

Funding Opportunities Fiscal Year 26/27

January 22, 2026

Welcome!

Agenda

- North Carolina Requirements
- SSMC Goals
- New this FY
- Application Requirements
- How to Apply
- Timeline
- Q & A



State Requirements

- Prenatal to 5 and their Families
- Mecklenburg County
- 501(c)3 or public agency
- Funding Mandates
- Evidence Requirements
- Cost Principles
- Reporting Requirements



SSMC Goals

1

SSMC will positively impact policy, practice & investments for all children birth to five and their families.

2

Families of young children provide supportive home environments & life in safe & supportive communities.

3

Children are healthy and developmentally ready for kindergarten success.

4

Children have access to high quality, nurturing early learning environments

5

Organizational capacity will support identified goals and outcomes.

Highlights!

- Smart Solutions Catalog Required
- 2 Grant Opportunities
 - Innovation Grant
 - Slight change in the Process for Innovation Grants.
 - Smart Start RFA
- Revised Budget Worksheet



All Applicants



- New this year! *Smart Solutions*
 - Must include *at least one* Smart Solution
 - Required by NC Partnership for Children
 - <https://smartsolutionscatalog.com>

SMART SOLUTIONS

Effective Prenatal-to-Five Investments

a Smart Start initiative 



Smart Solutions is a catalog of effective programs, interventions, and strategies that support children prenatal-through-five, their teachers, caregivers, and communities.

The catalog highlights opportunities for early childhood investment. These options are part of a high quality, comprehensive, accountable early childhood system and promote transparency and consistency in planning and funding across the state.

Contact smartsolutions@smartstart.org if you are interested in creating a Smart Solutions state specific portal for your state's early childhood system.

EXPLORE SMART SOLUTIONS



North Carolina

SMART START INVESTS IN SMART SOLUTIONS

Smart Start is a Network of 76 early childhood organizations, with 75 local county partnerships reaching all 100 North Carolina counties. Smart Solutions is a catalog of all the options the Network uses to create better outcomes for children, teachers, families, and communities across the state using state funding.

State funds are allocated to the Network for services to children and families to meet locally assessed needs. This funding allows Local Partnerships to fund and coordinate county solutions aligned with their county's strategic plan for early childhood development.

Each community and Local Partnership can use Smart Solutions to select the best options for children and families. Together, we can expand coverage of services for children and families and improve the quality of existing services.

[View Solutions](#)

WHAT IS IN SMART SOLUTIONS?

Smart Solutions presents evidence-based and evidence-informed solutions that improve early childhood experiences from prenatal-to-age five—supporting children and their caregivers from hospital, to home, to school.

Each Smart Solutions entry provides information for planning and implementation. Each entry also includes contact information, expected impact, core components, and infrastructure needs for each program, allowing users to compare solutions

Filter By:

Search



CATEGORY ▾



CHILD'S AGE ▾



PARTICIPANT ▾



LANGUAGES ▾

1 2 3 4



Family Support

Adolescent Parenting Program

Adolescent Parenting Program (APP) is a home visiting model developed and run in coordination with the NC Division of Public Health (NC DPH) that increases teen parents' self-sufficiency, delays additional pregnancies, increases high school graduation rates or achievement of the GED, improves child welfare and school readiness, improves positive parenting practices, and ensures children's access to a safe home environment and medical home.

[View Details >>](#)

Compare



Early Care and Education

Advising to Support Higher Education

Advising for child care professionals advancing their education in early care and education is an intensive and comprehensive service designed to support the whole student in achieving their goals. Intensive advising is associated with improved retention rates and knowledge gains for students.

[View Details >>](#)

Compare



Early Care and Education

Advising to Support Professional Certification

Advising for child care professionals advancing their credentialing in early care and education is an intensive and comprehensive service designed to support the



Early Care and Education

Apprenticeship

Building Bright Futures (BBF) is program developed by the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE), run in coordination with ApprenticeshipNC and Child Care Services Association (CCSA) that

Filter By:

Search

119 Smart Solutions!



CATEGORY ▾



CHILD'S AGE ▾



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Effective Prenatal-to-Five Investments

a Smart Start initiative 

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PARTICIPANT ▾



LANGUAGES ▾



CATEGORY ▾

- Early Care and Education
- Family Support
- Literacy
- Child & Family Health
- System Building



CHILD'S AGE ▾

- Prenatal
- 0-1 years
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- 3-4 years
- 4-5 years



PARTICIPANT ▾

- Children
- Parents/Guardian
- ECE
Owner/Operator
- ECE Teachers
- Human Service Professionals
- Medical Professionals



LANGUAGES ▾

- English
- Spanish
- French
- German
- Mandarin
- Other

[Back to List](#)

Compare Off

Print

Share

Communities of Practice (CoP)



Category
Early Care and
Education



Child's Age
0-1 years, 1-2 years, 2-3
years, 3-4 years, 4-5
years



Participant
ECE Owner/Operator,
ECE Teachers



Languages
English

Brief Description

The Growing Together Community of Practice (CoP) model focuses on supporting the development and sustainability of a community of practice around an area of interest in early childhood. A Community of Practice (CoP) is a group-based support and consultation service for early care and education professionals who share interests/practices. CoPs provide a space and opportunity, whether in person or virtual, for shared learning, problem-solving, reflecting on real-life professional challenges, or common interests by sharing experiences, practices, ideas, tools, and resources.

