

# COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

GRAYSON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

*"Elevated by Nature"*





**Grayson County** is seeking an experienced professional to serve as County Administrator, the chief administrative officer responsible for directing programs and operations of the County government. The new Administrator will succeed the previous manager who retired after five years of service. The Deputy County Administrator will serve as Acting County Administrator in the interim.

This recruitment profile provides background information on the community, its government operations, and its aspirations. It also outlines the qualifications, experience and characteristics determined to be necessary and desirable for successful performance as County Administrator.

Qualified candidates are encouraged to submit a cover letter and resume, with salary expectations and professional references, to The Berkley Group via email at [kimball.payne@bgllc.net](mailto:kimball.payne@bgllc.net). While the position is open until filled, **the formal review of applicants will begin September 6, 2022**. Inquiries relating to the County Administrator position may be directed to:

**Kimball Payne**

The Berkley Group

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# Grayson County, VA

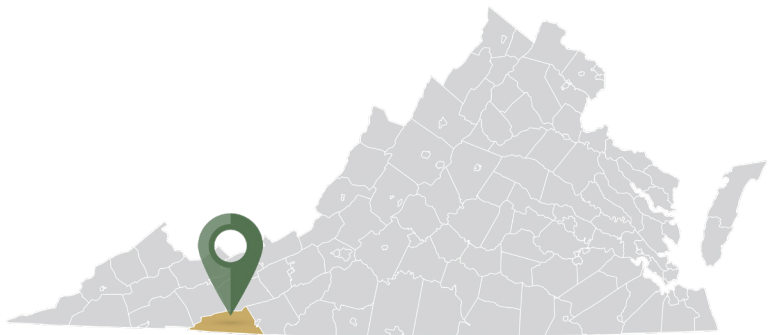
## COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Grayson County, Virginia, provides a high quality of life in a rural mountain environment. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the County's 446 square miles include the highest peaks in Virginia, Mount Rogers and Whitetop Mountain, and the second oldest river in the world, the New River. Grayson County is the home to proud, independent-minded people, some of whose families go back generations and others who have found the scenic beauty and slower pace of life to be attractive. It is at the epicenter of old-time mountain music and is the #1 producer of Christmas trees in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

## LOCATION & TRANSPORTATION

Grayson County is in the mountains of southwestern Virginia, bordering on North Carolina and Tennessee. There are three incorporated towns in the county, Fries, Independence, and Troutdale. The independent city of Galax sits on the County's eastern boundary. Routes 58 and 21 bisect the County, with Interstate 77 approximately twenty-five miles northeast on Route 58, and Interstate 81 approximately thirty-five miles north on Route 21, from the County seat at Independence.

Three regional airports, Roanoke-Blacksburg, Tri Cities (near Blountville, TN), and Concord-Padgett (NC), plus two international airports, Charlotte/Douglas, and Piedmont Triad (Greensboro), are within a two-hour drive of the County. Three local airports are within thirty-five miles. The closest, Twin County Airport (TCA) provides general aviation services and is jointly owned by Grayson County, Carroll County, and the City of Galax. The airport is approximately twenty-seven miles east of Independence near Hillsville, Virginia.



## HISTORY

The rich history of Grayson County includes hundreds of families and dozens of communities. The first inhabitants of the County were believed to be Native Americans known as Xualans or Mohetans. Later, the Iroquois, Cherokee, and Shawnee used the area as hunting grounds. European explorers came as early as 1540 with Desoto's expedition. Starting in 1750, the Colonial Governor issued land grants which were later sold to the pioneers who came over wagon roads and through the mountain gaps. In 1787 the first industry, an iron furnace and forge were established to provide important tools for settlers.

Formed in 1793 from Wythe County, Grayson County was named for William Grayson, one of Virginia's first two United States Senators. By 1800 over one hundred families had settled in Grayson County. Communities developed throughout the County around mills on waterways and at major transportation intersections and ferries or fords across the New River. The County's first court was held in 1793 in a log barn in Spring Valley. In 1794 a log courthouse was built in Greenville, now known as Old Town. It was succeeded by brick and block courthouses in 1811 and 1838, respectively. In 1842, healthy population growth in the region resulted





in the formation of Carroll County from Grayson. As a result of this change, the County seat was relocated to the more central town of Independence, established in 1850. A new courthouse was constructed and served until its replacement in 1908. The Historic 1908 Courthouse has been preserved and is the art and cultural center of Grayson County.

