

The background of the entire page is a red-tinted photograph. It shows a person's hands holding a white sign with handwritten text. The text on the sign includes "Campaign", "Raise", "Min. Wage", and "Regional State". The person's face is partially visible in the lower-left corner, looking towards the right.

EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA LOCAL STRATEGY

2026



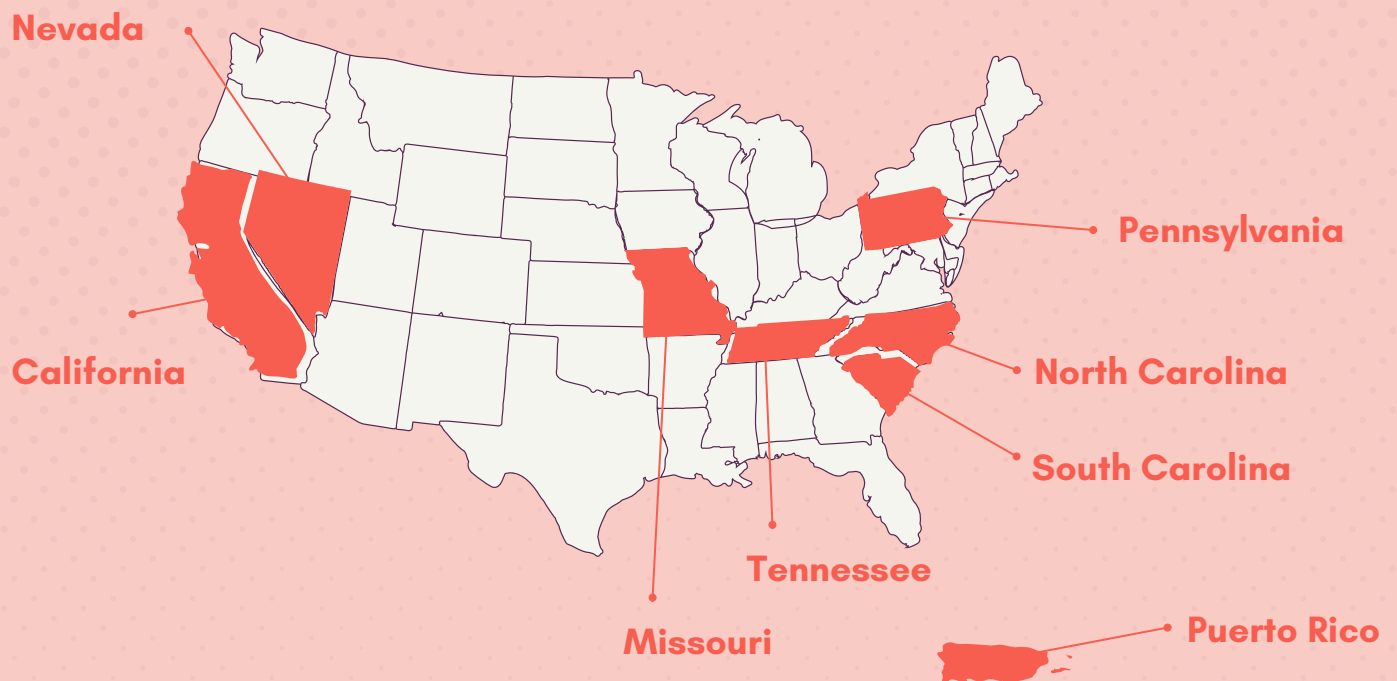
AMPLIFY FUND

NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP

Amplify Fund is a place-based pooled fund that supports historically marginalized communities in maintaining and building decision-making power.

We do this by funding community organizing groups working on land justice, economic justice, holistic wellbeing, and human dignity issues.

Each of our funding places has a unique historic, economic, political, and social context, so our grantmaking strategy is tailored to each place.



Local Strategy Design

In 2025, after committing to extend Amplify Fund 10 years beyond the original 4-year lifespan, we decided to update our local grantmaking strategies.

