



EACH CHILD. EVERY COMMUNITY.

*Annual Report to
The North Carolina General Assembly
for Fiscal Year 2021-2022*

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The Smart Start Network	4
How It Works	5
Funding	7
Raising the Quality of Early Care and Education	8
Supporting Parenting for North Carolina Families	12
Promoting Early Literacy	15
Advancing Child Health and Nutrition	16
Responding to COVID-19	17
Enhancing and Supporting Birth-to-Five Systems Building Efforts	18
A Comprehensive Approach to Early Childhood	22
Legislative and Policy	23
Graphs, Charts, and Supporting Data	24
Appendix: Smart Start Program Match & Fundraising Report	32

Introduction

Dear Members of the North Carolina General Assembly:

It is my pleasure to provide the 2021- 2022 Annual Report of The North Carolina Partnership for Children and Smart Start, in response to G.S. 143B-168.12(d).

The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) and Smart Start Network is committed to ensuring each child in North Carolina has the tools they need to thrive. Last year, the pandemic changed how our youngest children grew and learned and transformed how early care and education providers cared for and educated young children—with many providers experiencing added stress and intense pressures, especially in the recruitment, retention, and compensation of the early childhood education workforce. This year, the early childhood system is continuing to recover.

For NCPC and the Smart Start Network, the pandemic exacerbated already existing challenges, such as the need to provide services to those families who were historically under-resourced. Smart Start Local Partnerships responded innovatively to foster new partnerships with businesses and faith-based organizations, among others, to serve children and families. They also sustained and strengthened local collaboration already underway to provide evidence-based and evidence-informed programming and supports to children and families. The ability for Local Partnerships to serve their communities with flexibility is a key asset for extending programming and services across the state during times of crisis such as a pandemic and its aftermath.

In the last fiscal year, NCPC embarked on multiple initiatives that highlight and reinforce the Smart Start Network's central role in North Carolina's early childhood system. These initiatives were focused on enhancing and supporting a stronger, more effective birth-through-five system. NCPC worked networkwide to provide infrastructure support and leadership development to Smart Start Local Partnership staff. Additionally, the Smart Start Network was instrumental in building out supports to increase childhood resiliency and in establishing a statewide home visiting and parenting education system.

NCPC and the Smart Start Network are deeply grateful for the North Carolina General Assembly's support in building outstanding programs for North Carolina's young children. With consistent funding, Smart Start Local Partnerships are a critical support for stronger families and communities. In this impact report, we share how Smart Start Local Partnerships respond creatively to maximize their resources as public/private partnerships that best serve our state's youngest, reaching each child in every community.

Thank you.

In partnership,



Amy Stephens Cabbage,
President, The North Carolina Partnership for Children/Smart Start

The Smart Start Network

Smart Start is a Network of 75 nonprofit partnerships serving all 100 North Carolina counties. The Network is led by The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), which ensures fiscal and programmatic accountability and comprehensive, long-range strategic planning for the statewide Network to create better outcomes for children and families.

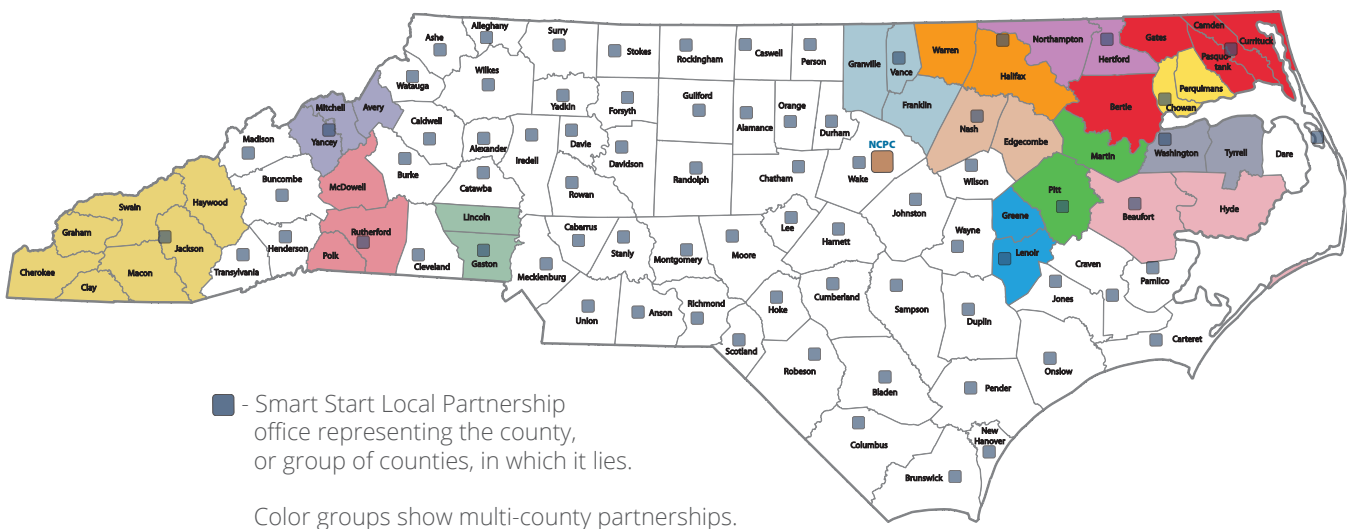
Smart Start brings communities together—parents, early learning and health professionals, faith-based leaders, educators, business leaders, and elected officials—to coordinate services and address service gaps to support children. Smart Start also provides tools and resources to fully engage young children in learning opportunities, so they can grow to be healthy, productive, and well-rounded students, parents, workers, and leaders.

This support is crucial as many children do not have access to the experiences or environments that foster healthy brain

development, such as supportive child-parent interactions, effective early education, and excellent health care.

The Network's structure provides a system for statewide governance and innovation with local flexibility. By building a more comprehensive system of programming as well as a stronger, more complete infrastructure in which to support children, the Smart Start Network is better able to create long-term change.

Serving children from birth-to-five, Smart Start works across the state to raise the quality of early care and education, strengthen families, improve child health and development, and support early literacy. Smart Start also works statewide to provide vital workforce supports as well as critical system-level support. The Network implements other state, federal, local, and private programs and services, such as NC Pre-K, child care subsidy, and Head Start, serving as North Carolina's system for childhood health, development, and learning.



How It Works

NCPC Supports Smart Start Local Partnerships

At the state level, NCPC supports data-driven results and accountability for the entire Network, ensuring state investments are producing strong outcomes for children and families. NCPC provides Local Partnerships with evidence on program outcomes to support informed budget choices that produce results. In addition, continuous fiscal and quality monitoring ensures effectiveness and promotes innovation. These activities include:

- Training partnership board members and staff on fiduciary oversight, protecting accountability in financial processes from budget oversight to contract management
- Monitoring partnerships to ensure compliance with state and federal laws, legislative mandates, and state policies
- Supporting centralized accounting and contracting that promote efficiency
- Guiding partnerships in selection and implementation of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs to achieve the best outcomes for children
- Assessing community assets and needs to determine how best to invest Smart Start funds to impact child well-being
- Reviewing programs at the local level to ensure services target and address unique community needs
- Facilitating the sharing of resources, innovative ideas, and solutions across the Smart Start Network so that individual counties benefit from collective knowledge
- Maintaining a centralized portal for collection of programmatic data including children served and outcomes for each activity
- Providing county-level measures of child well-being collected from state agencies to inform community planning

Smart Start Local Partnerships Create Community Impact

Smart Start's Local Partnerships have the flexibility and the data to determine how to improve the health, well-being, and development of children based on the needs and resources locally. Local Partnerships support the needs of children and families using a combination of state, federal, local, and private funds to provide comprehensive services and programs that support and strengthen early development by:

- Creating infrastructure for the delivery and implementation of sustainable evidence-based services
- Working with community organizations to improve coordination and alignment of services for children and families
- Ensuring early education is high quality, child-focused, and family-friendly
- Providing financial assistance to help families access early education
- Supporting the local infrastructure of NC Pre-K with financial resources and training
- Advancing child health and development through partnerships with early care and education programs and medical practices
- Supporting families with programs that improve parenting skills and encourage family engagement in children's development and education
- Promoting early literacy with programs that assist parents, teachers, and medical providers

With statewide governance and local data-driven decision-making, the Smart Start Network acts as an effective and efficient planning and delivery mechanism for North Carolina's early childhood system. The Network not only provides programs and services to families and children but also supports shared learning and innovation. Local partnerships are able to serve children as needed and leverage public and private dollars effectively, making North Carolina a leader in early care and education.

Smart Start Supports Birth-to-Five Systems Building Efforts

Smart Start creates critical impacts on the statewide early childhood system by:

- Coordinating the implementation of a delivery system and the creation of infrastructure to drive change across the state
- Launching Family Connects Pilots in eight rural counties as part of NCPC's work through the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) B-5
- Supporting family engagement and leadership coalitions in 14 Local Partnerships across the state to lift up family voice as part of NCPC's work through PDG B-5
- Investing in a series of projects to increase Smart Start capacity for systems leadership, supporting leadership development tools, creating opportunities for Smart Start Network-wide learning, strengthening data systems, and streamlining contracting as part of a multi-year grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation
- Launching and acting as the administrative and fiduciary agent for the North Carolina Home Visiting and Parenting Education (HVPE) System which works to align funding and resources for HVPE, improve services, and link programs to other supports.
- Convening and offering support to local coalitions to address adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) as part of the NC Healthy and Resilient Communities Initiative which works to build resilience across the state
- Working to promote racial equity in the state's early childhood system, with a workgroup of Smart Start Network staff focusing on reducing preschool expulsions

Funding

Smart Start is a national model of a successful public-private partnership. The public funding creates infrastructure that allows private dollars to flow to each county quickly and efficiently, delivering significant impact to children and families. By investing in collaboration and collective impact initiatives across the Network, Smart Start builds local community capacity to leverage existing resources.

In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, Local Partnership expenditures of state Smart Start funds totaled \$145 million. Of this \$145 million, \$65.7 million was spent on subsidy; \$37.7 million towards early care and education expenses such as child care, teacher technical assistant, and professional development supplements; and \$20.3 million on family support programs and strategies.

