



## *Request for Proposals*

### *FY 27 – 28 Funding Cycle*

#### **Background and Purpose**

Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) invests in young children, their families, and a connected early childhood system that supports and prepares them for school and life ahead. As the local Smart Start partnership, part of the statewide network led by the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), we administer programs, fund community organizations to deliver services, and work to connect those services for children and their families from before birth through age five.

The recently approved WCSS strategic framework includes priorities which will guide the planning and implementation of services through this initial FY27-28 funding period and into the remainder of the three-year funding cycle. The priorities in this plan represent thoughtful consideration of previous lessons learned and the strategic shifts WCSS is choosing to make over the next three years.

Four values set the standard against which we test our choices, partnerships, and investments.

- **We center children and families** facing the greatest barriers to opportunity.
- **We treat families and funded partners as leaders**, recognizing that the people closest to the work help shape its direction.
- **We show up as partners** in strengthening Wake County's early childhood system.
- **We steward public and private trust** through transparency, learning, and accountability.

In addition to aligning with and integrating these priorities into service delivery, funded partners will also be required to do the following:

- Deliver approved program to target clients (children, families, child care facilities or community programs).
- Collect and report data that measures the progress and/or impact of your proposed program. This includes information about who is receiving services (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, location in the county) and how often.



- Participate in annual financial and program monitoring, including submission of sample materials, to make sure that services are completed as approved.

### **RFP Requirements**

All applicants must:

- Submit an electronic application packet through the online portal by Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 5pm (EST)
- Direct clarifying questions to Bryce McClamroch at [bmcclamroch@wakesmartstart.org](mailto:bmcclamroch@wakesmartstart.org)

### **FY27 – 28 Funding Application Packet**

The electronic funding packet consists of three primary forms: agency background information, application questions and program budget. Completed application packets will be reviewed by the WCSS Allocations Committee, which includes WCSS Board members, staff members of the PCE and Finance departments, and members of the community representing a diversity of race/ethnicity, backgrounds, lived experiences and geographic location. Funding recommendations will be presented at the WCSS Board meeting in late February and decision letters will go out in March.

#### ***A. Agency Background Information***

- Agency Name and Address
- Agency Tax Status and Tax ID Number
- Copy of Most Recent Audited Financial Statement or IRS Form 990.

#### ***B. Application Questions***

The funding application primarily consists of seven questions with open-ended responses (for a full list of questions, please see Attachment A on page 4). Each question will be scored from a range of 0 to 4 points, with a total possible score of 28 points. Application questions align with the WCSS strategic priorities, as well as covering topics such as:

- Showing how your program works and how you will measure it works
- Description of services and experience working with the target clients
- Previous experience or plans to work with other community partners
- Description of how you plan to collect and use data and participant feedback



### *C. Budget*

The budget spreadsheet should cover all costs associated with delivery of your proposed program or practice. This will include both funding that is being requested through WCSS, as well as in-kind support. The budget includes the following sections:

- Personnel
- Supplies & Materials
- Fixed Charges (office rent, dues/subscriptions, etc.)
- Non-Fixed Operating Expenses (travel, training, advertising, etc.)
- Property & Equipment (furniture, computers, etc.)
- Purchase of Service & Grants (stipends, scholarships, non-cash awards, etc.)

If approved for funding, programs will need to submit a monthly financial status report, capturing spending for the month, in line with the sections above. Budgets can also be amended or revised through May during the fiscal year.

### **Funding Information Sessions**

Additional details regarding the RFP and completing the online application will be presented at two different information sessions (see dates below), one in-person and one virtually through Zoom. Please select the session which is most convenient for your schedule. The virtual meeting presentation will also be recorded and posted on our website. Those who are interested can use the opportunity to ask questions or schedule an additional follow-up meeting before or during the application process.

#### Information Session Dates:

- In-Person – Monday, **October 19** from 10-11am (Wake County Smart Start Training Room)

Address: 4901 Waters Edge Drive, Suite 101, Raleigh, 27606

- Virtual – Thursday, **October 22** from 2-3pm (Zoom)

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/wD4EKvZtS12U8d1UvN4N6Q>



## Attachment A – Funding Application

### **Question 1: Program Model**

Indicate which evidence-based program, practice, or service model you are proposing to implement:

- Examples: Family Navigation, TA: Consultation & Coaching
- NCPC Smart Solutions Catalog (<https://www.smartsolutionscatalog.com/nc/browse>)

### **Question 2: Program Description**

Describe the program/model you are proposing for funding and how you will deliver this program in Wake County to the population you intend to reach.

