Strategic Partnership Grants Committee
April 2, 2026
1:00 – 2:30 pm
200 College St, Room 310

In attendance:
Committee Members:
Present: Ann Flynn, Bing Owens (virtual) Charlie Beck, Dede Styles, Liz Ward, Mark Mickey, Ray Hemachandra

County Staff: Rachael Sawyer, Samantha Kirk, Angelyn Johnson

Opening Remarks
Ray Hemachandra called the meeting to order and provided a membership update. Cathy Ray has relocated out of Buncombe County and has resigned from her position on the committee.

Approval of Minutes
Liz Ward made a motion to approve the minutes from March 5, 2026, and Mark Mickey seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Old Business
- There was no old business.

New Business
- FY27 Funding Process
    - Funding Scenario
        - If the committee bases recommendation based on scoring, there would be 16 projects funded; however, fully funding the top 16 projects is $31,622 over the available budget.
        - The committee discussed different options and decided to recommend full funding for the top scorers, with a partial award for Appalachian Mountain Community Health Centers since only 62.5% of the committee members recommended this project for funding. It was recommended to fund this project for $53,378.

Organization	Project	Recommended Award
The Blessing Project, Inc	Swannanoa Hurricane Helene Recovery Program	$75,000.00
Full Circle Forestry Collective	Hazards to Heat: Transforming woody debris from Hurricane Helene into Free firewood	$84,274.00
Food Connection	Helene Recovery Prepared Meals & Food Rescue — Buncombe County	$60,000.00
WNC Grows	Swannanoa Streambank and Community Greenspace Restoration Project	$10,000.00
Asheville GreenWorks	Buncombe County Cleanups FY27	$38,000.00
Leicester Community Center	Building a Better Leicester	$22,000.00
Bounty & Soul	Advancing Long-Term Recovery by Creating Food & Health Equity in Post-Helene Food Deserts	$85,000.00

Strategic Partnership Grants Committee
April 2, 2026
1:00 – 2:30 pm
200 College St, Room 310

MANNA FoodBank	Rooted in the Southside: MANNA's Neighborhood Food Access Intervention	$85,000.00
RiverLink	A Lasting Legacy: Post-Helene Land and Water Restoration for Climate Resilience in Buncombe County	$54,882.00
Asheville Poverty Initiative	12 Baskets Cafe and Community Services	$85,000.00
Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project	Buncombe Farm Preservation and Food System Redevelopment Project	$84,975.00
W4H Asheville dba Working Wheels	Discounted Vehicle Repairs for Buncombe County Families Impacted by Helene	$85,000.00
Appalachian Mountain Community Health Centers	The Appalachian Mountain Health Mobile Behavioral Health Clinic Van Upfit	$53,378.00
Babies Need Bottoms	Tiny Humans, Big Needs: Essential Hygiene and Feeding Support for Buncombe's Smallest Residents	$62,600.00
Carolina Day School	Horizons at Carolina Day Summer Enrichment Academy	$29,891.00
Pisgah Legal Services	Justice For All Program	$85,000.00

        - Liz Ward made a motion to adopt this funding scenario as the committee's recommendation for FY27 awards. Mark Mickey seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.
    - Process Improvements
        - The committee would like to see more of the history of the organizations and their track record
            - Considering reworking the organizational capacity question
            - Possibly ask for 5 accomplishments they are most proud of
        - Request applicants do not use abbreviations
        - The strategic alignment doesn't always fit in just one category. Should organizations be allowed to select more than one option?
        - Ask applicants if they are applying for and/or receiving other county funding.
        - Instruct organizations to add specific details to their budgets
        - Define how the evaluator's question "Do you recommend this project for funding" will be used or consider removing it.
        - The committee will have a process improvement review at the June meeting.

Announcements:
- There were no announcements

Adjournment:
Ann Flynn made a motion to adjourn. Mark Mickey seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Next Meeting – There is no meeting in May. The next meeting will be June 4, 2026, 1:00 – 2:30 pm – 200 College St Room 310.