

# Wake County, North Carolina

## Recovery Plan

State & Local Fiscal Recovery Funds



2021 Report

**Wake County, North Carolina**  
**2021 Recovery Plan**

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*Cover photo – Wake County’s Mass Vaccination Site – PNC Arena – Raleigh, NC*

## **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

### **Executive Summary**

Wake County, NC (“The County”) was awarded \$216.0 million of State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) from the American Rescue Plan Act and received its first tranche of \$107.9 million in May 2021.

The County identified key immediate needs for utilization of these funds. These needs included continued Public Health Response and Food Security Programs through December 31, 2021, funding the remaining small business loans that could not be covered with the County’s Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF), hospitality support, as well as a broadband assessment.

In May and June of 2021, the Wake County Board of Commissioners appropriated \$52.7 million of the funding to meet these immediate needs.

The County will begin to work with departmental staff, the public and Community organizations to identify the longer-term needs of the community and County as a whole.

The County is waiting for the final guidance to be published to determine if it will have any allowable revenue loss.

It is anticipated that the County will present the next phase to the Board of Commissioners in October 2021.

Additional information on the County’s COVID-19 response can be found at <https://www.wakegov.com/covid-19-information>.

### **Uses of Funds**

#### **Public Health (EC1) - \$41.2 million:**

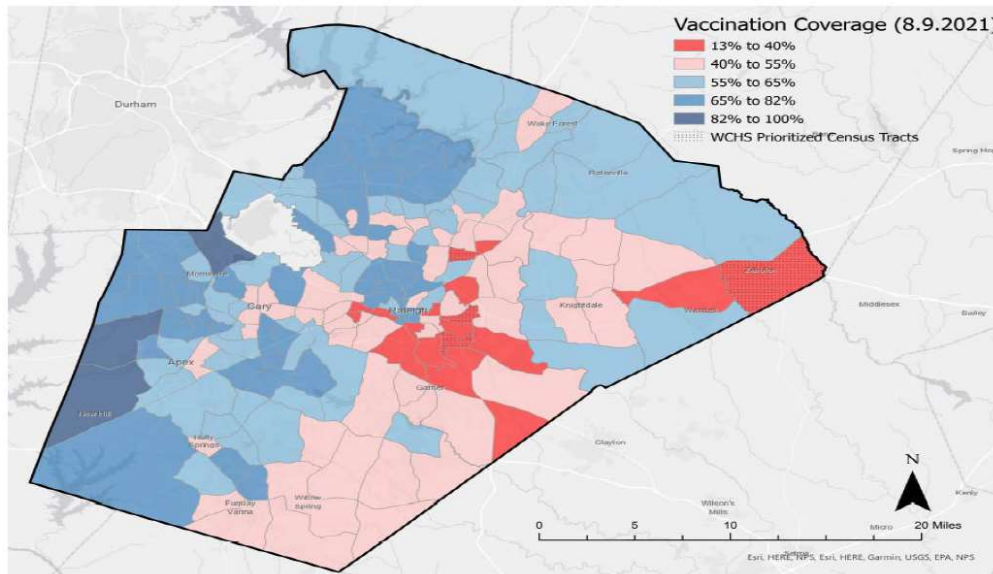
In North Carolina, it is required by State Statute that the local public health departments (operated and managed solely by NC counties) provide public health services to all citizens of its jurisdiction. Therefore, the priority of the County is to continue the public health response throughout the entire County. This includes testing (EC1.2), case investigation and contact tracing (EC 1.3) and vaccination (EC1.1). The focus includes ensuring the most vulnerable populations have adequate access to receive the vaccines as well as ensuring the County provides outreach and access to lagging census tracts.

In late Spring, the County transitioned to a regional approach for testing and vaccinations. The County currently operates several Health & Human Services Regional Centers that already provide other Public Health services to the County’s more underserved census tracts. By utilizing existing regional centers and the main Public Health facilities, more of the County’s underserved populations have access to COVID-19 testing and vaccines as well as social services (including, but not limited to Medicaid, childcare, and energy funded assistance programs). The County also provides outreach events and pop-up testing and vaccination events in areas where cases have spiked, or data shows that vaccination rates are lower than average in the County.

