



# Rising Above

*Resilience and Recovery Among  
Western North Carolina Nonprofits  
After Hurricane Helene*

A REPORT FOR





**A report to WNC Nonprofit Pathways**  
**with support from Dogwood Health Trust**  
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**Amy Jonason, PhD**  
Senior Consultant

**Tim Green, PhD**  
Director of Research  
& Data

**Molly Kaminski, MCRP**  
Research Consultant

**Parker Kinard, MPH**  
Research Associate

**Ben Abdo, MCRP**  
Research Consultant

Design and layout  
**Magda Castría**

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# Executive Summary

## Purpose and methods

This report presents findings from a survey of nonprofit leaders across Western North Carolina on the short- and long-term impacts of Hurricane Helene, the effects of recent federal policy shifts, and current organizational needs. Conducted online from May 28 to July 6, 2025, it was distributed via email to more than 2,000 nonprofit professionals and promoted on social media. The survey ultimately received 251 responses from a diverse set of nonprofit organizations across the region.

## Our findings

### SHORT-TERM IMPACTS OF HURRICANE HELENE

- Almost six in 10 organizations experienced some type of physical damage to their property.** *Though most of that damage was relatively minor, respondents still collectively reported over \$100 million in damage.*
- Amid major operational disruptions, over half of responding organizations pivoted to providing frontline assistance to people impacted by the hurricane.** *Assistance included food, supplies, medical aid, and administrative services such as filing FEMA claims.*
- Staff and volunteers experienced the hurricane's impacts alongside the people they serve.** *They faced the same trials and disruptions as their neighbors – mourning losses, coping with damaged homes, and going days or weeks without power or water – while still showing up to help their communities rebuild. Though many found meaning in the work, it took an emotional toll.*

## RECOVERY PROGRESS AND LONG-TERM IMPACTS

- Philanthropic foundations led in providing disaster assistance.** *Three-quarters of responding organizations have received disaster assistance since the hurricane, with foundation assistance leading the way.*
- Staff capacity has been the greatest obstacle to organizations' recovery.** *About half of respondents said that issues such as burnout are complicating the recovery process.*
- Organizations are adding long-term disaster recovery and preparedness to their work, with a focus on building community and environmental resilience.** *Other resilience strategies include emergency readiness, partnerships, fiscal health and supporting staff wellness.*
- Organizations still face critical resource gaps from the hurricane.** *Funding, support for staff mental health, and staff capacity top the list of remaining needs.*

## IMPACTS OF FEDERAL SHIFTS

- More than half of organizations have been impacted by federal policy shifts in 2025.** *Fifty-four percent have made a change to finances, programs, or staffing due to federal shifts.*
- Financial changes are the most common reported impact.** *Many organizations have been increasing their fundraising efforts or donor asks.*
- Most organizations have not made staffing changes — yet.** *Some have reorganized and reduced staff hours, a possible harbinger of future cuts if federal changes persist.*
- Respondents are seeing high levels of fear, stress, and uncertainty in their communities.** *These impacts, in turn, increase the strain on staff and on organizational resources.*

## WHAT NONPROFITS NEED NOW

- 1. Despite staffing shortfalls and financial challenges, a majority of organizations say their programs are running smoothly.**  
*Leaders remain confident and optimistic about navigating current challenges.*
- 2. Organizations need the most support in areas related to generating revenue.** *Almost six in 10 need fundraising support, followed by support for donor relationship development and grant writing.*
- 3. Beyond funding, nonprofit leaders seek peer connection, crisis support, and mental health services to sustain their work.**  
*They also want greater capacity, collaboration and visibility to strengthen their impact.*

Western North Carolina's nonprofits have been essential to the region's recovery from Hurricane Helene, even as the storm and its impacts have taken a heavy toll on staff, volunteers, and their communities. Continued support for operations, staffing, and mental health will be critical to sustain their work and the communities they serve.



## Introduction

Hurricane Helene brought catastrophe to Western North Carolina. After landfall in Florida on September 25, 2024, the storm tracked northeastward and moved into the region, bringing intense rainfall, extreme winds, and record flooding. Parts of the region experienced 20-30 inches of rain in three days, an amount consistent with a 1-in-1,000-year event.<sup>i</sup> Extreme rain triggered 34 flash flood emergencies and over 2,000 landslides, the vast majority concentrated in Western North Carolina.<sup>ii</sup> The French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers peaked at 24.8 feet and 27.3 feet, smashing record totals from over a century ago.<sup>iii</sup>

These events caused fatalities as well as severe damage to infrastructure and the environment. In North Carolina, 108 deaths were linked directly or indirectly to the storm – 94 of them in Western North Carolina.<sup>iv</sup> The hurricane damaged 73,000 homes in the state, as well as roads and bridges in more than 6,900 locations.<sup>v</sup> It also impacted over a quarter of the region’s forests, causing an estimated \$214 million of timber damage.<sup>vi</sup> Days after the storm, 160 communities were under boil water advisories;<sup>vii</sup> over 100,000 people remained under advisories for nearly two months until crews could complete critical infrastructure repairs.<sup>viii</sup> By December 2024, over 10.4 million cubic yards of debris had been cleared from 27 counties, with cleanup still ongoing in the summer of 2025. Statewide estimates describe Hurricane Helene as the costliest natural disaster in North Carolina’s history, with projected damages of \$59.6 billion.<sup>ix</sup>

Statewide estimates describe Hurricane Helene as the costliest natural disaster in North Carolina’s history, with projected damages of \$59.6 billion.

As serious as these impacts have been, the social consequences of the storm may be just as significant, especially for the region’s most vulnerable populations and the nonprofit organizations that serve them. Even before the hurricane, food insecurity rates in every county in the region were higher than the state average of 14%,<sup>x</sup> and home prices in many counties persistently exceeded state and national averages.

In Buncombe and Henderson counties, 25-30% of households were cost burdened, meaning they spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs.<sup>xi</sup> At the time of the hurricane, Western North Carolina counties also had higher shares of residents who were older, disabled, or lived in a mobile home – factors that increase vulnerability in disaster contexts.<sup>xii</sup>

In the months since Hurricane Helene, the region has started to recover from some of the worst environmental and economic impacts, but significant social challenges remain. Employment levels and tourism revenues are gradually rebounding, though they are still below pre-storm levels in some areas.<sup>xiii</sup> In Buncombe County, the January 2025 Point-in-Time Count documented 1,548 people still living in transitional shelters due to housing

loss from the hurricane, and an additional 116 people without shelter who directly attributed their homelessness to the storm.<sup>xiv</sup> Anecdotal evidence points to worsened food insecurity<sup>xv</sup> and anticipated increases in mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, which often do not surface until months after a disaster.<sup>xvi</sup>

Nonprofit organizations in Western North Carolina have been essential partners in meeting the immediate needs of disaster response and continue to be critical to the region's recovery. Yet, as organizations that work both *in* and *for* their communities, they too have been significantly affected by Hurricane Helene. A survey of 64 organizations in the region, conducted in January 2025, found that many nonprofit operations were disrupted by the storm; nearly half saw revenue decline, while at the same time over one-quarter saw increased demand for services.<sup>xvii</sup> Since January, many nonprofits have also been navigating a federal landscape marked by abrupt grant cuts and freezes, shifting policy priorities, and workforce reductions.<sup>xviii</sup>

This report, commissioned by WNC Nonprofit Pathways and Dogwood Health Trust, presents the results of a region-wide survey of nonprofit leaders. It is intended to help Pathways, its partners, and regional leaders understand how Hurricane Helene and federal shifts are impacting nonprofit organizations – and the people who work in them – in order to ensure the ongoing wellbeing of the region's nonprofit sector and the communities it serves.



# Methodology

To understand how Hurricane Helene and shifting federal policies have affected nonprofits in Western North Carolina, WNC Nonprofit Pathways – a local capacity-building organization – commissioned Openfields to conduct a regional survey of nonprofit organizations. The survey was supported by Dogwood Health Trust, one of Pathways’ funding partners and collaborators. The 58-question survey, developed in English and Spanish, covered a range of topics, including the immediate damage and short-term impacts of the storm, recovery progress, the effects of recent federal policy changes, current needs, and basic organizational and demographic information. The survey included a mix of single-choice, multi-select, and open-ended questions. Table 1 provides an overview of the survey sections and examples of questions for each section.

The survey was administered online via SurveyMonkey between May 28 and July 6, 2025. WNC Nonprofit Pathways first sent the survey invitation to a list of 540 nonprofit executive directors and senior leaders. To broaden participation, Pathways later distributed the survey to a longer list of 2,037 nonprofit professionals. Each survey invitation requested one response per organization from an executive director or senior leader. Several reminder emails were sent throughout the fielding period, and the survey was also promoted through Pathways’ social media channels. Additionally, Pathways asked several trusted partner organizations to publicize the survey through their distribution lists and social media channels.

To reach newer organizations, the survey included a question that invited respondents to share names and contact information, if known, for organizations that had been founded since the hurricane. Pathways and Openfields tracked responses to this question throughout the fielding period and reached out to these new contacts to invite them to complete the survey.

The survey yielded 297 responses, which were checked to remove substantially incomplete responses, responses from organizations outside of the region, and duplicate responses from the same organization. The final data set included 251 usable responses. For a more detailed account of this process, see the Appendix.

**Table 1 – Survey sections and example questions**

Section Title and Description	Example Questions
<b>1. Short-Term Impacts of Hurricane Helene.</b> This section focused on the immediate effects of Hurricane Helene on nonprofit operations, including damage to buildings and property, staffing disruptions, changes in revenue and donations, and short-term program adjustments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <i>What was the most severe degree of hurricane-related damage to your organization’s building(s)?</i></li> <li>+ <i>What was the impact of the hurricane on your organization’s staffing in the 0–8 weeks after the storm?</i></li> </ul>
<b>2. Recovery Progress.</b> This section explored how nonprofits have navigated the recovery process, including access to assistance, ongoing barriers, long-term adaptations, and remaining unmet needs related to the hurricane.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <i>What (if any) barriers has your organization faced in its hurricane recovery efforts?</i></li> <li>+ <i>Due to the hurricane, has your organization made any long-term or permanent adjustments to its programs?</i></li> </ul>
<b>3. Impacts of Federal Shifts.</b> This section asked about the effects of recent federal policy changes – such as shifts in funding, executive orders, or legislation – on programs, staffing, and finances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <i>So far in 2025, have changes at the federal level led your organization to alter or discontinue any programs or services?</i></li> <li>+ <i>So far in 2025, have changes at the federal level led your organization to make any financial changes?</i></li> </ul>
<b>4. Current Situation and Needs.</b> This section gauged the current health of nonprofit organizations, their capacity to operate, and general support needs for both organizations and leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <i>Please rate how much you agree with the following statement: “Our organization is in a strong financial position.”</i></li> <li>+ <i>What ongoing support do you need to maintain your wellbeing as a nonprofit leader?</i></li> </ul>
<b>5. Organizational Information.</b> This section collected basic information about each organization’s size, structure, staffing, funding, services, and populations served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <i>In your best estimate, what will be your organization’s total revenue for the current fiscal year?</i></li> <li>+ <i>Which categories best describe your organization’s activities?</i></li> </ul>
<b>6. Demographic Information.</b> This optional section gathered information on the race/ethnicity and gender identity of each organization’s leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <i>Which of the following best describe the race/ethnicity of your organization’s Chief Executive (i.e., Executive Director or CEO)?</i></li> <li>+ <i>Which of the following describe the gender identity of your organization’s Board Chair?</i></li> </ul>
<b>7. Closing.</b> The final section invited additional reflections, offered the opportunity to join a mailing list, and collected contact information for follow-up if the respondent wished to be contacted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ <i>Please share any additional comments or reflections about your organization’s experiences since the hurricane.</i></li> <li>+ <i>Do you know of any new nonprofit organizations founded in Western North Carolina since September 27, 2024? Please share the name of the organization and information for a contact person (if known) so we can invite them to complete this survey.</i></li> </ul>

# Survey Respondents

Our data set included responses from nonprofit leaders representing 251 organizations across Western North Carolina, 245 in English and six in Spanish. One hundred and ninety-nine responses (79% of the total) came from executive directors; 39 responses (16%) came from other senior leaders, such as board chairs or vice presidents; and 13 responses (5%) came from respondents occupying another organizational role, such as a program manager or board member. The responses included a broad set of organizations by geography, size, focus, and demographic diversity.

## *The survey captured responses from organizations across the region.*

Respondents represent organizations in the Qualla Boundary and each of 18 counties in Western North Carolina. The survey asked respondents where they were headquartered at the time of the storm, and where they were headquartered at the time they took the survey. Most organizations were located in the same county before and after the hurricane, but a few were not. Four organizations moved their headquarters between the storm and the present, and another two moved into the region since the storm. In addition, five organizations were newly established after Hurricane Helene (Table 2).

The two counties in the region with the highest populations – Buncombe County and Henderson County – had the highest shares of responses. At the time of the survey, 47% of survey respondents were headquartered in Buncombe or Henderson counties, with the remainder spread throughout the region. No county had fewer than two responses.

In order to explore how organizations’ experiences of the storm may have differed by geography while still retaining enough responses in each category for statistical analysis, in the remainder of the report we generally compare organizations headquartered in Buncombe and Henderson counties to those headquartered in the less populated counties in the region.

