

## 2025 Grant Cycle - Phase II Application

Name of Project	Bob Lewis Ballpark: Iconic Sports Destination Development through Visitor Amenity Enhancements
Organization Name	Enka Youth Sports Organization
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.

### Applicant Organization Information

Organization Type	Non-Profit Organization
Organization Phone	(828) 674-8986
Organization Physical 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.

### Project Details

Physical Address of Project	5 Walk Off Way Candler, NC, 28715
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 in detail.**

The Enka Youth Sports Organization is seeking support from the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority for facility updates and enhancements to the visitor experience at Bob Lewis Ballpark (BLBP), a well-utilized and highly regarded sports facility in the Western North Carolina region. The complex features seven ballfields with accompanying concession and restroom amenities, serving as a regional hub for youth and adult baseball and softball tournaments, practice for local schools, league play, and special events.

As we strive to elevate BLBP into an iconic sports destination, these enhancements will play a crucial role in enriching the visitor experience and positioning the ballpark as a premier venue that draws families and teams from across the Southeast and beyond.

The BLBP has enjoyed steady use on weekends and midweek since its opening in 2018, consistently serving residents and drawing teams from over 15 states each year. The youth sports market is characterized by family-centered travel, with teams often accompanied by parents, siblings, and grandparents. These visitors seek high-quality facilities and family-friendly environments, frequently extending their stay to explore local attractions. Asheville's scenic setting and vibrant hospitality sector make it especially appealing for this audience.

Despite its success, the facility has not yet reached its full potential and requires strategic improvements to adapt to the evolving expectations of visitors, tournament organizers, and community users. A comprehensive upgrade plan has been developed to address current limitations, enhance safety, and elevate the overall experience for players, spectators, and event organizers.

Proposed improvements include:

- Turf Groundwork and Resodding: Resodding the outfields across the facility is essential for maintaining competitive standards and ensuring optimal safety for players.
- Gateway Entrance: Installing an iconic gateway entrance with brick columns and a signature archway to mark arrival at a premier sports destination.
- Shade Sails: Adding shade sails around spectator viewing areas to improve comfort during tournaments and events.
- Paving Parking Lots: Paving existing gravel parking areas will increase capacity, prevent overflow into nearby business lots and roadways, and improve safety. This work will also enhance the facility's flexibility to host a broader range of events. (This component was generously supported with expedited TPDF funding in Phase I.)
- Directional Signage and Landscaping: Adding permanent directional signage and landscaping will improve navigation between the upper and lower fields, alleviate congestion on Walk Off Way—especially with the addition of the new bridge and connector road—and create a more welcoming environment for visitors.
- Enka Clock Tower Replica: Constructing a brick replica of the historic Enka Clock Tower in the lower field concourse. This monument will feature interpretive panels offering historical and cultural context about the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the site's industrial history, the surrounding community, and the transformation of this land from a former industrial landfill into a valued community recreation asset.

Since opening, Bob Lewis Ballpark has exceeded expectations in both serving local youth and attracting visitors. However, to continue growing its impact and appeal, the facility must evolve alongside the rapidly changing landscape of sports tourism and outdoor recreation. These enhancements will expand the site's functionality, improve the guest experience, and support more diverse uses throughout the year.

The upgrades will help position the ballpark to attract a broader range of events, deepen community engagement, and increase economic activity through longer stays and repeat visits. With more usable space, greater flexibility, and an enhanced visitor environment, the facility will be better equipped to meet the needs of existing users while welcoming new opportunities.

This project exemplifies successful placemaking by transforming an underutilized industrial site into a vibrant community hub for recreation. The proposed upgrades will not only enhance the user experience and increase capacity, but also drive greater economic benefit through tourism, helping sustain the long-term vitality of the facility and the region.

With its unique role in the regional sports tourism landscape, Bob Lewis Ballpark is well-positioned to deepen its economic and community impact. Through these improvements, we aim to ensure that it continues to serve as a meaningful contributor to Buncombe County's tourism economy and community development efforts—not just by keeping pace, but by creating new opportunities for connection, competition, and celebration.

**Construction Scope: To help us understand the size and scope of the project, please provide a detailed description of the scope of work for the physical construction of the project, along with associated costs for each component. As applicable, include number of buildings/structures, materials, square footage, equipment, etc.**

Parking Lot Paving and Striping: \$500,000 (Funded in Phase I)

Grading, asphalt paving and striping will upgrade the existing gravel parking areas to enhance accessibility and accommodate max capacity. This includes two main parking lots: the upper lot with a minimum of 150 spaces and the lower lot with at least 200 spaces (50 per field).

