



**1-Year Bidding Application for Smart Start Funds  
Guidelines & Request for Application Package  
for the Implementation of  
Smart Start Funded Activities  
2024-2025**

Application Deadline:  
Applications must be received by 4:30 p.m. on  
**Friday, January 5, 2024**

Email completed application to:  
Elisha Childers at [elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org](mailto:elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org)

**OR**

Mail or hand deliver completed application to:  
Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc.  
225 Birch Street, Suite 3. Boone, NC 28607

**Questions:**  
**Call the Children's Council office (828-262-5424)**  
**or e-mail Elisha Childers ([elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org](mailto:elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org))**



## 2024-2025 Smart Start Request for Application Package

### Table of Contents

2024-2025 Application Information .....	2
- Funding Principles	
- Vision	
- Goals/Strategic Priorities	
2024-2025 Program Priorities.....	4
- Child Care Resource & Referral	
- Parents as Teachers	
- Dual Subsidy – Quality Enhancements	
Timeline.....	8
Application Cover Page.....	9
Application Detail.....	10
- Part I – Programmatic Information	
- Part II – Budget Information	
- Part III – Additional Information Required	

**ATTACHMENTS:**

ATTACHMENT A - Required Forms (Word)

- Smart Start Application Agreement
- Conflict of Interest Policy

ATTACHMENT B - Proposed Smart Start Budgets (Excel)

ATTACHMENT C - Budget Narrative (Word)

ATTACHMENT D - Proposed Smart Start Staff Worksheet (Word)

ATTACHMENT E - Community Early Childhood Profile (PDF)

ATTACHMENT F - At-Risk Criteria (Word)

## 2024-2025 Smart Start Application Information

Completed applications must be received at the Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc. office by **4:30 p.m.** on the deadline date of **Friday, January 5, 2024**. Please email completed packet to Elisha Childers at [elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org](mailto:elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org) or mail/hand deliver to the Children's Council 225 Birch Street, Suite 3 Boone, NC 28607. Fax transmissions will not be accepted.

Funding timeline is July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025.

**All funding is contingent on the annual approval of Smart Start funding by the North Carolina General Assembly and the North Carolina Partnership for Children.**

The Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc.'s Board of Directors has worked through a strategic planning process which has provided focus for what they intend to fund, based on the funding we anticipate receiving.

You should be cautioned that the Smart Start funding projections are uncertain and there may be projects listed that may not be funded or may receive an allocation different than the current projections. While the Board may determine tentative allocations in late spring/early summer, final allocations will not be determined until the state budget is ratified and the Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc. receives a final allocation from the North Carolina Partnership for Children.

If you have any questions or need technical assistance, please contact Elisha Childers, Executive Director 828-262-5424 x 206 or [elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org](mailto:elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org).

### Funding Principles of the Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc.

When grant recipients or contracting agencies are being selected to provide Smart Start funded services, preference will be given to those responding in the most effective ways to the greatest number of the goals and program standards.

Proposals will be reviewed and assessed based on how closely the project description relates to local Board-determined priorities, Community Early Childhood Profile criteria (see Attachment E), and the **legislative mandate that all funded activities must be evidence-based or evidence-informed**. The Partnership for Children strongly prioritizes collaboration and blending of resources to meet the highest number of identified needs. Applications will also be reviewed and analyzed based on the bidder's projected ability to coordinate and maximize services to the community.

Smart Start is a statewide initiative funded by the NC General Assembly designed to provide funding for projects and programs that improve the quality of early childhood development for young children, birth through age 5, and their families. Smart Start was designed to ensure that children arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed. All grant applications should support the mission, goals, and strategic planning results of the Children’s Council of Watauga County, Inc. Grants are available to public and private organizations and corporations and nonprofit agencies.

**MISSION:**

To build a strong foundation for children’s learning and development by strengthening families, the early childhood system, and the community.

**VISION:**

We believe that every child deserves the opportunity to develop to his or her fullest potential in a community that supports, nurtures, and empowers children and families.

**OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (2020-2024):**

1. Build community partnerships and collaborate to lead community change that benefits young children.
2. Strengthen the early childhood system.
3. Innovate and focus to improve programs for children and families.
4. Build long-term financial and organizational capacity, strengthen leadership, and improve internal systems.

## 2024-2025 Program Priorities

Children’s Council of Watauga County, Inc. (CCWCI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children ages birth through five years and their families. CCWCI administers our local Smart Start grant. To that end, CCWCI is currently requesting applications for the following activities. The projected programs are in alignment with the results of the agency’s Board of Director’s strategic planning process. All Smart Start funded activities should be considered evidence-based or evidence-informed.