**Table 2 – Headquarters location of responding organizations (N=251)<sup>1</sup>**

At time of storm			At time of survey		
Location	Count	Percent	Location	Count	Percent
Avery County	4	1.6%	Avery County	5	2.0%
Buncombe County	97	38.6%	Buncombe County	98	39.0%
Burke County	12	4.8%	Burke County	12	4.8%
Cherokee County	6	2.4%	Cherokee County	6	2.4%
Clay County	2	0.8%	Clay County	2	0.8%
Graham County	4	1.6%	Graham County	4	1.6%
Haywood County	8	3.2%	Haywood County	8	3.2%
Henderson County	22	8.8%	Henderson County	21	8.4%
Jackson County	13	5.2%	Jackson County	12	4.8%
Macon County	11	4.4%	Macon County	12	4.8%
Madison County	3	1.2%	Madison County	3	1.2%
McDowell County	5	2.0%	McDowell County	5	2.0%
Mitchell County	10	4.0%	Mitchell County	10	4.0%
Polk County	15	6.0%	Polk County	15	6.0%
Qualla Boundary	5	2.0%	Qualla Boundary	5	2.0%
Rutherford County	8	3.2%	Rutherford County	8	3.2%
Swain County	2	0.8%	Swain County	2	0.8%
Transylvania County	8	3.2%	Transylvania County	9	3.6%
Yancey County	9	3.6%	Yancey County	9	3.6%
<b>In region total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>97.2%</b>	<b>In region total</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>98.0%</b>
Outside of region	2	0.8%	No response	5	2.0%
Did not exist	5	2.0%			
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Since the survey utilized skip logic and included several optional questions, the total number of responses to each question varied. The total number of responses to a question will be indicated by (N=) throughout the report.

### Responding organizations ranged from very small to very large.

**Table 3 – Responding organizations’ 2025 estimated fiscal revenue (N=251)**

	Count	Percent
<\$100,000	39	15.5%
\$100,000 - \$249,999	36	14.3%
\$250,000 - \$499,999	29	11.6%
\$500,000 - \$999,999	38	15.1%
\$1 million - \$1,999,999	38	15.1%
>\$2 million	52	20.7%
Unsure	6	2.4%
Did not respond	13	5.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Measured by annual revenue, survey respondents included organizations of every size (Table 3). Sixteen percent of responding organizations had annual revenue of less than \$100,000. On the other end, 21% had revenue over \$2,000,000.

For analysis of how organizations’ experience of the storm varied by size, we simplified revenue categories into three groupings representing small, mid-size, and large organizations and removed the 13 respondents who left the question blank. In this simpler breakdown, small organizations (those with reported annual revenues under \$250,000) make up 32%

of responses, mid-size organizations (those with annual revenues between \$250,000 and \$1 million) make up 28%, and large organizations (those with annual revenues over \$1 million) make up 38% (N=238).

There is a relationship between organizational size (as measured by reported annual revenue) and geographic location. A greater share of large organizations are headquartered in Buncombe and Henderson counties, while small organizations are more likely to be headquartered outside of Buncombe and Henderson counties.<sup>2</sup> Mid-size organizations are about equally likely to be located inside as outside of Buncombe and Henderson counties (Table 4).

**Table 4 – Organization size (revenue) by county (N=225)**

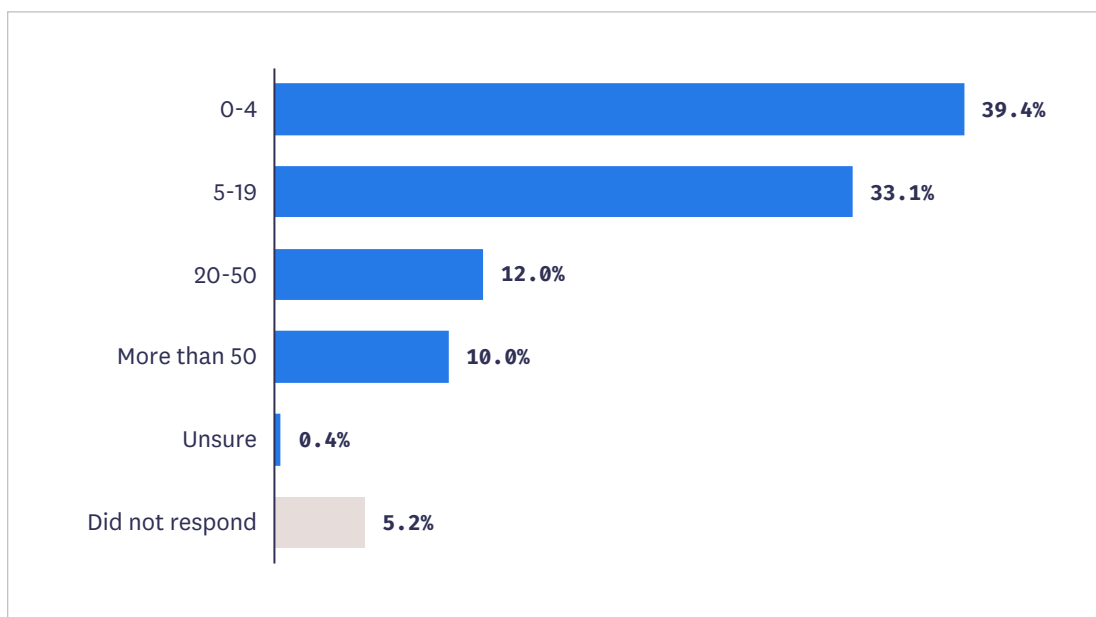
	Buncombe & Henderson Counties	All Other Counties	Total
< \$250k	20.9%	42.7%	<b>32.2%</b>
\$250k - \$1 million	27.3%	29.9%	<b>28.6%</b>
> \$1 million	51.8%	27.4%	<b>39.2%</b>
Total	100.0%	100.0%	<b>100.0%</b>

2 Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p = 1.731e^{-5}$ ) using Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

**Most operate with fewer than 20 staff, and many have no regular volunteers.**

While organizations were relatively evenly spread across different revenue levels, most had few paid employees. Over a third of respondents (36%) had fewer than five paid employees, and just under a third (32%) had five to 19 paid employees (Figure 1). In an open-ended question about volunteers, 42% of respondents wrote that they have zero regular volunteers and 60% listed a number lower than 20 (N=227).

**Figure 1 – Share of organizations by number of paid staff**



**About one-fifth of organizations focus their service delivery on communities that are Black, Indigenous, or people of color.**

Respondents were asked whether their organization focuses its service delivery on people of seven racial or ethnic categories, with the option to select more than one category or to opt out of the question entirely (Table 5). Nearly seven in 10 organizations (69%) do not focus on any specific racial or ethnic community (N=251).

Fifty-two respondents (21% of all respondents) selected at least one racial category as a focus. Out of these 52, 48 reported a focus on Latino/a, Hispanic, or Spanish-origin communities, 35 reported a focus on Black or

African American communities, and 29 reported a focus on Indigenous, Native American, or Alaska Native communities.

**Table 5 – Share of organizations focusing service delivery on specific racial / ethnic communities (N=251)**

	Percent	Count
Asian	6.8%	17
Black or African American	13.9%	35
Indigenous, Native American, or Alaska Native	11.6%	29
Latino/a, Hispanic, or Spanish-origin	19.1%	48
Middle Eastern or North African	4.8%	12
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5.2%	13
Other	1.6%	4
Unsure/Prefer not to answer	2.0%	5
We do not focus on any specific racial or ethnic group	69.3%	174
Did not respond	6.8%	17

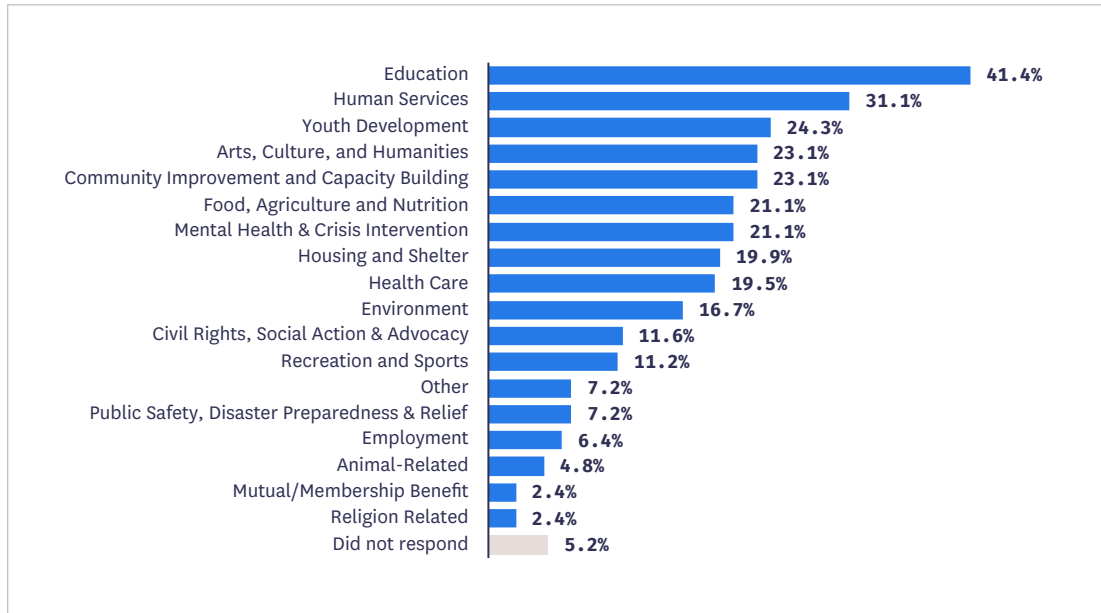
**Education, human services, and youth development are among the most common organizational activities, with people in poverty and youth the most common populations served.**

Respondents were asked to select from a list of 17 categories to describe their organization’s activities. Education (41%), Human Services (31%), and Youth Development (24%) were the most commonly selected, with Arts, Culture, and Humanities (23%) and Community Improvement and Capacity Building (23%) closely following (N=251). The most common activities written in the open-ended responses were services for those over 60, economic development, and financial wellness services. Figure 2 shows the full distribution of responses.

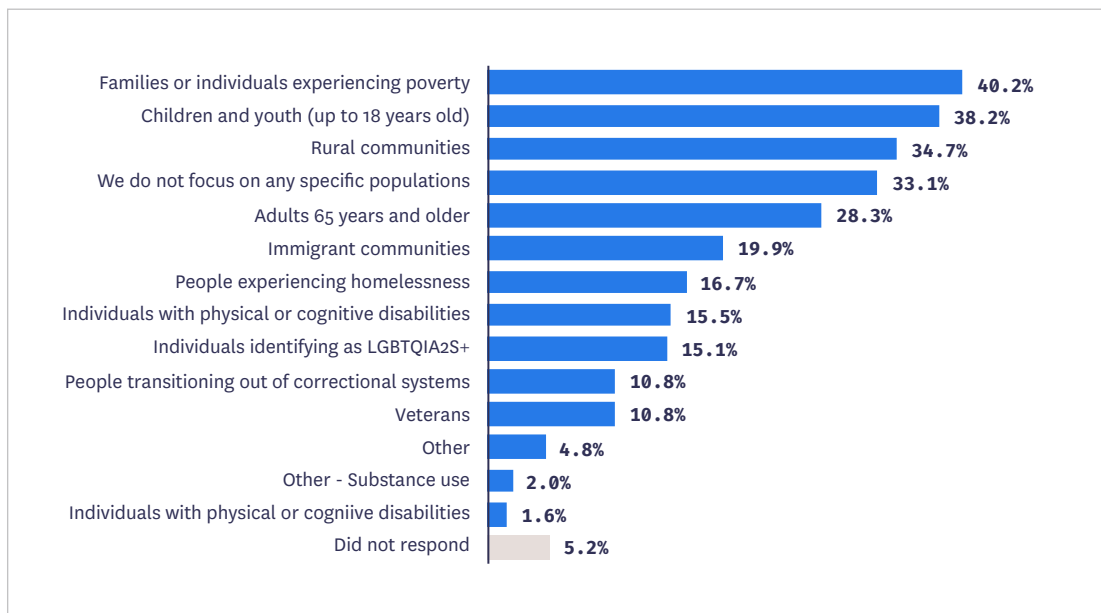
Respondents were also asked if they served any of a list of 12 specific population subgroups (Figure 3). The most common populations served are families or individuals experiencing poverty (40%), children and youth (38%), rural communities (35%), and adults older than 65 (28%, N=251).

A third of respondents said their organization does not focus on any specific population. Five respondents wrote in the *Other* category that their organizations serve populations impacted by substance use, the most common response in this category.

