

Helene Relief: Small Business Grant Program

Public Hearing
November 19th, 2024



BUNCOMBE COUNTY



Background and Request

Background:

- On November 1st, the Board of Commissioners approved the reallocation of ARPA funds for Helene Relief Programs
- Staff put out an RFP to identify partners to manage the Small Business relief funds and noticed today's Public Hearing
- On November 12th, staff reviewed and selected Mountain BizWorks' proposal
 - Competitive process, one proposal

Request:

Board of Commissioners approval for the following:

- Resolution authorizing the \$1.5 million economic development appropriation for Helene Relief; and
- Authorization to the County Manager to contract with Mountain BizWorks to administer the program



The Current Need

- In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, hundreds of businesses have experienced economic injury and interruptions to operations, impacting the local workforce.
- While programs may exist to support businesses, business and workforce impact: many of the businesses impacted by Helene are still recovering from COVID-19 and will not be able to sustain operations without grants.
- Impact to Businesses and Workforce:
 - **Estimated \$92 million estimated uninsured economic losses to small businesses** in Buncombe County based on applications to Mountain BizWorks so far
 - Local independent restaurants are seeing **60-70% less in revenue** compared to this time last year
 - Estimated **10,000 to 12,000 unemployment filings**, more details to come



Small Business Support Model

- **Eligibility:**

- Small businesses impacted by Hurricane Helene (less than 25 employees).
- Ability to demonstrate retention or rehire of employees.
- Ability to retain employees for 6 months from grant award.
- All industries eligible to apply, no specific focus for the grant.

- **Focus Areas:**

- BIPOC-owned businesses
- Woman-owned businesses
- Sole Proprietorships

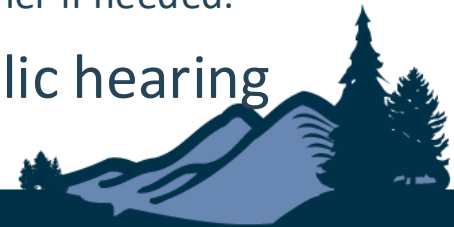
- **Usage of Funds:** business operations tied to retainage and rehire of employees.

- **Model:** Grants up to \$5,000 (1+ employees retained) or \$2,500 (1 employee retained)

- Buncombe County will work with fund manager to assess needs. Grant award amounts may be adjusted higher if needed.

- **Administered by:** Mountain Bizworks, pending Board authorization and public hearing

- Contract includes a 2.5% administration fee



Small Business Program Next Steps and Timelines

If approved:

- Buncombe County will finalize contract with Mountain BizWorks

Timeline for Partner Identification

- November 1: RFP Opened
- November 6: Public Hearing Noticed in Citizen Times
- November 8: RFP Closed
- November 12: Vendor Selected
- November 19: Regular Meeting – Public Hearing
- Early-to-Mid December: First Anticipated Awards



Request

Request:

Board of Commissioners conduct the following:

- Public Hearing and approval of the resolution authorizing \$1.5 million economic development appropriation for Helene Relief; and
- Authorize to the County Manager to contract with Mountain BizWorks to administer the program



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

