

2025 Grant Cycle - Phase I Application

Name of Project	Bob Lewis Ballpark: Iconic Sports Destination Development Through Visitor Amenity Enhancements
Organization Name	Enka Youth Sports Organization
Contact Name	Martin Lewis
Email	mlewis@lewisrealestatenc.com

Eligibility

Please complete the questions in this section to confirm your project is eligible for the Tourism Product Development Fund before beginning the application.

Is the applicant a federally recognized non-profit organization or government entity?	<input checked="" type="button" value="Yes"/>
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Is the project a festival, cultural event, or other event?	<input type="button" value="No"/>
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Is the grant application for operational expenses only?	<input type="button" value="No"/>
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Is the project located in Buncombe County?	<input checked="" type="button" value="Yes"/>
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At the time of application, does the applicant organization have legal control of the property through recorded deed or long-term lease agreement?	<input checked="" type="button" value="Yes"/>
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Will the project solely benefit a single lodging owner, lodging property, or be situated on a lodging property?	<input type="button" value="No"/>
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Is the project a major tourism capital project?

Yes

Will the project increase patronage of lodging facilities in Buncombe County by attracting tourists, business travelers, or both, AND further economic development in Buncombe County?

Yes

Will requested grant funds be used for one of the following: (1) Construction of a new location or relocation, or (2) Expansion of an existing location?

Yes

Applicant Organization Information

Organization Type	Non-Profit Organization
Organization Phone	(828) 674-8986
Organization Physical Address	5 Walk Off Way Candler, NC, 28715
Organization Mailing Address	5 Walk Off Way Candler, NC, 28715

Primary Contact Information

Please provide the contact information for the primary point of contact for this application.

Name	Martin Lewis
Title	Board Chair
Email	mlewis@lewisrealestatenc.com
Phone Number	(828) 777-9816

Project Details

Physical Address of Project	5 Walk Off Way Candler, NC, 28715
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Is your project an expansion of or improvement to an existing facility?

Yes

At the time of application, does the applicant organization have legal control of the property through a recorded deed or long-term lease agreement? If property is owned by a municipal partner, such as the City or County, a non-profit organization may provide a letter of support or other agreement with the municipal partner.

Yes, the applicant organization has legal control of the property through a recorded deed (Applicant owns the property)

Please describe your project.

The Enka Youth Sports Organization is seeking the support of the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority for facility updates and improvements to the visitor experience at the Bob Lewis Ballpark (BLBP), a well-utilized, highly regarded sports facility in the WNC region. The facility, consisting of seven ballfields with concession and restroom amenities, serves as a hub for competitive youth baseball and softball tournaments, practice play for local schools, adult league play and special events.

The BLBP has enjoyed steady use on weekends and midweek since its opening in 2018, consistently serving both residents and visitors. In 2024, Bob Lewis Ballpark welcomed baseball and softball teams, coaches and families from 189 cities/towns across 20 states.

Despite the level of usage, the amenities offered at the facility are limited. Opportunities for enhancement exist in order for the ballpark to reach its full potential and to remain both a competitive option for visiting teams and a useful asset for the local community. Improvements include items designed to enhance the visitor experience and create an iconic destination ballpark:

- The creation of a gateway entrance with brick columns and archway signaling the arrival to a premier destination.
- Installation of shade sails in the viewing areas surrounding the seven fields which will appeal to spectators especially during full-day tournaments.
- Paving the existing gravel parking lots which will prevent unnecessary overflow in area business lots and on the state road.
- Groundwork and turf resodding in high impact areas impacting players and spectator viewing areas.
- Permanent directional signage and landscaping to help guests navigate the upper and lower fields within the park versus going on Walk Off Way, a state road that will soon see increased traffic with the long-awaited and recently completed opening of the bridge and connector road to 19/23.

A top priority among these upgrades is paving the parking lots—an improvement that is essential for safely operating the facility at full capacity. Since opening, the site has relied on gravel lots and overflow parking along nearby roads. Now that the new bridge has opened and through-traffic is increasing, roadside parking is no longer possible, and neighboring businesses cannot accommodate visitors. Without this improvement, weekend tournaments would be limited to just 25 teams rather than the facility's standard 45-team capacity. Over the course of a season, that reduction would result in 640 fewer teams—480 of which are from out of the area—and an estimated loss of nearly 39,000 out-of-area visitors. This sharp decline would significantly impact tourism revenue for local hotels, restaurants, and small businesses that depend on tournament traffic throughout the season, as well as the sustainability of the facility.

