2025-2026 IMPACT REPORT



foodbank®
OF CENTRAL & EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Meeting the Moment, **Shaping the Future**

Rooted in Community

For more than four decades, the Food Bank's work has been grounded in one unwavering belief: no one should go hungry. That belief has guided us through hurricanes, economic uncertainty, the pandemic, and now a period of historically high need across central and eastern North Carolina.

Over the past year, I have made it a priority to spend more time out in the communities we serve, visiting partner agencies across our 34-county service area and listening to the people closest to this work. Those visits have reinforced something I have always believed: there is no single story of hunger.

In one community, the biggest challenge may be transportation. In another, it may be rising housing costs, rural isolation, or wages that simply do not stretch far enough. I have met partners serving families who are doing everything they can and still coming up short, and seniors facing impossible choices between groceries, medicine, and other basic needs.

I have also seen firsthand the extraordinary work our partners are doing every day. They are listening, problem-solving, stretching every dollar and every pound of food, and finding new ways to meet neighbors where they are.

That spirit is at the heart of our next chapter. I spent much of this year working with staff, board, partner agencies, and neighbors on our 5-year strategic plan. Through Rooted in Community, we are committing to listen more deeply, strengthen partnerships, and build solutions alongside the communities we serve.

None of it would be possible without you. Your generosity, time, and advocacy have helped us respond to rising need and stregthen a network that reaches neighbors every day.

Thank you for standing with us, for believing in this mission, and for helping us build a future where every neighbor has the opportunity to thrive.

Amy B.







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Our 2030 Strategic Plan

The Food Bank's 2030 Strategic Plan, Rooted in Community, is our roadmap and our promise to build a future where no one goes hungry.

Shaped by extensive input from neighbors facing hunger, partner agencies, donors, staff, and community leaders, the plan reflects both the urgency of rising food insecurity today and a clear strategy for long-term, systemic change. It prioritizes improving neighbor access and experience, increasing equitable food access, expanding policy and advocacy efforts, and advancing holistic supports that address the root causes of hunger.

Grounded in equity, data, and lived experience — and supported by investments in technology, sustainability, and people — this plan positions the Food Bank as a trusted partner and leader in building healthier, more resilient communities.

Achieving this vision will require strong partnerships and sustained investment, and we invite you to be part of this critical work. Because together, we can make meaningful progress toward a future where no one goes hungry.

Learn more about our strategic plan at FoodBankCENC.org/2030



Our Shared Impact

Your support means our friends and neighbors don't have to make impossible choices between food and other essentials like housing and medicine.

86 million meals
shared with neighbors throughout central and eastern North Carolina

54% of all food distributed
was fresh or frozen produce, protein, and dairy products

1.8 million meals
provided through school-year and summer nutrition programs

3.8 million meals
provided through dedicated senior nutrition programs

170,000+ volunteer hours
fueled our efforts to end hunger and its root causes

700+ community-based partners
including pantries, no-cost food markets, meal sites, and delivery programs

565,000+ miles
driven picking up and distributing food throughout our service area

$12 million invested
in local economies through SNAP benefits and local food purchases

Retail Partners Nourish More Neighbors

More fresh food is reaching neighbors across central and eastern North Carolina thanks to Walmart's three-year investment in the Food Bank's Retail Donation Program. The program connects Walmart stores and other grocers with nearby pantries and meal sites, keeping donated food in local communities and bringing it to families' tables more quickly.

Over the past year, the investment helped 40 Food Bank partner agencies launch retail recovery programs. Another 78 organizations significantly expanded their capacity to provide healthy, perishable food with refrigerated vans, trailers, and cold storage.

"Beyond the practical benefits, this donation represents encouragement and support for our mission," said Alexis Hargraves of New Bethel Baptist Church in Rolesville. **"The van has not only changed how we pick up donations; it has expanded our capacity to serve with excellence and dignity."**

Progressive Teamwork Outreach (PTO) in Zebulon received a trailer that enabled pickups from their local Walmart and two Sheetz stores, bringing more fresh food to families in the area. "The doors allow for faster, easier loading and unloading... that means we're able to reallocate volunteers and maintain a more efficient operation," said PTO's Sheila Gray. **"As the number of families in need of food in our area continues to rise, we are deeply grateful to have this reliable source of transportation to pick up food."**

In total, network partners added 194 weekly store pickups. And with local agencies handling more pickups, Food Bank drivers can now deliver 400 additional pallets of food monthly — including more frequent deliveries to rural communities where fresh food access can be a challenge. We're excited to build on this progress with a new, two-year Walmart grant that will help even more partner agencies provide fresh, nutritious food to neighbors facing hunger.