After the Civil War development focused on the County's natural resources with timber harvesting occurring on a large scale. Railroads and telephone lines came into the County in the late 1800's and, in the early 1900's, hydro-electric dams supported mills for textiles and other products. World War 1, floods, epidemic, and then the Great Depression impacted the community's economy. Nevertheless, the County's many communities continued to develop, adding dairies and creameries, schools, churches, post offices and banks. In 1936, Jefferson National Forest was created, absorbing large tracts on the western edge of the County.

Growth continued after World War II, with the establishment of larger hosiery and textile operations and the beginning of furniture manufacturing. Further diversification of manufacturing continued from the 1950's into the 1980's. The independent City of Galax was formed from Grayson and Carroll in 1953, reducing the population and tax base of both counties. More land was transferred to the State and Federal governments with the formation of Grayson Highlands State Park and the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area in 1965/66.

The 1970's and 1980's saw the abandonment of rail lines in the County and the opening of Interstate 77 significantly reduced through traffic. Local manufacturing began to decline with the closure of textile and furniture operations due to free trade and other factors. Today, although many residents commute outside of the County for employment, they still can enjoy the benefits of strong community, a moderate climate with bountiful natural resources, and a clean and safe environment.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Grayson County's main industries are agriculture and forestry, complemented by locally owned businesses that provide specialty products to the community and beyond. Livestock has the largest economic impact, with annual sales of about \$40 million. Dairy, vegetables, hay, and other crops also add significant value. A unique specialty crop, for which Grayson County is known, is cut Christmas trees. Approximately sixty-five farms grow Fraser fir Christmas trees on over 11,000 acres with annual sales of over one million trees and gross sales of more than \$15 million. Non-timber forest products, such as wildcrafted herbs, and non-traditional approaches to agricultural production, such as permaculture, organic and biodynamic techniques, and intense rotational practices are supported by County Extension Services and Farm Grayson County with its affiliate organizations. Farm Grayson County was established in 2018 to bring progressive ideas to the support of local agriculture. The County funds the position of Agriculture Economic Development Director to identify, develop, and recruit emerging agricultural and horticultural opportunities, develop marketing opportunities for locally produced products, and develop and coordinate agri-tourism events with the Director of Tourism. Farmer's Markets in Independence and Fries also support local agriculture and provide sources of healthy food to the community.

Manufacturing, both nationally focused and specialty/niche production, remains an important component of the local economy. The Grayson County Economic Development Authority (EDA), a political subdivision of the Commonwealth governed by a 7-member board appointed by the Board of Supervisors, is responsible for assisting new and existing businesses and industries to encourage capital investment, foster new employment opportunities, and diversify the economy. It manages two revolving loan programs to support industry and small business. The County is also a member of the Blue



Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority (BRCEDA) promoting small business growth in Carroll and Grayson Counties and the City of Galax. Industrial and business sites, with established infrastructure, are available at three public sponsored industrial parks, the Blue Ridge Crossroads Commerce Park adjacent to the City of Galax, the Grayson County Industrial Park in Independence, and the Wildwood Commerce Park in Carroll County. The Wildwood Commerce Park, a project under the auspices of the BRCEDA, is one of seven "mega sites" in Southwest Virginia. It is a 273-acre regional industrial park with infrastructure in place and graded 100-acre and 25-acre pad sites. The property is adjacent to Exit 19 of I-77, thirteen miles south of I-81, and is located within HUB and Virginia Enterprise Zones. The Twin County regional general aviation airport is within two miles of the park.

In 2013, the Virginia Department of Corrections opened the River North Correctional Center just outside of the Town of Independence. With over three hundred on staff, the facility is one of the largest employers in the County.