Additionally, out of the \$145 million expended by Local Partnerships, \$142.4 million was part of Smart Start's initial annual funding and \$2.3 million was a portion of Smart Start's additional \$10 million recurring funding. Because of timeline constraints, the majority of the additional funding was carried forward to FY 2021-2022 to ensure intentional implementation of funds.

Local Partnerships that utilized their portion of the \$10 million in funding in 2022 were able to spend strategically, investing funds in

target areas with increased needs due to the pandemic. Examples of investments included increased staff compensation and WAGE\$ funding.

NCPC's expenditures totaled \$5.71 million. Of this amount, \$1.81 million was Local Partnership funding managed by NCPC to help Local Partnerships build capacity and to meet legislative requirements, including the fiscal accountability system and Local Partnership audits. The remaining \$3.91 million was used by NCPC to ensure that Smart Start met all legislatively mandated requirements and operated to the highest standards of fiscal and programmatic integrity. These expenditures also included the provision of leadership in best practices and evidence-based and evidence-informed services, as well as nonprofit management and fund development support.

Federal, local, and private funders have invested millions of dollars in Smart Start to support children and families. In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, NCPC and Start Local Partnerships leveraged an additional \$48.1 million for the state's young children, including \$38.9 million in cash and \$9.2 million from in-kind contributions.

See Charts and Tables on page 24

Raising the Quality of Early Care and Education

Smart Start is committed to increasing access and raising the quality of early care and education across the state. Smart Start improves quality for children at early learning sites by offering professional development, technical assistance, and other supports to maintain and raise the quality (and/or licensed) star rating.

In North Carolina, licensed child care centers and homes have star ratings between 1 and 5 stars, with 5 stars being the highest. During the pandemic, the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) paused assessments for star ratings due to safety concerns, and in 2022, fewer centers and homes received a star level assessment.

Additionally, with the pandemic over, the number of child care centers receiving support from Smart Start increased. In 2021, Local Partnerships supported 607 child care homes and centers serving 18,210 children. In 2022, this number grew to Smart Start supporting 707 child care homes and centers serving 28,270 children. The majority of the child care programs supported by partnerships were star-rated; however, 63 were not star rated due to exemptions. Smart Start continues to work with these programs to improve quality for children and families.

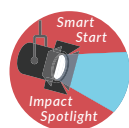
The Smart Start Network found innovative ways to continue to support providers as the state recovers from the pandemic. Local Partnerships

“I learned to ask more open-ended questions to encourage their thinking skills. When I asked more questions, I got better responses from the children, and they were more engaged. Participating in MTP has helped me look at interactions differently.”

– Robeson County Partnership for Children, My Teaching Partner (MTP) program participant.

However, the Smart Start Network continued to improve the landscape of early care and education throughout the pandemic. The average star rating for children enrolled in regulated early education programs across the state improved from 2.76 in 2001 to 4.28 in 2022. The percentage of children in 4- and 5-star programs increased from 33% in 2001 to over 70% in 2022, while the percentage of children in 1- and 2-star programs decreased from 46% in 2001 to less than 5% in 2022—demonstrating Smart Start’s role over the last 30 years in improving early education.

helped providers access needed supplies and stay up to date on health and safety regulations. The Network also provided support for providers seeking financial assistance.



Wilkes Community Partnership

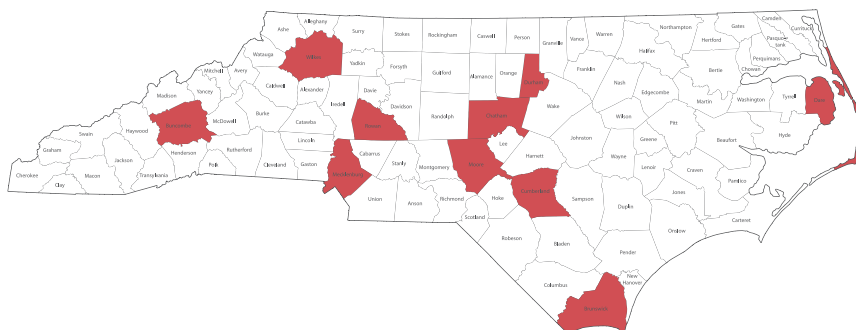
for Children’s Behavioral Specialist observed limited structure, an unstable routine, and very little rules or schedules. By visiting consistently, the specialist provided needed resources and was a model for teachers. After receiving support from Smart Start, children at the center had significant behavior improvements.



Children & Youth Partnership for

Dare County works to promote continuous quality improvement. A staff member encouraged participation in a director receiving technical assistance (TA). After TA, the program increased from a 2-star rating to a 4-star rating with a goal of improving to a 5-star program. The director now plans to apply for the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship and to take college courses.

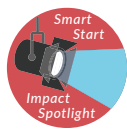
Spotlight on:



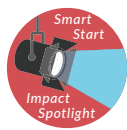
Ensuring a Strong Foundation for Early Care and Education

Smart Start works to create a strong foundation for programs and services to achieve successful outcomes, retain educated and qualified teachers, promote physical health and activity, and engage parents. NCPC works with statewide partners to ensure the latest research and effective programs are applied across the state, while Local Partnerships work directly with centers in each county to enhance effectiveness, which includes environmental ratings, teacher education and skill-building, and health and nutrition support.

Smart Start also works to bring together communities to support early education. This means not only working with individual centers but also ensuring positive transitions for children to kindergarten and helping centers raise awareness locally about how critical early education is to economic development.



Partners for Children & Families of Moore County facilitated 50 trainings for 291 early educators and provided technical assistance to 66 classrooms in 32 different licensed child care centers in FY21/22. The partnership also assisted two family child care homes and one center with acquiring their licenses!



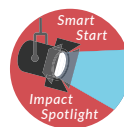
Chatham County Partnership for Children offered technical assistance for teachers at three different levels of intensity. The first workshop was designed to inspire teachers to incorporate and support a child's sense of curiosity, wonder, and scientific thinking. Participants made changes to their science centers and incorporated increased scientific exploration with children.

Infrastructure Support for NC Pre-K

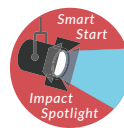
The NC Pre-K Program is designed to provide effective educational experiences to enhance school readiness for at-risk 4-year-olds. Funding for NC Pre-K is a blend of federal, state, and local funds, including funding from Smart Start. Across the state, Smart Start Local Partnerships help provide the infrastructure that supports NC Pre-K.

Smart Start partners with NC Pre-K providers to help eligible 4-year-olds access the program. Partnerships also co-chair the NC Pre-K Committees in all counties, administer the NC Pre-K program in 55 counties through separate contracts with the Division of Child Development and Early Education, and provide an additional \$8.3 million in funding for NC Pre-K classroom support. This collaboration and funding across the state helps to ensure high quality services and increase access for children.

Because there is local flexibility in how NC Pre-K is administered, Smart Start can support the program in ways that best meet the needs of families and school systems.



Smart Start of Brunswick County staff formed a relationship with a parent who was new to North Carolina. By building a relationship, the partnership was able to secure a parent representative for their NC Pre-K Committee to better NC Pre-K for more parents within the community!



Buncombe Partnership for Children and other organizations are working in Buncombe to support NC Pre-K. The partnership is doing so through \$3.2 million in funding approved by Buncombe County Commissioners to build on and strengthen the local NC Pre-Kindergarten Program. The 2-year pilot will address many ongoing issues

with funding, staffing, and training for the program. Proposed solutions include filling a gap between state funding and providers, paying NC Pre-K teachers on par with K-12 public school teachers, increasing teacher assistant salaries, and more. If successful, they could double the number of spots in local NC Pre-K programs by 2030!

A Value-Add to Subsidy Funds – Supporting Both Children and Parents

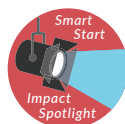
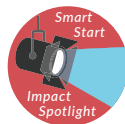
Child care subsidies provide financial assistance to help children and families access early care and education. Subsidy funds ensure that parents can enter or remain in the workforce, gain skills, work through times of crisis, and address special needs in their children.

Many Smart Start Local Partnerships manage subsidy funds locally to boost early education effectiveness while increasing access for children who are most under-resourced. NCPC supports subsidy innovation by sharing successes and best practices across the Network.

With assistance from the **The Smart Start Partnership for Children of Cumberland County** a single father was able to secure child care to maintain his full-time employment.

The services provided allowed the father to maintain his work goals while providing his child access to early care and education.

Smart Start Rowan uses its subsidy funds for its Star License Enhancement activity. The Enhancement provides payments to 4 and 5-star centers serving subsidized children, offsetting costs for providers. These funds can be used by education programs to pay for staff benefits, such as vacation or sick leave, as well as health insurance; teacher tuition; and bonuses or stipends.



*“A timely and much needed group focused on what’s truly important...well-being and connection. I cannot say enough good things about how this group [the Technical Assistant Community of Practice] began and has evolved. The facilitators poured their hearts and intentions into creating an atmosphere that is welcoming, practical, and offers a refreshing pace to uncertain times in our field. Grateful that this is offered to our community of Technical Assistance Providers”
– A Technical Assistant Community of Practice Participant.*

Smart Start’s Coaching for Technical Assistants

Coaching for Technical Assistants grew out of Shape NC, a Smart Start Initiative that focused on working with Local Partnerships, technical assistance providers, and child care programs to implement best practices in physical activity, child nutrition, and outdoor play and learning environments.

Coaching for Technical Assistants uses the essential lesson from Shape NC—technical assistance is a key support for child care providers—to consistently incorporate best practices. The project will also expand coaching and professional supports for Child Care Health Consultants (CCHC) and technical assistants in the Smart Start Network to provide coaching and consultation to child care providers towards implementation of healthy best practices in the early care and education setting.

As part of this work, Coaching for Technical Assistants collaborated with GO NAPSACC/BAK to scale up Be Active Kids implementation across the state. Smart Start technical assistants will be equipped to provide BAK training, coaching, and consultation across all 100 counties to promote physical activity best practices in early care and education classrooms. Additionally, the current CCHC coaching model was reviewed to ensure effective implementation of learning

competencies, particularly regarding physical activity and nutrition in early education settings.

NCPC also led focus groups comprised of Smart Start Network staff to gain insight on supports needed for technical assistants and supervisors, the challenges facing technical assistants, and opportunities for success such as peer connections, well-being opportunities, and skill-building. Based on the focus groups, NCPC convened a Smart Start Technical Assistant Community of Practice for technical assistants across the state.

