REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FY24 – 25 Activity Funding Application

Background and Purpose

Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) works to ensure that children birth to five, who are being marginalized, and their families have equitable access to affordable and culturally-affirming early childhood programs and services. In support of this vision, WCSS partners with families and early childhood organizations to build and maintain access to affordable and culturally-affirming programs and services through equitable funding processes and collaborative capacity building efforts in Wake County's communities. Through this Request for Proposal, WCSS seeks to identify programs and/or proposed models that will provide direct services to children, families, child care facilities or community organizations, in alignment with evidence-based implementation, WCSS strategic priorities and established community need.

The WCSS strategic framework includes goals and objectives which will guide the planning and implementation of services through the FY24-27 funding period. The framework includes one overarching goal for all funded partners and three goals that align with strategies and objectives at the child, family or early care and education level. The overarching goal, our systems goal, states that: children and families are supported by a strong, diverse, connected, and integrated early childhood system that promotes results. The remaining three goal areas are: 1) children are healthy and developmentally ready for school, 2) children are in safe, supportive home environments and 3) children are in high quality care that contributes to positive outcomes. In addition, the plan also includes three priority focus areas – advancing racial and ethnic equity, enhancing family engagement and leadership, and implementation of data-informed decision making.

The primary responsibilities for a funded program include the following:

- Deliver program to target clients (children, families, child care facilities or community stakeholders)
- Implement proposed services based on an approved evidence-based model based on the North Carolina Partnership for Children's Smart Solutions catalog (**https://www.smartsolutionscatalog.com/nc/browse**)
- 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.

- Plan and implement additional work in alignment with WCSS strategic framework priority areas including, but not limited to, development of program-level plans to advance racial equity and family engagement/ leadership and opportunities to work with other community partners and deliver culturally-affirming services.

RFP Requirements

All applicants must:
- Submit an electronic application packet through the online portal by Monday, March 4th at 5pm (EST)

- Direct clarifying questions to Bryce McClamroch at bmcclamroch@wakesmartstart.org

FY24 – 27 Funding Application Packet

The electronic funding packet consists of three primary forms: agency background information, the application questions and the program budget. Completed application packets will be reviewed by the WCSS Allocations Committee. The WCSS Allocations Committee includes staff (excluding those staff also applying for funding) 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 April and decision letters will be sent in May.

A) Agency Background Information
   - Agency Name and Address
   - Agency Tax Status and Tax ID Number

B) Application Questions

The funding application primarily consists of six questions, five with open ended responses that will be scored (for a full list of questions, please see Attachment A). Each question will be scored from a range of 1 to 10 points, with a total possible score of 50 points (scoring rubric included as Attachment B). Application questions align with the WCSS strategic priorities, as well as covering topics such as:

- Plans to address racial equity and provide culturally affirming care through service delivery
- Description of services and experience working with the target clients
- Description of plans 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 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 occurring virtually and one at the offices of WCSS. Please select the session which is most convenient for your schedule. The meeting presentation will also be recorded and posted on our webpage. Those who are interested can use the opportunity to ask questions during sessions and can also schedule an additional follow-up meeting (virtual or in-person) before or during the application process.

Wednesday, January 17th (in-person)
3:00 - 4:30pm

WCSS Training Room
4901 Waters Edge Dr
Raleigh, NC 27601

Thursday, January 18th (virtual)
10:00 - 11:30am

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUuc-2pqzMtGNKMDfdH-t_lKXnxIyhs1HLt

WAKE COUNTY SMART START FY 24-25 FUNDING APPLICATION

> *The use of evidence-based practices was mandated by the North Carolina legislation in 2011 for programs that operate using Smart Start funds. Evidence-based programs or practices are those that have repeatedly and consistently demonstrated desirable outcomes through application of scientific research methods (replicated experimental, experimental, and quasi experimental).*

1. **Indicate which evidence-based model from the NCPC Smart Solutions catalog (https://www.smartsolutionscatalog.com/nc/browse) you are proposing to implement.**

2. **Describe how you will deliver this program to the community and your experience serving your target clients (children, families, child care, community organizations, etc.).** Make sure your description includes the number of years your program has provided services to your target clients, your proposed staffing plan, proposed reach/scope of services and method of service delivery (virtual or in-person, objective of client contacts and contact frequency).

> *The WCSS Strategic Framework outlines the objectives and strategies that will support a transition to services which are rooted in racially equitable practice, family engagement and leadership, and data-informed decision-making. The following questions will ask you about your program implementation through the lens of our Strategic Framework's priorities and objectives.*

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3. Our Strategic Framework defines culturally affirming as the following:
   - Different cultural backgrounds are assets to care and learning
   - Strengths-based approach to caregiving and teaching
   - Rooted in respect and appreciation for the role of culture in children's learning and development
   - Supports the continued development of children's home or tribal languages by authentically incorporating them into the learning environment ("linguistic affirmation")

Question: Describe how you use, or plan to use, a culturally affirming approach in your work with families (or to support a culturally affirming approach in stakeholders working families, if you do not directly serve families).

