

# 2025 Grant Cycle - Phase I Application

Name of Project	Warren Wilson College Aquatic Center
Organization Name	Warren Wilson College
Contact Name	David Gliem
Email	dgliem@warren-wilson.edu

## 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?	Yes
Is the project a festival, cultural event, or other event?	No
Is the grant application for operational expenses only?	No
Is the project located in Buncombe County?	Yes
At the time of application, does the applicant organization have legal control of the property through recorded deed or long-term lease agreement?	Yes
Will the project solely benefit a single lodging owner, lodging property, or be situated on a lodging property?	No

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

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## Applicant Organization Information

Organization Type

Non-Profit Organization

Organization Phone

(828) 771-2000

Organization Physical Address

701 Warren Wilson Road  
Swannanoa, NC, 28778

Organization Mailing Address

Warren Wilson College, PO Box 9000  
Asheville, NC, 28815

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## Primary Contact Information

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

Name

David Gliem

Title

Special Assistant to the President for Grants and Innovation

Email

dgliem@warren-wilson.edu

Phone Number

(828) 771-3009

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## Project Details

Physical Address of Project

102 Northwest Lane  
Swannanoa, NC, 28778

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.

Buncombe County, renowned for its cultural vibrancy and natural beauty, can enhance its tourism industry and increase hotel occupancy rates by helping to fund the renovation of the Aquatic Center at Warren Wilson College. This state-of-the-art facility will serve as a focal point for engaging and inviting diverse audiences through athletics and recreational activities that will increase hotel occupancy rates, grow the local sports and outdoor leisure economy, and stimulate economic activity across Buncombe County, particularly in the eastern part of the county and Swannanoa.

The Aquatic Center will help the area retain dollars from residents who would otherwise have to travel elsewhere to access indoor aquatic facilities. Public surveys conducted in 2023 by the Asheville Parks & Recreation Project Team for the Recreate Asheville 10-year plan ranked indoor swimming facilities as one of the highest priority needs for Asheville residents. The recent closure of both the Recreation Park Pool (due to Helene damages) and Owen Pool in Swannanoa have increased the need for an accessible, year-round aquatic facility in the region. And we anticipate demand from regional residents in neighboring counties that lost pool facilities due to Hurricane Helene.

Summary

The primary objective is to renovate the Warren Wilson College Aquatic Center, which will attract visitors to Buncombe County with a range of athletic events (NCAA Division III, high school, clubs), educational programs, and recreational opportunities. The Aquatic Center will provide tourists with extended recreational offerings, increasing the probability of prolonged and repeat stays in the area, boosting hotel occupancy rates and helping to support local businesses. Access to this facility will help the area retain residential dollars by attracting those who would have to travel elsewhere to access resources like safety, fitness, and training classes.

Athletic Events and Recreational Activities:

Warren Wilson’s Aquatic Center will host a variety of events, including NCAA Division III and Independent South Conference swim competitions, high school competitions, triathlons, and summer camps, to bring an estimated 17,000–20,000 new visitors to Buncombe County per year with expected year-to-year increases.

The Aquatic Center will offer increased recreational programs such as swim and paddling practices, water safety training, scuba diving instruction, and boating instruction to cater to individuals seeking both recreation and education.

Partnerships and Collaboration:

Partnerships with local tourism organizations, led by the College's Office for Strategic Ventures, Programs, and Partnerships, will maximize the use of the Aquatic Center and other resources on and around campus.

The College will collaborate with community groups and regional tourism stakeholders to ensure the success of promotional efforts to attract visitors to Buncombe County. This year, for example, the College partnered with Explore Asheville to serve as the host for the National Archery Championship and the

United Flag Football League Championship. Both events were a tremendous success. The completion of the Aquatic Center will expand the College's ability to partner and serve as host for other high profile events.

#### Attractions, Amenities, and Education:

Warren Wilson College has a strategic location near popular attractions like the Blue Ridge Parkway, Mount Mitchell, and the downtowns of Black Mountain and Asheville. On-campus and off-campus hiking trails as well as college-sponsored athletic and cultural events will encourage outdoor enthusiasts to extend their stays in Buncombe County.

Pool access will complement the visitor experience and is expected to appeal to a broader demographic for those interested in attending cultural and educational programs offered by local organizations, including the College's Swannanoa Gathering, which welcomed 1030 visitors last summer; the MFA Program for Writers with approximately 130 visitors per year; and the Mountain Institute for Lifelong Learning with around 70 visitors. Plans to expand pre-college summer academic programs at the College in 2026 will attract even more visitors to the region.

Warren Wilson College has a longstanding ethos of sustainability, a commitment to preserving natural resources, and a mission of helping people understand their footprint, all of which makes campus an ideal place for visitors to learn responsible tourism practices. The College campus is a recognized Certified Wildlife Habitat, a Native Plant Habitat, and a Certified Monarch Butterfly Waystation and is home for the Center for Working Lands—a working, learning, and living laboratory committed to demonstrating sustainable land management. The establishment of a conservation easement on 600 acres of College land ensures the protection of this pristine wilderness in perpetuity.

New and existing student-run initiatives like the seasonal Makers Fairs, Farm School General Store, and pop-up market will mean Aquatic Center visitors will be provided a first-hand opportunity to sample and enjoy campus goods, student-made wares, and local products from Buncombe County businesses and artisans. The College's thriving Arts and Craft department provides opportunities for visitors to meet local artists, attend workshops and demonstrations, and visit the Elizabeth Holden Gallery.