Retail Expansion by the Numbers:

40 new partnerships

78 locations with new capacity

194+ pick-ups each week

400+ pallets monthly



Long-term Investments Boost Local Resources

In just a few short months, the Timberlake Community Center served thousands of families across Person County and the surrounding area — providing fresh produce, protein, and dairy products alongside pantry staples and non-perishable items.

"We don't turn anyone away, and we give as much produce and whole food as we can possibly give each person who comes through," said Irish Jones, the pantry director.

The brick-and-mortar pantry officially opened in March, following several months as a Food Bank pop-up market. The temporary distributions fill known gaps and build local capacity in areas where resources haven't been able to keep up with rising need. And Timberlake is an incredible example of local community leaders coming together to meet the challenge head-on.

"We have people who come from Durham County, Chatham, Alamance, Virginia and as far away as Caswell County," Jones said, noting the rising cost of food and fuel has driven far more families to seek support.

More than 6,300 people face hunger in Person County — that's 1 in 6 neighbors in Timberlake and the surrounding communities. While mobile markets with food, supplies, and support from the Food Bank team can provide immediate relief, the increase in demand underscores the urgency of establishing community-led pantries and meal sites. The need is especially great in neighborhoods without easy access to full grocery stores or traditional food assistance sites.

That's where Jones and her amazing team came in: with Food Bank support, they developed expertise in food safety, logistics, and trauma-informed care. Over many months, the team raised funds, recruited new volunteers, and grew to establish a permanent location with regular distributions year-round. It's exactly the kind of local leadership we need as the Food Bank works to help communities ramp up hunger relief efforts with additional food, funding, and equipment.

"We are here and available for folks — and with them through this time," Jones said. **"We'll do whatever we can to help support."**







PERSON COUNTY

1 in 6 neighbors are food insecure **| 39,000** visits to local pantries **| 587,000** meals provided

A Lasting Commitment to End Hunger

Kicab and Marta are Food Bank legacy donors who have spent years supporting families who face housing and food insecurity — both in their neighborhood and around the world. They build homes with Habitat for Humanity, organize local food drives with partners like Chatham Outreach Alliance (CORA) and PORCH Communities, and volunteer regularly at Food Bank distribution centers. This year, their volunteer service took them as far as Rwanda, where they worked to support refugees following drastic cuts to U.S. foreign aid.

"They lost all of their USAID money at the end of September...and didn't know where they'd get funding to feed 70,000 people living there," Marta shared. **"It was just terrible."**

As they served thousands of miles away, Marta and Kicab's concern grew over the impact of similar federal cuts back home. In North Carolina alone, more than 110,000 people have lost access to SNAP grocery support over the past year, as major changes in the 2025 federal budget went into effect.

"We want to reduce the number of people who don't have what they need," Marta said, pointing to the way funding and eligibility changes have impacted families. **"[But] the need is increasing with the cutting back of SNAP and everything else."**

Kicab and Marta see their legacy gift as a way to carry forward their long history of volunteerism and financial support for hunger relief efforts — no matter what changes may come at the federal level. And they've been outspoken in encouraging others to consider the Food Bank network in estate planning.

"If you support, in any way, people who are lacking food or lacking shelter... there are opportunities for long-term impact by being a legacy donor," Kicab said. **"For those who can, they should!"**



> **The need is increasing with the cutting back of SNAP and everything else... We want to reduce the number of people who don't have what they need.**
>
> *— Marta, dedicated volunteer and legacy donor*

