



REGIONAL DISASTER RELIEF AND RESILIENCE: SUPPORT, PLANNING, AND SOLUTIONS

Over the past five years, North Carolina has faced numerous major natural disasters, each eliciting crucial recovery efforts in affected communities. These events have emphasized the need for proactive planning in disaster response, recovery, and long-term resilience. **In 2022, the North Carolina General Assembly allocated a \$6M grant to the North Carolina Association of Regional Councils of Governments (NCARCOG) to strengthen and enhance recovery systems and resilience across the state's 16 regions.**

\$6M IN FUNDING SUPPORTED TWO MUTUALLY IMPACTFUL INITIATIVES

1. Develop and deliver a comprehensive FEMA public assistance financial administration training program for local governments
2. Lead region-specific capacity building activities to support local recovery and resilience

Over the last two years, NCARCOG has supported local governments by building capacity to successfully manage all phases of the resiliency spectrum – from hazard mitigation and pre-disaster recovery planning to disaster response and long-term recovery activities.

“The Town of Burnsville was fortunate to be able to lean on the expertise and advice of the COG staff as we worked through the FEMA/NC Emergency Management process for several storm-related projects. Smaller units typically do not have the in-house staff capacity to sift through all the federal regulations and filings required for this program. The ability of the regional COG to provide these services is so important in making sure the local unit is compliant with program guidelines and able to secure critical funding when disasters occur. **Any funding that will help build capacity, in areas that are hard to staff for our smaller units throughout the region, is money well spent.**”

– Heather Hockaday, Burnsville Town Manager

1 FEMA PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION TRAINING

Recently declared federal disasters in North Carolina enabled local governments to access federal funding for disaster response, recovery, and long-term resilience. The effective administration of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance funding requires navigating complex financial reporting and compliance requirements, which is often challenging for local governments.

An expert consultant team led by High Street Consulting (HSC) collaborated with NCARCOG and its member Councils, the NC Department of Public Safety, the Emergency Management Division, and the NC Office of Recovery and Resilience to develop a statewide training curriculum for local government staff to support the successful administration of Public Assistance funds. The multi-phased training is designed to be administered in each region by its Council of Government staff on an ongoing basis.

HSC trained 58 staff members across 16 Councils of Government to deliver FEMA Public Assistance financial administration training for local governments in their regions. This investment in COG capacity will enable staff to provide ongoing training and on-demand support to local governments in each region.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENEFITS OF OUR COORDINATED STATEWIDE TRAINING PROGRAM

- + Enhanced knowledge of the FEMA Public Assistance program and tools to efficiently and effectively manage federal funds
- + Increased proficiency in pre-disaster preparedness that incorporates successful policies and procedures for FEMA Public Assistance requests
- + Increased confidence and understanding of the Council of Governments' capacity and expertise to assist in disaster recovery
- + Ongoing access to regional networking, collaboration and peer support

STATEWIDE IMPACT

48

regional training events held

650

local government employees received training

2 CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES FOR LOCAL RESILIENCE

The 16 Regional Councils of Government each led a suite of capacity building and technical assistance activities for local governments that responded to the unique recovery and resilience needs of their regions. **In total, 255 local governments were engaged in these activities.**

FEMA REGULATORY SUPPORT AND PLANNING ACTIVITIES

FEMA has a range of recommended preparedness plans for counties and municipal governments, regions, and states. **Funding for planning and implementation activities is often limited, leaving an uneven patchwork of preparedness.**

REGIONAL COUNCILS DELIVERED THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES

- + 7 COGs delivered activities on developing regional plans or assessment for regional recovery, HMP*
- + 10 COGs delivered activities on developing local government plans or assessments for THIRA*, EOP*, stormwater
- + 6 COGs delivered activities on local codes or ordinances work
- + 14 COGs delivered activities on grant development support
- + 9 COGs delivered activities on grant administration or project implementation
- + 11 COGs delivered activities on leading regional convenings
- + 9 COGs delivered activities on developing maps, tools, or data products

*Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP), Emergency Operations Plans (EOP), Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA), Recovery Plans

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES OF CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE STATE

- + **Southwestern Commission:** Pigeon River flood mitigation in Haywood County
- + **Land of Sky:** Lower Mud Creek flood mitigation
- + **Foothills:** emergency operations planning for the Town of Boiling Springs' Broad River Greenway
- + **High Country:** culvert replacement for the Town of Crossnore
- + **Western Piedmont:** The Community Health and Disaster Mitigation Explorer, a multiple award-winning GIS tool for regional resiliency planning
- + **Centralina:** Anson County pre-disaster recovery plan
- + **Piedmont Triad:** FEMA BRIC grant for the City of Mebane
- + **Central Pines:** resilience through regional connections and energy investments
- + **Kerr-Tar:** regional emergency shelters needs assessment and funding
- + **Upper Coastal Plain:** disaster resilience strategic planning exercises and GIS mapping services for several small towns
- + **Mid-Carolina:** region-specific disaster preparedness and recovery toolkit, technical assistance to county emergency management departments and critical infrastructure facilities report
- + **Lumber River:** Lumber River Resilient Roads identifying key transportation corridors in times of flooding
- + **Cape Fear:** grant outreach and support
- + **Eastern Carolina:** disaster resilience planning workshops for 18 local communities
- + **Mid-East:** river hydrologic assessment and drainage and water plan in Bertie County
- + **Albermarle:** regional broadband planning

2025 FUNDING REQUEST: STRENGTHENING REGIONAL RESILIENCE THROUGH LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Building on the last two years of success, **NCARCOG seeks a recurring annual appropriation of \$3.9 million** to continue the work of building local capacity and leading regional resiliency initiatives in each of the 16 regional councils.

Funding will be used by each council to continue the FEMA Public Assistance financial administration training, provide customized technical assistance to communities during post-disaster recovery periods, create pre-disaster recovery plans, conduct hazard mitigation planning, and assist local governments with grant administration.

Now more than ever, it is vital that Councils of Government (COG) have a sustainable funding source to support regional coordination and local capacity building work. In the face of disaster, local governments can trust their COG to act as a connector, advocate, and trusted partner.

In blue-sky, non-disaster times, COGs help local governments with capacity building, intergovernmental coordination, and planning. COG involvement also enhances the efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars and provides the necessary technical assistance to meet federal grant compliance standards. North Carolina COGs have a successful track record of managing disaster recovery efforts from major events such as Hurricanes Helene, Matthew, and Florence to more

localized flooding, hazards, and threats. **NCARCOG's request for recurring funding from the General Assembly is an investment in our regions and toward a more resilient future.**



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