Entry Columns/Gates/Fencing: \$60,000

Gated, arched entries with brick columns and steel gates will be installed at the entrance to the parking lots to signal arrival to a premiere sports complex destination and to improve security and public safety at each ballfield complex. The design features masonry columns faced with bricks. An additional archway entrance with metal gates will be installed inside the parking area at the entrance to the concourse of the lower fields.

Monument Signage: \$50,000

Monument signage at each ballfield plaza will include arched designs with brick columns, masonry bases, and steel posts. The signage will be integrated with lockable fencing at the lower fields and will mark the pedestrian entrance to the complex, inside the parking lot. This metal gate will be lockable in order to secure the ballfields after hours.

Enka Clock Tower Replica with Interpretive Information: \$60,000

A 4' x 4" x 14-foot tall brick replica of the historic Enka Clock Tower will be constructed in the concourse of the lower field. This monument will include educational placards to provide historical and cultural context about the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, BASF industrial history, and the site's revitalization as well as donor acknowledgments.

Synthetic Turf Behind Dugouts: \$90,000

Synthetic turf will be installed behind dugouts on all seven fields (14 dugouts total) to minimize maintenance in high-traffic areas and offer additional seating area opportunities.

Shade Sails/Canopies: \$160,000

Shade sail canopies will be added to provide protection for existing bleacher seating and designated plaza areas. These structures will cover both permanent bleacher seating and areas where attendees can set up their own chairs, enhancing comfort for spectators. (14 Rectangular Shade Sails at 17' x 24' and

10 Triangular Shade Sails at 17' x 17' x 24')

Evergreen Outfield Fencing: \$100,000  
Evergreen fencing will be installed in the outfield areas of one upper and two lower fields to improve safety, visibility, and reduce sun glare for batters, contributing to better game conditions.

Pedestrian Trail Internal Access Road: \$30,000  
A 10-foot wide gravel pedestrian trail (approx 1,200 linear ft) will be created to provide safe internal pedestrian traffic access and connectivity between the upper and lower ballfield complexes.

Landscaping: \$200,000  
Comprehensive landscaping will be implemented throughout the park, including streetscape enhancements, parking lot shrubs and trees, and improved ballfield plaza landscaping. Raised planters with new trees and shrubs will replace the existing at-grade sandboxes, contributing to a more aesthetically pleasing environment.

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## Project Milestones

**What is the projected break ground date?** Tuesday, July 1, 2025

**What is the projected completion date?** Sunday, February 1, 2026

**What is the projected opening date?** Sunday, February 1, 2026

**If applicable, please list any additional project milestones. Be sure to include both the date and a brief description of each milestone.**

Design and Engineering Planning - Completed Fall 2023  
Paving of the parking lots commenced - July 2025

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## 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?** \$685,000.

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	Cash Reserves from private donors	\$65,000.	In-Hand
Source 2	TPDF Award (Phase I 2025)	\$500,000.	Committed
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 has contributed more than \$10 million toward the development and continued success of Bob Lewis Ballpark and has committed an additional \$65,000 in private donations for this next phase. We respectfully request consideration of the full TPDF funding request as an investment in a proven, high-performing tourism asset. With a projected payback period of just over six years, this remains a fiscally sound opportunity to support a facility that consistently drives visitor spending in Buncombe County.

Bob Lewis Ballpark has shown strong return on prior investment—hosting a robust schedule of events throughout the year and drawing teams from across the region. It has also proven its resilience, rebounding quickly from both COVID-related closures and from the Hurricane Helene storm, returning to operation ahead of many other attractions. A strong track record of private investment, responsible facility management, and consistent tournament activity reinforces the long-term value of supporting this next phase of development.

If the project is awarded less than the full requested amount, the scope will be reduced accordingly. However, the full package of improvements is what is necessary to elevate Bob Lewis Ballpark to iconic status and ensure it remains a top-tier destination for baseball and softball tournaments. As new facilities open and others renovate, they’re raising the bar—and expectations—for the visitor experience. We appreciate the TPDF’s early support, which allowed us to move forward with parking lot improvements to increase capacity and improve flow. This next phase builds on that momentum through a coordinated set of enhancements designed to enrich the visitor experience, expand capacity, and maintain the high-quality playing conditions expected at a premier tournament venue—positioning the facility to continue driving sports tourism in Buncombe County.

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

N/A

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## Project Impact

Does your project currently serve (or will serve) visitors to Buncombe County?

Yes

How many total guests do you receive annually, including local residents and out-of-market visitors?

82,500

How many out-of-market visitors do you receive annually? Please describe how you define "out-of-market"?

We receive approximately 57,000 out-of-market visitors annually (70% of total visitation). Out-of-market is defined as traveling from 50 miles or more outside of Asheville.