Please note that none of these projects has assured funding. We are asking all applicants to work closely with the CCWCI staff to prepare projected budgets and programmatic planning statements for these projects.

At this time, we anticipate that the following projects will receive some level of funding for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. More details for each of these projects can be found on the related Logic Model (additional attachments). You must carefully review the logic model as well as these activity descriptions and programmatic priorities as you complete your application for Smart Start funding.

### **CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL**

**Anticipated Annual Smart Start Investment: \$160,000 - \$175,000**

#### **Activity Description:**

Provide quality child care resource and referral services to the community and trainings/workshops for child care providers. Provide information to families about how to find quality child care services, help to establish new family child care homes, coordinate training efforts for child care facilities, and provide an emphasis on working to increase the level of education of child care staff. Provide specific focus on the early intervention system and prioritize improvement on the Early Intervention Community Early Childhood Profile data (see **ATTACHMENT E**). Collect and maintain local statistics regarding child care and the local child care work force. Offer community-wide trainings and resource and referral services at various locations. Participate on pertinent early childhood committees and task forces.

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) is an activity aligned with the North Carolina CCR&R System and will participate with, and report data to, the designated CCR&R Region. Services that are provided using Smart Start dollars in this activity include:

- **Technical Assistance:** Technical Assistance (in the form of coaching and modeling) may be provided to early childhood educators working in start-up, licensed and/or G.S. 110 child care facilities serving children birth to five years old. This activity will be focused on improving CLASS scores and will be responsive to the unique TA requests from child care centers throughout the

year, and on improving participating facilities' star levels; participating facilities' star rating education and program standard points; ITERS/ECERS/FCCERS scores.

- Training for child care providers: Training for DCDEE credit hours provided on child care related topics and coordination of CEU opportunities.
- Consumer education: Information and/or education to families about quality child care.
- ECE Lending Library: A Resource Center will also be available with developmentally appropriate materials, educational activities, a textbook rental program for students enrolled in early childhood classes.

Smart Start funds may be used to cover expenses related to child care provider appreciation, parent and community education on child care, written materials regarding the appropriate development of children, and other public outreach/events that promote quality child care services.

### **Program Priorities:**

- Deliver services that focus on a higher level of quality defined by positive teacher-child interactions, family engagement, and professional development of key staff. Provide one-on-one professional development visits with lead teachers and directors to support increased education levels.
- Offer trainings aligned with the NC Foundations of Early Learning.
- Coordinate a monthly PLCs: Director's Leadership Academy and one for Family Child Care Home directors.
- Serve as the community hub for referrals to services that are important to the well-being of young children and their families.
- Provide outreach to families with young children so that they are aware of referral services.
- Educate parents on Quality Rating System and quality indicators of child care programs.
- Provide outreach services to English and Spanish speaking families, including recruitment of children for NC Pre-K and Imagination Library.
- Coordinate professional development opportunities with other service providers, ensuring that the child care community has adequate access to required trainings and workshops.
- Work with early childhood educators on developing professional development plans and how to access the educational opportunities they need to meet their professional goals.
- Provide needed technical assistance to early childhood programs, including family child care homes and half-day programs, to help increase quality and maintain high quality of child care programs.
- Educate the community about the importance of early childhood as well as the importance of CCR&R services.
- Ensure that children who indicate a need for early intervention services are referred appropriately and efficiently, and children or families who may need other community support programs are referred appropriately to needed resources.
- Collaborate with other early childhood initiatives to maximize the impact of Watauga County's Smart Start funded programming.
- Provide data and reports to the Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc. as requested.

## **PARENTS AS TEACHERS®**

### **Anticipated Annual Smart Start Investment: \$30,000 - \$40,000**

Provide the Parents As Teachers program, using the PAT Foundational Curriculum to children in Watauga County. The PAT program will provide: (1) personal home-visits, based on recommended dosage for each family's number of risk factors; (2) 12 group connections per year; (3) annual developmental screenings and a health review that includes record of hearing, vision, and general health status of children served, and (4) referrals to community resources provided to children and families in need. The PAT program will serve a target population with at least one risk factor and identified as most appropriate for PAT services in the community. Parent Educators will be PAT trained and certified and will implement the program with model fidelity. The program will submit an annual report to Parents as Teachers National Center (PATNC) and participate in the Quality Endorsement and Improvement process as required by PATNC. Smart Start funds may also be used to support incentives for eligible participants.