**Figure 2 – Share of organizations engaging in selected activities (N=251)**



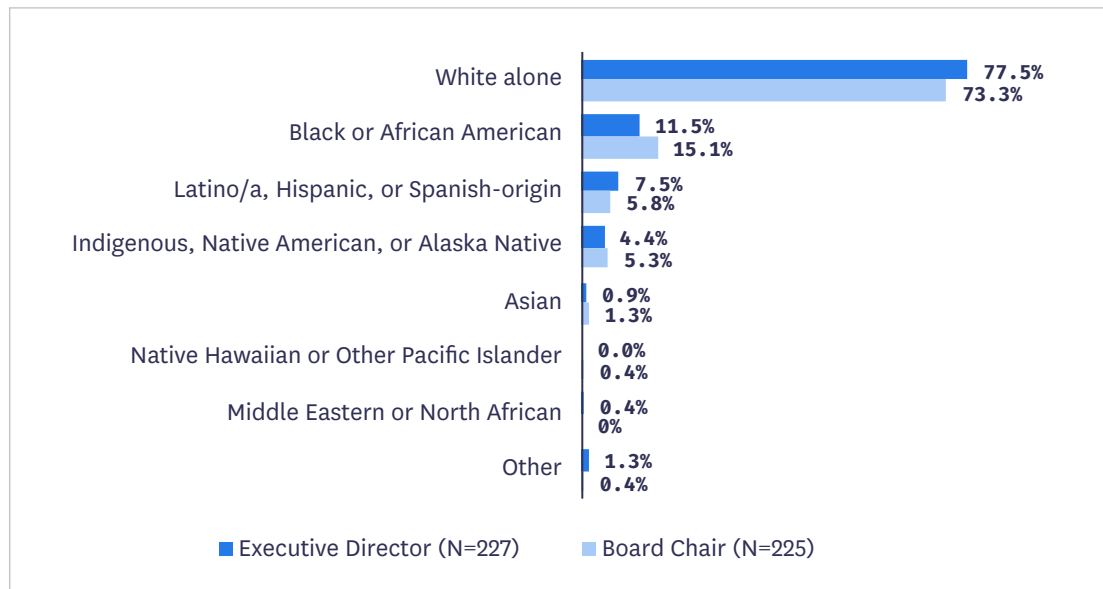
**Figure 3 – Share of organizations serving selected populations (N=234)**



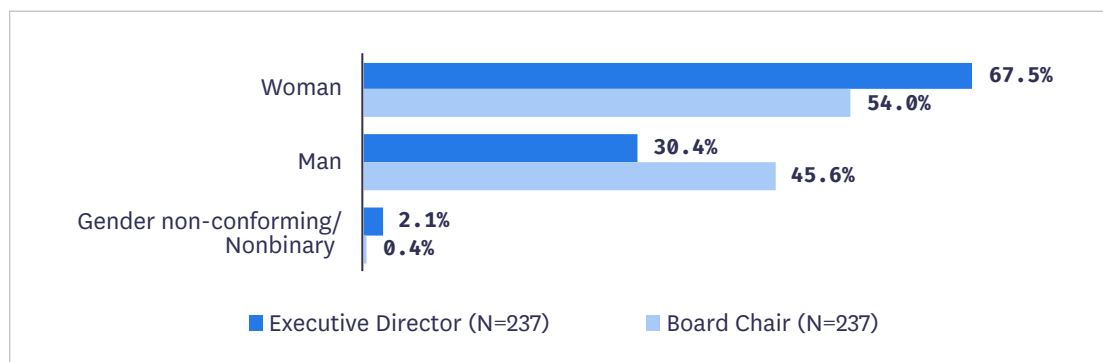
**Organizational leaders are primarily women. A quarter of organizations have someone who is Black, Indigenous, or a person of color in a leadership role.**

In an optional demographic section of the survey, respondents were asked about the racial and demographic identities of their leadership (Figures 4 and 5). One-fifth (20%) of respondents selected a racial/ethnic category other than white to describe their organization’s executive director, and nearly a quarter (24%) selected a racial/ethnic category other than white to describe their organization’s board chair (N=251). Respondents reported that 64% of executive directors and 51% of board chairs identify as women (N=251).

**Figure 4 – Racial and ethnic identities of executive directors and board chairs**



**Figure 5 – Gender identities of executive directors and board chairs**



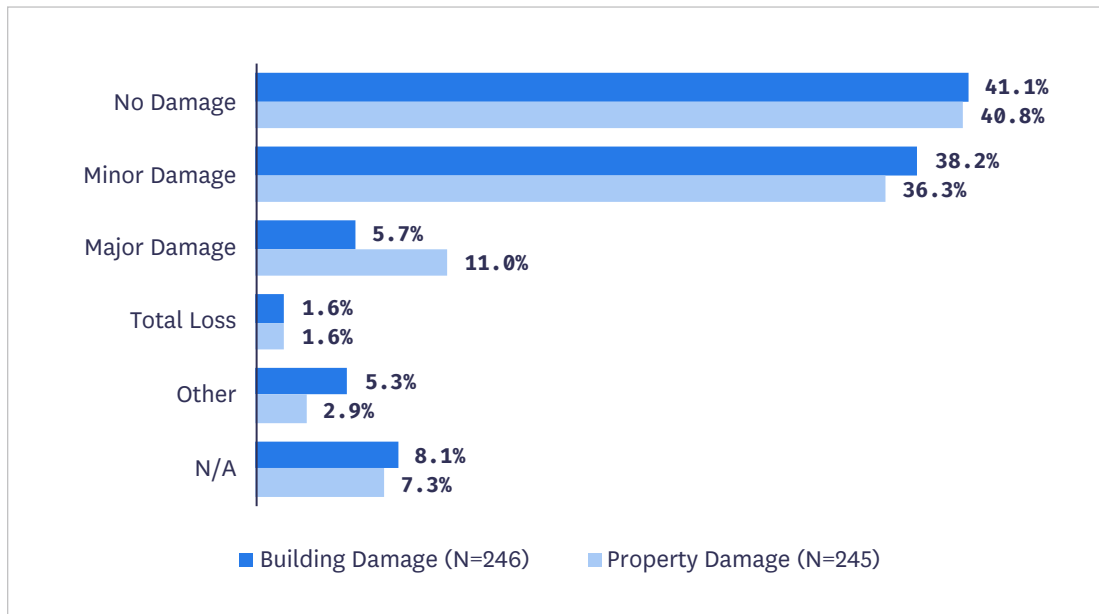
# Short-Term Impacts of Hurricane Helene

Hurricane Helene brought physical destruction to Western North Carolina, and nonprofit organizations were not spared. Survey respondents reported over \$100 million in damage to buildings and other property, as well as temporary and permanent relocation. But the impacts went far beyond just the physical toll. Even if they escaped direct physical damage, organizations were affected because their staff or volunteers suffered personal losses or needed to prioritize helping families and neighbors, all of which took a real emotional toll. At the same time, the broader community truly came together to support each other. Staff worked extra hours to keep operations going, foundations and individuals increased their giving, and nonprofit organizations pivoted to provide direct assistance to their communities even when it was not part of their mission.

***Almost six in 10 organizations experienced some type of physical damage to their property, though most of that damage was relatively minor.***

Survey respondents were asked about physical damage of two types: damage to buildings and damage to other physical property. For each type, just under half of respondents reported experiencing some level of damage (Figure 6). Collectively, almost six in 10 respondents reported damage to their building, damage to other physical property, or both. For the most part, reported damage was minor, with 6% of respondents reporting major damage or a total loss to buildings (N=246) and only 13% reporting major damage or total loss of other property (N=245).

**Figure 6 – Severity of damage to physical property**



In order to easily explore the relationship between physical damage and other outcomes throughout the remainder of the report, we combined respondents' answers to the two questions about physical damage, first coding any *Other* responses into one of the other damage level categories. Because so few respondents reported a total loss in either question, we combined the "Major" and "Total Loss" categories into a single category (Table 6).

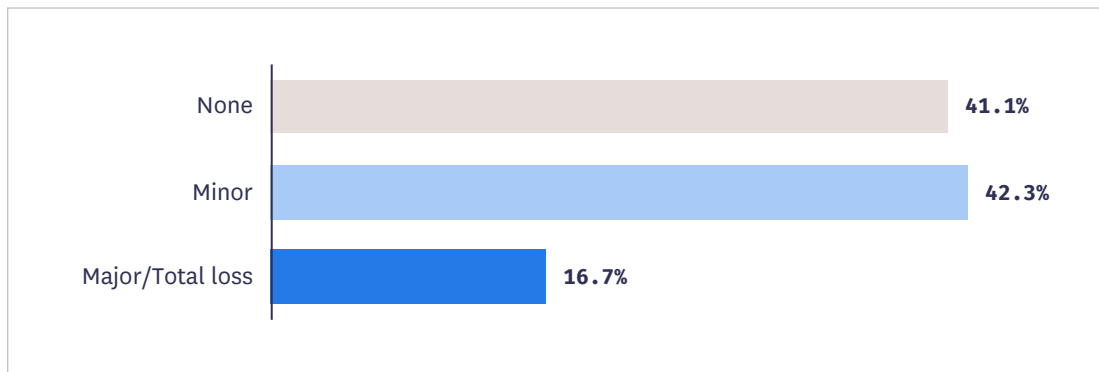
**Table 6 – Combined damage measure (N=246)\***

		Severity of Building Damage			
		N/A	None	Minor	Major/Total Loss
Severity of Damage to Other Property	N/A	None (14)	None (2)	Minor (3)	Major/Total Loss (0)
	None	None (3)	None (82)	Minor (12)	Major/Total Loss (5)
	Minor	Minor (2)	Minor (14)	Minor (73)	Major/Total Loss (3)
	Major/Total Loss	Major/Total Loss (1)	Major/Total Loss (5)	Major/Total Loss (9)	Major/Total Loss (18)

\*Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of responses in each category.

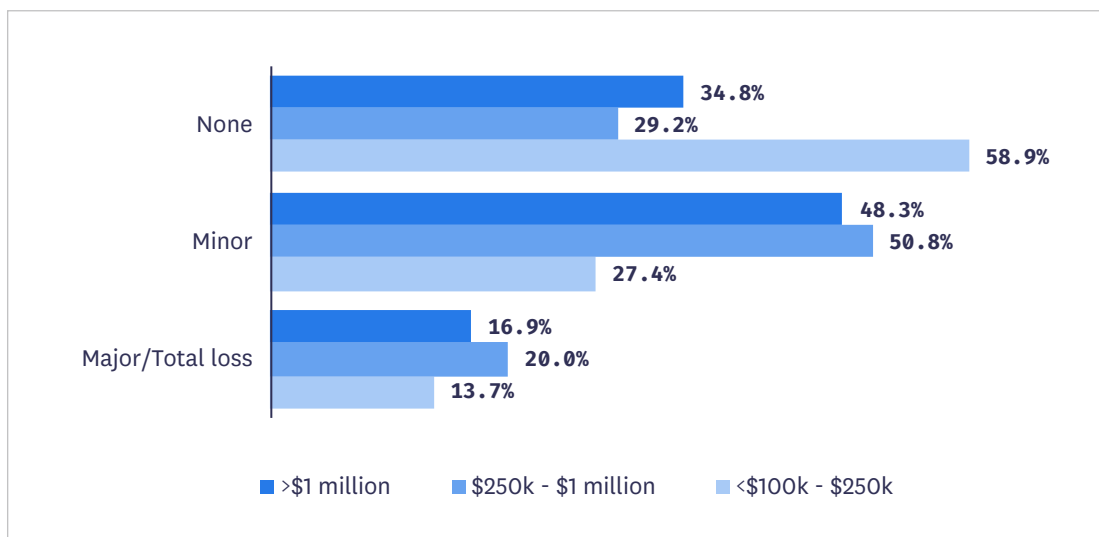
The resulting three-level damage variable includes physical damage to both buildings and property (Figure 7). With this aggregate measure, 59% of respondents reported at least some physical damage. Though most damage was minor, 17% of organizations reported major damage or a total loss to their buildings, other physical property, or both (N=246).

**Figure 7 – Combined damage severity (N=246)**



This damage pattern played out equally across different types of organizations, with two exceptions. First, small organizations were much less likely to report damage than mid-size or large organizations (Figure 8). Only 42% of small organizations reported damage, compared with 71% of mid-size and 65% of large organizations (N=227).<sup>3</sup>

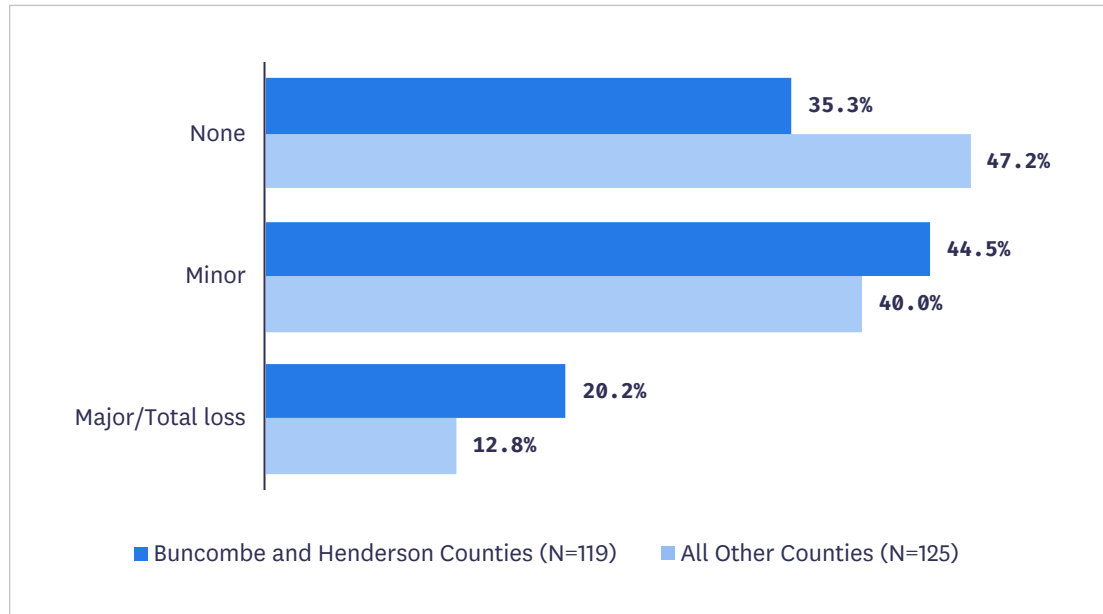
**Figure 8 – Damage severity by reported annual revenue (N=227)**



3 Significant at  $p < .05$  ( $p = 0.01608$ ) using Kendall's Tau-b test for ordinal-ordinal relationship.

Second, organizations in Buncombe and Henderson counties were slightly more likely to report damage than organizations in other counties (Figure 9).<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 9 – Damage severity by county group**



Respondents were also asked to estimate the cost (in dollars) of damage to buildings and property. Half (50%) of respondents reported dollar value estimates of the cost of property damage from the storm. Of this group, the median reported cost was \$10,000. Collectively, these organizations reported \$100,640,144 in property damage across the region.

