Request for Smart Start Funding Proposals
FY2027-2028, FY2028-2029 and FY2029-2030

The Cabarrus County Partnership for Children, Inc. (CCPFC) 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.

RFP Release Date:	**October 16, 2026**
Bidders' Conference:	Tuesday, November 3, 2026 at 9:30 AM Via Zoom, please contact Starla Hatley for registration link: starla@cabarruspartnership.org
Submit Questions to:	Starla Hatley, Program Manager starla@cabarruspartnership.org
Deadline to Submit Questions:	Friday, December 4, 2026 – 5:00 p.m.
Deadline for Proposals:	Friday, December 11, 2026 – 4:30 p.m.
Electronic Submission:	Attention: Starla Hatley starla@cabarruspartnership.org
Grant Award notices:	After the February 23, 2027 Cabarrus County Partnership for Children Board meeting, no later than March 5, 2027.

Applications should be submitted both in hard copy and electronic format no later than 4:30 p.m. on December 11, 2026. 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 Cabarrus County Partnership for Children (CCPFC) is the local non-profit organization that administers Smart Start funds in Cabarrus 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 Cabarrus 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 Cabarrus 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 Cabarrus 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 CCPFC's priorities of mental health, transportation, housing, 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.

A. The term of any resulting award is anticipated to be for three fiscal years from July 1, 2027 until June 30, 2030.
B. The bidder must submit an annual budget 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.
C. Funds may not be used for goods or activities that are currently funded by other government sources to ensure no supplantation of funds.
D. 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.
E. 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.
F. CCPFC will not contract with any applicant that fails to provide all required information and documentation. After all required information and documentation has been submitted, CCPFC will prepare the contract, notify the applicant, and submit the contract for signature. A template of the contract that the applicant will be required to sign is available upon request.
G. If proposals are rejected, applicants will be notified promptly by CCPFC.

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

A. Work collaboratively with the CCPFC and across agency lines in a community context, to include:
    a. Provide updates immediately if leadership of organization is changing; CCPFC must be informed prior to changes occurring.
    b. Any changes that are going to be made to the program as it is outlined in the proposal; CCPFC must be informed prior to changes occurring.
B. Regularly disclose that the activity receives funding from Smart Start and the CCPFC.
C. Be available for monitoring visits and meetings held by the CCPFC.
D. Comply with fiscal, program and evaluation reporting requirements and deadlines. Agree to evaluation of data collection to capture information around racial equity.
E. Revert funds not spent by the end of the fiscal year, unless requested to do so prior to that date.
F. Understand that funds must be spent according to the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) Smart Start Cost Principles [found at www.cabarruspartnership.org). If contract terms are not met, funds may be discontinued and any unspent funds returned to the CCPFC.
G. Comply with NCGS 143C-6.2 reporting requirements https://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_143C/GS_143C-6-23.html
H. Participate in any audit/evaluation of the CCPFC that is required by the NC General Assembly or any other State officials/agencies.
I. Maintain the necessary fidelity bond and commercial liability insurance coverage required.
J. Return items purchased with Smart Start funds should the entity no longer perform the services for which the assets were purchased.
K. Provide the following information for the contract administrator – name; title; telephone and fax numbers; and mailing address, including street address and zip code.
L. If a non-profit entity, provide a copy of the Internal Revenue Code 501(c)3 determination letter received from the IRS.
M. Provide No Overdue Taxes Certification.
N. Provide Board of Directors list (if a 501(c)3).
O. Provide a copy of the Board Approved Bylaws (if a 501(c)3).
P. Provide proof of insurance which may include, but not be limited to, the following:
    a. Workers' compensation.
    b. General business liability.
    c. Professional liability.
    d. Fidelity bonding (e.g. employee crime or dishonesty).
    e. Automobile (owned, hired or non-owned).
Q. Completed Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form W-9.
R. 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 childcare 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 applicants' programs must be located and provide the service within Cabarrus 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. CCPFC 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 Program Oversight Committee of the CCPFC Board**. **Nothing may be added to any application after it has been submitted, including a signed certification page**. Complete applications from eligible applicants will then be forwarded to the grant review committee who will review, score and rank the applications.

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

The Program Oversight 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 February 23, 2027, Cabarrus County Partnership for Children Board meeting, no later than March 5, 2027.

The Program Oversight 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.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) ☐Most recent audited financial statement ☐Detailed and Narrative Budget tab (3 yrs) ☐Summary budget tab (this will auto populate)	☐Logic Model tab (3 yrs)
☐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 starla@cabarruspartnership.org) with one printed copy, with original signatures, on 8 ½ x 11 inch white paper submitted to the CCPFC 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 4:30 P.M. ON DECEMBER 13, 2024

- One (1) electronic submission of the Application, Attachment B, and if applicable, new applicant documents, should be sent to starla@cabarruspartnership.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 CCPFC drop box on or before the due date/time. To use the CCPFC drop box you must enter the building between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday.

Cabarrus County Partnership for Children
1307 South Cannon Boulevard
Kannapolis, NC 28083

P.O. Box 87
Kannapolis, NC 28082

Questions and Answers

- All questions must be submitted in writing (email preferred to starla@cabarruspartnership.org, on or before 5:00 p.m. on December 4, 2026.
- A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) will be posted and maintained on our website at www.cabarruspartnership.org during the RFP period. Responses to questions will be updated no less than twice weekly on Mondays and Thursday with a final list posted on Monday, December 7, 2026.

Technical Assistance

- A special bidder's conference will be held on November 3, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom. All interested applicants are strongly encouraged to participate. Please contact Starla Hatley at 704-933-8278, option 6, or at starla@cabarruspartnership.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 CCPFC website. No questions will be responded to verbally except during the bidder's conference on November 3, 2026.