

Education Awards 2025

Organization	Project	Amount Awarded	Descriptions	County(ies) Served
Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project	ASAP Farm to School Project	\$25,000	to support Early Childhood through high school educators in implementing sustained farm to school (F2S) activities—such as school gardens, farm visits, and local food tastings—especially in underserved communities. Through its Growing Minds cohort model, the project provides training, peer support, and resources to ensure the program becomes an ongoing, integrated part of school communities rather than a one-time experience.	WNC Region
Asheville Art Museum	Literacy Through Art: Afterschool	\$17,150	to adapt its long-standing Literacy Through Art (LTA) curriculum into an on-site, afterschool program in 2026, serving 100 low-income or at-risk students from four Title I Asheville City Schools. This program will enhance students' creativity, communication, and critical thinking through multi-sensory arts and literacy lessons, while supporting resilience in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.	Buncombe
Asheville City Schools	Expanding STEM in Afterschool	\$24,000	to expand hands-on STEM afterschool programs at three high-poverty schools, engaging underrepresented students in robotics and creative problem-solving through VEX IQ Robotics and Odyssey of the Mind. Funding will remove financial barriers and support team-based learning that builds confidence, critical thinking, and collaboration skills, creating a STEM pathway from elementary to middle school.	Buncombe
Asheville GreenWorks	Expanding YELP to Afterschool Programming and Near-Peer Mentorship	\$25,000	to pilot an expansion of its Youth Environmental Leadership Program (YELP), enabling high school interns from underrepresented communities to lead environmental education activities for middle school students in the YMCA's afterschool program. This near-peer model fosters environmental awareness, mentorship, and career exploration while providing paid work experience, leadership development, and a pathway for YELP to become central to GreenWorks' educational efforts.	Buncombe
Bountiful Cities Project	FEAST Program Expansion	\$25,000	to expand its FEAST program by introducing hands-on cooking and gardening education to PreK students and increasing after-school programming for K–8 youth through partnerships with In Real Life and Children First. Building on a long-standing collaboration with Asheville City Schools, FEAST fosters healthy eating, academic integration, and meaningful connections to food and nature, often providing students their first experience with growing and preparing fresh food.	Buncombe, Madison

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Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau	BGCP STEM Program	\$25,000	to implement a comprehensive STEM program serving approximately 650 youth, primarily from low-income households, across its three club sites during the 2025–2026 school year and summer. The program will provide hands-on learning, increase math proficiency, and promote career exploration in STEM fields, helping rural students overcome barriers to academic success and future opportunities.	Jackson & Macon
Carolina Day School	Horizons at Carolina Day	\$25,000	to hire four assistant teachers and a student & family support specialist for its academic enrichment program serving low-income students from kindergarten through high school. The funding will support a six-week summer program and year-round engagement focused on closing achievement gaps through project-based learning, small class sizes, social-emotional support, and enrichment activities like swimming and field trips.	Buncombe
Friends of the WNC Nature Center	STEM Academic Achievement through Integrated Wildlife Education for Buncombe County Schools	\$6,000	to deliver wildlife-focused, curriculum-aligned science programs to economically disadvantaged 4th graders in Buncombe County Title I schools. By bringing live animals and interactive lessons directly into classrooms, the program supports equitable STEM access, aligns with updated state standards, and enhances both student engagement and teacher resources amid ongoing financial recovery.	Buncombe
Henderson County Education Foundation	Henderson County Pathfinders Mentorship Program	\$25,000	to expand its Pathfinders mentoring program into the Hendersonville Middle and High School feeder zone, pairing every 7th–12th grade student with a trained community mentor for academic support and postsecondary planning. Building on strong momentum and participation in the East zone, this expansion will add 500 students in 2026, moving the program closer to serving all 2,000+ secondary students countywide.	Henderson
Henderson County Public Schools	Henderson County Public Schools MEP K-12 Afterschool and Summer Development Program	\$25,000	to continue its 15-year partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of Hendersonville, providing summer and afterschool support for approximately 250 migratory students. Funding will offer tutoring, transportation, family outreach, and enrichment activities to help students overcome the academic challenges of frequent relocations and economic hardship.	Henderson