***In addition to physical damage, some organizations also lost fee-for-service revenue as a result of the storm.***

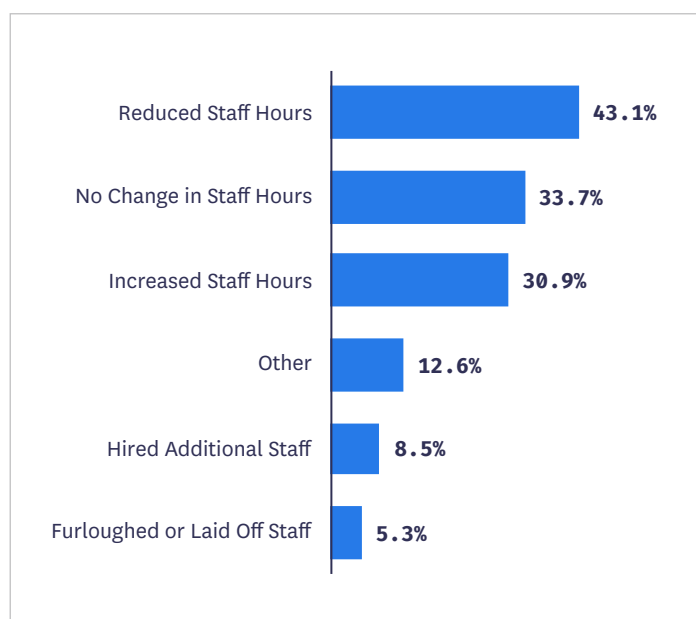
Physical damage was not the only direct financial impact of the storm. Though their number was relatively small, 36 respondents (15% of the total) reported that they earned some revenue from providing services for a fee. The overwhelming majority of this group (78%) experienced a loss in this revenue source as a result of the storm. For those organizations that reported such a loss, the median amount was \$60,000.

<sup>4</sup> Significant at  $p < .05$  ( $p = 0.03501$ ) using Wilcoxon-Mann Whitney test for categorical-ordinal relationship.

***The storm caused major disruptions to operations, from relocating operations to both increases and decreases in staff and volunteer hours.***

In addition to physical damage, the storm created a variety of operational disruptions to organizations in the region. Thirty-three organizations (13% of the total) had to relocate their operations in the aftermath of the storm. Though most were displaced only temporarily, eight organizations relocated permanently.

**Figure 10 – Share of organizations making staffing changes after the hurricane (N=246)**



Most organizations also made staffing changes. Just over 40% of organizations reported reducing staff hours, and just over 30% reported increasing staff hours (Figure 10). Reflecting the turbulent nature of the storm's aftermath, nearly 20% of organizations reported both an increase and a decrease in staff hours (N=246). Reductions in staff hours are one of several ways in which the storm impacted organizations even if the organization's facilities were not directly physically impacted. As open-ended comments showed, many staff experienced damage to their own homes, and others

needed to support their family, neighbors, and community. Some were unable to get to work due to impassable roads. At the same time, staff who were not directly impacted (and doubtless many who were) put in extra hours to ensure that nonprofit organizations continued operating. Organizations seemed to show a lot of flexibility to their employees after the storm, as only 5% of organizations furloughed or laid off staff.

Changes in volunteer support showed a similar pattern, with 32% of organizations reporting an increase in volunteer support and 27% reporting a decrease.

***Most organizations saw increases in demand for their services, and over half of responding organizations pivoted to providing frontline assistance such as food, supplies, medical aid, and administrative services such as filing FEMA claims.***

Despite having to deal with changes in staffing, almost 60% of respondents reported an increase in demand for their services post-hurricane (N=246). More than eight in 10 made adjustments to their services (N=241).

When asked how they adjusted their programs in the short term, many respondents described stepping up to provide direct, immediate relief in the critical weeks after the hurricane. One hundred and twenty-six – over half of all survey respondents – said their organization provided some type of frontline assistance (N=246). Most often, this meant distributing food, water, hygiene supplies, or other essentials. Organizations also gave emergency cash aid; turned buildings and parking lots into distribution hubs and volunteer sites; opened their doors to community members for showers, laundry, and phone charging; helped both English- and Spanish-speaking families navigate Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) claims and appeals; organized debris removal and wellness checks; performed water testing; and met other unique community needs.

Many organizations expanded the scale or scope of their services to meet rising demand – extending hours, opening more days per week, and in some cases hiring extra staff to help more people. Several widened their reach to new areas or loosened eligibility requirements to serve anyone in need. Nearly a dozen respondents said their organization offered free community events or programs, in addition to the many whose organizations distributed free food and supplies. Some organizations quickly launched new efforts, such as emotional support groups and small grant programs, to help communities recover.

A few dozen respondents described pausing or canceling regular programs right after the hurricane. However, over half of these also said their organizations offered frontline assistance. This suggests that in many cases, “pauses” quickly turned into “pivots” to meet urgent needs in an unprecedented time.



## STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES

*“We distributed 300 tractor-trailer loads of supplies in 30 days. We served 16 counties with food and supplies...We have continued to distribute an average of 50 tractor loads of supplies for nine months.”*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

*“We postponed upcoming concerts and instead focused on sending musical ensembles to shelters, resource distribution centers, community vigils and first responder lunches/dinners.”*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

*“Our community clinics were converted to ‘field hospital’ type clinics, with volunteer providers and no charges/no billing insurance.”*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN MITCHELL COUNTY

*“Suspendimos temporalmente actividades no esenciales y redirigimos nuestros esfuerzos hacia la distribución de ayuda directa, incluyendo asistencia financiera para vivienda, transporte y medicamentos.”*

*(Translation) We temporarily suspended non-essential activities and redirected our efforts toward direct aid distribution, including financial assistance for housing, transportation, and medications.*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN HENDERSON COUNTY

*“At some point we realized...a major need was shelf-stable milk products. We ended up delivering nearly 10,000 boxes of shelf-stable milk by truck, 4-wheeler, and even hand-carried several cases to areas with little or no refrigeration.”*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN YANCEY COUNTY

*“We [pumped] water from our pool for the community to use for non-potable water and [provided] drop-in, therapist-led family play sessions for families with young children.”*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

***The hurricane took an emotional and physical toll on staff and volunteers, though it also revealed strong community support and partnership.***

In open-ended comments, respondents emphasized the heavy emotional and practical burdens that their staff and volunteers faced. Many were directly impacted by the storm, navigating personal losses and damaged or destroyed property while trying to meet surging community needs. Some had to leave the area, take extended time off, or resign altogether. Others worked long hours under immense pressure, often without full staffing or stable utilities. Many respondents reported significant stress and trauma among their staff during this time. Some described giving staff paid time off when possible or bringing in mental health support.

“It was hard for any of our staff members to focus on work having lived through the trauma of the storm and just trying to figure out where to get our daily water, food and bathing needs met.”

SENIOR LEADER IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

“Four of our volunteer call managers either had their homes flooded or destroyed by the hurricane. A board member and her husband left the area never to return. About 15% of our volunteers became inactive due to flood damage or leaving the area.”

SENIOR LEADER IN YANCEY COUNTY

Beyond property damage, Hurricane Helene caused severe infrastructure disruptions that hampered basic operations. Many organizations faced flooding and road closures. Widespread power outages, lack of potable water, and poor cell and internet service made normal operations impossible, often for weeks. Some organizations lost critical inventory due to power loss or faced disrupted supply chains just as community needs soared.

Another strong theme across responses was that of support and resilience in the weeks following the storm, even amid widespread devastation. Many respondents described unexpected donations of money, supplies, and volunteer help. Respondents in less impacted areas shared stories of raising funds and marshaling supplies to send to partners in more heavily damaged

parts of the region. Others highlighted new partnerships and stronger community ties that emerged from working together.

“[El impacto del huracán] demostró que la comunidad hispana es una comunidad muy resiliente que también honra los valores de solidaridad y apoyo mutuo.”

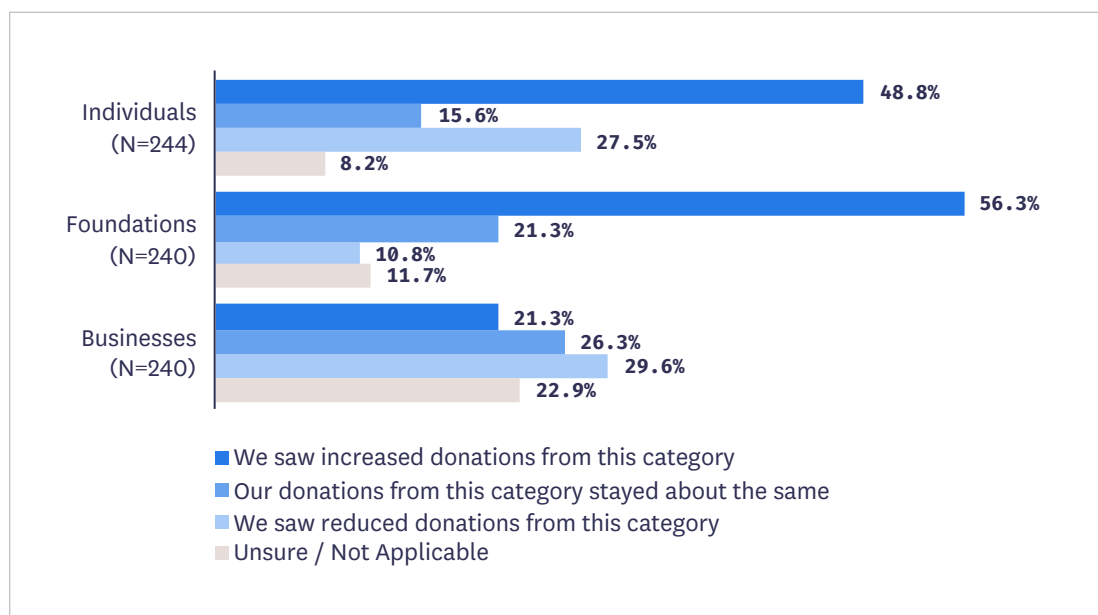
(Translation) [The aftermath of the hurricane] showed that the Hispanic community is highly resilient and deeply committed to values of solidarity and mutual support.

STAFF MEMBER IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

**Many nonprofit organizations reported increased donations, especially from foundations and individuals, in the eight weeks following the hurricane.**

Over half (56%) of organizations surveyed saw increased donations from foundations in the eight weeks following the hurricane (Figure 11). A little less than half (49%) saw increased donations from individuals. A smaller share of organizations (21%) reported increased donations from businesses.

**Figure 11 – Changes in donations by donor type**



Donation outcomes varied by organization size. Large and medium organizations were more likely than small organizations to report receiving increased donations from all three donor groups.<sup>5</sup> The greatest contrast was seen in increased support from foundations, where 71% of large organizations and 67% of mid-sized organizations saw increases compared with only 34% of small organizations (N=240).

The share of organizations reporting an increase in donations also grew with the severity of damage reported. For example, from individuals, 38% of those who reported no damage (N=101) also reported increased donations, which jumped to 50% of those reporting minor damage (N=102), and 73% of those reporting major damage or total loss (N=41).<sup>6</sup>

“We had individuals, volunteers, and funders come by to donate and help distribute items to families. [Staff from another organization] came over and helped us clean out all the flooded and destroyed furniture, supplies, etc. We had new donors give in major ways: painted our building, re-mulched our playground, built a platform to support our new HVAC system that was destroyed in the flood.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

5 From businesses: Significant at  $p < .05$  ( $p = 0.0149$ ); From individuals: Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p = 1.127e^{-4}$ ); From foundations: Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p = 3.584e^{-4}$ ). All were assessed using Kendall’s Tau-b test for ordinal-ordinal relationship.

6 From businesses: Not significant at  $p > .10$  ( $p = 0.2648$ ); From foundations: Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p = 4.791e^{-3}$ ); From individuals: Significant at  $p < .05$  ( $p = 0.02855$ ). All were assessed using Kendall’s Tau-b test for ordinal-ordinal relationship.

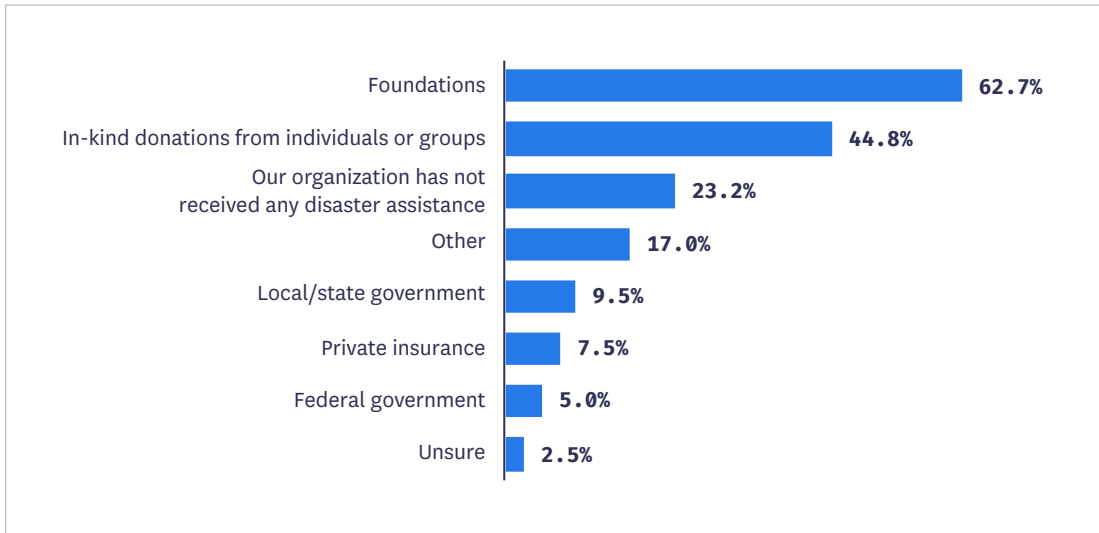
# Recovery Progress and Long-Term Impacts

While most respondents reported that their organizations received some assistance in recovering from the impacts of Hurricane Helene, they also described continued strain on their organizations and communities. Monetary and in-kind assistance from various public and private sources has been a lifeline for many such organizations, but this support has not been able to fill all of the gaps created or exposed by the hurricane. Demand for services and programs has remained elevated since the storm, leading many nonprofit staff to work increased hours and in unexpected capacities, and worsening the burnout that is already rampant in the nonprofit sector.<sup>xix</sup> Amid the challenges presented by the storm, some organizations have still made efforts to look to the future, implementing long-term strategies to improve preparedness and resilience to future disasters, both in their communities and within their organizations.

