

# 2024 & 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



**Fiscal Year 2024**  
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024  
**Fiscal Year 2025**  
July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



# LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DELEGATES CHAIR

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

Fellow Board Members, Elected Officials, and Partners of Land of Sky Regional Council:

Hurricane Helene's impact was staggering—over \$60 billion in damages—and, most painfully, the loss of more than 100 neighbors in Western North Carolina. We honor their memory and the families they left behind. In the days that followed, our region showed its character: neighbors helping neighbors, and partners from across North Carolina and the nation stepping in with time, talent, and resources.

Land of Sky Regional Council has been at the center of that effort, proving the strength of regionalism. We worked shoulder to shoulder with our local governments to assist with FEMA Public Assistance, support damaged infrastructure, serve older adults, help dislocated workers, and reconnect communities when communications were down.

This report covers July 1, 2023–June 30, 2025. In FY24, we advanced core priorities: strengthened Aging and independent living supports; accelerated safety, mobility, and transit projects with state and federal partners; delivered planning and GIS tools—from zoning data maintenance to stormwater and resilience analyses—that sped local decision making; and connected employers and jobseekers to training and placements.

In FY25, we shifted to recovery and long term resilience: began FEMA Public Assistance technical support; project development and grant support to build back critical infrastructure and jobs; led multi-county risk and capability assessments to build project pipelines; aligned transit, human services transportation, and safety initiatives with recovery and resilience funding; and continued direct services to older adults and displaced workers.

Our commitment is long term. Across FY24 and FY25, we helped communities leverage more than \$80 million for local recovery, resilience, and priority projects. Governor Stein appointed our Executive Director to his Advisory Committee on Helene Recovery, affirming regional leadership. We remain nonpartisan, fair, and diligent stewards of public resources—and your regional partner.

We are stronger together. Let's never forget that.

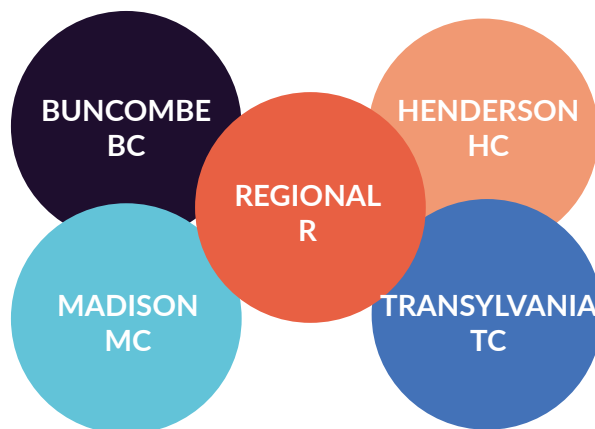
Honorable Patrick Fitzsimmons  
Mayor, Town of Weaverville  
Chair, Land of Sky Regional Council  
Board of Delegates 2024–2025



## OUR ANNUAL REPORT

### LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

Our Annual Report details programs and projects across Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties. The Council also runs programs extending to additional western counties and one that is implemented statewide. The report uses a color-coded system to differentiate between county-specific and regional data.





# BOARD OF DELEGATES

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

Land of Sky Regional Council is governed by a board made up of local elected officials, economic development professionals, and key regional stakeholders. Each member government appoints two delegates – one primary delegate and one alternate delegate. Primary delegates are elected officials of the appointing member governments. Delegates serve at the pleasure of their appointing governing body.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BOARD FY24 & FY25

- Chair** - Patrick Fitzsimmons, Mayor, Town of Weaverville (Buncombe)
- Vice-Chair** - Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Brevard (Transylvania)
- Secretary** - Preston Blakely, Mayor, Fletcher (Henderson)
- Treasurer** - Matthew Wechtel, Commission Chair, Madison County (Madison)
- County Delegate** - Jason Chappell, Commission Chair, Transylvania County (Transylvania)
- Municipal Delegate** - Sandra Kilgore, Vice Mayor, Asheville (Buncombe)
- Past Chair Delegate** - Barbara Volk, Mayor, City of Hendersonville (Henderson)
- Minority Representative Delegate** - Burton Hodges, Exec Director, Transylvania Alliance (Transylvania)
- Aging Representative:** Bob Tomasulo, Chair, Aging Advisory Committee

## MEMBER GOVERNMENTS

### LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

Buncombe County  
City of Asheville  
Town of Biltmore Forest  
Town of Black Mountain  
Town of Montreat  
Town of Weaverville  
Town of Woodfin  
Economic Development Representative  
At-Large Member

Henderson County  
Village of Flat Rock  
Town of Fletcher  
City of Hendersonville  
Town of Laurel Park  
Town of Mills River  
Economic Development Representative  
At-Large Member

Madison County  
Town of Hot Springs  
Town of Marshall  
Town of Mars Hill  
Economic Development Representative  
At-Large Member

Transylvania County  
City of Brevard  
Town of Rosman  
Economic Development Representative  
At-Large Member

Aging Program Representative







# MISSION

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

Our mission is to provide creative regional solutions to relevant and emerging issues in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania counties while providing a standard of excellence in the delivery of federal, state, and regional services for our member communities.

# WHO WE ARE

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

Land of Sky Regional Council is a multi-county, local government planning and development organization. We reach across county and municipal borders providing technical assistance to local governments and administer projects and programs which benefit our region's citizens.

**ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE:** This department is responsible for the overall administration and finances of Land of Sky Regional Council. This includes a growing, multi-million dollar budget, establishing and maintaining relationships with local, state and federal elected officials, departments and partners, human resources, marketing, public relations, as well as outreach and engagement, etc.

**ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** Land of Sky is the local economic development district for our region, providing access to a wide variety of expertise, partnerships, and funding streams. Current efforts are focused on greater regional cooperation in the areas of job creation, job retention, quality of place, entrepreneurship, and economic competitiveness. Professionally trained and experienced staff diligently strives to improve economic, environmental, and social conditions in every program area and project.

**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING:** French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – responsible for carrying out continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multi-modal transportation planning in the Asheville Urbanized Area which includes portions of Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, and Madison counties. Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization (RPO) is a voluntary organization of local governments working cooperatively with the NC Department of Transportation and local officials to enhance transportation planning opportunities for rural areas in Buncombe, Haywood, Madison, and Transylvania counties.

**AREA AGENCY ON AGING:** The AAA is a leader and catalyst in helping older adults in our four county region lead more independent, vibrant lives. Part of a national network of aging agencies established by the Older Americans Act, staff work to strengthen home and community care for older adults.

**TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE CENTER:** Land of Sky's Transportation Resource Center manages the administrative functions of Mountain Mobility and Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation, Buncombe County's community public transportation systems. Mountain Mobility provides transportation services to clients of human service agencies, local governments, and qualified citizens. NEMT provides transportation services for qualified Medicaid clients.

**MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** Land of Sky's Mountain Area Workforce Development (MAWD) designs and implements a strategic plan to meet the needs of the region's businesses for a skilled, reliable and proficient workforce; and meets the skill development and job acquisition needs of the region's jobseekers. MAWD is engaged in public/private partnerships that respond to emerging workforce issues and economic development opportunities.

**WORKFORCE:** The **Land of Sky P20 Council** fosters collaboration among employers, educators, and community members in the spirit of enduring economic prosperity, through the alignment of innovative cradle-to-career skills and resources that lead to life-sustaining job opportunities in our four-county region of western NC.

**CLIENT SERVICES:** Land of Sky has received funding to support several new initiatives to connect people to resources. **INspire Recovery to Career** is a partnership between Land of Sky and Southwestern Commission to provide community-based peer support services to people reentering the workforce after being discharged from treatment or released from prison. **GO PLACES** introduces and prepares youth and young adults ages 18-24 for the world of work through placement into paid work experiences and on a path to more equitable career opportunities with their peers.





**Fiscal Year 2024**  
July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024



# BUDGET & FUNDING SOURCES

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

A balanced budget is adopted each year, as required by state law. The budget is amended several times during the fiscal year, as many federal grants have different fiscal cycles.

### FY24 REVENUES

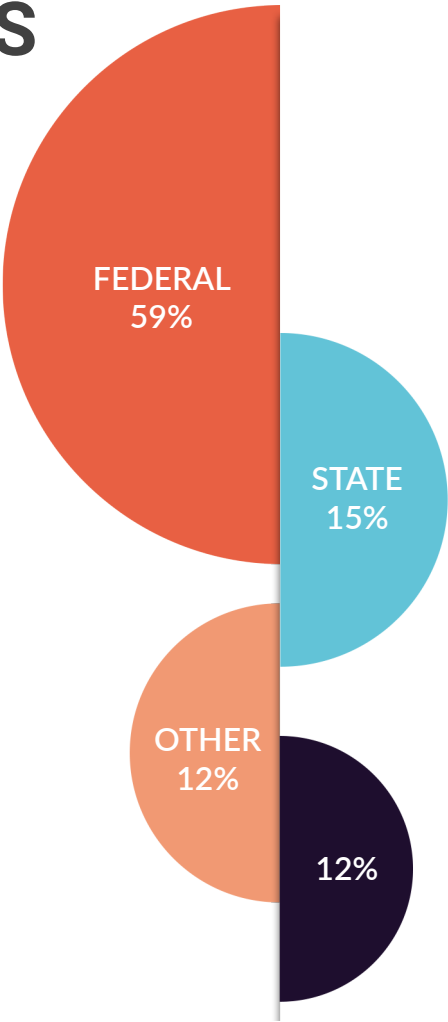
**\$18,461,616**

• Federal	\$11,073,648
• State	\$2,808,188
• Local Grants, Contributions, Charges for Services	\$2,321,664
• Private	\$1,810,383
• Local Government Dues	\$342,834
• In-Kind	\$104,899

### FY24 EXPENDITURES

**\$18,149,272**

Area Agency on Aging	\$6,602,577	(36%)
Workforce Development	\$4,461,652	(24%)
Economic & Community Development	\$4,604,745	(25%)
Buncombe County Transportation	\$2,164,724	(11%)
General Fund	\$128,862	(.5%)



#### FEDERAL

US Department of Agriculture  
US Department of Commerce  
US Department of Energy  
US Department of Health & Human Services  
US Department of Labor  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Corporation for National & Community Service  
US Department of Transportation- Federal Highway Administration  
Appalachian Regional Commission  
US Department of the Treasury

#### OTHER

Local Grants and Contributions  
Local Charges for Services  
Rents  
Usage Allowance

#### STATE

NC Department of Environmental Quality  
NC Department of Health & Human Services  
NC Department of Commerce  
NC Department of Transportation  
NC Institute for Emerging Issues  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Vaya Health

#### PRIVATE

Pisgah Health Foundation  
WNC Bridge Foundation  
Z Smith Reynolds  
John M Belk Endowment  
Dogwood Health Trust  
NC State University Institute for Emerging Issues

#### LOCAL DUES & IN-KIND

For every dollar of local dues, we leveraged  
**\$53.85** in return investment.



# HOUSING

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### RECOVERY HOUSING PROGRAM

Launched in 2023 with a \$50,000 grant from Dogwood Health Trust, Land of Sky's Recovery Housing Program aims to improve and expand housing options to serve individuals in recovery from substance use disorder. In addition to publishing a report identifying the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of recovery housing in the region and within each county, Land of Sky's Recovery Housing Program supported the launch of the Recovery Home Finder app and website. Essentially Airbnb for the recovery community, the app connects individuals in WNC looking for sober living with available vacancies in real time.

#### BUNCOMBE

In addition, Land of Sky partnered with Buncombe County on a \$1 million submission to the state's Recovery Housing Program, which would help build a 64-unit transitional housing facility at ABCCM's Transformation Village, with half of units reserved for women and mothers in recovery.

### LAND OF SKY HOUSING ALLIANCE

Each month, stakeholders in the region's housing landscape gather at Land of Sky's offices discuss strategies and plan action to preserve and expand affordable housing in the region. With representatives from local governments, affordable housing agencies, developers, lenders, funders, and housing advocates, the Housing Alliance plays a key role in coordinating regional efforts to find solutions to the area's ongoing affordable housing crisis.

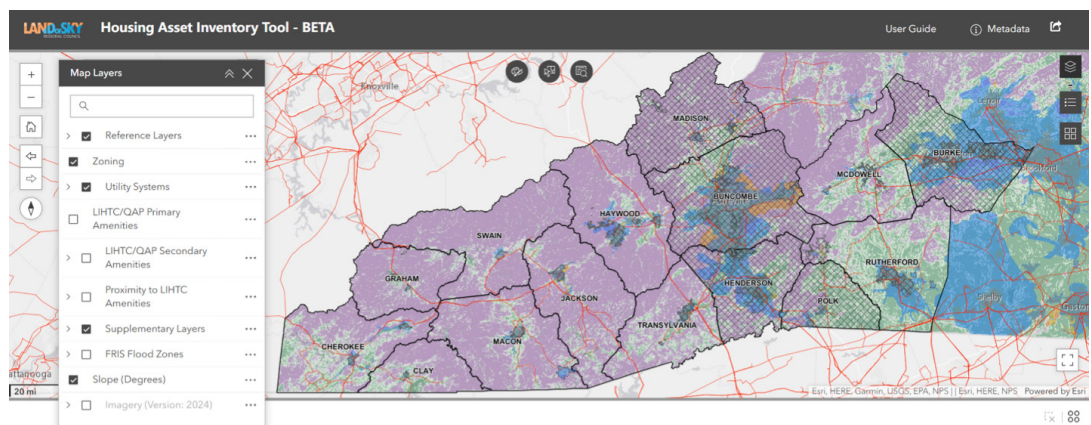
### WNC REGIONAL HOUSING FORUM

Roughly 200 individuals interested in learning about regional solutions to address the area's affordable housing crisis gathered at Blue Ridge Community College in August. The annual event highlighted successful efforts from local communities and best practices from across the state actively improving the outlook for affordable housing.

### HOUSING ASSET INVENTORY

The Housing Asset Inventory Tool, created as part of this initiative, is designed for comprehensive spatial analysis and planning. It is particularly beneficial for the development of affordable housing and includes features such as:

- **Identifying Development Sites:** The tool uses various layers to find suitable development sites, considering proximity to amenities, utilities, and zoning regulations.
- **Planning Infrastructure:** It assesses the current infrastructure and helps plan new developments accordingly.
- **Environmental Assessments:** It utilizes slope, flood zones, and conserved land layers for environmental impact assessments.
- **Community Planning:** The tool engages in detailed community planning by analyzing access to services, schools, and public facilities.
- **Economic Development:** It identifies opportunity zones and qualified census tracts for economic development projects. The Housing Asset Inventory Tool also provides snapshots that local governments can use to re-evaluate the expansion of water and sewer efforts and for conversations with state agencies, highlighting funding.



### 7TH AVE REVITALIZATION (CDBG-NR \$750,000)

Home repair and rehabilitation work continues on four homes in the 7th Ave/ Ashe St. Neighborhood in Hendersonville in collaboration with the Housing Assistance Corporation. Design has also been completed for new sidewalks along Beech and Cherry streets and construction will begin in FY25. Up to 10 additional homes will also be repaired with another round of CDBG-NR funding in FY25.

#### HENDERSON





# CLEAN VEHICLES AND ENERGY

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Led WNC Clean Air Campaign program that convenes air quality professionals from local and state entities to collaborate on education, outreach, and creative solutions to air quality issues in the region. This convening has been facilitated by LOS for decades, starting with Bill Eaker and leading to the current staff. Work of the members of this group was pivotal in the wake of Helene, due to the large piles of woody storm debris that needed to be disposed of.
- Collaborated with other Clean Cities and Communities coalitions in NC to ensure access for all residents of NC to the education, information, and funding opportunities that this longstanding partnership with the Department of Energy (32 years at the time of this report)
- Served on the National Alt-Fuels Corridor Council, a body that collaborates to build infrastructure along major travel corridors throughout the USA.
- Started a project in collaboration with other Clean Cities and Communities Coalitions in the Southeast US to expand coverage and deepen connections with fleets and stakeholders. This project was funded by an additional award through the Department of Energy for emerging technologies.
- Served on the Plug-in NC steering committee, a project of Advanced Energy in NC.
- Staff compiled a list of fuel prices for alternative and traditional fuels on a quarterly basis and submitted those findings to the DOE for their quarterly-updated national fuel price index.
- Staff educated and promoted microgrid technology as a resilience and energy-saving opportunity to communities and partners across the region.
- Staff continued ongoing work with a pro-bono microgrid consulting group to increase our own knowledge and to help promote the technology. This group also convenes college students from our region to work on projects and learn about the technologies.



# THE WISH COLLABORATIVE

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The WNC Initiative for Supportive Housing, or WISH Collaborative, is a grant-funded, cross-sector project focused on building the community's capacity for safe, accessible, affordable housing and transportation. This partnership brings together individuals and organizations focused on housing and transportation issues with advocates for older adults and adults with disabilities to help ensure individuals with high support needs can live with independence in community. Since its launch in 2022, the WISH Collaborative has put more than \$500,000 to work in the region helping preserve existing affordable housing, training staff at affordable housing agencies, and building trainings for community health workers.



# BROADBAND

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

LOS supported regional broadband projects through the states CAB and GREAT programs leading to **\$18,799,486** in federal funding and **\$5,938,029** in private investment for broadband infrastructure projects that will connect over 3000 LOS residents with new service. This brings our cumulative total for the WestNGN initiative to over **\$64M** in broadband infrastructure investment and over 16,000 residents with service since 2018. Staff remain active with local broadband initiatives and committees throughout the region, and work as an active liaison to communities to understand upcoming programs and policy.

**LOS DIGITAL CHAMPION** grant brings new staff to the WestNGN team to help close digital divide gaps for devices and digital literacy. **(\$689,960)** This grant will expand our regional device access and digital literacy program with community based partners across the LOS region.

### IEI BAND NC DIGITAL EQUITY PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

WNC Digital Equity Planning. LOS supported neighboring COG's with planning and technical assistance. Funding provided to LOS counties for implementation towards the digital equity plans. Staff supported IEI with the statewide convening at Blue Ridge Community College summer 2024 with over 200 attendees across North Carolina. Each county received **\$50,000** in funds to move forward their digital equity plans.



#### TRANSYLVANIA

Downtown WIFI in Brevard and parks.

#### HENDERSON

Jackson Park public Wi-Fi. Equipment purchased, waiting on tower construction.

#### BUNCOMBE

Supported Re-Entering Citizens with cell phones, laptops, and digital literacy training.

#### MADISON

Rural community center digital literacy training program with computer lab and device access for community centers.

### CONNECTING ALL COMMUNITIES (\$897,500)

LOS digital equity plan implementation project to close public Wi-Fi, device access gaps, and other digital equity needs in the region. Project provides capacity support for WestNGN team. This project has supplied tablets to El Centro in Transylvania County, for a Spanish speaking digital literacy program, worked on broadband challenge processes to get WNC represented, served to develop the states BEAD planning efforts, recruited over 500 devices into the device refurbishment program, set up business center support for Spring Creek Community Center in Madison County, and supported with grant writing support an additional **\$1,363,325** in Digital Champion Grantees with partners from Operation Gateway, AMREC, and NCTNA.

1. Operation Gateway **(\$463,325)**- Digital Equity for Re-Entering Citizens. Will provide cell phones, service, laptops, and navigation to Re-Entering Citizens.
2. AMREC **(\$500,000)**- Pilot Telehealth, device, affordability, and digital navigation for Veterans in WNC.
3. NCTNA **(\$400,000)**- Madison County Telehealth Pilot

### RURAL CENTER COLLABORATIVE BROADBAND PROJECT (\$45,000)

Worked with consultants and Rural Center staff to grow challenge and mapping efforts for WNC Broadband Infrastructure. Hosted convenings and challenged state community anchor institution mapping. Was provided access to Broadband Catalyzer tool and consultant advice.



# FRENCH BROAD RIVER MPO

## REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), its Board, and staff completed the following in FY24:

### I-26 CONNECTOR

The MPO Board and TCC received updates from NCDOT on the I-26 Connector project, specifically on the Optimization & Refinement process. MPO staff have coordinated with local government stakeholders and NCDOT as part of the Optimization & Refinement process to help reduce costs and maintain essential parts of the project.

### I-40 MANAGED LANE STUDY

The FBRMPO and LOSRPO passed a letter of request to have NCDOT begin a study to look at the feasibility of adding managed lanes to I-40 from I-26 to US 23/74. I-40 has planned to be widened since the 2008 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, but has not scored well enough in project prioritization to be funded as a widening. If managed lanes are feasible, their addition could make the project more likely to be funded.

