



2021–22 ANNUAL REPORT

UNC SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
ncIMPACT Initiative

**Dedicated to Improving the
Lives of North Carolinians**



The Team

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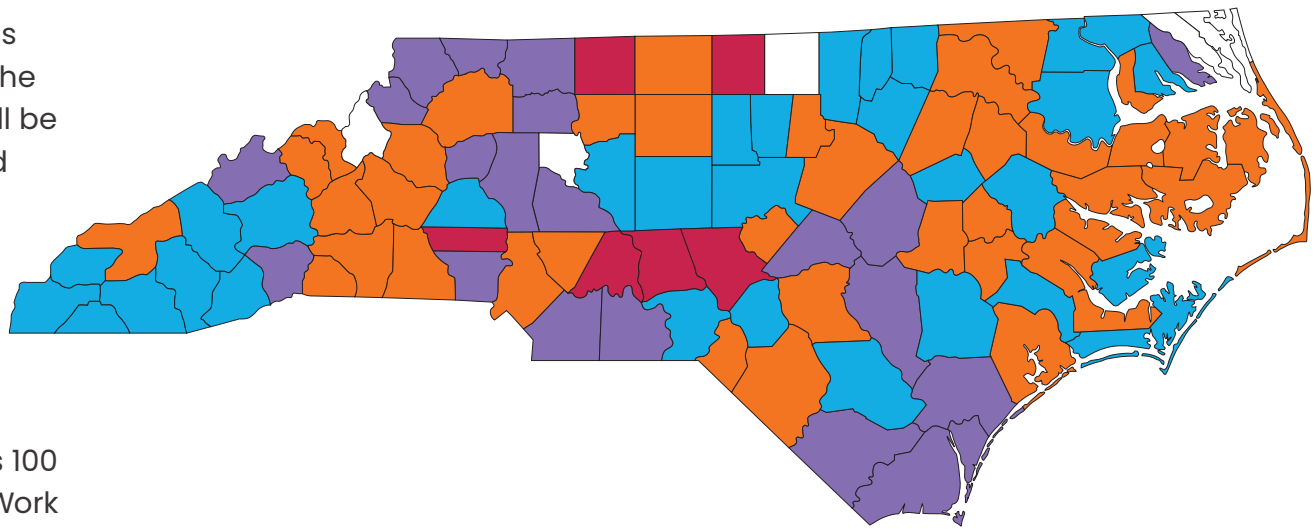
Our Vision

Serve as the go-to place in North Carolina for trusted tools that bridge policy and practice in response to complex challenges.

Learning From Our Communities

2018–22

Over the next 10 years, ncIMPACT will touch tens of thousands of lives across North Carolina, some in every one of the state's 100 counties. Our fingerprint will be found in the expanded capacities and program and policy innovations of civic leaders who will use new strategies and tools to meet their community needs better. This past fiscal year (June 2021 to July 2022), engagement in new counties included our Carolina Across 100 initiative launching its Our State, Our Work program for Opportunity Youth in Caswell, Lincoln, and Stokes counties and our PBS NC ncIMPACT show highlighting the work of communities in Montgomery, Moore, and Stanly counties.



PROJECT YEARS

■ 2018–19 ■ 2019–20 ■ 2020–21 ■ 2021–22



STRATEGY 1

Engage in deep experiments on pressing community challenges using sound data, high-quality research, and rigorous analysis.

RESEARCH PROJECTS



AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) SUPPORT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Challenge

ARPA has provided unprecedented federal funds to local governments to help with their COVID recovery efforts, but some municipalities and counties will need planning and administrative capacity support to put these funds to successful use and comply with federal and state regulations.

Response

The ncIMPACT Initiative is working with state leaders and regional councils of government to ensure that communities have access to the technical assistance needed.

Process

Partnering with the North Carolina Pandemic Recovery Office (NCPRO), the ncIMPACT Initiative has been an

engaged member of a broad group of stakeholders convened monthly by the NCPRO. In addition, the ncIMPACT Initiative has helped local governments to create and share community engagement efforts as encouraged by the ARPA.

Impact

We have touched hundreds of local governments with this work. We are confident, based on feedback from appreciative local governments, that many of them are finding high value in our contributions.

Project Lead

Anita Brown-Graham

Funder

UNC School of Government

**AMERICAN
RESCUE PLAN**

myFUTURENC LOCAL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT COLLABORATIVES

Challenge

Each community's talent development potential remains key to its economic competitiveness or disadvantage in today's economy, whether high-tech or service industries dominate their region. Before the pandemic, 58 percent of jobs in North Carolina required some form of postsecondary attainment. The pandemic accelerated this trend, while decelerating attainment.

