



STAFF REPORT

Agenda Title: Community Partnership Grant Applications

Presenter: Sheri Powers, Finance and Budget Director

Staff Contact: Shannon Tuch, Town Manager

Meeting Date: September 20, 2022

Summary:

Community Partnership Grant application review and award approval request

Background:

The Town Manager presented a detailed review of Woodfin's Community Grant Programs and in-kind community services at the August Board meeting, report attached. As a result of that conversation the decision was made to:

- 1) For the current FY23, maintain the existing budgeted allocations and in-kind support but also require recipients to prepare a report explaining who was served, and how the funds were used in FY 2022, and how they are expected to be used in FY 2023.
- 2) Develop an application that establishes eligibility criteria and/or questions that partners will submit when asking for support. Once established, the application along with an application deadline and instructions for how to apply would be posted on the town's website.
 - a) Requests for Community Program funds will be reviewed, and any funding approved pulled from fund balance.
 - b) Future requests will be incorporated into the budget process with an application deadline posted in the spring for review at an established budget work session. This process may also include the appointment of a review committee who may screen applications and provide a recommendation.

Process and Timeline:

The Town Manager distributed notifications to interested parties on August 26th and staff posted information about the Community Partnership Grant on the Town's website and via social media. Interested parties were asked to apply with an application deadline of 5pm, on September 12th.

The Town received two applications:

- 1) RiverLink, Inc. – RiverRATS (River **R**esearch and **A**ppreciation **T**hrough **S**cience) Program – \$2,500 grant requested, see attached application.

- 2) Asheville-Buncombe Community Land Trust (ABCLT) – Permanently Affordable Homes Program - \$50,000 grant requested, see attached application.

Staff Analysis:

Based on the information provided in the grant applications, both applicants meet the basic eligibility requirements established. The programs fall under the priority areas of Education and Housing Security.

Budget Impact:

For each approved grant request, a budget amendment will be prepared for Council consideration using the funds collected in previous years for community programs, current balance of \$51,235.30, as a funding source.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of both grant applications.



STAFF REPORT

Agenda Title: Opportunities for Community Partnerships

Staff contact(s): Shannon Tuch, Town Manager

Meeting Date: August 16, 2022

Summary:

In order to serve the residents of Woodfin, partnership opportunities with local community-based non-profits are explored.

Background:

It is very common for local governments to work with and support local community partners to provide valuable services to residents. A 1997 report (see attached) surveyed cities and counties across the state and concluded that almost 80% of NC local governments budgeted for community partnerships with support for human services and parks and recreation programs being the most commonly funded program areas.

The Town of Woodfin has historically supported various community-based programs both through **monetary distributions** but also with **in-kind services**. For FY22, town support for community service partners included:

Monetary

Golden Age Club	Activities for seniors	\$6,000
Woodfin Elementary	New playground construction	\$27,000
Community Program	Emergency heating/rent assistance	\$1,986*
Homeowner Grant	Emergency housing costs	\$10,400
Christmas Program	Gift cards for children's gifts	\$13,008*

In-kind

Manna/Catholic Charities	Food Pantry - Comm. Ctr. Fee Waiver	\$3000
Woodfin Elementary	5K - Traffic Control & Sanitation	\$2600

In-kind contributions are not directly represented in the town budget. Manna/Catholic charities continues to utilize the community center for the monthly food pantry and support for the Woodfin Elementary 5K has historically been provided and is expected again this spring.

The current FY23 budget currently includes the following items:

Monetary

620000-910	Golden Age Club	\$6,000
620000-970	Woodfin Elementary	\$2,000
420000-305	Homeowner Grant	\$10,000

*Money held in the Community Program fund represents an accrued balance that has carried over from previous years. This budget line item has been removed from the current FY23 budget and the remaining balance of \$51,235 is currently held in a separate account included in fund balance.

Staff Analysis:

Support for local community partners must adhere to applicable state laws. Fundamental to these restrictions is that a local government may only provide support to a local community partner for a service that:

- 1) The local government is authorized by the state to provide – N.C.G.S. §160A-20.1 & others (i.e. public safety, environmental services, parks and recreation, growth management, community development, economic development, etc.), and
- 2) Serve's a public purpose (i.e. reducing poverty, stabilizing housing, improving public health and welfare, etc.)