4. Our Strategic Framework defines racial equity as the following:
   - Process of eliminating racial disparities
   - Outcomes are not predicted by your race

Question: Describe how you use, or plan to use, racially equitable practices in your service delivery.

5. Our Strategic Framework defines Family Engagement and Leadership as the following:
   - Power is shared between families, teachers, and administrators
   - Families, teachers, and administrators have a shared understanding
   - Recognizes families as children's first and most important teachers
   - Centers families in decision-making
   - Is culturally defined

Our definition and objectives and strategies are based on [North Carolina's Family Engagement and Leadership Framework.](#)

Question: Describe how families (or stakeholders working with families, if you do not directly serve families) are empowered or could be empowered to be actively involved with the program beyond direct service delivery?

For example, child care providers are supported in developing strategies for encouraging parent participation in a center/home, parents are asked for their feedback and are engaged in discussions which change how services are delivered or a parent is an active member on a program planning or advisory committee.
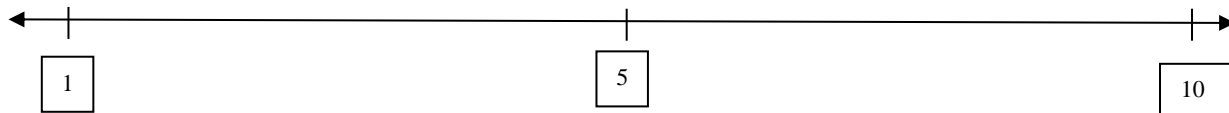
6. Our Strategic Framework prioritizes data-informed decision making. Data is information that can be collected to guide programs in measuring their progress and impact. This information can include numbers (outputs/outcomes), as well as stories which capture the experiences of your clients.

Question: *Describe what kind of information you will collect and use to measure the need and/or effectiveness of your program?*

WAKE COUNTY SMART START FY 24-25 FUNDING APPLICATION RUBRIC

Question 2: Describe how you will deliver this program to the community and your experience serving your target clients (children, families, child care, community organizations, etc.). Make sure your description includes the number of years your program has provided services to your target clients, your proposed staffing plan, proposed reach/scope of services and method of service delivery (virtual or in-person, objective of client contacts and contact frequency).

Rate their response from 1 to 10.   _____ / 10

1

- The plan for program implementation is unclear and disorganized.

- Target population is unclear.

- Unclear process in identifying target clients.

- No previous experience serving target clients

5

- Description of program implementation includes **some** of the details outlined to score a 10.

- Description of target population is missing details.

- Plan for how to identify target clients is missing information.

- 1-3 years of experience serving target clients

10

- Plan on how they will implement their program includes –
Staffing plan inclusive of staff credentials and training, how they will implement their program, frequency/dosage, and location(s)

- Target population is clearly defined.

- Clear plan on how they will identify target clients.

- At least 3 years of experience serving target clients.

Question 3: Describe how you use, or plan to use, a culturally affirming approach in your work with families (or to support a culturally affirming approach in stakeholders working families, if you do not directly serve families).
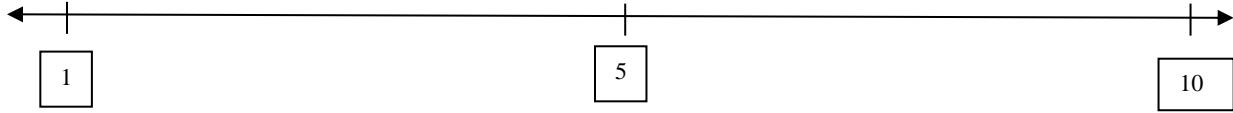
Rate their response from 1 to 10   _____ / 10

1	5	10

- The program and/or its stakeholders use a deficit/needs based approach and does not value the knowledge of families and communities they are serving.

- Program and/or stakeholder staff **are not** culturally and linguistically matched with the families they are serving.

- Program and/or stakeholder implementation strategies **do not** incorporate families' cultural identities and lived experiences

- The program and/or stakeholder **does not consistently** center services through a strengths-based approach or how they value the knowledge of families and communities they are serving.

- There are **some** efforts to match staff culturally and linguistically to their clients.

- The program and/or stakeholder **do not fully** incorporate families' cultural identities and lived experiences.

- Program and/or stakeholder center services and strategies through a strengths-based approach that values the knowledge of families and communities they are serving.

- Program/stakeholder staff are culturally and linguistically matched with the families/community they are serving.