What percentage of your out-of-market visitors spend the night in paid accommodations in Buncombe County?

Approximately 86% of out-of-market visitors spend the night in paid lodging within Buncombe County

What data or methods did you use to develop your visitor and out-of-market visitor estimates? (e.g., historical data, ticket sales, market research)

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

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

2

What percentage of out-of-market visitors to your project do you estimate will stay overnight in paid lodging within Buncombe County?

Approximately 86% of out-of-market visitors spend the night in paid lodging within Buncombe County

### Describe the market to be served by your project.

The sports tourism market is a dynamic sector that significantly contributes to local economies by attracting participants and spectators who travel specifically for sporting events. By offering improved amenities and hosting high-profile tournaments, the Bob Lewis Ballpark aims to position itself as a key destination within the broader sports tourism industry, which seeks premier facilities for competitive sports and drives regional tourism and economic growth. The Bob Lewis Ballpark is ideally situated to attract this growing market, serving a wide range of sports enthusiasts.

This includes the expanding youth sports market, with young athletes aged 6 to 18 participating in baseball and softball tournaments. These events attract teams from across the Southeast and East

Coast. The youth sports market is characterized by family-centric travel, where teams are accompanied by parents, siblings, and sometimes grandparents. This demographic values high-quality facilities and family-friendly environments, often extending their stay to explore local attractions and engage in recreational activities.

The ballpark also serves adult amateur leagues, which include players from their 20s to their 70s. These leagues primarily use the facility on weekdays, providing competitive play and opportunities for local exploration during their stay. This midweek usage helps balance the facility's schedule and supports lodging demand outside peak youth tournament times.

Additionally, once the project is complete, Bob Lewis Ballpark will be positioned to attract and accommodate a diverse range of outdoor special events, further expanding its market base and enhancing its role in the community.

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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



# 2025 Grant Cycle - Phase II Application

Many of these questions will build on the Phase I application and some of the questions are the same. For ease of the application, we recommend you have your Phase I submissions on hand to copy / paste and modify from there. Please reach out to our team if you have any questions along the way.

## Primary Contact Information

Name of Person Completing the Application	Martin Lewis
Title	Board Member
Phone Number	(828) 274-2479
Federal EIN Number	47-1890963
Organization Mailing Address	5 Walk Off Way Candler, NC, 28715

### Briefly describe your organization's mission and the history of the organization.

The Enka Youth Sports Organization is dedicated to its mission of promoting the mental and physical development of youth, fostering growth through athletic competition, instilling the values of good sportsmanship, and emphasizing the importance of hard work while enhancing overall well-being.

The organization oversees the management of Bob Lewis Ballpark, an exceptional baseball and softball facility that opened its doors in July 2018. The genesis of this endeavor dates back to 2007, when Bob Lewis, along with an investment group, acquired 200 acres of land known today as Enka Commerce Park. Inspired by a conversation with county officials about the need for a ballpark nearly two decades earlier, Bob Lewis' son, Martin, envisioned a premier youth ballpark that would serve as a hub for both competitive travel teams and community gatherings. This vision garnered support from the ownership group, who generously donated almost 100 acres of land for the ballpark—including a section that had once supported the area's industrial economy but had long since fallen into disuse.

With the backing of community volunteers, donors, and government entities, extensive efforts were undertaken to transform the vision into reality. The site, previously used as an industrial landfill, was safely remediated and repurposed. In July 2018, Bob Lewis Ballpark opened its doors, providing a venue for high-quality sports programs.

Today, the Enka Youth Sports Organization is dedicated to serving the community by offering a resource that residents and local groups can utilize, and providing a high-quality facility that attracts out-of-town tournament play, contributing to the local economy through increased tourism and patronage of local businesses. Bob Lewis Ballpark serves as a vibrant hub for athletes and spectators of all ages, fostering community engagement and creating lasting memories through sports and shared experiences.

### Identify and describe any pending legal action against you or your organization that would threaten the ability of the applicant to complete this project. If none, enter "N/A".

N/A



Is your organization formally registered with the IRS and State of North Carolina and is it in good standing? If not, please explain below.

Yes, and the organization is in good standing.

List the key leadership of your organization and project. Please also include a description of each individual's specific role with the project. (You can list up to 6 people.)

	Name	Primary Company / Organization	Role
Key Leadership of Project or Organization #1	Martin Lewis	Lewis Real Estate	Board Member, Secretary/Treasurer
Key Leadership of Project or Organization #2	Stuart Weidie	Blossman Gas	Board Chair
Key Leadership of Project or Organization #3	Debbie Wilson	Community Advocate	Board Member
Key Leadership of Project or Organization #4	Brian DeWine	Asheville Tourists	Board Member
Key Leadership of Project or Organization #5	Gary McDonald	Enka Youth Sports Organization	Director of Operations
Key Leadership of Project or Organization #6			

If applicable, identify any current partnerships your organization holds with other organizations that are related to this project. Include the name of the organization and nature of the partnership.