The County's Vaccine Objectives include:

- Protect and increase vaccination rates among those most vulnerable
- Ensure equitable access for historically marginalized populations and at-risk groups
- Increase vaccination in communities that have lagging rates of vaccination
- Continued outreach and engagement events in prioritized census tracts
- Maintaining surge capacity to provide booster and child vaccinations

**Vaccine Coverage by Census Tract:**



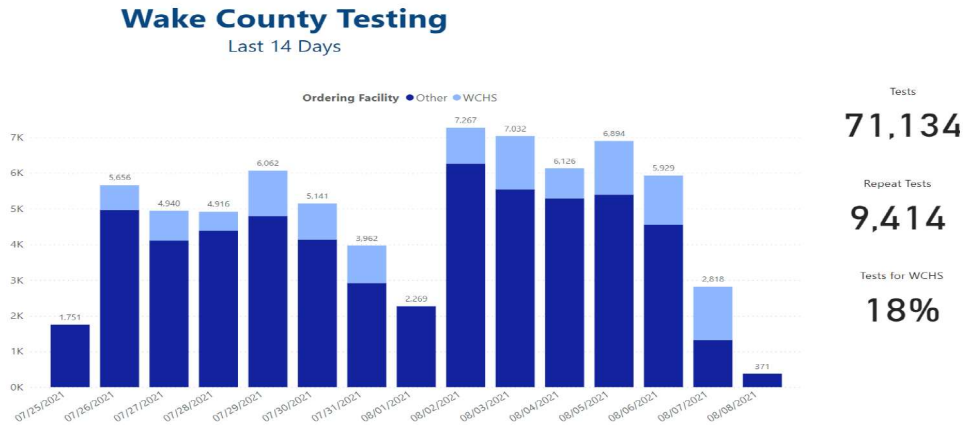
**Sources:**

Wake County Geographic Information Services, Wake County Information Services (Accessed 8.10.2021)  
North Carolina Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NCEdSS)  
US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2014-2018

The County's Surveillance and Testing Objectives include:

- Screening for surveillance and situation awareness
- Expanding test sites to regional centers
- Monitoring community testing capacity to ensure adequate data to inform intervention and treatment
- Identifying cases for public health and social measures
- Ensuring equitable access for historically marginalized populations
- Maintaining surge capacity to provide timely results

**Wake County Testing 7/25-8/8:**



The County is in the process of establishing a County-wide surveillance system which will include wastewater monitoring, variant detection and focused screening and detection response.

**Negative Economic Impacts (EC2)**

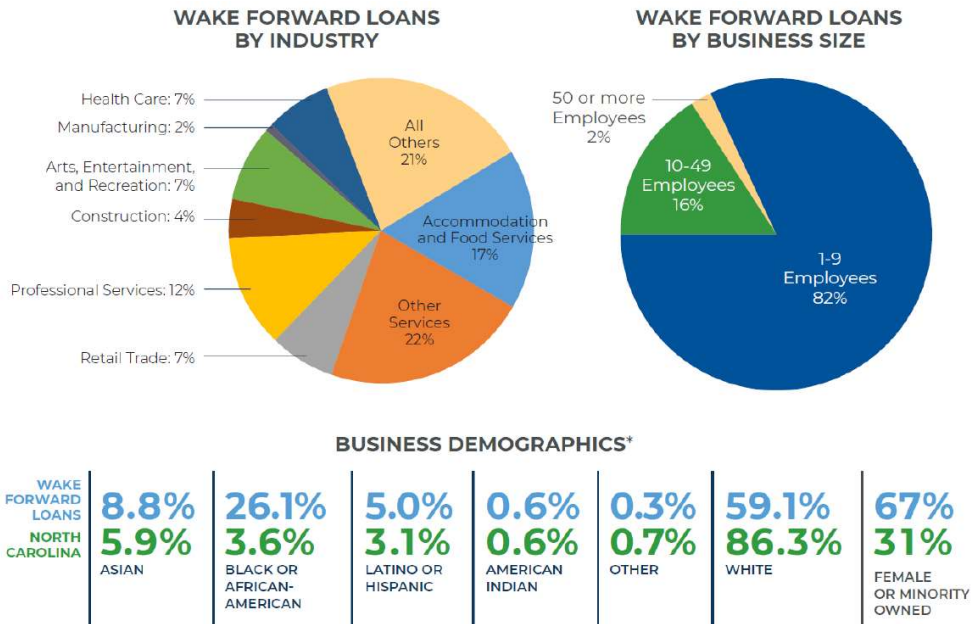
**EC 2.1 Household Assistance: Food Programs**

The County began its enhanced food security program in March 2020 utilizing CRF funding. This program was set to expire June 30, 2021. Utilizing \$1.1 million of the SLFRF funds allows the program to continue through December 31, 2021. The program includes contracts with partners to distribute food at hub sites, through meal delivery to college students, and providing food services to diverse populations and populations with special dietary needs. The program continues to coordinate with the Wake County Public School System to ensure school-aged children have access to meals outside of school.