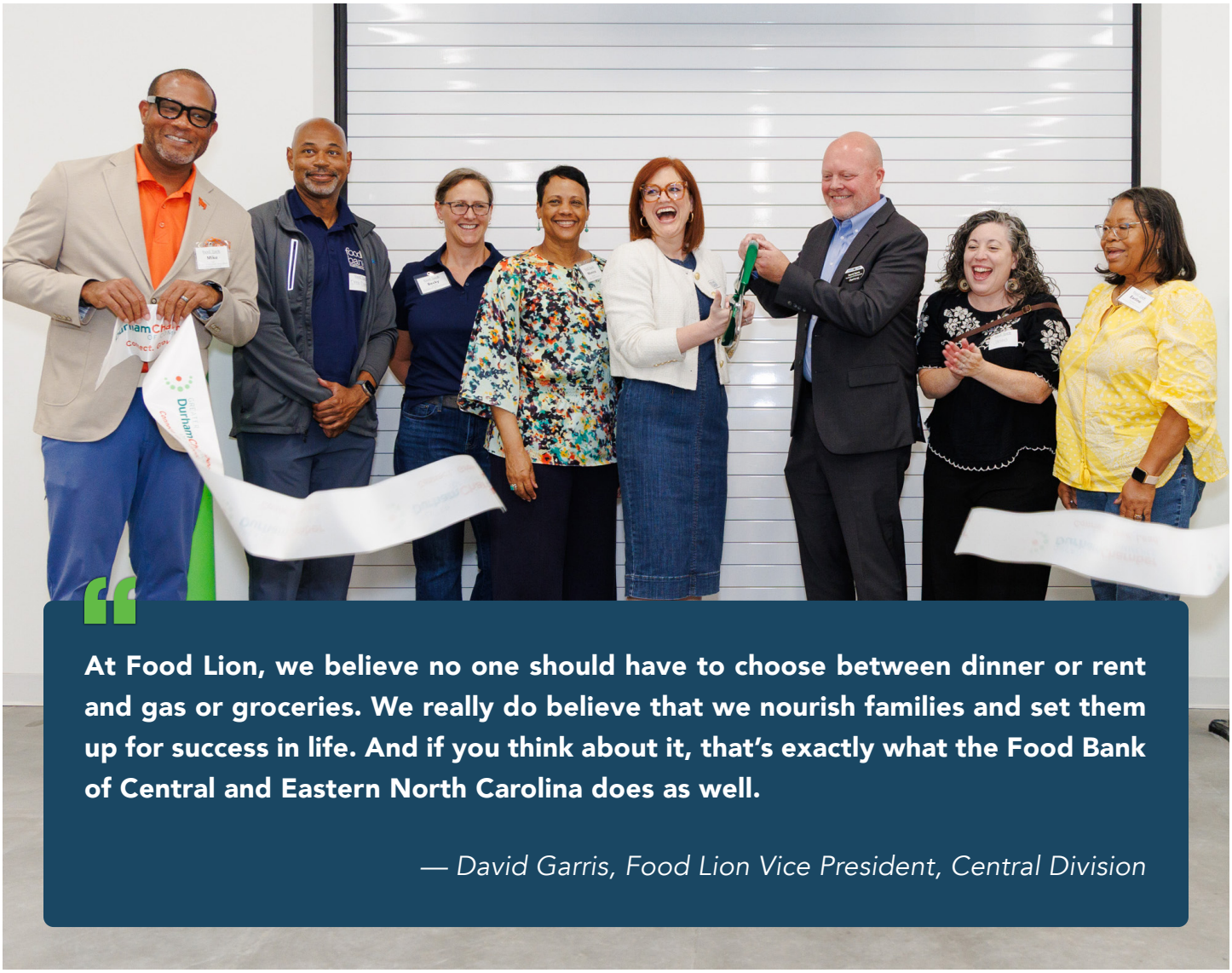
Expanding Capacity to Nourish More Neighbors

Thanks to our generous donors and community partners, improvements to our Sandhills Branch and the new Food Lion FEEDS Hunger Solution Center in Durham are helping us provide more fresh, nutritious food to neighbors facing hunger.

The renovated Sandhills Branch nearly doubles our capacity to distribute fresh produce, dairy, and protein across four counties, where more than 38,000 neighbors face food insecurity. This expansion helps our 89 local partner agencies keep their shelves stocked and meet growing community needs.

In Durham, a $1 million investment from Food Lion FEEDS helped make possible a new 64,000-square-foot facility that doubles distribution capacity across six counties. With three times more warehouse space, expanded refrigeration, and greater volunteer capacity, we can get more fresh, Carolina-grown food to neighbors faster.

Both facilities also offer more space for partner training and resources, strengthening our hunger-relief network. Together, these investments mean more nutritious food, stronger local partnerships, and more families able to put healthy meals on the table for years to come.



At Food Lion, we believe no one should have to choose between dinner or rent and gas or groceries. We really do believe that we nourish families and set them up for success in life. And if you think about it, that's exactly what the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina does as well.