To ensure that these tests are satisfied and documented, and to aid in the decision-making process, a town may establish some additional criteria when considering how to allocate funds. Common criteria may include considerations such as:

- The organization receiving the money is a school board, another local government or has 501(c)3 non-profit status
- Program directly benefits individuals of low-moderate income
- Program directly benefits the residents of the community
- Program aligns with and supports town adopted goals (i.e. comprehensive plan goals or town council strategic goals)
- Program promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Program will have a broad or durable impact
- Monies used will go directly to benefit recipients and not towards program overhead
- Program is not the direct responsibility of another government entity

Staff Recommendation:

The staff recommendation includes two components:

- 1) For the current FY23, staff recommends maintaining the existing budgeted allocations and in-kind support but also recommends that all recipients be required to prepare a report explaining who was served, and how the funds were used in FY 2022, and how they are expected to be used in FY 2023.
- 2) Develop an application that establishes eligibility criteria and/or questions that partners will submit when asking for support. Once established, the application along with an application deadline and instructions for how to apply would be posted on the town's website.
 - a) Requests for Community Program funds will be reviewed based on the proposed timeline below and pulled from fund balance.
 - b) Future requests will be incorporated into the budget process with an application deadline posted in the spring for review at an established budget work session. This process may also include the appointment of a review committee who may screen applications and provide a recommendation.

Process and Timeline:

- August 16, 2022 Offer feedback/input on application criteria

Community Program funds (one time grant):

- August 17-August 24, 2022 Develop application; Post application w/ instructions
- September 30, 2022 Close application period – review requests
- October 16, 2022 Discuss and announce award(s)

General fund allocations (to be considered on an annual basis):

- Late winter/early spring Post application and deadline
- Spring Review requests
- Late spring Discuss and announce award(s)
- June Adopt budget

Budget Impact:

As presented, there would be no budget impact in FY 2023. Future requests would be folded into the annual budget review and analysis.

Requested Action:

- 1) Provide input/feedback on application criteria & questions (see attached) to be used for evaluating requests.
- 2) Approve application and proposed schedules.

Suggested Motion:

I move to approve the proposed application and process for the consideration of community partner support requests.

Attachments:

- Draft application
- *How Local Governments Work with Nonprofit Organizations in North Carolina*, by Whittaker & Day (1997)



Town of Woodfin Application for Community Partnership Grant

Name of Organization: RiverLink, Inc.

Program Name: RiverRATS (Research and Appreciation Through Science)

Local Address: 170 Lyman St., Asheville, NC 28801 Phone #: 828-252-8474

Point of Contact: Justin Young

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-Mail Address: justin@riverlink.org

Is your organization:

501(c)3

Local Government Partner

Local School/Board

Other: _____

How long has your organization been in operation?

35 years.

What is your organization's mission?

RiverLink promotes the environmental and economic vitality of the French Broad River and its watershed. RiverLink accomplishes its mission by providing permanent public access to the river through conservation and recreation easements, reclaiming contaminated lands for public use and enjoyment, empowering over 1,000 volunteers each year, and annually educating over 3,000 students, as well as the public at large, about the importance of a healthy French Broad River watershed.

Brief Program description (2-3 sentences):

This project will provide experiential science learning activities at no cost to approximately 50 students at Woodfin Elementary in 2022-23, primarily in grades 3-5, led by a RiverLink educator in classrooms and outdoor stream locations. The project is part of RiverLink's effort to expand service to vulnerable populations at Title 1 schools serving some of Buncombe's most at-risk students, and build the next generation of river stewards.

Please tell us more about your funding request. a. Monetary - how much is being requested? What percent of the funds received will go directly to benefit the individuals

served vs. program overhead? Please describe how the money will be leveraged, if applicable. b.In-kind – what is needed, date(s), and for how long?

This proposal seeks \$2,500 to support delivery of hands-on discovery lessons led by an expert educator through field trips to local streams, and also for learning activities in the classroom (especially if bad weather intervenes on a scheduled field trip). Program duration will be the 2022-23 academic year, ending June 1, 2023. All grant funds will support direct program delivery, including staff time to consult with Woodfin teachers and deliver the desired lessons, plus transportation, equipment, and consumable supplies.

Students will engage in hands-on lessons using microscopes, chemical test kits, stream population surveys, interactive models and more. Acting as scientific investigators, they will discover the physical features of streams, the diverse habitats and creatures found there, the chemistry of the water, and how human actions can impact water quality and communities downstream. The strength of the program lies in the ongoing partnerships with Buncombe educators, and the tailored, scaleable nature of the lessons. RiverLink’s tested approach works 1:1 with classroom teachers to identify instructional needs, building customized lessons that integrate required curriculum objectives, and provide material teachers can share with each other, and use in subsequent lessons.

Please describe who is directly served by this program and what are the target age groups. Please include whether you primarily (or exclusively) serve a low-moderate income population and whether you verify income to participate in the program.

The River RATS program is in demand at schools in every Buncombe community, including at charter schools and afterschool programs. By seeking support to work with students and teachers at Woodfin Elementary, we seek to ensure that the program is delivered to the targeted group: low- to moderate-income students, including students of color, whose families typically struggle to provide high-quality experiential learning opportunities in the field or at home, especially when it comes to freshwater ecology – water being the lifeblood of all communities.

Do you (or can you) serve only the residents of Woodfin? Do you verify residency?