#### **Program Priorities:**

- Provide bi-monthly or monthly home visitation services to at-risk families in Watauga County.
- Provide family-centered assessment with each family, including the use of Parent's Assessment of Protective Factors (PAPF); utilize PICCOLO and other tools to document participating families' progress toward their goals.
- Maintain schedule of 30-35 home visits per month, per educator.
- Provide monthly group meetings for enrolled families and others, making every effort to include other community services and resources and to address the three areas of emphasis (above) and all ages of children served.
- Provide developmental assessments to children as needed and make appropriate referrals as indicated by results; incorporate parent observations of the child, provide verbal and written results of screening to the parent, and share parenting strategies and activities related to screening results.
- Provide a focus on early literacy by recruiting families for Imagination Library and by surveying those parents at year-end to measure parent use of the program.
- Adhere to quality endorsement and continuous quality improvement requirements of the PAT model and the state, including their systems of supervision, self-assessment, service documentation, data collection, and reporting.
- Work with other early childhood programs to maximize the number of children who are identified with special needs and who are receiving appropriate interventions.
- Collaborate with other early childhood initiatives to maximize the impact of Watauga County's Smart Start funded programming.
- Provide data and reports to the Children's Council as requested.

## DUAL SUBSIDY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

### **INCLUDES DUAL SUBSIDY TANF-ELIGIBLE AND DUAL SUBSIDY NON-TANF ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES**

**Anticipated Annual Smart Start Investment:** \$60,000 - \$70,000

This activity includes subsidy rate enhancements. Enhancements are available for child care facilities that meet all of the following requirements:

Star-rating of 4 or better; AND

- classrooms with lead teachers holding an AA in ECE (or related field) degree; OR
- classrooms with lead teachers enrolled in college classes and working towards AA in ECE; AND
- facilities that pay lead teachers a minimum of \$12/hour; AND
- facilities that are participating in the Children's Council Pathways to Accreditation/Quality Support Program.

Enhancements are not pro-rated for partial attendance months.

Finance assistance will be paid on a direct per child basis for subsidy for families eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) **and/or** the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Data will be reported into the state-level Smart Start Reporting Systems (SSRS) on a monthly basis.

#### **Program Priorities:**

- Provide quality enhancements to qualified licensed child care programs who are enrolled in the Pathways to Accreditation program.
- Monitor the Providers' performance.
- Pay the Provider in the manner and in the amounts specified in contract documents.
- Modify, by contract amendment, the number of classrooms authorized by, and the number of children served under, the Contract in response to changes in the needs of the children in the provider's county/region.



## **Children’s Council of Watauga County, Inc. 2024-2025 Request for Application Timeline**

- November 14: 2024-2025 Request for Application packet, including list of proposed projects approved by Programs & Services Committee.
- November 27: 2024-2025 Request for Application advertised in local media; packets sent out to potential bidders; Request for Application packets available on the CCWCI website: [www.thechildrenscouncil.org](http://www.thechildrenscouncil.org)
- January 5: Smart Start Applications due to CCWCI Office by 4:30 p.m.
- January 5-10: CCWCI staff reviews applications to ensure applications are complete. (CCWCI staff may have to contact applicants to get clarification or additional information.) Programs & Services Committee reviews applications and develops funding recommendations to present to Board of Directors.
- April 22: CCWCI Board of Directors reviews and discusses recommendations and approves 2023-2024 direct service providers for each funding priority and tentative 2023-2024 Smart Start allocations.
- June 24: CCWCI staff notifies applicants by mail or e-mail regarding Board of Directors’ decisions.
- Spring/Summer: CCWCI receives approval from the NC Partnership for Children. (Direct Service Provider contracts are contingent on CCWCI receiving a local partnership contract from the NC General Assembly and the North Carolina Partnership for Children. For each fiscal year, budgets will be officially determined when the state budget is ratified, and the Children’s Council of Watauga County, Inc. receives its Smart Start budget from the NC General Assembly and the North Carolina Partnership for Children.)



# 2023-2024 Smart Start Application COVER PAGE

Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please use only one activity name from the list of 2024-2025 Program Priorities found in application packet.)

Name of organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and title of main contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person authorized to sign contract: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency status: ( ) Public ( ) Private, Non-profit ( ) Private, For Profit

Federal Tax ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list the total amount of Smart Start funds requested and sources of other funding to be applied to this project. (A 19% match is required for all Smart Start funded projects.) Grant timeframe is July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.

FY: 2024-2025

Total Smart Start funds requested: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Cash Match & In-Kind Funds: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Project Cost:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your "Other Cash Match & In-Kind Funds" (include amount and sources):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*The applicant certifies that the information provided in this application is accurate as presented and applicant commits to comply with the provisions of Title II of the Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act and all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, as well as local regulations, policies, and expectations.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Authorized Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Application Detail

If you intend to apply for 2024-2025 Smart Start funds, you must contact Elisha Childers, Executive Director, at 828-262-5424 x 206 or [elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org](mailto:elisha@thechildrenscouncil.org) to obtain the current version of the **Smart Start Project Logic Model** that clearly describes the expectations that the NC Partnership for Children and the Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc. have for the activity. When indicated below, your responses should be based on the information in the current Logic Model, as well as the activity description and the program priorities that are in this packet. For current providers, responses to Part 1 should not exceed 5 pages in total. Please number your responses to correspond with the questions.