**EC 2.9 Small Business Economic Assistance**

During Fall of 2020, the County began the WakeForward program which provided small business loans to businesses in the community. The County leveraged \$5 million dollars of its CRF with the State’s small business loan program (run by the NC Rural Center) to award 349 loans totaling \$19.2 million. County staff partnered with Wake County Economic Development and the Wake County Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Alliance to promote the program throughout the entire County. The County stopped accepting applications on November 16, 2020 and the funds from both the State and County loans were exhausted. Forty-seven businesses were approved for loans after the exhaustion of these funds. Of these loans 43% were owned by persons of color. The County plans to use \$4.9 million of SLFRF to fund the remainder of these loans and to continue to assess the future needs of small businesses throughout the County.

## WakeForward Loan Demographics – Phase 1



### EC 2.11 Aid to Tourism, Travel and Hospitality

Revenues from hospitality taxes were significantly impacted due to closure from COVID-19. Combined revenue losses for FY20 and FY21 for county-wide Food & Beverage and Occupancy Tax was approximately \$24.0 million. These dollars help support tourism, sports, and leisure activities of the County’s partners both in operating and capital investments through State laws and Interlocal Agreements. The County awarded SLFRF totaling \$4.054 million to the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (GRCVB) and the Centennial Authority. The funding to the GRCVB will be used for targeted marketing and advertising campaigns showing Wake County has safety protocols in place to resume tourism, sport, and leisure activities and recruit conventions back to facilities in Wake County. Continued investments to the Centennial Authority allow the arena to remain competitive with other facilities and funds additional health and safety requirements for opening the arena.

### Services for Disproportionately Impacted Communities (EC3)

#### EC 3.12 Housing Support: Other Housing Assistance

The County utilized approximately \$12.6 million dollars of its CRF funds to initiate the House!Wake program, aimed to support housing access to at-risk citizens through various programs. The County also received approximately \$41.5 million of funding to date through the federal government’s two Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Programs. The County contracts with Telamon to process applications for the ERA program, providing rental and utility payment assistance. The County continues to assess where there may be gaps in programs that could be funded with SLFRF funds. Currently the County has identified a need in the Landlord

Engagement Program which works with landlords throughout the County to increase the pool of accessible affordable rental units, create and manage a unit database and to provide displacement relocation services. The program was approved by the Board of Commissioners on August 16, 2021.

## **Water, Sewer and Broadband Infrastructure (EC5)**

### **EC 5.17 Broadband: Other Projects**

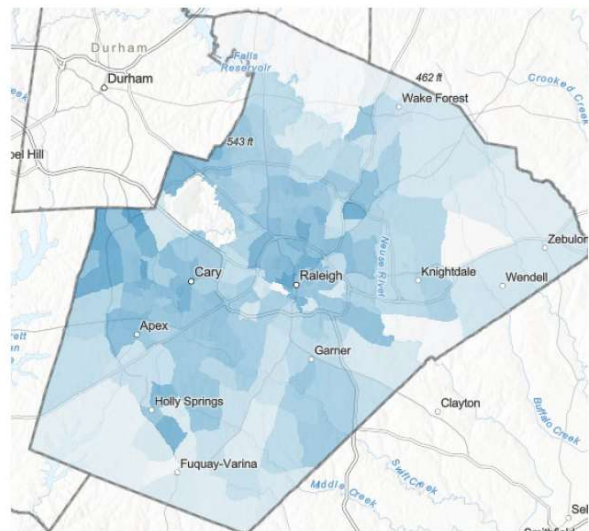
Access to broadband and internet service varies throughout the County. Rural areas typically have less providers and slower speeds, and underinvested communities lack technical assistance needed. Additionally, fiber optic and broadband connections typically have a higher monthly subscription cost, making the financial accessibility of such services too costly for certain households.

North Carolina law is very prescriptive of the role of local governments regarding telecommunications:

- Local governments are prohibited from serving as internet providers
- Local governments are prohibited from owning or installing and telecommunication infrastructure
- Current NC grant programs eliminate Wake County from funding opportunities

#### **Current Wake County Availability:**

- 99.9% greater than or equal to 100mb/s download and 20mb/s upload
- 69.7% have available fiber technology
- 0.15% have access only through DSL (phone line)



Wake County will use \$500K to hire a consultant to study the broadband service throughout the County that will focus on affordability, service availability, digital literacy, and equity. Once the study is received and evaluated, staff will return to the Board with recommendations to improve connectivity throughout the County.

## **Revenue Replacement (EC6)**

The County is continuing to analyze its revenues and wait for final guidance from the Treasury to determine if it will have any lost revenues to claim under SLFRF. If it is determined that the County has lost revenues, County staff will provide additional recommendations on how to utilize that funding source to the County Board of Commissioners.