### WNC PASSENGER RAIL

The FBRMPO Board and TCC received updates on the WNC Passenger Rail project. MPO staff have coordinated with the WNC Rail Committee, NCDOT, and external partners at other planning organizations to coordinate and keep the project moving forward.

### 5310 PROJECTS

The MPO awarded a total of **\$454,259** to the following projects to assist with transportation for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities:

- Buncombe County SEDTAP Program
- Buncombe County RIDE Voucher Program
- Land of Sky Senior Companions
- Council on Aging Call-A-Ride

### JOB ACCESS REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC)

The MPO programmed **\$408,379** to the City of Asheville's Route 170 to Black Mountain and S3 Route between Downtown Asheville and the Asheville Airport.

### REGIONAL IMPACT PRIORITIES

The MPO assigned local priority points to the following projects:

- WNC Passenger Rail
- US 19/23 (Smokey Park Highway) Access Management
- US 176 (Spartanburg Highway) Access Management
- US 19/23 (Park Street/Asheville Highway) Modernization
- NC 213 (Cascade Street) Access Management

### A-0010AA

The MPO facilitated discussions between local stakeholders and NCDOT regarding cost increases to the A-0010AA (Future I-26 Widening) project and the need to reduce the scope of the project.



# FRENCH BROAD RIVER TOURS

LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

## PROJECT RANKINGS

MPO staff facilitated discussions with local decision makers and NCDOT to help rank existing TIP/STIP projects. These rankings were used by NCDOT staff as a starting point to determine what projects to maintain and what to cut for the 2026-2035 STIP.

## MERRIMON AVENUE ROAD DIET

The MPO Board and TCC were updated on the outcomes of the Merrimon Avenue Road Diet, including crash reductions, increased bicycle use, and limited increases in vehicular travel-time through the corridor.

## MAGGIE VALLEY PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The MPO Board and TCC received updates on the Maggie Valley Pedestrian Improvement project that was funded by the Town of Maggie Valley and the FBRMPO to improve pedestrian safety along US 19.

## RESILIENCE PLANNING

The MPO and RPO received updates from NCDOT on the Statewide Resilience Plan and approved staff to apply for a USDOT PROTECT grant to pursue funding for a Regional Transportation Resilience Plan.

## PRIORITIZATION WORKGROUP

MPO staff continues to participate on the Prioritization Workgroup with NCDOT, to help determine measures and weights for prioritization scoring criteria that help determine what projects should be funded or not.

## REED CREEK GREENWAY EXTENSION STUDY (ASHEVILLE)

The FBRMPO provided 80% of the funding for the Reed Creek Greenway Extension Study, which was completed by McAdams in 2024.

## RIDGECREST CONNECTOR STUDY (BLACK MOUNTAIN)

The FBRMPO provided 80% of the funding for the Ridgecrest Connector Study, which was completed by Kimley Horn in 2024.

## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

This first year, the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program has been in active development, laying the groundwork for future implementation. Key accomplishments include establishing foundational partnerships with school systems, transportation officials, and community stakeholders to assess local needs and educational opportunities. We launched 7 different pilot schools throughout Buncombe, Henderson, Haywood, Madison, and Transylvania counties. We supported a bike rodeo, several walk-to-school day events, and helped schools acquire various grant opportunities.

Over 90 local leaders and watershed enthusiasts participated in one or more tours across our 4 counties. Each tour highlighted multiple river-dependent sectors including agriculture, energy, outdoor recreation, brewing, and tourism. We also met with municipal leaders in each county who highlighted key investments in their communities such as parks facilities and downtown revitalization projects. The final tour in Madison County culminated with a rafting tour led by Blue Heron Whitewater. We are grateful for the tour sponsors: UNC-Asheville, Western Carolina University, Epsilon, McGill, Mission Health/HCA, and the Community Foundation of WNC.

TRANSVYLVANIA



HENDERSON



MADISON







# LAND OF SKY RPO

## REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization (LOSRPO) is a voluntary organization of local governments working cooperatively with the NCDOT and local officials to enhance transportation planning opportunities for rural areas in Buncombe, Haywood, Madison, and Transylvania counties.

### ConCPT GRANT

Land of Sky's RPO was awarded **\$330,000** from NCDOT through the ConCPT grant, which aims to consolidate services, streamline processes, and expand community offerings. Land of Sky is the first recipient of ConCPT funds in Western North Carolina and one of the few statewide. FY24 marks the start of a two-year pilot program designed to improve grant management for regional transit systems. By collaborating with local transit agencies, we aim to increase efficiency in grant administration. In our first year, we've formed partnerships in Transylvania and Madison counties, with plans to expand further. Our goal is to reduce the burden of the complex and time-consuming grant application and reporting processes for small agencies, while maximizing grant awards.

### CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM PROJECTS

LOSRPO working with local partners and NCDOT Divisions 13 and 14 was able to secure funding for four projects utilizing Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) funds. CRP was established through the Infrastructure, Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA).

These projects include:

- Construction of a Park n Ride Lot on US 25/70 at US 25 Business in Madison Co.
- Purchase of two transit vehicles for Madison Co. Transit
- Construction of a section of the Estatoe Trail in the City of Brevard
- Construction of an intersection improvement project at US 276/Cascade Lake Road in Transylvania Co.

### PROJECT RANKINGS

RPO staff participated in discussions with local decision makers and NCDOT to help rank existing TIP/STIP projects. These rankings were used by NCDOT staff as a starting point to determine what projects to maintain and what to cut for the 2026-2035 STIP.

### PRIORITIZATION WORKGROUP

RPO staff continues to participate on the Prioritization Workgroup with NCDOT, to help determine measures and weights for prioritization scoring criteria that help determine what projects should be funded or not.

### REGIONAL IMPACT PRIORITIES

The RPO assigned Local Input Points to the following project:

- US 276 in Haywood Co Intersection Improvements
- NC 209 Haywood Co modernization
- US 25/70 at NC 213 in Madison Co. Improve interchange
- US 25/70 in Madison Co. Multiple intersection Improvements
- US 64 Rosman Hwy in Transylvania Co. Widen to 4-lane divided highway to NC 178
- US 64/US 276 at Ecusta Road Intersection improvement

### SAFE STREETS FOR WNC – REGIONAL SAFETY ACTION PLAN

RPO staff in collaboration with FBRMPO is working with a consultant team to develop a Safety Action Plan for Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties. The plan will provide detailed information about crash and safety histories and strategies and countermeasures for safer roadways for all users. This project is made possible by a Safe Streets and Roads for All grant through USDOT.

### WNC REGIONAL TRANSIT PLAN

LOSRPO is working in coordination with FBRMPO, NCDOT IMD and AECOM to develop a regional transit coordination plan.



# GIS

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

LOS provides comprehensive GIS services, including technical support, GIS product development, data analysis, data management, and mapping to local governments and regional initiatives. In FY24, LOS partnered with the Towns of Black Mountain, Fletcher, and Woodfin to maintain official zoning data and maps while also providing additional GIS services as needed. Additionally, in May of FY24, LOS conducted a GIS analysis of impervious surfaces to support stormwater planning decisions for the City of Brevard.

Beyond these efforts, LOS utilized GIS to support a range of regional programs and projects in FY24, particularly those focused on transportation, climate resilience, housing, and economic and community development. GIS at LOS played a vital role in the development and publication of the Housing Asset Inventory (HAI) Tool, which was released in May of FY24. The HAI Tool was produced to aid stakeholders and local governments in identifying potential sites for affordable housing across multiple regions in western North Carolina.



# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Staff continue to support several communities with ARPA compliance and project implementation including administering a Community Assistance grant program for Village of Flat Rock, a waterline extension for Town of Black Mountain, and pump station improvements for the Town of Mars Hill.

# ZONING—LAND USE

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Staff provide planning and zoning technical assistance to several jurisdictions in the region including serving as the Zoning Administrator for the Towns of Montreat, Marshall, and Laurel Park and Floodplain Administrator for the Village of Flat Rock. Zoning Administrator services include support for local land use boards, comprehensive plan implementation, administration of land use ordinances (including, but not limited to, zoning, stormwater, and floodplain), subdivision and site plan review, and code enforcement.

### SHORT TERM RENTAL STUDY

In the Spring of 2024, LOS began working with the Town of Weaverville to conduct a study of short-term rental impacts on the community. The purpose of this study was to engage the community of Weaverville to understand community issues surrounding short-term rentals. LOS staff focused engagement on three distinct groups: general public, those in neighborhoods with at least one short term rental or in neighborhoods with no Declaration of Covenants preventing the establishment of short-term rentals, and short-term rental owners. LOS facilitated a listening session for the general public and a focus group for neighborhoods with at least one short-term rental and no Declaration of Covenants restricting the establishment of short-term rentals. LOS also facilitated a virtual meeting for short-term rental owners. All meetings were open to the public and LOS gathered quantitative and qualitative data on how these distinct groups viewed, experienced, and engaged with short-term rentals. LOS then coalesced and analyzed the information gathered from the engagement process and examined relevant census data. LOS prepared a report and presented their findings to the Town of Weaverville Planning Board and Town Council.

**BUNCOMBE**

### CODE AUDIT

In the Fall of 2023, LOS began working with the Village of Flat Rock on an audit of the Village's Land Development Ordinance. To improve the usability for code enforcement, definitions, process, and standards were reviewed for clarity. Existing contradictions and ambiguities in language were identified with options proposed to clarify and streamline. The Village is now reviewing the Village's Comprehensive Land Use Plan adopted in 2022, to identify opportunities to align with the Land Development Ordinance by identifying standards that can support long-term vision, goals and objectives.

**HENDERSON**



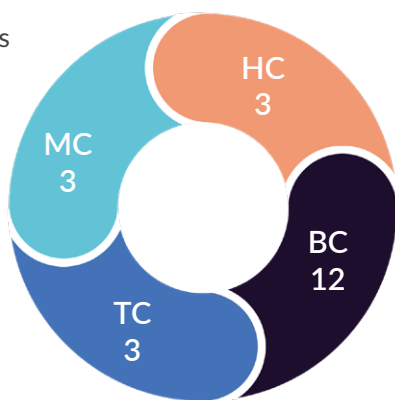
# WASTE REDUCTION PARTNERS

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY

In FY2024, Waste Reduction Partners (WRP) engineers and staff assisted 21 manufacturers and institutions across Region B with utility cost-saving and environmental sustainability assessments. These manufacturers, local governments, businesses and non-profits are projected to save more than \$88,000 annually from energy efficiency, water conservation and waste reduction assistance efforts.

Statewide, the Waste Reduction Partners program delivered on-site technical services to 111 businesses and institutions across 42 counties, with more than \$2.35 million in projected annual operational cost savings. The WRP program estimates past 5-year client savings of **\$37.3 million**, through the technical assistance provided to help clients improve their environmental performance, reduce carbon footprints, and cut waste.

Number of Clients Assisted



### DIRTCRAFT ORGANICS, GRANT ACQUISITION ASSISTANCE

WRP has been providing technical assistance to Dirtcraft Organics on their new composting facility in Madison County, and LOS provided application assistance for Dirtcraft Organics' successful funding application for the 2025 Food Waste Reduction Grant through NC Department of Environmental Quality. Their grant, one of thirteen awarded, is helping their new organics-recycling facility open in 2025. Dirtcraft received **\$60,000** for their project. This facility will be able to convert eighteen tons per week of organic waste, that would otherwise be wasted in our local landfill, into a productive soil amendment.

MADISON

### JARRET BROTHERS IGA, ENERGY GRANT ASSISTANCE

Luara Morgan, owner of Jarret Brothers IGA, a local grocery store in Rosman, was seeking USDA grant funding assistance to make upgrades to their store's walk-in freezer. The USDA provides competitive grants through its Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) for rural small business and farms pursuing facility upgrades that also save energy and reduce operating costs. WRP engineer, Adrian Boutwell provided a no-cost technical energy assessment required for Jarret Brothers REAP application. The new walk-in freezer will reduce operating costs by over **\$1,000** year and be superior to the older, existing unit. At present, the Jarret Bros. awaits notification of the status of the application and REAP program.

TRANSYLVANIA

### UNCA CONDUCTS "WASTE SORT BUFFET"

WRP and NC Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service partnered with UNC – Asheville to support their "waste sort buffet," an educational effort to highlight food waste awareness in their dining halls. A waste buffet displays the uneaten food in categories to visually show the volume of edible food that was discarded. UNCA's cafeteria had a total of 237 pounds of food waste during one lunch period! Nearly 80 pounds were edible portions resulting from 530 meal ticket swipes. With 15 percent of this purchased food being wasted, event organizers hope to encourage behavioral changes to reduce food waste.

*Raechel Peterson, Environmental Specialist, UNC-Asheville, exhibits a "buffet" of cafeteria food waste collected from one dining hall session.*





# RESILIENCE AND HAZARD MITIGATION

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### DISASTER RECOVERY FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION TRAINING

The COG DRR funds also enabled four LOS staff to complete a train-the-trainer program to build local government capacity to effectively secure and manage disaster recovery funds, largely focused on the FEMA Public Assistance program. Staff held three in-person training sessions in Buncombe (combined with Henderson), Madison and Transylvania counties, with 25 participants from 14 organizations.

### ACCELADAPT USER GROUP TRAININGS

Two user group trainings were held, one regionally focused and once for City of Asheville staff from multiple departments. The trainings focused on detailed use cases in planning, public works, and emergency management. UNC-A NEMAC also conducted an AccelAdapt usability study in conjunction with the trainings to identify potential user interface and analytical capability improvements.

### WNC HARP (HAZARD REMEMBRANCE AND PREPAREDNESS)

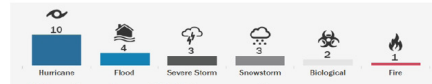
WNC HaRP was established as a collaborative effort between Land of Sky Regional Council, Haywood County Emergency Management, Haywood County Development Services, Western Carolina University, Haywood County Public Library, Haywood Waterways Association, and AmeriCorps. Partners worked together to document the experiences of individuals who had been significantly impacted by Tropical Storm Fred in 2021. The goals of this project were threefold:

- To tell the story of Tropical Storm Fred from the perspective of those most impacted
- To spread awareness of our region's past, present, and future relationship with severe flooding
- To provide resources that help local communities and families prepare for hazardous events

The culmination of this project was a StoryMap created by the WNC HaRP Team (found at this link). Additionally, an exhibit focusing on TS Fred was displayed in the Canton Library for several weeks and planned to make the rounds to other Haywood County libraries and the Haywood County Fair, however, these plans were disrupted by Hurricane Helene.

23

Federally Declared Disasters since 1973 in our region

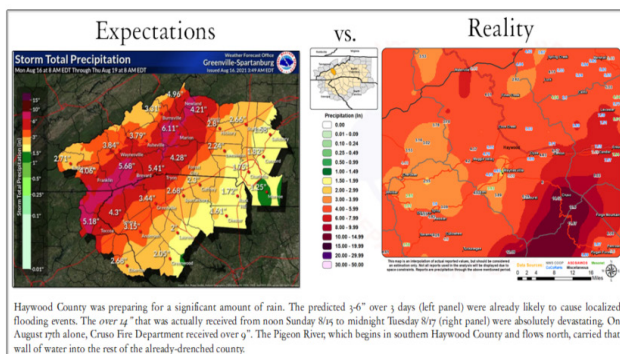


### REGIONAL RESILIENCE ADVISORY BOARD (RRAB)

The RRAB continues to meet three times a year to inform the LOSRRA. The board has representatives from the City of Asheville and Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce; Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania county governments; the American Red Cross and Haywood Waterways Association; NOAA and Fernleaf Interactive.

## Tropical Storm Fred

Despite a long history of flooding, the unexpected violence of Tropical Storm (TS) Fred eroded a local sense of security like no other disaster in recent history. The amount of rain that fell on August 17-18, 2021, was over twice what had been expected.





# STATEWIDE RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Staff served on a NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint Vulnerability and Risk Technical Advisory Group, on the NC Resilience Exchange Steering Committee, and on the RISE Steering Committee. Staff beta-tested the Blueprint Tool Version 1 and provided feedback on usability and potential enhancements. Staff also guided the structure and content of the NC Resilience Exchange, which went live last summer: <https://www.resilienceexchange.nc.gov/>

NC Resilience Exchange

About

Understand Your Vulnerabilities ▾

Identify Actions ▾

Find Funding ▾

Find Resources ▾

Find Experts



## Understand Your Vulnerabilities

# STORMWATER

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### REDUCE RAIN RUNOFF MEDIA CAMPAIGN

LOS supported RiverLink and Darby Communications to develop a yearlong multi-media campaign focused on how residents and businesses can reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality. The project was funded by CFWNC, Duke Energy Foundation and The McClure Foundation.

The campaign generated 53 news stories at 20 media outlets—with print, digital, and live broadcast appearances— including Asheville Citizen Times, WNC Business, Mountain Xpress, Hendersonville Times/Blue Ridge Now, Brevard Newswire, Fairview Town Crier, WLOS, BPR, Yahoo News, and many more. Most coverage was counted in Buncombe County (70%), but the campaign enjoyed WNC regional coverage (20%) including in Henderson and Transylvania counties, and even national placement (8%). When those traditional media hits are tabulated together with web analytics and social media clicks/shares, the campaign recorded a total of over 605 million total impressions over 12 months.

### WATER RETENTION LANDSCAPES: A COMMUNITY GUIDE FOR RESTORING WATERSHEDS IN THE MOUNTAIN REGION (FY24 205(J) GRANT: \$59,036.88)

The project addresses the need for both a practical guidebook and policy guidance to encourage and enable stormwater management and a water retention approach at the outset of any land development activity, not just those that trigger SCM requirements (i.e. > 1 acre of development or disturbance unless more stringent requirements enforced by a local MS4 permit). It will also provide information on restorative practices for already developed areas.

It fills the gap of providing technical knowledge of simpler landscape practices not covered in the NC Stormwater Design Manual. It targets multiple audiences, from residents and businesses to non-profits and governments, with practices and policies that can be applied at multiple scales in the geologic context (i.e. steep-slopes, shallow soil layers, bare soils) of our mountain region.

### REGIONAL STORMWATER SERVICES PROGRAM

Regional program to assist with MS4 compliance and reduce costs for each jurisdiction. Assisted with four stormwater management plans to implement the six minimum control measures. Participating jurisdictions: Fletcher, Weaverville, Montreat, Laurel Park. Three Good Housekeeping/Pollution Prevention workshops were held for municipal staff in Fletcher, Laurel Park, and Weaverville.

The MS4 Inspection App, an ArcGIS FieldMap and Survey123 mobile app integrated with a web-based stormwater system inventory for outfall inspections and illicit discharge detection, was deployed in two additional communities - Weaverville and Laurel Park. This work builds upon multiple years of stormwater system inventories funded and completed by LOS. The app was developed with the support of Wildlands Engineering.



# FRENCH BROAD RIVER PARTNERSHIP

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Staff continue to support the FBRP, which has over 300 members from organizations across local, state and federal government; businesses; consulting businesses; academia; and non-profits along with individual supporters, and serve as the Vice Chair and Communications Chair of the Steering Committee as well as participate in the Water Quality work group.

