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# Subtask 3.3: Recommendations for Integrating Federal, State, and Regional Flood Resiliency Efforts

## North Carolina Flood Resiliency Blueprint

Prepared for the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality by AECOM

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# Table of Contents

Definitions .....	iii
Acronyms .....	iv
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Purpose.....	1
1.2 Connections to Other North Carolina Flood Resiliency Blueprint Tasks .....	1
1.3 Partnerships and Coordination .....	1
1.4 Recommendation Summary Table .....	2
<b>2 Recommendations for Integrating and Leveraging Federal Flood Resiliency Efforts .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Federal Funding .....	4
2.2 Federal Programs.....	4
2.2.1 FEMA Mitigation Programs .....	4
2.2.2 FEMA’s National Flood Hazard Layer .....	4
2.2.3 USACE Flood Risk Management Program.....	4
2.3 Federal Standards.....	5
2.3.1 Federal Flood Risk Management Standard .....	5
2.3.2 Code of Federal Regulations .....	5
2.3.3 FEMA’s Risk MAP Guidance.....	5
2.3.4 The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).....	6
<b>3 Recommendations for Integrating and Leveraging State Flood Resiliency Effort .....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 State Programs, Planning, and Policy .....	7
3.1.1 North Carolina Floodplain Mapping Program .....	7
3.1.2 North Carolina State Hazard Mitigation Plan .....	8
3.1.3 North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan .....	8
<b>4 Recommendations for Integrating Regional Flood Resiliency Efforts.....</b>	<b>10</b>
4.1 Regional Programs, Planning, and Policy .....	11
4.1.1 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plans.....	11
4.1.2 Hurricane Matthew Resilient Redevelopment Plans.....	11
4.1.3 Resilient Coastal Communities Program.....	12
4.1.4 Regions Innovating for Strong Economies & Environment .....	12

**Figures**

Figure 1: USACE Shared Responsibility for Flood Risk Management ..... 2

**Tables**

Table 1. Summary of Federal Recommendations..... 3  
Table 2. Summary of State Recommendations ..... 7  
Table 3. Summary of Regional Recommendations ..... 10

## Definitions

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A comprehensive list of definitions applicable to multiple Flood Resiliency Blueprint documents is provided in a separate document.

## Acronyms

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**CFR** – Code of Federal Regulations

**FEMA** – Federal Emergency Management Agency

**FRBT** – Flood Resiliency Blueprint Tool

**FFRMS** – Federal Flood Risk Management Standard

**HMRRP** – Hurricane Matthew Resilient Redevelopment Plan

**NCDOT** – N.C. Department of Transportation

**NCEM** – N.C. Emergency Management

**NCFMP** – N.C. Floodplain Mapping Program

**NCORR** – North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resilience

**RCCP** – Resilient Coastal Communities Program

**RHMP** – Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

**RISE** – Regions Innovating for Strong Economies and Environment

**Risk MAP** – Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning

**RMCC** – Risk Management Coordinating Council

**USACE** – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Purpose

Subtask 3.3 presents recommendations for integrating and leveraging other federal, state, and regional flood resiliency efforts.

This document recommends how the North Carolina Flood Resiliency Blueprint program (Blueprint) can implement the existing knowledge, experience, and resources within the federal, state, and regional programs dedicated to flood resiliency. By drawing upon the wisdom and strategies of these established efforts, the Blueprint program can create a more comprehensive and cohesive approach to flood resilience that protects communities from the impact of flooding.

The Blueprint Team reviewed various materials related to federal, state, and regional flood resiliency programs, including plans, strategies, technical reports, research studies, and programs. Given that each flood resiliency initiative is unique, every section within this report is tailored to meet its specific integration demands.

## 1.2 Connections to Other North Carolina Flood Resiliency Blueprint Tasks

Connections to other tasks in Phase I are listed below.

- **Task 1.1** – presents the foundational literature review for state-wide existing data, planning efforts, research projects, studies, and regional scale modeling.
- **Task 1.7** – identifies specific recommendations from existing statewide planning efforts that correspond with flood resilience strategies.
- **Task 2.3** – documents the most current plans, reports, and documents identifying current flood resiliency efforts within the Neuse River Basin.
- **Task 2.10** – documents flood resiliency strategies and how they can be effectively connected to Blueprint

## 1.3 Partnerships and Coordination

Shared responsibility for flood risk management is crucial to ensuring the shared responsibility and success of flood resiliency efforts across the federal, state, and local government agencies (Figure 1).



