

Healthy Food

Our goal: everyone in North Carolina has access to healthy food.

To ensure everyone has access to healthy food, we need to change the policies, practices, and norms that contribute to food insecurity, especially for the populations and communities that face the most barriers to accessing healthy food. This includes a focus on supporting a strong and diverse network of leaders in the food system, developing and spreading new models of increasing healthy food access, and supporting policy and system changes to address food insecurity and improve the food system for all who participate in and benefit from it.

Signals in the Field



The state budget includes funding for reduced-price lunch copays and support for schools to participate in the [Community Eligibility Provision](#).



A number of COVID-era supplemental food benefits are expiring—specifically SNAP emergency allotments, college student SNAP benefits, extra food benefits for school children and children under 6. Nationally, child poverty more than doubled at 12.4% and median household income declined last year when coronavirus pandemic-era government benefits expired and [inflation kept rising](#).



There has been an influx of money into the state to support the procurement of local food through local food hubs. USDA programs are supporting nearly \$19M in local food procurement through 2025. The [North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services](#) received \$7.6 million to support the FarmsSHARE program which works with food hub partners to purchase from small farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, and small businesses.



There continues to be significant activity at the federal level around Food is Medicine. Examples include the White House National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health; Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Services Produce Rx pilots; USDA GusNIP Produce Rx funding; NIH Food is Medicine Centers of Excellence; and multiple CDC programs focused on Food is Medicine.



Recognizing that access to nutritious food is foundational to health and well-being, the [North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services released its State Action Plan for Nutrition Security](#), outlining an innovative, multi-pronged strategy to reduce food insecurity.



Current Focus

At the present time, we are focused on increasing access to healthy food by supporting the development and alignment of systems and policy change priorities among food-focused groups; growing the diversity of, and connections within, the network of organizations working toward a food system that benefits those who produce, process, and consume healthy food; and expanding access to no cost healthy school meals.

Strategies & Updates



Support a network of organizations to identify and achieve policy and systems change at local and state levels that will result in increased equitable access to healthy food.

- The Foundation released a funding opportunity to support 14 community-based organizations in expanding their ability to advocate for systems and policy changes to increase access to healthy food for those most impacted by food insecurity in their communities.
- Community Food Strategies, a multi-organizational team of food system experts working to support and develop North Carolina's food councils and coalitions, released a report detailing their journey and impact to connect and amplify community voices to advance food policy shifts. The Blue Cross NC Foundation has been a supporter of Community Food Strategies since their launch in 2012.



Support the development and spread of models to increase access to healthy food and transform the local food system in communities most impacted by food insecurity.

- The work of the Foundation-funded Food Hub Collaborative continues to support increased access to healthy food for communities with high poverty rates. Participating food hubs service 53 counties. Food Hubs offer a combination of production, distribution, and marketing services for small farms, helping make local food available for wholesale, food is medicine initiatives, community food access, senior programs, and farm-to-school.
- The Foundation's Healthy Food Rx evaluation partner, Seeds of Change, continues to explore the key capacities for clinical-community partnerships necessary to deliver their interventions. Findings from phase two of the evaluation are expected in late 2023.



Increase access to no cost and healthy school meals.

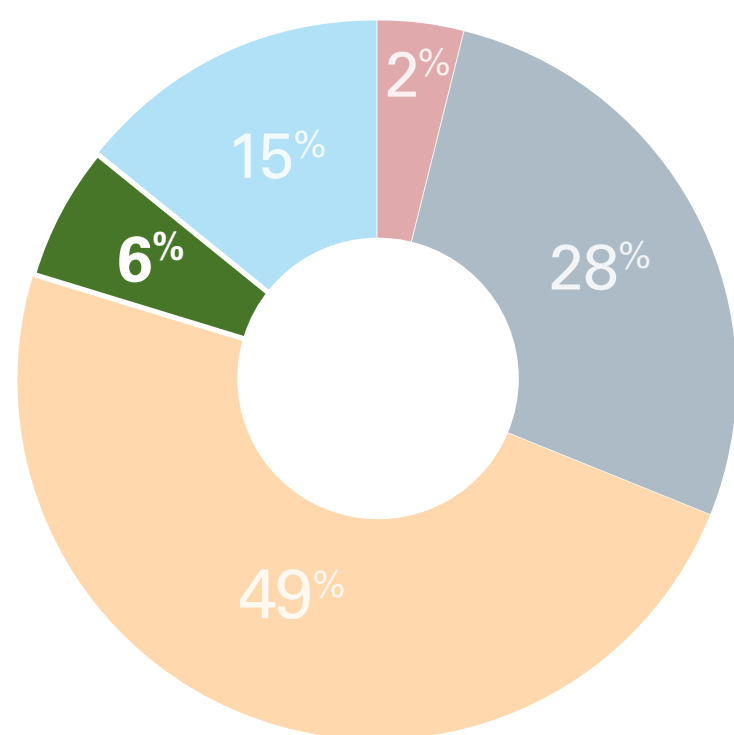
- The School Meals for All NC Coalition is currently focused on garnering support for universal breakfast.
- The newly passed State budget includes recurring, non-recurring, and pilot funding for provisions related to school food.