## ***Philanthropic foundations led in providing disaster assistance among responding organizations.***

Three-quarters (76%) of responding organizations reported receiving disaster assistance since the hurricane. The most common source of disaster assistance reported has been from foundations (63%), followed by in-kind assistance from individuals or groups (45%, N=241). Less than 10% of respondents reported receiving local or state government assistance, and only 5% of respondents reported receiving FEMA, Small Business Association, or disaster loans from the federal government (Figure 12).

**Figure 12 – Share of organizations receiving disaster assistance from different sources (N=241)**



While some types of assistance may still materialize – especially government sources and private insurance, which can take longer to process – nine months after the storm, nearly a quarter of organizations (23%) reported not having received assistance of any kind. Organizations in Buncombe and Henderson counties were more likely to receive assistance of most kinds, and less likely to report receiving no assistance (Table 7), but it is not clear if this was due to their location, the fact that organizations in those counties reported heavier physical damage, or both.

**Table 7 – Share of organizations receiving assistance by geography (N=241)**

	Buncombe and Henderson Counties		All Other Counties	
Source	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Foundations	89	76.7%	62	50.4%
In-kind donations from individuals or groups	65	56.0%	43	35.0%
Our organization has not received any disaster assistance	10	8.6%	46	37.4%
Other	25	21.6%	16	13.0%
Local/state government	13	11.2%	10	8.1%
Private insurance	11	9.5%	7	5.7%
Federal government	8	6.9%	4	3.3%
Unsure	3	2.6%	1	0.8%

Large organizations (as measured by reported annual revenue) were less likely to report not having received any assistance.<sup>7</sup> Only 10% of large organizations reported receiving no assistance, compared with 15% of mid-size organizations and 45% of small organizations. This is not entirely surprising, since larger organizations also tended to report higher damage levels (see Figure 8). However, large organizations were also more likely to report having received in-kind assistance.<sup>8</sup> Sixty-two percent of larger organizations and 46% of mid-size organizations reported receiving in-kind assistance, compared with only 21% of smaller organizations (N=233).

Finally, while BIPOC-focused organizations generally reported receiving assistance with the same frequency they were more likely to have received assistance from state or local government (15.4%) than those that did not have such a focus (6.9%, N=229).<sup>9</sup>

### **Staff capacity has been the greatest obstacle to organizations' recovery.**

Though most organizations did receive some assistance, most respondents (71%) also reported their organization experiencing one or more barriers during the hurricane recovery. The most common barrier was internal capacity, reported by 49% of organizations (Figure 13). All other barriers were each reported by less than 20% of organizations. Only 18% of organizations reported being specifically denied assistance.

“The leadership team was boots on the ground for the first month to two months after the hurricane trying to keep up with the changing needs. Several of our staff members evacuated. We missed out on several disaster recovery grants early on as we simply did not have the capacity to identify them or apply for them. The organization more than doubled in the number of people we served and our service footprint...overnight.”

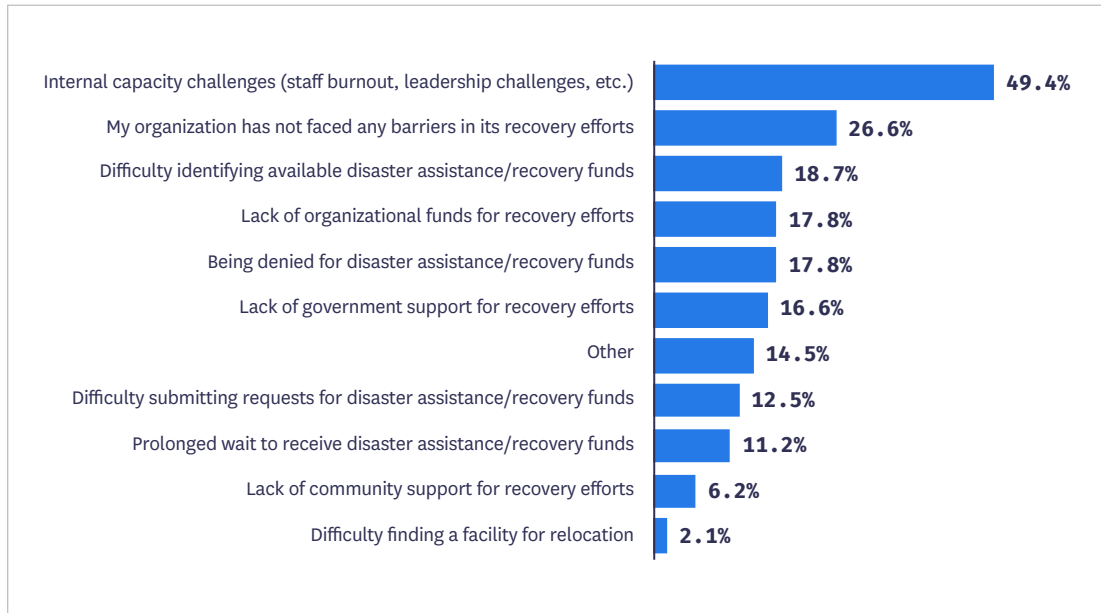
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

7 Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p = 4.268e^{-8}$ ) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

8 Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p = 1.081e^{-7}$ ) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

9 Marginally significant at  $p < 0.05$  ( $p = 0.0897$ ) using the Fisher's Exact test for categorical relationship.

**Figure 13 – Share of organizations that experienced certain barriers in hurricane recovery efforts (N=241)**



Though organizations in Buncombe and Henderson counties were more likely to receive assistance, they were also more likely to report barriers. For example, nearly two-thirds (62%) of organizations in those two counties reported barriers stemming from internal capacity challenges compared with only 38% of organizations outside those counties.<sup>10</sup> Along the same lines, organizations outside of Buncombe and Henderson counties were more likely (40%) to report not experiencing any barriers to receiving assistance than were organizations in those two counties (13%).<sup>11</sup>

The other notable difference between organizations reporting barriers to assistance was between large and small organizations (as measured by reported annual revenue). Small organizations were almost twice as likely (43%) to report experiencing no barriers than were mid-size (22%) or large (20%) organizations.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 6.509e^{-4}$ ) using the Chi Square test for categorical-categorical relationship.

<sup>11</sup> Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 7.901e^{-6}$ ) using the Chi Square test for categorical-categorical relationship.

<sup>12</sup> Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 1.067e^{-3}$ ) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

In open-ended comments, respondents described additional obstacles they faced during recovery. Funding losses and restrictions were the most common type of barrier described. For example, a couple of respondents named eligibility restrictions that prevented nonprofits from receiving small business recovery support. Others noted that community donations have shifted toward hurricane recovery, reducing support for regular programs or general operating costs. Some described funding as more competitive now, at the same time that revenues and donations are down and expenses are up. Others described revenue losses from canceled programs and reduced tourism.



*“Some organizations denied funds due to us not owning the building.”*

SENIOR LEADER IN POLK COUNTY



*“Due to Helene and now national politics, we have to rethink adding to staff benefits, increasing wages, adding admin positions. The failure to implement these things could mean more burnout for staff and higher turnover. We also canceled our annual fundraiser recognizing that the community was not yet ready for such events or to spend money. Given our economy, this trend will likely continue for years.”*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

Second to funding losses and restrictions, respondents described challenges associated with supporting community recovery while also trying to recover organizationally. Some organizations struggled to manage influxes of donations, which required storage and volunteer capacity they did not have. Many faced overwhelming demand for basic needs like housing, food, and utility assistance, which stretched their staff and volunteers thin.



*“We have been doing our food pantry for 11 years now. This is the worst it has been with keeping up with those still in need.”*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN HENDERSON COUNTY

Several respondents said that meeting housing needs has been a particular challenge. As one wrote, “Many of our clients were already experiencing housing instability, and the storm further reduced available housing options.” Others noted that the disaster added to the numbers of people experiencing homelessness, while exacerbating the challenges of those already unhoused.

***Organizations are adapting their approaches to include long-term disaster recovery and preparedness, with a focus on increasing community and environmental resilience.***

Just under half of responding organizations (47%) made long-term or permanent adjustments to their programs as a result of the hurricane, and more than half (59%) formed new partnerships (N=241). Organizations with more physical damage were more likely to report long-term adjustments<sup>13</sup> and develop additional partnerships<sup>14</sup> in their work, as were BIPOC-focused organizations.<sup>15</sup>

Most commonly, respondents described how their organizations are implementing a long-term program focus on community disaster recovery and preparedness. Several have permanently added staff to support this work. For some organizations, the work looks like case management and direct support, helping residents to recover emotionally and financially and repair their homes. Other organizations are focusing on community education and training, such as teaching workshops and disseminating disaster preparedness materials in English and Spanish. Still others are taking actions focused on strengthening both the physical and social infrastructure that communities rely on during and after disasters. Some are adapting their buildings to serve as community hubs in emergencies; others are training staff in crisis response, leading a long-term recovery group, fiscally sponsoring new relief organizations, launching a large-scale volunteer initiative, or building a mutual aid network. A few respondents described disaster recovery programs specific to certain populations, such as trauma support for first responders, farm recovery support, and artist recovery.

“We added a bilingual (Spanish) disaster specific Case Manager to our team to support families needing help with navigation of all the FEMA requirements and other supports.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN HENDERSON COUNTY

13 Significant at  $p < .05$  ( $p\text{-value} = 0.0167$ ) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

14 Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 1.40e^{-3}$ ) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

15 Long term adjustments: Significant at  $p < .05$  ( $p\text{-value} = 0.0199$ ); New partnerships: Significant at  $p < 0.01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 4.70e^{-3}$ ). Both were assessed using the Chi Square test for categorical-categorical relationship.

Another category of long-term program adjustments are those aimed at strengthening the health and resilience of both people and environment. Several respondents described a new or re-energized organizational focus on climate adaptation, land/water cleanup and restoration, resilient food systems, or environmental justice. Others described new or enhanced programs to support parents and families, renters, and people with behavioral health needs. Taken together, these changes suggest that nonprofits are recognizing that the region’s long-term wellbeing will depend on both supportive social systems and sustainable environmental practices.

“We now include climate change/severe storm resilience among our priorities. We are starting a strategic planning process and may incorporate this into a revised mission statement.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN JACKSON COUNTY

Overall, respondents emphasized that community need remains high. While planning for the long term, many organizations are still operating with extended hours, working across larger service areas, and/or distributing more supplies than they were before the hurricane.

“We are doubling our mobile distributions to reach more neighbors, especially in the hardest hit areas of our county.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN AVERY COUNTY

### **Other resilience strategies include emergency readiness, partnerships, fiscal health and supporting staff wellness.**

A separate question specifically asked respondents about steps their organization has taken to build or enhance its resilience to future disasters. Most commonly, respondents reported that their organizations are building emergency readiness into their operations and structures. A number are updating emergency plans, sending staff to trainings, procuring generators, or making physical improvements to their buildings so they can weather future crises. Several respondents again mentioned new, permanent staff members focused on crisis response or disaster recovery; presumably, these staff can serve as resources to both their organization and the broader community during a crisis event.

The second most common resilience strategy that respondents described is strengthening partnerships and regional networks. Some organizations are building relationships with local governments or other partners to improve emergency coordination; others are securing partners to help them get or store supplies in event of emergency.

“Participamos en un taller de manejo de ayuda en desastres (Disaster Relief Management) que nos brindó herramientas prácticas para planificar y responder de manera más efectiva a emergencias en la comunidad. Además, asistí a múltiples juntas del condado y la ciudad para aprender sobre los fondos disponibles para familias afectadas por desastres y para establecer conexiones con líderes locales.”

*(Translation) We participated in a Disaster Relief Management workshop, which provided practical tools to help us plan for and respond more effectively to emergencies in the community. In addition, I attended multiple county and city meetings to learn about available funding for families affected by disasters and to build relationships with local leaders.*

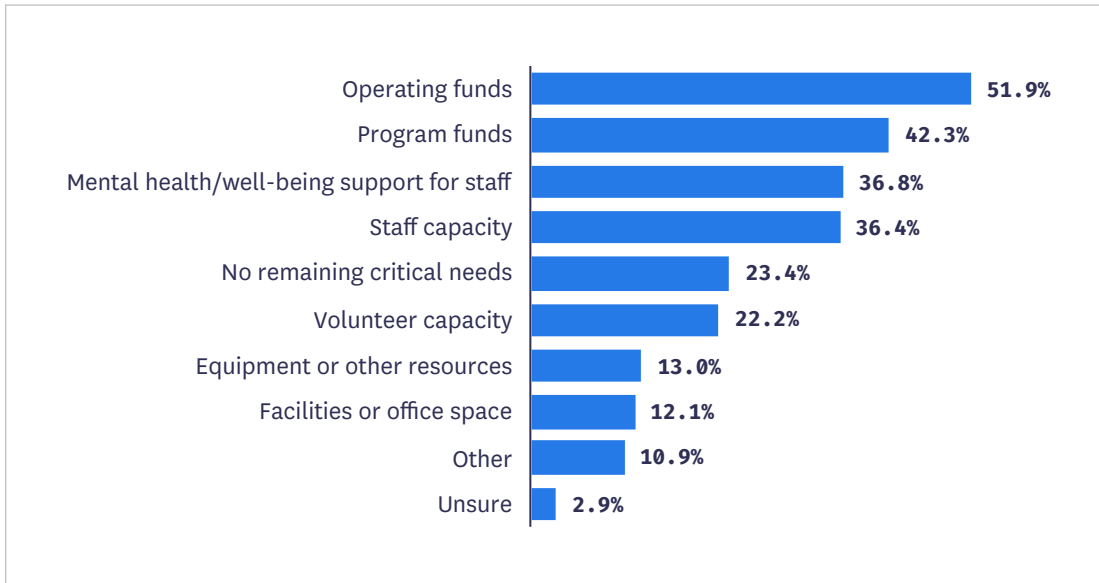
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

Third, several organizations are boosting their fiscal health by seeking to diversify their revenue streams or building up their cash reserves. Finally, with the growing recognition of the toll that hurricane response has taken on staff, a few respondents described supporting staff wellness as best they can by adding paid time off, wellness incentives, or trauma counseling.