*Figure 1: USACE Shared Responsibility for Flood Risk Management*

Consistent communication with other agencies will ensure continued alignment and adaptability of the Blueprint program. The recommendations outlined in this report emphasize the importance of coordination and communication among varying scales of flood resiliency efforts and governance.

### 1.4 Recommendation Summary Table

Each section of this report includes a summary table identifying recommendations for integrating and leveraging federal, state, and regional flood resiliency efforts and the relevant source material from which the recommendations originate.

## 2 Recommendations for Integrating and Leveraging Federal Flood Resiliency Efforts

A comprehensive assessment of Federal programs and initiatives was conducted throughout Phase I. In the following section, recommendations will be made for incorporating two existing federal-scale flood resiliency efforts with the greatest potential benefit to Blueprint. The forthcoming suggestions primarily center around the collaborative efforts of two Federal agencies, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). While this report focuses on only two federal efforts, there are many other efforts and ongoing work by federal agencies from which Blueprint can benefit.

For example, NCDEQ has an inherent relationship with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) by way of their historical and ongoing efforts to provide science-based environmental stewardship for the health and prosperity of all North Carolinians.

Several reports completed during Phase I touch on these and other existing federal-scale flood resiliency efforts, including subtask 2.6 – Flood Risk Resiliency Funding Source Inventory and subtask 2.9 – Project Restrictions Analysis. Further analysis and discussion will be held on how Blueprint can best incorporate these efforts during Phases II and III. A summary of recommendations from federal efforts covered in this report can be found in Table 1. Please see the sections below for more information on the recommendations.

Table 1. Summary of Federal Recommendations

Recommendation	
1	<b>FEMA Mitigation Programs:</b> Application requirements for other funding sources, such as project type, policy, or permitting constraints, should be examined and incorporated as input questions into the Community and River Basin Action Profile
2	<b>FEMA Mitigation Programs:</b> Blueprint program staff should coordinate regularly with federal partners such as FEMA to stay current with federal flood resiliency efforts.
3	<b>FEMA’s National Flood Hazard Layer:</b> Use FEMA’s National Flood Hazard Layer as a tool for communities to identify areas where flood resilience efforts are needed until more in-depth modeling (2D modeling) is available at the state level.
4	<b>USACE’s Flood Risk Management Program:</b> Blueprint program staff should coordinate regularly with the North Carolina Silver Jackets RMCC to maintain awareness of any USACE projects and programs that will support Blueprint's objectives.
5	<b>Code of Federal Regulations (CFR):</b> CFR provisions should be included in the review of community and river basin action plans to ensure compliance with federal regulations
6	<b>Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS):</b> Projects that receive federal funding through the Blueprint program should be reviewed for compliance with the FFRMS
7	<b>FEMA’s Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP):</b> On an annual basis, conduct a thorough review of FEMA’s Risk MAP guidance documents for any potential advancements in modeling standards



## 2.1 Federal Funding

Existing funding opportunities at the federal, state, and regional levels were explored in Subtask 2.6 *Flood Risk Reduction Project Funding Analysis*. Integrating these existing and potential funding opportunities into the Flood Resiliency Blueprint Tool will be essential for harnessing the full spectrum of available funding streams. Application requirements for other funding sources, such as project type, policy, or permitting constraints, should be examined and incorporated as input into the Community and River Basin Action Profile. This recommendation will facilitate alignment with each action's applicable federal funding source.

## 2.2 Federal Programs

### 2.2.1 FEMA Mitigation Programs

FEMA manages several programs focused on efforts to help build stronger communities and reduce loss of life and property. These programs increase awareness of flood risk by identifying and publishing flood hazard information, reduce the impact of floods through hazard mitigation and floodplain management, and provide flood mitigation assistance grants for flood mitigation. Coordination and planning with federal partners such as FEMA will allow the Blueprint program to stay updated with FEMA's flood resiliency efforts.

