

# North Carolina Helene Debris Recovery Disposal Grant

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS N.C. Department of Environmental Quality Division of Waste Management

The purpose of this grant program is to assist Hurricane Helene-impacted communities with shortening the timeframes necessary to address and/or fund remaining Hurricane Helene debris clean-up, especially where a responsible party is difficult to identify. This funding may prevent or resolve confusion or disputes over which entities are responsible for funding various clean-up efforts. The Division of Waste Management (DWM) administers the Debris Recovery & Disposal (DRD) grant program through funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Grant D1-05D52025, Hazardous Waste Management State Program Support (66.801) through the American Relief Act of 2025. Successful applicants to the DRD grant program will enter into contracts with NCDEQ (the pass-through entity) to become subrecipients of the EPA grant. This Request for Proposal (RFP) and the resultant grant contract include applicable federal requirements that pass down to the grantee as a subrecipient of EPA funding, as outlined at <https://www.epa.gov/grants/epa-subaward-cross-cutter-requirements>.

With the release of this RFP, DWM is seeking proposals that help western North Carolina communities shorten timeframes and/or fund remaining Hurricane Helene solid waste disaster debris clean-up and removal projects that are not covered by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or other funding sources. This will be especially essential in scenarios where a responsible party is difficult to identify and may prevent or resolve conflict or disputes over which entities are responsible for funding various clean-up efforts. Solid waste management is a critical component of the recovery process, ensuring proper debris removal and disposal to protect public health and the environment. The grant will enhance North Carolina's ability to assist communities in recovering from Hurricane Helene and to prepare for future disasters. Applicants should carefully read this entire RFP prior to submitting a proposal.

**Grant Funding:** Up to \$3,000,000

**Match:** None required

**Phase 1 Application Period:** Open through September 14, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

**Project Period:** Up to 3 years

**Contact:** Jason Watkins at [jason.watkins@deq.nc.gov](mailto:jason.watkins@deq.nc.gov) or 336-776-9674;  
Chris Hollinger at [chris.hollinger@deq.nc.gov](mailto:chris.hollinger@deq.nc.gov) or 919-707-8284

### **What Types of Projects are Eligible?**

DWM seeks viable, well-planned proposals from North Carolina local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) impacted by Hurricane Helene.

Grant funding may be used for storm generated solid waste debris collection, storage, and material size and volume reduction as well as for the final disposal of non-hazardous waste, provided these costs are not covered by FEMA.

Eligible projects include the collection and disposal of non-hazardous waste, and the clearing and management of debris from shorelines, floodplains, farmland, compost management operations, residential cleanup areas, and local park lands. Debris removal for wildfire mitigation will be considered if it involves elimination of a potential, direct impact to solid waste infrastructure such as a landfill or transfer station. This list is not

exhaustive.

Applicants must submit documentation demonstrating their eligibility and capacity to carry out the proposed activities. Only expenditures directly related to approved debris cleanup and solid waste management tasks are eligible for reimbursement under this grant program.

### **Eligible and Ineligible Expenses**

Approved uses of DRD grant funds include solid waste debris collection, storage, reduction, and final disposal (if not covered by FEMA); non-hazardous waste collection and disposal; clearing, management, and disposal of non-hazardous waste from shorelines, floodplains, farmland, compost management sites, residential clean-up sites, local park lands. Grant funds may be used for the operation and maintenance of currently owned equipment, contracted equipment costs, or the acquisition of rental equipment, in support of the collection, storage, reduction, and final disposal of Helene debris.

Grant funds may not be used for expenses which are not related to Helene debris, such as employee salaries, administrative expenses such as overhead, utility costs, contracted collection costs, and / or payment for other contracted cleanup or disposal services. Grant funding may not be used for purchasing equipment which would be used beyond the scope of the project (For example, the grant funds could not be used to purchase a new grinder or chipper).

### **How Grant Funds Work**

All DRD grant funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis. Purchases must be made during the grant contract period and requests for reimbursement can be made after the grantee has completed and paid for grant purchases. State and local sales taxes are not reimbursable and should be excluded from grant expenditure totals. DWM will continue to reimburse grantees until 90% of the award amount has been expended, withholding 10% of funds until receipt of an approved final report.