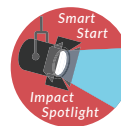
Coaching for Technical Assistants includes resource creation, the development of a technical assistant resource repository, and the creation of professional development and training opportunities to enhance teacher practice and effectiveness. These tools will provide technical assistants the opportunity to access comprehensive Shape NC inspired training resources, learning experiences, and coaching supports that correspond to TA capacity and experience.

Supporting the Early Care & Education Workforce

The pandemic shone a bright light on the workforce challenges that the early care and education field faced for years. Early educators continued to work during COVID-19, ensuring essential workers could stay on the job and providing children a safe place to learn and grow.

Unfortunately, many of those same professionals receive wages that are not nearly enough to make ends meet. North Carolina early education teachers make an average of \$12 per hour. Many professionals do not have access to health insurance or other benefits, and early education teachers are seven times more likely to live in poverty than public school teachers. In the wake of the pandemic, this workforce crisis became acute, as centers struggle to find and retain qualified teachers.

The Smart Start Network supports the early care and education workforce through statewide programs and innovative approaches developed by Local Partnerships. In collaboration with the Child Care Services Association, Smart Start implements the WAGE\$ program, which provides education-based salary supplements to teachers across the state. In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, 3,995 teachers received WAGE\$ supplements thanks to Smart Start. Local Partnerships also provide scholarships to support teachers' education and professional development and some share costs with other providers to offer benefits like health insurance.



Paige was a single mom new to the early education workforce. With no advanced training in early childhood development but eager to learn and grow, Paige received help from the Pathways to Accreditation Program at the **Children's Council of Watauga, Inc.** Pathways provides ongoing support to educators to increase positive teacher-child interactions, developmentally appropriate practices, and increase professionalism. After participating in the program, Paige completed her Associates degree, was hired as lead teacher, and is on her way to earning a bachelor's degree.



Smart Start of Mecklenburg County supported 600 teachers, paying out an average of \$2,300 per teacher for WAGE\$. The turnover rate of WAGE\$ recipients in the county is now 16% compared to 31% before the WAGE\$ program started!



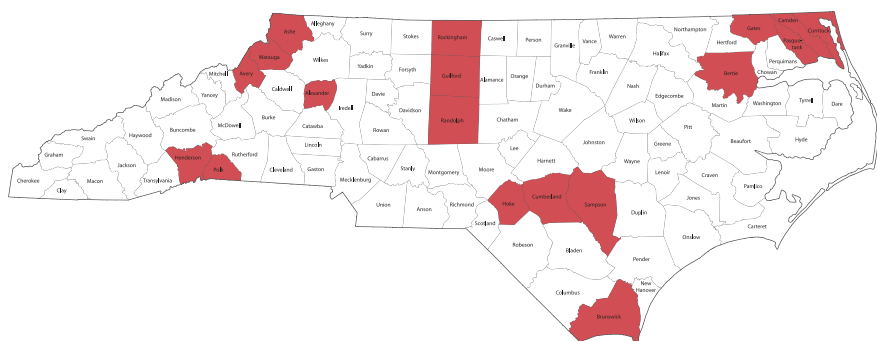
With assistance from the **Durham Partnership for Children**, a mother of a young infant diagnosed with Down Syndrome received a critical T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship. With the support of the program, she was able to enroll her son in a four-star school within two weeks. She now works full-time and her son is in a healthy and stable learning environment.

See Charts and Tables on page 25

Supporting Parenting for North Carolina Families

Recent research proves the tremendous long-term benefits of family support, parenting education, and home visiting programs. Studies of these programs have highlighted improved maternal and child health, increased maternal employment, and improved school readiness. Research has also produced new insights on the importance of parent-child interaction, managing behavior, and preparing children to enter school healthy and ready to succeed. With only about a quarter of North Carolina's children under 5 in licensed child care, providing parents and caregivers with the tools to help their children develop and learn is important for future success.

Spotlight on:

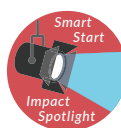


Additionally, increased stress on families and children during the COVID-19 pandemic made support for families more important than ever. Health concerns, economic uncertainty, and a decrease in early education options have combined to push families with young children to their limits. Parent and caregiver stress cascaded down to young children in ways science shows can be toxic, threatening their long-term well-being and development.

Smart Start provides critical infrastructure needed for families to receive support to be the best parents they can be. The Network offers evidence-based and evidence-informed, family-focused programs that offer support and training to promote positive parenting practices and increase parent confidence. NCPC supports these programs by evaluating the evidence around parent strengthening

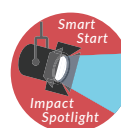
and engagement programs and providing technical assistance to implement them effectively. Parenting education programs give parents tools to increase their knowledge of development and positive parenting practices. Smart Start also provides needed referrals for other family support resources and coordinates support for children and families.

Home visiting programs provide unique support to help new parents and parents-to-be with access to education, information, and resources. For every dollar invested in home visiting, as much as \$5.70 is saved in long-term costs. Home visiting programs improve prenatal health and birth outcomes as well as child health outcomes by increasing immunization rates and by decreasing emergency visits and rates of abuse and neglect. NCPC plays a leading role in North Carolina's Home Visiting and Parenting Education System (HVPE), which aims to build a coordinated system to provide all families of young children access to a range of parenting education supports.

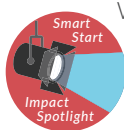


The **Albemarle Alliance for Children and Families**, serving children in Bertie, Camden, Currituck, Gates, and Pasquotank Counties, offered a 13-week Nurturing

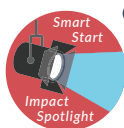
Father's program. A father taking part in the session, reported that he increased custody of his son, whom he previously only saw once a month. All the participants from the Spring 2022 session enjoyed the program so much that they requested a part two.



A woman raising her great-grandson participated in **Alexander County Partnership for Children's Circle of Parents** program. She remarked that the Circle gives her a small break and a chance to get tips from other mothers. The partnership also connected her with Early Head Start and she is now enrolled in a home visiting program.



What started out as a tantrum-filled experience at **Smart Start of Brunswick County's** Kaleidoscope Play & Learn (KPL) group, turned into a smiling and exciting time for a child and grandmother. Partnership staff shared resources and information related to developmentally appropriate expectations and now the grandmother has the support she needs!



Guilford County Partnership for Children's Parent Educator helped place a housing-insecure family with a toddler into permanent housing.

After obstacles and delays in the Section 8 housing voucher program for almost a year, the Parent Educator advocated on behalf of the family, and they were able to move into an apartment.

Launching Family Connects Pilots

Smart Start and Family Connects International, an evidence-based universal newborn home

visiting program, collaboratively launched a 3-year pilot program in eight counties to serve families of newborns. Participating counties include **Watauga, Ashe, Avery, Henderson, Polk, Cumberland, Hoke, and Robeson.**

Families served received access to comprehensive support to ensure healthy development of their newborn. Funded by the federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) B-5, the pilot sites combine the benefits of the Family Connects model with local Smart Start partnerships who have key community relationships and the ability to coordinate locally. The pilot sites were chosen in part because they were able to offer a regional approach (covering multiple counties) with a rural focus as accessing health resources in

rural areas can be challenging.

Within the first seven months of launching the Family Connects-Smart Start Pilots, over 1,000 families were served. These pilots create change by meeting families where they are, at a vulnerable time after the birth of a baby. Nurse home visitors share valuable information with families about the care and development of their newborn, create critical connections to resources in their community, assess and offer social-emotional support to families, and share mental health resources. Referrals are made for children and families to agencies and programs in their community. In fact, 98.7% of the families whose needs were assessed during a completed visit over the past year had some type of need identified by the nurse.

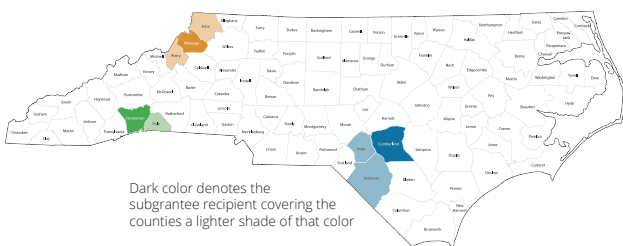
The Family Connects-Smart Start Pilots also make a difference at the community level by identifying health and medical trends or resource gaps and working with the local cross-sector Community Advisory Board to determine solutions. By utilizing Family Connects as a home visiting model while leveraging the impact of the Smart Start Network, children and families are receiving the support they need to thrive, right from the start.

Family Connects identified that many families were not yet reading to their babies, did not have physical books on hand, and did not recognize the need for supervised tummy time. Nurses were able to provide needed education and created a connection to Dolly Parton Imagination Library as well as other community resources.

Family Connects nurses can also create change for parents outside of the Family Connects program. At a birthing hospital, a Family Connects nurse realized that discharge education was lacking critical information for families. She is now training the unit coordinator at the hospital to enhance discharge education for families giving birth. Additional families can now receive the benefit of improved parental education!



Family Connects Subgrant Recipients and the Counties Covered



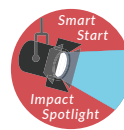
“Since beginning patient/family interactions in October 2021, I feel our team has made a strong connection and impact! Whether it is a new mom or someone with multiple children that we are working with, we have found that the topics we discuss, provide education on, and seek resources for, have made a difference by decreasing stress levels and easing this very busy postpartum period. This ranges from families with minimal complications to those with + substance use, DSS/CPS involvement, medical conditions, mental health issues, and lack of housing.” – Family Connects-Smart Start Pilot Site Team Member

Smart Start’s Family Engagement and Leadership Initiative

Smart Start is working to create change locally by intentionally expanding the roles that families play when it comes to programs and services in their communities. Family leaders are invited and welcomed to tables where decisions are being made that affect children and families. With PDG B-5 funding, NCPC worked with Local Partnerships, providing over a hundred technical assistance opportunities to partnership staff, hosting monthly Community of Practice meetings, and supporting Local Partnerships in building family engagement and leadership efforts.

NCPC also collaborated with MomsRising to create, Starting Strong, a comprehensive set of tools to support agencies as they develop cross-sector coalitions and center family voices. Additionally, NCPC partnered with CounterPart Consulting to provide training and coaching explicitly and intentionally centered on racial equity, as requested by Local Partnerships.