### 2.2.2 FEMA's National Flood Hazard Layer

FEMA continuously manages and updates a geospatial database, encompassing the current effective flood hazard data. This resource can serve as a tool for communities and river basins to explore flood hazards, aiding them in identifying areas where proactive mitigation efforts could prove useful. It is worth noting that FEMA's effective data, while comprehensive and valuable, focuses on current flood hazards and does not show projections of future or climate change-induced flood risks. However, these data can be used as a starting point for evaluating areas needing more in-depth modeling and analysis.

### 2.2.3 USACE Flood Risk Management Program

USACE's Flood Risk Management Program was established in 2006 and focuses on reducing overall flood risk through policies, programs, and USACE expertise. The program also works across all levels of government through coordination and dialogue to develop a national vision for flood risk management. In 2019, the USACE Wilmington District, in collaboration with NCDEQ (the non-Federal study sponsor), received funding from the Federal 2019 Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Act (H.R. 2157) to complete flood risk management studies for the Neuse, Tar-Pamlico, and Lumber River Basins. The studies identified, evaluated, and compared alternatives for flood risk management, consistent with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) policy and regulations, within the relevant basin to reduce risk and damages caused by flooding along the rivers and their tributaries. Draft technical reports for each Basin were released between 2022 and 2023. The comprehensive analyses conducted during these studies and resulting flood risk-related data can benefit Blueprint by providing a basis for how flood risk has been evaluated in these basins in the past and existing data sources that can be integrated into the Flood Resiliency Decision-Support Tool.

The North Carolina Silver Jackets Risk Management Coordinating Council (RMCC) supports the goals of USACE at a state level and reviews and updates the Enhanced State Hazard Mitigation Plan

(discussed below in Section 3). Regular coordination with the RMCC will ensure the Blueprint Program team knows of any USACE projects and programs supporting Blueprint's objectives. Participation of the USACE in basing specific Technical Advisory Groups and coordination during the implementation of actions could help facilitate alignment with each action's applicable additional federal and state funding sources, maximizing the potential to compound funding options and help formalize partnerships between the action and other flood resilience strategies.

## 2.3 Federal Standards

### 2.3.1 Federal Flood Risk Management Standard

FFRMS encourages the integration of resilient design and construction practices, as well as the consideration of climate change impacts and updated data in the decision-making process. It also promotes using natural and nature-based solutions to reduce flood risk, providing effective protection and positive environmental and economic outcomes. Incorporating FFRMS principles into the Blueprint program ensures that infrastructure and development are more resilient and enhances the long-term sustainability of communities in the face of a changing climate and increasing flood risks.

FFRMS requires agencies to select one of three approaches when designing federally funded buildings and projects from flood risk.

- Climate Informed Science Approach
- Freeboard Value Approach
- 500-year Floodplain

The type of funding and assistance the requesting agency receives is determined by the approach chosen. Projects formulated and prioritized through the Blueprint program that apply for and receive federal funding should be reviewed for compliance with the FFRMS.

### 2.3.2 Code of Federal Regulations

Integrating the CFR into the Blueprint program is crucial in ensuring compliance with federal guidelines while enhancing community flood resiliency. The Blueprint program will need to identify relevant CFR sections that pertain to flood management, floodplain development, land use planning, etc., and review the provisions to understand the specific requirements, standards, and regulations. Blueprint can integrate relevant CFR components by aligning the program's efforts with the NC DPS Floodplain Management Branch, whose work is inherently compliant with CFR due to their responsibility of coordinating the NFIP with local jurisdictions in the state. The NC Association of Floodplain Managers (NCAFPM) is another organization Blueprint can seek to coordinate with and learn from regarding applying CFR statewide. Relevant CFR provisions and best practices learned from organizations actively applying these regulations should be used when reviewing community and river basin action plans to ensure compliance with federal regulations. The Blueprint program should continually update its guidance to reflect any changes or amendments to the CFR.

### 2.3.3 FEMA's Risk MAP Guidance

Under FEMA's Risk MAP Program, guidance documents provide recommended approaches for effective, efficient program implementation. Guidance includes, among many other things:

- General hydrologic and hydraulic considerations,
- Methodology for hydrologic and hydraulic modeling (both one-dimensional and two-dimensional)
- Elevation data
- Post-flood data collection
- Development of recovery tools

Although the guidance closely adheres to FEMA’s Risk MAP mandatory standards for flood risk analysis and mapping, it is essential to conduct a thorough review of the guidance documents for any potential advancements in modeling standards that can be effectively used in the Data, Modeling, and Analysis step in the Blueprint program.