### **Organizations still face critical resource gaps from the hurricane, especially regarding funding, staff mental health, and staff capacity.**

Respondents were asked what critical needs their organization still has as a result of the hurricane, with the option to select from a list (Figure 14). Organizations most commonly reported needing more funding, with 52% needing operating funds and 42% needing program funds (N=239). Staff needs came next, with 37% of organizations in need of support for staff mental health/wellbeing and 36% in need of staff capacity. Almost a quarter of organizations reported having no remaining critical needs as a result of the hurricane.

**Figure 14 – Share of organizations that still have critical needs after the hurricane (N=239)**



As might be expected, organizations that reported major or minor physical damage from the storm were more likely to report needs when compared with organizations that had no damage (Table 8). But a significant share of organizations that did not experience physical damage (between 24% and 40%, depending on the need) also still have critical needs as a result of the storm. This is further evidence that nonprofit organizations were adversely impacted by the storm in multiple ways, including but not limited to direct physical damage.

**Table 8 – Share of organizations with critical needs by severity of damage (N=239)**

	Major / Total Loss	Minor	None
Operating funds <sup>16</sup>	59.0%	60.0%	41.0%
Program funds <sup>17</sup>	51.3%	52.0%	29.0%
Staff mental health <sup>18</sup>	41.0%	42.0%	30.0%
Staff capacity <sup>19</sup>	43.6%	46.0%	24.0%
No remaining needs <sup>20</sup>	20.5%	14.0%	34.0%

16 Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 6.971e^{-3}$ ) using Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

17 Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 1.117e^{-3}$ ) using Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

18 Marginally significant at  $p < 0.05$  ( $p\text{-value} = 0.0572$ ) using Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

19 Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 2.225e^{-3}$ ) using Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

20 Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 6.427e^{-3}$ ) using Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

Respondents associated with BIPOC-focused organizations were significantly more likely to report that their organization had a critical need for operating funds and program funds as a result of the hurricane, compared to respondents associated with organizations that do not focus on a particular racial or ethnic group (Table 9). These respondents were also more likely to report a need for staff mental health supports, though this difference was not statistically significant.

**Table 9– Share of organizations with critical needs by program focus (N=239)**

	<b>BIPOC-Focused Organizations</b>	<b>No BIPOC Focus</b>
Operating funds <sup>21</sup>	64.7%	45.6%
Program funds <sup>22</sup>	56.9%	38.0%
Staff mental health <sup>23</sup>	52.9%	32.1%
Staff capacity <sup>24</sup>	33.3%	35.1%
No remaining needs <sup>25</sup>	9.8%	28.7%

21 Significant at  $p < .05$  (p-value = 0.0255) using Chi Square test for categorical-categorical relationship.

22 Significant at  $p < .05$  (p-value = 0.0258) using Chi Square test for categorical-categorical relationship.

23 Not significant at  $p < .10$  (p-value = 0.9494) using Chi Square test for categorical-categorical relationship.

24 Significant at  $p < .05$  (p-value = 0.0113) using Chi Square test for categorical-categorical relationship.

25 Significant at  $p < .05$  (p-value = 0.0102) using Chi Square test for categorical-categorical relationship.

# Impacts of Federal Shifts

As 2025 unfolded, nonprofits in Western North Carolina had to contend not only with the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, but also with a wave of proposed and actual federal policy shifts that created widespread uncertainty and affected many organizations' operations, as well as the communities they serve. While a full accounting of federal policy shifts is outside the scope of this report, some notable examples during the first six months of the year include executive orders eliminating federal DEI programs,<sup>xx</sup> cuts and pauses to federal grants, new rules altering grant eligibility,<sup>xxi</sup> and shifts in immigration enforcement that impacted immigrant communities and nonprofits who work with them.<sup>xxii</sup> Additionally, by May 2025, over 260,000 federal workers had been fired, taken a buyout, or retired early as a result of federal workforce reduction initiatives.<sup>xxiii</sup> Since nonprofits often work with government staff to manage federal grants, cuts to the federal workforce could make it harder for these organizations to access and use funding.

Because federal shifts could affect nonprofits' capacity for response, their resources, and their communities' needs, it was important to ask survey respondents about the impact of these shifts in order to fully understand hurricane recovery. The survey therefore included a few questions about how federal shifts had affected organizations during the hurricane recovery period. The majority of respondents noted having felt the impact of these policy changes, particularly their impacts on funding. Reductions in federal funding streams have led many organizations to make funding shifts of their own or increase fundraising efforts. Some have been forced to cut back on their programmatic delivery or cut out programs completely. Staffing changes were rare among our respondents, but many acknowledged the unpredictability and tension that these policy shifts have levied on the region in the aftermath of the storm.

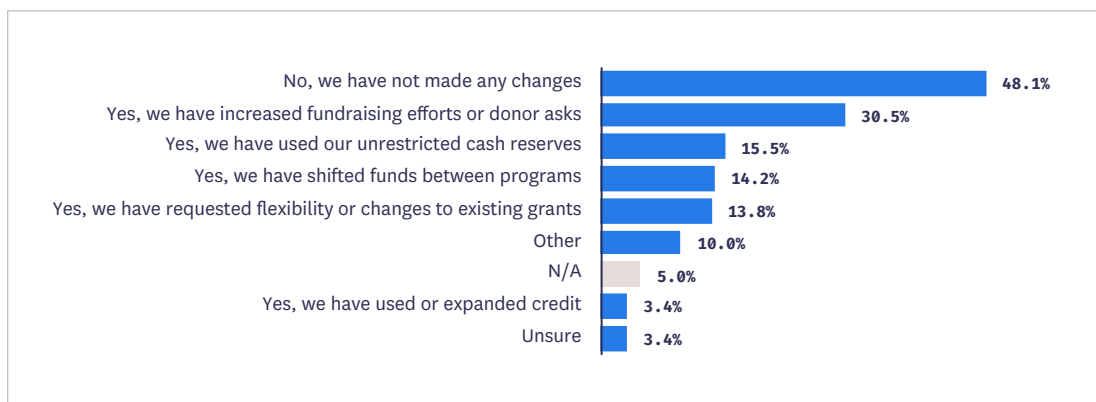
## ***More than half of organizations have been impacted by federal policy shifts in 2025.***

Respondents were asked a series of questions about whether their organizations have made program, staffing, or financial changes in 2025 due to changes at the federal level. Of 239 organizations represented in responses to these questions, 130 (54%) had made at least one change. Financial changes were the most common type reported, with 109 (46%) organizations reporting such an adjustment, followed by program changes (103 organizations, or 43%). Only 53 organizations (22%) reported a staffing impact.

## ***Organizations who made financial changes were most likely to increase their fundraising efforts or donor asks.***

About 31 percent of respondents reported that their organization has increased its fundraising efforts or donor asks due to federal shifts. Less common has been the use of reserve funds, shifting funds between programs, requests for changes or flexibility to existing grants, or use of credit (Figure 15). Smaller organizations were more likely to report not making any financial changes, perhaps because they are less reliant on federal funds.<sup>26</sup> BIPOC-focused organizations were more likely to have made changes to finances than organizations that do not focus on a specific racial or ethnic group.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 15 – Share of organizations that have made financial changes due to federal shifts (N=239)**



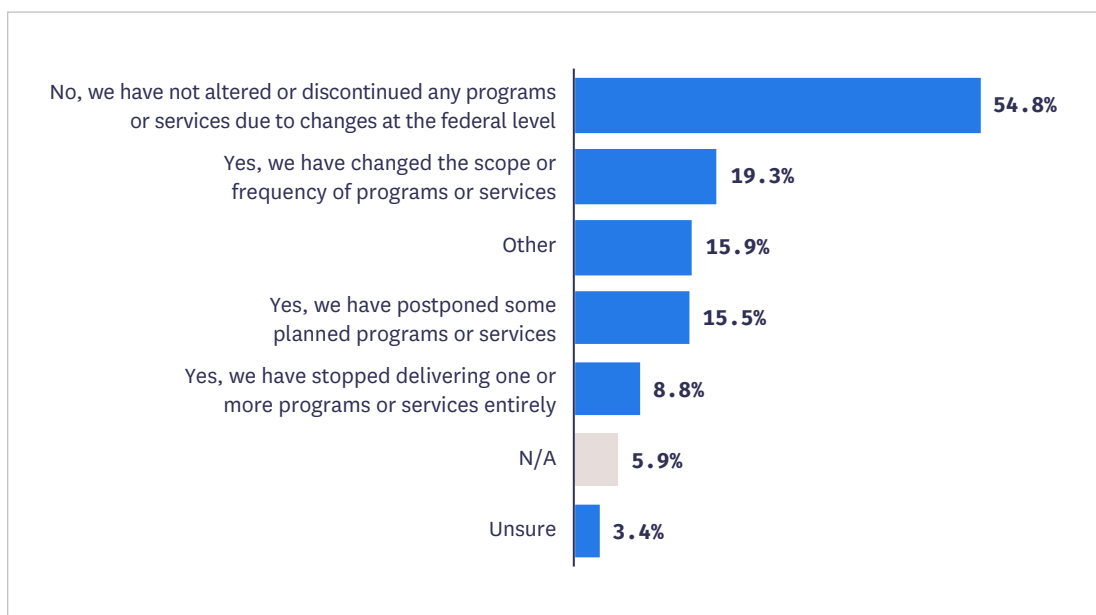
<sup>26</sup> Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p\text{-value} = 3.735e^{-3}$ ) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

<sup>27</sup> Asked for grant flexibility: Not significant at  $p < 0.10$  ( $p = 0.3676$ ); Increased fundraising: Marginally significant at  $p < 0.10$  ( $p = 0.1157$ ); Shifted funds: Significant at  $p < 0.05$  ( $p = 0.0422$ ); Used reserve funds: Not significant at  $p < 0.10$  ( $p = 0.6582$ ). All were assessed using Fisher's Exact test for categorical-categorical relationship.

**About one-fifth of organizations have changed the scope or frequency of their services.**

The most commonly reported program impact was a change in the scope or frequency of services delivered, impacting 19% of organizations. Sixteen percent have postponed planned programs or services, and about nine percent have stopped delivering some of their programs or services entirely (Figure 16). Small organizations were more likely than mid-size or large organizations to report that they had not altered or discontinued any programs.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 16 – Share of organizations that have altered programs or services due to changes at the federal level (N=239)**

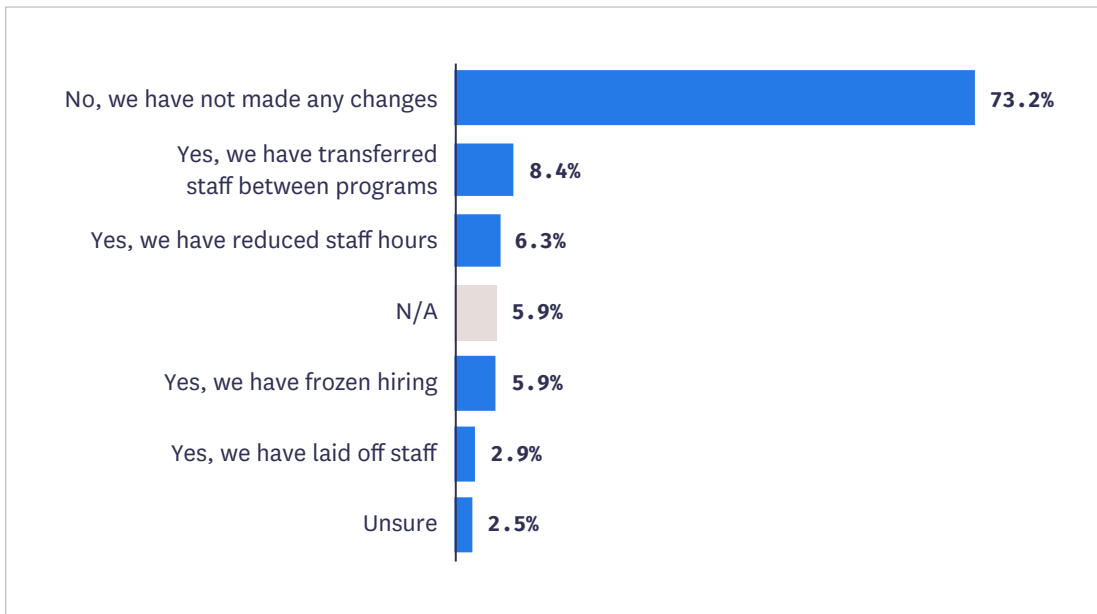


**Most organizations have not made staffing changes; reorganization and reducing hours are most common among those that have.**

Most respondents (73%) said their organizations have not made any staffing changes due to federal shifts. Among those that have made changes, the most common changes have been transferring staff between programs or reducing hours as opposed to layoffs, perhaps considered a last resort. Only seven respondents reported that their organization has had to lay off staff (Figure 17).