— David Garris, Food Lion Vice President, Central Division



Through the Nation's Longest Shutdown, Our Community Answered the Call

In fall 2025, the nation's longest federal government shutdown compounded food insecurity already at levels not seen in a generation. Communities across the state rallied to support federal workers, military personnel, and families who lost SNAP benefits — with the Food Bank's partner network providing critical food assistance.

The crisis foreshadowed challenges ahead as cuts to federal safety nets threaten to deepen hunger here in North Carolina and throughout the country. But it also showcased our community's incredible ability to come together and support one another in times of crisis. In addition to record-breaking grassroots support and volunteerism in October, November, and December...

Food Bank Partners Mobilized for Federal Workers
The Food Bank partnered with airport authorities to distribute boxes of nutritious pantry staples and fresh produce to TSA workers at RDU and regional airports in Wilmington and Greenville. Similar opportunities were offered to employees at federal facilities throughout the region. And families received connections to longer-term support through our partner network and, thanks to Food Lion, gift cards to purchase other essentials.

David & Nicole Tepper Foundation Responded to Growing Need
Building on its generous annual support, the David & Nicole Tepper Foundation announced $10 million in grants to food banks across North and South Carolina, responding quickly to growing need and helping more neighbors access food.

Statewide Elected Leaders Took Action in Support of Families
Thousands of Food Bank supporters urged state leaders to do whatever they could to mitigate shutdown impacts, and our governor and attorney general heard the call. Governor Stein united public and private partners to secure nearly $22 million in funding for North Carolina food banks to purchase food. And Attorney General Jackson took swift legal action to release federal SNAP funding that ensures families can afford groceries.

Across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, our shared response helped meet shutdown challenges head-on. We're grateful for everyone who rallied in support of North Carolina families!

Community Advocacy Drives Change

When families face hunger, our network is there to provide immediate relief through food assistance, resource connections, and referrals for support. But lasting change requires something more: public policies and investments that make food more accessible and address root causes of hunger.

This year, more than 3,000 supporters joined our nonpartisan advocacy efforts — meeting with lawmakers, signing petitions, and urging action through phone calls, text messages, and emails. Together, we shared our stories and spoke up for policies that help families thrive. And our voices helped secure meaningful victories or families, farmers, and communities across North Carolina.



Photo Credit: Dan West, CBS17

A Landmark Investment from the General Assembly
One of the year's most significant wins came at the State Legislature when leaders approved a landmark $9.1 million investment to help food banks purchase food from local farmers. This 50% increase in funding arrived at a critical time, helping offset major federal cuts that to food purchase funding. This investment strengthens local agriculture while helping ensure families can access fresh, nutritious food close to home.



State Movement to Restore SNAP Funding
As federal cuts threatened SNAP grocery support, Food Bank supporters called on North Carolina leaders to protect this lifeline. Our advocacy helped secure state funding to support SNAP administration, along with investments in staff, training, and technology to reduce payment errors. These resources are an important step toward protecting SNAP for the long term so families can keep food on the table.



Local Advocacy Delivers Results for Families
In Wilmington, advocates came together to share experiences that ultimately removed barriers and strengthened local hunger relief efforts. City leaders unanimously approved changes to zoning rules that formally recognize pantries, meal sites, and distribution locations as a distinct land use — paving the way for network partners to operate closer to the people we serve.

> **It would be devastating to lose SNAP. I use the program to eat and survive.**
> *- Market on Greenfield shopper in Wilmington*

These victories prove what's possible when people of all political stripes come together around a shared goal. Because of supporters like you, families facing hunger had advocates in city halls, at the General Assembly, and in conversations with state and federal leaders. Together, we're not only helping put food on the table today; we're building solutions that will nourish our communities for years to come!

2025-2026 Financials

Revenue

Food Donated	$181,336,666
Food purchase programs	$3,023,995
Contributions	$39,616,248
Governmental grant awards	$7,548,783
Materials and services donated	$244,543
Miscellaneous	$4,253,493
Total:	**$236,023,728**

Expenses

Community programs	$214,917,911
Management and general	$4,657,601
Fundraising	$5,391,853
Total	**$224,967,365**

Net Assets

Change in Net Assets	$11,056,363
Net Assets at Beg of Year	$97,090,271
Net Assets at End of Year	$108,146,634

Year End = June 30, 2026

Audited by Cherry Bekaert LLP

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