36 interviews

In Eastern North Carolina, we surveyed and interviewed 36 leaders from our grantee organizations, other movement organizations, and value-aligned, local foundations. We asked about the most pressing challenges in the region, progressive solutions to those problems, the ecosystem of organizations and leaders working on those solutions, and capacities needed to achieve those solutions.

8 advisors

With that data, we identified eight local strategy advisors, two of which were grantees. Most of those advisors came together on October 27, 2025 to make decisions on what Amplify Fund should focus on in Eastern North Carolina for the next five years and provided written feedback on the final strategy. Those decisions, along with important local context, can be found on the next few pages.



Heba Atwa
NC Budget and Tax Center



Kyna Bryant-Hardy
Partners in Community



Crystal Cavalier-Keck
7 Directions of Service



Yesenia Cuello
NC FIELD



Tanaya Suddreth Lynch
Cypress Fund



Josh McClenney
Hive Fund



Courtney Patterson
Blueprint NC



Mario Vargas
Campaign for Migrant Worker Justice

Local Context

EASTERN
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Eastern North Carolina, comprising 41 counties in the Sandhills, Lower Cape Fear, Crystal Coast, Inner Banks, and Outer Banks regions, is home to the largest Black and Indigenous population in the state. The Lumbee Tribe, which makes up 38.5% of the population in Robeson County, is the largest tribe in North Carolina, the largest tribe east of the Mississippi River, and the ninth largest in the nation. And, according to the 2020 census, all counties with Black populations over 50% are located in the east. The reason for this is, in part, a legacy of slavery. Eastern North Carolina was part of the “Black Belt,” known for its highly fertile, dark soil. Rich white landowners used slave labor to cultivate tobacco and cotton on the land, driving up the Black population. →

The tobacco industry produced significant wealth and led to the creation of several regional foundations including the Duke Endowment, Golden LEAF Foundation, the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. North Carolina remains the largest producer of tobacco in the United States and currently relies on the exploitation of H-2A Temporary Agricultural Workers coming primarily from Mexico, helping make the Latine population the fastest growing demographic in the state. ↓

However, political power is hard to come by for justice-minded communities. In 2011, Republicans gained complete control of the General Assembly for the first time in a century. One year later, a Republican governor was elected, forming a new Republican supermajority. The swift rightward shift has come with significant voter suppression. In 2023, the new GOP majority on the North Carolina Supreme Court narrowed the list of qualifying photo IDs acceptable for voting in the state. And in 2025, a federal court ruled that North Carolina’s new congressional gerrymander, which rewrites two districts in eastern North Carolina shifting tens of thousands of Black voters into configurations that dilute their influence, can be used for the 2026 elections. In order to push back against these anti-democratic efforts, join Amplify Fund in providing support to the following issues lifted up by our Eastern North Carolina local strategy advisors. ■

Other industries have recently come to overshadow tobacco, however. In the early 1980s, North Carolina promoted a corporate production model resulting in the rise of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Today, the state is second only to Iowa in pork production and fourth in chicken production. CAFOs have had devastating consequences on the water, air, and soil quality due to poor waste management and pollution. It was exactly this form of pollution, targeted at communities of color, that led to protests in 1982 in Warren County, North Carolina, which ultimately birthed the environmental justice movement. That movement continues to hold corporations accountable and fight for just recovery after hurricanes. ←

Grantmaking Priorities

EASTERN
NORTH CAROLINA

Land and Housing

Coastal counties are some of the fastest growing in North Carolina, causing a significant housing gap. Coupling that with heirs' property disputes, corporate development, and buildings collapsing because of climate change, land and housing are becoming unaffordable. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations working on alternative models like community land trusts, reparations, greater regulation of development and corporate landlord practices, and protections for people that own their homes.