Enka Youth Sports Organization collaborates annually with multiple tournament organizers such as All League Sports Baseball/USSSA, All League Sports Softball/ USSSA, Athletx Sports Group, Pack Softball, Top Gun Sports Baseball and Top Gun Sports Softball. These organizations utilize the Bob Lewis Ballpark as a destination host facility for a number of their annual youth baseball and softball tournaments each season.

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

Yes, but for a different phase or project scope items

Describe the value of your project to tourism in Buncombe County.

Bob Lewis Ballpark is a vital contributor to Buncombe County’s tourism economy and the region’s only dedicated venue for youth baseball and softball. The facility hosts approximately 30 weekend tournaments each year from early March through mid-November, drawing teams from across the Southeast and beyond. These events consistently attract not only players and coaches, but also families—including siblings and grandparents—many of whom extend their stay to enjoy Asheville’s natural beauty, local attractions, and vibrant hospitality offerings.

This steady influx of visitors generates significant tourism spending on lodging, dining, retail, and entertainment, creating a ripple effect across multiple sectors of the local economy. For example, during the 2025 Youth World Series held July 9–13, the ballpark welcomed 34 teams (33 of which were from out-of-market), representing 11 states. Using a conservative estimate of \$160 per visitor per day over 3.5 days and applying the standard 1.6 local economic multiplier, the tournament is estimated to have generated \$1.15 million in economic impact from just a single event.

This local impact reflects larger national trends. According to the Sports Events and Tourism Association, youth and amateur sports tourism generated \$39.7 billion in direct spending and a total economic impact

of \$91.8 billion in 2021, supporting over 635,000 jobs and contributing \$12.9 billion in tax revenue. At the same time, participation in baseball and softball continues to climb. The Sports & Fitness Industry Association reports that combined participation in these sports has reached 25.3 million—the highest since 2018—including a 108% increase in casual baseball participation since 2014.

Enhancing Bob Lewis Ballpark positions Buncombe County to capture more of this growing market. The proposed improvements will allow the facility to host higher-profile tournaments, increase its capacity and flexibility, and offer a more compelling experience for visitors—all of which translates into greater tourism spending and more frequent return trips.

Sports tourism is a recognized priority in the BCTDA's investment strategy, and Bob Lewis Ballpark reflects the type of facility that contributes meaningfully to this success. The ballpark has continued to generate year-round visitation and deliver economic impact through a range of events, even during periods of disruption. In the wake of both COVID-related shutdowns and storm damage from Hurricane Helene, the facility returned to operation quickly—providing a steady presence during uncertain times and helping sustain momentum in the local tourism economy.

As the only venue of its kind in the county, Bob Lewis Ballpark remains a dependable driver of sports-related visitation. Strengthening this facility supports not only the youth and amateur sports market, but also the wider tourism economy through expanded events, increased overnight stays, and stronger alignment with long-term regional tourism goals.

**If any of the above milestones have changed from what was provided in your Phase I application, please provide an explanation for the change. (If no changes, please enter "N/A")**

N/A

**When will TPDF funds first be required?**

August 2025

**If your project will not begin construction within 18 months of the award notification, please explain why securing funding at this stage is essential to the project's success.**

N/A

**Does a project similar to yours already exist in Western North Carolina? If so, please identify the project(s) and how your project will draw new or additional overnight visitors.**

There is no direct competition in the immediate area; however, there are other facilities outside of Buncombe County that host youth baseball tournaments, such as J.B. Red Owens Sports Complex in Easley, SC, Catawba Meadows Park in Morganton, NC, and a municipal facility in the City of Tega Cay, SC. These facilities have dirt fields that become unusable with excessive rain. Each one has, in the past, relocated a scheduled tournament to Bob Lewis Ballpark, which has turf fields that are rarely impacted by weather. The quality of ballfield surfaces is crucial for the marketability of a sports facility, and Bob Lewis Ballpark has an advantage with well-maintained turf fields.

Additionally, as facilities such as Catawba Meadows have closed due to storm damage from Hurricane Helene, we anticipate they may return with new and improved amenities—further underscoring the need to continue enhancing Bob Lewis Ballpark to remain competitive in the regional sports tourism market.

**Has a feasibility study been completed for this project?**

No

**What are your project and/or organizational goals, and how will you determine if you met them?**

Our organizational goals, as outlined in our mission, focus on promoting the mental and physical development of youth, fostering growth through athletic competition, instilling the values of good sportsmanship, and enhancing overall well-being.

