



After Action Report

NC 100 - Rockingham County Design Thinking & Community Engagement Initiative

Reporting Period: February 2024 - May 2025

Executive Summary

About NC 100.

NC 100 is a trusted community anchor and convener serving Rockingham County, North Carolina. Since our founding in 2018, we have worked to build power and capacity in Black, Latinx, and historically marginalized communities so that everyone has access to the resources and relationships needed to thrive.

NC 100 was founded by former residents concerned about demographic and economic decline, particularly the loss of young people and the growth of an aging population. In response, the organization promotes inclusive engagement, economic opportunity, and generational rootedness. It supports grassroots leaders, facilitates community conversations, and builds pathways to generational wealth.

Key strengths include deep trust within the community, diverse cross-sector partnerships, and extensive on-the-ground experience navigating rural equity issues. NC 100's theory of impact centers on economic opportunity, civic infrastructure, and equity, with the goal of anchoring families and shaping a vibrant, inclusive future for Rockingham County.

Its work is bolstered by partnerships with a broad network of allies including funders, healthcare providers, advocacy groups, and statewide organizations such as the Reidsville Area Foundation, Cone Health, NC Counts, NC Black Alliance, and the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, Hispanic Federation, North Carolina Employee Ownership Center, Center for Responsible Lending, Southern Vision Alliance, Southern Partners Fund, Care Share Health Alliance, North Carolina Community Foundation, Piedmont Triad Regional Council, and a host of others. These alliances amplify NC 100's capacity to turn community aspirations into collective action.

Our vision is bold: by 2028, NC 100 aims to expand its reach across the region, growing to one hundred named funding and project partnerships. We exist to strengthen community roots, create opportunities, and make sure families see Rockingham County as a place where they can stay, grow, and lead.

Theory of Impact. We believe that when local residents are equipped with opportunities for leadership, work, and civic participation, they not only stay in their communities—they shape their futures. By anchoring more young families and working-age adults in Rockingham County, we help ensure a vibrant, equitable future for the region.

Our approach focuses on:

- **Economic Opportunity:** Supporting initiatives that create well-paying, sustainable jobs to retain talent and build generational wealth.
- **Civic Infrastructure:** Increasing avenues for meaningful community engagement and leadership, especially for historically excluded populations.
- **Equity and Belonging:** Elevating inclusive practices that address structural barriers and power imbalances.

Why Authentic Engagement Matters

Authentic community engagement in rural areas has always been a challenge—but in the wake of the 2020 pandemic, cascading economic downturns, and chronic underinvestment, the stakes have grown even higher. Rural communities, especially those historically underserved and marginalized, have been stretched thin. Local leaders are often wearing multiple hats, trusted institutions are overburdened or underfunded, and the social fabric—already been frayed by decades of disinvestment—has had to hold together under the weight of new and compounding crises.

Engaging these communities with sincerity and care demands more than just presence; it requires deep trust, long-term commitment, and an understanding that listening must be matched with resourcing. Unfortunately, in many cases, organizations and institutions arrive with good intentions but leave behind little more than surveys, stories, and data—used elsewhere to unlock philanthropic support that rarely flows back into the communities that made it possible. This dynamic, no matter how unintentional, reinforces the extractive practices that have long eroded trust between rural communities and outside entities.

For those working on the ground, there is a persistent tension: how to elevate rural voices, spotlight inequities, and attract resources without commodifying people's experiences. Community members are understandably cautious. They have seen their stories packaged into compelling grant proposals while local conditions remain unchanged. And for community-based organizations operating with limited capacity, every request to "partner" or "engage" must be weighed against the actual benefits for their people, especially when they are already operating beyond their limits just to meet daily needs.

True engagement in this context means showing up differently. It means moving at the speed of trust, investing in relationships before results, and ensuring that any data collected or stories shared are returned to the community as tools for self-determination—not just leverage for outside funding. It also means philanthropy must shift—recognizing that rural equity is not a project or a case study, but a long-term investment in people who have been resilient not because of support, but often despite the lack of it.

