

INCREASING BROADBAND ACCESS for Agricultural Workers in NC

Agricultural workers in NC lack reliable Internet access, limiting their access to essential services.

North Carolina's Agricultural Industry



ranked 6th nationally for migrant agricultural workers



90,000 agricultural workers and their families



\$111.1B contributed to NC in 2024

Key Agricultural Worker Findings



1 IN 4

lacked consistent internet access



84.9% rely on cellular network internet



93.9% are dependent on mobile phone devices

Broadband Availability in Agricultural Worker Housing Locations

- 13% of registered agricultural worker housing locations are missing from broadband serviceable location maps compared to 1% statewide.
- Registered agricultural worker housing locations are 4.5xs more likely to not have any available broadband options in NC.
- Approximately 36% of mapped housing sites lacked full broadband service compared to 8% statewide.



Farmworkers face an added layer of barriers to broadband access due to:



language barriers



rural temporary housing



lack of broadband infrastructure



affordability concerns

As a result, they are affected by inconsistent internet access, affecting:



health access



emergency communication



behavioral health services

Efforts to Improve Broadband Access

In 2025, the NC Farmworker Health Program supported:

3,012 agricultural workers and

53 community health workers with access through Hotspot Lending Program through

379 available mobile hotspots.

587 agricultural workers with access through

14 ruggedized routers

6 mobile clinic mobile routers



113

agricultural workers were provided with internet access (via fiber, satellite) through Migrant Housing Internet Connectivity Reimbursement with the Agromedicine Institute

Due to funding constraints, these programs closed. The need for broadband access in the agricultural community remains.



Representation in Digital Inclusion Planning Efforts

Out of 30 county digital inclusion plans that cover 50 of the 100 counties in NC:

0% included agricultural workers

7% included agricultural workers organizations in their planning and development

13% notes agriculture as a topic of interest

40% noted agricultural technologies as a topic of interest

To find out who your local Council of Government (COG) is go to: <https://ncarcog.org/regional-councils/>



Additional Resources



County Broadband Profiles



NC Broadband Data & Resources



NC State Plan



NC Tech Resource Hub

References

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