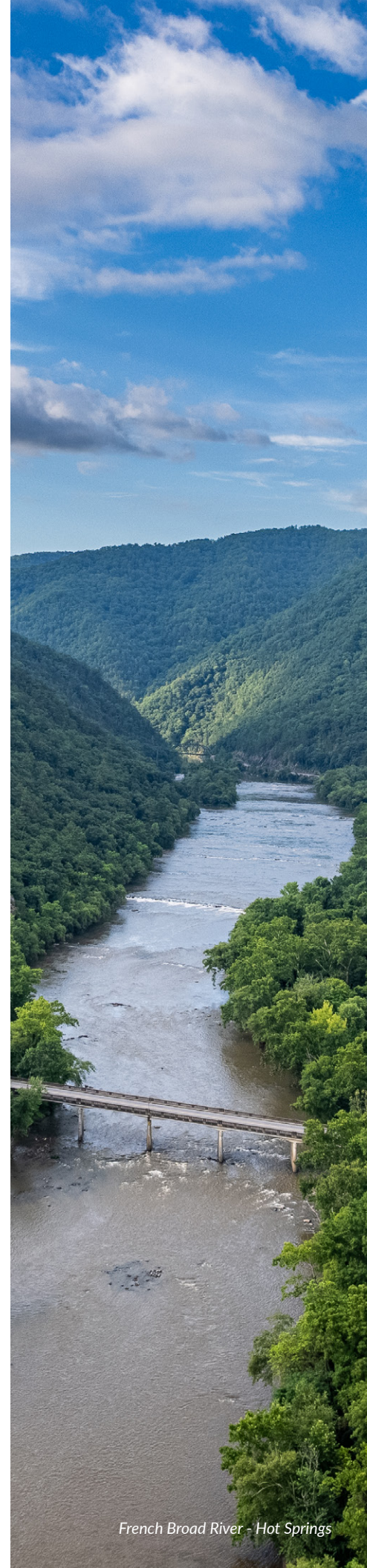
Highlights for FY24 include:

- A strategic plan with four strategic directives to guide continued organization development, available here: [frenchbroadriver.org/strategic-plan/](https://frenchbroadriver.org/strategic-plan/)
- 5th Annual Meeting in November 2023, with nearly 200 attendees, which featured three panels with state and local elected officials; major industry stakeholders; and business and tourism leaders. Discussion focused on priorities and actions for watershed protection and restoration, as well as broader socio-economic linkages and benefits.

The Water Quality work group hosted multiple community outreach events to support Cane Creek watershed planning (Buncombe/Henderson counties) including an outreach event at Turgua Brewing that featured a rain barrel workshop and giveaway led by RiverLink and funded by New Belgium Brewing. Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District organized children's activities in the creek, NC Wildlife Resources Commission brought Rocky the Hellbender for a meet and greet, EQI and DEQ gave short water quality talks, and elected officials Eric Ager, NC House District 114, and Caleb Rudow, NC House District 116, shared their perspectives on the importance of protecting and improving water resources. Several other Partnership members also helped organize and support the event including City of Asheville, Defenders of Wildlife, Mountain Valleys RC&D, and NRCS.



Photo credit: Ralph Grizzle, Fairview Town Crier



French Broad River - Hot Springs



# RURAL TRANSFORMATION GRANTS

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### ROSMAN PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN

The Town of Rosman received funding from the Department of Commerce to prepare a master plan for a key tourism development site. During this fiscal year, LOS completed the master plan for the project site. On October 13, 2023, the steering committee unanimously voted to recommend approval to the Town's Board of Aldermen. LOS presented the master plan to the Town's Board of Aldermen on December 12, 2023, and the Aldermen adopted the plan that night.

### ROSMAN PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Land of Sky staff continue to support the Town of Rosman in navigating and pursuing the approved pedestrian bridge under the Department of Commerce's Rural Transformation Grant Fund Program.

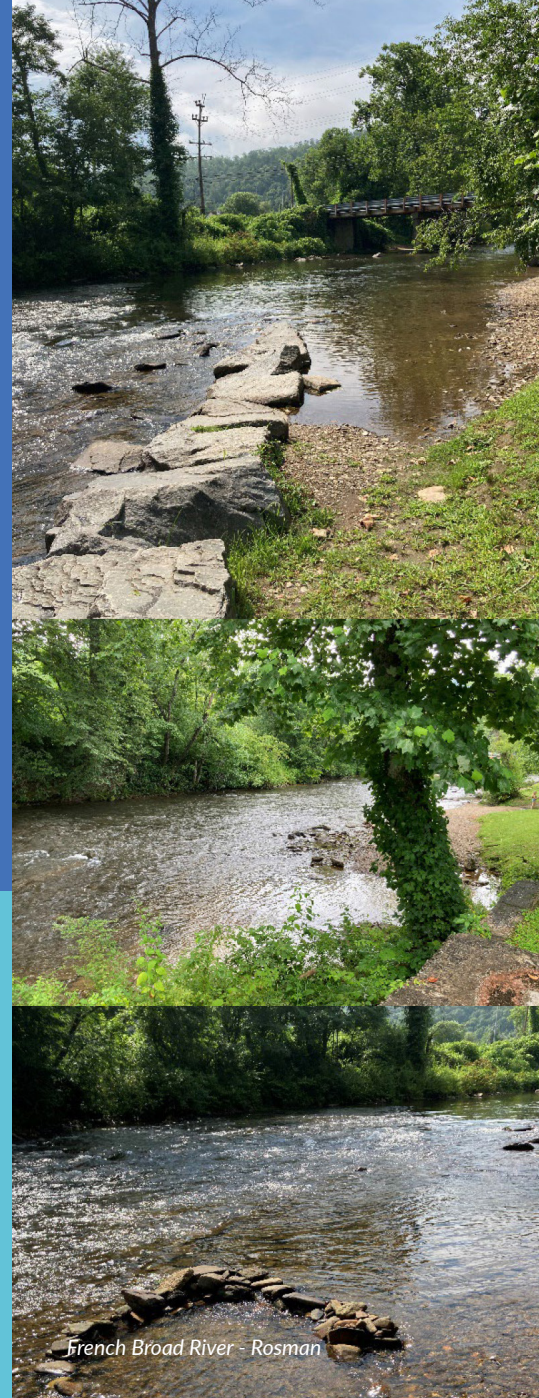
TRANSYLVANIA

### NORTH MAIN SMALL AREA PLAN

In the Fall of 2023, staff began working with the Town of Mars Hill on drafting a Small Area Plan with funding through the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Rural Transformation Grant Fund. One-on-one stakeholder meetings have been conducted to ascertain ideas and concerns of residents, employees, and property owners. Visioning and objective development center around streetscape improvements, pedestrian connections, parking options, and public space activation. The Plan is set to be adopted by Council in Spring of 2025.

This project is funded by both the Appalachian Regional Commission (\$299,800) and Dogwood Health Trust (\$330,000).

MADISON



# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

LOS staff performed environmental assessments for projects approved for funds through state and federal funding sources. The purpose of an environmental assessment is to identify and evaluate the environmental impacts of a project on a community. This assessment also examines disparate impacts to vulnerable communities in our region. Factors such as impacts to endangered species, wetlands, streams, and air quality are examined as part of the assessment. If an impact is determined to be present as part of the project, a mitigation action is developed and incorporated into the project. Following completion of the environmental assessment, the project grantee is able to access the awarded funding.

In FY24, LOS performed environmental assessments for the following communities and projects:

- Graham County, Town of Fontana Dam - Fontana Infrastructure Expansion and Improvements (ARC Area Development Construction Funds)
- Graham County, Town of Robbinsville - Robbinsville High School Construction Class Affordable Home Construction (HUD HOME Investment Partnerships Program)



# COGWORKS

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

COGWorks is an educational initiative within Economic and Community Development. This program provides monthly learning, training, and networking opportunities around emerging issues for the region's planning community. Opportunities within this initiative take the form of free or low-cost virtual and in-person educational sessions with choice speakers covering a variety of topics. COGWorks sessions also provide Certification Maintenance (CM) credits, which are required for members of the American Planning Association's American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). All sessions are sponsored by NC-APA.

This fiscal year, COGWorks hosted seven free sessions providing 6.5 CM credits, 1.0 CM credit towards ethics educational requirements, and 1.5 CM credits towards sustainability and resiliency educational requirements to our planners. Additionally, a summit on Artificial Intelligence hosted in May 2023 (required a paid ticket) provided our planners with 5.5 CM credits. Sessions hosted between twenty and eighty participants made up of municipal planners, local government officials, and private sector practitioners. Session held this fiscal year contained a mix of virtual, in-person, and hybrid attendance opportunities making this program affordable and accessible to our region. AICP attendees of these sessions satisfied their biennial ethics and sustainability and resilience CM credit requirements and obtained over a quarter of their overall biennial required CM credits for little to no cost. This fiscal year's sessions covered:

- Conservation-oriented land use and transportation planning
- Equitable and harmonious housing development and growth
- Ethics in planning
- Artificial intelligence
- Fair housing training



Toxaway Falls



# RETURN ON INVESTMENT

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ROI = \$55,056,289

INFRASTRUCTURE

\$6,590,467

RESILIENCE & ENVIRONMENTAL

\$6,006,044

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

\$9,700,812

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

\$7,127,982

TRANSPORTATION

\$4,484,182

BROADBAND

\$21,146,801



Lake Tomahawk





# IN THE NUMBERS

## MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

### TRAINING SERVICES PROVIDED

Individuals served through the NCWorks Career Centers include under- and unemployed Adult and Dislocated Workers enrolled in WIOA for training services. WIOA participants receiving training services work with their NCWorks career advisor to develop goals that lead to self-sufficient employment in in-demand occupations within the four-county region or in an area to which they plan to relocate. NextGen Youth are discussed below including the funding that supports their WIOA activities.

### BUSINESS SERVICES

Services provided to employers to assist them to meet their workforce needs including job and hiring events, job placement services, and pre-screening for job applicants, among other services.

### YOUTH

Individuals served as NextGen Youth can receive career guidance and work experience opportunities and may be engaged in WIOA supported training services (long- and short-term) to gain relevant workplace skills and achieve post-secondary degree attainment.

	Job Seekers Served		Training Services		Business Services	Youth Served	
BUNCOMBE	5,378	\$234,950	76	\$100,027	10,106	40	\$317,899
HENDERSON	1,701	\$146,279	10	\$ 18,686	3,129	39	\$164,966
MADISON	7,122	\$140,158	13	\$2,287	2,838	23	\$168,381
TRANSYLVANIA	444	\$103,746			261	3	\$35,810
Totals	14,645	\$625.133	99	\$121,000	16,334	105	\$687,056

Individuals served by the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board earned an average of **\$44,928** per person in wages for our region. For the **\$2.25** million invested by Mountain Area Workforce Development Board to serve Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth, workers served by the Board generated over **\$655,140,096** in wages.

The return on investment of nearly **\$292** for each \$1 invested in workforce development.



# BUSINESS ACCELERATOR GRANTS

## MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

The Business Accelerator Grant for incumbent worker training provided grants to two companies, The Three-Ring Brewing Company, dba Hi-Wire Brewing and Carolina Management Team, totaling **\$12,968**. The grant helped Hi-Wire train and certify one employee in Planning and Inventory Management through the Association of Supply Chain Management. Carolina Management Team utilized the grant to train and certify three employees as Certified Coating Inspectors by the Association for Materials Protection and Performance. Another employee completed contractor training. This grant is subject to the availability of Title 1, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding for low-income Adults and Dislocated Workers.

# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) GRANT FOR INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING

## MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board (MAWDB) received **\$704,000** to provide grants up to **\$25,000** to small businesses with 3-25, w-2 employees impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Many small businesses had to lay off workers during Covid-19 and this grant helped train new hires or train incumbents for higher level positions. Between July 2023 and June 2024, 13 businesses received grants totaling **\$195,120**. Businesses receiving grants included: Mathis Electronics, Accurate Technology, Conservation Pros, Sugar and Snow Gelato, Western Carolina Sewing Co., Brian Boggs Chairmakers, Metropolitan Medical, Asheville Tea Company, Legacy Bookkeepers, Devil's Foot Beverage, Mind your Business, Friday Services, LLC, and Appalachian Restoration and Cleaning. Incumbent workers received a variety of certifications that increased their potential for advancement. These training courses also increased the stability and competitiveness of the companies. ARPA WBL IWT grant funding is available through December 31, 2026.

# CONSTRUCTION CAREER DAY

## MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Construction Career Day is a two-day, annual career exploration event for high school students from 18 school districts across 16 WNC counties. The event was held at the Smoky Mountain Event Center in Waynesville, NC on April 29, 30 and May 1, 2024. Sixty-two employees participated and provided a wide variety of hands-on activities including brick laying, a hammering contest, operating a simulator, digging holes with an excavator, and going up in a chair lift. Approximately 700 career and technology education students (CTE), grades 9-12, gained insight into the many types of jobs and career paths available in construction and the skilled trades. The event is funded through sponsorships from private-sector employers and workforce and educational partners. The event could not happen without the generous donations from employers. In 2024, sponsorships provided \$41,100 to pay all costs of this event. The Mountain Area Workforce Development Board staff led the planning, fund raising, and execution of CCD. Vannoy Construction was the Presenting Sponsor for CCD 2024.







Twilight Job Fair



AI Summit

# JOB FAIRS

## MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

To assist employers and job seekers, the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board hosted or supported seven job fairs in Program Year 2023.

### Fall Career Fair hosted by A-B Tech - October 2023

The fair had 30 exhibitors and 45 job seekers.

### WNC Career Expo hosted by Asheville Chamber of Commerce and the MAWDB - October 2023

Approximately 90 exhibitors and 450 job seekers attended.

### Veteran's Job & Resource Fair hosted by NCWorks Asheville- November 2023

This fair provided an hour each day for Veteran's only, then opened to the general public. Twelve companies participated with around 60 veterans and general job seekers.

### Twilight Job Fair hosted by MAWDB - January 2024

Thirty-five employers were delighted that 400 job seekers flooded the building between 3-6 pm.

### Mountain Area Career Fair (MAC) hosted by MAWDB - February 2024

This fair attracting 75 employers and 400 job seekers and featured several vehicles representing transportation, first responders, and trades.

### Job Fair hosted by A-B Tech Madison - March 2024

The fair had 36 exhibitors and 41 job seekers attending.

### WNC Career Expo hosted Asheville Chamber of Commerce - April 2024

The expo featured 90 employers and 600 job seekers. Several high schools and the Schenck Job Corps students visited the fair prior to opening to the public. During the time of this report, NCWorks Career Center Asheville held 51 Employer Interview Day hiring events that drew over 500 job seekers.

# AI SUMMIT

## MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, in partnership with Blue Ridge Community College, UNCA, A-B Tech, WCU and ERC Broadband held the first Annual AI Summit on May 30, 2024, at Blue Ridge Community College. This event drew 150 attendees including public and private sector businesses, educators, college students, workforce professionals, and the public. The agenda included distinguished keynotes including Jeff Crume, PhD, CISSP, IBM Distinguished Engineer and NCSU Adjunct Professor, Jeff Bannister, Founder, North Bend Consulting, and Kristi Nickodem, J.D., Robert W. Bradshaw Jr. Distinguished Term Assistant Professor of Public Law and Government, UNC School of Government. Topics included: Adversarial AI – Lying Chatbots, Deep Fakes, Transforming Communities with AI and Generative AI: Legal Issues, Potential Risks, and Best Practices. Three panel discussions added to the agenda with local professionals sharing various uses of AI. This event exemplified partner engagement and was noted by NC Commerce and workforce boards in the state. The second Annual AI Summit is scheduled for June 25-26, 2025, at A-B Tech's Conference Center.



# SUCCESS STORY

HENDERSON

## MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

A student came into the Career Academy hoping to receive guidance and support with his academic studies. At the age of 17, He was living on his own trying to be self-sufficient. Due to his overwhelming responsibilities, He was struggling to keep going to school and work part-time. His mental health declined, and he quickly experienced lack of motivation which caused him to fall behind in his studies. He stopped attending school and even moved to a new county hoping to start a new life. Facing several barriers in his life, he still remained firm in his decision to graduate from high school. Reaching this goal would require commitment and dedication. He needed motivation and encouragement to help him. The Henderson County Career Academy connected him to a Career Coach, and together they created the best graduation plan for him. In this plan, there would be a goal for him to complete Work Experience during school so that he could advance in his skills and gain extra income at the same time. He graduated and obtained his high school diploma. He showed responsibility, commitment and dedication to his goals. He continued to strive to do his best in all areas and learned to live on his own, work part-time and attend school. He was awarded several academic recognitions including maintaining a 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) with early graduation. Skyler appreciates the support and attention that he received during his last year of high school. He is thankful for the Career Academy and the Workforce program.



## PROJECT COLLABORATE

### P20 COUNCIL

Since the beginning of the project, participants represented all four of our counties (Buncombe 40.2%, Henderson 38.6%, Madison 2.6%, Transylvania 8.5%), plus eight other nearby counties. Most participants (69%) enrolled in registered apprenticeships, while a minority (31%) enrolled in short-term certificate programs.

This project is 100% supported by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the U.S. Department of Labor as part of an award totaling \$1,441,125 to the Land of Sky Regional Council from the Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities (WORC) grant initiative.

## FINANCIAL AID AWARENESS

### P20 COUNCIL

- Implemented multiple approaches to increase awareness of postsecondary financial aid opportunities in our communities.
- Attended job fairs and financial aid events at high schools and other settings in the community and shared fun and engaging resources via our financial aid awareness booth, which allowed us to reach approximately 720 individuals.
- Ensured our financial aid materials are available in Spanish and English.







A3 Event

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

## P20 COUNCIL

- A3 Event (Align, Aspire, Achieve) in late 2023 brought the region's innovative leaders together for presentations on promising practices that had measurable impact that can be scaled by others in the region and create a multiplier effect for our youngest learners through our adult learners
- Career Development Planning Event convened over 70 educators from across WNC to come together to learn about tools and resources that can help their staff and schools navigate the newly required Career Development Plans for our 8th and 11th graders, with a special focus on our region's credentialing opportunities and career pathways at local employers
- Post-Helene Workforce Data Forecasting event focused on the impact of Helene on our workforce ecosystem through national and state economists as well as GROW NC.



Financial Aid Summit

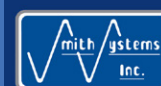
## TRANSYLVANIA

# THIRD #WORKLOCAL CAMPAIGN

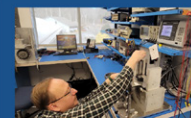
## P20 COUNCIL

For this collaboration in Transylvania County, we partnered with Smith Systems, a local employer, Transylvania County Schools, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College and Blue Ridge Community College, and Western Carolina University to introduce high school students – our emerging workforce – to manufacturing careers.

## #WORKLOCAL



SMITH SYSTEMS, INC. &  
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS



"Align your continuing education with the job needs in your area"  
-John Arnold

John Arnold | Engineering Manager | 27 Years at Smith Systems  
Brevard High School | Class of 1991  
University of North Carolina at Charlotte | Class of 1996  
Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering  
Certified IPC Trainer for J-STD-001, IPC-A-610  
IPC/W-HMA-A-620



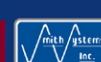
Carl Conley, Jr. | Sales Lead Development  
Less Than One Year at Smith Systems  
Brevard High School | Class of 1996

"It's important for young people to train for jobs like mine because there is room for upward growth and advancement." - Carl Conley, Jr.



Danny Baddeley | Sales Process Team Manager | 5+ Years at Smith Systems  
Brevard High School | Class of 1994  
AB Tech | Class of 1998  
Associate in Business Administration  
Associate in Marketing and Retailing

"It is important to have the next generation preparing to work in fields like Smith Systems is active in. We work with locomotives, and every single person in America has received food, clothing, water and other goods that arrived on a train. The country runs on the strength of our railroads." -Danny Baddeley





# ELEVATING STUDENT VOICES: THE P20 STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAM

## P20 COUNCIL

The Land of Sky P20 Council brings together partners from early childhood education, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, local government, and industry. Yet, one vital stakeholder group was missing: students themselves. To address this gap, we established the Student Representative Program (formerly the Student Ambassador Program) to ensure that student perspectives are meaningfully included in our region's education and workforce initiatives.

By sharing their lived experiences and insights, our Student Representatives have brought an essential dimension to the Council's work—Students as Stakeholders. Their voices provide valuable context about the strengths, challenges, and opportunities within the Land of Sky region's cradle-to-career pipeline, helping us better understand and address barriers to student success.

Between Fall 2023 and Spring 2025, the P20 Council has welcomed three cohorts of Student Representatives, totaling 47 students from four counties and representing more than 15 high schools, community colleges, and universities. Their contributions have included peer interviews, personal reflections, formal presentations to the Council, video storytelling, and recommendations for community leaders in both education and workforce development.

The Land of Sky P20 Council extends its sincere gratitude to these remarkable students for their leadership, insight, and unwavering commitment to shaping a stronger, more inclusive future for our region.

