

Local Government

Helene Recovery Partnership Technical Assistance

Local governments in western North Carolina (WNC) are leading their communities' recovery and rebuilding efforts. They require additional capacity and support to manage the scale and complexity of post-disaster work effectively.

To meet these needs, the Governor's Recovery Office for Western North Carolina (GROW NC), the UNC School of Government, the NC Association of County Commissioners, the NC League of Municipalities, Western Carolina University, and High Country, Western Piedmont, Foothills Regional Commission, Southwestern Commission, Land-of-Sky, and Centralina Councils of Government established the **Local Government Helene Recovery Partnership**. Legislative appropriations have enabled each organization to expand its direct assistance to local governments. A contract from GROW NC directly supports the partnership work with the School of Government.

Progress: July to December 2025

Established regular meetings among support partners	Hired WNC Recovery Navigator Amanda Stratton to serve as a regional point of contact and connector for local governments	Launched weekly office hours calls to help local governments navigate state and federal recovery funding programs and related deadlines	Launch of the NC Local Government Disaster Recovery Portal , featuring funding opportunities and deadlines, shared training calendars, implementation guidance, and resource coordination
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A Snapshot of Current Partner Engagement

GROW NC

- › Working with Temporary Solutions and Join NC to provide staffing augmentation for local governments; an MOU under development would allow OSHR to recruit and place staff with local governments or partner organizations on a contract basis

NC Association of County Commissioners

- › Strengthening county recovery operations through financial management coaching and hands-on assistance, supporting budgeting, procurement, audit readiness, CDBG-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) planning and implementation, and grant administration
- › Connecting counties with federal and state partners to identify unmet needs; align recovery efforts; provide real-time policy, legal, and regulatory guidance; and help counties navigate eligibility, compliance, and funding integration across programs like FEMA Public Assistance and CDBG-Disaster Recovery CDBG-DR

NC League of Municipalities

- › Providing an array of services to assist municipalities: financial recovery assistance, bookkeeping and accounting, grant writing and management, and cybersecurity assessment and technology support
- › Connecting municipalities with legal experts on contracts, property issues, and FEMA compliance as well as partners who provide staffing support, project oversight, and planning assistance

Centralina Regional Council

Disaster-impacted counties: Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, Union

- › Hosting grant-readiness workshops and office hours through the Regional Resilience Collaborative (RRC) to help local governments transform mitigation ideas into fundable Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) projects
- › Coordinating a support network that fosters peer learning, shares letters of support, and delivers proactive communications about grant opportunities, deadlines, and RRC convenings

Foothills Regional Commission

Disaster-impacted counties: Cleveland, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford

- › Providing recovery support for Chimney Rock by facilitating resident and business owner meetings, assisting with applications across multiple recovery programs, serving as the sponsor and administrator of the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, and preparing to administer the HMGP buyout process
- › Acting as the liaison between FEMA/NC Emergency Management and local jurisdictions, helping communities navigate the FEMA Public Assistance process and answering questions after Program Delivery Manager meetings

High Country COG

Disaster-impacted counties: Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, Yancey

- › Administering a \$4M CDBG-Neighborhood Revitalization grant in Yancey County to fund the construction/reconstruction of 20 homes
- › Enrolled 85 participants in temporary disaster recovery positions across 30 work sites, using more than \$900K from the Helene National Dislocated Workers Grant Program; supported 76 employees across seven businesses through the NC Business Edge Hurricane Helene Fund

Land-of-Sky Regional Council

Disaster impacted counties: Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Transylvania

- › Assisting 20 local governments with post-disaster recovery and grant implementation; support includes FEMA Public Assistance for nine municipalities, recovery project management for one community independent of FEMA Public Assistance, recovery planning in two counties, and grant writing for almost every jurisdiction in the region
- › Providing on-site, in-office recovery support for two communities

Southwestern Commission

Disaster-impacted counties: Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

- › Prepared 25 grant applications on behalf of 16 local government units to support disaster recovery planning, housing, and infrastructure
- › Administering three active disaster recovery grant projects, with additional projects anticipated

Western Piedmont COG

Disaster-impacted counties: Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba

- › Submitted more than 30 grant applications, securing notable awards such as a \$6M NC Department of Environmental Quality Helene Recovery Home Weatherization Program grant and a \$1M Small Business Infrastructure award for the City of Morganton's boardwalk replacement project
- › Conducted drone and LiDAR mapping to assess storm damage across multiple communities and supported the review and enforcement of floodplain ordinances; these efforts continue to inform mitigation strategies and strengthen future emergency response and recovery operations

Lead for North Carolina (LFNC)

- › Recruited and trained 14 LFNC Fellows and placed them with COGs and local governments to support project management, community engagement, and administrative capacity

School of Government

- › Advising and training local officials on procurement and contracting, grant writing and compliance, budgeting and accounting, emergency management and hazard mitigation, land use and code enforcement, affordable housing tools, and strategic leadership and management
- › The Development Finance Initiative is supporting affordable housing and community development projects, and the Environmental Finance Center is assisting with utility regionalization and grant/loan applications for critical water and wastewater infrastructure.

Helene Disaster Recovery Upcoming Office Hours

Tuesdays at 3 PM

Join Zoom Meeting: unc.zoom.us/j/91003839189

Meeting ID: 910 0383 9189

Contact

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