

U.S. Department of Labor Awards \$4 Million to Support Disaster Recovery Jobs Across Missouri Counties

November 20, 2025 Jefferson City, Missouri – In a significant boost to statewide recovery efforts, the U.S. Department of Labor has awarded an additional \$4 million to the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (MDHEWD) to fund disaster-relief employment for residents impacted by severe storms earlier in 2025. This funding extends an initial \$1 million grant provided in July and targets workforce needs in communities where resources are stretched thin following widespread devastation.

The storms, which struck between March 14–15, March 30–April 8, and May 16, brought tornadoes, wildfires, flooding, and high winds that damaged homes, infrastructure, and agricultural lands across 26 Missouri counties. From urban areas like St. Louis County to rural southeast regions including Cape Girardeau, Iron, New Madrid, Scott, Stoddard, and Wayne counties, the events left lasting effects on local economies and municipal services. This Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant, authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, will sustain jobs for 266 eligible participants, focusing on cleanup, rebuilding, and community restoration.

Enhancing Local Government Capacity Through Targeted Employment

The grant enables MDHEWD to deliver direct employment services, training, and support in affected areas, directly benefiting counties and municipalities grappling with heightened demands on public resources. Local governments, often the first responders in disaster scenarios, can leverage these positions to bolster emergency management teams, public works departments, and social services—roles critical for long-term resilience.

Key impacts include:

- **Job Creation in Underserved Areas:** Temporary positions in debris removal, infrastructure repair, and environmental restoration will prioritize unemployed or underemployed residents, including those from low-income households and veteran populations.
- **Support for Municipal Operations:** Counties like Scott and Stoddard, hit hard by EF-3 tornadoes, can redirect limited budgets toward core services while grant-funded workers handle recovery tasks.
- **Statewide Coordination:** The initiative aligns with Missouri's broader workforce development goals, integrating with Missouri Job Centers to connect participants to permanent opportunities post-recovery.

Broader Implications for Missouri's Municipalities and Counties

This funding underscores the federal government's commitment to partnering with states during crises, ensuring that rural and urban municipalities alike receive equitable support. In Missouri, where local governments manage everything from road maintenance to emergency shelters, such programs help mitigate fiscal strains—estimated at millions in uninsured damages from the storms.

The 26 impacted counties represent a cross-section of the state, from the densely populated St. Louis metro to agricultural heartlands in the Bootheel. By fostering employment in these areas, the grant promotes economic stabilization and reduces reliance on state emergency funds.

For more details on eligibility or application processes, residents in affected counties can contact their local Missouri Job Center via jobs.mo.gov or call MDHEWD at (573) 751-1668.