Specific project goals include:

**FACILITY MANAGEMENT & IMPROVEMENTS:**

Enhance and continuously improve our facility to meet the evolving needs of our users. We are committed to upgrading and modernizing our ball fields and amenities to deliver a superior experience for local residents, youth and adult leagues, nonprofit partners, and visiting groups. By investing in ongoing enhancements, we aim to ensure that Bob Lewis Ballpark remains a top choice for sports events and continues to compete with other premier destinations.

**FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:**

Generate revenue through hosting tournaments, events, and leagues to sustain operations and fund long-term maintenance and improvements. These efforts allow us to attract high-value teams and tournaments while supporting nonprofits and area schools through effective resource management. Achieving financial sustainability enables us to reinvest in the community and advance our charitable and educational mission.

**ENHANCED VISITOR EXPERIENCE:**

Realize the full potential of the ballpark by continuously improving the visitor experience. This includes upgrading amenities, facilities, and services to ensure the ballpark remains one of the most well-regarded venues in the region. We aspire for the facility to be booked consistently—during the main season and shoulder seasons—maximizing community benefit and overall impact.

**SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY:**

Ensure the safety of players, families, and spectators by maintaining high field standards and improving parking and access infrastructure. Our goal is to eliminate safety concerns such as the need for pedestrians to walk along public roadways to reach the fields.

We will determine our success through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. This includes tracking tournament and event revenue, monitoring facility bookings and utilization rates, conducting regular inspections of field and infrastructure conditions, and collecting user feedback to assess satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. We will also assess our community impact and regularly review progress toward our stated goals, adjusting strategies as needed to ensure continued growth and long-term success of the ballpark.

**If any of the above funding sources are grants, please provide a description of the expenses covered by each grant.**

N/A

**What is the estimated annual cost to operate and maintain the project? Who will be responsible for ongoing operations and maintenance?**

The estimated annual operating budget is \$400,000. The director of operations is responsible for all operations and maintenance of the facility.

**What is the LEAST amount of TPDF Funding your project could receive without significant changes to the project scope?** 0

## Project Marketing Plan

**Describe the target audience for your project.**

Bob Lewis Ballpark currently attracts a broad range of baseball and softball teams, including youth leagues and adult amateur leagues, with players ranging in age from six to over seventy. With the completion of this project, the target audience will expand to include additional types of sporting events

and special events beyond sports.

#### **YOUTH SPORTS TOURNAMENT PROMOTERS:**

The facility regularly works with large, well-established tournament promoter organizations such as USSSA, Top Gun Sports, and Athletx/NetElite Sports. These organizations handle registration, team recruitment, logistics, and operations in-house, typically bringing 15–30+ teams per weekend. Most teams stay for the duration of the weekend, and many of these promoters book multiple weekends per year.

#### **ESTABLISHED SPORTS LEAGUES & ORGANIZATIONS:**

The facility also serves established leagues that bring in adult players from across the country for multi-day tournaments (e.g., Roy Hobbs Baseball, State Highway Patrol Softball, etc.). These events often include 3–7 day stays spread throughout a week. In addition, the park serves high school-age players through leagues such as the High School Wood Bat League, attracting athletes from Buncombe County and surrounding areas.

#### **EMERGING SPECIAL EVENTS & NEW AUDIENCES:**

With the proposed upgrades—especially paved parking lots—the ballpark will be better positioned to host large-scale non-sporting events such as car shows, festivals, and fairs, particularly during the off-season and on non-tournament weekends. The Enka Youth Sports Organization also plans to explore additional opportunities such as summer camps and youth sports clinics, expanding the reach and use of the facility.

### **How do you plan to reach your target audience?**

Once the project is underway and in anticipation of its completion, we will implement a comprehensive outreach strategy to reintroduce the upgraded facility to our core audience, including past, current, and prospective sports organizations, as well as new and emerging event markets. Our goal is to maximize facility utilization, build strong community relationships, and establish Bob Lewis Ballpark as the premier destination for youth sports and outdoor events in the heart of Western North Carolina.

The upgraded facility will offer the capacity to host a broader variety of events, including car shows, fairs, kickball and volleyball leagues, and other gatherings. This diversification presents an exciting opportunity to explore new markets and fully leverage the facility's prime location in the Asheville area.