Authentic community engagement in rural places is not impossible—but it requires humility, accountability, and a commitment to reciprocity. Only then can rural voices be heard, respected, and resourced in the way they deserve.

Personal Reflection: Katrina Harrison, NC 100 Project Lead

It is with great pride that I reflect on the past year and share that the last 365 days have been a success. At the same time, I feel a deep sadness knowing this phase of the project has come to a soft close. I would hate to see the relationships built, the trust earned, and the momentum created in underserved communities begin to fade. This work—driven by networking, community engagement, and a sincere passion to serve—has been a labor of love and purpose. Four groups are currently awaiting dates and times to begin their sessions in Healthy Eating and Active Living.

I believe deeply in the power of local leadership. As a Rockingham County native and a familiar face in the community, I have been proud to serve as a trusted connector within this initiative. I have been on the ground, present at sessions, coordinating logistics, and investing my energy into relationship-building. With over 15 years of trusted community service, I have helped bridge generational gaps and supported individuals through both structured programming and informal support.

My presence has helped communities feel a sense of ownership and comfort—especially in places like New Saint Paul Baptist Church, where Pastor Joel Clark welcomed me with open arms. After years of hesitation to fully engage with outside initiatives, Rockingham County residents embraced this opportunity with honesty, openness, and commitment. I was invited into personal conversations and planning sessions and became part of their evolving vision for service. This included working alongside key figures like Vanessa Stubbs, with whom I developed a strong and lasting connection—and in October, I had the honor of introducing her to Pastor Clark.

The success of these efforts is a testament to what's possible when trust is built slowly and respectfully. Initiatives like Day of Healing and Neon Night Lights have shown that the Kairos team, alongside community-rooted leaders like me, can make a measurable and meaningful impact.

As someone born and raised in Rockingham County with a heart committed to service, I am more convinced than ever that this work must continue. However, in order to sustain this progress, compensation through a full-time, community-focused position is not just helpful, it is essential. The only way to ensure continued success is to invest in local leadership that is already trusted, already trained, and already embedded in the fabric of the community.

I remain committed and hopeful, and I look forward to continuing this important work alongside the partners and residents who made this year so impactful.

Project Overview

1. What is Design Thinking?

This is a process that helps a group of people come together to address shared challenges/think about “how might we” solve a problem together. This process is human centered, which means people that are experiencing the problem are at the center of finding a solution.

Groups find consensus using immersion, ideation, and prototyping to develop ideas, ground truth needs for solutions to long standing problems, pilot ideas with lean models and adapt.

NC 100 agreed to find a community focused contractor to support learnings in partnership with Cone Health in February of 2024 using the following process, hoping to convene multiple stakeholders across the county.

Our Modified Design Thinking Process:



2. Expanding Our Circle with Local Leadership: Adding Katrina to the NC 100 Team

Katrina’s inclusion in the NC 100 circle has significantly strengthened our local footprint. With a legacy of service to nearly 5,000 unique individuals across Rockingham County, Katrina brings unparalleled credibility and lived expertise. Her presence has deepened our alignment with local priorities and enhanced our trust and connection with community members.

Her goals in partnership with Cone Health were to:

- Support community-led planning and healing experiences with 4-5 engaged teams across the geography of Rockingham County.
- Build capacity within local faith-based institutions, community groups and non-traditional leaders to better engage and build trust with mainstream practitioners both county and statewide.

- Strengthening partnerships between residents, churches, healthcare providers, and other organizations.



Her approach began by convening diverse local voice-residents, youth, business owners, and members of the Rockingham County health collaborative—to identify barriers to health and brainstorm fresh ways to talk about nutrition, exercise, and community wellness.

Through two major pilot events and more than six community presentations, NC 100 introduced over **375** unique individuals to the principles and practice of Design Thinking.

These sessions helped residents see themselves as problem-solvers and co-designers of community solutions—strengthening local capacity for change.

3. Community Partnership Development: To whom did we reach out?

We engaged five key community institutions with varying levels of involvement, laying the groundwork for deeper participation in Phase II, should we be involved.