### **Available Funding**

Applicants may request any amount of grant funding up to a maximum of **\$3,000,000** per project. The total available funding for the Solid Waste DRD grant program is \$18,000,000.

- **Solid Waste Debris Removal Grants fund allocation:**
  - Up to \$5 million allocated to non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
  - Remaining funds will be allocated to local governments.

### **Cash Match**

DRD grants do not require a cash match, but the grantee is responsible for covering any project costs that exceed the awarded grant amount or fall outside the list of eligible expenses.

### **Contract Period:**

Successful grant applicants will be required to enter a grant contract with NCDEQ and will become a subrecipient of the EPA funding. The contract period may be one, two, or three years depending on the scope and timeline of the proposed project. All projects must be completed no later than June 30, 2030. Grantees must expend funds within the contract period unless the grant contract end date is extended by written agreement between the applicant and NCDEQ. Extensions are possible but not guaranteed and may not extend beyond June 30, 2030.

### **Who is Eligible?**

Local governments, defined as counties, municipalities, councils of governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in counties with a Tropical Storm Helene FEMA disaster declaration ([D-4827](#)) are eligible to apply for funding from the DRD grant program.

Eligible applicants for this grant include local governments and NGOs engaged in solid waste management activities related to Hurricane Helene recovery efforts. Eligible entities must demonstrate capacity for managing non-hazardous waste, including debris cleanup and disposal, and must be able to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

Eligible counties include:

Alexander County	Clay County	Lincoln County	Stanly County
Alleghany County	Cleveland County	Macon County	Surry County
Ashe County	Forsyth County	Madison County	Swain County
Avery County	Gaston County	McDowell County	Transylvania County
Buncombe County	Graham County	Mecklenburg County	Union County
Burke County	Haywood County	Mitchell County	Watauga County
Cabarrus County	Henderson County	Nash County	Wilkes County
Caldwell County	Iredell County	Polk County	Yadkin County
Catawba County	Jackson County	Rowan County	Yancey County
Cherokee County	Lee County	Rutherford County	

Communities outside the counties listed above are not eligible for funding through this grant program. Federal and state agencies, universities and colleges are not eligible for funding through this grant program.

**Conditions of Submittals**

- *At this time, only one proposal per eligible entity will be accepted.* Applicants may combine funding requests for multiple types of projects into one proposal. Available funding limits still apply.
- Joint proposals, in which multiple local governments or a local government and an NGO partner on a project, are encouraged. For instance, if a local government chose to partner/contract with an NGO for small private property debris (PPDR) removal projects. If a local government is involved in a joint project, it cannot submit any other proposals at this time.

**How to Submit Proposals:**

One electronic copy of the proposal must be submitted by email to [chris.hollinger@deq.nc.gov](mailto:chris.hollinger@deq.nc.gov). Please submit Microsoft Word (preferred) or Adobe (PDF) files. Receipt of all acceptable proposals will be acknowledged by email. *If you do not receive a confirmation email, contact Chris Hollinger at (919) 707-8284 as soon as possible.* It is the responsibility of anyone submitting a proposal to contact DWM if they do not receive confirmation. Please contact Chris Hollinger if submittal of an electronic version of a grant proposal presents a hardship.

**Proposal Due Date:**

DWM will accept proposals in phases. Proposals may be submitted to DWM at any time within the first phase of the grant application period ending September 14, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. DWM may award grant funding to successful proposals prior to the first phase cutoff date. Subsequent phases will be announced after evaluation of the first phase is complete, depending on funding availability.

**Word of Advice for Grant Writing:**

Funding is limited, and it is anticipated that the DRD grant proposals will be highly competitive. For this reason, it is important that projects are well-planned and that applicants provide all information as outlined in the Required Proposal Format section. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Jason Watkins ([jason.watkins@deq.nc.gov](mailto:jason.watkins@deq.nc.gov), (336) 776-9674) or Chris Hollinger ([chris.hollinger@deq.nc.gov](mailto:chris.hollinger@deq.nc.gov), (919) 707-8284) to discuss potential grant projects prior to submitting a proposal.**

## **Required Proposal Format:**

The following outline indicates what applicants *must* include in their proposal for it to be considered complete. Proposals that fail to provide all the required information or that fail to follow this format may not compete well and may not be considered for funding.

