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Food benefits platform used to address food insecurity within local communities

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Food insecurity is at an all-time high, with one in eight Americans reporting some level of uncertainty about where their next meal will come from. In Wake County, NC, 12 percent of the population is considered food insecure, which includes more than 37,000 children under the age of 18.

To help, Wake County Government, NC Cooperative Extension – Wake County Center and community partners have teamed up with [Tangelo](#), a national food benefits platform, to create, distribute and evaluate food benefits for at-risk members of the community.

Working with Tangelo, Wake County specified eligibility criteria, designed food benefits and enrolled members of the community onto the Tangelo Mobile App. Once on the app, residents completed a social risk screening, and then were able to redeem their nutritious food benefits and have fresh, culturally relevant food delivered to their doorstep twice a month.

The county plugged in local supplier [The Produce Box](#) to provide local, fresh produce, which Tangelo is delivering directly to member's doorstep — helping to address core issues households face accessing nutritious food.

“Many of the participating households reside in food deserts — places where it's tough to find fresh, affordable food,” said Wake County Board of Commissioners Chair Matt Calabria. “This new program will allow us to overcome food deserts, transportation barriers and other hurdles that have historically prevented people from accessing nutritious food. The healthy food will come directly to them.”

Five-hundred households are taking part in this pilot program through February 2022, with options to continue. Families who have limited transportation and are experiencing food insecurity are eligible for the program.

“We are thrilled to be working with Wake County and partners to successfully deliver nutritious foods while also identifying diet deficiencies and barriers within their communities,” said Jeremy Cooley, founder and CEO of Tangelo. “This is the first step in building a sustainable food future for Wake County, and we look forward to continuing our work here.”

“The holidays can be stressful for everyone, especially the most vulnerable residents in our community,” said Courtney Tellefsen, CEO of The Produce Box. “This partnership is a natural extension of what we've been doing for 13 years across North Carolina and helps support our local farmers and deliver fresh fruits and vegetables to families who need them into well into the new year.”

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