### Part 1: Program Information

1. How does the activity fit into your organization's vision, mission, and goals?
2. What experience does your organization have with this type of activity?
3. Does this proposed activity duplicate any other similar services that are currently being provided in the community? What similar services are already provided and how will it be duplicative?
4. How would your organization sustain the activity if Smart Start funds were not available?
5. How will you inform the public about this activity? How will you recruit participants?
6. How do you intend to meet the priorities indicated in the activity description, the program priorities as listed in this packet, and the logic model?
7. Answer the following questions based on the current Smart Start Activity Logic Model for the activity you are applying to provide:
  - A. Is there any other information you can provide, new or updated, to strengthen the Need Statement?
  - B. What are your projected Outputs for the bidding year: FY 2024-2025? (Outputs are the NUMBERS you intend to serve (How many parents, early childhood teachers, children, etc.)
  - C. What are your projected Outcomes for the bidding year FY 2024-2025? (Outcomes are the CHANGES or IMPROVEMENTS that will occur because of your project. (How much will average star ratings increase? How much did teachers increase their knowledge base?)
  - D. How will the Outcomes you've proposed impact either our county's Community Early Childhood Profile results (**ATTACHMENT E**) or other long term early childhood goals?

8. How will you work to identify children with special needs and work to engage them in a process to receive appropriate services?
9. How will you maximize the impact of your Smart Start funded project through collaboration and coordination of early childhood services? Please provide examples of how you intend to collaborate with other programs and projects and what the impact will be.

## Part 2: Budget Information

Please submit your budget information for **FY 2024-2025**. **Your total budget should reflect the estimated investment totals indicated in the Program Priorities.** Please use **ATTACHMENT B** to let us know how you would spend this estimated grant total in **FY 2024-2025** to meet the goals that have been established for your project.

You must also provide a detailed **Budget Narrative (ATTACHMENT C)** that clearly describes what has been included in each line item and justification for the funds requested. You must comply with the **Smart Start Cost Principles** for all expenses included in your budgets. A copy of the Smart Start Cost Principles is included as an additional attachment. All proposed expenditures will be reviewed carefully by the staff to make sure they are compliant with all Smart Start guidelines and definitions and unallowable expenses will be removed from your budget request. **Please be realistic and clear about what you will be able to accomplish.** Attach additional sheets as necessary.

You must include your anticipated in-kind and cash match funds, understanding that, if you receive Smart Start funds, you will be required to provide very specific documentation that verifies all contributions you claim. You must clearly describe all resources you plan to bring to this project and how funds will be leveraged including current funding sources and in-kind contributions. Be sure to include information about any other funding sources that will be tapped, including Medicaid or other sources of government funding.

**Remember: A 19% match is required for all Smart Start funded projects. Cash and in-kind contributions must meet auditing requirements. State funds cannot be used as a match for Smart Start funds. All cash and in-kind contributions must be received and expended within the fiscal year.**

If administrative or indirect costs (including salaries) are included, they should be put in the "Other Expenses" line item in the "Fixed Charges" category. The Children's Council of Watauga County, Inc. puts a maximum of 4% on any administrative overhead costs. (Be aware that all overhead costs must also go through a separate approval process with the NC Partnership for Children.) On **ATTACHMENT C** you must describe what costs are included and/or how the overhead is calculated. If salaries are included, specifically describe how the employee's time will be spent, demonstrating total use to Smart Start activities if total salary is paid through Smart Start or the appropriate percentage depending on

leveraged salary funding. For example, if you use a portion of time of an administrative employee, how will you document the number of hours spent on Smart Start activities? You may attach additional documentation that describes how the administrative costs are allocated. If you need any technical assistance, please call our office at 828-262-5424.

If you are proposing to request funds for staff, please fill out **ATTACHMENT D: Proposed Smart Start Funded Staff** providing detail about what the proposed staff members will be doing and how you have determined the percentage of time that employee will be spending on the Smart Start project, and how that relates to the percentage of funding you are requesting for that position.

### **Part III: Additional Information Required**

Please provide the following information (if applicable) with your application.

- Names, addresses, phone numbers of the members of your Board of Directors
- For non-profit; copy of 501(c)3 documentation
- One copy of most recent audit or financial statement