



2025 IMPACT REPORT

Toward Zero Waste

Toward Zero Waste NC
PO Box 4413
Cary, NC 27519

Toward Zero Waste is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting waste-conscious living in North Carolina through inspiration, education, and action.

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2019 when I attended my first Toward Zero Waste (TZW) impact meeting, I learned that Wake County's only landfill is projected to reach capacity around 2040, and there is no room to build a new one. I knew working with TZW meant a chance for progress. Just this year, we were able to launch two new programs to divert waste from the landfill, and TZW hopes to grow these programs in coming years.

TZW's first new initiative, the Compostable Tray Project, began in January when we partnered with PTAs from nine Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) schools to purchase compostable fiber trays for the cafeterias, in lieu of polystyrene trays currently provided by the school system. The goal of this initiative is to offset and divert a portion of the thousands of trays sent to the landfill each day from WCPSS schools, reducing the overall impact to our local landfill.

Our second new initiative, SHARE (Stop Hunger and Restore Earth) is a food recovery program with WCPSS to capture wholesome leftovers from Child Nutrition Services and feed students, rather than landfills. The program was launched in March, beginning with 8 elementary schools, and will be running in 27 schools, both elementary and middle, as of January 2026.

As we continue to see the Makers' Reusable Bag Project and our community composting initiatives grow, we also hope to see our new school-based programs made available in every WCPSS school. With our organizational successes to date, and our collective power in numbers, we are grateful to the TZW community for their continued support to make this happen.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Liebowitz
Executive Director

MISSION & VISION

MISSION

To promote waste-conscious living in North Carolina through inspiration, education, and action.

VISION

Toward Zero Waste envisions a state free of unnecessary waste, where individuals, families, businesses, and local governments are mindful of the resources they use, the waste they create, and emissions they produce; where reuse, refill, repair, composting, renewable energy, and zeroing emissions are the norm. We see a North Carolina where Zero Waste is no longer a concept, but the culture of our community!



IMPACT: COMMUNITY FOOD WASTE COMPOSTING

Toward Zero Waste has partnered with local organizations and municipalities to provide compost drop-off sites in Cary and Raleigh. These sites provide community members with a free, local option to divert food waste from the landfill. In 2025, 169,000 pounds were saved from landfills.



149,000

**POUNDS SAVED FROM
2 CARY SITES IN 2025**

20,000

**POUNDS SAVED FROM
MIDTOWN FARMERS
MARKET IN 2025**



IMPACT: COMPOSTABLE TRAYS PROJECT

Toward Zero Waste has partnered with PTAs from nine WCPSS schools to purchase compostable fiber lunch trays to replace the polystyrene trays currently used.

This initiative reduces daily cafeteria waste and lessens the impact on the local landfill. Participating schools compost the trays through a private hauler. This program is made possible by funding from the Lonnie and Carol Poole Family Foundation.

ANNUAL TRAYS

475,000

KEPT OUT OF THE LANDFILL



IMPACT: SHARE FOOD RECOVERY PROGRAM

In 2025, we launched SHARE, a school-based food recovery program created in partnership with the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS). The program began as a pilot in 8 schools and, due to its success, expanded to 27 schools.

SHARE allows schools to collect approved, unopened food items that would otherwise be discarded and redistribute them to students. It's a simple, sustainable system that fights hunger, reduces waste, and teaches children the value of sharing.

Over 40 WCPSS schools remain on the waiting list. TZW continues to work diligently to seek funding, with a goal of being able to offer SHARE to any interested school in WCPSS.

27

SCHOOLS

199,000

FOOD ITEMS SAVED
FROM LANDFILLS
ANNUALLY



SHARE MEDIA
SPOTLIGHT



IMPACT: REUSABLE BAG PROJECT

In 2025, the Makers welcomed and trained several new sewists. As a result, we expanded our monthly meetups to three different sessions and increased our annual bag goal to 600, which is well within reach.

Finally we strengthened our relationship with the Cary Farmers Market by adding new vendors to our bag distribution roster and tabling several times over the course of the year.



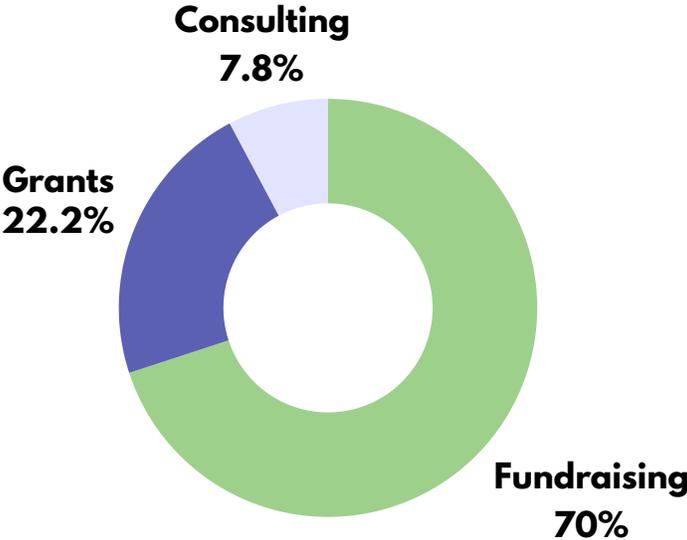
600
ANNUAL BAGS

20%
INCREASE FROM 2024

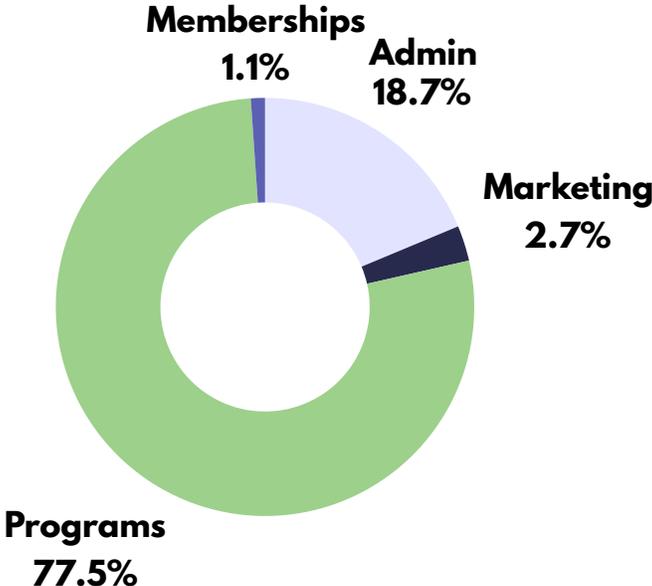


FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

REVENUE BY TYPE



EXPENSES BY TYPE



LOOKING AHEAD

GOALS

- **Secure funding and expand the SHARE food recovery program to serve additional schools currently on the SHARE waiting list.**
- **Expand the Compostable Tray Project to three schools that have requested involvement.**
- **Continue to support Cary and Midtown Farmers Market food waste composting drop-offs.**
- **Provide enrichment to Makers' Group and expand donations of reusable bags beyond the Cary Farmers Market.**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OUR BOARD



Kathleen Liebowitz
Executive Director



Shriya Nanugonda
Youth Advisor



Leigh Williams
Co-Founder



Dargan Gilmore
Co-Founder



Dawn Comfort
Treasurer



Casey Pickering
Secretary

THANK YOU

We could not have done this without your support.

**We look forward to another year of working
toward a zero waste future.**

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