Early Childhood Education Committee

August 4, 2026

WELCOME

Welcome new committee members:

- Kara Lauffer
- Maura Davis
- Stephanie Jones

Welcome guests present for the community partner engagement session

AGENDA

Minutes:

- Approval of minutes from June 2, 2026

New Business:

- Community Partner Engagement on the Focused Investment Plan

FOCUSED INVESTMENT PLAN

Purpose: Define & implement a new focused funding strategy

Deliverables

- Updated committee focus (goal & strategies)
- Updated funding priorities (continued and/or new)
- Performance measures
- Multi-year implementation plan

Approach

- Build on results-to-date
- Respond to current conditions
- Review models for local government investment
- Utilize data
- Engage impacted populations
- Maximize impact & sustainability

FOCUSED INVESTMENT PLAN

Aug 2024
Project launched

Aug 2025
Project relaunched post-Helene

May-June 2026
Determine focus area(s) to be scoped



Aug-Dec 2026
Design program scope(s)

Jan-June 2027
Finalize priorities & identify grantees/ contractors for new focused funding

July 2027
Begin new funding

COMMITTEE FOCUS

Draft as of Aug 2026

GOAL:

Expand access to reliable, high-quality early care and education that:

- optimizes children's learning and development;
- is delivered by well-prepared and adequately compensated educators;
- enables families to fully participate in the workforce; and
- prioritizes those with the greatest needs.

STRATEGIES:

Provide grants to expand access to reliable, high-quality early care and education.	**Partner with community leaders** and other investors to build a coordinated, cohesive system.	**Advocate for state and federal policy solutions** to strengthen early childhood education and development.

PRIORITIES:

Funding Priorities Under development	**Partnership Priorities** To be developed	**Policy Priorities** To be developed

Our focus today!

POTENTIAL FUNDING PRIORITIES

- **Infant & Toddler Slots:** Funding to increase access to high quality early care and education for children birth to age 3
- **NC Pre-K Enhancement:** Continuation of the local supplement to the NC Pre-K program, known as “Buncombe Pre-K”
- **Grants for Workforce Programs:** Funding for programs that recruit, train, develop, support and retain the ECE workforce
- **Teacher & Staff Supplements:** Payments to early care and education professionals to aid with recruitment/retention
- **Pyramid Model:** Funding for programs following evidence-based models to promote healthy social-emotional development in young children and prevent challenging behaviors
- **Innovation Grants:** Funding for projects to support creative ideas, provide seed funding, and support one-time needs

COMMUNTITY PARTNER SURVEY

We asked applicants and grantees to share their thoughts via a written survey

- Open for 5 weeks (6/17/26 – 7/22/26)
- Multilingual (English & Spanish)

Received 31 total responses, including:

- Feedback on what worked well/what was challenging on the previous funding priorities and grant process
- Level of support for/comments on the potential new funding priorities

See meeting packet for Partner Survey Results

LET'S DISCUSS