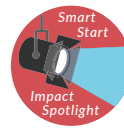
Building with, and not for families is impactful work that benefits communities, families and children. Imbedded in the Smart Start value-system is a family-centered mentality that recognizes that when families are seen as partners, organizations achieve sustainable outcomes for children.



“Our parents were integral to our receiving \$300,000 in new funds from the county, which was finalized at the

Nov. 1 meeting of the Randolph County Commissioners. Voices are being heard. Families with young people are being prioritized. This marks the first significant investment in the early years by our County Government. Two of our Coalition parent members were involved in this effort”-

Randolph County Partnership for Children
Staff Member



The Rockingham County Partnership for Children (RCPC) participated in Smart Start’s Family Engagement and Leadership

Initiative. As a result, family leaders identified personal professional goals and are now receiving intentional career development opportunities through RCPC’s partnership with a community college. Through these professional development opportunities, Family Engagement and Leadership Council members build capacity to advocate on behalf of the children and families in Rockingham County. RCPC is also working to ensure family leaders are at the center of its Early Care and Education Action Plan and are better equipped to apply for funding in the community due to the support and funding they received as part of the Family Engagement and Leadership Initiative.

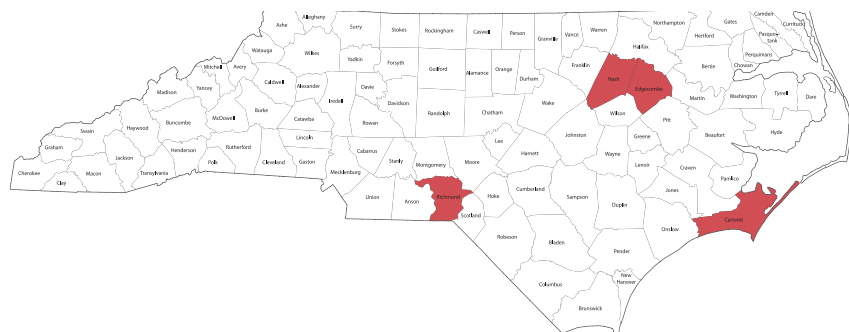
See Data and Tables on page 27

Promoting Early Literacy

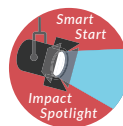
A majority of language development occurs in the first few years of life and Smart Start supports this development by providing programs needed for success in school, work, and life. Smart Start does so with its strong infrastructure, bringing proven national programs to the children and families of North Carolina through community collaborations.

Programs with wide reach across the state include Reach Out (ROR) and Read, Raising a Reader (RAR), and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL). These national programs promote positive language-rich interactions—by not only providing books, but by increasing reading frequency and skills, fostering language skills, and nurturing relationships.

Spotlight on:

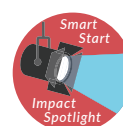


In 2017, the General Assembly allocated funding to NCPC to increase access to DPIL, an early literacy program that mails age-appropriate books monthly to registered children. The General Assembly's investment leveraged Smart Start's community roots and resulted in rapid expansion of the program. In less than two years, every child under the age of 5 in North Carolina had access to DPIL, and by June 30, 2022, the Smart Start Network distributed more than 11.7 million books to North Carolina children.



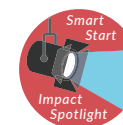
Down East Partnership for Children saw remarkable success in the promotion of early literacy programs through DPIL.

Through collaboration and business owners wanting to engage in this work, DPIL information is now in restaurants, local barber shops, and non-business settings, such as both county health departments and local medical clinics. Current enrollment in the program is 3,416 active children, ages 0 to 5.



In 2021, **Carteret Partnership for Children** partnered with Reach Out and Read to ensure all participating ROR clinics were supporting children from birth.

Clinics began giving books and early literacy guidance starting at birth, amounting to four additional ROR visits—a newborn, one-month, two-month, and four-month well-visits. This increased the dosage of ROR by 40% and amounted to 6,017 books for children at well-child checkups!



To encourage young boys to read, **Richmond County Partnership for Children** highlights male role models by engaging male leaders in the community to read publicly. From

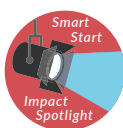
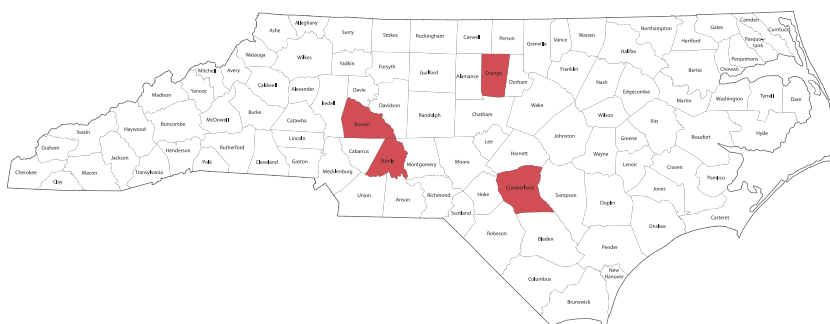
high school students to former and current mayors, this effort showcases how positive influences can create an impact.

See Data and Tables on page 28

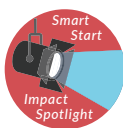
Advancing Child Health and Nutrition

Early health and development support is critical to ensuring children grow into healthy adults. Smart Start works to ensure children have the tools and resources they need to establish healthy behavior patterns. Local Partnerships work with medical providers, health departments, families, and other organizations to improve the health and safety of young children, prevent childhood obesity, and ensure more children are screened for developmental delays and referred to services for help long before they start school. By providing a delivery system and the infrastructure for health professionals to support children and families, children are better prepared to thrive.

Spotlight on:



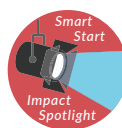
Smart Start Rowan provided health care to children in need, some without access to preventative health care. The partnership was able to do so through the local Health Department's Healthy Beginnings program, which utilizes Smart Start funds to assist with well and sick visits for children ages 0-5, as well as prenatal visits and interpreter services.



The Orange County's Partnership for Young Children began Growing Up Healthy to increase physical activity, nutrition, and outdoor learning best practices for children. The program recently assisted eight centers, resulting in teachers and children spending more time outside engaging in active play. The program also helped children endure the challenges of the pandemic.

Keeping Child Care Safe & Healthy

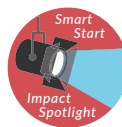
In addition to supporting Shape NC, Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) play an important role in ensuring the health and development of young children. CCHCs are trained health professionals who work with child care programs to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate strategies to achieve high quality, safe and healthy child care environments. NCPC and the Smart Start Network have worked with partners to expand access to CCHCs to every county in the state. Through the work of Smart Start, the North Carolina Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center, and other partners, 45 new counties now have access to CCHCs, bringing the total counties covered to 87. Although in-person visits by CCHCs to child care programs were limited during the pandemic, they continued to provide critical advice and support to child care providers.



The Partnership for Children of Cumberland County identified several children with special health care needs at a center.

CCHCs provided guidance on

obtaining medical action plans and medication administration documentation from parents/guardians. Health training was also provided to directors and staff. The members were very appreciative of the training as they felt more knowledgeable about caring for children.



CCHCs from **Stanly County Partnership for Children's** aided Albemarle Head Start during a potential bed bug outbreak. The

CCHC provided onsite assistance with diagnosing, referrals to medical facilities, and information on outbreaks.

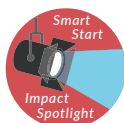
See Data and Tables on page 30

Responding to COVID-19

The pandemic was challenging for the entire state, but especially for our youngest children, their families, and those who support them. In fact, new research shows that children born during the pandemic score lower on standard measures of verbal, motor, and overall cognitive ability. Changing health, economic, and care conditions placed stress on both children and families. Child care providers faced intense business pressures, with reduced enrollment and rising costs.

Throughout the pandemic, the Smart Start Network responded to the needs of the children and families. While time has passed, many of the effects of the pandemic are still profound.

In fact, the pandemic not only created new challenges for early education but exacerbated existing ones. To overcome these challenges, the Smart Start Network works to ensure children receive the support they need through strategic partnerships and support.

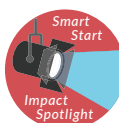


In Wake County, many families could not afford devices or an Internet connection, rendering them unable to access Wake County's system of life-changing services during the pandemic. Children were unable to connect with healthcare providers, caregivers,

teachers, and other providers who support young families. **Wake County Smart Start** invested \$310,250 in its connectivity initiative. Because of this investment, Wake Smart Start gave children and families 225 tablets and 25 Hot Spots, all pre-loaded with two years of wireless service. The partnership broke through the digital divide, connecting families to needed services!

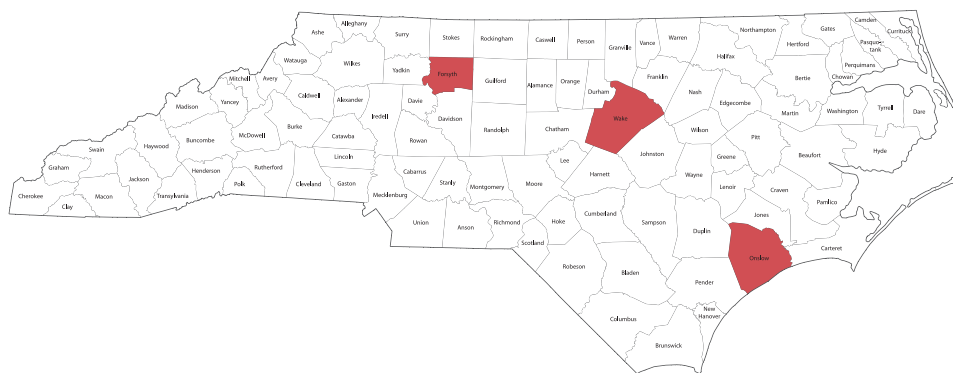


In Onslow County, first-time foster parents were connected to **One Place**. The child care resource and referral team helped narrow down the best child care center that fit their needs. The parents received valuable information to navigate the early childhood system for the first time.



Smart Start of Forsyth County collaborated with five other key non-profit organizations to apply for the American Rescue Plan Act funding. Within this proposal, the team focused on supporting 30 Pre-K Classrooms, 60 Pre-K educators, and up to 540 children. As part of the process, the partnership will be playing an instrumental role in supporting educators with equitable salary pay, retention bonuses, tuition assistance, and coaching support.

