



## December 2025 Grant Resources Newsletter



Welcome to ECC's December 2025 Grant Resources Newsletter. This is a resource for local government employees, elected and appointed officials, and other community-focused individuals in the ECC region for receiving information about upcoming opportunities, relevant updates, and useful tools pertaining to grants.

### Grants

#### US Water Alliance

ECC staff recently met with staff from US Water Alliance to learn about their organization. The US Water Alliance is designated a national Environmental Finance Center (EFC), which provides technical assistance to underserved communities with the goal of obtaining federal funds for water infrastructure (including drinking, sanitary, and stormwater).

Direct technical assistance includes state revolving fund readiness support, funding application support, and post-award advising. The organization also assists with "Field Building", which includes education and resource development for water issues.

Please see case studies [HERE](#) on their website.

Contact ECC if you are interested in assistance.

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## Updated County Tier Designations

The NC Department of Commerce has released its 2026 County Tier Designations. Link to memo is [HERE](#). The tier system divides NC counties by Economic Distress Rank, which affects access to state economic development programs.



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This system is based on relative levels of economic distress, with 40 spots for Tier 1, 40 spots for Tier 2, and 20 spots for Tier 3. Tier 3 is relatively least distressed, whereas Tier 1 is most distressed. Tier level is determined by the sum of four factors. These factors are 1 to 100 rankings for the following variables:

- Average unemployment rate
- Median household income
- Percentage growth in population
- Adjusted property base per capita

**Jones County** is the only county within the ECC region to change tiers from 2025 to 2026, moving from Tier 2 to a more distressed Tier 1. This is due to changes in the unemployment and median household income factors.

The ECC region's 2026 County Tier Designations are as follows:

- Tier 3 (least distressed): Carteret
- Tier 2: Craven, Duplin, Onslow, Pamlico
- Tier 1 (most distressed): Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Wayne

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## 2026 Low Income Home and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)



**NCDHHS**

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has received federal funds for the 2026 LIHEAP. The purpose of this program is to assist households with the cost of home heating, with one-time payments going directly to heating vendors.

Households with an individual at least 60 years or older with a disability who receive services through the Division of Aging can apply for this program starting on December 10 if they did not receive automatic renewal. Notices for automatic renewal were provided in November.

See press release [HERE](#) for more information.

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## Grant cycle opens soon for North Carolina Land & Water Fund (NCLWF)



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The NCLWF, within the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, prioritizes drinking water and protecting natural habitats. Eligible applicants for their grant programs include local governments and conservation nonprofits.

There are four regular cycle grant programs:

- Land acquisition of eligible properties through purchase or perpetual conservation agreements.
- Restoration of natural water resources, including streams, wetlands, floodplains, living shorelines, and related projects.
- Innovative projects for managing stormwater aimed at improving water quality.
- Planning to reduce surface water pollution.

Matches are recommended but not required.

The grant cycle opens January 15, 2026, and the application deadline is March 1, 2026.

Link

- Click [HERE](#) for more information about the NC Land & Water Fund.

## FY2026 Brownfields Grants

The EPA has released guidelines for multiple brownfields grants. These include the Multipurpose Grant, Community-wide Assessment Grant, Assessment Coalition Grant, Community-wide Assessments Grant for States and Tribes, and Cleanup Grant.

Applications are due on January 28, 2026.

Link

- Click [HERE](#) for guidelines.



## The Grant Portal (TGP) - Aging Grants / Grants for Seniors

View a catalog of aging grants at <https://north-carolina.thegrantportal.com/aging-seniors>. TGP is online database of grant opportunities. Information about grant details requires a paid subscription.



## North Carolina Resilient Coastal Communities Program (RCCP)



RCCP is managed by NCDEQ's Division of Coastal Management. The purpose of this program is to provide financial and technical assistance for coastal resilience projects. Local governments in North Carolina's 20 coastal counties are eligible to apply. Within the ECC region, that includes Carteret, Craven, Onslow, and Pamlico counties and their municipalities.

This program is based on four phases. The first two phases are planning-related and concurrent, and they result in the creation of resilience strategy and project portfolio documents. Phase 3 includes engineering and design for selected projects, and Phase 4 consists of project implementation (construction). Participation in the first two phases is required for participation in the subsequent phases.

Phases 1 and 2 are awarded directly to approved contractors that assist communities. Phases 3 and 4 are awarded directly to communities.

There is no local match for this program.

This program is awarded annually. The 2025-2026 RCCP Cohort has already been awarded. Visit the links below for more information.

#### Links

- Click [HERE](#) for an overview of the program on [deq.nc.gov](http://deq.nc.gov).
- Click [HERE](#) for the 2025 RCCP Planning Handbook.

## ARPA Updates

### Office Hours

The UNC School of Government (SOG) hosts office hours via Zoom for discussions on local government finance including ARPA. Click [HERE](#) for the office hours page on UNC SOG's NC Finance Connect website. Consider bookmarking this page to stay up to date on future offerings.



**Reminder:** December 31, 2026 is the deadline to expend ARPA SLFRF funds.

**Reminder:** If your entity accepted ARPA SLFRF funds, you must maintain an active registration on [SAM.gov](http://SAM.gov). If you've forgotten your entity's expiration date, please consider checking your registration status on SAM.gov soon!

**Reminder:** ECC staff are available to provide ARPA SLFRF technical assistance to local governments within our nine-county region. There is no cost for this service. Reach out to ECC staff if you have questions or concerns related to:

- SAM.gov registration
- Treasury notices / documentation requests
- ARPA compliance requirements
- Anything else related to ARPA SLFRF

Contact Carlton Gideon, Senior Community Planner, [cgideon@eccog.org](mailto:cgideon@eccog.org), 252-638-3185 ext. 3018.

## Updates

### ECC Services

Would you like to pursue a grant opportunity but are short-staffed? Consider grant writing and administration services offered by ECC. If interested, contact Carlton Gideon, Senior Community Planner, [cgideon@eccog.org](mailto:cgideon@eccog.org), 252-638-3185 ext. 3018.



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**Eastern Carolina Council Mission** - *to improve the region's quality of life by providing human, planning, and economic development services to local governments and area residents by leveraging resources and collaborating regionally.*

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