### **2.3.4 The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**

The NFIP provides flood insurance to property owners, renters, and businesses, and having this coverage helps them recover faster when floodwaters recede. The NFIP works with communities that are required to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations that help mitigate flooding effects. The NFIP can collaborate with the Blueprint by sharing data, coordinating risk assessments, and implementing mitigation measures. Working with NFIP to access flood insurance data, providing insights into the number of policies, claims, and payouts to help highlight areas of concern where resiliency efforts are most needed. NFIP can support community outreach efforts and provide insurance incentives for resiliency measures, fostering a comprehensive approach to reducing flood risk. Blueprint and the Blueprint Tool could enable users to visualize and document their communities’ risks and flood resiliency measures for NFIP and Community Rating System (CRS) compliance. With North Carolina’s robust approach to flood resiliency, many communities likely exceed the minimum requirements for NFIP and thus qualify for premium reductions.

### 3 Recommendations for Integrating and Leveraging State Flood Resiliency Effort

A comprehensive assessment of state-administered programs and initiatives was conducted throughout Phase I. In the following section, recommendations for incorporating existing state flood resiliency efforts will be made. The forthcoming suggestions primarily center around the collaborative efforts of the North Carolina Floodplain Mapping Program, the North Carolina State Hazard Mitigation Plan, the North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan, and the N.C. Department of Transportation’s (NCDOT) Resilience Strategy Report. A summary of recommendations from state efforts can be found in Table 2. Please see the sections below for more information on the recommendations.

Table 2. Summary of State Recommendations

Recommendation	
1	<b>Principal Advisory Group:</b> continuing with a Blueprint Principal Advisory Group to ensure coordination across State entities as well as other partners
2	<b>N.C. Floodplain Mapping Program:</b> Blueprint should leverage the extensive flood-related datasets generated and managed by NCFMP by using existing datasets as the foundation of its modeling efforts.
3	<b>N.C. Floodplain Mapping Program:</b> Blueprint may fund any data or enhanced modeling needed for a project that exceeds FEMA regulatory requirements.
4	<b>State Hazard Mitigation Plan:</b> Coordinate with NCEM on the State Hazard Mitigation Plan to better identify and assist underserved communities and inform the Blueprint program on building flexibility, training & outreach, and technical assistance to serve communities that may lack capacity and/or strategic partners.
5	<b>State Hazard Mitigation Plan:</b> The Blueprint program should consider the 5-year cycle for the State Hazard Mitigation Plan when determining the cycle process for the Blueprint program.
6	<b>North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan:</b> Blueprint program staff and River Basin Commissions should review the NCORR state agency strategies after their annual update to identify and align with ongoing or planned flood resiliency efforts being conducted by state agencies. This recommendation can realize potential partnerships and knowledge-sharing opportunities.
7	<b>NCDOT Resilience Strategy Report:</b> The NCDOT’s Resilience Strategy Report should be reviewed annually as updates occur and align ongoing and planned flood mitigation and resiliency efforts conducted by state agencies with the objectives and planned actions of Blueprint participants.

#### 3.1 State Programs, Planning, and Policy

##### 3.1.1 North Carolina Floodplain Mapping Program

Hurricane Floyd, which caused widespread damage across eastern North Carolina in 1999, highlighted the need for accurate, up-to-date flood-related data and mapping to better address the state’s

vulnerabilities. In response to Hurricane Floyd in 1999, North Carolina created the Floodplain Mapping Program (NCFMP) to fulfill its responsibility as a Cooperating Technical Partner. In 2000, FEMA designated North Carolina as a Cooperating Technical State in conjunction with the federal flood map modernization program. The state government created the NCFMP to fulfill its responsibility as a Cooperating Technical State.

Administered by N.C. Emergency Management (NCEM), NCFMP updates North Carolina's flood hazard data, funds studies, and creates floodplain maps to identify areas of the state at risk of flooding. The NCFMP provides services to the entirety of North Carolina through the following five key programs: Flood Inundation Mapping and Alert Network, Flood Inundation Mapping and Alert Network for Transportation, Digital Flood Risk Information System, Coordinated Needs Management Strategy, and Advisory Flood Program.

