

Helene Relief: Household Assistance Grant Program

Regular Meeting
November 19, 2024



BUNCOMBE COUNTY



Request and Next Steps

Background:

- On November 1st, the Board of Commissioners approved the reallocation of ARPA funds for Helene Relief Programs
- Staff released an RFP to identify partners to manage the Household Assistance relief funds
- Two proposals were reviewed by staff and one was selected (Grace Covenant request for \$300K).
- Staff recommend proceeding with Grace Covenant and administering the remaining funds via Buncombe County Economic Services with additional temporary staffing resources.

Request:

Board of Commissioners approval for the following:

- Resolution authorizing the County Manager to contract with Grace Covenant to administer the program.
- Allocation of remaining funding to Economic Services for Household Assistance.



The Current Need

- In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, the livelihoods of Buncombe County residents have been impacted by both **lost employment/wages and physical damage to real and personal property.**
- While programs may exist to support members of our community, **many of the individuals impacted by Helene will not be able to recover with insurance and FEMA assistance alone.**
- **Current Individual Assistance claims are 80K+ with \$70M paid out by FEMA.**



Household Support Model

- **Eligibility:** Households that experienced economic impact from Hurricane Helene and are at/below 80% AMI.
- **Usage of Funds: life essential needs** such as utility bills, fuel, rent/mortgage, internet access, etc.
- **Model:** direct assistance grants **paid to service provider**, not directly to individuals.
- **Administered by:** A Buncombe County partner, who will screen applicants to ensure all other potential sources are exhausted, including public assistance programs and the services of our community partners.



Recommendation

- Staff recommend the following:
 - **Grace Covenant:** award \$300K to Grace Covenant for Helene Relief including rental assistance.
 - **Economic Services:** utilize the remaining \$1.2M to administer Helene Relief including rental assistance via Buncombe County Government.
- Both organizations will administer programs that track income, demographic data, and benefit Buncombe County residents (at or below 80% AMI).
- Additionally, the programs will minimize administrative fees to maximize resident relief.



Household Assistance Program Next Steps and Timelines

If approved:

- Buncombe County will finalize contract with Grace Covenant

Estimated Timeline for Partner Identification

- *November 1: RFP Opened*
- *November 8: RFP Closed*
- *November 13: Vendors reviewed and selected*
- *November 19: Regular Meeting*
- **November 22: Contract award**
- **December: payments disbursed on a rolling basis**



Request

Board of Commissioners approval for the following:

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- Allocation of remaining funding to Economic Services for Household Assistance.



Questions?



Appendix



Other Assistance Programs

- **General Questions Call:**
 - One Buncombe Call Center 828-250-6100
 - United Way at 211, a multilingual and confidential service that provides information and referrals
- **Apply for FEMA Assistance:** DisasterAssistance.gov or 800-621-3362
- **Disaster Recovery Centers:** open 8 am-7 pm; In-person at 1 Rocket Drive
- **For the latest information:** tune into Buncombe County's daily 11 AM Briefings on Facebook/YouTube
- **Eblen Charities:** 23 Hamilton St 28801 or eblencharities.org is accepting requests for rent, mortgage, utility (electric, natural gas, water), eyeglasses, medication and gasoline assistance.
- **Goodwill Industries:** 1616 Patton Avenue, Asheville offering Good Neighbor vouchers for survivors for clothing and household goods. These vouchers can be used at any Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina retail store and don't expire.
- **Pisgah Legal Services:** offers free legal assistance with FEMA and Disaster Benefits applications, housing and evictions issues, consumer protections, and domestic violence and custody issues. You can apply online for services at www.pisgahlegal.org or call 828-253-0406.
- **Crisis Clean-Up hotline.** Survivors who need help cleaning up damage from Hurricane Helene can call 844-965-1386. Crisis Clean-Up will connect you with volunteers from local relief organizations, community groups, and faith communities who may be able to assist with muck out, trees, tarps, and debris. The hotline is open through Friday, Nov. 1



Preliminary Assessment

Preliminary Damage Assessment Data across Buncombe County

- 1200+ structures impacted
- 300+ destroyed