*Include:*

- *Brief program description*
- *Staffing structure and qualifications*
- *Service delivery approach (in-person, virtual, hybrid)*
- *Expected reach and frequency of services*

### **Question 3: Organizational Experience and Capacity**

Describe your organization's experience implementing this model or delivering similar services. What experience do you have working with the population and community you are proposing to serve? What are the strengths you bring to service delivery?

### **Question 4: Addressing Barriers to Opportunity**

Describe how the program addresses populations with the greatest barriers to opportunity.

*Include:*

- *How you create strategies, policies, practices, and operations that identify, understand, and address greatest barriers to opportunity*
- *How you differentiate and target strategies for communities that have been marginalized*
- *How you represent the diversity of the population you intend to serve*

### **Question 5: Relationships as a Source of Learning and Improvement**

WCSS values relationships as essential sources of knowledge and believes that trust is fundamental to effective service delivery.

Describe how your organization builds and sustains relationships with families, providers, community partners, or other stakeholders. How do those relationships influence decisions about your program or services?

*Consider including:*

- *Trust-building strategies*
- *Two-way communication*
- *How stakeholder feedback is incorporated into decisions*
- *Examples of program changes resulting from stakeholder input*

### **Question 6: Storytelling and Impact**

WCSS seeks to understand both outcomes and lived experiences in order to tell a more complete story about early childhood in Wake County.

Describe the information you collect to understand your program's effectiveness and the experiences of the people you serve. How will you use this information to tell the story of the population you serve and communicate the impact of services?

*Consider including:*

- *Success stories*
- *Past focus groups, interviews, or surveys*
- *Strategies for communicating impact*
- *Continuous improvement processes*
- *How findings are shared internally and externally*

### **Question 7: Contribution to the Early Childhood System**

Wake County Smart Start seeks partners that strengthen the broader early childhood system, not solely individual programs.

Describe how your organization collaborates with other organizations, shares knowledge, coordinates services, or contributes to stronger connections across the early childhood system.

*Consider including:*

- *Referral partnerships*
- *Cross-sector collaborations*
- *Participation in coalitions or community initiatives*

- *Shared learning efforts*

- *Efforts to reduce barriers for families navigating service*

## Attachment B: Application Scoring Rubric

### **Question 1: Program Model**

Indicate which evidence-based program, practice, or service model you are proposing to implement. -- include link to Smart Solutions catalog and a suggested example

Rate the response as either 0 OR 4. \_\_\_\_\_/4

### **Question 2: Program Description**

Describe the program/model you are proposing for funding and how you will deliver this program in Wake County to the population you intend to reach.

Include:

- Brief program description
- Staffing structure and qualifications
- Service delivery approach (in-person, virtual, hybrid)
- Expected reach and frequency of services

Rate the response from 0 to 4. \_\_\_\_\_ / 4



- Target population and plan to identify/engage is not provided, unclear or not in alignment with Strategic Plan and Greatest Need definition
- Reach and expected frequency of service delivery is either not provided or unclear
- Process to identify target clients is either not provided or unclear
- Description of ANY of the below missing details:
  - Target population
  - Staffing
  - Service delivery
  - Reach and frequency of services
- All previous elements identified are clearly captured and in alignment with Strategic Plan and Greatest Need definition

### Question 3: Organizational Experience and Capacity

Describe your organization's experience implementing this model or delivering similar services. What experience do you have working with the population and community you are proposing to serve? What are the strengths you bring to service delivery?

Rate the response from 0 to 4. \_\_\_\_\_ / 4



- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experience working with target population is not included, unclear or not in alignment with the Strategic Plan or Greatest Need definition</li><li>• Experience providing proposed services is either missing or unclear</li><li>• Strengths are either missing or not well defined</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Description of any of the below missing key details:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Experience providing proposed services</li><li>- Experience working with target population</li><li>- Organizational strengths</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All elements previously identified are clearly captured and aligned with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Need definition</li></ul> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

#### Question 4: Addressing Barriers to Opportunity

Describe how the program addresses populations with the greatest barriers to opportunity.