#### Expected Outcomes:

1. Increased hotel occupancy rates in Buncombe County due to the attraction of diverse audiences through Aquatic Center programming.
2. Enhanced visitor experience and satisfaction, leading to positive word-of-mouth promotion and repeat visits.
3. Economic stimulation through tourism spending and support for local businesses, contributing to the overall prosperity of the region.
4. Additional responsible tourism education opportunities for visitors.

The construction of the Aquatic Center represents a strategic investment in Buncombe County's tourism infrastructure, with the potential to yield significant economic and social benefits. By providing a hub for athletic events, recreational activities, and educational programs, the Aquatic Center will not only increase hotel occupancy rates but also enrich the visitor experience, fostering a culture of exploration and discovery in Buncombe County.

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

##### Project Description:

The scope of work includes the demolition and disposal of an existing 7,500-square-foot pool enclosure, as well as portions of entrances and sidewalks, to build a new 10,000-square-foot enclosure housing a six-lane pool (to be deepened and refinished) with two competition-level diving boards (1M and 3M

spring boards) and new seating for 200 spectators and 50-100 seats for athletes. The new building will feature two new main entrances as well as a secondary secured entrance requiring student access cards. The renovated space will include a new sound system, digital scoreboard, and have a total occupancy of 433 people. Exterior site work will improve entrance to and egress from the pool, including ADA-compliant accessibility upgrades and landscaping.

Demolition and Site Preparation: ~\$180,000 – \$200,000

The project will begin with the demolition of the existing 7,500-square-foot pool enclosure, including the entire roof structure, windows, and wall panels. The site will be prepared to accommodate the larger, expanded pool enclosure. Site utilities for the new sprinkler system and storm water management will be installed underground and a building pad will be prepared for a new slab on grade foundation. Timeline: June-August 2026

Construction of New Building: ~\$2,420,000 – \$2,600,000

The facility will be designed to be used by both the public and College for recreation and competition. The new enclosure will feature either long-span steel or glulam wood girders, tongue and groove wood ceilings, and numerous windows to bring in ample natural light. The pool deck will have an anti-slip epoxy finish and all of the lighting in the building will be LED to reduce the building’s electrical load. Timeline: August-November 2026

Furnishings, Fixtures & Equipment: ~\$540,000 – \$650,000

The interior will be outfitted with seating for 200 spectators (including accessible seating) and 50-100 seats for team members. Railings and other safety-related furnishings, signage, sound and timing systems, a fire sprinkler system, connections to mechanical and filtration systems, and other furniture, fixtures and equipment will be included. The pool, pool deck, and bleachers will be refurbished. Timeline: October-November 2026

Sitework: ~\$470,000 – \$550,000

The site around the pool will see substantial upgrades and improvements: expanded handicap parking with accessibility to the entrance, landscaping, retaining walls, and a concrete plaza. The underground storm drainage system will be reconfigured, water distribution and fire protection systems improved, and utilities extended. Timeline: November-December 2026

The project may add solar panels or make the building solar ready, but this will depend on available funding and is not included in the current total cost estimate.

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## Project Milestones

**What is the projected break ground date?** Saturday, June 20, 2026

**What is the projected completion date?** Saturday, December 19, 2026

**What is the projected opening date?** Saturday, January 30, 2027

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

The pool was closed in 2016 for renovations. Since 2016 the College has invested \$2,403,130 in the facility. These upgrades include:

- 1. Removed and replaced roofing.
- 2. Updated men’s and women’s locker rooms with expanded storage and renovated bathrooms.
- 3. Installed new pool heating and filtration systems.
- 4. Purchased new scoring system, lane dividers, and other FF&E.

## Project Financial Information

What type of funding are you requesting? Grant

What is the total budget for your project? 3,600,000

What is your requested funding amount? 1,800,00

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	Buncombe County	300,000	Pending
Source 2	Institutional Funding	1,000,000	Committed
Source 3	Fundraising	500,000	Pending
Source 4			
Source 5			
Source 6			
Source 7			
Source 8			
Source 9			
Source 10			

Total Amount of non-TPDF funding 1,800,000

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.

N/A

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?

No

## 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?

25,000

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

35,000

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

50,000

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

60,000

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

These estimates were determined by the number of visitors who attend collegiate contests for all 12 NCAA sponsored varsity sports as well as summer camps, prospect camp, ID camps, and tournaments. National statistics were used to project the increase in visitors due to the new programming planned for the renovated Aquatic Center.

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

3

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.

- Our current and expected audiences include the following:
- \* Current Warren Wilson students, employees, and their families and friends
  - \* Buncombe County and regional K–12 public and private schools
  - \* NCAA, Independent South Conference, high school, swim club teams, families, and spectators
  - \* Regional high school and collegiate teams that lost pools due to Helene



- \* Triathletes and spectators
  - \* Cyclists and spectators
  - \* Summer camps students and staff
  - \* Department of Veteran Affairs and civil service personnel
  - \* Visitors engaged in paddling practices, water safety training, scuba diving instruction, and boating instruction
  - \* Visitors participating in cultural and educational programs (e.g. Swannanoa Gathering, MFA and MS students, Mountain Institute participants)
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## 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.

### Disclosure 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