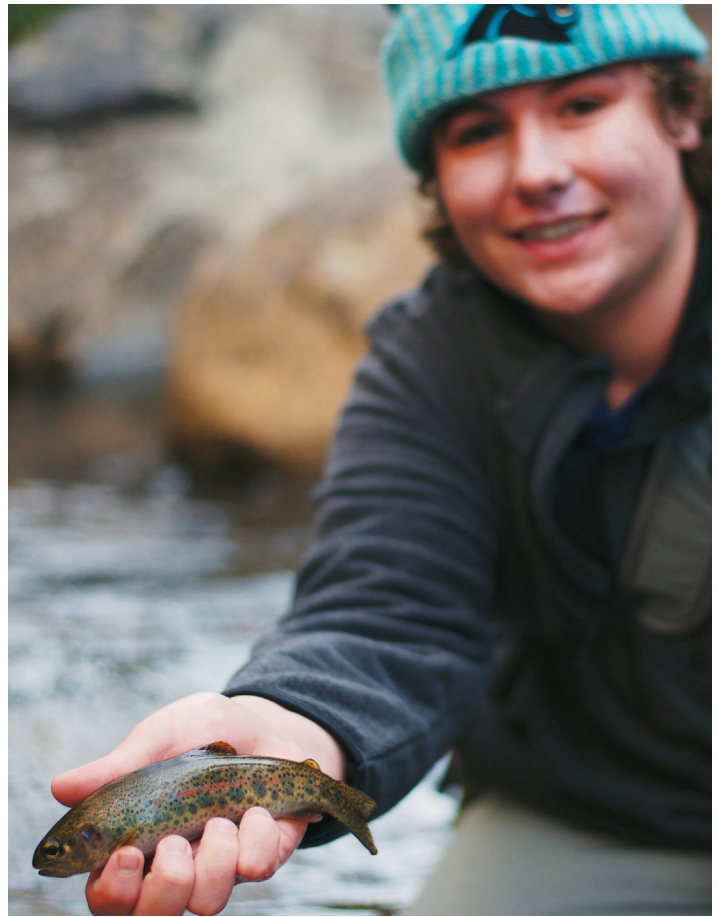
The Crossroads Rural Entrepreneurial Institute opened in 2005 in Galax and provides a variety of resources to the region, including a mixed-use small business incubator, modular workspaces, computer and electronics labs, classrooms, seminar rooms, and conference facilities with video teleconferencing capabilities. An exhibit hall and atrium also serve as a café and social area for students and the public.

## TOURISM & RECREATION

Grayson County's beautiful mountain geography, mild climate, varied outdoor recreation opportunities, traditional music legacy, agrarian landscape, and historic assets have made it a popular destination for tourists. The Grayson County Visitor's Center provides excellent services to those wishing to explore the region. (See, <https://www.graysoncountyva.com/>) The Blue Ridge Birders and Blue Ridge Discovery Center can also guide visitors to amazing outdoor discoveries.

There are nearly forty thousand acres of public land, fourteen percent of the County, contained in local, State, and Federal parks and forests, including Grayson Highlands State Park, Jefferson National Forest, Mathews State Forest, and the Mount Rogers National Recreational Area. These areas contain hundreds of miles of trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Campsites, from primitive to RV, are abundant.

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail has a beautiful section in the Mount Rogers NRA. Other popular trails are the New River Trail State Park, the Commonwealth's



only linear park, stretching fifty-seven miles on a former railroad line along the New River, and the Virginia Creeper National Recreational Trail, a 33.4-mile multi-use facility connecting Whitetop Station to Abingdon. Both the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Trans America Bike Trail pass through the County.

The New River, the oldest river in North America, runs from south to north in the County and supports fishing, tubing, canoeing, and kayaking. Cold mountain streams in the public forests and parks provide access to native and stocked brook, rainbow, and brown trout.

Grayson County is the home of traditional, "Old-Time," mountain music. It sits on the Crooked Road, Virginia's Heritage Music Trail through the mountains of Southwest Virginia. The Blue Ridge Music Center, established by the U.S. Congress in 1985, is located on the Blue Ridge Parkway and provides performance and interpretation of this important part of American music culture. There are multiple venues and events highlighting traditional mountain music for residents and visitors. The annual Grayson County Fiddler's Convention is sponsored every summer by the Elk Creek Volunteer Fire and Rescue Squad. The oldest and largest old-time event, the Galax Old Fiddler's Convention, is held the second week of August. It is followed by the Fries Fiddler's Convention. Many other traditional music events are held throughout the year.



## HEALTHCARE

Twin County Regional Healthcare, a part of Duke LifePoint Healthcare, operates a 141-bed facility in Galax that provides acute care, ambulatory care, and an emergency department. Its services include behavioral health, cardiology, gastroenterology, occupational health, orthopedics, women's health, and a birthing center. The Mount Rogers Health District, a component of the Virginia Department of Health, provides public health services to Grayson County and other localities in the region. One of its offices, the Grayson County Health Department, is in Independence.