Response

In 2021, the ncIMPACT Initiative, in partnership with myFutureNC, launched a two-year pilot program that supports 15 local educational attainment collaboratives (LEACs) across the state that seek to significantly increase the number of students completing post-secondary credentials of value in the workforce: a degree, credential, or certification.

Process

For the past 18 months, the core team in each community has identified and engaged the full community team (local collaborative). Each collaborative includes a diverse team of community stakeholders, all committed to active participation in the two-year program. ncIMPACT assisted communities with stakeholder identification to build the collaborative team.

Each community collaborative has met monthly over the course of the program to develop and implement a cogent strategy that:

- Leverages existing assets and activities
- Increases the community's educational attainment
- Improves equity in attainment

Impact

This effort will help achieve the state's legislative goal of two million individuals between the ages of 25 and 44 who possess a high-quality credential or postsecondary degree by 2030. **The teams have collectively committed to increasing the educational attainment of almost 100,000 North Carolinians by 2030.**

Project Lead

Anita Brown-Graham

Funders

John M. Belk Endowment, Dogwood Health Trust, and UNC Rural

OUR GOAL

2 MILLION

**high quality credentials or post
secondary degrees by 2030**

(as of today, there are 1.3 Million)

HISTORIC PRESERVATION RESILIENCE PROJECT



Thomas Wolfe Memorial, Asheville, NC

Challenge

The State Historic Preservation Office in the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources received federal funding due to extensive damage to the state from multiple hurricanes. These hurricanes reflect the increased frequency of natural disasters impacting the state and threatening historic sites and assets.

Response

The Historic Resilience Project team is working to:

- Develop design standards that integrate resilience for local governments and provide training for local staff on these new design standards.
- Train communities to better link local disaster planning (hazard mitigation) with historic resource resiliency planning.
- Provide disaster preparedness and response training for state agency personnel, local governments, and non-profit historic sites.

Process

The ncIMPACT Initiative recruited a team of experts to provide the deliverables requested to address this statewide challenge.

Impact

The project team developed the Historic Preservation Resilience Advisory Group to engage local government officials, subject matter experts, and other stakeholders to provide input that will ensure the effectiveness of products developed by the Historic Preservation Resilience Project. The first set of trainings will be offered in 2023.

Project Leads

Adam Lovelady, Emily Gangi

Funder

National Park Service and NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, State Historic Preservation Office

NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENT (NCARCOG) PARTNERSHIP

Challenge

NCARCOG and the UNC School of Government share a commitment to meeting the needs of local governments in North Carolina. As such, local governments are better served when the two groups work seamlessly to build on complementary strengths.

Response

The ncIMPACT Initiative serves as a liaison between the School of Government and the NCARCOG and provides:

- Two hybrid training programs—that utilize School faculty—for regional leaders who may gather at respective COG offices.

- A primary point of contact for COG staff seeking connections to School faculty for subject-matter consultations.

Process

The ncIMPACT Initiative meets quarterly with the NCARCOG liaisons to identify training and research topics of interest and then recruits School faculty and staff to provide training content.

Impact

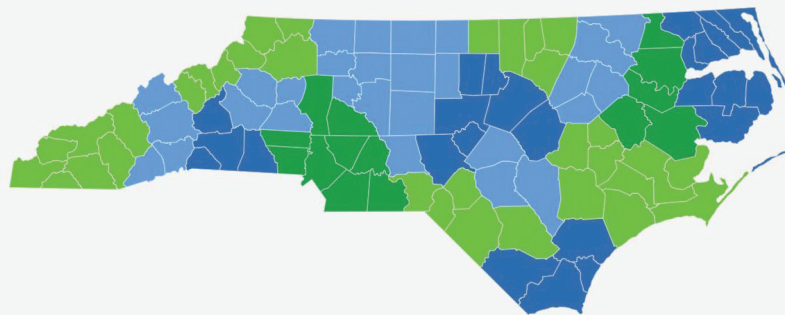
The two hybrid trainings this fiscal year served local governments in all 16 COG regions of the state and enrolled more than 400 public officials.

Project Leads

Emily Gangi, Anita Brown-Graham

Funder

UNC School of Government



CAROLINA ACROSS 100

Challenge

As communities work to recover from the far-reaching effects of COVID-19, they seek to partner with the research-based insights generated at UNC. However, with a campus as large and decentralized as Carolina, it can be difficult to know where to turn for support.

Response

In 2020, Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz charged Carolina Across 100 to serve as a five-year initiative that partners with cohorts of communities across the state as they work on their most challenging issues, many of which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Process

The team began its work by interviewing and surveying community members from across the state to determine the primary pain points to which the expertise at the University is particularly well suited to respond. The results of the survey and interviews determined the focus subjects for Carolina Across 100.

The team prepared requests for participation in the program and conducted interviews with applicant communities. Communities were asked to apply as cross-sector teams of critical stakeholders, including local governments, nonprofits, faith leaders, and local business representatives.