Blueprint can leverage the extensive flood-related datasets generated and managed by NCFMP by using existing datasets as the foundation of its modeling and Blueprint Tool efforts. When enhanced modeling and/or detail-specific data are required for a proposed project, the Blueprint program can provide a funding option for datasets that go above the original scope of FEMA's regulatory requirements.

### 3.1.2 North Carolina State Hazard Mitigation Plan

FEMA requires each state to develop and adopt a state hazard mitigation plan on a 5-year cycle. Completing the plan makes the state eligible for certain non-emergency disaster funds. North Carolina maintains an "enhanced" plan status, qualifying for 20 percent (as opposed to 15 percent) of the total federal recovery assistance funds (i.e., what has been paid out through the individual and public assistance programs combined). These funds can be used on projects that minimize the impact of future storms.

One of the Plan's identified strategies, "improve coordination/education/outreach to better identify and assist underserved communities as identified in the FEMA Strategic Plan 2022-2026," can be leveraged under the Blueprint program. Close coordination with NCEM will ensure flood resiliency resources can be accessed and leveraged by underserved communities in ways that meet their needs.

Some communities the Blueprint will inevitably serve will lack local staff and/or strategic partners who understand how to access and navigate the Blueprint's resources. Learning from and collaborating with NCEM and the State Hazard Mitigation Plan will help inform the building of flexibility, training/outreach, and technical assistance into Blueprint's program and resources, which will serve a large and socially, politically, and economically diverse population.

### 3.1.3 North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan

The North Carolina Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan ("2020 Resilience Plan") was released in June 2020. The development of the Plan, led by the NCDEQ with interagency collaboration and stakeholder support, was a key action directed by Governor Cooper's Executive Order 80 (EO 80), signed in October 2018. The plan aims to guide state action, engage policymakers and stakeholders, and facilitate collaboration among many partners to protect the state against high-impact, low-frequency weather events. This effort also established the North Carolina Resilience Strategy, formed by four component documents: (1) the North Carolina Science Report, (2) State Agency Climate

Strategies, (3) Statewide Vulnerability Assessment and Resilience Strategies, and (4) the state of North Carolina Enhanced Hazard Mitigation.

Agency Climate Strategy reports are updated annually in March, with guidance from the North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resilience (NCORR). The individual annual reports expand upon the climate vulnerabilities and risks and recommended solutions outlined in the larger Climate Risk Assessment and Resilience Plan. The reports outline the agency's current and planned actions to increase resilience and report progress on implementing strategies. Blueprint should review the state agency strategies during their annual update and seek to identify and align ongoing and planned flood mitigation and resiliency efforts being conducted by state agencies with the objectives and planned actions of Blueprint participants. Potential partnerships, funding, and knowledge-sharing opportunities can be realized between state agencies and Blueprint's regional (river basin) based efforts.

## 4 Recommendations for Integrating Regional Flood Resiliency Efforts

A comprehensive assessment of regional programs and initiatives was conducted throughout Phase I. In the following section, recommendations for incorporating existing regional-scale flood resiliency efforts will be made. The forthcoming suggestions primarily center around the collaborative efforts of regional hazard mitigation plans, Hurricane Matthew Resilient Redevelopment Plans, the Resilient Coastal Communities Program, and the Regions Innovating for Strong Economies and Environment program. A summary of recommendations from regional efforts can be found in Table 3. Please see the sections below for more information on the recommendations.