## EDUCATION

Grayson County Public Schools, governed by an elected School Board, serves approximately 1,500 students with four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. All schools were accredited by the Virginia Department of Education prior to waiver of annual accreditation with the onset of the pandemic.

The Grayson County Career and Technical Education Center (CATE), in Independence, offers an array of career and technical education courses in the fields of agriculture, automotive technology, business, cosmetology, culinary arts, family and consumer science, nursing, and precision machining. It recently occupied a newly renovated building that provides a small business incubator and includes a state-of-the-art commercially licensed kitchen and a large, technology-enhanced conference center.

Grayson County is also home to Oak Hill Academy, a co-ed, college preparatory boarding school for 8th to 12th graders. Offering a comprehensive and enriching academic program in a structured and supportive setting, the school is known for its basketball program that routinely sends players to NCAA Division I, II, and III programs.

Wytheville Community College provides technology enhanced educational offerings in The Crossroads Institute's Higher Education Center in Galax. It also partners with Old Dominion University to offer bachelor's and advanced degrees while staying local. There are approximately thirty higher and/or technical education institutions located within sixty miles of Grayson County, including several branches of the Virginia and North Carolina community college systems. In Virginia, higher educational opportunities include Virginia Tech, Radford University, and Emory & Henry College. Appalachian State University, King University, Bluefield State, and Wake Forest University are in North Carolina.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Grayson County has a population of 15,359 (2021 estimate). It is 92.5% white, 5.7% African American, 1.2% multiracial, 0.2% Asian, and 3.8% Hispanic or Latino. The 2020 Median Household Income was \$41,558, with a median value of owner-occupied housing of \$109,800, and a poverty rate of 16.2%.

## COUNTY GOVERNMENT & SERVICES

Grayson County provides a range of services to the citizens and businesses of the County, including public safety, animal control, social services, community planning, building permits and inspections, emergency management, library services, parks and recreation facilities and programs, water service, and environmental programs. County roads are maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Grayson County operates under the traditional, or County Administrator/Board of Supervisors, form of government (as defined under Virginia law). The County is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors who are elected to four-year terms, with elections staggered at two-year intervals. Four members represent magisterial districts, and one is elected at-large. Board members annually select a Chair and Vice-Chair to serve a one-year term. The Board is the legislative policy making body for the County government. It enacts ordinances, adopts the annual budget, appropriates funds, sets tax rates, establishes policies, and adopts plans for County growth and development.

Five constitutionally mandated officers, funded by state and local resources, are elected by, and serve County residents. They are not accountable to the

Board of Supervisors but work closely with the Board and County Administrator. The Grayson County Sheriff provides law enforcement, animal control, court security and civil process services. The Sheriff and the County Administrator serve on the board of the New River Valley Regional Jail Authority. The other constitutional officers are the Commonwealth's Attorney, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Commissioner of the Revenue, and Treasurer. The latter two provide property assessment and tax collection and financial management, respectively.

Ten volunteer fire and rescue squads provide emergency response services in the County. The Grayson-Galax EMS supplements volunteer response with paid staff. Emergency communications and dispatch are handled regionally through the Twin County E-911 Regional Dispatch Center co-located with the Galax Police Department Communications in downtown Galax. It serves as the public safety answering point (PSAP) for emergency 911 calls from Grayson and Carroll Counties and the City of Galax.

The Wythe-Grayson Regional Library has five branch locations, three of which are in Grayson County. In addition to their collections of materials in various formats, the libraries offer business services, computers and wireless internet access, and events and programs for all age groups.

The Grayson County Parks and Recreation Department hosts a variety of activities for all ages including trails, ballfields, an outdoor swimming pool, playground and multiple shelters that are available for public use. The Powerhouse, or Peach Bottom, Falls area has over one hundred acres being developed for outdoor activities around the historic and scenic site.

Water and sewer facilities across the County consist primarily of private wells and onsite sewage/septic treatment systems. The Town of Independence and the Town of Fries maintain and operate water and sewage lines from within their jurisdictions. Troutdale has its own water system. The Grayson County Public Service Authority, governed by the Board of Supervisors, purchases water from the City of Galax and provides water service to nearby County customers. A partnership between Sparta, North Carolina, Independence, and Grayson County created the Virginia-Carolina Water Authority which provides water to the two towns and the North River Correctional Center.