Commercial Agriculture Labor Practices

There is extensive evidence of illegal recruitment practices, labor trafficking, wage theft, retaliation and blacklisting, inhumane housing, harsh working conditions, physical abuse, and union busting by agriculture companies that use seasonal or migrant workers. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations unionizing farmworkers to increase minimum wages and improve labor protections, establishing worker co-ops, and advocating for more accountability.

Climate Crises

Because of the geography of Eastern North Carolina, the region is regularly devastated by hurricanes; however, it is the ineffectual and inequitable government response to recovery, in addition to corporate polluters degrading the environment, that harms local communities. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations using a Just Transition framework, trying to pass and implement stronger regulations, working on mitigation strategies and resiliency hubs, and adequately funding recovery.

Public Schools

Despite two landmark court cases (Leandro I, Leandro II) affirming every child's state constitutional right to a sound, basic education, in 2026, the North Carolina supreme court overturned the decision and continues to promote vouchers for private schools. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations demanding rural investment, challenging income tax cuts, and continuing legal action around Leandro.

Land
Justice

Economic
Justice

Grantmaking Priorities

EASTERN
NORTH CAROLINA

Holistic
Wellbeing

Access to Healthcare

Since 2010, eight rural hospitals have closed in North Carolina: five in counties with high shares of Black residents, and two in counties with high shares of Latine residents. Medicaid and Medicare cuts are putting even more rural hospitals at risk. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations bringing culturally responsive healthcare to rural areas, advocating for healthcare for all, addressing mental health, and pressuring the state to meet people's basic needs.

Political Representation

Aside from significant corporate and conservative representation amongst elected officials, for decades, North Carolina lawmakers have used a "gut-and-amend" strategy to quickly pass legislation without public comment by changing an entire bill's language in committee. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations demanding community input, limiting corporate political donations, and challenging redistricting.

Human
Dignity

Food Insecurity

Despite its robust agricultural economy, eastern North Carolina has a high concentration of "food deserts and "food swamps." Access to healthy food is also limited because commercially grown produce is sprayed with pesticides making it unsafe to eat, locally produced food is overlooked in favor of large-scale industrial sourcing, and there is less farmland because of development. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations working towards food sovereignty which includes food cooperatives, resources for small farmers especially Black and Latine farmers, zoning that maintains farmland, expansion of SNAP, and farmers markets.

Criminalization

In 2025, House Bill 318 passed requiring local law enforcement authorities throughout North Carolina to work more closely with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The state now ranks in the top 10 for the highest number of cooperation agreements between local agencies and ICE. Local advisors recommend Amplify Fund support organizations tying the liberation of immigrants to the liberation of Black and indigenous people, in addition to challenging the criminal justice system, supporting previously incarcerated individuals, and providing know your rights training.

Capacity Building

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When asked what kinds of technical assistance or capacity building support local organizing groups most need to deepen the impact of their work, local strategy advisors identified the following priority areas:

1. **Fundraising** support specifically focused on storytelling and grant writing, plus information about institutional funders or individual donors interested in North Carolina.
2. **Coalition facilitation** to aid in overall governance, decision-making, strategic planning, conflict resolution, and collaborative fundraising.
3. **Organizing training** on different approaches to organizing, including strategies and tactics, in addition to funding for organizers, movement leaders, and their organizations.
4. **Communication tools** like Canva, mass texting services, PowerPoint, and media resources.
5. **Leadership development** resources for board members and emerging leaders.

As long as Amplify Fund continues to meet its fundraising goals, we will provide no-strings-attached, general operating grants to organizations in Eastern North Carolina working on the problems and solutions named by local leaders in this strategy paper. We will also offer capacity building grants related to the priority areas listed above.

We encourage our fellow funders to join our pooled fund, or fund Eastern North Carolina organizations directly, to support long-term change in the region.

If you have any questions about our local strategy process or would like to further discuss our final grantmaking strategy in Eastern North Carolina, please contact amplify@nfg.org