Key strategies and tactics, as outlined in our broader marketing plan, include:

- Create New Media Assets: Produce high-quality photography, video, and drone footage to showcase recent upgrades and facility capabilities. These assets will be used across marketing materials, digital platforms, and social channels.
- Enhance Directory Listings: Update and optimize profiles on Playeasy and Explore Asheville, while adding listings on additional event and tourism directories to broaden reach.
- Expand Web Presence: Build a new landing page tailored to event organizers, integrating multimedia content and a "Request a Tour" feature to simplify booking inquiries.
- Strengthen Social Media Engagement: Implement a targeted social media strategy across LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram, with a focus on engaging tournament organizers, event producers, community partners, and attendees. Content will highlight facility renovations, visitor benefits, and community events.
- Host Events & Site Tours: Organize a grand reopening event with media, public officials, and sponsors. Offer open house nights for the community and schedule private tours for potential event partners.
- Conduct Targeted Email Campaigns: Distribute updates and invitations to existing and potential tournament promoters, as well as organizers of other large-scale events beyond baseball and softball.
- Engage in Public Relations: Issue press releases announcing project milestones and re-opening events.

Participate in local forums and community initiatives to maintain visibility and public support.

- Develop Strategic Partnerships: Build relationships with local businesses, hospitality partners, and community organizations to foster cross-promotion, strengthen buy-in, and expand the facility's network of supporters.

**How much do you plan to invest in marketing annually? How much will be invested outside the Asheville market? (Out-of-market is defined as 50 miles or more from Asheville.)**

We anticipate investing approximately \$25,000 in marketing during the first year following project completion, with ongoing annual investments adjusted based on performance and need. The majority of this initial investment—and future marketing efforts—will focus on reaching out-of-market audiences (defined as 50 miles or more from Asheville), with a particular emphasis on attracting regional tournaments and event organizers.

**Who will implement the marketing plan?**

Marketing efforts will be implemented by local marketing and communications consultants with experience in tourism and event promotion. Additionally, tournament-specific promotion—including team and player recruitment—is managed directly by the individual tournament promoter organizations who contract with the ballpark.

**Please describe the demographics of your current guests, if possible.**

**YOUTH PLAYERS (Ages 6–18):**

Our primary audience consists of youth baseball and softball players participating in weekend tournaments. These events draw teams from over 15 states across the Southeast and East Coast. Players are typically accompanied by parents, siblings, and often grandparents, as well as coaches and team staff.

**FAMILIES:**

Youth tournaments are highly family-oriented, with many families extending their visit to explore the Asheville area. These guests frequently stay in local hotels, dine at area restaurants, and enjoy nearby attractions, contributing to the local tourism economy.

**ADULT AMATEUR PLAYERS:**

The facility also serves adult amateur leagues, with players ranging in age from their 20s to 70s. These leagues generally operate year-round and more heavily on weekdays, drawing a mix of local and out-of-town participants.

**LOCAL SCHOOLS:**

Local middle and high schools regularly use the fields for midweek practices, particularly during the spring season.

**SPECIAL EVENT ATTENDEES:**

In addition to sports programming, the ballpark hosts community events, charity games, and fundraisers, attracting a diverse cross-section of the community.

**Please describe the methods your organization uses to calculate total annual visitation and to distinguish out-of-market visitors.**

Total annual visitation is calculated by tracking facility usage across all user groups, including local schools, leagues, and visiting teams participating in tournaments and events.

Out-of-market visitation is determined by reviewing the origin of teams booked for tournaments. If a team is based 50 miles or more outside of Asheville, it is classified as out-of-market.

**How will your project drive increased patronage of lodging facilities in Buncombe County by attracting tourists, business travelers, or both?**

The project will drive increased use of lodging facilities in Buncombe County by attracting a broad range of visitors through expanded sports and event programming. Key areas of impact include:

**YOUTH BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL TOURNAMENTS:**

Bob Lewis Ballpark regularly hosts youth baseball and softball tournaments, drawing teams from across the Southeast and East Coast. These events bring not only players, but also family members—parents, siblings, and often grandparents—many of whom extend their stay to explore Asheville and the surrounding area. Upgraded facilities and increased hosting capacity are expected to result in more frequent and larger tournaments, generating a measurable increase in overnight stays.

**ADULT AMATEUR LEAGUES:**

The ballpark also supports adult amateur leagues that typically play on weekdays. These groups often stay multiple nights, contributing to midweek lodging occupancy—a valuable complement to weekend-driven tourism. Improvements to the facility will make it more attractive to additional adult leagues and multi-day events, further boosting hotel demand during traditionally slower periods.

**NON-BASEBALL SPORTING & NON-SPORTING EVENTS:**

Facility upgrades will enable the site to host a more diverse mix of events. For example, car shows have previously considered the location but were unable to move forward due to the lack of paved parking. After improvements are complete, the ballpark will be positioned to accommodate large-scale events such as the Street Tiques Asheville Car, Truck, & Bike Show, which spans three days and includes more than 300 vehicles. Events like these have strong potential to draw additional out-of-market visitors and generate new lodging demand.