*P20 Student Ambassador Kimberly Jones with Tracy Parkinson, Executive Vice President and Provost, Mars Hill University*

*Emily Nicholson, P20 Council Executive Director with Julieta at A-B Tech for Student Ambassador interview filming*



# IEI FINANCIAL RESILIENCE COMMUNITY COHORT

## P20 COUNCIL

The Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) at NC State University has chosen five teams from across the state to participate in its Financial Resilience community cohort. Members of this cohort include representatives from organizations that are working to increase household financial resilience locally, especially for communities with historically increased barriers to saving and debt management. This is IEI's tenth cohort promoting community-level capacity building. Melissa Zenz, Community Engagement and Data Management Specialist, and Emily Nicholson, Executive Director, are participating for the Land of Sky P20 Council and will be focusing on increasing postsecondary financial aid awareness among communities and families so that more prospective students, from youth to adults, are knowledgeable about their options for beginning or continuing their career preparation studies at a community college or university.



# GO PLACES

## CLIENT SERVICES

GO PLACES experienced a transformative year in FY24, significantly expanding its mission to provide meaningful work experience opportunities for participants and employment partners. This report highlights our key achievements, challenges, and future outlook. Even while GO PLACES faced a unforeseen natural disaster and like so many others shifting for months to recovery.

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Full-Circle:** Devin Wiley a former GO PLACES participant now contributes as a full-time Community Health Worker and staff member of GO PLACES through sub-grantee SPARC Foundation. We couldn't be happier for GO PLACES and Devin.
- **Expansion of Partnerships:** We established collaborations with 15 new local businesses, increasing work experience placements by 30% compared to the previous year.
- **Participant Success:** Over 290 individuals participated in our program, with 75% transitioning into stable full-time employment.
- **Skills Development:** Several new vocational training initiatives were launched, offering certifications in customer service, logistics, cosmetology, green jobs, and technical trades.
- **Community Engagement:** GO PLACES hosted four community networking events, connecting job seekers with potential employers and mentors.
- **Recognition:** GO PLACES received the Community Impact Award for excellence in workforce development, gained national recognition from NADO, and was honored locally by Black Wall Street and other grassroots organizations here in Buncombe County.

### PARTNERSHIPS & EXPANSION EFFORTS

- Our sub-grantee partners expanded their roles, providing additional training spaces and increasing work experience opportunities.
- A strategic focus on the "Green" sector has created career pathways that lead to sustainable employment opportunities for participants.

### TARGETED RECRUITMENT & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- **Juvenile Justice Engagement:** Referrals in Target Service Area 1 have doubled, demonstrating enhanced collaboration and trust with youth-serving organizations.
- **Community-Driven Enrollment:** Faith-based and grassroots organizations in Target Service Areas 2 & 3 played a critical role in enrolling participants from key census tracts, a strategy that will continue to strengthen our outreach and impact within Tennessee.

### INCREASED MEASURABLE SKILLS TRAINING

GO PLACES has expanded access to industry-recognized training programs, ensuring that participants acquire tangible and trackable skills aligned with the current workforce demands.

### LOOKING AHEAD

As we move into 2025, GO PLACES remains committed to deepening its impact through enhanced partnerships, expanded training initiatives, and increased community engagement. We will continue to innovate and adapt to workforce trends to ensure that participants have access to meaningful, long-term employment opportunities, skills, and certifications.

# SUCCESS STORY

## GO PLACES

GO PLACES would like to highlight our work with Shana Baynard, who came to GO PLACES unsheltered but with a strong desire to make a positive impact on the unsheltered community. Since her journey with us began, Shana's life has taken a remarkable turn:

**EMPLOYMENT:** Shana has successfully transitioned into a full-time role at Safe Shelter, a pivotal position where she can actively contribute to supporting and empowering the unsheltered population.

**EDUCATIONAL MILESTONES:** Shana's dedication to learning is evident through her certifications. She obtained her Community Health Worker certification from Edgecombe Community College, her Peer Support certification from Umoja Health, Justice, and Wellness Collective, and WRAP training through Sunrise Recovery, equipping her with essential skills to serve her community effectively.

**WORK EXPERIENCE:** Shana gained valuable hands-on experience through a work placement with Safe Shelter, facilitated by GO PLACES' employment partner Counterflow. This experience has further enriched her understanding of the challenges faced by the unsheltered and strengthened her ability to provide compassionate support, and has led to her becoming a full-time employee overseeing a staff of three.

**CPR CERTIFICATION:** Adding to her qualifications, Shana has obtained her CPR certification, ensuring she is equipped to handle emergency situations and provide life-saving assistance when needed.

**HOUSING STABILITY:** Shana's journey towards stability includes securing her own apartment, a significant achievement that provides her with a sense of security and a stable foundation for her future endeavors.

**FUTURE GOALS:** Looking ahead, Shana has set her sights on obtaining her CDAC certification, demonstrating her commitment to continuous growth and professional development in the field of community support and healthcare.

Shana's story is a testament to resilience, determination, and the transformative power of education and opportunity. We are proud to have been a part of Shana's journey and remain committed to supporting individuals like her in reaching their full potential and making meaningful contributions to their communities.





# INSPIRE PROGRAM

## CLIENT SERVICES

WNC Recovery to Career serves the needs of individuals who are leaving treatment centers and ready for career/ life skills. The program also focuses on employment readiness and education attainment. In FY24, INspire staff served 257 clients by offering peer support to those who have completed treatment and need assistance with employment, education, housing, transportation and other social supports. Of those, 222 were employed and 35 connected with education/training including Peer Support Training, CAN training, Community Health Worker training, Welding, and assistance with securing CDL license.

Clients originate from these counties. Primarily served in Buncombe and Henderson. Most clients coming from the further western counties are assisted with transitioning to Buncombe for resources and housing. INspire does provide some supports with court and access to care in the further west.



### SUCCESS STORIES

Heather Evans transitioned for Cherokee County. Staff supported her with securing housing in Oxford House and employment with Ingles Grocery.

*Pictured left with Peer Support Specialist, Amanda VonLitloff.*

Julia Henson assisted with CNA training at Givens Estate and she is now employed with them in a CNA position. She has achieved over 1 year of recovery.

*Pictured right.*



# TRANSITIONS TO COMMUNITY LIVING

## CLIENT SERVICES

TCL Provides eligible adults with serious mental illness the opportunity to choose where they live and work. TCL connects people to mental and physical healthcare services and supports that help them maintain a home in their own name, instead of living in a facility. In FY24, TCL staff served 60 clients in the region. Four clients were prepared to transition into TCL subsidized independent housing and two are actively working. The total served (including discharge clients) and counties clients reside in.





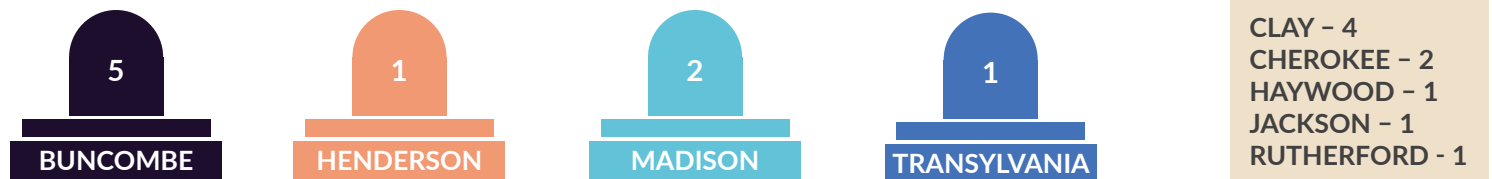


Alexander Baptist Church

# THE REMEMBRANCE PROJECT

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

In FY24, Land of Sky received a **\$333,000** grant from AmeriCorps to establish The Remembrance Project – an initiative to identify, restore and protect African-American cemeteries in our region. The grant is part of AmeriCorps' September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance. Leading up to the September 11 event, Project Manager Phyllis Utley worked with community leaders throughout WNC to identify cemeteries that would become the focus of our efforts for the event. Phyllis worked to recruit volunteers for the Days of Service and identified cemeteries in the following WNC counties:



# HEALTHY OPPORTUNITIES

## CLIENT SERVICES

The Healthy Opportunities Pilot (HOP), part of North Carolina's Medicaid transformation, addresses four of the social determinants of health – food insecurity, housing, transportation and interpersonal violence/toxic stress. By understanding the linkages between these focus areas and overall health, the HOP works with local organizations to provide services to Medicaid members that will ultimately result in healthier communities in Western North Carolina. Land of Sky worked with Impact Health, an arm of Dogwood Health Trust, to provide transportation services, housing services and technical assistance to the 18 westernmost counties in North Carolina.

In FY24, HOP staff assisted 1272 clients with transportation, including mileage reimbursement to access healthy food; car repairs; bus passes; first/last month's rent and security deposits; utilities assistance and healthy home goods (HEPA filters for clean air, dust-proof mattress protectors, etc.) – all services designed to help those in our community stay healthy! The financial impact of HOP in FY24 was extensive – HOP staff processed **\$821,790.72** in assistance to Medicaid clients in our region.

### BUNCOMBE

Transportation – 629  
Utilities – 43  
Rental deposits – 155  
Healthy Home Goods – 155

### HENDERSON

Transportation – 105  
Utilities – 4  
Rental deposits – 22  
Healthy Home Goods – 150

### MADISON

Transportation – 65  
Utilities – 14  
Rental deposits – 4  
Healthy Home Goods – 0

### TRANSYLVANIA

Transportation – 39  
Utilities – 6  
Housing – 2  
Healthy Home Goods – 4



# NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION

## TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE CENTER

Land of Sky provides Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation (NEMT) services for Buncombe County residents with Medicaid. Transportation to and from providers is a critical component for Medicaid beneficiaries to obtain necessary health care. NEMT services consist of arranging and/or paying for transportation. When the beneficiary has access to a suitable mode of transportation, but lacks the means to use it, the county must assist with the means through gas vouchers, mileage reimbursement, etc. When the beneficiary lacks both means and mode, the county is responsible for arranging transportation at a cost within allowable Medicaid regulations. However, the obligation to provide transportation is not without qualifications.

<b>96,509</b> Number of trips scheduled by the call center	<b>66,522</b> Number of trips provided by vendors in	<b>10,494</b> Number of private vehicle trips reimbursed	<b>394</b> Number of new assessments completed	<b>12,946</b> Number of information and referral calls received	<b>1,237</b> Average number of active cases monthly
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# MOUNTAIN MOBILITY

## TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE CENTER

Mountain Mobility, Buncombe County's Community Transportation Service, provides demand response transportation to members of our community who qualify for service and is funded through a contract with Buncombe County. Mountain Mobility provides transportation to life-saving treatments such as dialysis and chemotherapy, and regular medical transportation ensures our community members can receive necessary medical care in a timely manner. It is also crucial for those with mobility limitations or chronic health conditions.

Mountain Mobility saw a 20.86% increase in the number of trips performed in FY24 and traveled 1,095,147 miles throughout Buncombe County. Unique passengers – **8,466** – up 12% from FY23  
Average monthly On-Time Performance – 95.16%

### TRAILBLAZER SERVICES

Buncombe County has three deviated fixed-routes in Buncombe County: Black Mountain, Enka-Candler and North Buncombe. In FY24, the Trailblazers traveled 158,227 miles in these three areas.

Black Mountain – **15,391** passengers served

Enka-Candler – **15,491** passengers served

North Buncombe – **2,054** passengers served

### RIDE (RIDERSHIP INDEPENDENCE FOR THE DISABLED AND ELDERLY)

RIDE is a taxi-voucher program that increases the independence, self-esteem, freedom of choice and transportation options for senior adults and individuals with disabilities. Participants can purchase books of discounted vouchers in the form of \$10 off coupons from Mountain Mobility. The coupons/vouchers would then be used to pay for the cost of a trip provided by a participating provider. The participant schedules the trip with a participating provider of their choice, who then submits the vouchers to Mountain Mobility for reimbursement.

**10,820** vouchers were sold to 161 participants. The value of each voucher is **\$10.00 = \$105,690** in cab fare purchased.

### THE SENIOR BUS PASS PROGRAM

Mountain Mobility uses grant funds to provide bus passes to residents aged 65 and older through the City of Asheville's ART transportation service. In FY24, we provided 838 passes at a cost of **\$8,380**.





Tai Chi in the park

# HEALTH PROMOTION

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

- Multiple evidence based health programs were offered in FY24 including Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls, A Matter of Balance, Living Healthy with Chronic Disease and the Arthritis Foundation's Walk with Ease.
- 31 evidence-based health program workshops totaling over 374 hours were delivered by 27 certified volunteer instructors.
- 232 program registrants participated in evidence-based health workshops with a 77% completion rate.
- 14 new leader volunteers were trained and certified in evidence-based programs that included A Matter of Balance, Walk with Ease, and Tai Chi for Arthritis and falls.

### COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER PROGRAMS (CHW)

The Community Health Worker Program expanded in FY24 to include both Asheville Terrace Apartments (ATCHW) and Arrowhead Apartments (AHCHW). The Community Health Worker Program is a community-based model addressing the complex needs of high-risk elders in subsidized senior housing. Community Health Workers are trusted peer leaders trained to provide culturally conscious care to high-risk, low-income senior housing communities. There is an emphasis on social connectivity, safety, physical activity, nutrition and reducing social isolation. Services provided include food distribution, health education, exercise, access to on-site screenings and services (e.g. vaccine and flu shots), and home visits. This program is instrumental in addressing social isolation with opportunities for engagement and community volunteerism.

Community health workers provide home visits to frail and homebound residents through the "Neighbor Knock" program offering health management support, neighborly visits, reassurance, and transportation assistance. Community service events include food, health events, health groups, and social events or groups. The "Neighbor Knock" program has been critical to identifying and addressing resident challenges including food insecurity, safety and social isolation.

- 139 events held
- 45 food distribution events in partnership with MANNA food bank in which 940 bags of groceries were provided to residents
- 5012 home visits through the "Neighbor Knock" program
- 100% of participants received food through CHW-led food distributions at Asheville Terrace Apartments and 20% of the community received daily "Neighbor Knock" services (in-person reassurance check).
- Approximately 24% of participants are considered high utilizers of the Community Health Worker organized events with 56 out of 246 (unique participants have registered for 10+ service events)



# MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Money Follows the Person (MFP) is a state project that helps NC Medicaid-eligible North Carolinians living in inpatient facilities move into their own homes and communities with home and community-based supports. Land of Sky Regional Council houses two roles with the Money Follows the Person Demonstration Project: The Community Inclusion Specialist and the Transitions Coordinators.

The Community Inclusion Specialist provides education, outreach, and support to increase awareness and utilization of the program. The Transitions Coordinator performs complex, professional work to assist people with chronic conditions and disabilities as they move from institutions back into the community using community-based services and support.

### THE COMMUNITY INCLUSION SPECIALIST

- Staff covers 37 counties including 170 skilled nursing facilities. This includes 28 facilities in Region B.
- Staff have contacted all facilities via phone, email, and in person to provide education and support.
- Staff provided outreach at community events in all counties for Region B.
- Staff provided education to counties' department of Social Services for Buncombe, Transylvania and Henderson counties.
- In FY24, 62 out of 170 skilled nursing facilities had staff turnover in their Social Services Director position. Turnover improved from FY23 to FY24 but continues to provide opportunities for education of program.
- Staff provided webinar training for skilled nursing and social services staff for all counties. Offering program training both in person and virtually has continued to increase attendance.

From July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, Land of Sky was responsible for transition coordination services for 15 counties (Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Mitchell, McDowell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Yancey, Forsyth, Yadkin, Surry, Davie, Davidson, and Stokes). In those 15 counties, Land of Sky received 77 new referrals to the program. Overall a total of 9 individuals transitioned into the community. 56 individuals withdrew from the project, which happens for a variety of reasons such as insufficient support from non-paid caregivers, discharging from the facility before community services are in place, worsening health conditions, and not being able to afford the monthly deductible if their income is over the Medicaid threshold. The median number of days it took to transition someone from the date of application approval is 156 with a transition rate of 11.69%. The recidivism rate for FY24 is 0.0%. Securing safe, affordable, accessible housing is the greatest barrier to transition.



Donna and Thomas

## SUCCESS STORY

### MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON

The transition coordinator received application in August of 2023. It was for a gentleman, Thomas, who was staying in a skilled nursing facility after having a stroke. His wife, Donna, was his power of attorney. Thomas did not communicate verbally and had no interest at the time in exploring other options, additionally his range of motion was very limited; he was not able to sit in a wheelchair and was at risk of falling from bed. He was what some facilities refer to as "total care." He needed help with every aspect of his daily living. But Donna was a fierce advocate for her husband and ready to tackle any challenge that came their way. She was determined to be rejoined with her husband so that she could provide care and attention, which she was certain would aid in his healing. At the time, she was living in an apartment in a dangerous area of town just to be closer to his facility to visit as often as she could. After applying to the Money Follows the Person project, she really got to work. She found an affordable, accessible apartment that she was able to secure with help with funding from the Money Follows the Person project. Thomas discharged from the facility in February of 2024. Donna and Thomas, after being apart for years, were reunited in their new home! While there were hiccups along the way, they were able to overcome them all. Less than a month after discharging, Thomas no longer had a feeding tube. And after a few more months of gaining strength, not only was he sitting up by himself, he was using a walker. Donna and Thomas are a true testimony to what the power of love and determination can do with the right support!



# VETERAN DIRECTED CARE PROGRAM

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

As 2024 began, the Area Agency on Aging started its efforts to become a Veteran-Directed Care provider, partnering with the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Asheville and the No Wrong Door initiative through the Administration for Community Living. By the close of FY24, the Area Agency on Aging was officially approved to collaborate with the Veterans Administration Medical Center. In FY25, the agency will begin assisting veterans in our region, helping them remain at home with support from family, friends, or neighbors. We are excited about this opportunity to partner with and support aging veterans in our community.

# SE4A CONFERENCE

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Over 650 aging professionals from twenty states attended the 2023 Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging Annual Training Conference at the Omni Grove Park Inn in Asheville on August 27 - August 30, 2023. Foster Grandparent Program Manager presented at the conference: *Advocacy 101*.

*The conference hosted a dinner at Taylor Ranch and held activities including fishing, line dancing, corn hole, caricature drawings and a petting zoo with goats, chickens, a duck, a kangaroo, bunnies, piglets and this llama.*



# FAN / HEAT RELIEF

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Operation Fan/Heat Relief is a special emergency assistance project to help elderly North Carolinians cope with summer heat. The project began in 1986. Funding assistance is available May through September of each year. This project is made possible by contributions from Duke Energy Foundation and Progress Energy Services Company, LLC.

Because many elderly citizens do not have electric fans or air conditioners, they are highly susceptible to life-threatening situations, which could be avoided if they were able to remain cool. The fans that are collected and purchased through "Operation Fan / Heat Relief" are given to those elderly citizens who have the greatest need for relief from the heat. The fans are distributed by one local provider in each county and are given as a gift – they are not to be loaned or retrieved at the end of the summer.



# WEAAD WALK

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Walk, hosted by Buncombe County Elder Justice Coalition, was held in Carrier Park in June 2024. Over 250 participated in the walk. The keynote speaker for the event was Holly Jones from the Department of Justice.

*Pictured L-R LOSRC Staff: Zack Schmitt, Edward Jones, Charlie Lee, Donna Case, Vicki Jennings, LeeAnne Tucker, Cori Search, Nancy Hogan, Phyllis Utley, Jenna Sharrits*

**BUNCOMBE** - partner with Council on Aging of Buncombe County

- 76 fans distributed
- 9 A/C units distributed

**HENDERSON** - partnered with Council on Aging for Henderson County

- 56 fans distributed
- 4 A/C units distributed

**MADISON** - partnered with Madison County DSS

- 14 fans distributed

**TRANSYLVANIA** - partnered with WNCSource

- 12 fans distributed





# SENIOR TAR HEEL LEGISLATURE

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Since its creation with the passage of Senate Bill 479 in July of 1993, the North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature has served as a nonpartisan, unicameral body tasked by the North Carolina General Assembly to identify the most pressing issues facing older adults across the state and propose new legislation that will improve their quality of life. Each of the 100 North Carolina counties is entitled to one Delegate and one Alternate to the Senior Tar Heel Legislature. All Delegates and Alternates must be at least 60 years of age and be residents of their respective counties.

### 2023-2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The NC Senior Tar Heel Legislature recommends these priorities to the NC General Assembly.