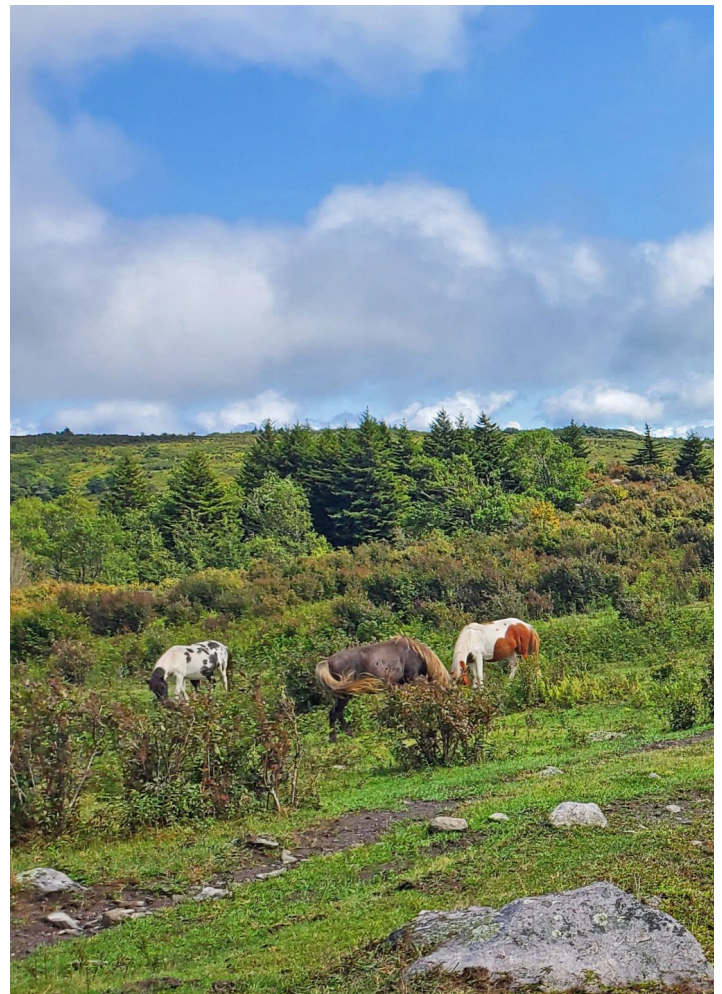
The County is also engaged in efforts to increase broadband and wireless communications capabilities for all its residents and businesses. It participates in a collaborative effort, the Wired Road, with Carroll County, the City of Galax, and the Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority in developing a fully

integrated fiber and wireless broadband network. The Wired Road's Grant Community Computing Center, in Troutdale, offers free public access to a computer lab and provides high speed broadband internet.

Solid waste management services are provided by Grayson County Public Works which offers weekly trash service to residents and businesses of the County. It also operates recycling centers across the County. The Carroll-Grayson-Galax Solid Waste Authority operates a regional landfill in Hillsville, VA, and supports a robust recycling program.

Family and protective services, benefits programs, and other assistance are delivered through the Grayson County Department of Social Services which is governed by an appointed board. The department administers federal, state, and local public financial assistance and social work service programs.

Grayson County has approximately 95 FTE employees, including those of the constitutional officers, and a FY23 budget of approximately \$30.3 million, including \$15.6 million for General Government, a \$7.6 million transfer for School Operations, \$3.3 million for Social Services, and \$1.2 million for Debt Service. The County has low debt and a healthy fund balance.

