

Press Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Supporting the Small Businesses of Southwest Florida in Recovering from Hurricane Helene

FORT MYERS, FL — The Florida Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), in collaboration with state and federal partners, remains dedicated to helping Southwest Florida businesses recover from the devastation of Hurricane Helene. As your trusted resource for disaster recovery, we are here to provide vital assistance and help your business reopen, rebuild, and thrive.

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS RECOVERY

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, the Florida SBDC at FGCU is offering **confidential, no-cost consulting** with our team of disaster specialists. Our experts are available to guide businesses through disaster loan applications, recovery planning, and a range of post-disaster challenges. We are here to help you access the capital and resources necessary to restore operations, offering expert advice every step of the way.

With nearly 40% of small businesses never reopening after a disaster, taking action now is crucial. Let us assist you in navigating these challenges. **Help is here—schedule a no-cost consultation today: [SBDC at FGCU Consulting](#).**

STATE AND FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The Florida SBDC at FGCU is actively supporting businesses impacted by Hurricane Helene, working closely with the state and the U.S. Small Business Administration to coordinate relief efforts. Below are some key disaster recovery programs available:

STATE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Florida One-Stop Business Resource Sites

All sites open **10am - 3pm** and will offer help with Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loans, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, and other business and employee resources.

- **Lee County:** CareerSource Mobile Unit — **Oct. 2 - Oct. 4, 2024**
CareerSource SWFL
6800 Shoppes at Plantation Drive, Suite 170
Ft. Myers, FL 33912
- **Charlotte County:** FloridaCommerce Mobile Unit — **Oct. 2 – Oct. 4, 2024**
CareerSource SWFL
3745 Tamiami Trail
Port Charlotte, FL 33952

Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan (EBL) Program

The [Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program](#), activated by FloridaCommerce, provides short-term, zero-interest loans to small businesses that suffered economic injury or physical damage due to Hurricane Helene. The loan program is designed to offer immediate remediation between the impact of the disaster and longer-term recovery funding, such as federally-backed loans, insurance claims, or other resources.

- Eligible businesses with 100 or fewer employees may apply for loans up to \$50,000.
- The business must have been established before **September 23, 2024**, and located in an eligible Florida county impacted by Hurricane Helene.
- Application deadline: **November 24, 2024**.
- Visit [FloridaCommerce](#) for more information.

Agriculture and Aquaculture Producers Natural Disaster Recovery Loan Program

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is providing low-interest and interest-free [loan programs](#) to agricultural and aquaculture producers affected by Hurricane Helene. Eligible producers may apply for loans of up to \$500,000 to restore, repair, or replace damaged physical property and remove vegetative debris.

Explore the [Natural Disaster Recovery Loan Program](#) for more information.

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

SBA Disaster Loans

Low-interest disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) are available to businesses in eligible Florida counties that experienced physical damage or economic injury as a result of Hurricane Helene. The [SBA Physical Disaster Loan](#) program allows businesses to borrow up to \$2 million to repair or replace disaster-damaged property. The Economic Injury Disaster Loan provides working capital assistance for small businesses, agricultural cooperatives, and most private nonprofit organizations that suffered economic losses due to the disaster.

- Physical property damage application deadline: **November 27, 2024**.
- Economic injury application deadline: **June 30, 2025**.

- For more information on SBA disaster loans, visit floridasbdc.org/helene.

CONTACT US FOR HELP

At the Florida SBDC at FGCU, we are committed to helping you access these critical resources and guiding your business through the recovery process. Whether you need assistance with loan applications or strategizing for long-term recovery, our disaster specialists are here to support you every step of the way.

For more information, or to schedule a no-cost consultation, please [visit this link to our regional office at FGCU](#).

Help is here when you need it most.

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About the Florida SBDC at FGCU:

The FSBDC at FGCU offers one-on-one, confidential, no-cost consulting and low-cost workshops for businesses throughout Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, and Glades counties. The state designates the Florida SBDC Network as Florida's principal provider of business assistance. The FSBDC at FGCU is a member of the Florida SBDC Network, a statewide service funded in part through cooperative agreements with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Department of Defense, State of Florida, and other private and public partners, and is hosted by Florida Gulf Coast University and nationally accredited by the Association of SBDCs. For more information, please visit www.fsbdcswfl.org.