1. **Allocate an additional \$8M in recurring funds for Adult Protective Services (APS) to address staff shortages.** In SFY 21, APS received 32,075 reports across the state, compared to 14,001 reports in SFY 2005-2006, reflecting an increase of 129% in 17 years.
2. **Increase the Senior Center General Appropriation by \$1,265,316 in recurring funds.** Senior Center General Purpose funding is currently \$1,265,316, which is not meeting the demands of a growing population.
3. **Allocate an additional \$8M in recurring funds for the Home and Community Care Block Grant.** The Home and Community Care Block Grant is the primary funding source for community-based programs that support people 60 and older and current funding is insufficient to meet the need. The current state appropriation is \$36.9M.
4. **Allocate an additional \$1.5M in recurring funds for 11 Additional Long-Term Care Ombudsmen.** Ombudsmen serve as advocates for residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, providing protections for vulnerable elders. The current state appropriation for this program is \$918.8K.
5. **Strengthen Long-Term Care Staffing Standards.** In nursing homes, NC mandates minimum staffing standards for RNs and LPNs. For Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), there are no staffing standards, resulting in a strong likelihood of substandard care of frail elders.

### SENIOR TAR HEEL DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES

Susan Schiemer, Delegate - Buncombe County  
Steven Studebaker, Delegate - Henderson County  
Shawn Kelly, Alternate - Henderson County  
Paula Hartman-Stein, Delegate - Transylvania County  
Robert Stein, Alternate - Transylvania County  
Sherrye Perry, Delegate - Madison County  
O'Neal Shelton, Alternate - Madison County





# OUTREACH AND RESOURCE ASSISTANCE

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Area Agency on Aging received funds from the state American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to conduct outreach targeting older adults aged 60 and older or persons acting on their behalf to provide information on existing services in each of the four counties of Region B. This outreach is to target unserved and marginalized older adults. The funding has helped offer a targeted effort on outreach by giving a staff member to be the point person on outreach efforts. The Area Agency on Aging has seen a sizable difference in the number and a more directed outreach effort with this funding. Allowing us to schedule more in-person presentations, participation in community events, and coordinating staff to attend events on the behalf of Land of Sky.

In total reaching 39,097 throughout the region.

**BUNCOMBE: 2,589**

**HENDERSON: 659**

**MADISON: 914**

**TRANSYLVANIA: 482**

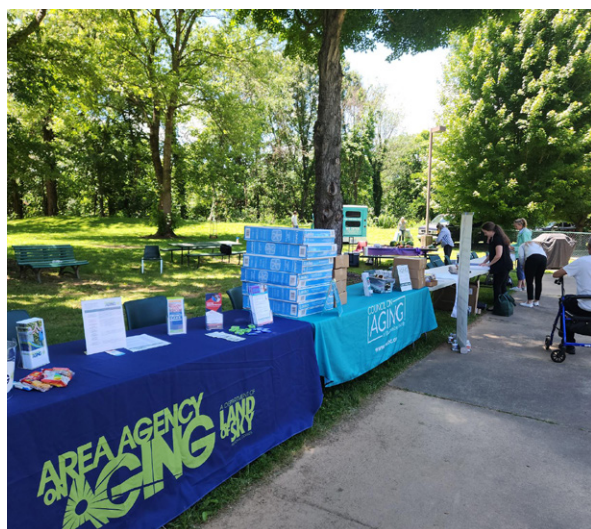
3 TV spotlights on WLOS and 1 Radio ad

Unknown: 1,283

Facebook and Newsletter: 30,574

Just with Facebook, the AAA reached about 10,700 people throughout the year and just about half interact with us on Facebook! One of those interactions include an older adult who commented on one of our Facebook Post about the importance of Senior Centers. The Older Adult commented "I don't know what our senior center provides. Not any exercises as far as I know." After asking her what county she was in, our staff private messaged her over Facebook connecting her with two of the many Buncombe County Senior Centers. Both provide a variety of exercise, creative, and group activities. This older adult thanked us for getting her connected.

**BUNCOMBE**



Dee Heinmuller, Senior Companion Program Manager



# HOME & COMMUNITY CARE BLOCK GRANT

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) became effective July 1, 1992 through North Carolina General Statute 143B-181.1(a)(11). The HCCBG programs are intended to encourage and maintain independence for persons over 60 as well as provide protection for older adults. The funds that support the HCCBG programs come from county, state, and federal funds. The federal funds are provided through the Older Americans Act that was created in 1965.

The block grant gives County Commissioners maximum discretion in deciding how aging funds will be administered and budgeted in the county. By endorsing a local funding plan, Boards of County Commissioners will define the services to be provided, determine funding levels for services, and identify the community service providers to be involved with providing Home and Community Care Block Grant services. In addition to giving counties increased decision-making authority for planning and delivering aging services, the block grant is also intended to achieve the following goals:

- promote the visibility and importance of aging programs locally,
- establish a single set of policies and procedures for in-home and community-based services provided with block grant funds, and
- provide for an equitable distribution of funds to each county consistent with the requirements of the Older Americans Act.

### BUNCOMBE: \$1,783,020



**1,258**

Hours of legal assistance provided



**6,631**

Hours of in-home aide services



**26,315**

Transportation trips provided for medical and general purposes



**2,279**

Days participants attended adult day programs



**35**

Housing/Home improvement projects completed



**58,263**

Nutritional meals served

### HENDERSON: \$844,295



**398**

Hours of legal assistance provided



**4,129**

Hours of in-home aide services



**12,122**

Transportation trips provided for medical and general purposes



**776**

Days participants attended adult day programs



**9**

Housing/Home improvement projects completed



**45,422**

Nutritional meals served

### MADISON: \$278,904



**28**

Hours of legal assistance provided



**2,068**

Hours of in-home aide services



**2,497**

Transportation trips provided for medical and general purposes



**33,958**

Nutritional meals served

### TRANSYLVANIA: \$265,951



**147**

Hours of legal assistance provided



**1,853**

Hours of in-home aide services



**5,393**

Transportation trips provided for medical and general purposes



**177**

Days participants attended adult day programs



**7,916**

Nutritional meals served



# BUNCOMBE

## ARPA FUNDING

**Total Funding: \$235,184**

21,348 Additional Meals  
85 Additional Days of Adult Day Care/Health  
25 Additional Hours of Legal Services

New and Innovative Services offered through ARPA Funding:

- The Council on Aging of Buncombe County was able to offer Chore and Chore Enhanced services which covered items that are not normally covered by existing HCCBG funding. (I.e. House Cleaning, Hoarding Cases, Pest Services, Yardwork etc.)
- Land of Sky Regional Council's Senior Companion Program was able to offer an additional \$47,012 in stipends to their Senior Companions.

# HENDERSON

## ARPA FUNDING

**Total Funding: \$165,533**

14,155 Additional Meals  
151 Additional Days of Adult Day Care/Health  
25 Additional Hours of Legal Services

New and Innovative Services offered through ARPA Funding:

- The Council on Aging for Henderson County was able to begin a new Information and Options Counseling program.
- Housing Assistance Corporation was able to offer an additional \$5,100 in Home Repairs.
- Jewish Family Services was able to offer virtual mental health counseling outside of their normal operating area.



**TOTAL AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT  
FY24 FUNDING:  
\$571,952**

# MADISON

## ARPA FUNDING

**Total Funding: \$62,852**

27 Additional Hours of Legal Services

New and Innovative Services offered through ARPA Funding:

- Jewish Family Services was able to offer virtual mental health counseling outside of their normal operating area.
- Madison County DSS was able to purchase items to support their home delivered meal program such as to-go boxes, utensils, a new awning for the Marshall Active Living Center and a much-needed electrical repair to the Marshall Active Living Center to get their kitchen back up and running.

# TRANSYLVANIA

## ARPA FUNDING

**Total Funding: \$108,383**

29 Additional Hours of Legal Services

New and Innovative Services offered through ARPA Funding:

- Housing Assistance Corporation was able to offer Housing and Home Improvement Services in Transylvania County outside of their normal HCCBG funds through Henderson County.
- WNCSource was able to purchase supplies to create an incontinence closet to aide in taking the financial burden of purchasing these supplies off of their older adults.
- Jewish Family Services was able to offer virtual mental health counseling outside of their normal operating area.



Mother.

Neighbor.

Caregiver.

**HERO.**

# Make a Difference.

## Volunteer with AmeriCorps Seniors

The AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program matches older adults with children who need your help, guidance, and mentorship. When you change a child's life for the better, you get back more than you give.

## FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

### AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) provides volunteer opportunities to persons aged 55 and older. Volunteers serve a minimum of five hours, up to a maximum of 40 hours per week, to provide social, emotional, and educational support to children in the classroom. Volunteers receive a small stipend, mileage reimbursement, as well as other benefits for their service. The volunteers also receive the added health benefits of living happier, healthier lives while making a difference in the community.

Mountain Child Advocacy Center and Murmuration facilitated a Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) training for 10 FGP volunteers, all of whom received certificates of completion at the end of the training. COSP is an 8-week training held for 2 hours weekly. This training program helps improve the developmental pathway of children through their parents and helps strengthen a caregivers' abilities to observe and improve their caregiving skills as well as discover new ways to help children connect, restore, and grow. In the previous grant year, sixteen FGP volunteers completed the training and received certificates of completion and we hope to train the remaining FGP volunteers in the upcoming grant year so that all FGP volunteers will have completed the training. The volunteers enjoyed this training opportunity and reported learning a great deal about connection and child behaviors. Not only is this a tremendous opportunity to learn about connection and support with children struggling but it is also a good source of match for our FGP.

UNCA invited the Foster Grandparent Program staff and volunteers to speak to a class of first year students about the Foster Grandparent Program, the impact that FGP volunteers have on children, and the impact that it has on the volunteers. Students were studying longevity and the importance of social connections and purpose. Two FGP volunteers and the FGP Manager shared the impacts of the program in a panel-style discussion.



Foster Grandparents along with Stacy Friesland, Foster Grandparent Program Manager, enjoying the 2023 Land of Sky Regional Council's Annual BBQ.

### BUNCOMBE

38 volunteers served 27,031 hours providing one-on-one support to 63 children ages 0 to 8 years old in 11 schools, childcare centers, and Head Start Programs. Of the 63 children served 86% made improvements in academic engagement, social and emotional skills, and/or school readiness.

We partner with the following: Avery's Creek Head Start, Child Care Center at First Presbyterian Church of Asheville, Eliada Child Care Center, Hall Fletcher Elementary School, Lucy S Herring Elementary School, Mountain City Public Montessori, Oakley Elementary School, Pisgah View Head Start, The Academy at Biltmore Church, Weaverville Primary School, and YWCA Early Learning Center.



# Make a Difference.

## Volunteer with AmeriCorps Seniors

You've had a good life and have so much left to give to others. Through the AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program, you'll provide assistance and friendship to older adults. You'll be surprised how great it feels to lend a hand.

## SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM

### AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Senior Companion Program (SCP) engages adults, age 55 and over, to provide non-medical companionship and support to older adults. This allows older adults to "age in place" in their home and community. Senior Companion volunteers serve an average of 20 hours per week. Volunteers work in private homes and for local agencies.

The Senior Companion Program provided 58 volunteers for a total of on the ground volunteering for 42,394 hours (about 5 years) in community in this fiscal year. Each July we celebrate our volunteers and their years of service. With 58 volunteers in combined service, they have 364 years of service in our communities! Our lead years of service is 16 years for two of our volunteers. The program speaks for itself in its mission of aging in place, connection and longevity.

AmeriCorps - Seniors, the federal funders for the Senior Companion Program, celebrated 50 years across the nation. At the yearly convening the President of AmeriCorps, Michael Smith, spoke with Special Envoy of the current administration who praised the service work of our seniors and offered continued support.

The Senior Companion Program provided support to over 170 clients in the four-county region of Land of Sky Regional Council. We held an in-house health fair, specifically geared to our volunteers. We celebrated the volunteers twice with recognition luncheons. We lost two of our volunteers due to illness, but we remain strong as an older adult community that engages and supports their communities.

#### BUNCOMBE

46 volunteers for a total of 34,780.25 hours served.

Buncombe County Volunteer Stations include: CarePartners Rehabilitation Center, CarePartners Hospice, Charles George VA Medical Center, Council on Aging-Buncombe County, George Knight-Skyland Apartments, Land of Sky Regional Council, Laurelwood Apartments, Buncombe County Adult Day Center-Mtn Care, and Jewish Family Services.

#### HENDERSON

11 volunteers for a total of 6,949.75 hours (about 9 and a half months) served.

Henderson County Volunteer Stations include Council on Aging for Henderson County, LifeHouse, Henderson County Adult Day Center-Mountain Care, and The Storehouse.

#### MADISON

1 volunteer for a total of 644 hours served.

Madison County Volunteer Station is Madison County Department of Social Services



**AmeriCorps**  
**Seniors**



# PROJECT C.A.R.E

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Western Office of Project C.A.R.E (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) received **\$37,829** from the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services, **\$42,012** from the American Rescue Plan Act, and **\$4,471** from North Carolina Lifespan Respite Coalition to fund respite care services for dementia caregivers in fifteen WNC counties. The total amount was **\$84,312**, nearly all of which was spent on in-home respite care services followed by adult day care services. Sixty-two caregivers in the Land of Sky region received respite funds in amounts ranging from **\$500 to \$3,000**.

These dollars enabled family caregivers caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia to take a break from caregiving to tend to their own healthcare needs, spend time with other family members and friends, take mini vacations, get some exercise, and participate in other forms of self-care. In addition, Project C.A.R.E. provided care consultation services and referrals to other organizations such as the two Councils on Aging, the county departments of health and human services, MemoryCare, the VA Medical Center and Veterans Services Offices, MountainCare Adult Day Care, PACE, palliative care and hospice care providers, etc. and to other resources such as the North Carolina Caregiver Portal and caregiver support groups.

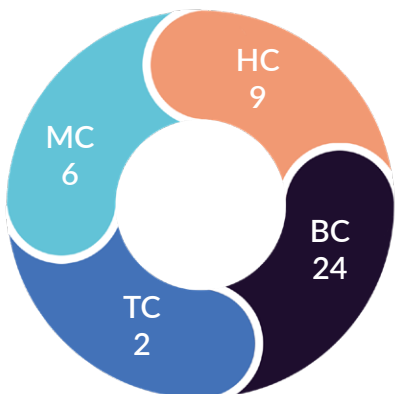
**BUNCOMBE: \$27,029**

**HENDERSON: \$15,903**

**MADISON: \$8,985**

**TRANSYLVANIA: \$2,232**

**Number of Caregivers:**



# STORY

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Despite having multiple health challenges of her own, 64-year-old Debbie cares for each of her 90-year-old divorced parents. Her father, Bobby, a retired police officer, lives in Asheville at Givens Gerber Park, and her mother lives near her in Flat Rock. Debbie regularly drives 20 miles (30 minutes each way) to her father's home to spend hours per day on most days caring for him. Bobby's MemoryCare doctor referred her to Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) in 2021 and soon after staff enrolled Debbie as a client and provided her with care consultation services and funds for respite care to lighten her caregiving load. Over the years Debbie has hired several ladies, some of whom live at Givens Gerber Park, to be with Bobby between her visits she can have a little time for herself. Debbie's disability and her father's social security retirement incomes do not provide enough for them to pay for caregivers, so it has been the Project C.A.R.E. funds that have made this possible. Staff also gave Bobby an animatronic dog that was bought by Family Caregiver Support Program staff using supplemental funds. Bobby told Debbie that it was the best present anyone had ever given him and that it was saving his life.

*Bobby with his animatronic dog.*





# LTC OMBUDSMAN

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is mandated through the Older Americans Act and funded by the Administration of Community Living. A Long Term Care Ombudsman serves as a mediator who seeks to resolve complaints made by or on behalf of people living in long-term care facilities. The Ombudsman provides a way for people to voice their concerns and have their complaints addressed. The Ombudsman works with all parties to resolve a problem.

	CAC Training Hours	Closed Complaints	Closed Cases	Total AGIs	Benefits/Rights/Regulations (AGI type)
BUNCOMBE	154	39	38	949	267
HENDERSON	240	66	37	807	311
MADISON	No CACs	0	0	54	25
TRANSYLVANIA	7	11	5	119	59
Regional Total	401	116	80	1949	662

# COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Members are local citizens appointed by the County Commissioners to serve on the committee as volunteers. They are selected because of their interest in ensuring the quality of care of nursing home and adult care home residents.

In September 2023, the Ombudsman Program held a CAC retreat. 17 CACs attended and speakers included:

- Vicki Jennings, Director of Strategic Initiatives, “Navigating Aging Services & Long-Term Care”
- Cindy Keehn, Founder of Engaging Dementia Effectively, “How to interact with Residents Living With Dementia”
- Long Term Care Panel: Brittany Helms, McCune Center Administrator; Jennifer Fender, Facility Compliance Consultant II – Training Specialist and Kristy Wilson and Sally Griffin, Buncombe County Adult Care Home Specialists - Discussion centered around Special Care Units.

### GIFTED ITEMS FROM THE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

“We were able to receive 2 of the FurReal pets at our facility. When we brought one of them to a very active long term care resident, she immediately lit up when she saw it. I sat it in her lap and she began petting it and talking to it. She was very concerned that someone had lost their dog and we assured her that no one had lost it, but we needed her to take care of the dog. She allowed the dog to sit on her lap and it seemed to calm her and give her purpose for a bit. She did let us know that her father wouldn’t let her have dogs, so she couldn’t keep him. It was so touching to see that she got to feel that purpose of care taking again. We so quickly forget that, as caregivers, we don’t lose that love and need to take care of others.” ~ Nicole Burnett, Administrator of Life Care Center

HENDERSON



# CAREGIVER STORY

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

One way in which staff supports family caregivers in Transylvania County is by providing vouchers for respite care services. One of the caregivers assisted this year was a woman whose husband's health had steadily been deteriorating. He had dementia and was at risk of falling when walking even short distances such as from his bed to the bathroom. His wife was doing her best to care for him, but in caring for him, her health started to decline, too. She developed carpal tunnel syndrome and nerve damage. She needed someone to watch her husband so she could go to her own medical appointments. This couple was able to get by with various assistance programs but was not able to afford to pay someone to be with the husband while she went to medical appointments and ran various errands like going to the grocery store. She reached out to Family Caregiver Support Program staff for assistance and received multiple respite vouchers. These vouchers gave her the ability to hire a caregiver for her husband so she could leave home and do the things she needed to do for herself and for them both. As the months went by, the husband was in and out of the hospital until, at the very end of his life, it was no longer possible for her to care for him at home. Even though he passed away in a hospital, his wife was grateful for the respite vouchers that allowed her to care for her beloved husband at home as long as she did.

TRANSYLVANIA

# FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Family Caregiver Program assists family caregivers primarily with funding for paying someone to spend time with their loved one while the caregiver can run errands, go to medical appointments, or do something fun and relaxing (respite). Other assistance is also provided for support groups and supplemental services such as providing incontinence supplies.

Funding used to help Family Caregivers by county:

## BUNCOMBE

131 Caregivers Served  
\$49,486 Respite  
\$802 Supplemental Services  
\$2,400 Support Groups

## HENDERSON

117 Caregivers Served  
\$44,529 Respite  
\$1,600 Supplemental Services  
\$8,160 Support Groups

## MADISON

42 Caregivers Served  
\$112,999 Respite

## TRANSYLVANIA

15 Caregivers Served  
\$37,283 Respite

Edwards Jones, Family Caregiver Specialist, was a guest on WLOS Carolina Spotlight in May 2024.



Rod Honeycutt with Sherrye Perry

## CAROL MCLIMANS TRAILBLAZER AWARD

Sherrye Perry, Madison County Delegate, NC Senior Tar Heel Legislature

Sherrye Perry received the eighth annual Trailblazer Award on Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at the monthly Board of Delegates meeting at Land of Sky Regional Council. The award was presented by Madison County Manager Rod Honeycutt. The award is given annually to a professional in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, or Transylvania Counties who is a pioneer and innovator in the field of aging and adult services.

Sherrye tirelessly advocates for older adults in rural Madison County, throughout Western North Carolina, and across the state. With a strong background in finance, sales, and marketing, she began a new career in healthcare in 2014. For the past six years, she has worked at Brightstar Care as the Director of Client Relations and is a board-certified patient advocate. In this role, she ensures clients receive the care needed and family caregivers are supported.

