



Working Together **FOR FOOD ACCESS**

2022-2024 Food
System Investment

Strategy Impact Report

December 10, 2025



THE ENDOWMENT
NEW HANOVER COMMUNITY ENDOWMENT

ABOUT THE ENDOWMENT

The Endowment's mission is to improve the health, education, safety, and economic opportunity of every person in New Hanover County. The Endowment was established from the sale of the county-owned New Hanover Regional Medical Center to Novant Health in 2020. The initial fund has grown from nearly \$1.3 billion to more than \$1.7 billion, allowing The Endowment to award millions in grants to our community every year, in perpetuity.



Education



**Social and Health
Equity**



**Community
Safety**



**Community
Development**

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Dear New Hanover County Community,

Food is a basic human need: simple, fundamental, and essential to survival and dignity.

In this report, you'll learn about The Endowment's 2022–2024 efforts to promote food security in New Hanover County, including the grants we awarded, the lessons we learned, and the impact of the work they supported. Our goal is simple but essential: to ensure every family in our community has what every household should have without question: reliable access to nutritious, affordable food.

We are deeply grateful to the partners and volunteers who work every day to help bring this goal to life. Yet the continued demand for food assistance highlights something deeper. When so many families must rely on food banks, nonprofits, and public programs to meet a need as essential as food, it signals that something in our broader system is not functioning as it should. Meeting immediate needs is necessary, but it is not where our work ends.

We are equally committed to understanding and addressing the conditions that make food assistance necessary in the first place: jobs that do not keep pace with the cost of living; housing expenses that stretch family budgets beyond their limits; health costs that destabilize households; and inequities that place a heavier burden on some communities than others. Together, these pressures make food insecurity a predictable outcome of structural gaps.

Our mission is not only to fill those gaps, but also to help close them. That is how we will achieve transformative change. As we continue to support families today, we look forward to partnering with all of you to build a future in which no New Hanover County family needs food assistance at all.

Thank you for standing with us in this work.



With sincere gratitude,
Sophie Dagenais,
Interim President and CEO

Working Together for Food Access

Dear Friends and Partners,

As The Endowment's Social and Health Equity Network Officer, it is a privilege to witness the determination and ingenuity that define our community's work toward food security for our New Hanover County community. This report captures not only data, but local voices—neighbors, leaders, and organizations—working in partnership to ensure no one goes hungry.

The stories and outcomes highlighted in this report show what is possible when we recognize food access as health equity, and join together to remove barriers faced by our most vulnerable residents. Each program, partnership, and fresh idea brings us a step closer to a system where nourishment, dignity, and opportunity are realities for all.

As we move forward, let's continue to support each other in building pathways to health and equity for every person in New Hanover County.



With deep appreciation,
Leigh Quarles,
Social and Health Equity Network Officer

A close-up photograph of several small, orange pumpkins with green stems, arranged in a dark-colored wire mesh basket. The pumpkins are of various sizes and are the central focus of the image, which serves as a background for the top half of the page.

SUMMARY

Since 2022, The Endowment has awarded grants to local organizations to expand food distribution, strengthen organizational capacity, and increase access to nutritious, culturally relevant food for thousands of residents.

In Summary:

- Over 187,000 food distributions and more than 4.5 million pounds of food delivered to individuals and families in need.
- Expansion of mobile markets and food pantries, including the launch of the Mobile Market on Market (MoM), which has served over 1,800 families and 3,400 children.
- Support for local farmers and food producers, with new infrastructure and equipment enabling greater reach and sustainability.
- Increased collaboration among nonprofits, schools, and community partners, resulting in more coordinated and effective food security efforts.
- Enhanced education and outreach, including nutrition workshops, cooking classes, and workforce development programs.

Despite these gains, challenges endure. The Endowment remains committed to reducing food insecurity and improving access to healthy food for all residents, with a focus on measurable outcomes, driven by cross-sector collaboration.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report provides an overview of The Endowment's grants from 2022-2024 to help reduce food insecurity in New Hanover County. It highlights each grant's purpose and the work underway, demonstrating how coordinated local investment is expanding access to nutritious food and strengthening cross-sector partnerships. While this report is dated 2025, for grants made from 2022-2024, the food security data herein is drawn from publicly available sources in 2023, the midpoint of that period.

