



Broadband Recovery Program Guidance Document

Funding to Rebuild, Repair or Replace Broadband
Infrastructure Damaged by Hurricane Helene

Funded by the Federal American Rescue Plan Act

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About the N.C. Department of Information Technology

The mission of the N.C. Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) is to promote a stronger North Carolina that connects customers, residents, business, education, and government. NCDIT provides technology services to state agencies and is charged with closing the digital divide by expanding availability of broadband services and promoting the adoption of affordable, high-speed internet through its Division of Broadband and Digital Opportunity.

The Broadband Infrastructure Office (office), housed within the NCDIT Division of Broadband and Digital Opportunity, is responsible for administering the broadband infrastructure programs funded under the American Rescue Plan Act.

1. Program Summary

The Broadband Recovery Program was established in Session Law 2025-89 and provides funding to rebuild, repair or replace broadband infrastructure damaged by Hurricane Helene. The newly created Broadband Recovery Program is one of five broadband infrastructure programs funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, appropriated by the N.C. General Assembly and administered by the office. Funding for these broadband programs comes from State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) plus \$273 million from the Capital Projects Fund (CPF), both from the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Funding is allocated as follows:

- GREAT Grant (\$350 million, SLFRF)
- Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) Program (\$400 million, SLFRF and CPF)
- Stop-Gap Solutions Program (\$86 million, SLFRF)
- *Broadband Pole Replacement Program (\$100 million, SLFRF Revenue Replacement)
- Broadband Recovery Program (Hurricane Helene) (up to \$50 million from the Broadband Pole Replacement program funds)

**The Broadband Pole Replacement Program is also referred to as the Broadband Make Ready Accelerator Program.*

The primary function of the GREAT, CAB and Stop-Gap programs is to provide funding for broadband deployment to unserved or underserved households and businesses across the state. The Broadband Recovery Program provides funding to rebuild, replace or repair broadband infrastructure damaged by Hurricane Helene as follows:

Session Law 2025-89

SECTION 4.3.(e) The Department of Information Technology may provide emergency funding to communications service providers to rebuild, repair, or replace broadband infrastructure damaged by Hurricane Helene, including reimbursement of costs already

incurred for rebuilding, repairing, or replacing broadband infrastructure, provided that all of the following apply:

- (1) An applicant for funding under this section shall only be permitted to recover costs that are not subject to reimbursement from another source of external funding, including insurance.*
- (2) The Department may cap reimbursement at a portion of the costs incurred based upon evaluation of considerations such as the number of applications anticipated compared to funds available.*
- (3) Priority shall be given to restoration of broadband service.*

SECTION 4.3.(f) The Department may use up to fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) of the funds available from the Broadband Make Ready Accelerator appropriation in S.L. 2021-180 for the emergency funding described in subsection (e) of this section. Funds shall be used in compliance with applicable federal guidelines associated with the use of federal funds. The Department may use its emergency procurement authority provided in 09 NCAC 06B .1302 to procure any goods or services in accordance with subsection (e) of this section and shall document the request for funding, the emergency situation or need, the area to be served, and the community's need for the procurement.

Funding Source and Funding Availability

N.C. Session Law 2021-180 appropriated \$100 million from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 for the Broadband Pole Replacement program (also referred to as the Broadband Make Ready Accelerator Program). This appropriation has been designated by the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management under the revenue loss eligible use category. Session Law 2025-89 subsequently allows NCDIT to utilize up to \$50 million of the funds available in the Broadband Make Ready Accelerator program for the broadband recovery efforts related to Hurricane Helene (titled in this guidance as the Broadband Recovery Program). The NCDIT Broadband Infrastructure Office will administer these funds in accordance with the requirements of state law and the SLFRF Treasury Guidance relevant to revenue loss funds, and applicable provisions of the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200).

2. Eligible Applicants

- Eligible applicants are providers of broadband infrastructure and services, including cooperatively organized entities.
- Eligible applicants include last-mile or middle-mile broadband providers providing service in impacted areas as demonstrated by Broadband Data Collection data from the Federal Communications Commission that reflects broadband availability to broadband serviceable locations or Community Anchor Institutions in impacted areas. Middle mile providers that provide transport only may also be considered if funding is available.
- Applicants must have had existing broadband infrastructure in western North Carolina prior to Sept. 27, 2024.