**INCREASED FACILITY CAPACITY:**

Additionally, the project’s upgrades will allow the ballpark to accommodate larger events and a greater number of participants. This increased capacity will help to attract more significant and higher-profile tournaments and events, bringing in visitors from a broader geographic area and encouraging longer stays.

**Please provide your estimated total number of guests—both local and out-of-market—for each of the first three years of operation. Also include an estimated percentage for out-of-market visitors for each year.**

	Total Guests (Local + Out-of-Market)	Percentage of Out-of-Market Visitors
Year 1	95000	
Year 2	110000	
Year 3	123000	

**How will future visitation to the project be tracked? Please specify the methods you plan to use (e.g., ticket sales, registrations, surveys, or other tracking tools).**

Future visitation will be tracked primarily through facility rental contracts and tournament registrations.

**Please describe how you came up with the above estimate for the number of days a typical out-of-market visitor would patronize your project during one visit in Buncombe County.**

The estimate is based on historical data provided by tournament organizers and reflects typical travel patterns associated with weekend tournaments. Most events begin early Saturday morning and continue through Sunday, prompting attendees—players, families, and coaches—to arrive on Friday and depart Sunday. This results in an average stay of approximately two nights in Buncombe County.



## **Will your project draw out-of-market visitors to Buncombe County during identified periods of need for lodging room nights?**

As part of our regular season, Bob Lewis Ballpark hosts approximately 30 weekend baseball and softball tournaments throughout the year. The tournament season typically runs from early March through mid November.

With the completion of this project, there are plans to pursue non-baseball/softball events to host at the facility throughout the year as well as expand our weekend tournament play to 40 weekends.

The project also supports the opportunity to address identified midweek needs, as some tournaments span 4–5 days and begin midweek, drawing visitors earlier in the week and increasing overnight stays beyond traditional weekend peaks.

## **What methodology do you plan to implement to determine the project's impact upon lodging once the project opens?**

We will track lodging impact primarily by collecting estimated room night data through facility rental agreements for all tournaments and special events. In addition, follow-up surveys will be distributed after each event to gather more detailed insights on overnight stays, including the number of nights spent in paid lodging within Buncombe County, the lodging type, and the distance attendees traveled to attend. Together, these tools will provide a snapshot of the project's contribution to local lodging demand.

**After your project opens, how many new, permanent full-time positions do you anticipate your project will generate that are directly related to the project?** 1

**After your project opens, how many new, seasonal or part-time positions do you anticipate your project will generate that are directly related to the project?** 4

## **Alignment with Strategic Imperatives and Destination Brand**

Please describe how the project is aligned with each of the four strategic pillars of Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority. [Learn more about the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority's Strategic Imperatives.](#)

### **How does your organization and proposed project complement and support the strategic imperative of: Delivering Balanced and Sustainable Growth?**

This project advances the Delivering Balanced & Sustainable Growth pillar by enhancing Bob Lewis Ballpark's ability to serve as both a high-quality visitor destination and a valuable year-round community asset. By expanding the types of events hosted—including emerging sports like kickball, volleyball, and pickleball, as well as future opportunities for non-sporting events—the project will help distribute visitation more evenly across the calendar, supports off-peak travel, and increase the facility's capacity to attract higher-quality visits.

Many visitors extend their stays to explore Asheville's attractions, restaurants, and retail offerings—generating additional overnight stays and increased local spending. This expanded activity enhances the overall value of each visit. The ballpark plays a key role in driving this impact, attracting teams from more than 15 states and serving as a significant tourism driver for Buncombe County.

The upgrades will improve the overall experience for players, families, and event organizers, encouraging



longer visits and return trips. As the only venue of its kind in the county, Bob Lewis Ballpark contributes to consistent, multi-day travel patterns that support the region's hospitality sector.

The facility also serves local residents, including use by area schools and community groups, helping ensure it remains a meaningful asset for the broader Buncombe County community. By investing in improvements that support expanded use and broader appeal, the project enhances Asheville's position as a sports tourism destination, differentiates it from competing markets, and contributes to sustainable, long-term growth.

### **How does your organization and proposed project complement and support the strategic imperative of: Encouraging Safe and Responsible Travel?**

The project aligns with Pillar 2 by demonstrating a long-standing commitment to environmental stewardship, responsible land use, and community well-being. Bob Lewis Ballpark serves a broad user base, not only youth and families but also adult leagues and community groups. The facility provides a well-managed environment that supports positive visitor experiences and encourages responsible use of shared recreational resources.

The transformation of a former industrial landfill into a thriving public ballpark stands as a powerful example of what can be achieved through purposeful investment and coordination with public and environmental partners. The site was remediated to meet all regulatory standards and reimagined as a high-quality outdoor venue with ballfields and visitor amenities, now serving as a valued community asset.