Data and Methods

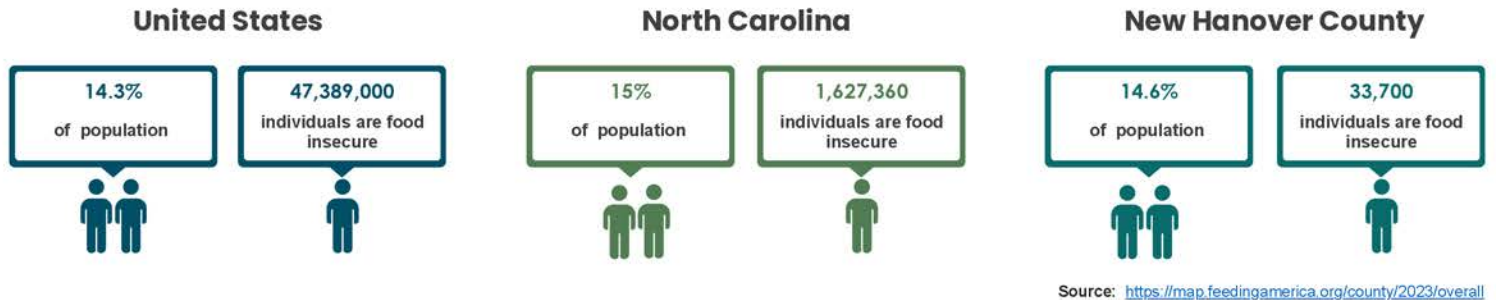
- Uses grantee outcome reports, annual surveys, and local metrics.
- Tracks numbers served, food distributed, outreach events, and capacity building.

Limitations

- Data consistency varies by program and reporting cycle.
- Some outcomes are qualitative and hard to compare directly.
- Changing external factors, such as government funding may impact results.

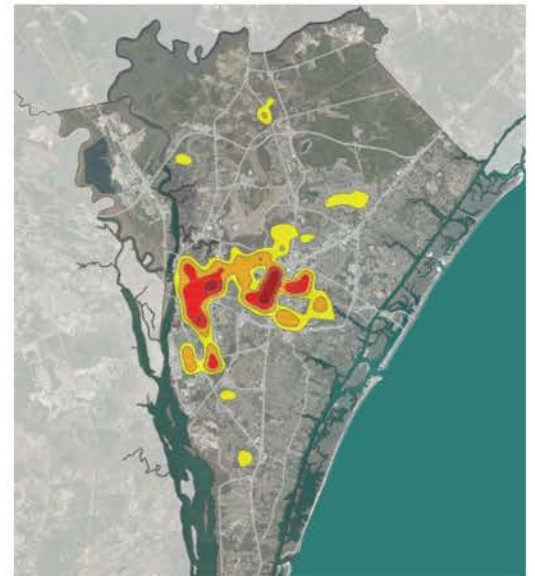
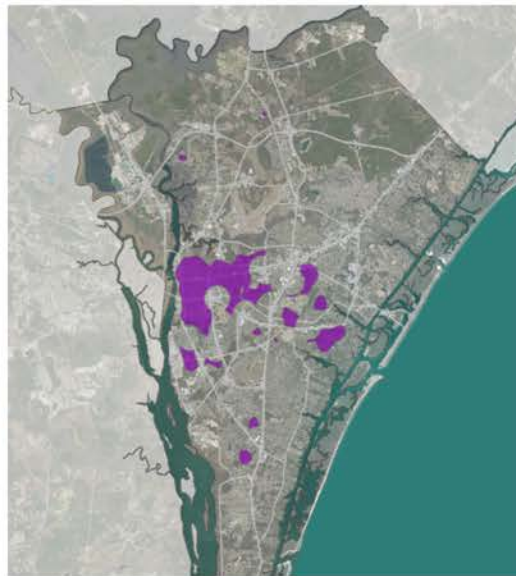
FOOD INSECURITY IN

New Hanover County



Food Desert (i.e. low access & low-income area) is indicated in purple

Poverty Density



Nearly 33,700 residents (14.6% of New Hanover County Residents) experience food insecurity, with rates even higher among children (over 6,400 affected; 1 in 6 kids struggle with hunger). Demand for food assistance is rising, some local programs saw a 39% increase in clients served in 2023 alone.