The team will spend the next two years focused on expanding and deepening education and employment pathways for "Opportunity Youth," young adults between the ages of 16-24 who are out of school and work.

Continued on next page

CAROLINA ACROSS





Carolina Across 100 continued from previous page

Impact

Thirteen teams representing 37 counties were selected to participate in the “Our State, Our Work: Connecting Young Adults with their Future” program. These teams span from the mountains to the coast and are home to nearly 40 percent of our state’s population of Opportunity Youth.

Carolina Across 100 will facilitate an effective and efficient cross-sector collaboration process that allows the participating communities to ensure the successful removal of barriers to advancement for these Opportunity Youth. Additionally, the team will offer a menu of resources to which participating communities have access.

Expected outcomes will:

- Create deep local impact by increasing the number of Opportunity Youth connected to educational systems and employers.

- Enhance capacity across the state by creating collaborative cross-community learning and partnerships, and delivering model policies to inform North Carolina’s broader policy landscape.
- Increase resources—including federal, state, and philanthropic funding focused on Opportunity Youth—as well as shared data tools and metrics to measure collaborative progress toward achieving the goals.

Project Leads

Anita Brown-Graham, Jess Dorrance, Abigail Holdsclaw

Funders

Seed funding provided by the Office of the Chancellor, UNC-Chapel Hill, and Blue Cross of North Carolina

EXPANDING THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT (EITC) IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Challenge

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is the federal government's largest benefit for workers. In North Carolina, around 180,000 filers do not claim the tax credit even though they could benefit from the boost to their household budgets. Low- and middle-income North Carolinians lose a total of \$450 million each year. For people who earned income from working for someone or running a business or farm, it's money that positively impacts change in their life, family, and community.

Response

The project team partnered with local leaders and stakeholders in the targeted rural counties to deliver recommendations and strategies based on data and best practices locally identified as helpful in supporting increased understanding of the EITC and improved uptake in rural counties. Partners in the project included The Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC School of Social Work and Rural Forward at the Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation.

Process

Hosted 12 Community Conversations on the EITC with 98 total participants to understand the different reasons people in local communities do not utilize the EITC. These conversations took place with participants from Beaufort, Bladen, Columbus, Edgecombe, Halifax, McDowell, Nash, Robeson, and Rockingham counties.

Impact

Local leaders are pleased that an estimated 1,500 additional North Carolinians in the target rural communities are now aware of the EITC benefit.

Project Lead

Anita Brown-Graham

Funding

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**GET BACK MONEY
YOU HAVE EARNED**

THE US FEDERAL EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT (EITC) IS A TAX
BENEFIT FOR WORKING INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

RECLAIM UP TO \$6,728

THRIVE RURAL FRAMEWORK

Challenge

One in five Americans lives in a rural place. The same is true in North Carolina. While many rural places in our state are dynamic and thriving, others are struggling, with economies under stress and declining livelihoods and health outcomes.

Response

Thrive Rural is an effort of the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute that aims to create a shared vision and understanding of what it will take for communities and Native nations across the rural United States to thrive.

Process

Using a National Advisory Board, which includes the ncIMPACT Initiative as well as a Theory of Change Working Group, Thrive Rural worked to:

- Discover, synthesize, curate, and build a shared understanding of the state of relevant policy, systems, and practices—and what is needed to realize improvements in rural community conditions, health, and wellbeing.

- Create systems for iterative learning, asking questions that prompt new ideas and insights, and frames new research and analysis.
- Connect practitioners, policymakers, and academics across sectors and regions to weave a more organized, unified, and powerful network to improve rural community conditions.
- Heighten awareness and strengthen understanding of the interdependence of urban and rural America, providing stories of people and places that offer a truer account of rural America's diversity, contribution, and value to our nation.

Impact

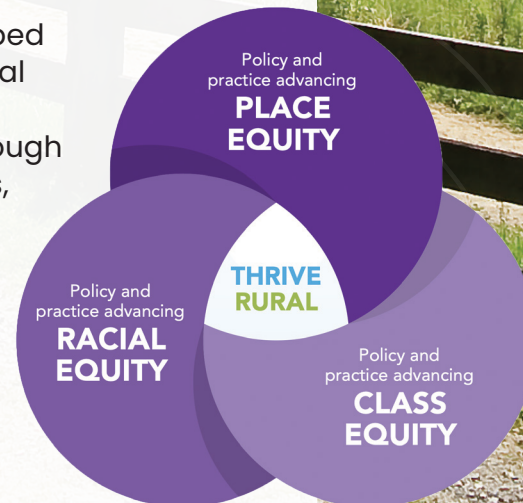
Thrive Rural has developed a new framework for rural development and is publicizing the work through several written products, including one by Anita Brown-Graham.