Grantmaking Data



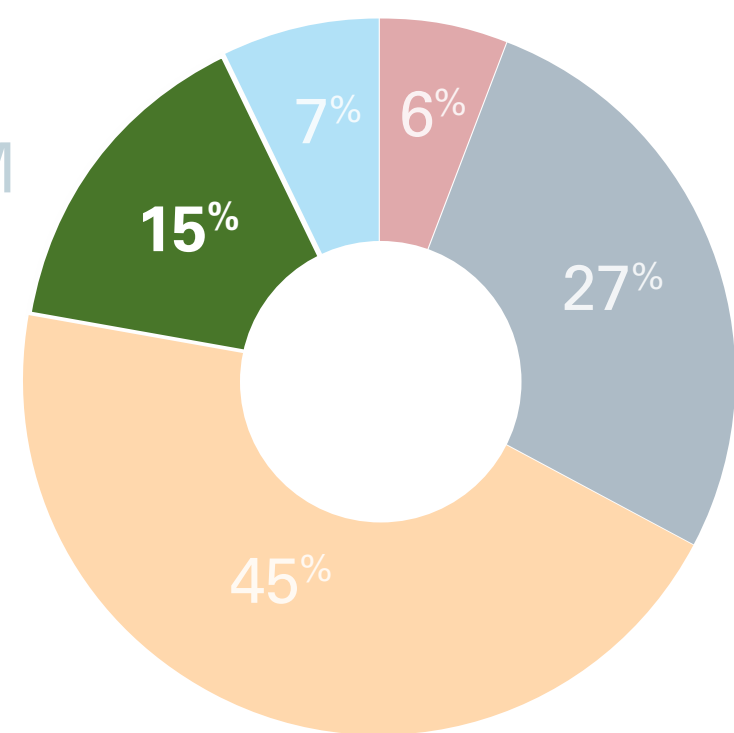
CURRENT ACTIVE GRANTS

- Health Care Workforce: 4
- Early Childhood: 47
- Healthy Communities: 82
- Healthy Food: 9
- Oral Health: 25



CURRENT \$ AMOUNT OF ACTIVE GRANTS

- Health Care Workforce: \$3.8M
- Early Childhood: \$16.8M
- Healthy Communities: \$27.8M
- Healthy Food: \$9.4M
- Oral Health: \$4M