## **Promoting equitable outcomes**

Wake County's programs are designed to ensure equity across the County.

### **Public Health:**

It is the goal of Wake County to provide COVID-19 testing and vaccine resources across the entire population of the County. Wake County Health and Human Services provides equitable COVID-19 testing and vaccine resources and access to all communities to include those identified as historically underserved, such as the African American and Hispanic populations. Public Health offers direct vaccination and testing services to all eligible individuals via walk-in or drive-through clinics in five locations in the county. Additionally, targeted vaccination strike teams are deployed to vaccinate individuals in vulnerable communities and high-risk settings such as long-term care facilities that are unable to benefit from walk-up or curbside service.

Together, a dedicated communications representative, outreach and canvassing team, community partners, a devoted call center, and internal efforts partner to inform residents and businesses of the COVID-19 services available through Wake County Health and Human Services to include:

- Canvassing efforts in communities identified as historically marginalized
- Internal referrals from existing Wake County Health Clinics clients and/or staff
- Mobile vaccine clinics that travel to hard-to-reach communities
- Standard presence of drive-through or curbside vaccination clinics at various locations in the community
- Pop-up clinics at various community settings, such as COVID-19 testing sites, school nutrition sites, construction sites, migrant farm worksites, processing plants, churches, parking lots
- Immunization clinics to reach jails, homeless shelters, or other community organizations
- Wake County Public Health has teamed up with Wake County Economic Services to send insert informational COVID-19 vaccine flyers into more than 4,000 mailings to current recipients of food stamps, Medicaid, and other income assistance programs, putting vital health information directing into the homes of some of the County's most vulnerable residents.
- Wake County Public Health partnered with County and municipal housing and homeless services departments to bring regular and repeating vaccine clinic events to men's and women's homeless shelters.
- Wake County Public Health partnered with Wake County Cooperative Extension to provide vaccines at community food distribution sites. Other resources provided at these events included: mental health outreach from Alliance, science kits for school-aged youth from 4-H youth development, personal hygiene kits for families, and kits with washable, reusable masks and hand sanitizer.



- Wake County Public Health partnered with Wake County Cooperative Extension to provide vaccines to recently arrived farmworkers and farms were provided with large quantities of masks and hand sanitizers to maintain worker safety.

Access to COVID-19 vaccine and testing resources among groups remains equitable across Wake County. All services are at no cost to the client, no identification is required, and services are available in multiple languages. Mobile, curbside and at-home services are also available for clients. Electronic registration may be completed by the client prior to arrival to a vaccine or testing clinic but concierge staff are available to complete this task for clients presenting onsite in need of assistance.

Intended outcomes for Wake County's COVID-19 response include ensuring equitable access to vaccine and testing services by all community members, including historically marginalized populations and as necessary, deploy strategies to close identified gaps in service access based on demographics (race, ethnicity, age, etc.).

### **Household Assistance: Food Programs**

It is the goal of Wake County to provide access to food to underserved communities. The Wake County Cooperative Extension division has prioritized resources for Hispanic populations and service several neighborhoods/regions that are on the outskirts of the County and lack reliable transportation to services. These neighborhoods are primarily BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of color) communities. The County also utilize funding to purchase produce from black farmers and to build food boxes and are funding boxes specially built for Hispanic populations.

Wake County partners with a wide net of faith communities and not for profit organizations and utilizes door to door canvassing methods to share information about available resources. Outreach materials are produced in Spanish and English. The County will be piloting a new app, Tangelo, to provide free on-line grocery orders and will be working with El Centro to do outreach with Hispanic communities. This app also will collect demographic data of participants, to help the County gauge the level of participation of historically marginalized populations in its food security programs.

Access to Wake County's COVID-19 food security programs are available to anyone who is food insecure. Analysis has been conducted to identify areas that are transportation limited and have worked with partners to get service to those neighborhoods when possible. Many of the County's food outreach programs help fill gaps in food support, as the County can provide resources to those who may not qualify for SNAP, WIC, and other federal/state assistance resources or lack appropriate documentation to receive those services.

### **Housing Support: Other Housing Assistance**

It is the goal of Wake County's Housing Affordability & Community Revitalization (HACR) department to help residents gain and maintain safe and affordable housing. The House!Wake Strategic Plan addresses the COVID-19 crisis within the County's homeless and precariously housed population and aims to move the maximum number of individuals possible to housing stability. HACR's programs target historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affect

groups. By regulation as well as policy, HACR's programs target residents whose incomes are at or well below 80% AMI; with priority given to 50% AMI or less. The projects both proposed and approved for funding through ARPA target homeless populations, people needing permanent supportive housing, and creating housing opportunities for low to moderate income residents who historically have the fewest resources available for decent, affordable housing.