- Applicants must have an active Sam.gov registration.

3. Eligible Areas

Funding for rebuilding, repairing or replacing broadband infrastructure damaged by Hurricane Helene is only provided for infrastructure located in the eligible areas. Eligible areas for this program are areas designated under the major disaster declaration for Hurricane Helene as declared by the Governor and approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as follows:

The 39 counties designated under a disaster declaration for Hurricane Helene include Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Catawba, Cherokee, Clay, Cleveland, Forsyth, Gaston, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Iredell, Jackson, Lee, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Nash, Polk, Rowan, Rutherford, Stanly, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Union, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, Yancey and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians.

In the event of insufficient funding to cover all reimbursement requests, priority may be given to reimbursements for counties with the most significant infrastructure damage. (Damage to roads and electric infrastructure may also be considered as data points in this analysis.)

4. Eligible Expenditures

The majority of eligible expenses to be covered by this program should be directly related to the construction of broadband infrastructure, including installation, acquiring or updating easements, backhaul infrastructure, testing, engineering, and any other costs associated with securing a lease to collocate infrastructure on public or private property or structures, but not including actual monthly lease payments.

Eligible expenses will be considered as follows, with the following priorities:

Priority on Restoration of Service

The priority for reimbursements under this program is for expenses related to restoration of broadband service, as stated in the legislation, including:

- Labor, equipment, materials, construction and infrastructure costs related to *temporary* restoration of service.
- Labor, equipment, materials, construction and infrastructure costs related to rebuilding for *permanent* restoration of service.

Reimbursement will not be provided for broadband infrastructure projects to last-mile locations outside of the applicant's original footprint. Reimbursement requests should only include infrastructure to restore service to broadband serviceable locations or Community Anchor Institutions served by the broadband provider prior to Hurricane Helene. Funding should not be requested for service to new locations. Because the

legislation references broadband service, expenses related to restoration of broadband service that was provided at speeds of 100/20 Mbps or higher, prior to Hurricane Helene, and service restored at speeds of 100/20 Mbps or higher will be prioritized.

Expenses related to repair, rebuild and replacement of middle mile infrastructure or network transport for restoration of service may be considered, if funds are available. Funding should not be requested for new fiber routes unless original routes are required to be redesigned/rerouted due to Helene damage.

Insurance deductibles for Helene incurred damage may be considered for reimbursement under this program if funds are available. Filing costs related to FEMA applications may be considered if not covered by FEMA, if funds are available.

Other Potential Eligible Expenses

Expenses related to exceptional administrative and operational costs during the emergency may be considered if funds are available. Explanation and justification of these costs will be required.

Emergency temporary services for high-speed internet or voice communications implemented immediately during the active emergency may be considered for reimbursement in limited cases regardless of technology type utilized including implementation of wireless, satellite, cell on wheels, or other technologies to provide immediate high-speed internet or voice service for broadband provider operations or community use during the emergency may be considered.

Other technology types: Areas damaged by Hurricane Helene may have been receiving high-speed internet via technology types not providing broadband speeds of 100/20 Mbps, such as coax, copper, and fixed wireless technologies. While the legislation speaks to the restoration of broadband service, some restoration of high-speed internet infrastructure may be considered in limited cases if funding is available.

Expenses related to efforts for hardening, redundancy and resiliency while replacing or rebuilding infrastructure may be considered, if funds are available.

Expenses for rebuilding, repairing or replacement work that is not yet complete may be considered for future reimbursement on a case-by-case basis, with justification for why this work is not yet complete, but priority will be placed on projects that are already complete.

Ineligible Expenses

Applicants cannot request funding for repairing, rebuilding or replacement expenses that are being reimbursed by another entity, such as private insurance or FEMA.

Revenue loss as a result of the damage caused by Hurricane Helene is not eligible for reimbursement.

5. Application Process

Applications and reimbursement requests for the Broadband Recovery Program will be accepted in two phases. Applicants are required to submit an application form and estimated costs template during the initial window for consideration. If approved, applicants will be invited to submit subsequent reimbursement requests.