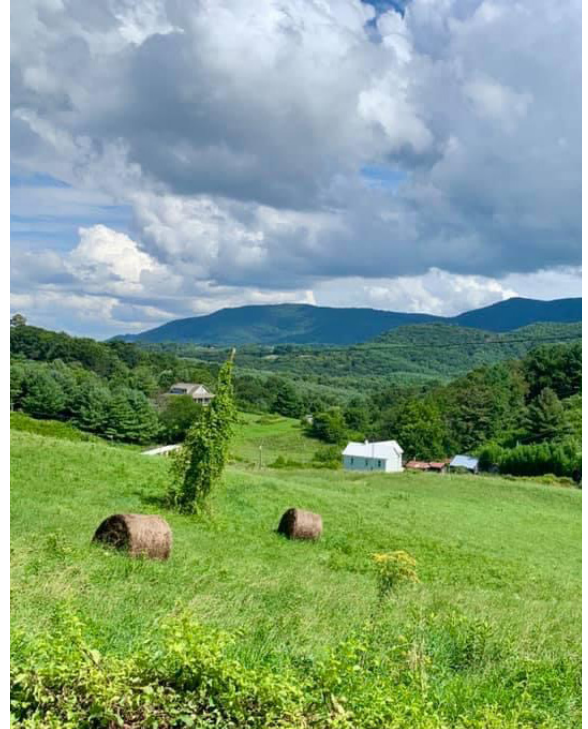




# Position Profile | County Administrator

## THE POSITION

The Board of Supervisors appoints a County Administrator to act as Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Economic Development Officer of the County. The County Administrator serves at the pleasure of the Board, carries out its policies, and directs business procedures. He or she is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the county government and manages and supervises all departments, agencies, and offices of the County except for the County Attorney who reports directly to the Board. The County Administrator is responsible for developing and, upon adoption by the Board, implementing annual operating and capital budgets. He or she recommends policies and priorities for the Board's consideration and leads the County workforce in delivering services and responding to citizen issues or concerns. He or she serves as a liaison between the Board of Supervisors, the Constitutional Officers, the Judiciary, regional, state, and local agencies and authorities, and community organizations. The County Administrator also serves as the official Clerk to the Board, the Clerk to the Economic Development Authority, the Deputy Director of Emergency Services, and the Purchasing Agent, and is a member of local and regional committees, commissions, or authorities.



## PERSONAL TRAITS & DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

- Absolute integrity, ensuring ethical, equitable, honest, fair, and open interactions with members of the Board of Supervisors, community members, and all County employees.
- Professionally competent, with confidence tempered by humility.
- A good steward of public funds; fiscally conservative, with a focus on improving the efficiency of County operations.
- Possessing an appreciation of the challenges and opportunities of a rural community and the role of agriculture and forestry in its culture; able to embrace Grayson County for what it is.
- A sound decision maker, open to input from stakeholders, exhibiting sound judgment, and decisive when appropriate.
- A visionary, open to different ways of thinking and new approaches while respecting the culture of the organization and the community.
- Excellent communications and interpersonal skills including the ability to collaborate, listen effectively, and understand differing views.
- Strong participative leadership skills within the government organization, the community, and the region; visionary, proactive, and decisive; able to integrate new ideas and facilitate the blending of differing points of view into a reasonable approach for community betterment.
- Not easily intimidated; able to diffuse tense situations and seek common ground when different perspectives create friction.
- Approachable and empathetic with a customer service mindset.
- A role model, coach, and mentor for County employees; dedicated to the professional development of staff; able to empower employees with a focus on performance, collaboration, and accountability; able to build a competent staff team and to delegate responsibility.



## CHALLENGES, ISSUES, & OPPORTUNITIES

The current Grayson County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2018 and is currently under review for possible revision. Nevertheless, the goals identified in that plan remain relevant today, although implementation has been lacking. While there may be some revision, amendment, addition, or deletion, to the goals, those identified in 2018 provide a good picture of the challenges, issues, and opportunities facing Grayson County.

Goals, with associated strategies, in the areas of Population & Housing, Education, Economy, Agriculture & Forestry, Transportation, Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities, Health & Wellness, Tourism, and Land Use are intended to complement the following needs of the County:

- Support life-long learning opportunities.
- Educate and prepare tomorrow's youth for the regional workforce.
- Protect the natural and cultural assets of the county.
- Improve infrastructure throughout the county.
- Strengthen the local economy and increase job growth.
- Improve citizen's quality of life and promote healthy lifestyle choices.
- Continue efforts to provide safe communities.
- Establish reasonable, predictable, and sustainable land-use policy and tools.
- Prepare for issues relating to dynamic shifts in population demographics.
- Promote a responsible and efficient use of government resources.
- Utilize local and regional partnerships.

In addition, the 2018 Plan includes an addendum, an AARP Age-Friendly Community Network Five-Year Plan, developed by the Grayson County Senior Advocacy Committee, designed to address the needs of an aging community in eight domains, Outdoor Spaces, Transportation, Housing, Communication and Information, Healthcare, Respect and Social Inclusion, Community and Health Services, and Civic Participation and Employment. (For more information see, <https://www.graysoncountyva.gov/2018-comp-plan/>).