Project Lead

Anita Brown-Graham

Funding

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Experts

WHO PARTNERED WITH THE ncIMPACT INITIATIVE ON ITS PROJECTS

The ncIMPACT Initiative engaged **141 experts** in its projects and convenings this year. The following School of Government faculty and professional staff participated in funded projects coordinated by the ncIMPACT Initiative:

Expanding EITC in Rural Communities

WHITNEY AFONSO

Historic Preservation Resilience Project

ADAM LOVELADY

BEN HITCHINGS

myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives

RICARDO MORSE

JOHN STEPHENS

PEG CARLSON

ARPA Support for Local Governments

KARA MILLONZI

PATRICE ROESLER

TESHANEE WILLIAMS

JOHN STEPHENS

NC Association of Regional Councils of Governments Partnership

ADAM LOVELADY

JIM JOYCE

TYLER MULLIGAN

SARA ODIO



STRATEGY 2

Share knowledge on evidence-based insights and creative policy options for responding to the most important questions communities face through a virtual civic solutions lab.

2021–22 GOALS AND OUTCOMES





Present to various audiences

We gave **40 presentations** to nearly **4,000 participants**. Audiences included public sector policymakers, foundation staff and boards, economic developers, business leaders, workforce developers, community residents, and nonprofit organizations.



Expose leaders to new facts and emerging research

Facts That Matter blog

We published **25 blog pieces** on topics including maternal health, school safety, pandemic learning loss, mental health, cross-sector collaborations, student success, affordable housing, and the economy.



Website utilization

Traffic increased on our website as we continue to drive our audience to robust resources, including nearly **40,000 views** and **more than 20,000 users** from **all 50 states**.



Help decision makers use data

The ncIMPACT Initiative sponsored six **data-focused webinars**.

ARPA Support for Local Governments

Community Engagement • October 26, 2021

NC Association of Regional Councils of Governments Partnership

Land Use Top 10 Training • November 18, 2021

Affordable Housing Webinar for Local Government Leaders • June 15, 2022

myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives

Local Attainment Goal Setting • October 26, 2021

Tips for Engaging Employers in Workforce Initiatives • April 26, 2022

Data Tools to Support Shared Attainment Measures • May 12, 2022



Social Media

We leverage social media to publicize our work, targeting local, state, and community leaders and strategic partners whose work aligns with the ncIMPACT Initiative.

Aside from our content, we share partner content related to community innovations and collaborations. We also utilize social media advertisements to increase followers. We package content for each social media channel, prioritizing high-quality and high-interest images and videos.



Facebook

Followers increased from 1,547 in the first quarter **to 1,821** in the fourth quarter.



Twitter

The ncIMPACT Initiative's use of Twitter as a social media vehicle remained strong. We ended the fiscal year with a total of nearly **879,000 impressions, 2,758 followers, and 14,603 engagements** (likes, tweets, replies).



Instagram

We saw similar growth on Instagram, from **400 followers** in the first quarter **to 636** in the fourth quarter.



LinkedIn

ncIMPACT launched a LinkedIn account in November, ending the year with **621 followers** and **177,211 impressions**.



STRATEGY 3 Create a high-impact culture of innovation in NC communities by supporting relevant practices.

ncIMPACT TELEVISION SERIES



ncIMPACT introduces promising community collaborations to hundreds of thousands of civic innovators (or potential civic innovators) in North Carolina. We highlight partners working together to respond to challenges that are often mirrored in other NC communities. In each episode, we ask, "Could you do this in your community?," and offer online resources to support viewers who choose to do so.

- In partnership with PBS North Carolina and UNC Health, the fourth season of ncIMPACT yielded 13 new episodes and four town halls.
- These episodes drive the series' multi-platform content distribution strategy across broadcast, the website, and social media.
- Content is complemented by a dynamic social media and marketing campaign promoting the series.

For season four of the ncIMPACT series with PBS NC, the team offered a Facebook Live event for two virtual town halls so as we recorded the broadcast, viewers across the state could participate and pose questions to the panelists. Topics for these events included "Workforce Shortages in NC" and "Mental Health Access."



Our strategies



EXPERIMENT

By engaging in on-the-ground projects that are bold, creative, and that tackle the most pressing issues facing communities with new tools and strategies, ncIMPACT will produce measurable improvements in each of NC's 100 counties.



SHARE

By using multiple platforms to communicate the learnings from projects and disseminate relevant tools, ncIMPACT will facilitate the creation of a virtual civic solutions lab across NC.



CREATE

By connecting the learnings from civic solutions delivered across the state, ncIMPACT will support a culture of innovation where leaders experiment, take strategic risks, and collaborate effectively.



SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
ncIMPACT Initiative



ncimpact.org



ncimpact@unc.edu



[ncimpactsog](https://www.facebook.com/ncimpactsog)