Include:

- How you create strategies, policies, practices, and operations that identify, understand, and address greatest barriers to opportunity
- How you differentiate and target strategies for communities that have been marginalized
- How you represent the diversity of the population you intend to serve

Rate their response from 0 to 4 \_\_\_\_\_ / 4



- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategies to differentiate and target outreach for different communities are missing, unclear or not in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Need definition</li><li>• Strategies, practices, etc. that identify and address barriers to access services are either missing, not clearly outlined, or not in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Needs definition</li><li>• How organization and proposed program represent the diversity of their target population is unanswered or not well defined</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Description of ANY of the below missing details:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Strategies, practices, etc. that identify and address barriers to access services</li><li>- Strategies to differentiate and target outreach for different communities</li><li>- How organization and proposed program represent the diversity of their target population</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All previous elements identified are clearly captured and in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Need definition</li></ul> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Question 5: Relationships as a Source of Learning and Improvement

WCSS values relationships as essential sources of knowledge and believes that trust is fundamental to effective service delivery.

Describe how your organization builds and sustains relationships with families, providers, community partners, or other stakeholders. How do those relationships influence decisions about your program or services?

Consider including:

- *Trust-building strategies*
- *Two-way communication*
- *How stakeholder feedback is incorporated into decisions*
- *Examples of program changes resulting from stakeholder input*

Rate their response from 0 to 4 \_\_\_\_\_ / 4



- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategies to build trust and maintain two-way communication with target population are not included, unclear or not in alignment with the Strategic Plan or Greatest Need definition</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Description of ANY of the below missing details:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>Trust-building strategies</i></li><li>- <i>Two-way communication</i></li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All previous elements identified are clearly captured and in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Need definition</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategies to collect and incorporate stakeholder feedback are either missing, unclear or not in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Needs definition</li></ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>How stakeholder feedback is incorporated into decisions</i></li><li>- <i>Examples of program changes resulting from stakeholder input</i></li></ul>                              |                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Examples of program changes as a result of feedback are either missing, unclear or not in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Needs definition</li></ul>                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                               |

## Question 6: Storytelling and Impact

WCSS seeks to understand both outcomes and lived experiences in order to tell a more complete story about early childhood in Wake County.

Describe the information you collect to understand your program's effectiveness and the experiences of the people you serve. How will you use this information to tell the story of the population you serve and communicate the impact of services?

*Consider including:*

- *Success stories*
- *Past focus groups, interviews, or surveys*
- *Strategies for communicating impact*
- *Continuous improvement processes*
- *How findings are shared internally and externally*

Rate their response from 0 to 4 \_\_\_\_\_ / 4



- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategies to demonstrate impact for target population, using examples such as success stories or surveys, are missing, unclear or not in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Needs definition</li><li>• Examples of using data to communicate impact or engage in program improvement are either missing or unclear</li><li>• Examples of sharing data internally or externally are either missing or unclear</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Description of ANY of the below missing details:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Success stories</li><li>- Past focus groups, interviews, or surveys</li><li>- Strategies for communicating impact</li><li>- Continuous improvement processes</li><li>- How findings are shared internally and externally</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All previous elements identified are clearly captured and in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Needs definition</li></ul> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Question 7: Contribution to the Early Childhood System

Wake County Smart Start seeks partners that strengthen the broader early childhood system, not solely individual programs.

Describe how your organization collaborates with other organizations, shares knowledge, coordinates services, or contributes to stronger connections across the early childhood system.

Consider including:

- *Referral partnerships*
- *Cross-sector collaborations*
- *Participation in coalitions or community initiatives*
- *Shared learning efforts*
- *Efforts to reduce barriers for families navigating services*

Rate their response from 0 to 4 \_\_\_\_\_ / 4



- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Examples of efforts to reduce barriers for families navigating services are missing, unclear or not in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Needs definition</li><li>• Strategies to build referral partnerships and establish cross-sector collaborations are either missing, unclear or not in alignment with the Strategic Plan or Greatest Needs definition</li><li>• Examples of facilitating or participating in community initiatives or shared learning efforts are either missing or unclear</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Description of ANY of the below missing details:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Referral partnerships</li><li>- Cross-sector collaborations</li><li>- Participation in coalitions or community initiatives</li><li>- Shared learning efforts</li><li>- Efforts to reduce barriers for families navigating services</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All previous elements identified are clearly captured and in alignment with the Strategic Plan and Greatest Needs definition</li></ul> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|