Spotlight on:



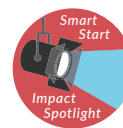
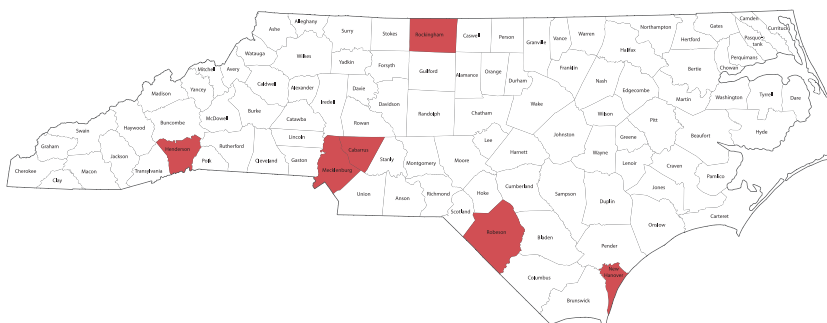
Enhancing and Supporting Birth-to-Five Systems Building Efforts

As Smart Start Local Partnerships support children, families, and early childhood professionals, NCPC works at the state level to strengthen governance coordination, as well as ensure the Network is meeting and responding to all legislative mandates and changes.

While the previous fiscal year was a year of transition and growth as NCPC launched a new Strategy Division, FY 2021-2022 led to even more innovation as the Smart Start Network worked to create systems-level change.

In partnership with state agencies, philanthropy, and other organizations, NCPC played a leading role in many statewide projects and initiatives to enhance the state's ability to support children and families.

Spotlight on:



Smart Start of Mecklenburg

County launched a landscape study of prenatal-to-age 3 services and supports. The goal of the study was to provide a comprehensive, baseline inventory of family services and support for families expecting and with a child between birth-to-three years old. The study will identify gaps and opportunities in service access and referral processes, provide recommendations for improving family utilization of relevant services, and support county efforts to build capacity to address the needs of families.

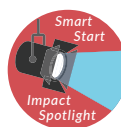
Smart Start Leadership Development through Systems-Building

Smart Start is focused on capacity building for systems change. By fostering systems change capacity building strategies, the Network is better able to increase health and resiliency in each county.

With Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation funding, NCPC developed a system of training and coaching that embeds systems change and advocacy strategies in the practice of Smart Start leaders.

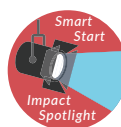
Over 90 Smart Start Network staff members have participated in cohort learning opportunities focused on systems thinking. These learning opportunities advance leadership competencies, deepen Network connections, and ensure staff are better ready to respond to community needs. NCPC is also focused on ongoing change and is working to support the full Network with funding systems change work long-term as well as with ongoing technical assistance.

Through systems building work, Smart Start Network staff can better support community



Rockingham County Partnership

for Children's (RCPC) Family Leaders Advisory Council is led by eight active participants who represent families of young children and early education professionals. This council communicates with policymakers, works with RCPC staff to strengthen early childhood systems, and advocates for the needs of children and families.



Cabarrus Partnership for Children's

SUN Project achieved great patient outcomes this year. To date, the SUN project served 40 pregnant mothers suffering from substance use disorder.

There have been zero infant and maternal deaths and 91.43% of mothers delivered their baby at 35+ weeks. Additionally, the

change and county-level coordination, ensuring Smart Start is an effective system for creating better outcomes for children and families.



Smart Start Partnership for

Children in Henderson County

participated in the Network's systems building training. After the training, the partnership continued this work together, determining staff strengths and growth areas regarding systems-building. The partnership is ready to move forward together towards becoming a partnership that can better affect systems change!

Smart Start Leadership Development towards building Strong Nonprofits

NCPC is committed to developing a Network of strong nonprofits. To ensure Local

Partnerships have the skills, knowledge, and resources to support children, Smart Start partnered with the NC Center for Nonprofits. Through this partnership, the Network has access

to membership benefits, increasing nonprofit leadership skills.

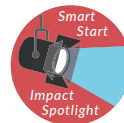
Through this partnership, the Smart Start Network accesses more resources. Additionally, the NC Center for Nonprofits offered a series of trainings for Smart Start Network staff. In November 2021, a Smart Start Capacity Building Cohort was developed for a pilot group of 11 Local Partnerships leaders. Cohort members participated in an organizational assessment and grew their leadership capacity. NCPC and Local Partnership staff also participated in the Nonprofit Management Institute offered by the Center. Participants were part of a learning cohort to assess their management practices, identify successes and challenges, and to build capacity in order to work towards long-term sustainability.

With the current cost of coaches and leaders receiving 30 hours of coaching, the NC Center for Nonprofits estimated a \$99,000 investment into Smart Start Network leaders!

"At our partnership we have already taken advantage of the NC Center for Nonprofit's services by using the pro bono services to revise our bylaws. We had to drop our membership previously due to cost restraints. So, it's great to have access once again."

NC Healthy & Resilient Communities

Research shows that early experiences lay the foundation for future health and emotional well-being. Adverse experiences can dramatically hinder not only children's social-emotional health, but also their physical and mental health over their lifetime. A growing body of evidence shows that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), negative social drivers of health, and other forms of trauma and adversity pose significant risks to young children as they grow and develop into adults.



NCPC is committed to increasing individual, organizational, and community level resilience across the state, serving as the backbone

agency of the NC Healthy and Resilient Communities Initiative (NC HRCI). Community resilience is the capacity to promote safe, secure, and nurturing environments for all within a community. Several Local Partnerships already serve as resiliency leaders educating, training, and organizing community members to prevent ACEs.

As part of the NC HRCI , NCPC and the Smart Start Network leverages its deep roots locally to provide support to dozens of multi-sector coalitions working to reduce adversity across a person's lifespan. As local resilience coalitions meet, the NC HRCI helps to build the long-

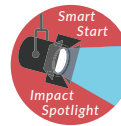
"The practice of reflective supervision instructs that you provide care by focusing on making the person feel seen, heard, and held. I felt seen, heard, and held through the process"

term capacity of these coalitions to address their community's highest needs to increase protective factors and positive childhood experiences, increase resilience skills, and promote systems change. NC HRCI is also learning from the innovative and creative work happening across the state to share best practices and lessons learned by pioneers in this field.

The NC HRCI Initiative builds community resilience capacity by offering monthly peer connection meetings where participants can come together to share and learn from one another. Technical assistance and workshops are also offered to the individual coalitions and their members as needed such as action planning and systems mapping.

Additionally, NCPC was able to secure funding for nine community organizations, including

individual resilience. Their work resulted in the development and implementation of action plans that will improve the coordination of care for people impacted by adverse experiences in Robeson County.



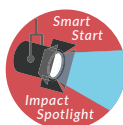
After noticing some common difficulties amongst her Spanish-speaking clients, **Smart Start of New Hanover County** connected

to a local expert in the Community Resilience model to provide resilience training to Spanish-speaking families. This need was identified by the partnership's Parent Educator who noted common difficulties amongst families. The training not only equipped them with strategies on how to improve communication and effective mindfulness but also created a community and support group that persisted independently of the partnership.

Raising Resilience Western NC, a collaborative group of 13 western Smart Start Local Partnerships, aims to strengthen resilience skills throughout individual and organizational levels of early child care communities. The collaborative utilizes strategies like Sesame Street in Communities, Resources for Resilience Reconnect Trainings, and the Center for Trauma Resilient Communities Resilience Academies. With this community-based approach, Raising Resilience Western NC can create a regional system capable of supporting positive childhood experiences and relationships.

three Smart Start Local Partnerships, to offer trauma and resilience training.

The initiative is also working alongside other statewide entities to map out and connect NC Trauma and Resilient Coalitions. By supporting local collaboratives in this work, the Smart Start Network is fostering community champions to create a more resilient state.



Robeson County Partnership

for Children received funding to serve as the backbone agency for a local resilience coalition, ROAR

(Robeson Overcoming Adversity through Resilience). This project builds awareness about the impact of ACEs and the resources to help build both community and

Home Visiting & Parenting Education System (HVPE)

NCPC serves as the lead fiduciary agent for the North Carolina Home Visiting & Parenting Education (HVPE) System. The System is led by a statewide Collaborative Board with the goal of aligning home visiting and parenting education funds and resources, improving home visiting and parenting education services, and linking parents to other supports.

Smart Start Network representatives work alongside other experts within the Board and its committees to increase awareness and access to home visiting and parenting education programs, to develop a state home visiting and parenting education expansion

plan, and to close racial disparities for those being served across the state.

In 2021-2022, the HVPE System expanded with the launch of Assessment & Planning, Communications, and Finance committees. A Community Advisory Body and Family Advisory Body also commenced with a goal of prioritizing family and community-level voices in statewide systems-level decision making. These committees and bodies are critical to ensuring North Carolina is equipped to support children and families with home visiting and parenting education.

Other activities from the HVPE System include the Board hosting a statewide home visiting and parenting education conference and its Communication Committee leading efforts to establish Family Support Awareness Month, lifting up services that increase parental knowledge, skills, and confidence in raising young children.

The HVPE System Collaborative Board recently passed a two-year budget with a focus on infrastructure supports—allowing for long-term strategic planning and investments into the home visiting and parenting education system for the state of North Carolina.

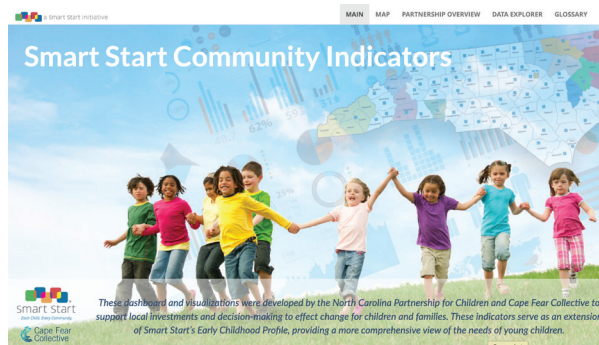
Smart Start Community Indicators Dashboard

NCPC is committed to advancing a high-quality, comprehensive, accountable system. To create this system, it is critical that Smart Start Local Partnerships use data to support decision-making.

