

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



CONTACT:

Nathan Ramsey
Executive Director
nathan@landofsky.org

***Land of Sky Regional Council Honored with Three
2026 Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations***

July 21, 2026 – Land of Sky Regional Council has recently been recognized with a 2026 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for *#WorkLocal Real Careers. Right Here.*, Aging Sensitivity Training, and Regional Disaster Recovery Support in Western North Carolina.

#WorkLocal Real Careers. Right Here.

Project Partners: Asheville City Schools, Buncombe County Schools, Madison County Schools, Transylvania County Schools, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Blue Ridge Community College, Western Carolina University, South College, University of North Carolina – Asheville, Elkamet, Smith Systems, Mission Hospital

Summary: #WorkLocal is a regional workforce initiative that connects education and employment by showcasing local high school graduates who have earned industry-recognized credentials and launched successful careers within the Land of Sky region. Led and implemented by the Land of Sky P20 Council, the project involves coordinating alumni recruitment, employer partnerships, professional workplace photography, exhibit design, and installation logistics across multiple counties. The initiative's signature displays, large-format posters placed in high school hallways, highlight relatable success stories and redefine postsecondary success by emphasizing career pathways outside traditional college routes. Its impact extends beyond visibility, incorporating classroom-based activities that build career awareness, research, interviewing, and presentation skills. By strengthening connections among educators, employers, and students, #WorkLocal promotes regional workforce pride, increases awareness of in-demand careers, and supports long-term economic resilience.

Aging Sensitivity Training

Project Partners: Blue Ridge Community College

Summary: The Aging Sensitivity Training program, developed by Land of Sky Regional Council Area on Aging Ombudsman Program, is an educational initiative designed to prepare future Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) to deliver respectful, person-centered care to older adults while increasing awareness of the Ombudsman Program. Delivered by agency staff, the training combines structured instruction with hands-on simulations that allow students to experience common age-related challenges such as visual impairment, arthritis, cognitive decline, and dementia. The team developed, adapted, and provided all course materials and instruction, ensuring participants gain practical skills and a deeper understanding of aging-related needs. Reaching approximately 200 CNA students, the program has had a meaningful impact by filling gaps in traditional curricula, shifting perceptions of elder care, and equipping future healthcare workers with the empathy and competencies required to improve care quality in long-term care settings amid a rapidly aging population.

Regional Disaster Recovery Support in Western North Carolina

Project Partners: NC Association of Regional Councils of Governments

Summary: Land of Sky Regional Council (LOSRC) has delivered comprehensive disaster recovery support following Tropical Storm Helene in September 2024, demonstrating a rapid and coordinated response to regional needs. Initially focused on distributing relief supplies, LOSRC quickly transitioned to long-term recovery, providing FEMA Public Assistance grant management to nine local governments and leveraging recent disaster financial management training to maximize efficiency. The organization also conducted damage assessments, supplemented local government capacity, and administered workforce recovery programs. LOSRC has written over \$100 million in recovery grants and secured funding for regional recovery project managers in partnership with other councils. Through regional convenings, trainings, and leadership roles at the state level, LOSRC has strengthened coordination and resilience, showcasing its adaptability and critical role in guiding communities through complex recovery efforts.

Presented annually, the [NADO Impact Awards](#) honor regional development organizations and their partners for strengthening communities, building regional resilience, and enhancing local economies through creative approaches to economic and community development. NADO is a Washington, DC-based membership association of regional development organizations that promotes programs and policies that strengthen local governments, communities, and economies.

This year's cohort included 94 impactful projects led by 58 organizations across 20 states. These award-winning efforts will be recognized during [NADO's 2026 Annual Training Conference](#), to be held this coming October in Reno, Nevada. All selected projects are featured in an interactive StoryMap that showcases summaries, images, and key partners. The map is available at <https://www.nado.org/2026-impact-award-recipient/>.

"Each year, the Impact Awards celebrate the remarkable work being done by regional development organizations to strengthen communities and improve quality of life," said 2025-2026 NADO President Matthew Dolge, Executive Director of the Piedmont Triad Regional Council in North Carolina. "This year's honorees demonstrate how strategic leadership, strong partnerships, and a shared commitment to progress can create meaningful and lasting benefits across the country."

Board of Delegates Chair and City of Brevard Mayor says, "On behalf of the Land of Sky Regional Council Board of Delegates, I am proud to congratulate Land of Sky Regional Council on receiving three 2026 NADO Impact Awards. This recognition reflects the Council's commitment to practical regional solutions, strong local partnerships, and service to communities across Western North Carolina. These awards are a testament to the outstanding work of our staff, member governments, and community partners who continue to advance projects that make a meaningful difference for the people and places we serve."

The Impact Awards are presented in memory of Aliceann Wohlbruck, NADO's first executive director, who was a lifelong advocate for regional solutions and rural economic development.

For more information, contact Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director at 828-768-3216 or nathan@landofsky.org.

About Land of Sky Regional Council

Land of Sky Regional Council is a multi-county, local government, planning and development organization. We reach county and municipal borders providing technical assistance to local governments and administer projects and programs which benefit our region's citizens.

About NADO

The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) promotes public policies that strengthen local governments, communities, and economies through the regional strategies, coordination efforts, and program expertise of the nation's regional development organizations. Learn more about NADO at www.nado.org.