THE IMPACT OF FOOD INSECURITY

- Risk of malnutrition in children and other vulnerable groups.
- Individuals are more likely to suffer from chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure.
- Mental health issues—including anxiety, depression, and stress—are more prevalent.
- Food insecurity increases demand for healthcare services and drives up costs due to preventable health issues.
- Economic impacts include lost productivity and absenteeism at work, as well as a poverty trap where families must ration limited resources for food instead of other critical needs.
- For children, it means stunted growth, learning challenges, and greater risk for developmental delays—all of which can have lifelong and generational effects.
- Housing instability and high housing costs often force families to choose between rent and food, deepening economic hardship and community disparities.

THE ENDOWMENT'S FOOD SYSTEM INVESTMENT STRATEGY *Goal*

Decrease the number of New Hanover County residents experiencing food insecurity to less than 10% in the next 10 years.

As of 2023, 14.6% of the population in New Hanover County (approximately 33,700 residents) were experiencing food insecurity. This serves as our baseline for measuring progress to goal.



ENDOWMENT FOOD SYSTEM INVESTMENT *Strategy*

Strategy

Outcome



Provide funding to expand food access program capacity and reach

Increase access to nutritious, culturally relevant food

Support infrastructure for local systems and policy change

Increased collective impact driven by real time local data

Support innovative models that transform the local food system

Identification of models that increase access and support systems change

2022-2024 FOOD SYSTEM INVESTMENT GRANTS

From 2022 through 2024, The Endowment awarded 16 grants totaling more than \$4 million to expand food access, improve infrastructure, and spark innovation across New Hanover County.

2022
11
Grants Awarded

2023
3
Grants Awarded

2024
2
Grants Awarded

2022-2024 Food System Investment Grants: *Breakdown*

Year	Grantee	Grant	Focus/Activity
2022	Bread for Life Senior Pantry	\$15,000	Pantry/Access
2022	Catholic Charities Diocese of Raleigh	\$197,500	Mobile Pantry/Garden/Equipment
2022	Community Enrichment Initiatives, Inc	\$129,200	Farm/Outreach
2022	Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Assn	\$13,400	Community Garden Design
2022	Feast Down East	\$120,000	Mobile/Farmers Market/Supply Expansion
2022	Food Bank of Central & Eastern NC	\$120,000	Distribution/Prepared Meals
2022	Harbor United Methodist Church	\$135,000	Community Garden/Delivery
2022	Mother Hubbards Cupboard	\$50,000	Pantry/Collaboration
2022	NCSU Cooperative Extension NHC	\$38,500	Partnership/Capacity
2022	NourishNC	\$105,000	Market on Market (MoM) Mobile Market/Backpack Program/Produce
2022	St. Judes Metropolitan Church	\$80,000	Pantry/Homeless Outreach
2023	Growing Resilience/Northside Market	\$249,715	Market Expansion/Outreach
2023	NourishNC	\$450,000	Mobile Grocery Truck/Outreach
2023	St. Judes Metropolitan Church	\$40,000	Pantry/Homeless Outreach
2024	Feast Down East	\$1,128,720	Mobile Market & Expansion
2024	NourishNC	\$1,165,574	Market on Market (MoM) Market Expansion, Food Access

TRACKING OUR IMPACT: METHODOLOGY

To assess the effectiveness of the Food System Investment Strategy, The Endowment used a structured approach that combined quantitative and qualitative data from our 2022 to 2024 grant cycles.

Data Sources: Outcome data were drawn from interim and final grantee reports, site visits, and annual community surveys. Metrics included the number of meals served, pounds of food distributed, individuals reached, partnerships formed, and infrastructure improvements.