- Program/stakeholder implementation strategies incorporate families' cultural identities and lived experiences.

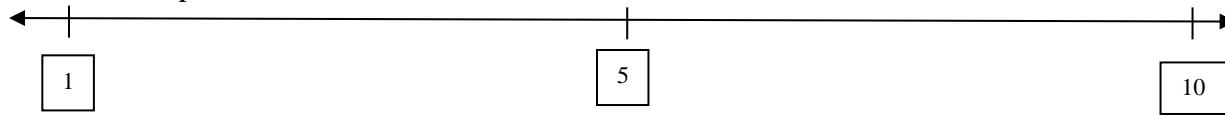**Question 4: Describe how you use, or plan to use, racially equitable practices in your service delivery.**

Rate their response from 1 to 10 _____ / 10

| 1 | 5 | 10 |

- Program **does not** prioritize addressing bias, racial equity, anti-racist practices, and inclusion by building it into strategies and practices.

- Program **does not** make it a priority to understand families' experiences and break down barriers created by structural and individual racism and other types of discrimination.

- Program staff **do not** attend training and professional development opportunities focused on equity, anti-bias, anti-racism and/or culturally affirming practices.

- Program builds in racial equity, anti-racist practices, inclusion, and anti-bias into **some** of its strategies and practices. There seems to be uneven implementation and/or unclear how this is done.

- Program makes **some** attempts to understand families' experiences and break down barriers created by structural and individual racism.

- Program staff attend **some** training and professional development focused on equity, anti-bias, anti-racism and/or culturally affirming practices, but it is not an ongoing practice or expectation. Done one time or to check off a box.

- Program prioritizes addressing bias, racial equity, anti-racist practices, and inclusion by building it into strategies and practices. Response is clear as to how this is done and implemented.

- Program makes it a priority to understand families' experiences and break down barriers created by structural and individual racism and other types of discrimination.

- Program staff continually attend training and professional development opportunities focused on equity, anti-bias, anti-racism and/or culturally affirming practices.

  It is part of staff onboarding and continued training/professional development.

a partner in the smart start network

Question 5: Describe how families (or stakeholders working with families, if you do not directly serve families) are empowered or could be empowered to be actively involved with the program beyond direct service delivery.
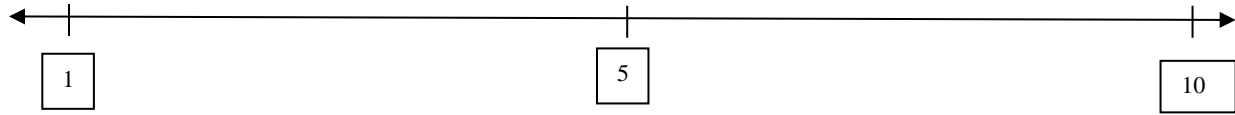
Rate their response from 1 to 10 _____ / 10

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1                          5                          10
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- Families and other stakeholders are only seen as recipients of the program.

- Program **does not** make decisions to benefit families by partnering with parent leaders or other community stakeholders from the start and continually.

- Families, community stakeholders and staff **do not** work together to design, implement, and evaluate programming, policies, and practices for the program.

- Families and community stakeholders are **sometimes** participants in creating goals and decisions to strengthen children's well-being, development, and learning.

- Program **sometimes** makes decisions with families and community stakeholders but the work is not done consistently.

- Staff **sometimes** seek feedback from parents and community stakeholders to support program design and implementation.

- Families and other community stakeholders are equal partners and active participants in goals and decisions about children's well-being, development, and learning.

- Program makes decisions with, not for, families and stakeholders, supporting partnerships from the start and continually.

- Families, community stakeholders and staff work together to design, implement, and evaluate programming, policies, and practices for the program.

Question 6: Describe what kind of information you will collect and use to measure the need and/or effectiveness of your program?

Rate their response from 1 to 10   _____ / 10

| 1 | 5 | 10 |

1
- Data **is not** collected by the program.

- Program **does not** use either quantitative or qualitative data: it does not use "experiences" or "metrics/numbers."

- Program **does not** use measures and/or feedback loops for continuous program improvement.

5
- **Some** measures of success are inclusive of what is meaningful to families/communities they serve, but primarily derived from funders and/or program model.

- **Some** data is collected about the experiences of their clients (e.g., how families/target population experience the program), but no clear plan on how to use the data.

- Program uses **some** measures and/or feedback loops for **some** continuous program improvement.

10
- Measures of success are inclusive of what is meaningful to families/communities they serve.

- Data collected and used is inclusive of experiences of their clients (e.g., how families/target population experience the program). This can include surveys, interviews, focus groups, or feedback forms.

- Program uses measures and/or feedback loops for continuous program improvement.