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Literacy Connection	Pathways to Opportunity: Adult Literacy and Citizenship in Henderson County	\$25,000	to expand adult education services in Henderson County through individualized English Language Acquisition, U.S. Citizenship preparation, and real-world enrichment programs focused on healthcare, finances, and job readiness. Funding will support staff time to coordinate services that empower 150 adults with the literacy, employment, and civic tools needed to strengthen families and contribute to the local workforce.	Henderson
Literacy Together	Literacy Changes Lives	\$25,000	to expand access to free, high-quality tutoring for economically disadvantaged and historically marginalized individuals in Buncombe County. Funding will support core programs in adult literacy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and youth literacy—including a paid internship program—helping participants build foundational skills for education, employment, and civic engagement.	Buncombe
OpenDoors of Asheville	Transportation Associate for To & Through College and Career Initiative	\$25,000	to fund a Transportation Associate who will help drive students to and from year-round academic and enrichment programs as part of their To & Through College and Career Initiative. With 90% of participating families led by single mothers and lacking reliable transportation, this support is critical to ensuring under-resourced students can access tutoring, STEAM programs, and college readiness opportunities that improve long-term educational outcomes.	Buncombe
Partnership for Appalachian Girls' Education (PAGE)	Partnership for Appalachian Girls' Education: Madison County Afterschool Program	\$25,000	to expand the free afterschool program for girls from rural Madison County, now offering two days a week with STEAM, Makers workshops, and wellness activities for middle and high school students. Support will help hire a second bus driver, purchase snacks and supplies, and pay facilitators, doubling enrollment and enhancing educational equity for underserved girls.	Madison
Reach Out and Read Carolinas	Reach Out and Read- WNC Initiative	\$23,750	to support over 65 programs that promote early literacy by integrating shared reading into routine well-child visits for more than 29,000 families across CFWNC. Clinicians provide coaching and free, developmentally appropriate books to foster parent-child reading habits and support child development and literacy, especially for under-resourced families.	WNC Region

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Smart Start Partnership for Children	Kindergarten Transition Summer Camps	\$25,000	to support Kindergarten Transition Summer Camps for rising kindergartners in Henderson County, particularly benefiting children with limited preschool experience. The camps ease the transition to school by helping students acclimate to the environment, meet staff, and build confidence, while strengthening early family-school connections and offsetting implementation costs for participating schools.	Henderson
Southwestern Community College	Southwestern Community College Adult Education for IDD Learners	\$11,000	to provide hands-on learning and enrichment activities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, aiming to enhance their social, verbal, and independent living skills. Activities include cooking lessons, field trips, a drama troupe, arts and crafts for local sales, and community engagement to prepare students for employment and increased independence.	Jackson, Macon, Swain, and the Qualla Boundary
The Christine Avery Learning Center	Music is Life	\$24,935	to sustain and expand Music is Life, a culturally rich STEAM and music education program, inspired by HBCU-style marching bands, that fosters creativity, discipline, and confidence. Grant funding will provide instruments, professional instruction, and resources to ensure equitable access for students, supporting academic enrichment and personal growth.	Buncombe
The Industrial Commons	Creative Futures: Increasing Access to Afterschool Arts in Burke County	\$25,000	to expand access to its afterschool arts program for elementary and middle school students in Burke County, particularly those facing financial and transportation barriers. Funding will support staff training, scholarships, and transportation, enabling programming to meet growing demand while fostering creativity, emotional wellbeing, and future readiness through a diverse arts curriculum.	Burke
The Literacy & Learning Center	The Literacy and Learning Center's Free Educational Programs	\$25,000	to support its free, comprehensive educational programs serving all ages, including Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, after-school homework support, individualized tutoring, and a new free Pre-K program addressing early childhood education gaps in Macon County. Additional services include weekly ESL classes and GED preparation designed to meet community needs and improve educational outcomes.	Macon
THRIVE Appalachia	Ending Poverty with Four Pathways to Prosperity	\$25,000	to offer 25 hands-on class series that teach teens marketable skills through real-world projects, entrepreneurship, and apprenticeship opportunities. Teens engage in ventures such as running a café, launching fashion lines, building sheds, and co-leading a preschool, all while earning income and preparing for future careers or college.	Yancey, Mitchell, Avery

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United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County	Fostering United Way Community School's After-School Programs	\$25,000	to continue offering free, high-demand after-school programs at Clyde A. Erwin Middle School, where 99% of students qualify for free lunch. Serving over half the student body, these teacher-led clubs support academic growth, enrichment, and belonging through the Community School strategy, aiming to improve attendance, behavior, and academic performance.	Buncombe
Verner Center for Early Learning	High-Quality Early Care and Education for Low-Wealth Children	\$25,000	to help cover the cost gap for providing high-quality early care and education to low-income families in Buncombe County, ensuring access for children whose parents often work long hours in low-wage jobs. This funding will support evidence-based services—including literacy, health, nutrition, mental health consultation, and family partnerships—so that families can maintain employment while their children receive care and developmental support.	Buncombe
Western Piedmont Foundation	Mock Early Childhood Classroom	\$16,750	for fully equipped mock early childhood classroom on campus that will serve as a hands-on training environment for early childhood education students.	Burke
YWCA of Asheville	Supporting WNC Resilience by Increasing Access to Affordable Childcare	\$25,000	to support their Empowerment Child Care and Early Learning Program, providing high-quality, affordable childcare for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. The programs focus on developmental milestones and kindergarten readiness, offer sliding-scale and free childcare for families in need, and include case management to support parents' economic and educational goals.	Buncombe

TOTAL: \$573,585