To ensure insights are based on up-to-date metrics, Smart Start launched Smart Start Community Indicators, a data dashboard. The dashboard provides data on critical early childhood indicators at the county, Local Partnership, and census-tract level. Indicators include but are not limited to population, child abuse incidences, infant mortality, and teen birth incidences. By utilizing this data, Local Partnerships and other external organizations can better plan and make decisions for their community as well as examine inequities that may exist with their community and specific metrics.

Future Birth-to-Five Systems Building Efforts

Into the next fiscal year, Smart Start will continue to build out a strong system for children birth-to-five. In the near future, NCPC will determine revisions to the Smart Start Network Needs Formula, the formula in which NCPC provides state funding to Smart Start Local Partnerships to support children. Additionally, the Network will expand its catalog of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs, strategies, and solutions to support children and families and will work with other states to curate this data. This expansion will allow Local Partnerships the ability to find the best approach for serving children and families. Finally, Smart Start is continuing to improve its data and finance reporting, ensuring effective data for the birth-to-five system. These continual changes will allow Smart Start to create long-lasting systemic changes.



See Data and Tables on page 31

A Comprehensive Approach to Early Childhood

NCPC and the Smart Start Network are honored to serve the state's youngest children and are committed to the ongoing development of our early childhood system that offers accessible, high-quality programs and services for all families and young children in the state, regardless of racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic background.

With ongoing challenges in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic for young children, their families, and all who care for and educate them, Smart Start implements and promotes policies and strategies that work, including those addressing gaps in access to high-quality early childhood programs and services evident across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Smart Start is committed to providing continued support to children, families, communities, and businesses as well as promoting expansion and sustainability of the early learning workforce.

In 2023, Smart Start shall remain at the forefront of early childhood initiatives and work to advance policy objectives and priorities as follows:

Increasing funding to continue strengthening the comprehensive, statewide, community-based system of early childhood education, family support, and whole-child development. Increased funding for the Smart Start Network, the infrastructure supporting the evidence-based, evidence-informed programs and services across the state will ensure a strong early childhood system exists.

Smart Start Local Partnerships support NC Pre-K and other high-quality early education programs and services across the mixed-delivery system. These programs are among the most strongly evidenced, cost-effective interventions available to prepare students

for success in school. Additionally, research shows the long-term positive impact on young children over their lifetimes of other Smart Start funded family supports.

However, without additional funding, Smart Start cannot meet 25% of the defined needs of children aged birth-through-five years for which it was designed. NCGS § 143B – 168.13 requires a needs assessment to be conducted every three years, and NCPC to establish a funding formula to allocate funds to Smart Start Local Partnerships with the formula updated annually using the most recent data available. Currently, each allocation to Local Partnerships represents only a percentage of total need within each community. The needs formula clearly reveals the current system remains underfunded and unstable.

Expanding access to programs that provide early childhood education learning services to children and families in all settings, including early literacy supports. Children's

early school performance improves when their families are involved in helping them learn to read. Smart Start supports increasing investments in programs that encourage families to engage in daily reading habits early for later school success. During the 2017 legislative session, the General Assembly provided funding to Smart Start to expand DPIL statewide. With an increase in funds to DPIL, more of North Carolina's young children and families can be reached during these critical first five years.

DPIL is just one of the ways Smart Start uses early literacy programs to help children and families. By combining early literacy initiatives with effective family strengthening programs, an environment that encourages strong parent-child interaction and an early love of reading is created.

Ensuring comprehensive funding to support quality early care and education, particularly in regard to child care and workforce supports.

Research illustrates that the quality of care children receive is significantly impacted by high teacher turnover rates and inadequate teacher education. Child care teachers' low pay contributes to high turnover rates. Equally important, the shortage of access to high-quality infant and toddler child care and child care waitlist totals are also tied to the child care workforce crisis.

These early care and education workforce challenges were already present before the pandemic and are even more pronounced in 2022. To address this challenge, Smart Start continues to collaborate with early care and education stakeholders, advocacy organizations, and policymakers to address increasingly complex, multi-faceted issues.

Smart Start supports policies and investments that provide additional funding to improve access to quality care, including increased compensation for the early childhood workforce, and improved child care subsidy reimbursement rates.

Broadening access to family support programs like home visiting and parenting education, as well as child and family health programs that aid families in becoming healthier and stronger.

COVID-19, and its aftermath revealed that family support is essential in preparing parents and families in addressing early childhood issues. Home visiting also supports pregnant mothers and new and experienced parents. It is an important strategy in helping prevent child abuse and neglect by providing resources and tools to educate parents regarding the growth and development of their children. These parenting programs can support families and a child's physical, emotional, and educational development. Most fundamentally, supports such as these address the most serious issue facing our youngest North Carolinians: infant and maternal mortality.

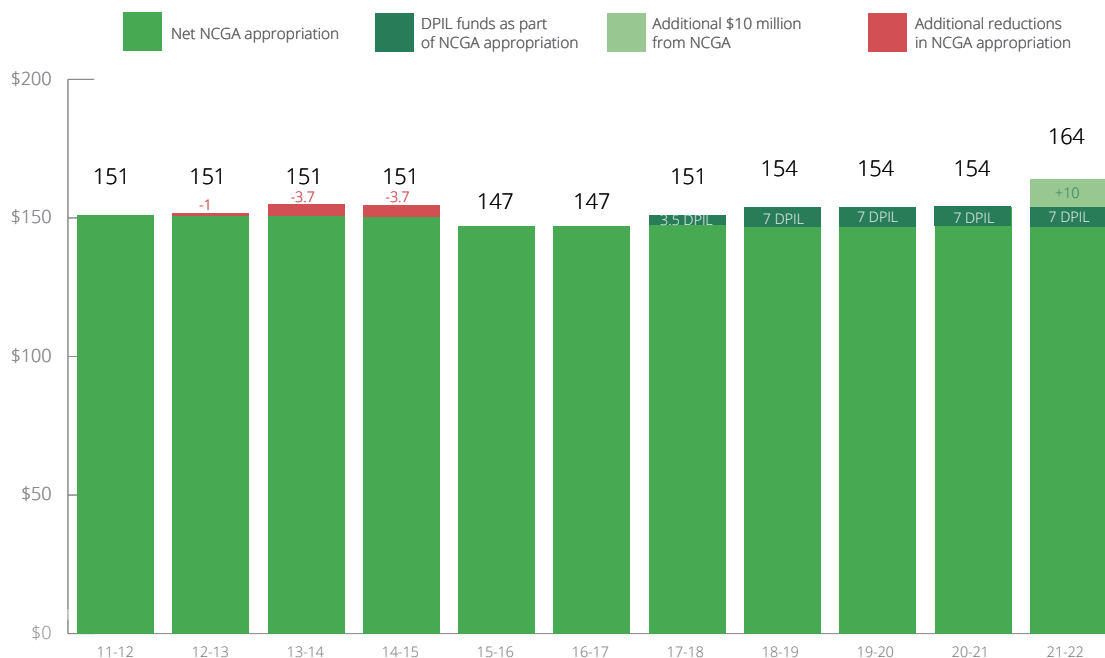
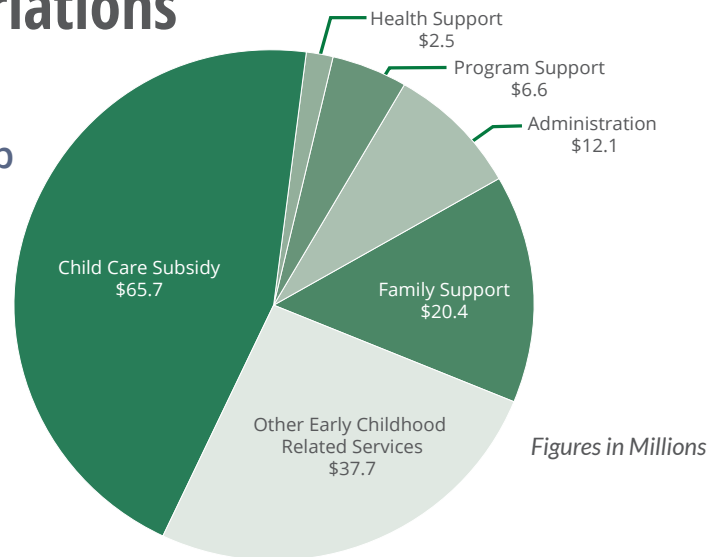
Smart Start supports increasing equitable access to a range of parenting education and early home visiting programs, meeting families where they are, to keep children safe and healthy across the state.

Graphs, Charts, and Supporting Data

Finance and Appropriations

Total Local Partnership Expenditures

Fiscal Year 2021-2022
\$145 million



Smart Start Total Appropriation History

Early Childhood Allocations Within the Total State Budget

	FY 2000-2001	FY2020
Total State General Fund Budget	\$13,854,000,000	\$24,317,466,876
General Fund Smart Start Appropriation	\$231,000,000	\$147,013,453
DCD Subsidy General Fund Appropriation	\$54,000,000	\$43,727,006
NC Pre-K General Fund Budget	-	\$34,930,075
% of Total State General Fund Budget	2.1%	0.93%

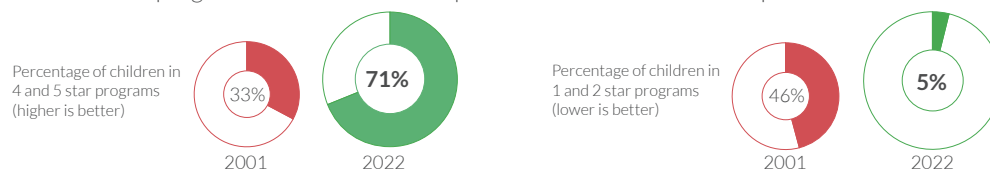
Raising the Quality of Early Care and Education

	FY 2018-2019	FY 2020-2021	FY 2021-2022
Number of all child care programs (1- to 5-star) receiving support to improve or maintain the quality of care	1,080 child care programs serving 46,233 children	607 child care programs serving 18,210 children	707 child care programs serving 28,270 children
Purchase of care expenditures excluding NC Pre-K	\$53,545,012	\$54,471,622	\$53,594,702
Number of low-paid teachers receiving an education-based salary supplement ensuring continuity of care for children by highly qualified teachers	4,616 teachers serving 53,546 children	3,784 teachers serving 43,894 children	4,263 teachers serving 49,451 children
Number of teachers participating in Smart Start-funded programs that helped them to study early education at the college level and the related number of children	680 teachers serving 7,888 children	525 teachers serving 6,090 children	466 teachers serving 5,406 children
Number of counties where a Smart Start Local Partnership administers NC Pre-K	55	55	55

Record of Child Care Quality Improvement

At a statewide level:

- The percentage of children in 4- and 5-star programs increased from 33 percent in 2001 to nearly 71 percent in 2022. The percentage of children in low quality, 1- and 2-star programs decreased from 46 percent in 2001 to less than 5 percent in 2022.



