

The GROW Project

"These trainings made me feel seen. As a woman living with HIV, I finally feel like my voice matters."

ABOUT US

MISSION STATEMENT

The North Carolina AIDS Action Network improves the lives of people living with HIV & AIDS and affected communities through outreach and public education, policy advocacy, and community-building to increase visibility and mutual support of people living with HIV & AIDS throughout our state.

VISION STATEMENT

The North Carolina AIDS Action Network envisions a state that values the voices, knowledge, and life experiences of people living with HIV & AIDS; where HIV education and healthcare are accessible, fact-based, compassionate, and without moral judgment; and where people living with HIV & AIDS live in a community of mutual support and are treated as whole individuals worthy of love, respect, and dignity.

NEXT STEPS & LESSONS LEARNED

As we move into the final stretch of the GROW Project (July through September 2025), our commitment remains rooted in deepening community impact and building something that will outlast this funding cycle. We are not just closing out a grant, we are building a movement that is community-led, intergenerational, and justice-centered. In the next few months, we are focused on:

- Training at least 20 new advocates with a focus on rural communities, young people, and women of color
- Finalizing South Carolina's HIV Policy Agenda using what we've heard directly from town halls and listening sessions
- Delivering 500 advocacy postcards to state legislators to protect Medicaid and prevention funding
- Hosting a convening with SCDHHS, ASOs, and justice-centered partners to align on access and funding priorities
- Working alongside SC-based HIV and LGBTQ justice organizations to write grants together and strengthen our collective advocacy power

We're proud of the foundation we've built, and we know the real work continues beyond September. Our network is growing, our voices are louder, and our vision is clear: build power, protect care, and ensure that those most impacted lead the way.

We are especially grateful to the team at Emory COMPASS for believing in our potential and investing in our vision for expanding advocacy in South Carolina. This grant allowed us to take bold steps rooted in community wisdom, and it opened the door for partnerships and momentum we will carry forward. As the COMPASS program sunsets, we look ahead with hope and commitment and remain deeply thankful for the opportunity to begin this journey together.



GROWING RIGHTS THE ORGANIZING WAY

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The GROW Project is a transformative initiative by the North Carolina AIDS Action Network (NCAAN) designed to expand HIV advocacy across South Carolina, empower community voices, and protect healthcare access. Supported by the COMPASS Initiative, the GROW Project combines grassroots strategy, policy education, and intergenerational mentorship to create structural change in HIV policy and equity in the South.

GOALS

- Educate and mobilize HIV advocates across the Carolinas.
- Empower grassroots leaders with tools to advocate for HIV Justice
- Host interactive meetings across SC
- Center the leadership of Black and Brown communities.
- Strengthen Medicaid protection and HIV funding through collective action.
- Host the inaugural "HIV Speaks on Gervais Street" for advocacy & engagement.
- Build a strong SC Action Team for legislative engagement

KEY OUTCOMES

"Our stories should guide policy & I am happy to be able to share"

- Held 6 convenings across SC with over 175 participants
- Trained 30 advocates, including 12 Black women living with HIV
- Raised \$4,000+ to support travel and eliminate barriers
- Held a powerful HIV Speaks Day in Columbia, with 50+ attendees
- Established an SC Action Team to sustain community voice & policy education
- Hosted meetings with FQHC's, AIDS Service Organizations and community members in Columbia, Charleston, Florence, Rock Hill, Spartanburg and Greenville; 175+ participants
- Our Communications team filmed Advocate "Our Stories" videos of community leaders

COMMUNITY IMPACT

We've learned that storytelling and mentorship are not just tools—they are strategies for policy change. Across our town halls, Action Team trainings, and letter-writing efforts, participants shared the value of being invited into the work, not talked at.

Some of the lessons that will shape our path forward include:

Consistency matters. When we show up, follow up, and stay engaged, people respond with commitment.

- Cultural grounding is critical. Folks need to see themselves in the work and feel respected in the room.
- Timing and access count. Evening and weekend options helped bring new faces to the table, especially for those who work, parent, or live in rural communities.
- Intergenerational spaces work. Youth and elders alike brought wisdom, curiosity, and accountability to every gathering.

"I never knew I could speak to a legislator, but NCAAN showed me how."

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