

**Request for Smart Start Funding Proposals**

**FY2025-2026, FY2026-2027 and FY2027-2028**

The Columbus County Partnership for Children, Inc. (CCPC) is seeking qualified organizations with expertise in early childhood to support our local community with evidence-based or evidence-informed services for children birth to five and their families.

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| **RFP Release Date:** | **February 7, 2025** |
| **Bidders’ Conference:** | Tuesday, February 17, 2025 at 10:00 AM  Via Zoom, please contact Charmaine Blue-Singletary for registration link  910-499-4545, Charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org |
| **Submit Questions to:** | Charmaine Blue-Singletary, Program Coordinator  charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org |
| **Deadline to Submit Questions:** | Thursday, February 25 – 12:00 p.m. |
| **Deadline for Proposals:** | Thursday, March 13 – 12:00 p.m. |
| **Electronic Submission:** | Attention: Charmaine Blue-Singletary  charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org |
| **Grant Award notices:** | After the April 16, 2025 Columbus County Partnership for Children Board meeting, no later than April 30, 2025. |

**Applications should be submitted both in hard copy and electronic format no later than 12 p.m. on March 13, 2025. Late applications will not be accepted. Faxed applications will not be accepted.**

**I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Introduction**

Smart Start is North Carolina’s nationally recognized and award-winning early childhood initiative designed to ensure that every young child living in North Carolina enters school healthy and ready to succeed. The Columbus County Partnership for Children (CCPC) is the local non-profit organization that administers Smart Start funds in Columbus County. We collaborate with existing programs and support the creation of new ones to measurably strengthen families and improve the lives of their youngest children.

**Purpose of the Request**

The Columbus County Partnership for Children is seeking proposals from programs that provide data driven, collaborative, measurable and meaningful early childhood related services and support to as many families as possible within Columbus County.

Experiences during early childhood shape the structure of the brain. Because today’s children are tomorrow’s leaders everyone has a stake in making sure that all children have the experiences they need to thrive. Providing support to the programs and people who are involved in a young child’s life—families, teachers, doctors, caregivers, social workers, and many others is a way to ensure every child has all they need for healthy growth and development.

The Local Partnership is seeking proposals from programs that are interested in providing services, within Columbus County, that support the quality and availability of early childhood services that address the needs of children from birth to age five, not yet in Kindergarten, their families and/or caregivers **specifically around the CCPC’s priorities of health, family engagement, and quality early education**.

Community-based needs are to be addressed through one of the following Smart Start priority areas:

* **Early Care and Education –** Increase the quality early learning and care experiences for children birth to five. Strategies may include:
  + Collaborative training, coaching, and technical assistance that includes program level and market level goals.
  + Availability and high utilization of resources such as TEACH, WAGE$, and AWARD$.
  + Providing and expanding access to teacher education and professional development
* **Family Support –** Increase the availability and usage of evidence-based/evidence-informed family programs or services that improve parenting skills and promote family involvement and stability. Strategies may include:
  + Parent education programs that give parents tools to increase their knowledge of early childhood development and positive parenting practices.
  + Home visiting programs to help new parents and parents-to-be by providing education, information and resources, i.e. Nurse-Family Partnership.
  + Increase literacy rich home environments, i.e. Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.
  + Train parents or caregivers on how to support pre-literacy at home.
* **Health –** Increase the availability and usage of evidence-based services or support that promote the physical health and mental health of young children ages birth to five. Strategies may include:
  + Increase prenatal and infant/toddler access to healthcare; working with providers, health departments, families, and communities to improve the health and safety of young children
  + Increase incidence of healthy weight in children ages birth to five.
  + Ensure all children receive age appropriate developmental screenings and referrals for treatment, as well as supports to encourage the follow through on treatment recommendations.
  + Increase pediatric mental health or other specialized services needed for young children, i.e. Attachment Bio-Behavioral Catch-Up, or Parent-Child Interactive Therapy

**II. AVAILABLE FUNDING AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

**Award Term and Requirements**

Funding for this project will be provided for a three-year term and is contingent on funding availability and adherence to the requirements of the grant.