Nearly 80 percent of five-year-olds are in a 4- and 5-star child care program.

- The average star rating for children enrolled in regulated early child care and education programs increased from 2.76 in 2001 to **4.28** in 2022.



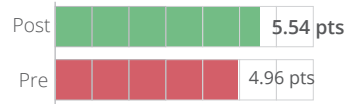
Age	Average Stars
Infant	4.13
1 y.o.	4.12
2 y.o.	4.11
3 y.o.	4.18
4 y.o.	4.43
5 y.o.	4.51

Results of the previous year:

- Promoting a child's health and development is the cornerstone of many Smart Start funded activities. Teaching Strategies GOLD is a common instrument for measuring child development. Among those Smart Start funded activities that used Teaching Strategies GOLD, participating children achieved these outcomes.

	Pre	Post
Language - Meets or Exceeds	53%	89%
Literacy - Meets or Exceeds	46%	93%
Math - Meets or Exceeds	34%	83%
Physical - Meets or Exceeds	62%	93%
Social Emotional - Meets or Exceeds	46%	91%
Cognitive - Meets or Exceeds	37%	87%

- On average, child care centers that participate in programs that enhanced the education environment improved on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ECERS). Based on a seven-point scale



Supporting North Carolina Families

The Smart Start Network's family support programs have impacted 8,445* parents/guardians. These family support programs assist families and enhance their ability to raise healthy children by supporting positive parenting practices, increasing parental knowledge of child development, and growing parental social support networks and access to community resources.

Smart Start Local Partnerships Support Parents, Families, Caregivers

Select Family Support Programs Implemented by Smart Start Local Partnerships

Select Family Support Programs Implemented by Smart Start Local Partnerships	Number of Local Partnerships Implementing
Parents as Teachers	30
Facilitated Parent Child Playgroups- Kaleidoscope	19
Positive Parenting Program (Triple P levels 2-4)	21
Circle of Parents	12
Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP)	14

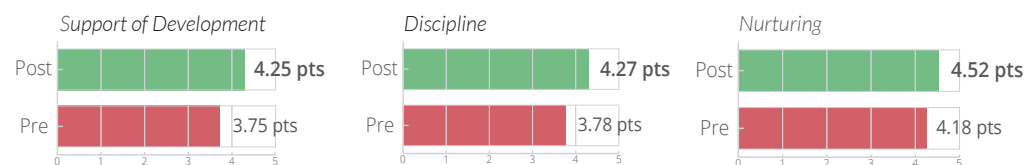
NCPC Family Support Focused Initiatives

Number of Technical Assistance sessions held with Local Partnership staff on family engagement and leadership from September 2021 to June 2022	117
Number of Smart Start Local Partnerships that engaged in family engagement and leadership cohorts throughout the state in 2021-2022	14
Number of families that received home visiting services since the Family Connects-Smart Start Pilot program began in 2021	1,078
Number of in-person, telehealth, and/or telephonic visits that have been conducted as part of the Family Connects Smart Start Pilots from October 2021 to June 2022	1,625

Results of the previous year:

In the last fiscal year, programs that support parent education and family engagement accomplished the following: accomplished the following:

Based on the Life Skills Progression Positive Parenting Practice measurement instrument, parents that participated achieved the following improvements (based on a five-point scale):



*This number is an estimate, as some families may have participated in multiple family support programs.

Promoting Early Literacy

	FY 2018-2019	FY 2020-2021	FY 2021-2022
Number of children participating in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL)	273,061	289,590	297,019
Number of children participating in Reach Out and Read (ROR)	91,169	79,302	75,591
Number of families participating in Raising A Reader (RAR)	6,434	3,165	4,404
Number of medical offices participating in ROR in collaboration with Smart Start Partnerships across 55 counties—42% of the total number of medical offices participating in ROR	161 offices in 61 counties	161 offices in 59 counties	161 offices in 55 counties
Number of children whose caregivers are participating in Motherread or Fatherread	511	428	476
Number of children whose caregivers are participating in other literacy programs	2,845	1,587	2,141

Results of the previous year:

Smart Start offered a wide range of early literacy initiatives that promote parent and child shared reading time. Results show an increase in the percentage of parents who report reading to their children daily.

Reach Out and Read (ROR):

Participating ROR parents reported an increase in reading to their children daily. 49% of new parents reported that they read daily while 65% of returning ROR participants reported reading every day.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL)



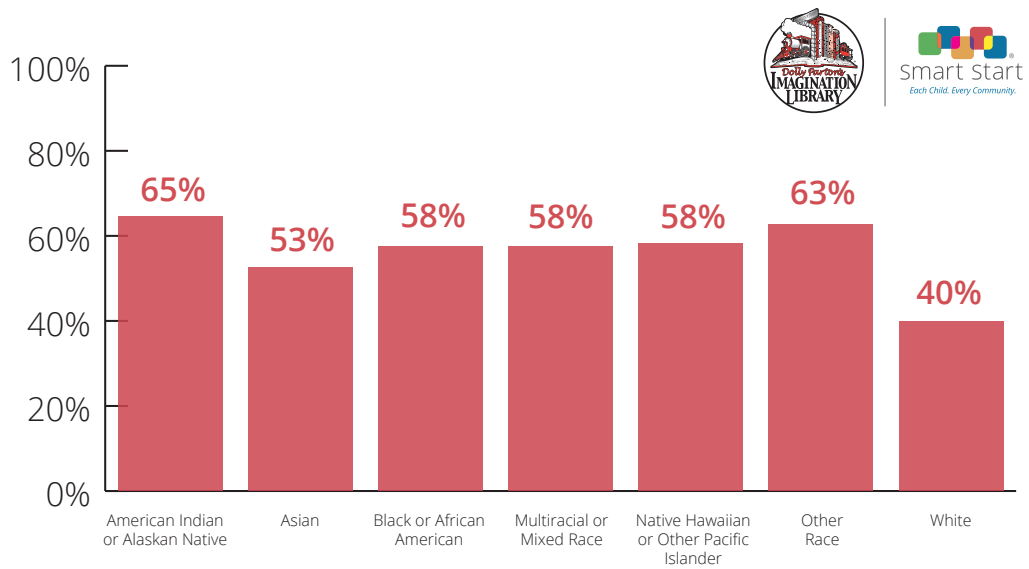
On average, parents who participated in DPIL for any length in time reported an increase in reading to their children daily from 41% before they began receiving books to 62% after participating in DPIL.

Additionally, 45% of families reported that without DPIL, they would not have been able to purchase the types of books provided by the program for their children. Of these parents, those who identified as white reported that they would not have been able to purchase books at a rate of 40% and those identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Natives reported that they would not have been able to purchase books at a rate of 64.6%

Additionally, 63% of Latino or Hispanic parents reported they would not have been able to purchase books without the aid of DPIL.

In terms of children served, family and caregiver participation, and medical office participation, each indicator in literacy improved within the last fiscal year!

Percent of participants who wouldn't be able to purchase books without DPIL identified by race



How Parental Reading Strategies Improved Before and After DPIL

	Before DPIL	Now
I change my voice to sound like animals or people to animate the story	77%	86%
I ask my children questions about the story	63%	80%
I point to pictures or other clues to help my children understand new words in the book	83%	91%
I point out or point to the text or letters as I am reading a book with my children	70%	83%
My children look at the book when I am reading to them	89%	95%

Advancing Child Health and Nutrition

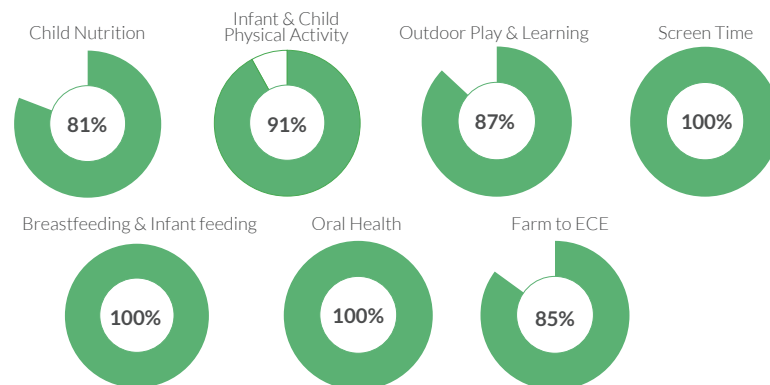
Smart Start Local Partnerships Advancing Health and Nutrition

Number of medical practices and physicians participating in ABCD	56 medical practices
Number of potential children receiving healthier food options and increased physical activity as part of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) program	94 child care centers and homes serving up to 4,717 children
Number of potential children served in child care programs receiving support from CCHCs who establish or improve health policies and procedures that prevent injuries and protect children from infectious diseases	139 child care centers and homes serving up to 7,063 children

Results of the previous year:

NAP SACC

Percentage of child care centers improving in:



Health and Safety Assessment

Average Classroom Scores	Pre	Post
Illness & Infections Disease	85%	94%
Children with Special Healthcare Needs	83%	92%
Medication Administration	83%	91%
Safety & Injury Prevention	92%	97%
Emergency Preparedness, Response, & Recovery	86%	96%
Infant & Child Social Emotional Well-being	86%	94%
Child Abuse & Neglect	97%	98%
Physical Activity	83%	92%
Nutrition	80%	88%
Oral Health	34%	52%
Environmental Health	96%	97%
Staff Health & Wellness	95%	96%
Policy Development & Implementation	89%	92%

Enhancing and Supporting Birth-to-Five Systems Building Efforts

Building a Sustainable Network through Leadership Development

Number of Smart Start Local Partnership staff participated in cohort learning opportunities focused on systems thinking	90
Number of Smart Start Local Partnerships that received training as part of a Smart Start Capacity Building Cohort by the NC Center for Nonprofits	11
Number of Smart Start Network staff who participated in Nonprofit Management Institute by the NC Center for Nonprofits	30
Number of Smart Start staff who participated in NC Center for Nonprofits trainings since fall 2021	63
Number of Smart Start Local Partnership staff with active membership accounts with the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits	400+

Building Strong Systems for Early Childhood

Number of attendees to the 2022 Home Visiting & Parenting Education Conference	400+
Number of Peer Connection gatherings hosted by NC Healthy & Resilient Communities Initiative (NC HRCI)	11 Peer Connection Meetings
Number of counties with multi-sector coalition/collaboratives working to reduce and respond to individual and/or community adversity	45+
Number of counties with updated data down to the census tract level within the Smart Start Community Indicators Dashboard	100
Number of Early Care and Education Committees, Coalitions, and Workgroups across the state that NCPC staff serve on with the goal of raising the quality of early care and education	39

Appendix

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly Smart Start Program Match & Fundraising Report Session Law 2021-180 Section 9C.6.(d)

The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) and local partnerships are required to match 19% of funds allocated by the General Assembly through cash and in-kind contributions. Per SL 2021-180, Section 9C.6.(d), "Of the funds the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., and the local partnerships are required to match, contributions of cash shall be equal to at least thirteen percent (13%) and in-kind donated resources shall be equal to no more than six percent (6%) for a total match requirement of nineteen percent (19%) for each year of the 2021-2023 fiscal biennium."