Partner	Level of Engagement	Status
New Saint Paul Baptist Church (Eden)	HIGH	Ongoing activities and leadership expansion
Unaffiliated Movement Group (County Wide)	Moderate	Ongoing activities
Benaja United Holiness Church (Reidsville)	Moderate	Capacity Scheduling constraints
Eden/Wentworth Senior Group	Moderate	Capacity Scheduling constraints
New Reidsville Housing Authority (Reidsville)	Disrupted	High initial interest; awaiting staff replacement
Faith Harvest Church	Emerging	Initial hesitations, increasing interest post-event
Bluestone Baptist Church	Emerging	Initial hesitations, increasing interest post-event

4. Data sets for the needs:

As part of this project, NC 100 [offered community attitude surveys](#) to 103 people across Rockingham County between October 2024 and May 2025.

Participants shared their insights during 160 days of data collection—capturing both quantitative data (location, gender, demographics) and qualitative feedback about local health priorities, trust in services, and ideas for future initiatives.

This set of data (below) is designed to turn those insights into actionable evidence for Cone, RCHC and other community leaders, inform future needs assessments, and guide contributions to the upcoming Rockingham County Community Health Assessment (CHNA).

[Open here](#)



5. Bragging on our Community

Three pilot events provided a multi-generational entry point for dialogue and relationship building:

-  **Neon Light Nights** - Broad community conversation starter that welcomed all ages.
-  **Team Kairos**- Served as the “crown jewel,” bringing youth and middle-aged adults into design thinking and healthy living activities.
-  **Senior Modified Dance Event** - Built trust and broke generational barriers by engaging older residents in a unique, inclusive way.

Before, during and after these events, 103 people responded to surveys that helped shape and evaluate the effectiveness of our work. Engagement intentionally targeted different community segments and included faith groups, health providers, and local partners.

The Neon Light Celebration: A Pilot for Community-Led Health Dialogue



To bring these conversations to life and introduce residents to this kind of coaching, NC 100 hosted a pilot event in October 2024, the Neon Light Celebration in downtown Reidsville. This event combined fun, visibility, and inspiration by featuring local food vendors, interactive activities, and a keynote from national motivational speaker Tina Moore.

More than three hundred people attended, lighting up the streets with glow gear and neon colors as they walked, danced, and celebrated wellness together. This high-energy gathering demonstrated that health promotion can be joyful and community-centered—breaking the mold of traditional health fairs and one-way presentations.

The Neon Light Celebration proved to be more than a single event; it became a model for community engagement. Since October 2024, smaller-scale replications have been organized in pockets across the county, from neighborhood parks to church parking lots, sparking ongoing conversations about how Rockingham County can become a healthier place for all its residents.

However, we know this is just the beginning. The momentum created by this pilot needs further development and investment to deepen its reach and create sustainable change. With additional support, NC 100 and its partners can expand the initiative, host more events, and continue building partnerships with the Rockingham County Health Collaborative and other local stakeholders.

New Saint Paul Baptist Church “Team Kairos”

During her tenure as the coordinator of the Cone Health-supported Design Thinking project, Katrina Harrison of NC 100 played a pivotal role in guiding New Saint Paul Baptist Church through a process of discovery, collaboration, and transformation. She conducted spent over one hundred hours with planning or executing “think tank” gatherings, each one becoming a trusted space for honest dialogue, creative problem-solving, and shared leadership development.

From the very first session, Katrina emphasized that this was a process owned by the participants themselves. She encouraged church members to speak candidly about their needs and hopes, creating a culture where honesty was not only welcomed but celebrated. Over time, natural leaders emerged from the group—leaders

who not only shaped the conversations but committed to carrying the work forward beyond the project's formal end.

The core team met weekly after Sunday services for 6-8 weeks, creating a consistent rhythm of strategic reflection and planning. These sessions quickly became known as the "think tank gatherings," a name that reflected their focus on ideation and collaborative problem-solving.