# AWARDS

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL, AREA AGENCY ON AGING & MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

### NADO AWARDS

INspire: Recovery to Career

Advancing Equity and Inclusion in Evidence Based Health Promotion Programs  
Regional Stormwater Services Program – MS4 Information Management System

### THE CHARLES H. CAMPBELL REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Nancy Allen, Town of Marshall

### THE ROBERT C. PARRISH, SR. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AWARD

Brenda Mills, City of Asheville

### THE ROBERT E. SHEPHERD EXCELLENCE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Jason Chappell, Transylvania County

### EXTRAORDINARY PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS

Larry Chapman, Transylvania County Commissioner

Jerry VeHaun, Town of Woodfin Mayor

Drew Reisinger, Buncombe County Register of Deeds

### EXTRAORDINARY LEGISLATIVE SERVICE AWARDS

Senator Kevin Corbin

Senator Warren Daniel

Senator Ralph Hise

Julie Mayfield

Senator Timothy D. Moffitt

Representative Eric Ager

Representative Jennifer Balkcom

Representative Mike Clappitt

Representative Mark Pless

Representative Lindsey Prather

Representative Jake Johnson

### NCWORKS NEXTGEN YOUTH PROGRAMS

Lori Cole, Goodwill NWNC

Lavendar Mullican, Madison County Schools

Lolita Perez-Patishtan, Henderson County Public Schools

### NCWORKS BUSINESS PARTNERS IN THE MA WDB REGION

UPM Raflatrac, Inc., NCWorks Career Center Henderson County

Transylvania Economic Alliance, NCWorks Career Center- Transylvania County

Elderberry Health Care, NCWorks Career Center-Madison County

### NCWORKS & WIOA ADULT & DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

Timothy Undenvood, Mountain Area Regional Business Services

Jamis Gaughan, Mountain Area Regional Business Services

Dameion Fenton, NCWorks Career Center Buncombe County

Brian Spreng, NCWorks Career Center-Henderson County

Brenda Hicks, NCWorks Career Center-Madison County

Kita Bowman, NCWorks Career Center Buncombe County

### MAWDB REGIONAL BUSINESS SERVICES - EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Western Carolina Sewing Company, Mountain Area Regional Business Services

### DEB HOLEBROOKS OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD

Mary Moore, NCWorks Career Center Henderson County

### MOUNTAIN LOCAL AREA SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Michael Horvath, Experienced Workforce Initiative (Asheville 50+)

Meet the Geeks, Career Pathway & Workforce Development Collaboration

Vannoy Construction, Strategic Regional Partnership- Construction Career Day

MB Haynes Corporation, Regional Apprenticeship



Picture Top L-R: Forrest Gilliam, Nancy Allen, Paul Moon, and Kaitland Finkle

Pictured Bottom: Sandra Kilgore with Brenda Mills







HURRICANE HELENE...





**Fiscal Year 2025**  
July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025



# FY25 - FOCUSING ON RECOVERY

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

On September 27, 2024, Hurricane Helene made landfall, leaving a trail of devastation across Western North Carolina. The Land of Sky region was among the hardest-hit areas, experiencing unprecedented flooding, landslides, and infrastructure collapse. The scale and scope of the destruction resulted in a formal FEMA disaster declaration (DR-4827-NC), and the storm exposed and deepened pre-existing challenges in our region—including high housing costs, an aging infrastructure network, and persistent workforce shortages.

The region's economy, which had been steadily growing on the strength of small businesses, tourism, outdoor recreation, and advanced manufacturing, was brought to a near standstill. A post-storm survey conducted by the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce found that 90% of local businesses experienced revenue losses, with nearly one-third reporting a decline of more than 50%. As of mid-2025, almost half of the affected businesses remained partially or fully closed. More than 188,000 unemployment claims have been filed statewide since the storm—70% from our region alone—and an estimated 20% of the local workforce has been displaced due to job loss, housing instability, or childcare disruptions.

In the face of these challenges, the strength and resilience of Western North Carolina's people and institutions have come to the forefront. Land of Sky Regional Council has worked side-by-side with local governments, state and federal agencies, and community partners to respond swiftly and strategically to the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Over the past year, our team has:

- **Coordinated Emergency Communications and Response Support**, ensuring local governments had access to timely and accurate information during the critical early days of the disaster.
- **Provided Technical Assistance for FEMA Programs**, helping local jurisdictions navigate the complexities of federal recovery funding.
- **Assisted with Damage Assessments and Long-Term Recovery Planning**, serving as a conduit between local communities and state/federal agencies.
- **Facilitated Collaborative Regional Recovery Efforts**, aligning efforts across sectors and counties to identify shared needs, avoid duplication, and streamline resource delivery.

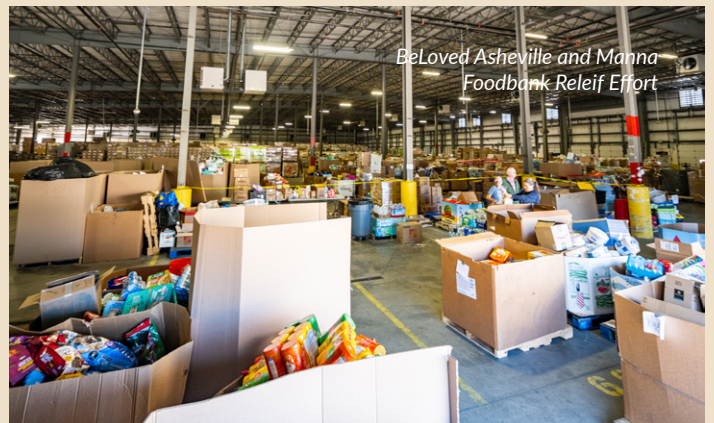
We have seen firsthand the determination of our communities to rebuild—not just to return to what was, but to shape a stronger, more equitable and resilient region for the future.

While much work lies ahead, we remain committed to walking alongside our communities through every stage of recovery. Whether it's helping secure infrastructure grants, rebuilding lost capacity, or designing future-forward economic strategies, Land of Sky will continue to serve as a hub for collaboration and coordination.

To our community leaders, partners, and neighbors: thank you for your perseverance, your partnership, and your trust. Please know that we are here to support you—for as long as you need.

Let's keep moving forward—together.

With respect and resolve,  
The Team at Land of Sky Regional Council



# BUDGET & FUNDING SOURCES

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

A balanced budget is adopted each year, as required by state law. The budget is amended several times during the fiscal year, as many federal grants have different fiscal cycles.

### FY25 REVENUES

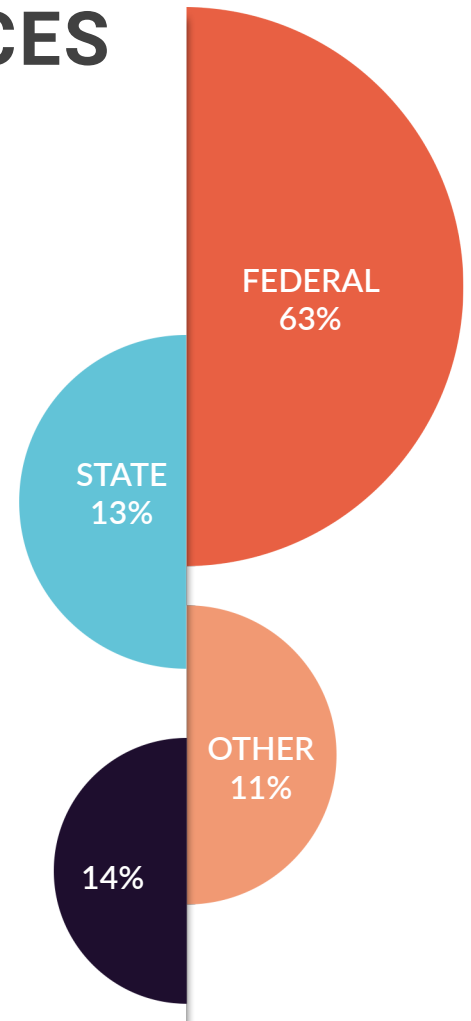
**\$22,012,263**

• Federal	\$13,748,453
• State	\$2,843,686
• Local Grants, Contributions, Charges for Services	\$1,587,982
• Private	\$3,233,939
• Local Government Dues (does not include MPO & RPO)	\$154,854
• In-Kind	\$443,350

### FY25 EXPENDITURES

**\$21,701,983**

Area Agency on Aging	\$6,535,650	(30%)
Workforce Development	\$5,977,540	(28%)
Economic & Community Development	\$6,279,198	(29%)
Buncombe County Transportation	\$2,790,026	(13%)
General Fund	\$119,569	(.6%)



#### FEDERAL

US Department of Agriculture  
US Department of Commerce  
US Department of Energy  
US Department of Health & Human Services  
US Department of Labor  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Corporation for National & Community Service  
US Department of Transportation- Federal  
Highway Administration  
Appalachian Regional Commission

#### OTHER

Local Grants and Contributions  
Local Charges for Services  
Rents  
Usage Allowance

#### HELENE DISASTER RELIEF

AARP  
BCBS Fund of NC  
Community Foundation of WNC  
Crescent Health  
Impact Health  
Meals on Wheels NC  
NC Association of Aging  
US Aging

#### STATE

NC Department of Environmental Quality  
NC Department of Health & Human Services  
NC Department of Commerce  
NC Department of Transportation  
NC Institute for Emerging Issues  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Vaya Health

#### PRIVATE

Pisgah Health Foundation  
WNC Bridge Foundation  
Z Smith Reynolds  
John M Belk Endowment  
Dogwood Health Trust  
NC State University Institute for  
Emerging Issues

#### BROADBAND FUND

Centene Management  
Dogwood Health Trust  
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors  
The Benton Institute

#### LOCAL DUES & IN-KIND

For every dollar of local dues, we leveraged  
**\$142.14** in return investment.





# ADVOCATING FOR THE REGION

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

In March 2025, members of Land of Sky's Leadership Team traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Conference and the NC Association of Regional Councils of Governments Hill Day. This annual federal engagement provided an opportunity to:

- Share the impact of federal investments on Western North Carolina's communities
- Highlight Land of Sky's role in deploying recovery, infrastructure, and workforce funding
- Advocate for continued federal support and flexibility in addressing local needs
- Meet directly with congressional representatives from our region

These visits continue to strengthen our federal partnerships and ensure that the unique needs of our region are represented at the national level.

LOS staff are also engaging with the WNC Recovery and Resilience Partnership, coordinated by the American Flood Coalition, to advocate and represent the needs of the region both at the federal and state level.



# DISASTER RELIEF

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL

In a moment of heartfelt community solidarity, Land of Sky was honored to deliver \$2,500 disaster relief checks to 21 local government employees who lost their primary residences due to Hurricane Helene. This funding, made possible by the Civic Local Foundation, the NC Regional Councils of Governments, and donors statewide, offered a small but meaningful measure of support to those who serve others even in their own time of need. Recipients included employees from Buncombe County, City of Asheville, Asheville City Schools, and Buncombe County Schools

These dedicated individuals have not only helped lead our community through recovery but have done so while personally experiencing the storm's devastating effects. Their resilience and commitment are a testament to the spirit of public service that defines our region.

As we reflect on the past year, the strength of Land of Sky lies in the partnerships we foster, the leaders we support, and the communities we serve. Our Leadership Team remains committed to advancing collaborative, forward-thinking solutions across all corners of the region.

Thank you to all who lead with heart, vision, and a deep commitment to WNC.

# LEADERSHIP AND RECOGNITION

## LOSRC, AAA & MAWDB

This year marked a time of exceptional service, leadership, and dedication across the Land of Sky region—amid the challenges of Hurricane Helene recovery and in the pursuit of long-term resilience and regional collaboration.

### NADO AWARDS

GO PLACES – Peer Leaders Activating the Community for Employment Success  
Healthy Opportunities Pilot Project  
WISH Collaborative – WNC Initiative for Supportive Housing

### CAROL MCLIMANS TRAILBLAZER AWARD

Elizabeth Williams, Executive Director of MountainCare and Council on Aging for Henderson County

At the December 4, 2024, Board of Delegates Meeting, Land of Sky Regional Council proudly recognized outstanding leadership and public service across our region through our annual awards. These honors celebrate individuals and organizations whose dedication has made a meaningful impact on our communities and highlight their strength of our local leaders and public servants, who continue to demonstrate resilience, innovation, and compassion through both daily governance and extraordinary circumstances.

### THE CHARLES H. CAMPBELL REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Brownie Newman, Buncombe County Chairman

### THE ROBERT C. PARRISH, SR. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AWARD

Matthew Wechtel, Madison County Chairman

### THE ROBERT E. SHEPHERD EXCELLENCE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Debra Campbell, City of Asheville Manager

### EXTRAORDINARY PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS

Abigail Norton, Town of Hot Springs Mayor  
Sandra Kilgore, City of Asheville Vice Mayor  
Dr. Jennifer Hensley, City of Hendersonville Council Member  
Jasmine Beach-Ferrara, Buncombe County Commissioner  
David McNeil, Transylvania County Assistant County Manager

Mountain Area Workforce Development Board WIOA Recognition Luncheon Meeting

### NCWORKS NEXTGEN YOUTH PROGRAMS

Skylar Roberts, Henderson County Innovation High School  
Garrett Jackson, Henderson County Innovation High School  
Jake Folse, Goodwill NWNC  
Charleigh Smith, Goodwill Transylvania  
Damon Meadows, Goodwill Madison  
Madison Martin, Madison County High School

### NCWORKS BUSINESS PARTNERS IN THE MAWDB REGION

Linamar Light Metals, NCWorks Career Center Henderson County  
Oskar Blues, NCWorks Career Center Transylvania County

### NCWORKS & WIOA ADULT & DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

Roger Long, NCWorks Career Center Buncombe County  
Rodney Young, Blue Ridge Community College  
Brittany Neal, Asheville Buncombe Technical College

### GO PLACES GRANT OUTSTANDING PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

Shana Baynard and Reia Freeze

### MAWDB REGIONAL BUSINESS SERVICES - EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Legacy Bookkeeping and Mathis Electronics

### DEB HOLEBROOKS OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD POSTHUMOUSLY

Marc Czarnecki, Mountain Area Workforce Board

### MOUNTAIN LOCAL AREA SPECIAL RECOGNITION

AI Summit, Mountain Area Regional Business Services  
Karen Sanders, Experienced Workforce Initiative (Asheville 50+)  
Henderson County Chamber, Strategic Partnership  
Buncombe Co/Asheville Chamber, Career Pathway/Workforce Development Collaboration

### EXTRAORDINARY PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS

- iHeart Media Asheville
- Blue Ridge Public Radio
- WHKP
- WTZQ
- WSQL
- WGCR
- WHBK
- WART

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene phone and internet service were inoperable throughout our region. Without radio station broadcasts there was no means for public safety officials to communicate with the public. Local radio stations helped respond to this disaster by broadcasting lifesaving information. Local governments relied on you to share information with the public. Land of Sky Regional Council is grateful for your heroic efforts to keep our communities informed during this historic disaster.

### LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL HEROES AWARD

- Tony Ray Garrison, Fairview Fire Department and Garren Creek Fire Department
- Michelle Lynn Elliott Quintero, Madison County Sheriff's Office

### EXTRAORDINARY LEGISLATIVE SERVICE AWARDS

- Congressman Patrick McHenry

### THE ORDER OF THE LONG LEAF PINE

- Jon Beck, GIS Manager





Spring Creek

# WORKFORCE OVERVIEW

## MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Over the past year, Land of Sky and its partners have worked tirelessly to strengthen the region's workforce infrastructure and support economic recovery following Hurricane Helene. Through strategic convenings, targeted workforce programs, and innovative partnerships, we continue to advance inclusive economic growth and build a resilient labor force in Western North Carolina.

## WORK-BASED LEARNING

### MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

#### SUPPORTING DISASTER RECOVERY THROUGH WORK-BASED LEARNING

In response to the ongoing impacts of Hurricane Helene, Land of Sky supported the deployment of nearly 84 National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) participants to help with disaster clean-up and beautification efforts at local governments and nonprofit sites across the region. Worksite hosts included:

- Town of Hot Springs
- MountainTrue
- Action Coaching (Builders Association of the Blue Ridge Mountains)
- Mars Hill Farmers
- Craigmont Assembly
- Mountain Valleys RC&D Council
- Black Mountain/Swannanoa Chamber Foundation
- Valley Hope Foundation

These partnerships have not only advanced regional recovery but have also provided hands-on work experience and income support to those impacted by job loss after the storm.

## CONSTRUCTION CAREER DAY

### MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

#### BUILDING THE CONSTRUCTION PIPELINE

Land of Sky and the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, along with Vannoy Construction and other partners, hosted the most successful WNC Construction Career Day to date. The event welcomed 572 students from 14 school districts to engage with over 60 industry exhibitors, introducing youth to high-demand careers in construction and the skilled trades.

This year also marked the inaugural Marc Czarnecki CCD Champion Award, created to honor the memory and impact of Marc Czarnecki. The 2025 award was presented to Brian Walker, Vice President of Vannoy Construction, for his longstanding leadership and dedication to Construction Career Day.



# YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS

MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

To expand access to jobs and training for young people, the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board and NCWorks held their first-ever Youth Job Fair on May 6, 2025. Over 20 employers and education institutions participated, sharing internship, summer job, and educational opportunities with high school students across the region. A-B Tech and UNC Asheville also joined to highlight college and credential pathways available locally.

## AI SUMMIT

MOUNTAIN AREA  
WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD

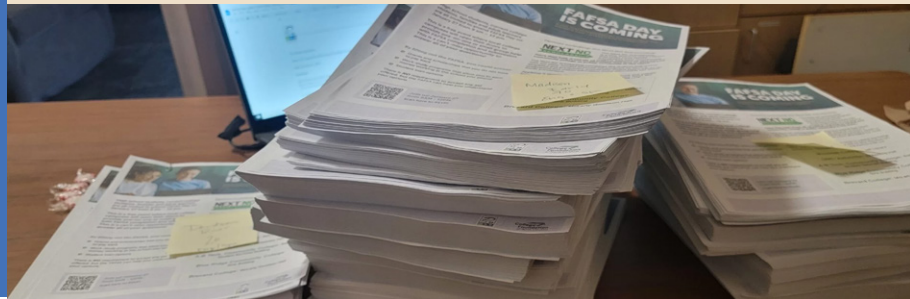
### INNOVATING FOR THE FUTURE

On June 25–26, the Workforce and Economic Development teams co-hosted the second annual brAI'n Hub 2025: AI Summit, bringing together experts and practitioners to explore how artificial intelligence can enhance both personal productivity and regional economic resilience. This signature event highlighted AI's potential to transform workforce development and business practices across sectors in Western North Carolina.

## FAFSA DAY

P20 COUNCIL

P20 assisted with a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) day event at Buncombe County schools where admissions officers from all our colleges in the Land of Sky footprint attended as students and their families came to apply for financial aid for college. Around 30 attendees benefited from one-on-one support during the day. This was a partnership with myFutureNC, College for NC & Buncombe County Schools.



## YOUTHBUILD GRANT

P20 COUNCIL

The U.S. Department of Labor awarded **\$1,500,000** in February 2025 to Land of Sky for a grant in the YouthBuild program, which will support training and employment services to prepare and equip young workers for quality jobs. The P20 Council will administer the grant. The YouthBuild program follows a pre-apprenticeship model, providing underserved youth ages 16-24 with educational guidance, industry skills training, and support services such as transportation assistance, provision of work attire, healthcare referrals, and childcare.

YouthBuild program participants will split their time between classroom instruction and workplace training, preparing them for gainful employment and successful careers. Land of Sky will execute the YouthBuild program CORE-2 (Construction Opportunities in Rural and Urban Environments) via two sub-awardee programs. Camp Grier's WORX Project will provide a rural skills training site to build one modular housing unit to be used as a long-term, below-market rate rental. Hood Huggers will provide an urban site at the future Blue Note Junction where participants will work on a 32-unit affordable housing project.

Both sub-awardees have linkages to accredited training providers for education, credentials required for Registered Apprenticeships (RAPs), industry-recognized certifications, and direct placement into employment. CORE-2 will simultaneously prepare young people to acquire the skills and training needed to successfully enter the workforce while providing affordable housing to community members in need. With a goal of reaching 70 participants over 3 years, and its focus on construction training, these participants will offer our communities invaluable assistance in the recovery efforts.