<sup>28</sup> Significant at  $p < .05$  ( $p$ -value = 0.02115) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

**Figure 17 – Share of organizations that have made staffing changes (N=239)**



***Respondents’ own words highlight rippling funding impacts, looming uncertainty, and operational strain.***

In open-ended comments, respondents described funding challenges, an uncertain operating environment, and changes in to day-to-day operations as the most common impacts of federal shifts. Cuts to federal entities such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, AmeriCorps, and programs established through the Victims of Crime Act had already reduced funding for some organizations at the time of the survey. Along with direct cuts, there are also indirect impacts. Federal cuts are impacting some local and state programs that organizations rely on, causing these organizations to lose additional funding opportunities. Several respondents said they are seeing reduced donations from private and individual donors due to a “tightened environment” (as one respondent described it), along with more competition for private funding. Many organizations anticipate additional cuts, making long-term planning difficult and contributing to stress and unease among staff.

“The instability and unknowns of the future make budget planning very difficult. We are attempting to create an emergency budget but the number a different scenarios and possibilities of funding changes make this a complicated process. The overall chaos in the news negatively affects staff.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

“Two of our food supplies at the federal level have been paused or cut, which accounts for 20% of our food inventory. We are using extra funds to purchase food from local farmers.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN AVERY COUNTY

In addition to program reductions and closures due to funding cuts, changes at the federal level have impacted several other aspects of organizations’ day-to-day operations. Several have revised or eliminated references to diversity, equity and inclusion in their program communications. Others have spent time and resources establishing security protocols to protect staff and community members. Still others have incurred extra operational costs as they seek alternate ways to fill resource gaps.

While writing their comments, many respondents took time to highlight how federal shifts are also impacting the communities they serve. They described high levels of fear, stress, and uncertainty in their communities. In some cases, this is creating barriers to care as residents avoid seeking services due to fear of exposure. These community impacts, in turn, increase the strain on staff and on organizational resources.

“Ongoing uncertainty and fear among those we serve has been horrific to witness. The levels of mental and emotional stress that both our staff and clients are experiencing is, somedays, nearly debilitating. We have people afraid to visit our facility even though they are in dire need. We have a large increase in formerly employed people due to layoffs... There is fear regarding civil rights abuses, voting rights abuses, fear of travel, even within the state, and a rising distrust for any organizations that appear to [be] connected to governmental authority.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN JACKSON COUNTY

# What Nonprofits Need Now

The final portion of the survey asked respondents how their organizations are currently faring, and what general needs and supports they have at present (not necessarily related to the hurricane). While a majority of respondents say their programs are running smoothly, staffing shortages, uneven financial health, and persistent fundraising demands create ongoing pressure. Respondents report high confidence and optimism, yet also identify a clear need for peer connection, crisis support, and mental health resources to sustain their work. Beyond funding, respondents are calling for capacity-building, stronger networks, and greater visibility, suggesting that their organizations' long-term resilience will depend on both internal capacity and a supportive, interconnected regional system of support and care – for vulnerable populations, and for the organizations that serve them.

***Staffing shortfalls and mixed financial health are challenging many organizations, even as most keep programs running smoothly.***

Respondents rated their agreement with a series of statements about their organization's operational health and their own optimism and confidence about navigating current challenges. Across the four operational indicators, responses suggest mixed capacity and stability (Table 10). A majority of organizations report challenges with staffing, with nearly half (45%) disagreeing that they have the paid staff they need and only about 31% agreeing or strongly agreeing (N=241). Volunteer availability shows a similar pattern, with one-third lacking enough volunteers and roughly the same proportion reporting sufficient numbers. Financial health appears somewhat stronger, as 47% of respondents agree or strongly agree their organization is in a strong position, though nearly one in four disagree. Program delivery is the most stable area, with 57% reporting smooth operations without major disruptions, while just under a quarter disagree.

**Table 10 – Nonprofit leaders’ assessment of their organizations’ current situation (N=241)**

	<b>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree or Strongly Agree</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Our organization has the paid staff capacity we need to carry out our work.	45.23%	19.92%	30.70%	4.15%
Our organization has enough volunteers to support our program needs.	34.02%	25.31%	34.03%	6.64%
Our organization is in a strong financial position.	25.31%	27.80%	46.89%	0.00%
Our programs are operating smoothly without major disruptions.	24.48%	17.43%	57.26%	0.83%
I feel confident about my ability to lead through current conditions.	1.66%	14.94%	81.74%	1.66%
I feel optimistic about my organization’s ability to navigate current challenges.	8.30%	18.26%	73.45%	0.00%

Respondents’ opinions on some indicators varied by organizational size. Respondents from large organizations were more likely to agree or strongly agree that their organization was in a strong financial position (69%), compared to a third (35%) of respondents in small or mid-size organizations.<sup>29</sup> Respondents from large organizations were also more likely to agree or strongly agree that their programs were operating smoothly.<sup>30</sup> Just over half of respondents from small organizations disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had enough paid staff to support their program activities – significantly more so than respondents from mid-size (43%) or large organizations (34%).<sup>31</sup>

29 Significant at  $p < .01$  (p-value =  $1.445e^{-7}$ ) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

30 Significant at  $p < .05$  (p-value = 0.0435) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

31 Significant at  $p < .01$  (p-value =  $3.56e^{-4}$ ) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

### ***Leaders report high confidence and optimism in steering their organizations through current challenges.***

Respondents express strong self-assurance, with more than four in five (82%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel confident in their ability to lead through current conditions (Table 10). Optimism about their organizations' ability to withstand current challenges is similarly high, with nearly three-quarters expressing a positive outlook. Neutral responses outpace disagreement on both measures, suggesting that while a small minority feel pessimistic, most leaders maintain a resilient and forward-looking stance.

### ***Organizations need the most support in areas related to generating revenue.***

Respondents were asked to select from a list of areas in which their organization could use support at the time of the survey. Among the options available, those related to generating revenue – fundraising, donor relationship development, and grant writing – were most commonly selected (Figure 18). These top support categories did not vary much across organizational types, except that respondents from small and mid-size organizations were more likely to select a need for fundraising support, compared to large organizations.<sup>32</sup> This difference suggests that large organizations may have sufficient resources to allow them to address a broader range of strategic needs at the current time, while small organizations remain more focused on meeting immediate revenue demands. Respondents from BIPOC-focused organizations were also more likely to select fundraising as a current need, compared to organizations that do not focus on a specific racial or ethnic group.<sup>33</sup>

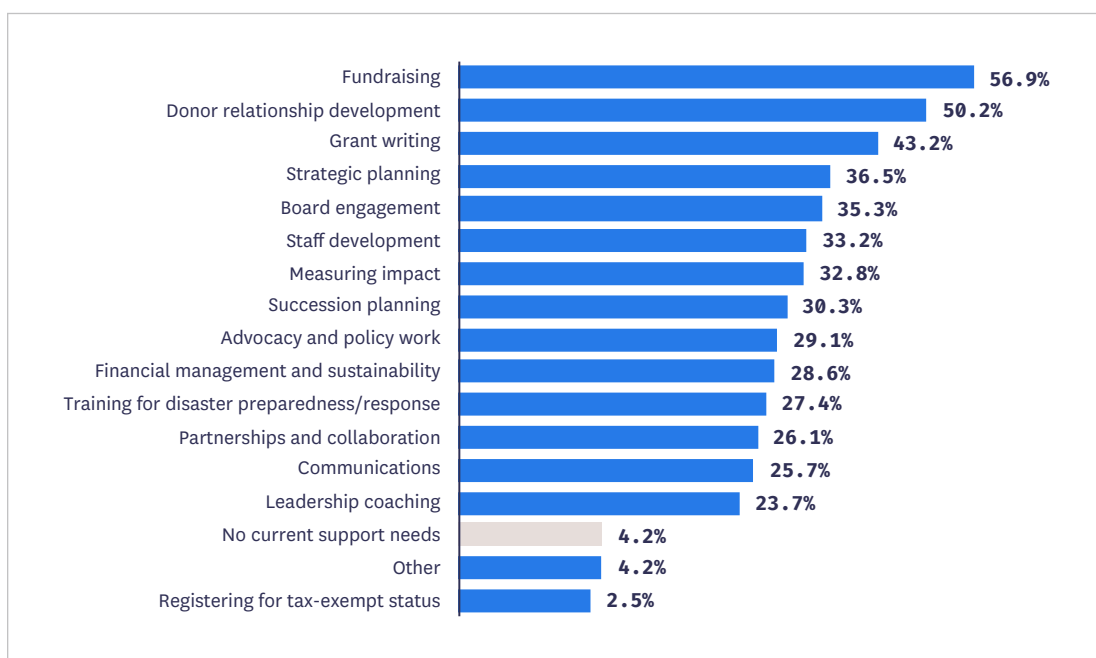
32 Significant at  $p < .01$  ( $p$ -value =  $1.095e^{-4}$ ) using the Cochran-Armitage test for ordinal-categorical relationship.

33 Marginally significant at  $p < .10$  ( $p$ -value = 0.1127) using the Fisher's Exact test for categorical-categorical relationship.

“I am still new to the role as ED. One thing that confounds me is funding streams that come at various times throughout the year. Sometimes I can’t make good decisions because I don’t know how the finances are going to ‘play out’... At present, I am the only paid staff, and am trying to write grants, manage the finances, develop programs. It’s overwhelming at times. But I suspect I am not alone.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN CHEROKEE COUNTY

Figure 18 – Share of organizations with current support needs (N=241)



### Leaders voice strong need for peer connection, crisis support, and mental health services.

Respondents were also asked to select from a list of ongoing supports they need to maintain their wellbeing as nonprofit leaders (Figure 19). At least one-quarter of respondents indicated a need for each type of support, with regular peer support meetings and crisis leadership training topping the list at 34% each, followed closely by access to mental health services (32%). Just over a quarter (26%) of respondents said they do not need any support. Among write-in responses to the *Other* category, four respondents indicated interest in a sabbatical, four wrote of a need for more staff, and two expressed a need for higher pay.

“Creating safe spaces for peer exchange among small, rural, and BIPOC-led organizations would allow us to share knowledge, troubleshoot challenges, and build collective resilience.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN BURKE COUNTY

Figure 19 – Share of leaders with current support needs (N=241)



Leaders in Buncombe and Henderson counties reported even higher needs, with nearly half seeking regular peer support and only 17% indicating no support needs. In contrast, more than a third of leaders outside those counties reported no support needs, and their selections in other categories were generally lower.

**Table 11 – Areas in which nonprofit leaders could use support to maintain their well-being, by Headquarters Location (n = 241)**

	Buncombe & Henderson Counties		All Other Counties		No Response	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Access or continued access to mental health services	41	35.3%	31	25.8%	4	80.0%
Coaching	42	36.2%	23	19.2%	2	40.0%
Flexible working arrangements	38	32.8%	27	22.5%	1	20.0%
I am not in need of support for my well-being at this time	20	17.2%	42	35.0%	1	20.0%
Other	7	6.0%	3	2.5%		
Other - more funding/pay			2	1.7%		
Other - sabbatical	2	1.7%	2	1.7%		
Other - staff	4	3.4%				
Regular peer support meetings	54	46.6%	26	21.7%	2	40.0%
Training for crisis leadership/management	45	38.8%	35	29.2%	1	20.0%

***Beyond funding, organizations seek capacity, connection, and visibility to strengthen their work.***

An open-ended question that asked respondents to share suggestions for how WNC Nonprofit Pathways, local funders, and the broader community can support their organization – *beyond* funding – generated 132 responses. While many comments did focus on general operating support and other funding needs, respondents also called for more capacity building, training, and technical assistance support. Many also emphasized the value of peer learning and collaboration, and others pointed to increasing visibility and amplifying nonprofit voices with decision-makers as key to sustaining their work. Table 12 lists all eight categories of non-funding support ideas that were shared, along with examples of each. Taken together, these suggestions highlight the need for broad and equitable investments that will support resilience and sustainability across the entire regional nonprofit ecosystem.

**Table 12 – Non-funding support ideas, by category**

<b>Category</b> (% of all mentions not related to funding)	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Capacity Building, Training &amp; Technical Assistance</b> (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Strategic planning guidance</li> <li>+ Organizational structure support for hiring EDs</li> <li>+ Capacity-building assistance in data systems, communications, and planning</li> </ul>
<b>Peer Learning, Networking &amp; Collaboration Platforms</b> (16%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Opportunities to connect and collaborate with other organizations</li> <li>+ Safe spaces for peer exchange among BIPOC-led and rural orgs</li> <li>+ Shared regional strategies for sustainability</li> </ul>
<b>Visibility, Marketing, Communications &amp; Storytelling</b> (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Amplifying nonprofit voices to decision-makers</li> <li>+ Visibility support for the organization and its work</li> <li>+ Shared outreach platforms</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy &amp; Policy Strategy</b> (19%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Promoting data's role in regional policy</li> <li>+ Sustained advocacy for trauma-informed, long-term disaster recovery</li> <li>+ Lobbying and legal support for nonprofits</li> </ul>
<b>Governance, Board Development &amp; Volunteer Support</b> (15%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Succession planning at the board level</li> <li>+ Creating diverse funding methods through governance</li> <li>+ Recruiting volunteers</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Wellness, Burnout Prevention &amp; Peer Support</b> (14%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Behavioral health services for staff</li> <li>+ Enrollment in Employee Assistance Network</li> <li>+ Staff mental health resources (post-disaster)</li> <li>+ Peer support for solo EDs</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure, Resource Tools &amp; Strategic Planning</b> (9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Physical space for meetings</li> <li>+ Facility support for old buildings</li> <li>+ Access to grantmaking databases</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Competency &amp; Language Accessibility</b> (4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Access to Spanish-language resources</li> <li>+ Access to culturally competent consultants</li> <li>+ Culturally safe spaces for Latino-led organizations</li> </ul>

# Conclusion

The months since Hurricane Helene have tested the capacity, adaptability, and endurance of Western North Carolina’s nonprofit sector. Survey findings confirm that these organizations have been both directly impacted by the storm and central to the region’s immediate relief and ongoing recovery. While physical damage to nonprofit facilities was often modest, operational disruptions were widespread, and many organizations diverted resources to meet urgent community needs. Staff and volunteers faced the same personal hardships as those they served, and although many found purpose in their work, the emotional toll has been considerable.