1. The term of any resulting award is anticipated to be for three fiscal years from July 1, 2025 until June 30, 2028.
2. The bidder must submit annual budgets ending June 30th with its proposal. Contracts for subsequent fiscal years in the multi-year bidding period will be executed only after a satisfactory evaluation of performance, availability of funds, and review and approval of proposed activities.
3. Funds may not be used for goods or activities that are currently funded by other government sources to ensure no supplanting of funds.
4. A 19% in kind program match is required that may include, but is not limited to, parent and community volunteer time, donations of goods and services, etc.
5. A background check of each person providing direct services to children under the contract will be required at the expense of the Direct Service Provider in accordance with the Partnership’s policy.
6. CCPC will not contract with any applicant that fails to provide all required information and documentation. After all required information and documentation has been submitted, CCPC will prepare the contract, notify the applicant, and submit the contract for signature.
7. If proposals are rejected, applicants will be notified promptly by CCPC.

**If the application/proposal is approved for funding the applicant must agree to comply with the following pre-contracting list of requirements:**

1. Work collaboratively with the CCPC and across agency lines in a community context, to include:
   1. Provide updates immediately if leadership of organization is changing; CCPC must be informed prior to changes occurring.
   2. Any changes that are going to be made to the program as it is outlined in the proposal; CCPC must be informed prior to changes occurring.
2. Regularly disclose that the activity receives funding from Smart Start and the CCPC.
3. Be available for monitoring visits and meetings held by the CCPC.
4. Comply with fiscal, program and evaluation reporting requirements and deadlines. Agree to evaluation of data collection to capture information around racial equity.
5. Revert funds not spent by the end of the fiscal year, unless requested to do so prior to that date.
6. Understand that funds must be spent according to the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) Smart Start Cost Principles (found at www.columbussmartstart.com). If contract terms are not met, funds may be discontinued and any unspent funds returned to the CCPC.
7. Comply with NCGS 143C-6.2 reporting requirements <https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_143C/GS_143C-6-23.html>
8. Participate in any audit/evaluation of the CCPC that is required by the NC General Assembly or any other State officials/agencies.
9. Maintain the necessary fidelity bond and commercial liability insurance coverage required.
10. Return items purchased with Smart Start funds should the entity no longer perform the services for which the assets were purchased.
11. Provide the following information for the contract administrator – name; title; telephone and fax numbers; and mailing address, including street address and zip code.
12. If a non-profit entity, provide a copy of the Internal Revenue Code 501(c)3 determination letter received from the IRS.
13. Provide No Overdue Taxes Certification.
14. Provide Board of Directors list (if a 501(c)3).
15. Provide a copy of the Board Approved Bylaws (if a 501(c)3).
16. Provide proof of insurance which may include, but not be limited to, the following:
    1. Workers’ compensation.
    2. General business liability.
    3. Professional liability.
    4. Fidelity bonding (e.g. employee crime or dishonesty).
    5. Automobile (owned, hired or non-owned).
17. Completed Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form W-9.
18. Must provide most recent audit report and/or financial statements.

**Eligibility**

Eligible applicants include non-profit, government agencies, community-based organizations and institutions of higher education with experience in delivering services to children, their families and child care professionals.

All proposals must impact children from birth through age five, not yet in Kindergarten. Programs directed at children older than five cannot be considered, by legislative mandate. Only Evidence-Based/Evidence-Informed Programming found in Smart Solutions will be accepted.

To be eligible to apply for this funding, applicants must demonstrate sound organizational and fiscal capacity. Funds should be used for activities, experiences, or other resources that have a beneficial impact on children and follow Smart Start legislative mandates and Cost Principles.

In addition, eligible applicant’s programs must be located and provide the service within Columbus County. This is to ensure that applicants and their providers have a strong understanding of our community’s needs and assets while having established relationships with other stakeholders.

