

# Healthy Places NC Funding Opportunity

Creating Equitable Food Systems in Eastern North Carolina

Rising obesity and food insecurity rates contribute to many of the chronic diseases that help drive poor health outcomes. Community health needs assessments, especially in rural counties, often target heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other problems caused by nutritionally deficient diets as areas of concern. Every Healthy Places NC community identifies equitable food systems as a goal. Each of these counties has an adult obesity rate that exceeds the state average. According to County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, the obesity rate in Halifax is 38 percent, in Nash and Edgecombe counties the rate stands at 37 percent.

Several of the Healthy Places NC counties also have limited access to healthy food options. Prior to the pandemic, North Carolina had one of the nation's highest food insecurity rates, defined as "a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life." Food insecurity puts young children at risk for negative health, developmental, behavioral, and academic outcomes. Food insecurity also puts young children's parents and other caregivers at risk for poor physical and mental health and can lead to family conflict. Data from Feeding America notes that in 2019, Halifax, Edgecombe, Bladen, Columbus and Robeson counties all had food insecurity rates from 16 to 19 percent, which are some of the steepest rates in the state. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated many of these disparities in hunger rates.

Local coalitions and collaboratives are tackling these longstanding inequities and health concerns through a variety of means including the creation of food policy councils, establishing new farmer's markets, encouraging greater access to public benefits like SNAP and WIC, and ramping up healthy eating and active living programs.

Our mission is to serve financially vulnerable residents and to close racial disparities in health care, so we are particularly interested in how communities are engaging residents with low-incomes and people of color in these efforts.

## **Goal**

Build a more equitable food system where residents with low incomes have ongoing access to healthy food options.

## **Strategy**

Conduct community-based evaluation, research, and planning that engages residents in the process to collect data, identify gaps, and determine best practices to address goals.

Convene, facilitate, and coordinate stakeholders to collectively address goals. This could include better coordination within and across systems and regularly convening community partners.

Build community, organizational, and individual capacity in areas with low incomes so that historically marginalized populations can participate in health improvement efforts.

## **Timeframe**

Call-by date: **October 5, 2021**

Application deadline: **October 26, 2021**

## **Geographic Focus**

Nash, Edgecombe, Halifax, Robeson, Bladen, Columbus counties

## **Opportunity Details**

Organizations in eastern North Carolina are working to create more equitable food systems that provide ongoing opportunities for healthy food access, especially for historically marginalized communities. These groups are also helping ensure that people with low incomes and communities of color have greater leverage to influence the food system and address hunger. These stakeholders are mapping out paths to improve healthy food access.

To help communities in this mapping and implementation process, the Trust is interested in supporting system change strategies for increasing access to healthy food and building a more equitable food system. This could include communications or advocacy strategies, community engagement, policy reform, coordinating across organizations and related approaches. If communities have not developed maps and action plans, then the Trust can assist with this approach as well. Competitive applications will directly engage the communities that disproportionately suffer from a lack of healthy food options.

## **Contact**

To schedule a conversation about this opportunity, please contact Program Coordinator Alison Duncan for an initial consultation at [alison@kbr.org](mailto:alison@kbr.org) or 336-397-5521.