Table 3. Summary of Regional Recommendations

Recommendation	
1	<b>Regional Hazard Mitigation Plans:</b> Compare regional hazard mitigation plans with basin action strategies to identify overlapping projects and gaps that future Blueprint projects can seek to fill. This analysis will help prevent duplication of effort and bring greater transparency to the Blueprint process by demonstrating how the basin action strategies differ from RHMPs and bring added value to communities.
2	<b>Hurricane Matthew Resilient Redevelopment Plans:</b> Integrated HMRRP actions into Blueprint by creating individual strategy inventories from these and other plans at varying scales, including county, municipal, and/or implementing organization (non-governmental organization, academic institution, etc.). Identify and coordinate with representatives of those communities/organizations on the status of projects within strategy inventory tables, allowing space for them to update project milestones.
3	<b>Hurricane Matthew Resilient Redevelopment Plans (alternative):</b> Compile actions from river basin-specific flood resiliency efforts in collaboration with stakeholders participating in the “Basin & Community Initiation and Discovery” process outlined in the governance schema/decision framework. This may assist Blueprint in vetting strategies and building relationships with local decision-makers who can track the project's progress and status updates.
4	<b>Resilient Coastal Communities Program:</b> Prevent participation fatigue and identify data and knowledge gaps by leveraging RCCP’s stakeholder and community engagement efforts during the basin action strategy development process in river basins that intersect the coast by incorporating RCCP stakeholder participants as contributors and decision-makers in the development of the strategies. Like the Hurricane Matthew Resilient Redevelopment Plans, review actions developed by communities through the RCCP and integrate flood resiliency-related actions into basin action strategies.
5	<b>Regions Innovating for Strong Economies and Environment:</b> Engage NCORR staff in regions where RISE portfolios were recently completed and ask about lessons learned. In collaboration with NCORR, evaluate the possibility of using RISE’s stakeholder lists or outreach mechanisms. Articulate how the basin action strategy will differ from the RISE process and how/why stakeholders should re-engage. Explore whether running basin action strategies and RISE simultaneously would be feasible - this would avoid planning fatigue and might be possible in the state's western half. Engage with the COGs for basin action strategies. Many are interested in continuing to work on resilience and are far more familiar

with the local communities and possibilities for coordination than any outsider. Explore whether the Blueprint can fund projects identified in RCCP and RISE portfolios. Run an analysis of opportunities and share the results with potential project sponsors. Explore products from the Funding Forum to understand/recommend how the Blueprint funding process can avoid duplication and build on the success of other programs.

## 4.1 Regional Programs, Planning, and Policy

### 4.1.1 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plans

Through a combined effort between county, city, and town departments, NCEM, FEMA Region IV, residents, and stakeholders, regional hazard mitigation plans (RHMPs) are created to reduce the impacts natural and human-induced hazards have on people and property. These plans identify, assess, and mitigate hazard risk and ensure participating jurisdictions are eligible for disaster assistance from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Pre-Disaster Mitigation (earmarks / Congressionally Directed Spending Pre-Disaster Mitigation), Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, and Flood Mitigation Assistance programs. According to the previously discussed N.C. Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023), there are currently 30 different regional hazard mitigation plans in the state, covering the eastern, central, and western areas of North Carolina.

The timelines and relevant phases of work for regional hazard mitigation plan updates within a given river basin should be compared with the basin action strategies project timeline once they are finalized. Blueprint should align basin action strategy development within each basin with the pertinent regional hazard mitigation plan update cycle where possible so that Blueprint's action strategy development begins one year after the RHMPs. Offsetting the action strategy development cycle in this manner will present numerous opportunities to leverage resources, reduce the chances of duplicating work, and create a more unified flood mitigation and resiliency planning approach across the state. Mitigation planning and coordination should be part of the Blueprint work even when cycle alignment is impossible.

### 4.1.2 Hurricane Matthew Resilient Redevelopment Plans

Following Hurricane Matthew in 2016, the Disaster Recovery Act of 2016 directed NCEM to lead efforts in a resilient redevelopment program for all fifty counties included in the Presidential Disaster Declaration. The program's purpose was to create a path for impacted communities to rebuild and revitalize through the creation of Hurricane Matthew Resilient Redevelopment Plans (HMRRPs). The comprehensive planning program also served as the foundation of the state's Recovery Action Plan, which the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development required to allocate Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Relief program funds. The locally driven plans identified redevelopment strategies and reconstruction projects and defined unmet funding needs.

The HMRRPs, while published in 2017, still hold a wealth of pre-evaluated and prioritized flood mitigation and resilience-related actions that may not have been implemented. The identified HMRRP actions can be integrated into Blueprint using the location/geospatial data specified for each strategy identified in the HMRRPs. Individual strategy inventories can be created and separated by the applicable county, municipal, and/or implementing organization (non-governmental organization, academic institution, etc.). Contact information can be identified for representatives of those communities/organizations responsible for implementing the identified strategies. The identified



parties can then be contacted and provided with the strategy inventory tables, allowing space for them to update project statuses. Depending on staff capacity and stakeholder response, an alternative solution is to review the compiled actions from river basin-specific flood resiliency efforts with stakeholders participating in the “Basin & Community Initiation and Discovery” process outlined in the Blueprint planning workflow. This may assist Blueprint in identifying relevant contacts, thereby increasing the likelihood of receiving input from decision-makers on the status of identified strategies.