- Project Title
- Applicant Contact Information to include:
  - Name and title of main contact
  - Organization
  - Address
  - Phone number
  - Email address

- Date of Proposal Submittal

- Project Description

Provide responses to each of the following prompts below. Applicants are encouraged to provide a clear project description and consider the award criteria as they describe the project elements. *(Relevant award criteria listed below; see page 8 for award criteria description and point values)*

1. Describe the project need and impact, including describing the extent and nature of the Hurricane Helene-related debris to be removed; identifying the communities, infrastructure, and natural resources most affected; providing evidence to demonstrate the urgency for the debris removal, such as photos, assessments, etc. *(Demonstration of Need)*
2. Describe the scope of the project: Outline the proposed debris removal activities; define the geographic area to be cleared, including maps or boundaries, if possible; estimate the volume of debris to be removed; describe the types or categories of debris (vegetative, construction/demolition, waterway debris, household debris, etc.); provide your timeline for debris removal, sorting, and storage or disposal. Indicate which, if any, parts of the project will be completed by a contractor. If any contractors have already been selected, please identify them. *(Planning; Debris Removal Impact)*
3. Explain the methods, equipment, and tools to be used for clearing the debris. Describe how the debris will be reduced, stored, or disposed. Describe any applicable environmental or safety protocols you or any contractors will follow. Outline your monitoring and quality-control processes. *(Planning; Debris Removal Impact)*
4. Explain the project's measurable community benefits and any potential long-term environmental benefits. *(Demonstration of Need; Efficiency/Cost Effectiveness)*
5. Describe your organization's experience with disaster recovery or debris removal; describe staff qualifications and roles. If using any contractors, describe their experience with disaster recovery or debris removal. Or, if contractors are not selected at the time of application submittal, indicate how experience with disaster recovery and debris removal will be incorporated into the process of selecting one. *(Planning; Efficiency/Cost Effectiveness)*
6. Identify major risks (weather, hazardous materials, access limitations) and your strategies to mitigate them. Describe how you and your contractors (if applicable) will comply with federal, state, and local regulations related to debris removal and environmental protection; outline your plan for documentation and reporting. *(Planning)*
7. Estimate the volume or tonnage of debris expected to be removed during the project's lifecycle and explain how you came up with the estimate. *(Demonstration of Need; Debris Removal Impact)*
8. Describe your organization's ability to meet monitoring, reporting, and evaluation requirements of the project (Budget and performance tracking and reporting; reporting/documentation

methods; metrics; etc.) *(Planning; Efficiency/Cost Effectiveness)*

9. A line-item Project Budget is requested below. Explain how budget estimates were calculated; describe any cost-saving or efficiency measures; indicate how your organization will cover any costs not allowed under this grant. *(Planning; Efficiency/Cost Effectiveness)*
10. Describe any partnerships associated with the proposed project. Please include documentation of support from any partner entities. *(Joint Effort)*

- **Project Term:** Indicate the preferred contract term of the project: one-year, two-year, or three-year.
- **Timeline:** Provide a simple bulleted list showing approximate dates for major project milestones. The timeline must show milestones over the course of the proposed project term and include quarterly status reports and a comprehensive final report. Please follow the example below:
  - November 15, 2026: Contract start date.
  - November 15, 2026: Coordination of debris removal contractors, volunteers, staff hired for equipment operations, etc. Submit quarterly report to DWM.
  - January 1, 2027: Debris removal project launched.
  - February 1, 2027: Submit quarterly report to DWM.
  - May 1, 2027: Submit quarterly report to DWM.
  - June 30, 2027: Submit all invoices and draft Final Report to DWM.
  - August 30, 2027: Contract end date. Submit Final Report to DWM.
- **Project Budget:** Please submit a table following the example below. The project budget table should include an itemized list of intended expenditures and estimated costs. Total row should reflect the total grant project cost and indicate if additional funds will be provided by the applicant.