Application Form (Due by 11:59 p.m. on Nov. 24, 2025)

Interested eligible applicants who wish to be considered for the program must submit the following items by 11:59p.m. on Nov. 24, 2025, to participate in the program:

- **Completed Broadband Recovery Program Application Form**
- **Estimated Costs Template** (or alternatively approved data format)

The Broadband Recovery Program application form and estimated costs template:

- serve as an expression of interest
- provide estimated total costs to be requested for reimbursement
- provide types of expenses being requested
- indicate counties where restoration has occurred
- provide additional context on rebuilding, repairing and replacement work by the applicant
- provide an opportunity for applicants to submit feedback on the eligible expenditures and program prioritization.

After receipt of the application forms, the office will evaluate responses received and demand for the program, as well as any feedback from applicants on eligible expenditures and prioritization of expenses. Additional information may be requested from applicants during this evaluation phase. In this phase applicants may be requested to supply information to demonstrate financial solvency, no outstanding compliance issues with other infrastructure programs, no overdue taxes, etc., if this information is not already on file with the office.

Reimbursement Requests

After applications are evaluated and initial applications are identified for potential award, applicants will be invited to submit reimbursement requests for expenses identified by NCDIT as a priority under the program. At this stage, selected applicants will be required to submit:

- Financial documentation required for reimbursement
- Documentation to demonstrate initial damage and completed repairs

The reimbursement request form and requirements for documentation will be released by the office prior to this submission window.

Compliance with Funding Requirements

Upon submission of the reimbursement request, applicants will also need to agree to the terms and conditions required with the funding in alignment with federal American

Rescue Plan Act rules, state legislation and other state conditions. These terms and conditions will be released prior to this submission window.

6. Funding Awards and Prioritization for Funding

- Application requests will be evaluated based on prioritization of eligible expenses as outlined in the [Eligible Expenditures section](#) of this guidance.
- In addition, in the event of insufficient funding to cover all reimbursement requests, priority may be given to reimbursements for counties with the most significant infrastructure damage, as outlined in the [Eligible Areas section](#) of this guidance.
- As outlined in legislation, *NCDIT may cap reimbursement at a portion of the costs incurred based upon evaluation of considerations such as the number of applications anticipated compared to funds available.*
- Consideration may also be made to the size of the company and relative percentage of footprint impacted.

7. Instructions for Application Form Submission

Interested eligible applicants who wish to be considered for the program must submit a completed [Broadband Recovery Program Application Form](#) and [Estimated Costs Template](#) by 11:59p.m. on Nov. 24, 2025, to participate in the program. Incomplete applications and applications received after the deadline may be ineligible for consideration in the program unless funding remains available for an additional application round.

Applications should be submitted through the Broadband Infrastructure Office's Data Exchange as outlined below. Please submit questions regarding the application process via email to technicalassistance@nc.gov.

Broadband Infrastructure Office's (BIO) Data Exchange Instructions

Applicants for the Broadband Recovery Program should submit their application form and estimated costs through NCDIT's BIO Data Exchange cloud storage folders for the secure upload of files to private folders that are only accessible to the broadband provider to which they are assigned. For context, the BIO Data Exchange has also been used to collect information from broadband providers for mapping data related to the other recent broadband infrastructure programs and for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program.

These folders should be used by broadband providers for the following data exchange purposes:

- Upload the [Application Form](#)
- Upload the [Estimated Costs Template](#)
- Upload any supporting documentation (supporting documentation is not required at this phase)

Upon the identification of the correct data contact person(s) at each participating broadband provider, secure login credentials and instructions will be individually provided. These credentials can then be used to upload the necessary files from an internet browser. Files should be uploaded using the NCDIT Broadband Data Exchange web application at assets.gis.nc.gov/apps/ncbio-data-exchange/index.html. Credentials should be requested at least three days prior to the submission deadline to ensure time for assignment of credentials and submission of materials.

Designated data contacts (including name, email and phone number) should be emailed to technicalassistance@nc.gov.

Disclaimer

The office reserves the right to amend this guidance if further clarification on items is needed or pursuant to any potential changes to relevant session law. While we have worked to ensure that the content of the guidance is complete and accurate, the office acknowledges that errors and omissions can occur. The information contained in this document is not legal or professional advice. While the office is available to answer questions and will attempt to help resolve any concerns, we cannot provide legal advice to applicants.