Under Katrina's guidance, the team:

- Formalized its group identity and established a commitment to continue working together.
- Built high levels of engagement, with participants returning each week even when attendance fluctuated.
- Developed a strong sense of ownership, taking responsibility for event design, resource mobilization, and community outreach.
- Identified a need to explore models from other states, including examples of how communities' access federal and philanthropic funding to address health equity challenges.
- Discussed the importance of aligning with partners and associations to ensure shared values and coordinated approaches.

Katrina also introduced the group to the Food as Medicine framework, exploring innovative strategies like a mobile vegetable bus and educational outreach to promote nutrition as a form of preventive care. As part of the design process, the group hosted two pilot events that allowed participants to co-create the experience and test their ideas in real time. Members worked together to secure resources for meals, supplies, and incentives—often leveraging community partnerships and in-kind support. These pilot efforts became a powerful demonstration of what is possible when a community takes collective action.

The most celebrated outcome of this work was the **"Day of Healing"** event, which drew record attendance and offered a full spectrum of physical, emotional, and social support.

Highlights included:

- Fresh produce distribution coordinated with Pine Knot Farms
- On-site health screenings provided by Cone Health
- A healthy community meal prepared by Chef Dulce of Slice 325

Opportunities for connection across generations and open conversations about health, healing, and future priorities. This event not only addressed immediate needs but also built momentum and enthusiasm for continued collaboration.



Wentworth Senior Engagement - Modified Neon Lights Event

Katrina also led a unique engagement with a group of unaffiliated seniors in Wentworth who regularly gather for monthly bingo nights. Recognizing the potential to build community health momentum with this group, Katrina introduced them to a modified version of NC 100's **Neon Lights event** from October 2024 – an initiative designed to spark conversations about healthy living and collaborative problem-solving through the Design Thinking model.

The session drew **sixty-four people (including 40 seniors)** who participated in a light, accessible workout tailored for their needs, followed by an interactive orientation to the Design Thinking framework. This introduction created space for participants to identify health and wellness challenges they face and begin brainstorming solutions in a supportive, low-pressure environment.



The event was intentionally designed to break down barriers to participation, using familiar settings and social connections to create trust. By merging physical activity with collaborative dialogue, Katrina and NC 100 demonstrated how health promotion can be both fun and empowering. The seniors expressed enthusiasm for continuing this work and exploring new ways to stay active, signaling strong potential for sustained collaboration and community-led idea generation.

This engagement represents an important step toward bridging generational and organizational divides, ensuring that Wentworth's seniors are not only included in health initiatives but are positioned as co-designers of future activities that support healthy aging and vibrant community life.

6. What have we learned?

This work is building capacity for further investment.

Capacity building (equipment, funding, knowledge) emerged as an unexpected benefit, enabling partners to continue work beyond the project's original scope. NC 100 and Cone Health deepened their relationship as partners in Rockingham County Health Champions, which enhanced our organizational footprint and ability to engage with other mainstream partners.

We can also see:

- a. **New St. Paul Baptist Church** (Eden) emerged as a model of deep engagement and leadership development, with tangible outcomes such as senior pastor Dr. Joel Clark joining UNC Rockingham's board. His nonprofit Focus securing thousands of new funding for commercial food storage equipment.
- b. **Launch of the One Less Campaign:** A Cone Health driven and peer-led diabetes education with bi-monthly meetings and two annual community events, building new leadership capacity.
- c. Resources across NC have discovered that Rockingham County is a place to build relationships and make investments. **SLICE 325, a statewide nonprofit** founded in 2017 as a socially responsible initiative that provides culinary education classes to individuals and families. Through educational instruction classes, individuals and families are able to learn valuable skills and techniques that aim to reduce the financial stress of preparing healthy meals while allowing them to explore the diversity of food.

Community Investment and Trust Building take time.

One of the most significant takeaways from this project is the central importance of community trust, especially in Rockingham County, where skepticism toward outside initiatives has historically been high. Rather than imposing a top-down program design, the project prioritized investment in trusted relationships and collaboration with local leaders and residents.