Project Elements	Requested Grant Funds*	Additional Funds Covered by Grantee	Total Grant Project
Contract Vegetative debris removed to TDSR for processing (25,000 cu yards x \$13/cy)	\$ 325,000		\$ 325,000
Contract C&D debris removal to final disposal (10,000 cubic yards x \$15/cy)	\$150,000		\$150,000
Contract TDSR site management (includes remediation/stabilization)	\$ 75,000		\$ 75,000
Contract Processing (Grinding/Chipping) of Vegetative Debris at TDSR for Final Disposal (\$3/cy)	\$ 75,000		\$ 75,000
Contract Vegetative Debris final disposition (10,000 cubic yards x \$10/cy)	\$100,000		\$100,000
Yearly salary for contractor oversight and reporting**		\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
<b>Total Grant Project Budget</b>	<b>\$ 725,000</b>	<b>\$ 150,000</b>	<b>\$ 875,000</b>

\* *State and local sales taxes are not reimbursable expenditures and should not be included as part of proposed grant budgets.*

\*\**Salaries are not eligible for grant expenditures and must be covered by the grantee.*

- **Certification:** Include the following certification in accordance with 2 CFR 200.415(b):  
 “I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the information provided herein is true, complete, and accurate. I am aware that the provision of false, fictitious, or fraudulent information, or the omission of any material fact, may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative consequences including, but not limited to violations of U.S. Code Title 18, Sections 2, 1001, 1343 and Title 31,

Sections 3729-3730 and 3801-3812.”

## **How are Proposals Evaluated?**

A selection committee will use the pre-established Award Criteria identified below to rank proposals and make award decisions. DWM will review proposals upon submittal and anticipates notifying the applicant of the award decision within three months.

### **Award Criteria:**

Applicants are encouraged to consider the following Award Criteria as they develop their grant proposals.

1. **Demonstration of Need (0-30 points):** Does the proposed project address a specific equipment or debris removal need for the community? Will the project result in the faster debris clean-up and removal efforts in the region? Does the project address an unmet debris removal need caused by Hurricane Helene?
2. **Planning (0-25 points):** Did the Project Description include all necessary elements as outlined in the Required Proposal Format? Is the proposal accurately descriptive, well-researched, and backed by valid facts and assumptions? Is the project consistent with debris removal best management practices?
3. **Debris Reduction Impact (0-25 points):** Will the project contribute substantially toward removal of debris? Will the project position the community to be more resilient from future hazards and storm and weather events?
4. **Efficiency / Cost-effectiveness (0-15 points):** Does the project improve the long-term resiliency of the community’s debris removal program? Will the project improve the efficiency or cost-effectiveness of the local debris removal program? Does the project make investments that will continue to serve the community for years to come?
5. **Joint Effort (0 or 5 points):** One-party proposals will receive zero (0) points; multi-party proposals will receive five (5) points.

## **If a Proposal is Selected for Funding**

DWM anticipates that applicants selected to receive grant funding will be notified within three months of proposal submission. Upon consideration of the proposals received, DWM reserves the right to award grant amounts that are lower than the amount requested by an applicant.

DWM will notify the applicant with a formal offer by e-mail. The applicant must accept or decline the offer. The following will occur once the offer of grant funding is accepted:

