

Watauga County

COVID-19 Grant Outcomes and Accomplishments

County and local governments used these funds in many ways, including: supporting public health and safety personnel, equipment for health departments, grants for small businesses and non-profits, and economic support to individuals.

Session Law	Item	Total Funding Authorized to Watauga County
S.L. 2020-4	Local Government Assistance	\$2,254,298

The County was able to conduct business and keep citizens safe and informed during the pandemic as a result of the grant funding. Their main objective was to keep citizens updated and safe.

The funding allowed the County to continue police coverage on a continuous basis. Public Safety Officers are substantially dedicated to the mitigation of responding to the pandemic. The County also purchased a portable broadband kit for the local health department to facilitate the real-time transmission of testing data from COVID-19 mobile testing sites located in rural areas served by the local health department.

The grant was allocated 25% to the four towns of Blowing Rock, Boone, Seven Devils and Beech Mountain. The Towns were able to purchase PPE, equipment, and consulting services in addition to public safety salaries due to the funding of the grant to assist with the pandemic. See the next page for more detailed information for each town.

Also, the County allocated \$478,518 to the regional health department, \$200,000 to the local hospital, and \$125,000 to the school system. The health department used these funds to purchase PPE, support salaries for health department employees, equipment, and utilities (including fax, telephone, and internet for home-based staff), meals for quarantined patients, hotels to house quarantined patients, COVID call centers, campaigns for encouraging masks, radio ads for testing events, supplies needed for additional contact tracers and investigators to work from home, and COVID-19 tests and results. The funds were detrimental in supporting the health department in order to educate the public and support employees substantially dedicated to mitigating and responding to COVID-19. The local hospital utilized these funds to purchase monitors and ancillary equipment for a COVID unit, telehealth equipment, disinfecting system for COVID unit, automated temperature checking machines and thermometers.

The school system utilized funding to purchase PPE, equipment (no-touch cleaning system and Clorox sprayers), childcare for teachers to plan for virtual learning, reconfiguring nurse's station to accommodate COVID situations, folding tables for social distancing, and Mifi bundles for virtual learning.

The County's accomplishments include supporting (in all aspects) the local health department with ensuring they have resources to meet the needs of the citizens in responding to and mitigating COVID-19; supporting the school system with virtual learning, social distancing and support for teachers; supporting the local hospital with necessary equipment to ensure safety for all patients; and continued public safety for all citizens in the County.



Town of Beech Mountain

The Town of Beech Mountain was able to use the funds to keep essential personnel such as police officers in the field educating citizens and visitors alike on COVID restrictions and being safe in public spaces, as well as keeping continuous police presence throughout the town. Police officers delivered groceries and restaurant to-go orders to those that found themselves and their household quarantined due the virus. The police department picked up and delivered prescription medication, enforced quarantines on those known to have traveled into the area, and aided in the enforcement of short-term rental housing restrictions. Due to the number of visitors, the police department had extra traffic and crowd control duties at outdoor venues maintaining social distancing.

Town of Blowing Rock

The funds were used for Emergency Personnel salaries during the COVID-19 pandemic including police and fire department personnel essential to COVID-19 related needs.

Town of Boone

The Town of Boone was able to make enhancements at most of the offices such as Planning, Public Works, Parking, Administration Building, Fire Station 1, and Police Comms to protect the public and workers from COVID-19. Planning offices and Fire Station 1 offices were equipped with doorbells; other offices were equipped with shields and modified doors to limit close contact with the public that staff interact with. The town was able to contract for assistance to help with the response and planning, providing Incident Action Plans and assistance to employees and was able to pay overtime for employees that worked the COVID-19 response.

Town of Seven Devils

Because of the funding received from the County, the Town of Seven Devils was able to conduct business through the pandemic and keep citizens safe and informed of Town and County events directly related to the pandemic.

Their main objective was to keep the communications to citizens updated, current, and informative. Public Safety Officers educated the citizens on the Governor's Executive Orders, the State of Emergency Orders, the Emergency Management updates, and the County's and Town's efforts to keep everyone safe. Masks, gloves, and wipes were distributed to citizens and staff, as needed.

The funding from the County allowed the Town to continue the 24/7/365 police coverage that citizens count on. Labor costs and benefit costs were covered for the period of March 1, 2020 through the end of July 2020. Public Safety Officers are substantially dedicated to the mitigation of responding to the pandemic.

Town accomplishments include the education of citizens in the battle to contain the virus, how to keep their family and loved ones safe, and constant reminders of the statistics of positive cases in the area, and the extreme limitations of health care professionals and hospital beds available for COVID-19 patients.