The applicant must provide details of any pertinent judgment, criminal conviction, investigation or litigation pending against the applicant or any of its officers, directors, employees, agents or subcontractors of which the contractor has knowledge, or a statement that there is none. CCPC reserves the right to reject a proposal based on this information.

**Selection Process**

All applications received by the required deadline will be reviewed to ensure all necessary attachments and documentation are complete and included. **Applications that are** **incomplete, late, or submitted by non-eligible applicants will not be reviewed by the Grants Review Committee of the CCPC Board**. **Nothing may be added to any application after it has been submitted.** Complete applications from eligible applicants will then be forwarded to the Grants Review Committee which will review, score and rank the applications.

Applicants may be required to make a 15-minute presentation to the Grants Review Committee of the CCPC Board to briefly describe their activity and answer specific questions.Presentation times, if needed, will be scheduled after proposal submission.

The Grants Review Committee will meet to formulate recommendations to the full Board. Committee members will not include any representative who may have a conflict of interest regarding any funding decision.

Award notices will be provided after the April 16, 2025 Columbus County Partnership for Children Board meeting, but no later than April 30, 2025.

The Grants Review Committee will be recalled **IF** funding levels made by the General Assembly are not adequate to fully meet the approved program budgets.

**III. SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

**Application Format**

Applications (proposals) must include the following components to be considered complete. All documents are available at [www.Columbuspartnership.org](http://www.cabarruspartnership.org). **Incomplete** applications (proposals) will **not** be reviewed or scored:

ALL APPLICANTS NEW APPLICANTS ONLY

☐RFP Application (including signatures) Attachment A ☐Three(3) letters of support

☐RFP Attachment B (Excel workbook) ☐Written Program Guidelines

☐Logic Model tab (3 yrs) ☐Most recent audited financial statement

☐Detailed and Narrative Budget tab (3 yrs)

☐Summary budget tab (this will auto populate)

☐Job descriptions of funded and in-kind staff

☐List of Board of Directors (if applicable)

☐ Other optional materials

**Basic format:**

* The RFP application should be completed in the Proposal Application document and submitted electronically (to [charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org](mailto:charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org)) with one printed copy, with original signatures, on 8 ½ x 11 inch white paper submitted to the CCPC office. Font sizes of responses should not be changed.
* Respond to each criterion in the order listed in the Application Narrative.
* Page limit of the Application Narrative section, not including first 2 pages of application and attachments, is 9 pages. Reviewers will not consider material past the page limit in the printed report.
* The RFP Attachment B should be completed in, and submitted as, an Excel workbook, no PDFs will be accepted.

**Application Deadline**

**ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 12 P.M. ON March 13, 2025**

* One (1) electronic submission of the Application, Attachment B, and if applicable, new applicant documents, should be sent to [charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org](mailto:charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org) and must be received on or before the due date/time.
* One (1) signed original should be submitted via mail or placed in the CCPC drop box on or before the due date/time.

**Columbus County Partnership for Children**

**109 W. Main St.**

**Whiteville, NC 28472**

**Questions and Answers**

* All questions must be submitted in writing (email preferred to [charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org](mailto:charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org), on or before 12:00 p.m. on February 25, 2025.
* A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) will be posted and maintained on our website at [www.columbussmartstart.com](http://www.columbussmartstart.com) during the RFP period. The final list of FAQs and responses to will be posted on Thursday, February 28, 2025.

**Technical Assistance**

* A special bidder’s conference will be held on Tuesday, February 17 at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. All interested applicants are strongly encouraged to participate. Please contact Charmaine Blue-Singletary, at 910-499-4545 or at [charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org](mailto:charmaine.bluesingletary@columbussmartstart.org) to register for the bidder’s conference.
* Before or after the bidder’s conference, all questions must be submitted in writing by the deadline listed for questions, and responses will be posted to the FAQ document on the CCPC website. No questions will be responded to verbally except during the bidder’s conference on February 17, 2025.