In addition, the County identified six strategic priorities which were adopted by the Board to help shape partnerships and investments of resources. These include: affordable housing, clean and renewable energy, early childhood education, diverse community workforce, justice resource support, and opioid addiction. Community partners are funded through performance contracts based on outcomes aligned with Buncombe County strategic priorities and sustainability goals.

The main goals represented in the County's Sustainability Plan will continue to be implemented in large part within County departments and through our local partnering agencies. The commitment to continually improve our strategies to provide better outcomes is necessary to propel us forward to help ensure that our community, economy, and environment remain healthy, safe, and thriving.

SOURCES:

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Program	North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics
Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce	OnTrack Financial Education & Counseling
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	Soil and Water Conservation District
Asheville City Schools	USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
Buncombe County Government	United States Probation Office
Buncombe County Health & Human Services	Western North Carolina Air Quality
Buncombe County Schools	Western North Carolina Green Building Council
Buncombe Partnership for Children	
City of Asheville	
French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization	
Land-of-Sky Regional Council	
Mountain Area Health Education Center	
North Carolina Community Health Improvement Process	
North Carolina Cooperative Extension	
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction	
North Carolina Department of Transportation	