This trust-centered approach sparked engagement across a wide spectrum of community members, from youth to seniors, demonstrating that meaningful participation is possible when residents feel heard and respected. Activities such as healthy eating and active living events, senior-youth partnerships, and mental health initiatives helped foster a sense of shared purpose.

Moments of joy—like the October 2024 dance event and the spring gathering where seniors danced with children—created energy that transcended program coordination and reinforced cross-generational connection. The positive feedback from these events indicates there is growing appetite for community-centered, interactive activities that blend fun, wellness, and meaningful dialogue.

Sustaining Relationships requires commitment and thoughtful transition.

Another core learning is that strong partnerships require intentional care during transitions. As relationships such as leadership passing from NC 100 to new organizational contacts, community members must not feel abandoned or exploited.

This project surfaced an important reminder: the work of grassroots community members has value and should not be expected to happen without support or compensation. Maintaining consistency and honoring

the time and energy of participants is essential to avoid falling back into extractive practices that have historically bred mistrust.

Early signs are promising—local partners like Ms. Mary Martin in Stoneville are actively building relationships to keep momentum going—but there is a clear need for a “soft handoff” strategy to maintain continuity and ensure the community remains engaged through implementation under Cone, UNC, and local government partners.

Our Participants Know and Learn Together using multiple disciplines.

We observed 4 learning styles and journeys from this project. Here’s how our partners learned and shared:



1. **Learning from people sharing what they know:** The wisdom passed down from families and ancestors.
2. **Expressing Through Creativity:** They told stories, made art, and used music to show what they felt. Creative acts help us understand our own experiences and help others connect with them too.
3. **Seeing the Bigger Picture:** We felt they noticed patterns, asked great questions, and trusted experiment or experiment’s sake.
4. **DT Thinking was Putting Knowledge into Action:** We took what we have learned – from experience, patterns, and reflection – and try it out in the real world. Each step helps us keep learning and improving as we go.

A Call for Partnership.

This project has shown that when you give residents the space and tools to imagine solutions, they will show up—and they will bring their friends and families with them. We believe that with more resources and collaboration, Rockingham County can build a strong culture of health where healthy eating and active living are community norms. We leave this project satisfied with our contribution with some key closing messages:

- Consistency Builds Trust: Weekly meetings helped create strong bonds and better results.
- Flexibility is Key: Adjusting schedules and incentives allowed leadership to grow naturally.
- Start Where Energy Is: Focusing on engaged partners like New Saint Paul accelerated impact.
- Partnerships Must Be Sustained: Avoiding abrupt transitions and ensuring fair compensation for community leaders is critical.

Next Steps might include:

- Continue to resource and coach existing leaders while onboarding new teams.
- Expand partnerships with Black farmers and health providers to deepen impact.
- Explore virtual coordination tools to engage faith communities with full calendars.
- Revisit partially engaged partners in Phase II with flexible options for entry.
- Formalizing a toolkit based on New Saint Paul's model for other churches to use.
- Developing a sustainability plan with local and philanthropic partners to fund and expand this work.

Gratitude & Acknowledgments from NC 100:

Residents have shared their priorities, and now they must see the results of their participation through concrete initiatives and investments. This work would not have been possible without the dedication of local residents, faith leaders, and volunteers who showed up, shared their voices, and led the way.

We also offer our deep gratitude to The Duke Endowment and Cone Health for their trust and partnership. Your investment helped turn ideas into action and gave Rockingham County residents the tools and support they need to shape a healthier, more equitable future for their community. This means developing programs that are relevant, meaningful, and clearly tied to community feedback, so participants can point to outcomes and say, "This is what we helped create." Stakeholders expect that the forthcoming comprehensive report will offer more specific, actionable recommendations to guide this next phase of work.

Overall, this project reinforced the belief that trust, consistency, and tangible results are the foundation of sustainable community change. By investing in relationships, honoring the contributions of grassroots partners, and following through with visible outcomes, this initiative has positioned itself to deepen impact and foster long-term collaboration in Rockingham County.

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