

Rutherford County Impact Report Narratives for Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Each local government that receives opioid settlement funds is asked to share a “brief general narrative,” summarizing how it used opioid settlement funds during the previous fiscal year, along with progress reports and success stories for each of the strategies it funded. Rutherford County provided the following information for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (July 2022 through June 2023):

General Narrative

In 2022, the County created the Rutherford County Opioid Settlement Funds Collaborative Strategic Planning Committee (the “Committee”) to work with the County on the following goals/objectives:

- Agree on a shared vision - Agree on a shared vision for positive community change, considering how strategic investments of opioid settlement funds have the potential to improve community health and well-being, as well as address root causes of addiction, drug misuse, overdose, and related issues.
- Identify and explore root causes - Explore root causes of addiction, drug misuse, overdose, and co-occurring issues in the community using quantitative data as well as stakeholder narratives, community voices, the stories of those who have lived experiences, or similar qualitative information.
- Identify gaps in existing efforts - For each potential strategy identified (or for favored strategies), survey existing programs, services, or supports that address the same or similar issues and identify gaps or shortcomings.
- Identify and evaluate potential strategies - Identify potential strategies to address root causes or other aspects of opioid use and consider the effectiveness of each strategy based on available evidence.
- Build upon any related planning - Build upon or coordinate with prior or concurrent planning efforts that address addiction, drug misuse, overdose, or related issues, including but not limited to community health assessments.
- Prioritize strategies - Prioritize strategies, considering the shared vision, analysis of root causes, evaluation of each strategy, and analysis of gaps in existing efforts.
- Consider ways to align strategies - For each potential strategy identified (or for favored strategies), consider opportunities to braid opioid settlement funds with other funding streams, develop regional solutions, form strategic partnerships, or to pursue other creative solutions.
- Public forum - Host a public forum to inform/educate the public on matters pertaining to the opioid settlement funds and current planning efforts and to solicit input.
- Priority spending plan - Establish a priority plan for funding consideration.

The Committee is made up of representatives from the following agencies, departments, associations, and other local government entities:

- Towns of Forest City, Lake Lure, Rutherfordton, and Spindale
- Council of Government Foothills Regional Commission
- Foothills Regional Health District
- Rutherford Regional Hospital

- Rutherford County Health Council
- Partners Health Management (LME/MCO)
- United Way of Rutherford County
- Sheriff's Office
- District Attorney's Office
- Public Defenders' Office
- Department of Social Services
- County Emergency Medical Services
- Local Behavioral and Substance Addiction professionals and clinicians
- Regional and local philanthropic and human services related non-profit organizations that serve our underserved communities
- Rutherford County School System
- Isothermal Community College
- County Finance Director
- County Attorney
- County Manager

The first meeting of the Rutherford County Opioid Settlement Funds Strategic Planning Committee was held on August 25, 2022 followed by a succession of multiple strategic planning meetings with the most recent meeting having occurred on November 15, 2023. Participants received a brief orientation as to the County's participation in the national opioid litigation proceedings, the relevant data supporting the need for additional support and resources to combat opioid addiction in the County, the schedule of payments from the national settlement agreement earmarked for Rutherford County, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the State and participating local governments on proceeds relating to the settlement funds, Option A and B strategies outlined in the MOA, and goals/objectives for the committee. Committee members have participated in multiple group activities to share their perspective and insight pertaining to a prescribed list of questions/statements.

The committee hosted an Opioid Settlement Funds Public Forum on November 22, 2022 and a second public forum on November 14, 2023 on the campus of Isothermal Community College, with approximately 80+ participants present at the first meeting and approximately 30 participants at the second meeting. The purpose of the forums was to engage members of the public, as well as community stakeholders, in a discussion centered around the topic of substance use disorders and its impact on our communities. Participants were also informed of the County's efforts to identify effective strategies to invest the opioid settlement funds the County receives.

The next prescribed steps before the County expends any of our opioid settlement funds are as follows:

- Develop and release a Request for Applications (RFA) to solicit project/program proposals. Date: TBD as we understand that NCACC is working on producing RFA and service agreement templates examples for County use.

- Create a sub-committee of members from the Opioid Settlement Funds Strategic Planning Committee to review, score and rank proposals. Sub-committee cannot be a prospective applicant.
Date: TBD
- Submit recommendations to the County Commissioners for their consideration and approval.
- Work with the County Attorney and Finance Director to draft a subrecipient service agreement.
Date: TBD
- Contract with one or more respondents as approved by the County Commissioners.
- Begin monitoring and reporting activities as required by the State MOA.

Rutherford County did not disburse funds for any strategies in F.Y. 2022-2023.