



Coalition Policy Agenda — 2025

Mission: Healthy Meck exists to serve the community by promoting healthy living for better health outcomes for all residents of Mecklenburg County.

Vision: We envision thriving communities within Mecklenburg County where every individual has access to information, resources and opportunities that support their optimal health and well-being.

Access to Healthy Food

Objective: Increase access to affordable, nutritious, culturally appropriate food.

Action 1: Promote local initiatives that increase access to fresh produce.

Action 2: Promote nutrition education programs that support culturally appropriate, healthy food choices.

Action 3: Promote initiatives that increase affordability of healthy food.

Action 4: Support collaborative efforts among local organizations and other interest-holders that strengthen healthy food access.

Action 5: Align Healthy Meck with advocacy efforts on issues that impact healthy food access.

Strategic Initiative: Healthy Meck Blue Tablecloth Initiative (See Blue Tablecloth Initiative Plan)

Background: Mecklenburg County's most recent Community Health Assessment found that 8 out of 10 deaths in 2023 were attributable to chronic disease. The incidence of diabetes and hypertension has been increasing in the county. Data confirms that health outcomes in the county vary by racial and ethnic groups, as well as by educational level and socio-economic status. Chronic health conditions are worsened by poor nutrition and impacted by social drivers of health. Mapping of the social vulnerability index (SVI), a tool used by disaster planners, confirms that neighbors experience widely different levels of social vulnerability depending on where they live. Community conversations in partner neighborhoods located in lower SVI areas identified barriers to accessing healthy food. Working with neighbors to identify efforts that can be tailored to different social and cultural contexts is essential to ensure equitable outcomes.

Identifying Interest-Holders: Community members, seniors, SNAP recipients, food pantry clients, volunteers and participants in community gardens, Farmers markets vendors/staff/volunteers,

Mecklenburg County Health Department, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department, Atrium Health, Novant Health, non-profits supporting food and nutrition security, Extension agents, grocery stores and food distributors, restaurants, catering businesses, culinary guild, day cares, schools and parent-teacher-student organizations, colleges and universities, local government and elected officials, faith community members, business community members, health professionals, community health workers, lay health workers.

Engaging Interest-Holders: Host community conversations to gather input from neighbors about healthy food access, attend community meetings, meet with faith community leaders about the Blue Tablecloth initiative.

Access to Health Information

Objective: Increase access to information that is understandable, relatable, and culturally appropriate.

Action 1: Promote local initiatives that strengthen information access.

Action 2: Support collaborative efforts between local organizations and other interest-holders that strengthen information access.

Action 3: Align Healthy Meck with advocacy efforts on issues that impact information access.

Strategic Initiative: Healthy Meck Network of Neighbors Initiative (See Network of Neighbors Initiative Plan)

Background: At the kick-off event of Healthy Meck, participants shared that despite significant health-promoting resources in the area, neighbors have many challenges accessing them. Subsequent community meetings in partner neighborhoods confirmed that many neighbors lacked awareness of what resources existed, which ones were trustworthy, and how to navigate them. Seniors and members of the Latine community are particularly vulnerable to informational barriers. The information workgroup has been using a community health literacy framework to develop its efforts.

Identifying Interest-Holders: Community members (especially seniors and members of the Latine community, and those that are connected to them), Mecklenburg County Health Department, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department, Atrium Health, Novant Health, community non-profits and grassroots organizations, day cares, schools and parent-teacher-student organizations, colleges and universities, local government and elected officials, Extension agents, library workers, faith community members, business community members, health professionals, community health workers, lay health workers.

Engaging Interest-Holders: Survey of community-based organizations, develop promotional materials to engage community members, attend community meetings, outreach to leaders and community influencers.

Access to Community Support

Objective: Increase residents' ability to take community-based, health-promoting actions and to equitably access support services when needed.

Action 1: Promote initiatives that build community capacity for community health workers.

Action 2: Promote local initiatives that strengthen neighborhood social cohesion and increase community engagement.

Action 3: Support collaborative efforts between local organizations and other interest-holders that strengthen neighborhood ecosystems.

Action 4: Align Healthy Meck with advocacy efforts on issues that impact and build capacity within neighborhoods.

Strategic Initiative: Healthy Meck Weaving Strength Initiative (See Weaving Strength Initiative Plan)

Background: Healthy Meck's efforts have been informed by conversations with neighbors in five partner neighborhoods in North Mecklenburg. Three of these neighborhoods are historically black with many senior neighbors. Two of these neighborhoods are predominantly Latine, with a mix of ages and families. In community meetings, neighbors expressed a desire for efforts that would encourage social engagement, mutual support, and intergenerational connection. Likewise, leaders of neighborhood organizations have expressed the desire to build their capacity to support and advocate for their neighbors. The community support workgroup has approached its work through the lens of a connected community approach and promotes efforts that support neighborhood ecosystems and their ability to advance community well-being.

Identifying Interest-Holders: Community members, seniors, Mecklenburg County Health Department, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department, Atrium Health, Novant Health, North Carolina Community Health Worker Association, Extension agents, health sector nonprofits, community-based non-profits and grassroots organizations, day cares, schools and parent-teacher-student organizations, colleges and universities, local government and elected officials, faith community members, business community members, health professionals, community health workers, lay health workers.

Engaging Interest-Holders: Host advocacy training, host and promote capacity-building trainings, host and participate in networking opportunities that foster interorganizational collaboration, attend community meetings, outreach to leaders and community influencers.

Approved by Healthy Meck Steering Committee 06/13/2025