“Almost nine months post-storm, many of the leaders I know that have been deeply involved in disaster recovery efforts at some level are dealing with pretty significant burnout. My personal capacity is extremely low right now and I am powering through burnout.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

Recovery is underway, but significant challenges remain. Nonprofits are navigating a complex landscape shaped by long-term disaster recovery needs, staffing shortages, and shifting federal policies that affect both funding and community stability. Leaders remain confident in their ability to continue serving their communities, but they identify clear priorities for support: increased funding, expanded fundraising capacity, stronger peer and mental health supports, and sustained investments in staff and organizational resilience. Meeting these needs will be essential to ensuring that Western North Carolina’s nonprofits can continue to play their critical role in the region’s recovery and long-term stability.

“El huracán Helene puso a prueba nuestra capacidad como organización, pero también demostró la fuerza y la solidaridad de nuestra comunidad. A pesar del dolor y las pérdidas materiales, vimos cómo vecinos, voluntarios y organizaciones se unieron para apoyar a las familias más afectadas.”

(Translation) Hurricane Helene tested our capacity as an organization, but it also revealed the strength and solidarity of our community. Despite the pain and material losses, we witnessed neighbors, volunteers, and organizations come together to support the families most affected.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

# Methodological Appendix

## 1. DEVELOPING THE SURVEY

From May 28 to July 6, 2025 we deployed a 58-question survey to nonprofits across the Qualla Boundary and 18 counties in Western North Carolina. Questions were designed to assess the short- and long-term impacts of Hurricane Helene on these organizations and the effects of recent federal policy changes on their operations and service delivery.

Throughout survey development, WNC Nonprofit Pathways reviewed draft questions and draft versions of the survey. WNC Nonprofit Pathways confirmed appropriate language, finalized response options, and ensured that the local nonprofit context and project goals were considered in survey design. Additional input on question and survey design was provided by Dogwood Health Trust and other members of the WNC Nonprofit Pathways board. To validate that the survey language, questions, and design made sense to and reflected the mindset of the intended respondents, we conducted cognitive interviews with volunteer participants from the three nonprofit leaders in Western North Carolina.<sup>xxiv</sup> A Spanish version of the survey was developed with

the assistance of bilingual staff from both Openfields and WNC Nonprofit Pathways.

We used skip logic for some questions in the survey for respondents to provide additional context or information depending on their responses to previous questions. One primary skip logic that we incorporated was for respondents from organizations that were founded after September 27, 2024, the day Hurricane Helene made its greatest impact. Those respondents were directed from Section 1 to Section 6, skipping Sections 2-5, which asked about organizations' experience in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Since organizations founded after Hurricane Helene are likely to have experienced minimal or no direct impact from the storm, these sections were not as relevant for them to answer than organizations who were in operation at the time of the hurricane.

The final survey was built out and administered through SurveyMonkey and covered seven primary areas. A description of the survey sections with sample questions can be found in Table 1 of this report.

## 2. DEVELOPING A CLEAN LIST OF WNC NONPROFITS TO CONTACT

WNC Nonprofit Pathways supplied an initial list of 479 organizations with general contact information to include in the survey outreach process. We cleaned the list to ensure we had the most up-to-date information for each organization and that there were no duplicates. We also identified primary contacts, our goal being to have only one primary contact for each organization and for that contact to be a

person currently in leadership, such as an Executive Directors, CEO, or the equivalent.

After removing duplicates and identifying primary contacts, the list had 467 distinct organizations. WNC Nonprofit Pathways sent a pre-launch email to the contact list to inform people about the incoming survey. From this pre-launch email, WNC Nonprofit

Pathways received a bounce-back report from emails that were no longer active. We used this bounce-back report of inactive emails to clean our list of organizations again and find the contact information of the current executive directors or CEOs. In this process, we updated 57 contacts and also incorporated 92 additional email addresses provided by Pathways.

After this second phase of data cleaning, our revised distribution list contained 540 contacts confirmed as active, newly identified, or added by Pathways. These contacts received the remaining pre-launch outreach and subsequent survey launch emails.

### 3. DEPLOYING THE SURVEY

WNC Nonprofit Pathways distributed the survey to this list of 540 contacts across the Qualla Boundary and the 18-county study area. The survey was open from May 28 to July 6, 2025. WNC Nonprofit Pathways also utilized social media to distribute the survey to their wider network.

To broaden participation, WNC Nonprofit Pathways later distributed the survey to a list of 2,037 nonprofit professionals. Additionally, Pathways asked several trusted partner organizations to publicize the survey through their distribution lists and social media channels.

Following the initial launch, WNC Nonprofit Pathways deployed targeted reminder emails and continued to coordinate social media posts to maximize visibility and drive strong response rates. Openfields provided WNC Nonprofit Pathways staff with suggested language for the pre-launch, launch, and reminder emails, and suggested a schedule and language for social media posts.

Throughout the deployment of the survey, Openfields conducted a randomized quality check on responses to verify that responses matched an actual nonprofit in the service area. We also checked for duplicate submissions.

### 4. CLEANING SURVEY RESPONSES

The survey yielded 290 responses to the English language survey and seven responses to the Spanish language survey for a total of 297. Spanish responses were translated into English and integrated into a single dataset for cleaning.

We prepared our final data set by cleaning and filtering responses according to the following steps:

#### a. Remove responses that were substantially incomplete.

We did this by removing any response that did not meet ONE of the following requirements:

- + They filled out most of section 1 on damage, as indicated by their having submitted a response to that last required question in the section (*Q21: “In the short-term aftermath of the hurricane (0-8 weeks after), did your organization make any adjustments to its programs (such as program priorities, services delivered, or populations served?)”*)
- + They answered NO to Q3 (*“Was your organization founded before September 27, 2024?”*) in which case the skip logic forced them to skip to Section 6.

This allowed us to include as much information about immediate damage and recovery as possible as it allowed us to include partial responses that provided relatively complete information for section 1.

This step eliminated 31 organizations, leaving 266 remaining.

**b. Remove responses from organizations who were headquartered outside of the study region both at the time of the storm and at the time the survey was completed.**

The five organizations founded after the hurricane hit did not include county information on location at either time (before the hurricane or at the time of this survey), because of the skip logic built into the survey. However, their location within the service area was independently verified.

This step meant that our final data set included organizations who were headquartered in the service area either at the time of the storm, at the time the survey was completed, or both.

This step removed five responses (two located in Ashe County, two located in Caldwell County, and one located in Cleveland County) leaving 261 remaining.

**c. Remove multiple responses from the same organization.**

We identified multiple responses from the same organization using the reported organization name from Q1, taking the most complete response if one was less complete than the other. If both responses were complete, then we kept the response from the more senior respondent. If titles seemed equivalent, then we kept the response completed most recently.

This step of removing multiple responses from the same organization removed 10 responses (including one from the Spanish survey), leaving 251 organizations remaining.

Our final data set included 251 complete or substantially complete responses, 245 from the English version and 6 from the Spanish version.

## 5. CONSTRUCTION OF CROSSTABS

We created several variables to use in the creation of crosstabs to explore relationships between key variables in the data. Below is a description of each with a brief explanation of how we created the crosstab and what questions we used.

**County Crosstab #1**  
**Current headquarters location**

We grouped organizations by where their headquarters are currently located, asked in Q4, into two primary categories: Buncombe and Henderson Counties, and All Other Counties (see table below).

For responses to this question with an open-ended answer in the *Other* option, we re-coded their responses according to the primary county they listed. If we were unsure of the location, we found headquarter locations from the organization's website and re-coded their answer to that county.

*Q4 - Currently, in which county or tribal area is your organization headquartered? (If your organization is remote or headquartered in multiple counties, please choose the county where your Executive Director works.)*

### ***Current location crosstab grouping***

<b>Crosstab Group</b>	<b>Counties Included</b>
Buncombe-Henderson	Responses which indicated Buncombe or Henderson County
All Other	Responses which indicated Avery, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Qualla Boundary, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Yancey
No Response	Responses from organizations founded after September 27, 2024, did not receive this question

### ***County Crosstab #2***

#### ***Headquarters location at the time of the storm***

We grouped organizations by where their headquarters were located at the time of the hurricane, asked in Q5, into two primary categories – Buncombe and Henderson Counties, and All Other Counties (see table below).

For responses with open-ended answer in the Other option, we re-coded their responses according to the primary county they listed. If we were unsure of the location, we found headquarter locations from the organization’s website and re-coded their answer to that county.

*Q5 - At the time of the hurricane, in which county or tribal area was your organization headquartered? (If your organization was remote or headquartered in multiple counties at the time of the hurricane, please choose the county where your Executive Director worked.)*

### ***Location at the time of the storm crosstab grouping***

<b>Crosstab Groups</b>	<b>Counties Included</b>
Buncombe-Henderson	Responses which indicated Buncombe or Henderson County
All Other	Responses which indicated Avery, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Qualla Boundary, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Yancey
Outside of Region	Responses from organizations located in counties outside of the 18 county service area at the time of the storm
No Response	Responses from organizations founded after September 27, 2024 – they did not receive this question

### Damage Crosstab

To get a more comprehensive measure of physical damage done to organizations from the hurricane, we combined respondent answers to questions Q7 & Q8.

We first coded any *Other* responses into one of the other damage level categories. Because so few respondents reported a total loss in either question, we combined the “Major” and “Total Loss” categories into a single category (see table below).

*Q7 - Considering the building(s) your organization occupied in {{ Q5 }} at the time of the hurricane: What was the most severe degree of hurricane-related damage to the building(s)?*

*Q8 - Considering all physical property other than building(s) that your organization had in {{Q5 }} at the time of the hurricane: What was the most severe degree of hurricane-related damage to this property? Physical property includes any land, vehicles, equipment, office supplies, infrastructure, or other physical assets that your organization is financially responsible for.*

### Combined damage crosstab creation

	(Q7) Building Damage				
(Q8) Other Property Damage Severity		N/A	None	Minor	Major/Total Loss
	N/A	None	None	Minor	Major/Total Loss
	None	None	None	Minor	Major/Total Loss
	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major/Total Loss
	Major/Total Loss	Major/Total Loss	Major/Total Loss	Major/Total Loss	Major/Total Loss

### Organization Size Crosstab

To create a simple measure of organization size, we used annual revenue from Q43. We grouped revenue categories from Q43 to represent small, mid-size, and large organizations.

*Q43 - In your best estimate, what will be your organization’s total revenue for the current fiscal year? Total revenue refers to all income your organization will receive this fiscal year, including all gifts, grants, program service revenue, membership dues, investment income, income from the sale of assets, and other income.*

### Organization size (revenue) crosstab grouping

Size Crosstab Category	Revenue Answers Included	Organization Size (by revenue)
<\$250k	<\$100k \$100k-\$249,999k	Small
\$250k-\$1 million	\$250k-\$499,999k \$500k-\$999,999k	Medium
>\$1 million	\$1 million - \$1,999,999 >\$2 million	Large

### Program Focus (Race/Ethnicity) Crosstab

We grouped organizations by whether they reported a focus on communities that are Black, Indigenous, or people of color in Q48.

*Q48 - Does your organization focus its service delivery on any of the following racial or ethnic groups? (Select all that apply.)*

Open-ended *Other* answers were re-coded to a different racial or ethnic group (or multiple) if applicable.

### Organization program focus crosstab grouping

Focus	Answers Included
Focus on specific racial or ethnic group	Checked at least one of the following: Black or African American; Latino/a, Hispanic, or Spanish origin; Indigenous, Native American, or Alaska Native; Asian; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
No specific focus	Checked: We do not focus on any specific racial or ethnic group
Did not answer	Did not answer the question
Other/Unsure	Checked: <i>Other</i> or <i>Unsure</i>

6. ANALYSIS

Our analysis generally consisted of reporting the frequencies of different answer choices and qualitative analysis of open-ended responses.

In analysis using a crosstab, for example to explore the relationship between organizational size and the sources of assistance received, we used a range of tests to ensure that apparent relationships actually met tests for statistical significance.

We used several tests to determine the statistical significance of the claims made in this report. We selected each test with consideration of sample size, the nature of independent and dependent variables, and the relationships which we were describing. The table below explains the factors used to decide on each test, as well as the number of times it was used.

Test	Condition	Number of claims tested	Source
Chi Square test	Both variables are categorical	10	<a href="#">Link</a>
Fisher’s Exact test	Both variables are categorical, but the sample sizes are small (an expected value is <5)	6	<a href="#">Link</a>
Kendall’s Tau rank correlation coefficient	Both variables are ordinal	7	<a href="#">Link</a>
Cochran-Armitage test for trend	The independent variable is ordinal and the dependent variable is categorical	14	<a href="#">Link</a>
Wilcoxon Whitney-Mann rank test	The independent variable is categorical and the dependent variable is ordinal	1	<a href="#">Link</a>

All statistical analyses were performed using R (version 4.4.1, R Core Team 2024). The stats package (v4.4.1; R Core Team, 2024) was used for the Chi Square, Fisher’s Exact, and Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney tests. The DescTools package (v0.99.60; Signorell, 2025) was used for the Cochran-Armitage test for trend and the Kendall’s Tau rank correlation test.

Qualitative responses were exported, translated as needed, and coded in Dedoose, a qualitative analysis tool. Codes were then aggregated to identify major themes within responses to each question.

# Endnotes

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