In addition to infrastructure and safety needs, several improvements in the scope focus on beautification—such as enhanced landscaping, monument signage, and the creation of a formal gateway. These elements not only elevate the overall visitor experience but also contribute to the ballpark's appeal as a tournament destination. A well-maintained and visually distinctive environment is essential for attracting

regional and national tournaments, and is a key factor in remaining competitive in a growing sports tourism market.

By seeking support from the TPDF Fund, Bob Lewis Ballpark aims to enhance the overall visitor experience while addressing long-standing infrastructure needs that affect safety, capacity, and usability. These improvements are essential not only to maintain current levels of success, but to grow responsibly and meet the expectations of tournament organizers, families, and visitors. The Enka Youth Sports Organization is committed to ensuring that Bob Lewis Ballpark remains a top-tier regional facility—and with these upgrades, we believe it can reach its full potential as an iconic, year-round destination for sports tourism in Buncombe County.

Provide a detailed description of the project scope of work. For each task / deliverable, include description, cost, and timeline of completion.

- Parking Lot Paving and Striping: \$500,000.00
Asphalt paving and striping of existing gravel parking areas
 - Synthetic Turf behind Dugouts: \$90,000.00
Minimize maintenance impacts to high pedestrian traffic area and provide additional seating opportunities
 - Evergreen Outfield Fencing: \$100,000.00
Required to increase safety and reduce sun glare for batters
 - Entry Columns / Gates / Fencing: \$60,000.00
Gated entry to each ballfield complex for security and public safety
 - Monument Signage: \$110,000.00
Signage at the entrance to each ballfield plaza and highlighting the history of the property/industry and cultural resources
 - Shade Sails / Canopies: \$160,000.00
Provide shade to existing bleacher seating as well as other designated plaza seating
 - Maintenance Road / Trail: \$30,000.00
Provide safe internal maintenance access and pedestrian connectivity between field complexes
 - Landscaping: \$200,000.00
Implement the originally intended Streetscape, Parking Lot and Plaza Landscaping
- All aspects of the construction scope can be worked on concurrently and are anticipated to be complete by the end of 2025.

Project Milestones

What is the projected break ground date?	Wednesday, May 14, 2025
What is the projected completion date?	Wednesday, December 31, 2025
What is the projected opening date?	Sunday, March 1, 2026

Please provide other project milestones, if applicable. Please include the date and the milestone description.

Milestone: Parking Lot Paving – May/June 2025
Paving the parking lots is the project’s most time-sensitive milestone. Without it, we risk canceling or downsizing upcoming tournaments, which would impact attendance, revenue, and long-standing partnerships for the 2025 season. A local paving contractor is prepared to complete the work on an expedited timeline as soon as funding is confirmed.

Project Financial Information

What type of funding are you requesting? Grant

What is the total budget for your project? \$1,250,000.

What is your requested funding amount? \$1,185,000.

List the current mix of non-TPDF funding for your project. Include the source, amount, status, and if the funding is contingent on TPDF funds.

	Source	Amount	Status
Source 1	Enka Youth Sports Organization	\$65,000.	Committed
Source 2			
Source 3			
Source 4			
Source 5			
Source 6			
Source 7			
Source 8			
Source 9			
Source 10			

Total Amount of non-TPDF funding \$65,000.

If the total amount of non-TPDF funding sources listed above is less than the requested TPDF funding amount. Please describe your plan to raise the remaining amount to meet the 1-to-1 funding match requirement.

The Enka Youth Sports Organization respectfully requests full funding of this grant request to support critical visitor amenity upgrades at Bob Lewis Ballpark. While we have received public funding in the past —\$2 million from TPDF and \$1.3 million from Buncombe County—the vast majority of investment in this facility has come from our nonprofit organization. Since 2016, the Enka Youth Sports Organization has

invested \$10,024,061 into building, improving, and sustaining the facility—ensuring it remains open, functional, and available as a valued community asset. As the owner and operator, we recognize this responsibility, as well as the ballpark’s far-reaching community and economic benefits.

Over the years, the facility has grown into a leading regional venue and reliable driver of sports tourism in Buncombe County. We’ve maintained operations through major disruptions, including COVID-19 and Hurricane Helene, returning to full operations sooner than most venues. Today, we face essential infrastructure needs that affect safety, capacity, and our ability to remain competitive—particularly as we work to attract more regional and national tournaments. Without these upgrades, we risk canceling or downsizing events—undermining the impact this facility continues to deliver. Full support will help sustain a proven community asset that serves local families, traveling teams, and the county’s tourism economy.