- DWM may work with applicants to revise initially submitted proposals before entering into a grant contract. Any changes to initial proposals must be approved by DWM and the applicant and the resultant final SWDR grant proposal will become an attachment to the grant contract.
- Successful applicants will be required to:
  - Provide their federal tax ID number.
  - Provide the federal Unique Entity Identifier. Applicants can register to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier from the System for Award Management site: <https://sam.gov/>
  - Register or confirm access to your government or organization's NCID account. For more information, visit: <https://it.nc.gov/support/accounts>.
  - Submit a Conflict-of-Interest Policy using the template available at the following link or submitting a copy of your organization's existing policy: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/environmental-assistance-and-customer-service/recycling-and-materials-management/programs-offered/grants-recycling-businesses/grant-contract-forms-and-information>.
  - Submit a No Overdue Taxes Certification with notarized signature using the form available at: <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/environmental-assistance-and-customer-service/recycling-and-materials-management/programs-offered/grants-recycling-businesses/grant-contract-forms-and-information>.
  - Submit a Substitute W-9 form, if necessary, as required by the North Carolina Finance System: <https://www.ncosc.gov/state-suppliers>.
- All applicants selected for funding will undergo a risk assessment which evaluates factors such as prior experience in managing grants, previous audits, personnel, and policies or procedures for execution and oversight. Applicants will be required to complete a Risk Assessment Questionnaire to collect necessary information. The results of the risk assessment, along with the scope and complexity of the approved project, will determine the level of monitoring throughout the course of the project, subject to adjustments at the discretion of the DWM grant manager.
- **Monitoring and Compliance**
  - Solid Waste Section (SWS) grant management staff will monitor subrecipient projects to ensure compliance with EPA grant terms and conditions.
  - Funds will be distributed to subrecipients on a reimbursement basis for approved expenditures, documented with paid invoices and proof of payment.
- All applicants selected for funding will undergo a compliance review to ensure that they do not have an outstanding Notice of Violation (NOV) related to North Carolina solid waste statutes and rules. Any outstanding NOVs must be corrected to the satisfaction of the N.C. Division of Waste Management (DWM) prior to any grant being awarded.
- DWM will submit a request through the NCDEQ contract processing system for a grant contract. Grantees must act to execute the resultant grant contract without excessive delay.

## **Other General Terms and Conditions:**

All grantees are subject to the following terms and conditions. Most of these terms and conditions will be outlined in the grant contract.

- **Project status updates and site visits:** grantees should expect frequent communication with their DWM grant manager and site visits from DWM and/or EPA staff. Grantees should be able to provide project status updates upon request.
- **Quarterly reports:** quarterly status reports will be required throughout the duration of the contract

period. DWM grant manager will provide a report template.

- **Final reports:** a comprehensive final report is required at the end of the project. A draft must be submitted to DWM at least 30 days prior to the contract end date and a final report must be submitted by the contract end date. DWM grant manager will provide a report template.
- **Certifications:** subrecipients must certify to DWM whenever applying for funds, requesting payment, and submitting financial reports: “I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the information provided herein is true, complete, and accurate. I am aware that the provision of false, fictitious, or fraudulent information, or the omission of any material fact, may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative consequences including, but not limited to violations of U.S. Code Title 18, Sections 2, 1001, 1343 and Title 31, Sections 3729-3730 and 3801-3812.”
- **Reimbursement:** distribution of grant funds is on a reimbursement basis, and instructions will be provided by the DWM grant manager. Reimbursement requests must include copies of invoices and proof that the grantee has made payment. Proof of payment may include copies of canceled checks or other financial reports showing that funds were spent. State and local sales taxes are not reimbursable, may not be counted towards expenditure requirements, and should be excluded from reimbursement requests. The amount of actual grant payments may be prorated for projects and / or project elements that come in under budget.
- **Final 10 Percent of Funds:** DWM will continue to reimburse grantees until 90 percent of the grant award amount has been expended, withholding 10 percent of grant funds until receipt of an approved final report. The final report must be received and approved prior to the end date of the contract.
- **Publications:** all documents and publications associated with a grant contract should be sent to the DWM grant manager for review and approval prior to printing or publishing and should be printed on recycled paper containing at least 30 percent post-consumer content.
- **Use of EPA and NCDEQ Logos:** If the EPA and/or NCDEQ logo(s) are appearing along with logos from other participating entities on websites, outreach materials, or reports, it must not be prominently displayed to imply that any of the subrecipient's activities are being conducted by the EPA and/or NCDEQ. Instead, the EPA and/or NCDEQ logo(s) should be accompanied with a statement indicating that the [Subrecipient NAME] received financial support from the EPA under an NCDEQ Assistance Agreement. More information is available at: <https://www.epa.gov/stylebook/using-epa-seal-and-logo#policy>
- **Extensions / Amendments:** no-cost time extensions are possible but not guaranteed for grant contracts. Grantees seeking no-cost time extensions should submit a request for a time extension at least sixty (60) days prior to the contract end date. Extensions beyond June 30, 2030, are not possible.