HACR and its many community partners work diligently to promote awareness of the program through numerous channels and venues. HACR staff attend many community meetings, disseminating information, which is also available on the County's Website. The Communications Department also works closely with HACR staff to develop communications strategies that will reach the broadest market possible. Together, HACR and Communications issue press releases, twitter feeds, PSAs, print and radio advertisements as well as live news interviews. The County's Board of Commissioner also strongly supports these programs and regularly contribute to disseminating information to the public.

Priority is given to the most disadvantaged populations, namely those at or below 50% AMI, who have historically demonstrated that the lack of resources has hindered their ability to compete for and obtain affordable housing in Wake County. Regarding administrative requirements, all programs place the administrative burden on program staff, be they County employee or funded subrecipient agencies acting on the County's behalf. Staff work closely with all eligible populations to ensure accurate and timely documentation satisfying programmatic requirements while expediting services provided.

## **Community Engagement**

Currently, the County is reviewing project requests submitted by County departments that supplement or initiate programs that continue to address economic disparities exacerbated by the pandemic, mitigate social determinants of health in low-income and predominantly minority communities, and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in local government. In the next phase, the County will assess additional projects, initiatives, and programs to use the funds in accordance with US Treasury guidance. Several public engagement tools will be launched for community groups and citizens to provide feedback and request funding. By utilizing these tools, the County intends to come up with a plan that will be presented to the Board of Commissioners in late 2021. This could include additional funding for programs already in place.

**Table of Expenses by Expenditure Category as of July 31, 2021:**

<b>Category</b>		<b>Cumulative expenditures to date (\$)</b>	<b>Amount spent since last Recovery Plan</b>
1	Expenditure Category: Public Health		
1.1	COVID-19 Vaccination	72,027	72,027
1.2	COVID-19 Testing	747,969	747,969
1.5	Personal Protective Equipment	2,737	2,737
1.8	Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine)	6,227	6,227
1.9	Payroll Costs for Public Health, Safety, and Other Public Sector Staff Responding to COVID-19	1,507,528	1,507,528
2	Expenditure Category: Negative Economic Impacts		
2.1	Household Assistance: Food Programs	38	38

## PROJECT INVENTORY

The County has set up several units in its American Rescue Plan Fund to track each project.

### **CV50 – Public Health Operations**

Funding amount: \$36,225,000

Project Expenditure Categories: 1.2 – COVID-19 Testing; 1.5 – Personal Protective Equipment; 1.8 – Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenditures; 1.9 Payroll Costs for Public Health, Safety and Other Public Sector Staff Responding to COVID-19

The Public Health Operations encompasses all aspects of the Public Health emergency except for the COVID-19 vaccinations. This project includes contracting for mass testing, contact tracing and monitoring, procuring PPE for County departments, payroll for employees working the response and contracts with partner agencies for continued outreach and communication.

### **CV51 – Public Health Vaccinations**

Funding amount: \$5,000,000

Project Expenditure Category: 1.1 – COVID-19 Vaccination

The Public Health Vaccination project includes the communication and outreach for the COVID-19 vaccination as well as contracts with vendors to assist with administering the vaccine at County sites.

### **CV60 – Economic Recovery**

Funding amount: \$8,954,000

Project Expenditure Categories: 2.9 – Small Business Economic Assistance; 2.11 – Aid to Tourism, Travel and Hospitality

The Economic Recovery project includes funding the remaining small business loans initiated in the WakeForward program as well as assisting key tourism partners, GRCVB and the Centennial Authority.

### **CV61 – Enhanced Food Security**

Funding amount: \$1,100,000

Project Expenditure Category: 2.1 – Household Assistance: Food Programs

The Enhanced Food Security project will allow various programs that were implemented during FY21 utilizing CRF resources to continue through December 31, 2021.

**CV62 – Broadband Infrastructure**

Funding amount: \$500,000

Project Expenditure Category: 5.16 – Broadband: Other Projects

The Broadband Infrastructure project was approved to hire a consultant to study the Broadband service throughout the County that will focus on affordability, service availability, digital literacy, and equity. Once the study is received and evaluated, staff will return to the Board with next step recommendations.

**CV70 – County Support**

Funding amount: \$896,000

Project Expenditure Category: 1.8 – Other Public Health Services; 7.1 – Administrative Expenses

The County Support project was approved for additional non-public health and safety positions that will assist the County-wide COVID-19 response. It includes positions in Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology and Facilities.