Within the context of the Comprehensive Plan and its addendum, the Board of Supervisors has identified the following priorities and issues that the new County Administrator can anticipate addressing within the next three to five years:

- Continue and quicken efforts to provide universal broadband coverage, including 100% fiber, to County residents and businesses.
- Promote economic development in agriculture and forestry, in the support of existing businesses, in promoting tourism, and in attracting new investment and jobs with regional partners.
- Enhance the first responder network, as the volunteer structure is struggling; in particular, seek improvements in public safety communications in the western end of the County.
- Provide opportunities for an aging population, including a wellness center.
- Address potential budget challenges due to static revenues and added costs; develop a capital plan to improve aging infrastructure.
- Review and revise, or develop and adopt, policies, procedures, practices, and protocols for efficient and effective County governance and operations.
- Work with officials in the three towns to improve relationships and work together to address challenges regarding finances, utilities, and infrastructure.
- Work with the Public Service Authority to expand water services.
- Continue to work to improve communications, collaboration, and coordination with Grayson County Public Schools.

## **QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE**

The following education and experience factors are the expected qualifications for successful performance:

- A bachelor's degree in Public Administration, Business Management, Political Science, or a related field; a master's degree is preferred.
- Five years of progressively responsible senior level executive management experience as a chief executive/administrator, deputy executive/administrator, or department head in a high performing, comparably sized or larger, growing community, business, or non-profit organization with a wide range of duties in operations and management; possessing a broad skill set appropriate to the breadth of County government operations.
- Comprehensive knowledge of the principles and practice of public administration, local government finance, public works, information technology, and economic development. An understanding of the statutory authority and requirements of county government. Local government experience in Virginia is desirable.
- Experience in, an understanding of, and an appreciation for living in a rural community with a history of balanced involvement in community activities and public relations.
- A demonstrated commitment to ongoing professional development through participation in organizations such as the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA). Designation as an ICMA Credentialed Manager is a plus.
- Any combination of education and experience that qualifies an applicant may be considered in lieu of the more specific criteria listed above.

## **PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

- Short-term, immediate actions will be to engage with staff, the Board of Supervisors, community leaders, and residents; review the County budget, structure, policies, and procedures, and get up to speed on active projects.
- Actively participate in the review and revision of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan.
- Encourage participative engagement with the community and County department heads.
- With the Board of Supervisors, and staff and community engagement, and through transformational leadership, develop a vision of what is possible to better Grayson County for its residents.
- Be responsive to citizen concerns and issues; listening, understanding, and providing timely follow-up.
- Demonstrate a commitment to open and transparent government; promoting a positive and interactive relationship with citizens and stakeholders; encourage citizen engagement and inclusion.
- Conduct effective communications with all stakeholders; presenting information in a form understandable to various audiences; maintain strong, consistent, and equal communications with the Board of Supervisors.
- Focus on promoting communication, cooperation, and collaboration with community stakeholders, Constitutional Officers, Grayson County Public Schools, non-profit agencies, the private sector, other local governments, and regional organizations.
- Be a leader in regional activities and a facilitator, building effective relationships and promoting collaborative efforts consistent with County priorities.
- Serve as an effective liaison with representatives and agencies of the State and Federal governments, including the Forest Service and State Parks.
- Practice fair and equitable investment in and support of County employees and departments with a priority of enhancing competency and accountability through individual development and improved business processes. Avoid micromanagement; empower and entrust employees in fulfilling their responsibilities. Foster a team environment that welcomes staff feedback and participation.
- Become an active and visible resident of Grayson County, building relationships with citizens, business owners, and other County and regional stakeholders.



## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Compensation for the County Administrator will be competitive depending on qualifications and experience. The successful candidate will be offered a generous benefits package including participation in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), health insurance coverage, paid time off, deferred compensation, professional development support and other benefits as identified in a negotiated employment agreement.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

**A formal review of applications will begin on September 6, 2022**, and those candidates considered to most closely match the qualifications contained in this profile will be contacted for initial interviews. Applications received after that date may be considered until the position is filled, however, timely submittal will ensure the most advantageous review. **To be considered, please submit a cover letter and resume, with salary expectations and professional references**, to The Berkley Group, via email at [kimball.payne@bgllc.net](mailto:kimball.payne@bgllc.net). Questions may be directed to:

### **Kimball Payne**

The Berkley Group

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## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Visit <https://www.graysoncountyva.gov/>

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