Ongoing efforts at the park continue to reflect this same care. Through responsible operations, thoughtful site management, and a strong emphasis on community-centered use, the ballpark contributes to a healthy visitor economy rooted in recreation, shared values, and respect for place.

### **How does your organization and proposed project complement and support the strategic imperative of: Engaging and Inviting More Diverse Audiences?**

The Bob Lewis Ballpark aligns with Pillar 3: Engaging & Inviting More Diverse Audiences by hosting and recruiting a broad array of events that appeal to a wide range of demographic groups. The diversity inherently found in sports—spanning various socio-economic and age groups—draws a wide-ranging audience, with our facility serving as a testament to this broad appeal.

Our events cater to various age groups and interests. For instance, youth baseball and softball tournaments draw participants aged 6 to 18 from across the Southeast and East Coast. Other tournaments, such as the Donnie Jones Special Needs Sports Baseball Tournament, further illustrate our commitment to inclusivity, welcoming players of all abilities. In addition, the Roy Hobbs Baseball tournaments, feature age groups from 60 to 75+, and the Bryan Pack Softball Showcases, attract high school players and college recruiters, highlighting the facility's ability to engage a diverse range of age groups, purpose and interests.

The Bob Lewis Ballpark also hosts community-focused events that attract visitors who connect with and support local organizations. One example is the East Coast State Police Charity Women's Softball Tournament, which brought together police officers from various states and backgrounds to compete while raising funds for local charities.

These events not only provide recreational opportunities but also create avenues for engagement with local neighborhoods, businesses and organizations. As we continue to expand our reach, we plan to connect with additional local leagues and organizations, further diversifying our engagement and reinforcing our commitment to serving a broad spectrum of interests and communities.

### **How does your organization and proposed project complement and support the strategic imperative of: Promoting and Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit?**

The Bob Lewis Ballpark project supports Promoting & Supporting Asheville's Creative Spirit through creative placemaking, community connection, and a strong emphasis on local history. A key feature of the project is the construction of a brick replica of the historic Enka Clock Tower, accompanied by

interpretive panels that share cultural and historical insights. These panels will honor the heritage of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, recognize the site’s industrial past, and celebrate its transformation into a public space for recreation and gathering.

This initiative exemplifies placemaking by converting a former industrial landfill into a vibrant community hub that enhances both recreational opportunities and local character. By weaving together history, culture, and community use, the project fosters a sense of place that reflects the region’s identity. These efforts not only preserve and showcase local heritage, but also create new opportunities for engagement, storytelling, and connection—core to Asheville’s creative spirit.

## Required Supporting Documentation

**Proof of Legal Site Control of the Property:** May provide copy of 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.

 01-Bob Lewis Ballpark Deed Records -... .pdf

**Proof of non-profit organization status** through a filed IRS Form 990

 EYSO 990 2024.pdf


**List of your organization's Board of Directors and affiliations**

 Bob Lewis Ballpark 2025 Board of Dire....pdf

**Drawings, photos, or renderings related to the project (optional).**

 Bob Lewis Ballpark Rendering 7-23-25... .pdf

**Completed Room Night Calculator**

 BLBP 2025 - Buncombe County Room... .pdf

**Project Budget** - if possible, budget line items should align with the scope of work provided in the "Project Financial Information" section of this application. Please provide the project budget in a Microsoft Excel or Word format (.xls, .xlsx, .csv, .doc, .docx).

 Bob Lewis Ballpark Project Budget\_T... .xlsx


**Proof of non-TPDF funds raised to date for the project.** Example documents can include the following: commitment letters, account statements that show available cash in a dedicated checking account, cancelled checks from funders, loan documents, or any other evidence demonstrating proof of other funds to be used for the Project.

 Bob Lewis Ballpark 2025 Funding Co... .pdf

**Most recent Statement of Activities or Income Statement** showing current year-to-date actual revenues and expenses compared to year-to-date budget and a year-end projection.

 06\_EYSO Statement of Activities 2024.pdf

**Prior year Statement of Financial Activity** showing previous year's total actual revenues and expenses compared to approved fiscal year budget.

 07\_EYSO Financials Prior year Statem... .pdf

**Statement of Financial Position or Balance Sheet showing current position and beginning year position.**



08\_EYSO Statement of Financial Posit... .pdf

**Letters of recommendation (up to 3) regarding your organization's ability to lead this project to success.**



Bob Lewis Ballpark Letters of Recom... .pdf

**Any additional supporting documentation (optional).**



Bob Lewis Ballpark 2025 Marketing Pl... .pdf

**Terms of Agreement**