Under Session Law 2021-180, Section 9C.6.(d), the North Carolina General Assembly requires that the NCPC report on the cash and in-kind contributions received by local partnerships and NCPC in its annual report as required under G.S. 143B-168.12(d). This report is submitted as an appendix to the annual report in response to that requirement.

*FY 2021-2022 Match
Amounts by Local
Partnerships and NCPC*

	Cash	In-Kind	Total
Local Partnerships	\$38,185,848	\$9,189,143	\$47,374,991
NCPC	\$683,061	\$65,481	\$748,542
Total	\$38,868,909	\$9,254,624	\$48,123,533

Per Session Law 2021-180, Section 9C.6.(i), "Notwithstanding subsection (h) of this section, the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., and local partnerships may use up to one percent (1%) of State funds for fund-raising activities." This provision requires NCPC to include in its annual report required under G.S. 143B-168.12(d) a report on these funds expended on fundraising.

For FY 2021-2022, 18 local partnerships of the Smart Start network (24% of all local partnerships) took advantage of the flexibility to transfer up to 1% of program dollars to be used for fundraising activities. Approximately \$423,680 of Smart Start program dollars were transferred and spent on fundraising activities by these 18 partnerships, in addition to their regular administrative expenditures. Local partnerships indicated that these funds were used most frequently for staff time for grant writing and fund development work in their communities. Additional uses included donor management software, fundraising solicitations, consultant services and grant writing courses. These activities help to build capacity in each local community to raise more private funds

If there are additional questions on this report, please contact Amy Cubbage, president of The North Carolina Partnership for Children, at

Summary of LP Program Match For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2022

Local Partnership County/Countries Covered	Cash	In-Kind	Total	Program Match Target	Over (Under)
Alamance	20,451.30	158,475.98	178,927.28	412,290.00	(233,362.72)
Albemarle	28,775.45	62,926.59	91,702.04	324,226.00	(232,523.96)
Alexander	23,101.10	36,372.50	59,473.60	112,154.00	(52,680.40)
Alleghany	30,776.28	10,594.40	41,370.68	37,039.00	4,331.68
Anson	64,841.69	32,785.39	97,627.08	103,774.00	(6,146.92)
Ashe	44,758.20	22,067.43	66,825.63	83,001.00	(16,175.37)
Beaufort/Hyde	43,071.00	135,057.76	178,128.76	150,708.00	27,420.76
Bladen	150,312.50	18,838.90	169,151.40	113,642.00	55,509.40
Blue Ridge	373,112.33	14,766.20	387,878.53	148,131.00	239,747.53
Brunswick	25,822.74	22,339.93	48,162.67	259,351.00	(211,188.33)
Buncombe	653,963.38	187,310.46	841,273.84	517,070.00	324,203.84
Burke	157,363.93	64,777.20	222,141.13	372,999.00	(150,857.87)
Cabarrus	63,176.82	179,887.81	243,064.63	431,779.00	(188,714.37)
Caldwell	13,700.00	32,647.33	46,347.33	311,199.00	(264,851.67)
Carteret	57,361.56	99,518.30	156,879.86	130,230.00	26,649.86
Caswell	10,800.57	30,145.68	40,946.25	65,337.00	(24,390.75)
Catawba	58,924.11	35,600.26	94,524.37	506,651.00	(412,126.63)
Chatham	107,123.90	6,432.80	113,556.70	190,064.00	(76,507.30)
Chowan/Perquimans	24,614.36	58,990.12	83,604.48	91,412.00	(7,807.52)
Cleveland	2,419,124.00	174,249.41	2,593,373.41	337,882.00	2,255,491.41
Columbus	229,935.08	76,023.75	305,958.83	176,878.00	129,080.83
Craven	24,564.89	33,821.21	58,386.10	321,117.00	(262,730.90)
Cumberland	210,915.98	199,243.06	410,159.04	1,336,169.00	(926,009.96)
Dare	257,456.38	56,143.85	313,600.23	96,301.00	217,299.23
Davidson	38,800.79	135,240.32	174,041.11	526,775.00	(352,733.89)
Davie	73,926.46	27,219.51	101,145.97	93,425.00	7,720.97
Down East	235,245.96	68,713.44	303,959.40	497,950.00	(193,990.60)
Duplin	4,835.00	149,306.31	154,141.31	224,060.00	(69,918.69)
Durham	3,242,010.57	271,507.99	3,513,518.56	1,074,681.00	2,438,837.56
Foothills	27,682.37	32,087.47	59,769.84	394,095.00	(334,325.16)
Forsyth	272,612.17	61,960.67	334,572.84	969,008.00	(634,435.16)
Franklin Granville Vance	59,613.16	139,470.93	199,084.09	475,604.00	(276,519.91)
Guilford	122,419.25	1,429,242.06	1,551,661.31	1,028,075.00	523,586.31
Halifax-Warren	2,135.00	707.20	2,842.20	253,923.00	(251,080.80)
Harnett	11,201.79	101,988.21	113,190.00	374,948.00	(261,758.00)
Henderson	210,412.13	143,610.18	354,022.31	221,897.00	132,125.31
Hertford- Northampton	5,024.82	30,498.04	35,522.86	153,653.00	(118,130.14)

**Local Partnership
County/Countries
Covered**

	Cash	In-Kind	Total	Program Match Target	Over (Under)
Hoke	6,111.48	283,709.24	289,820.72	189,128.00	100,692.72
Iredell	110,427.61	244,611.38	355,038.99	423,932.00	(68,893.01)
Johnston	133,786.61	135,306.48	269,093.09	472,145.00	(203,051.91)
Jones	550.00	3,585.36	4,135.36	43,847.00	(39,711.64)
Lee	22,300.16	40,221.51	62,521.67	198,014.00	(135,492.33)
Lenoir/Greene	37,979.33	105,362.04	143,341.37	308,477.00	(165,135.63)
Lincoln/Gaston	26,133.86	13,328.60	39,462.46	785,315.00	(745,852.54)
Madison	3,783.40	51,885.91	55,669.31	72,084.00	(16,414.69)
Martin/Pitt	66,835.87	135,506.49	202,342.36	502,111.00	(299,768.64)
Mecklenburg	21,767,057.12	479,124.89	22,246,182.01	2,590,782.00	19,655,400.01
Montgomery	4,490.04	44,011.09	48,501.13	107,936.00	(59,434.87)
Moore	18,960.35	57,205.38	76,165.73	221,743.00	(145,577.27)
New Hanover	114,049.46	103,517.40	217,566.86	415,458.00	(197,891.14)
Onslow	2,428,609.90	26,669.60	2,455,279.50	784,180.00	1,671,099.50
Orange	52,958.22	34,959.01	87,917.23	396,325.00	(308,407.77)
Pamlico	14,731.25	1,162.80	15,894.05	36,438.00	(20,543.95)
Pender	9,088.29	83,484.26	92,572.55	125,755.00	(33,182.45)
Person	36,732.40	22,136.70	58,869.10	129,861.00	(70,991.90)
Randolph	158,617.75	552,663.84	711,281.59	405,957.00	305,324.59
Region A	181,262.40	187,906.64	369,169.04	433,261.00	(64,091.96)
Richmond	6,396.91	24,790.60	31,187.51	190,349.00	(159,161.49)
Robeson	17,866.79	311,900.18	329,766.97	516,551.00	(186,784.03)
Rockingham	9,280.30	129,846.25	139,126.55	243,173.00	(104,046.45)
Rowan	31,790.87	184,558.07	216,348.94	371,790.00	(155,441.06)
Sampson	160,221.25	6,182.56	166,403.81	213,953.00	(47,549.19)
Scotland	11,591.63	35,013.40	46,605.03	117,012.00	(70,406.97)
Stanly	15,432.51	43,389.25	58,821.76	246,829.00	(188,007.24)
Stokes	45,894.65	35,477.83	81,372.48	144,427.00	(63,054.52)
Surry	-	180,044.97	180,044.97	231,070.00	(51,025.03)
Transylvania	705,447.90	-	705,447.90	70,672.00	634,775.90
Tyrrell-Washington	4,950.00	19,348.18	24,298.18	75,590.00	(51,291.82)
Union	26,357.91	186,816.21	213,174.12	461,975.00	(248,800.88)
Wake	2,025,755.26	649,579.17	2,675,334.43	2,420,795.00	254,539.43
Watauga	328,242.94	103,984.24	432,227.18	82,487.00	349,740.18
Wayne	132,569.47	92,365.48	224,934.95	351,496.00	(126,561.05)
Wilkes	41,197.39	151,731.88	192,929.27	235,110.00	(42,180.73)
Wilson	6,998.91	31,999.89	38,998.80	271,347.00	(232,348.20)
Yadkin	21,421.09	55,187.20	76,608.29	115,716.00	(39,107.71)
Grand Total	38,185,848.30	9,189,142.63	47,374,990.93	27,920,589.00	19,454,401.93