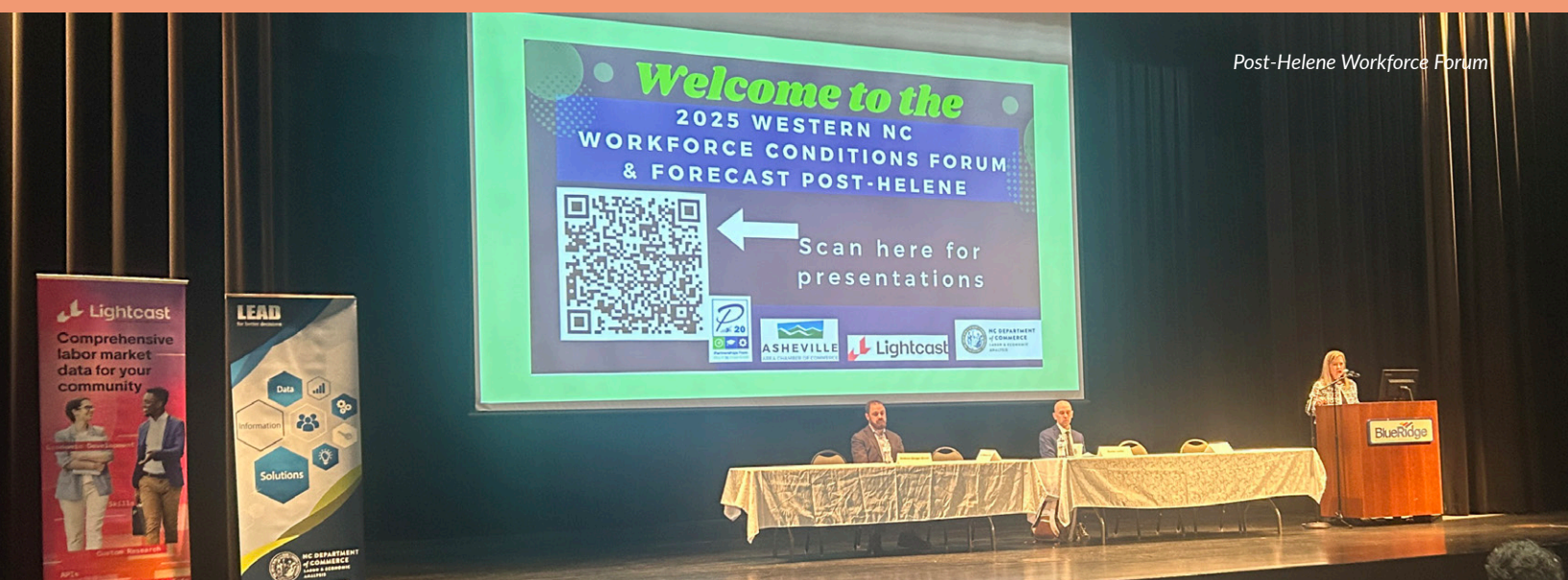
# POST-HELENE WORKFORCE FORUM

## P20 COUNCIL

In partnership with the P20 Council and state agencies, Land of Sky hosted the 2025 Western NC Workforce Conditions Forum & Forecast on February 26. This event provided a critical platform to evaluate and interpret the regional workforce impacts of Hurricane Helene, aligning data-driven insights with recovery efforts and future planning.

Around 50 attendees from government, colleges, K12, and more came to learn about post-Helene unemployment, short term industry impacts, etc. From a national perspective and two statewide perspectives.

Land of Sky remains committed to supporting workforce development that meets the evolving needs of our region. From recovery and resilience to innovation and growth, we are helping build the foundation for a thriving, future-ready workforce in Western North Carolina.



Post-Helene Workforce Forum

# EMPATHY TO ACTION WORKSHOP

## P20 COUNCIL

### HELPING EDUCATORS NAVIGATE POST-HELENE RESILIENCE

On January 28-29, we hosted an event for WNC educators where Open Way Learning conducted a workshop called "Empathy to Action: A 2-Day Resilience-Building Workshop for WNC Educators & Stakeholders". This project was born from a shared commitment to help schools and communities not just recover from the disruption of Hurricane Helene, but to use that crisis as a catalyst to imagine something better - something more learner-centered, equitable, and resilient. Over 100 educators attended the workshop, and it'll be the first of many. With a focus on topics like power generation, water access, communication networks, mental health, and disaster logistics, we aim to empower students to actively apply their learning to local rebuilding and resiliency efforts. Moreover, by leveraging emerging fields like cybersecurity, data analytics, and technology-driven problem-solving, students can explore high-tech solutions to real-world problems, further enriching their contributions to community resilience, while also developing skills needed in today's innovation economy.

This phase will also further develop credentialing prototypes, such as digital portfolios, micro-credentials, and mastery-based assessments, aligned with North Carolina's Competency-Based Education (CBE) policies. Our goal is to pave the way for wider adoption of CBE strategies across the region's schools. Throughout all phases, inclusivity remains paramount; we will ensure a diversity of community voices and stories are represented, particularly from underrepresented groups.

# ECD OVERVIEW

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Over the past year, the Economic & Community Development team at Land of Sky has played a pivotal role in advancing regional recovery, resilience, and long-term economic vitality—particularly in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. With a focus on collaboration, service delivery, and strategic planning, our team has worked across multiple sectors and jurisdictions to meet the urgent and evolving needs of the Land of Sky region.

To meet this need, our team hosted numerous regional recovery convenings to share resources, strengthen intergovernmental coordination, and provide clear pathways to action among federal, state, and local partners. The team continues to support FEMA Public Assistance administration across multiple communities, state and federal grants, and project development across all funding sources to maximize opportunities for recovery. We continue to work with communities to identify funding needs and have developed over 40 grant applications focused on economic development, infrastructure, workforce, and community services—especially those tied to Hurricane Helene recovery.

Land of Sky supported local governments by facilitating Town Board Retreats focused on strategic visioning and capacity building. The Council also hosted a Lead for NC Fellow who enhanced regional outreach through new communications tools. Staff elevated the region's profile by presenting at major conferences, including the NC Rural Summit, the Institute for Emerging Issues, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond's Rural Investment Summit.

*Governor Josh Stein visits  
Marshall*



# RESILIENCE & HAZARD MITIGATION

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Leading Helene recovery and long-term hazard planning:

- Supported FEMA Public Assistance to communities throughout the region.
- Provided Disaster Financial Management training to LG staff.
- Advanced the Land of Sky Regional Resilience Assessment, incorporating landslide, wildfire and NCEM advisory flood probability and threat analyses.
- Trained and provided direct support to LG staff to incorporate multi-hazard vulnerability and risk assessment into planning and development decision-making processes.
- Supported local and regional hazard mitigation planning for South Mountain region and Domestic Preparedness Region 9 counties.
- Continued to assist with funding and project management for flood mitigation projects like the Lower Mud Creek floodplain restoration project in the City of Hendersonville.





# TRANSPORTATION

## REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Land of Sky continues to lead and support innovative, regional transportation planning:

- Administered transportation grants for Transylvania and Madison Counties, supporting public transit operations.
- Continued to provide financial support for the City of Asheville's Patton Avenue Corridor Study
- Continued work on the Safe Streets for WNC Safety Action Plan, that looks to improve the safety of our region's transportation network and allows our local governments to pursue new grants for implementation.
- Developed the Elevate 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, that helps shape our region's transportation priorities over the next 25 years.
- Launched and managed the Brevard Circulator Study to explore local service needs and gaps.
- Applied jointly for a PROTECT Regional Resiliency Improvement Plan with the RPO and MPO.
- Partnered with the Manhan Group to develop regional socio-economic projections through 2050, supporting long-range transportation forecasting.
- French Broad River MPO programmed:
  - **\$429,806** in FTA Section 5310 funds to expand mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
  - **\$477,562** in JARC funds to improve job access for low-income residents in suburban and rural areas.
- Kicked off:
  - Woodfin-Weaverville Greenway Study
  - Buncombe County Pedestrian Plan
- Held a Bike Rodeo at Brevard Elementary and supported eight school's Walk/Bike to School Day events through the WNC Safe Routes to School Program.
- Coordinated Strive Not to Drive Week across Buncombe, Haywood, and Henderson counties to promote walking, biking, and transit.

# WASTE REDUCTION PARTNERS

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Practical sustainability and operational cost savings:

- Supported Riverside Stump Dump in finding wood biomass markets, reducing open burning.
- Assisted DirtCraft Organics, Eaton, and Flint Group with energy, water, and waste assessments.
- In 2024 alone, WRP helped 108 clients save **\$2.4 million**, while improving sustainability practices.

# PLANNING SERVICES

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Delivering local support and visionary planning:

- Provided weekly zoning, floodplain, and comprehensive planning services in Montreat, Marshall, Hot Springs, Flat Rock, and Laurel Park.
- Advanced small area planning in Mars Hill, Laurel Park, Hot Springs, and Flat Rock, aligning local ordinances with land use plans.
- Supported Rosman Riverfront Park implementation with successful funding for Phase 1 construction.
- Pursued multimillion-dollar grants for downtown and cultural tourism projects.

# ENERGY RESILIENCE & CLEAN TRANSPORTATION

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Reducing emissions, preparing for future emergencies:

- Partnered on solar-plus-battery microgrid systems for recovery hubs and displaced communities during the storm. Over 40 resiliency hub sites deployed during the storm.
- Submitted the DOE Clean Cities and Communities annual report. This year our partners reduced over 3.7 Million gas gallon equivalents, and over 32,000 Tons of Greenhouse Gas Emissions.
- Collaborated with NCSEA, Footprint Project, and others for energy resilience planning and equipment allocation leveraging over \$1M in donated funding and equipment during the response phase of the storm and an additional \$5M in NC DEQ grant funding to support long term resiliency in WNC.
- Promoted alternative fuel infrastructure, including electric vehicle (EV) charging projects under the CFAT program.
- Community Engagement Liaison for the CCEEJ program submitted the Clean Transportation Action Plan for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.
- Hosted monthly calls of the Clean Air Campaign.



# GIS & DATA SERVICES

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Driving data-driven decision-making across sectors:

- Hosted GIS workshops and built a WNC GIS Summit partnership with Esri.
- Led disaster response mapping and damage assessments post-Helene.
- Enhanced interagency working group decision-making for improving NC road closure data collection and sharing for emergency response scenarios elevated beyond the county-level.
- Produced high-impact visualizations and applications for transportation, stormwater, CEDS, and Wi-Fi expansion.
- Supported local governments with zoning maps, recycling routes, data schema development, app migrations, and master plans.
- Migrated internal GIS users to a more scalable, secure, and long-term-sustainable internal GIS infrastructure hosted in the cloud.
- Scaled GIS licensing from individual user-based to organization-wide licensing to better accommodate organization-wide GIS needs while saving on per license costs.
- Began automating GIS workflows for organization-wide ArcGIS Online administration and data management.
- Prototyped a public-facing ArcGIS Hub portal for regional data sharing and transparency.





# BROADBAND & DIGITAL CONNECTIONS

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A transformative year for digital connections across Western NC:

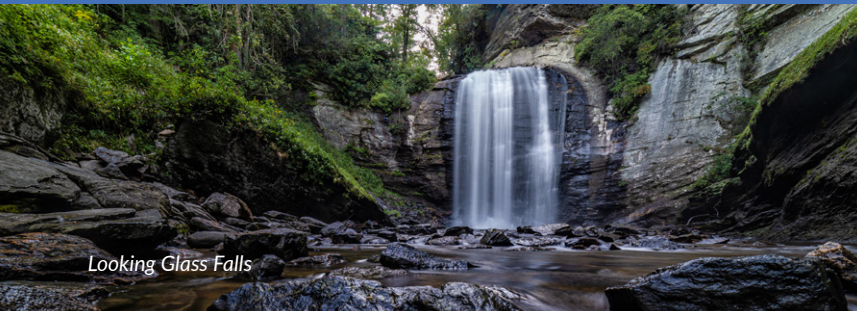
- Awarded a Dogwood Health Trust grant for broadband access, enabling:
  - Public Wi-Fi on Asheville buses
  - Affordable housing connectivity in Hot Springs
  - A regional device refurbishment program
- Launched the Helene Technology Recovery Program, delivering over 1200 devices to families, businesses, and nonprofits who lost their devices such as cell phones, laptops, and tablets to the storm. These devices helped connect people to new jobs, FEMA resources, homes, insurance, education, and healthcare.
- Created a Hurricane Helene public wifi map with over 140 locations to help WNC victims and resource providers access needed information about what networks were available to use
- WestNGN staff launched the Energy+Connectivity Program helping to support getting communications infrastructure back online after Hurricane Helene and supporting businesses, governments, and non-profits with access to starlink equipment leveraging hundreds of thousands of dollars back into the pockets of WNC.
- Developed partnerships and training events, including with Lutheran Services Carolinas, Shiloh Neighborhood Association, and others to deliver digital literacy services.
- Supported multiple NC Digital Champion Grant applications, including projects in telehealth, smart housing, and reentry.
- Reached agreement with Buncombe County and City of Asheville for long-term surplus device donation.
- In partnership with NCTNA, Madison County Health Department, Madison Schools, and Hot Springs Health Program we supported the Digital Champion Grant in Madison County, establishing telehealth booths in three county libraries to focus on preventative care and behavioral health.
- WestNGN team has supported broadband infrastructure projects in Buncombe, Madison, Henderson, and Transylvania Counties adding an additional 2,518 households receiving new service.
- In partnership with Dogwood Health Trust and Benton Institute we have launched the Blue Ridge Broadband Alliance to promote broadband and digital opportunity issues from Western North Carolina. This group has already advocated for improved policy around BEAD and DEA funding.
- WestNGN added three new staff members to help support our growing digital access needs in WNC.
- WestNGN is supporting the Buncombe County Dogwood Health Trust Digital Opportunity Hub- Hub members include Buncombe County Libraries, The Cellphone Project, Our Journey, YMCA, AB Tech, UNCA, AMERC, and RHA.
- Staff were awarded a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to support licensing of OOKLA data for broadband infrastructure planning and the milestones to connectivity project.
- Staff were awarded an ARC grant to support device access ecosystem building and communications resiliency in WNC.
- Wellcare awarded WestNGN a grant to supply devices to underserved communities in WNC.

# HOUSING

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

From rehabilitation to recovery housing, increasing housing options was a top priority:

- Completed third home rehab in Hendersonville and sidewalk improvements; assisted with **\$1.3M** in new CDBG-NR funding for home rehab.
- Completed the Asheville Regional Housing Consortium's HUD 5-Year Consolidated Plan.
- Hosted Regional Housing Alliance, focusing on preservation and production strategies across counties.
- Helped secure a **\$3.5M** Recovery Housing Program grant for Transformation Village, adding 64 transitional units for women and mothers in recovery.
- Launched RecoveryHomeFinder.com to connect providers and those seeking sober living options.
- Utilized Dogwood Health Trust grant funding to support construction workforce development training for 22 employees at eight affordable housing nonprofits.
- Partnered with 8 housing nonprofits to complete no-cost repairs on 44 homes, helping keep older adults and adults with disability in their home.
- Leading regional participation in the UNC School of Government NC Impact Our State, Our Homes program.
- Earned a **\$1.9 million** HUD Older Adults Home Modification Program grant award to support high impact, low-cost modifications to more than 200 homes in the Land of Sky region.



# WATER, SEWER, & STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Progress in resilience, compliance, and capacity building:

- Facilitated infrastructure design and construction in Mars Hill, Black Mountain, Weaverville, Brevard and others.
- Completed Brevard's stormwater system inventory, with MS4 compliance support ongoing in four municipalities.
- Managed ARC and EDA grants supporting wastewater and stormwater infrastructure and commercial development.
- Awarded 205(j) funds for "Love Your Watershed", engaging river-based businesses in watershed stewardship, as well as for developing a community guidebook and best practices for creating water retention landscapes in the mountains.
- Supported a year-long regional campaign "Reduce Rain Runoff" together with RiverLink and community partners.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & WORKFORCE

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Building economic resilience and regional competitiveness:

- Submitted the Regional Readiness Strategy application with Southwestern Commission to EDA.
- Launched ARISE Forestry Planning Grant and began consultant selection for a multi-state biomass market analysis.
- Hosted and planned technical assistance and summits for ARISE multi-state collaboration projects.
- Initiated the update of the 2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), laying the foundation for long-term regional growth.
- Administered Creative Manufacturing Project, completing a 26-county textiles supply chain analysis and initiating marketing efforts.
- Administered Foreign Trade Zone 301, responding to increased business interest related to trade and tariff shifts.
- Awarded two Duke Energy Grants to support business recovery through small grant awards and capacity for CarolinaWest.
- Administered the Accelerate Buncombe program in partnership with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce to support business recovery and economic resilience.





AAA Staff and helpers from L-R: Diaper Delivery Driver, Carol Allison, Tess Anderson, Brea Kuykendall, Dee Heinmuller, Kelly Morgan, Megan McKinney, Zack Schmitt, and LeeAnne Tucker

## AAA OVERVIEW

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

### EMPOWERING OLDER ADULTS THROUGH RESILIENCE, CONNECTION, AND CARE

FY25 was marked by innovation, expansion, and exceptional responsiveness to both ongoing needs and the unprecedented disruption caused by Hurricane Helene. Across core programs, the Land of Sky Area Agency on Aging advanced its mission of supporting older adults and caregivers through health promotion, social connection, access to services, and crisis response.

## FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Staff supported over 570 caregivers through resource counseling, respite care, and emotional support.

## CAREGIVER STORY

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

### "More Than Respite"

Elaine, overwhelmed caring for her husband, found not just temporary relief but emotional and logistical support through the program. Staff helped her create a self-care plan, ensuring her well-being during her husband's final months.

**BUNCOMBE**  
316 Caregivers Served

**HENDERSON**  
131 Caregivers Served

**MADISON**  
48 Caregivers Served

**TRANSYLVANIA**  
76 Caregivers Served

**HELENE SUPPORT**  
9 caregivers assisted with emergency supplies

**DISASTER FLEXIBILITY**  
Helene allowances enabled family members not residing with care recipients to be paid for respite—expanding access during provider shortages.

# HEALTH PROMOTION

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

### PROMOTING HEALTH & INDEPENDENCE

Staff delivered 36 evidence-based workshops to 323 older adults through programs to promote health and independent to include:

- Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention
- A Matter of Balance
- Walk With Ease
- Chronic Disease Self-Management

### HURRICANE HELENE RESPONSE

Staff acted quickly to protect participants, safely concluding or postponing workshops. After the storm, they ensured all participants were contacted, safe, and able to re-engage. Classes became healing spaces, reinforcing community resilience.

### COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER PROGRAMS (CHW)

The Community Health Worker (CHW) program is designed to meet the multifaceted needs of high-risk older adults residing in subsidized senior housing. The program's central mission is to empower residents to be healthy, foster connections and enhance their well-being across their communities.

Originally established at Asheville Terrace Apartments, the program expanded in FY24 to include Arrowhead Apartments, extending its reach and impact. CHWs deliver comprehensive support that addresses key areas such as social connectivity, personal safety, physical activity, nutrition, and reduction of social isolation.

### CHW HURRICANE HELENE IMPACT

CHWs at Asheville Terrace and Arrowhead Apartments played a pivotal role in safeguarding residents and maintaining vital services amidst crisis conditions. Their efforts during this time exemplified the program's core mission by delivering support in four key areas:

- **Resident Safety:** CHWs conducted wellness checks before, during, and after the storm, ensuring that high-risk elders were safe, and had emergency supplies. Communicating needs to staff for targeted needs and resource procurement. Their presence and attentiveness provided reassurance and necessary supplies for residents.
- **Social Connectivity:** Recognizing the isolation disasters can intensify, CHWs provided neighbor-to-neighbor communication, helping residents stay informed and emotionally supported. Staff utilized phone trees and implemented the "Neighbor Knock" check-ins for all residents to provide resources and assess community needs.
- **Nutrition:** When access to food became precarious, staff and CHWs worked to coordinate emergency food donations including organizing supplies and donations providing a choice model for food selections with donations and MANNA contributions., increasing a sense of independence for residents and reducing food and resource waste. Staff and Community Health Workers helped ensure no one went hungry in the aftermath.
- **Reduction of Social Isolation:** The storm heightened fears and feelings of loneliness among some residents. CHWs provided emotional support and reassurance through home "Neighbor Knock" visits, small group gatherings, and one-on-one conversations, strengthening a sense of belonging and calm when it was most needed.

Community Health Workers during Hurricane Helene demonstrated the critical role CHWs play—not just in routine contributions, but in disaster response. By combining compassion with coordination, they ensured that residents weathered the storm with dignity, safety, and connection.