If any of the above funding sources are contingent on receiving funding through the Tourism Product Development Fund, please explain below.

N/A

Have you received TPDF funding in the past for this specific project? Yes

If yes, Please describe what the previous BCTDA investment(s) specifically funded for your project and why you are applying for funding for this project again.

The Enka Youth Sports Organization received a TPDF grant in 2014 for the initial development of the Bob Lewis Ballpark, formerly known as the Enka Center Ballpark, consisting of seven ballfields and two buildings with concessions and bathrooms.

We are seeking funding for critical facility improvements to ensure Bob Lewis Ballpark remains competitive and continues to attract out-of-market visitors for tournament play. These upgrades are necessary to maintain full-capacity operations and deliver a high-quality experience for both local users and traveling teams.

Bob Lewis Ballpark has consistently demonstrated its value as a driver of sports tourism in Buncombe County and has remained a dependable venue even through challenging circumstances. However, sustaining this level of impact requires the ability to operate at full capacity. Without timely investment in infrastructure, the long-term viability of hosting tournaments at this site will be at risk. We are applying again because we believe in the value this facility brings to the community—and continued investment is essential to keep it operating as a year-round economic and recreational asset.

Project Impact

Will the project be able to track the number of visitors to the project through ticket sales, registration, surveys, or other similar methods? Yes

If applicable, how many visitors does your current operation serve annually? 82,500

What is the estimated number of visitors at your project for YEAR 1 of operation? 95,000

What is the estimated number of visitors at your project for YEAR 2 of operation? 110,000

What is the estimated number of visitors at your project for YEAR 3 of operation? 123,000

What are your visitation estimates based on? (Example: existing customer data, ticket sales, research, etc.)

Estimates are based on historical data tracking usage of the ballpark by local schools, leagues and visiting teams and tournaments, as well as projected usage for new tournaments and special events.

Additionally, the projections are based on running the facility at full capacity with 45 teams per weekend during the tournament season, with an estimated 39 visitors per team as confirmed by tournament organizers.

How many days would a typical visitor patronize your project during one visit to Buncombe County? 2

What is your estimated percentage of visitors to this project who will stay overnight in Buncombe County in paid lodging? 60%

Please describe your current or expected audience.

- Visiting Youth Baseball and Softball Teams: Families, coaches, and players from regional & national youth baseball and softball teams, seeking top-notch facilities for competitive tournaments, located in the vibrant Asheville area.
- Parents and Spectators: Supportive parents and enthusiastic spectators attending youth tournaments, contributing to the vibrant and family-friendly atmosphere.
- Baseball and Softball Enthusiasts: Individuals passionate about baseball and softball, drawn to the facility to watch competitive games and enjoy the sport's community spirit.
- Local Schools: Physical education programs and school sports teams utilizing the fields for midweek practices.
- Business Leagues: Local businesses organizing recreational leagues for their employees.
- Special Events Attendees: Visitors attending community events, fundraisers, or charity games hosted at the ballpark.

Terms of Agreement

Please read each of the following statements and acknowledge that you understand and agree to them by checking the boxes. Applications cannot be submitted unless this field is completed.

Disclsoure for the Public Record

As a public authority, the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority is subject to Chapter 132 of

the North Carolina General Statutes. Therefore, any and all aspects of this application must be made available by the BCTDA to any party, public or private, upon request without exception. If you are concerned that the distribution of any of your application materials may do irreparable damage to you, your organization, or associated parties, the BCTDA highly recommends that you seek alternative funding in lieu of TPDF funds.

Project Monitoring

I hereby acknowledge that if I am awarded TPDF funding, I will be required to submit an annual report by January 15 of each year during the term of the agreement, with the term commencing on the effective date and continuing for four years after the completion date. Reports include marketing plans and methodologies for capturing annual and out-of-market visitation, up-to-date room night projections, and copies of survey instruments used for data among other requirements.

BCTDA Marketing

I hereby acknowledge that certain information from my application, such as the project description, timeline, and leadership, may be used by the BCTDA at its sole discretion for the promotion and marketing of the TPDF program and the region as a tourism destination.

Completed Application

I hereby acknowledge that I have completed this application in good faith and have done so in full compliance with the law. I have made no attempt to falsify or misconstrue facts or data anywhere in this application. The information contained in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Terms and Conditions

Accepted