Funds requested with this application will only serve Woodfin Elementary. Buncombe County Schools and Woodfin Elementary verify residency; we propose to serve classrooms of students enrolled at Woodfin (and their teachers).

Is participation in your program open to the public (do you require “membership”)?

We do not require membership. RiverRATS is open to K-12 students at participating Buncombe schools, until our annual schedule is full.

What Town-adopted goals do you support?

This program will support the Town of Woodfin in achieving its objectives in K-12 education, particularly for the development of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) skills that are essential as we seek solutions to a new set of challenges in a time of client change. Participating students and teachers will grow science-based environmental knowledge, appreciation, and stewardship awareness; the project will also deliver new teaching resources and expand relationships with local educators, to support quality science instruction in some of Buncombe's neediest communities. The program will mark shifts in student and educator knowledge and attitudes toward the environment; deeper understanding of local ecosystems; and desire to take action on pressing environmental concerns, including clean water, freshwater ecology, stream dynamics, and the impacts of climate change.

How does this project advance DEI goals?

RiverLink has placed diversity, equity, and inclusion as the #1 priority in its Strategic Plan. This priority is being enacted through our programs in several ways, including through neighborhood stream restoration and stormwater management projects in historically marginalized communities in Buncombe County, such as the Southside neighborhood in Asheville. In Woodfin and other communities serving greater numbers of economically disadvantaged families and people of color, we are seeking grant support to expand delivery of our high-quality discovery programs at no cost to the participating schools. Our approach has enjoyed considerable success, as the program has received support in 2022 from Buncombe County Strategic Partnerships grant program, the Walnut Cove Members Association, Prestige Subaru, and a number of private donors.

What is the anticipated impact of the program (# people served, how long will the impact last, etc.)

In the 2022-23 academic year, we hope to serve 50 students and 2-3 educators at Woodfin Elementary. We believe the impact is life-long, and we have evidence that our impact extends to families and friends, because once a child understands our impact on local streams and rivers, and what it means to the greater community, they are more likely to act in ways that improve community stewardship of these essential natural resources. They begin to see themselves and their families as actors with influence in the realm of stewardship – a critical step in solving 21st Century environmental problems.

What kind of records or data do you collect on program participation and impact?

RiverRATS program staff collect qualitative data using pre- and post-lesson surveys and live observations recorded during each lesson that indicate the program's effectiveness and point the way to any adjustments needed to better serve participating students and teachers.

1) The project will mark success when a teacher at each school has accepted a modest leadership role, and supported participating teachers at their school (in their grade level) in making full use of this program through the end of the school year. This will include sharing

RiverLink's pocket naturalist guides; promoting experiential instruction tips; and submitting surveys that RiverLink uses to collect feedback to ensure continuous improvement in content, presentation, equity and more.

2) The project will mark success when 90% of participating educators agree with survey statements including, "I have increased confidence in my capacity to provide live science investigations with my students," and "I have observed a notable increase in my students' understanding of environmental science topics."

3) The project will mark success when our educators have observed at least 25 instances of a transformative or "ah-ha moment" for students. This could be a statement that reflects new knowledge such as, "WOW! Look at the PINCHERS on that dragonfly larva!" or a student building the confidence to touch a crayfish despite being initially alarmed by it.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your organization or program?

The RiverRATS program is delivered during the school year by two expert educators. In the next 12-18 months, RiverLink plans to hire another educator to support expanded program delivery to students of color and working families. The position would work mostly with after-school groups but would increase our overall capacity, and thus the number served. The after-school program is intended to focus particularly on ensuring equity and will be partnering with groups that already work with a majority of Black and Latinx youth. For this reason we hope to hire an educator of color who can serve as a relatable role model, enabling students of color to see themselves in leadership roles in education and in nature. This new educator would be a key team member to advance the overall aims of this project.



Town of Woodfin

Application for Community Partnership Grant

Name of Organization: _____

Program Name: _____

Local Address: _____ Phone #: _____

Point of Contact: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Is your organization:

_____ 501(c)3 _____ Local Government Partner _____ Local School/Board

_____ Other: _____

How long has your organization been in operation: _____

- What is your organization's mission?

- Please provide a brief (2-3 sentences) program description.

- Please tell us more about your funding request.
 - a. Monetary - how much is being requested? What percent of the funds received will go directly to benefit the individuals served vs. program overhead? Please describe how the money will be leveraged, if applicable.
 - b. In-kind – what is needed, date(s), and for how long?

- Please describe who is directly served by this program and what are the target age groups. Please include whether you primarily (or exclusively) serve a low-moderate income population and whether you verify income to participate in the program.
- Do you (or can you) serve only the residents of Woodfin? Do you verify residency?
- Is participation in your program open to the public (do you require “membership”)?
- What town adopted goals does your organization or program support?
- How does this program support goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- What is the anticipated impact of the program (# people served, how long will the impact last, etc.)
- What kind of records or data do you collect on program participation and impact?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your organization or program?