### CHW SERVICES

In tackling broader social determinants of health, CHWs work to diminish inequities related to food insecurity, transportation barriers, and disengagement. Services are delivered both individually and collectively, and include:

- Food distribution initiatives
- Health education and wellness programming
- Social engagement activities
- On-site clinical screenings
- Home visits

These services are intentionally designed to cultivate inclusive social networks, enhance access to resources, and foster a sense of belonging among participating residents.

#### Primary Community Events

- Food Distribution events: 74
- Community Health Fair- 2
- Social and Group Events-26
- Home Visits through the "Neighbor Knock" program: 5641



### VOICES FROM ASHEVILLE TERRACE RESIDENTS

CHW's strengthen community Resilience:

- "Keeping the Community clean as possible. Helping disabled residents carry water"
- "Everyone worked together as able"
- "Everyone went above and beyond to help"
- "Brought food to the ones that could not come down the stairs, when we couldn't use elevators."
- "Take storms as they come do your best and help anyone that asks for help."



# LTC OMBUDSMAN

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is mandated through the Older Americans Act and funded by the Administration of Community Living. A Long Term Care Ombudsman serves as a mediator who seeks to resolve complaints made by or on behalf of people living in long-term care facilities. The Ombudsman provides a way for people to voice their concerns and have their complaints addressed. The Ombudsman works with all parties to resolve a problem.

	Closed Complaints	Closed Cases	Total AGIs
BUNCOMBE	47	34	1009
HENDERSON	69	35	892
MADISON	1	1	38
TRANSYLVANIA	1	1	133
Regional Total	118	71	2072

### COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)  
Members are local citizens appointed by the County Commissioners to serve on the committee as volunteers. They are selected because of their interest in ensuring the quality of care of nursing home and adult care home residents.

CAC Hours	1499
CAC Miles Driven	6280
CAC Facility Visits	240
CAC In-Service Trainings	23

### HURRICANE HELENE RESPONSE

Ombudsmen assisted in delivering and providing both drinking and potable water, protective undergarments, sheets, blankets, food and other necessary items. These items were provided to all facilities in need in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania Counties.

### HELENE THROUGH THE EYES OF AN OMBUDSMAN

Throughout my life, there have been lots of reasons to be proud of being born and raised in Western North Carolina. Never has that been more true than in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

In the hours that communications were difficult or completely failing, I was concerned for the residents of the long-term care facilities, especially in the Fairview and East Buncombe areas. I was on the far side of the county with two small children and getting to those facilities was unsafe and almost impossible. However, I reached out to a church that hit the ground running to serve some of the people that needed it the most...the Fairview community.

I was able to text the church group, usually at midnight or standing in a specific spot in our yard, to have them be my eyes and ears at those facilities. After an old well was reconnected to give one facility access to water to flush the toilets and mop floors. Even though it was not approved for drinking, it helped the facility to maintain somewhat better living conditions. This facility also shared water with other facilities and residents of that community.

The church members also visited another facility in the area and provided items to meet their needs and communicated to me that everyone was safe. The church quickly set up as a distribution center, and even began cooking hot meals, providing a safe place for tents and campers, and distributing donations. The facilities nearby were being checked on almost every day.

When road conditions improved enough for me to be able to get to that community, I went to do what I could. I began assisting with delivering meals and shopping at the distribution center for the items that residents needed the most. As Land of Sky began receiving items and sharing information about other distribution centers, I was able to deliver items to 15 facilities, with several of them receiving multiple deliveries to meet their needs. These deliveries consisted of clean sheets and bedding, new pillows, lots of incontinence supplies, food and snacks, bottled water and drinks, cleaning items, paper products, and so much more. Because of these deliveries, I was also acting as a messenger for some of the residents, letting several family members know their loved ones were safe and doing ok when I returned to areas where we could get cell service. It was also necessary to contact FEMA for a few family members that were unable to connect with their family members and request well-checks for 3 facilities. Through Land of Sky's distribution efforts, it was also able to deliver supplies to a neighboring region's Ombudsman to assist the residents in that region.

Most of all, with each delivery, I realized that it was making a difference for some of those that were most isolated and letting them know that others truly care about them. We are now at the ten-month mark and residents still sometimes say things like "Remember when you brought the sheets after the hurricane? I still have them." Or "You know I haven't forgotten what you did for us."

~ Donna Case,, LTC Ombudsman



Fraud and Scam Training

# AMERICORPS SENIOR PROGRAMS

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

AmeriCorps Seniors (ACS) collaborated with rescue teams, FEMA, and local/state organizations to distribute essential resources after Hurricane Helene. ACS coordinated with local and state agencies to aid older adults during recovery. Volunteers received widespread support, with donations pouring in from across the state via moving trucks and tractor trailers. These included water, paper products, adult incontinence supplies, liquid nutrition, hygiene kits, and cleaning supplies. We supported volunteers needing home repairs such as roofs and HVAC systems and helped provide household items. ACS staff assembled and distributed care packages containing hygiene items, cleaning supplies, and paper goods.

Despite the lack of power and water, volunteers stepped up by checking their homebound neighbors, delivered food/necessities, set up donation sites, and partnered with World Central Kitchen to feed their communities. Their resilience, dedication, and quiet service united communities and exemplified the true spirit of volunteerism.

### SENIOR COMPANION CAREGIVER PROGRAM

This new AmeriCorps Seniors program received funding to support caregivers in our region.

#### BUNCOMBE

5 volunteers for 1,361.5 hours served.

### SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM

#### BUNCOMBE

Volunteers: 43  
Clients Served: 88  
Hours provided: 39,417.75

#### HENDERSON

Volunteers: 10  
Clients Served: 41  
Hours provided: 8,831

#### MADISON

Volunteers: 1  
Clients Served: 5  
Hours Provided: 911

### FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

Foster Grandparent volunteers provided one-on-one support to 65 children ages birth to eight years old. Of the 49 year-end student progress reviews received, 45 students (92%) showed improvement in academic engagement, social and emotional skills, and/or school readiness.

#### BUNCOMBE

38 volunteers served 24,263 hours to 65 children in 11 schools, childcare centers, and Head Start Programs.

### FOSTER GRANDPARENT STORY

Foster "Grandma" Joy shares: I don't know WHEN I've had so much PURE DELIGHT as this year with MY kindergarten class. If only other people could see the countless special moments I get to experience. I take a little one by the hand and lead them to a hall bench to give them opportunities to calm down and tell me their problems—OR—I take them to a quiet table in the room and work with them on their writing or math, and they always improve when taught one-on-one. All such sessions end with kudos and smiles. When I hear unstoppable crying I've asked the teacher "Would you like some help?" They always say, "Yes!" So I take the child, and he simply stops crying. Then we talk. It's not a cure, but they get an opportunity to reset. One of my most difficult ones was pleading with me yesterday to take him to the quiet table to write. There truly are TOO FEW of us, my school has so many children who need.



# REGIONAL FUNDING

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

### HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE BLOCK GRANT (HCCBG)

These funds sustained in-home aide services, meals, transportation, and case management that kept vulnerable older adults safe and supported—especially critical during Helene recovery.

### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA)

FY25 Marked the end of the Title IIIB and IIIC ARPA Funding. The remaining funding was able to be spent down by our regional providers and was able to expand the services.

### STATE FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS – CHOOSING HOME

Region B received **\$195,548** in State Fiscal Recovery Funds or Choosing Home Funding which was made possible by remaining ARPA Funding. This funding was intended to keep older adults aging in place however the need of the funding shifted after Hurricane Helene. This funding was not only used to help keep older adults in their homes but to also help with Helene recovery. This funding went to provide services such as removing trees leftover from Helene, building ramps, installing grab bars, transfer benches, purchasing lift recliners, bed railings, repairs to electricity, plumbing, and even addressing pest control.

#### BUNCOMBE

HCCBG:  
**\$1,786,673**

##### ARPA:

- 6,132 additional meals
- 60 days of additional Adult Day Care
- **\$26,158** worth of Chore and Chore Enhanced services such as Helene Cleanup, Yardwork, Housekeeping, etc.

State Fiscal Funds:  
**\$73,330**

#### HENDERSON

HCCBG:  
**\$903,742**

##### ARPA:

- 1,499 additional meals
- 16 days of additional Adult Day Care

State Fiscal Funds:  
**\$48,887**



#### MADISON

HCCBG:  
**\$237,356**

##### ARPA:

- **\$19,454** in Non-Unit Home Delivered Meal Expenses which went to provided additional heating cabinets to help keep food at safe temperatures, upgrade to outlets to accommodate the new heating cabinets.

#### TRANSYLVANIA

HCCBG:  
**\$295,962**

State Fiscal Funds:  
**\$73,330**

# MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Money Follows the Person (MFP) is a state project that helps NC Medicaid-eligible North Carolinians living in inpatient facilities move into their own homes and communities with home and community-based supports.

### THE COMMUNITY INCLUSION SPECIALIST (CIS)

This role provides education, outreach, and support to increase awareness and utilization of the program. This role focuses outreach and education efforts to skilled nursing facilities while VAYA Health, who took over as the transition coordination entity in September 2025, has been assigned with providing outreach to the general community.

After Hurricane Helene, the CIS reached out to all facilities as phone lines opened up. In person visits were restricted due to safety concerns in some areas, but all the nursing facilities that were safe to travel to were provided with in person outreach.

The Hurricane impacted housing availability in the affected areas causing concerns for program participants. The CIS worked with VAYA Health to contact all participants and nursing facility representatives to assure them that the program was still diligently working towards their transition back to the community.

- Staff covers 37 counties including 170 skilled nursing facilities. This includes 28 facilities in Region B.
- Staff have contacted all facilities via phone, email, and in person to provide education and support.
- Staff provided outreach at community events in all counties for Region B.
- Staff provided education to counties' department of social services for Buncombe, Madison and Henderson counties.
- In FY25, skilled nursing facilities had staff turnover in their social services director position of approximately 30 percent. Turnover improved greatly from FY24 to FY25 but continues to provide opportunities for education of program.
- Staff provided webinar as well as in-person training for skilled nursing facility staff for all 37 counties. Offering program training both in person and virtually has continued to increase referrals to the program.

### TRANSITION COORDINATION

On September 18, 2024, Vaya Health began managing the Money Follows the Person Demonstration project as they were awarded the contract at the end of June 2024. From July 1, 2024 to September 18, 2024, the western coverage area, which included Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Madison, Rutherford, McDowell, Polk, Yancey and Mitchell counties, had two individuals transition, six who withdrew and one new referral. For the same time period, the central coverage area, which included Forsyth, Davie, Davis, Surry, Yakin and Stokes counties, received five new referrals and three withdrawals.

After September 18, all caseloads were transferred to Vaya Health staff with the exception of one. Land of Sky was contracted through June 30, 2025 to provide continued transition coordination services for one individual from Forsyth County due to the complicated nature of her case. After many months of hard work, construction, and coordination, it is very exciting to share that remaining individual transitioned on June 30, 2025. She moved into her own apartment after living in a hospital for six years, mostly confined to her one room the entire time. She had been living in a hospital because there was not a single skilled nursing facility in all of North Carolina that could manage her particular health needs (a quadriplegic with a ventilator and tracheostomy). She entered the program with no income, no home and no family or friends who were able to provide care. After close to two years, all of that changed. An open basement was converted into her own living quarters with a separate room for a live in caregiver. One the first day of her transition while sitting outside and enjoying the sunshine, she proudly proclaimed her patio her new happy place.





Hurricane Helene supplies that were distributed out in the community.



# DIGITAL NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

## DIGITAL EQUITY FOR AGING ADULTS

Launched in the wake of Helene, the Digital Navigator Program supported older adults across eight counties with recovery-related device distribution and digital skill-building.

- Community events & outreach efforts: 113
- Older adults directly connected: ~8,000
- One-on-one device and tech support: 100
- Most requested topics: Online safety, cellphone help

## HIGHLIGHT STORY - "BILL'S RESILIENCE"

After losing his home in Helene, Bill was connected to our program, where he received a computer and one-on-one support. A musician and writer, Bill now uses the device to regain independence and pursue creative healing.

"You are very competent and skilled at your job... I sincerely thank you and Land of the Sky for this wonderful gift."

- William H. Queen



# PROJECT C.A.R.E

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Western Office of Project C.A.R.E (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) received funding from the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services, the American Rescue Plan Act, and North Carolina Lifespan Respite Coalition to fund respite care services for dementia caregivers in fifteen WNC counties.

These dollars enabled family caregivers caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia to take a break from caregiving to tend to their own healthcare needs, spend time with other family members and friends, take mini vacations, get some exercise, and participate in other forms of self-care.

Staff provided 500+ callers with assistance, information and referral services. The number of caregivers who received respite funds & care consultation services:

	Caregiver Served	State	ARPA & Lifespan	Total Respite
BUNCOMBE	28	\$8,989	\$7,535	\$16,524
HENDERSON	15	\$3,318	\$4,378	\$7,696
MADISON	5	\$2,045	\$2,340	\$4,385
TRANSLYVANIA	1	\$500		\$500
REGIONS A & C	43	\$17,003	\$15,330	\$32,333

## HELENE RESPONSE

- Staff called and emailed clients in all 15 counties served by the Western Office of Project C.A.R.E. after the storm to find out how they had fared during Helene and to ask what help, if any, was needed.
- Staff helped organize donated relief supplies and distributed supplies to clients.

# VETERAN DIRECTED CARE

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Veterans Directed Care Program (VDC) serves Veterans of all ages and with all types of disabilities who are enrolled in the VA health care system or who do not require enrollment under 38 CFR 17.37, and who are in need of nursing home care. VDC provides Veterans the opportunity to receive home and community-based services, supporting them to live independently in their homes. Veterans manage their own monthly budget to directly hire workers and/or purchase goods and services to meet their needs in their home and community.

VDC is modeled after self-directed programs, a method of providing long-term services and supports in which individuals determine the services they receive. This includes hiring their own workers and purchasing goods and services from a pre-determined budget and spending plan. The individual receiving the services, or their authorized representative, is the employer of the workers providing services to the individual.

As a VDC provider, Land of Sky received four referrals throughout FY25. Of the four, two of the Veterans completed their enrollment into the program. As part of the program, Land of Sky receives a monthly fee for every enrolled Veteran for case management services.

# AGING OUTREACH

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Area Agency on Aging staff participated in 96 different outreach events with a total approximate audience of 7,005 individuals, including older adults, caregivers, healthcare professionals and aging providers. Area Agency on Aging staff published 24 editions of their bi-monthly email newsletter containing resources, events, and job/volunteer/funding opportunities to an audience of roughly 440 emails, with an average open rate of 40 percent.

Area Agency on Aging staff spent **\$13,661.87** to help older adults in the community that were affected by Hurricane Helene who could not access assistance elsewhere. This money was spent a variety of services; including a few roof repairs, HVAC and heating repairs, and replaced furniture and medical equipment that was lost in the storm.



# LOOKING AHEAD

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Area Agency on Aging at Land of Sky remains steadfast in its commitment to serve aging residents and their caregivers. Our FY25 efforts highlight how a coordinated, community-based approach can enhance dignity, resilience, and quality of life—no matter the challenge.

We are grateful to our partners, staff, volunteers, and the older adults who continue to inspire us through their strength and stories.

AAA Team pictured above, front to back, L-R: Jenna Sharritts, Kathryn Florack, Donna Case, Donna Thomason, Cori Search, Vicki Benavides, Zach Schmitt, Kelly Morgan, Edward Jones, Nancy Hogan, LeeAnne Tucker, Dee Heinmuller, Brea Kuykendall, Carol Allison, Stacy Friesland



AAA Director, LeeAnne Tucker  
and Foster Grandparent Program  
Manager, Stacy Friesland

AREA AGENCY  
ON AGING  
A DEPARTMENT OF  
LAND OF SKY



# STAFF

## LAND OF SKY REGIONAL COUNCIL



### ADMINISTRATION

Nathan Ramsey - Executive Director  
Erica Anderson - Deputy Executive Director  
Christina Giles - Administration and Communications Director  
Asha Rado - Administrative Support Specialist

Phyllis Utley - The Remembrance Project Program Coordinator

### FINANCE

Mike Blount - Finance Director  
Sherry Christenson - Payroll and Finance Coordinator  
Wanda Clark - Accounting Assistant  
Melissa Lindsey - Accounts Receivable Clerk  
Kim Ward - Accounts Payable Clerk



### MOUNTAIN AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Nathan Ramsey - MAWDB Director  
Barbara Darby - Assistant Workforce Director /  
Regional Business Services Leader  
Brandon Priester - Regional Services Representative,  
Youth  
Mark Sternal - Regional Services Representative  
Melissa Wright - Workforce Operations Director

### P20 COUNCIL

Emily Nicholson - P20 Council Director  
Melissa Zenz - YouthBuild Project Director  
Katlen Smith - P20 Administrative Support Specialist



### TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE CENTER

Vicki Jennings - Strategic Initiatives Director

### MOUNTAIN MOBILITY

Samantha Case - Transportation Specialist  
Charlie Lee - Transportation Specialist  
Buffey Smith - Transportation Specialist

### NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION

Glenda Brown - NEMT Manager  
Diana Boone - NEMT Specialist  
Tanya Carver - NEMT Specialist  
LeChelle Fore - NEMT Specialist

### LEADERSHIP TEAM



Erica Anderson



Mike Blount



Glenda Brown



Gene Ettison



Christina Giles



Vicki Jennings



Emily Nicholson



Nathan Ramsey



LeeAnne Tucker



Tristan Winkler



# ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Erica Anderson - ECD Director  
Mary Roderick - Planning Director  
Sara Nichols - Energy & Economic Development Manager  
Alexis Baker - Regional Planner  
Ian Baillie - Regional Planner  
Jane Margaret Bell - Regional Planner  
Jessika Bond - Regional Planner  
Harry Coleman - Housing Rehabilitation Project Manager  
Jacob Compher - Regional Planner  
Kaitland Finkle - Regional Planner  
Erin Hughes - Regional Project Manager  
Paul Moon - Regional Planner  
Jane Pies - Regional Housing Administrator  
Nicole Samu - GIS Coordinator  
Savanah Stone - Digital Education Program Coordinator  
Craig Varley - Digital Education Program Coordinator  
Brian White - Project Manager  
Kennedy Young - Project Manager

Anna Baechtold - Lead Fellow for North Carolina  
Olivia Rosen - Lead Fellow for North Carolina

## REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Tristan Winkler - French Broad River MPO Director  
Vicki Eastland - Land of Sky RPO Director  
Hannah Bagli - Transportation Planner  
Sandy Broadwill - Transportation Demand Management Coordinator  
Abigail Incze - Transit Grant Administrator  
Ada McGovern - Regional Safe Routes to School Coordinator  
Daisy O'Conner - Transportation Planner

## WASTE REDUCTION PARTNERS

Jan Hardin - Solid Waste Manager  
Irena Rado - WRP Office Manager  
Kimberly Van Niekerk - Energy Program Manager

# AREA AGENCY ON AGING

## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

LeeAnne Tucker - Area Agency on Aging Director  
Vicki Benavides - SCP Support Specialist  
Donna Case - Long Term Care Ombudsman  
Stacy Friesland - Foster Grandparent Program Manager  
Dee Heinmuller - Senior Companion Program (SCP) Manager  
Nancy Hogan - Project C.A.R.E. Manager  
Edward Jones - Family Caregiver Specialist  
Brea Kuykendall - Aging Program Specialist, Health Promotion  
Carol McLimans - Caregiver Program Associate  
Kelly Morgan - Senior Companion Caregiver Program Manager  
Zack Schmitt - Aging Program Specialist, Contracts  
Cori Search - Long Term Care Ombudsman  
Jenna Sharrits - Aging Program Specialist, Outreach  
Donna Thomason - Long Term Care Ombudsman

# CLIENT SERVICES

## CLIENT SERVICES

Vicki Jennings - Strategic Initiatives Director  
Brandon Manson - Peer Support Programs Director

## INSPIRE RECOVERY TO CAREERS

Melissa Berretta - INspire Peer Support Specialist  
Lee Gibson - INspire Peer Support Specialist, Cherokee Hospital  
Dillon Moss - INspire Project Liaison  
Antony Sluder - INspire Peer Support Specialist  
Amanda Von Litolff - INspire Peer Support Specialist

## GO PLACES

Gene Ettison - GO PLACES Project Director  
Lindsey Hensley - GO PLACES Project Coordinator





SINCE 1966

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