### 4.1.3 Resilient Coastal Communities Program

The NCDEQ’s Division of Coastal Management, in partnership with NCORR, administers the Resilient Coastal Communities Program (RCCP) to provide technical and financial assistance to advance coastal resilience efforts in 20 North Carolina counties. The program addresses economic and capacity constraints that limit communities’ abilities to develop coastal resilience by providing a planning framework and funding source for eligible and prioritized projects. RCCP facilitates a community-driven process for setting coastal resilience goals, assessing existing and needed local capacity, and identifying and prioritizing “shovel-ready” projects. Participating communities follow a step-by-step planning guide created by RCCP called the “North Carolina Resilient Coastal Communities Program Planning,” which provides information on program requirements, existing data, tools, and resources to help communities through the process to ultimately obtain funding.

Like Blueprint, the RCCP’s planning process is based on and relies on community and stakeholder engagement. RCCP requires each participating community to form a community action team of key stakeholders that provide feedback and lead the effort. RCCP further requires participants to create a community engagement strategy that ensures the incorporation of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion values, as well as the solicitation of feedback and validation of vulnerability assessments and participation in the prioritization and selection of projects. Blueprint can leverage RCCP’s stakeholder and community engagement efforts during the basin action strategy development process in river basins that intersect the coast. Having a strong understanding of what collaboration has already taken place prevents participation fatigue and will help identify gaps in our understanding of stakeholders’ needs and priorities that can be addressed during Blueprint’s future engagement efforts. Blueprint should also seek to incorporate RCCP stakeholder participants as contributors and decision-makers in developing river basin action strategies due to their experience in regional resilience planning efforts.

### 4.1.4 Regions Innovating for Strong Economies & Environment

Regions Innovating for Strong Economies and Environment (RISE) is administered through a partnership between NCORR and the NC Rural Center. RISE aims to support resilience primarily in the storm-impacted regions of North Carolina. RISE is promoting statewide resiliency by supplying support and tools to regional partners. The program supports resilience efforts in eastern North Carolina regions affected by recent storms, including those that have experienced flood impacts. RISE is a multi-phase effort that includes a forward-looking vulnerability assessment, identifying five to ten high-priority projects, and a list of the actions needed to implement each proposed project. A diverse stakeholder partnership guides the program to ensure that the scope of work reflects local priorities. The program supports resilience primarily in the storm-impacted regions of Eastern North Carolina in three primary ways:

1. RISE will supply coaching and technical assistance to regional partners to support community

vulnerability assessments, identify priority actions to reduce risk and enhance resilience in their region, and develop paths to implementation.

2. Developing the North Carolina Resilient Communities Guide as a statewide resource that supplies tools, guidance, and opportunities for building community resiliency.
3. Host regional leadership training workshops emphasizing resilience as a tool for community economic development.

Another component of RISE is the Funding Forum, which NCORR hosted in February 2023. The forum addressed the obstacle of funding resiliency projects by introducing community leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders to federal, state, and nonprofit funding opportunities for resilience-related projects. The free, one-day event allowed attendees to engage with potential funders, who supplied presentations and answered project-specific questions during break-out sessions. Attendees also had the opportunity to participate in a grant writing session to take their project one step closer to reality.

There are several ways that Blueprint can effectively connect to the RISE program, including:

- Engage NCORR staff in regions where RISE portfolios were recently completed and ask about lessons learned. In collaboration with NCORR, evaluate the possibility of using RISE's stakeholder lists or outreach mechanisms.
- Articulate how the basin action strategy will differ from the RISE process and how/why stakeholders should re-engage. Explore whether running basin action strategies and RISE simultaneously would be feasible - this would avoid planning fatigue and might be possible in the state's western half.
- Engage with the COGs for basin action strategies. Many are interested in continuing to work on resilience and are far more familiar with the local communities and possibilities for coordination than any outsider.
- Explore whether the Blueprint can fund projects identified in RCCP and RISE portfolios. Run an analysis of opportunities and share the results with potential project sponsors.
- Explore products from the Funding Forum to understand/recommend how the Blueprint funding process can avoid duplication and build on the success of other programs