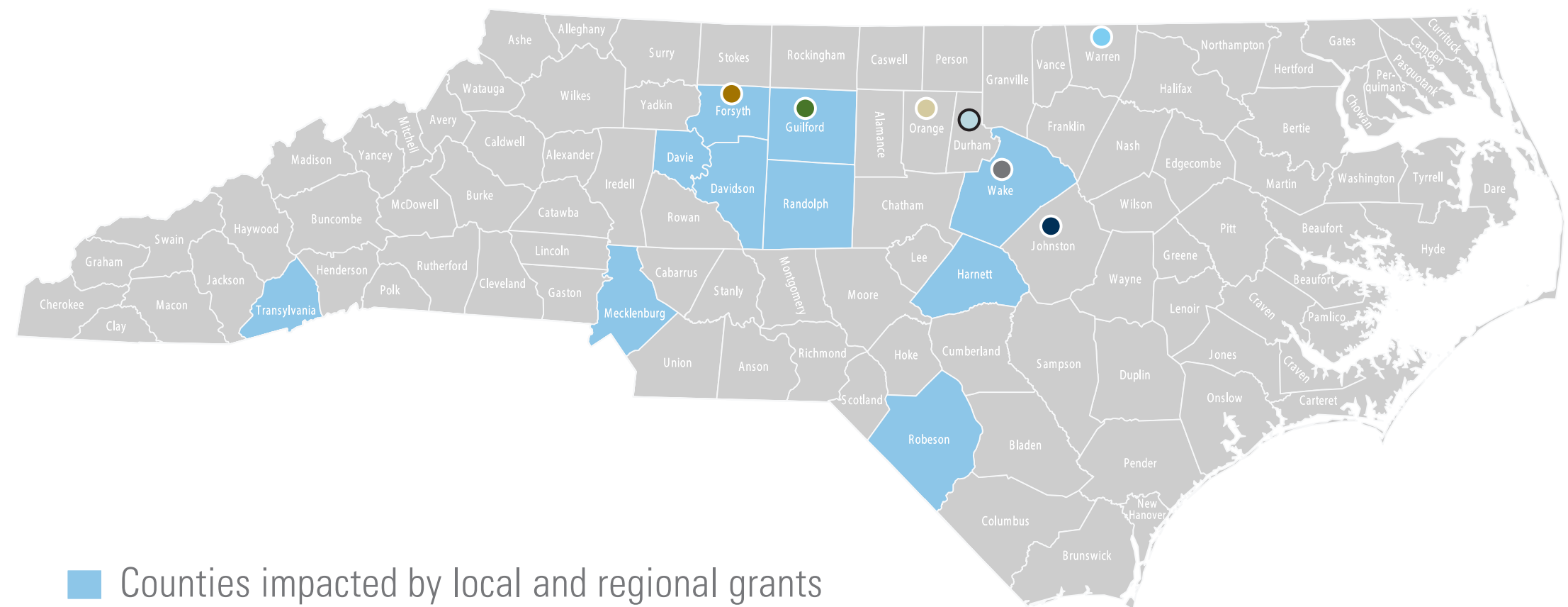


Active Grants by Geographic Area

Location of Grantee

○ Durham	2
● Forsyth	2
● Guilford	1
● Johnston	1
● Orange	3
● Wake	4
● Warren	1

Statewide 8



Grants Approved by Fiscal Year: Three-Year Snapshot

Fiscal Year	Number of Grants Approved	Dollars Invested
FY 21- 22	1	\$595,000
FY 22- 23	3	\$5,200,000
FY 23- 24 YTD	0	\$0

Looking Ahead

✔ STRATEGY	WHAT TO EXPECT IN FY 23-24
<p>Support a network of organizations to identify and achieve policy and systems change at local and state levels that will result in increased equitable access to healthy food.</p>	<p>Enhance capacity of grassroots organizations to advance efforts focused on increasing access to healthy food through a funding opportunity.</p> <p>Accelerate local food policy and systems change by deepening our support for local food councils, technical assistance, a resource hub, and other activities that strengthen food-focused coalitions.</p>
IMPLEMENTATION METRIC	TIMEFRAME
Enhanced organizational capacity to advocate for changes in systems that increase access to healthy food.	APRIL 2027
Identification of priorities for changing the systems that increase access to healthy food.	APRIL 2027
Increased connections between and among organizations working to advocate for changes in systems.	APRIL 2027

✔ STRATEGY	WHAT TO EXPECT IN FY 23-24
<p>Support the development and spread of models to increase access to healthy food and transform the local food system in communities most impacted by food insecurity.</p>	<p>Develop a strategy to strengthen local models to increase food access and spread lessons learned.</p> <p>Continue to support Healthy Food Rx grantees through shared learning, additional supports, and evaluation.</p> <p>Support food hubs individually and as a collective in successfully accessing new USDA and other market opportunities.</p>
IMPLEMENTATION METRIC	TIMEFRAME
Identification of viable models to increase healthy food access and transform the local food system in communities most impacted by food insecurity.	JUNE 2024

✔ STRATEGY	WHAT TO EXPECT IN FY 23-24
<p>Increase access to no cost and healthy school meals.</p>	<p>Build public will for making permanent no-cost access to school meals statewide by increasing capacity for advocacy in the field and through strategic communications.</p> <p>Strengthen nutrition in schools by identifying and addressing barriers and facilitating connections to fresh, local food sources at the school and district level.</p>
IMPLEMENTATION METRIC	TIMEFRAME
The creation of an effective messaging and communications to educate and build support for no-cost healthy school meals for all.	DECEMBER 2025