Categorization: All reported outcomes were grouped into themes such as Food Distribution, Organizational Capacity, People Served, Partnership Development, Access Expansion, Infrastructure Improvements, and Education/Outreach. Unique initiatives were counted only once per reporting period to avoid duplication, and both output (what was delivered) and outcome (results/impact) data were reviewed for completeness.

Continuous Learning: The methodology emphasizes ongoing refinement, encouraging grantees to align reporting with shared KPIs and to submit both measurable data and success stories for a more comprehensive impact narrative.

This mixed-methods approach enables The Endowment to both quantify results and learn from lived community experience, guiding future investment and strategy refinement.



SUMMARY OF MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Food Distribution

Over 4.5 million pounds of food distributed in one year by the Food Bank of Central & Eastern NC.

28,428 weekend food bags provided annually to local children through NourishNC's Backpack Program, totaling 227,424 meals.

- 2,556 families shopped at the Market on Market, and Mobile MoM reached 1,896 families and 3,467 kids in 2024.
- Prepared 8,000+ meals for disaster preparation and delivered over 2,300 food boxes.

People Served

Mother Hubbard's Cupboard served 67,151 clients—a 39% increase over the previous year.


St. Jude's Metropolitan Church served 16,800 individuals in one year and provided over 5,800 breakfasts and 7,800 lunches to homeless individuals in a single grant period.

Feast Down East supported 36 farmers (17 new in 2023), directly increasing market access.

Organizational Capacity

Feast Down East and Growing Resilience/Northside Food Cooperative hired and retained key staff, such as farm managers, market managers, and development directors.





...continued

SUMMARY OF MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Access Expansion & Infrastructure

New mobile food distribution units were launched at four anchor locations through NourishNC's Mobile Market on Market (Mobile MoM) program, with the custom-designed unit anchored at El Cuerpo, Boys & Girls Club, Early Learning Academy, and Johnson Pre-K.

Refrigerated trucks, expanded community gardens (from 12 to 33 beds), and increased storage space were supported across several organizations, including:

Harbor United Methodist Church: Purchased a refrigerated delivery truck and expanded its community garden from 12 to 33 beds.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Raleigh: Acquired a walk-in fridge and freezer and improved storage capacity for fresh produce, dairy, and meats.

NourishNC: Purchased and upfitted a custom refrigerated van to support the Mobile MoM program.

Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC: Acquired a short box truck for food delivery and expanded storage capacity.

Education & Outreach

Over 100 nutrition/cooking classes, community events, and workforce certifications—including forklift and CDL trainings—were delivered by grantees such as the Food Bank of Central and Eastern NC, N.C. Cooperative Extension of New Hanover County, and community partners involved in food system investment programming and workforce development efforts.

NourishNC: Hosted 6 Produce Power Ups in 2023, which serve as opportunities for families enrolled in the Backpack Program to stock up on healthy fruits and vegetables.

Growing Resilience Northside Food Cooperative and Feast Down East also participated in community meals and engagement events as part of their food system investments to strengthen community ties and food access.

Partnerships

Dozens of local partnerships, involving nearly 100 agency partners.

LESSONS LEARNED

Collaboration is Key: Strong partnership and sharing knowledge between grantees, local agencies, and funders accelerates progress and helps address barriers that single organizations cannot solve alone.

Community Voices and Data

Matter: Leveraging stories from impacted residents and robust local data improves understanding of the real challenges, informs better decisions, and builds trust within the community.

Flexible Strategies Increase

Resilience: Programs that adapt quickly to changing needs, policy shifts, and funding realities are better positioned to maintain and grow services, especially in times of crisis.

Cross-Pillar Integration Drives

Impact: Aligning food security work with education, housing, and broader health initiatives amplifies benefits for families and strengthens community outcomes.

Continuous Feedback Improves

Outcomes: Regular progress reviews, innovation sharing, and iterative refinements in strategy and measurement yield more actionable results over time.

Sustainable Change Requires

Advocacy: Successful navigation of policy challenges and funding cuts depends on strong advocacy, flexible funding sources, and ongoing engagement with policymakers.

These lessons will inform future investments, and help us continuously refine our work to maximize our impact in New Hanover County.



Community-Informed. Grounded in Data. Driven by Impact. | theendowment.org