Expected Impact

- Increase in members' confidence and knowledge of relevant subjects (varies based on the focus of the CoP)

Program Description



Program Implementation



Cost and Purveyor Information



NCPC Reporting & Evaluation



Research



Citations



Highlights!

✔ ~~Smart Solutions Catalog Required~~

- 2 Grant Opportunities
 - Innovation Grant
 - Slight change in the Process for Innovation Grants.
 - Smart Start RFA
- Revised Budget Worksheet



Innovation Grant Focus

Systems Change Approach

- Parent/caregiver engagement and empowerment.
- Fostering social and emotional skills in children ages 0-5.

Innovation Requirements



Range is up to \$100,000



Organization self-assessment required prior to applying



Support documents uploaded with application



Application questions are different from RFA



Jennifer Stamp is contact – jstamp@smartstartofmeck.org

Smart Start Grant “RFA”

Request for application

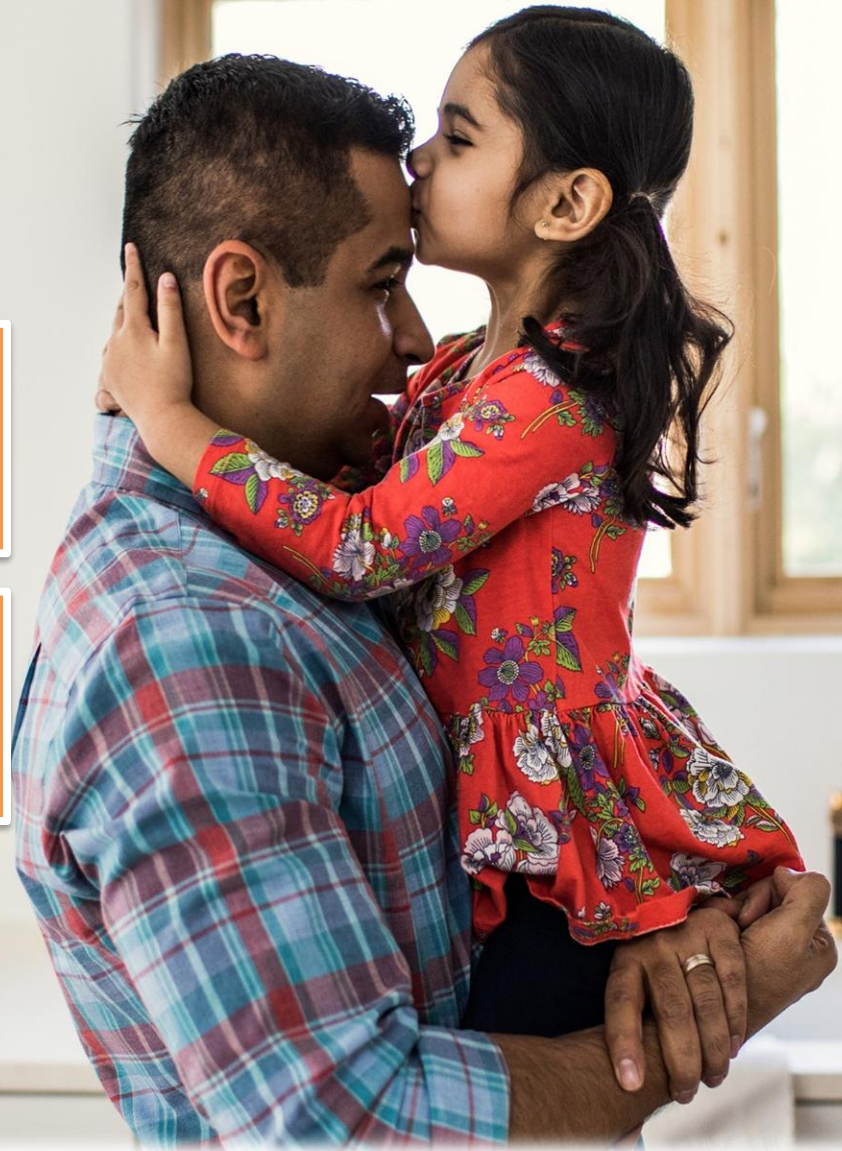
No dollar limit

Requires Research to support

Requires model listed in Smart Solutions

Priority areas given preference

Natacha Duggins is contact
nduggins@smartstartofmeck.org





SSMC Funding Priorities



Early Care and Education

Increase teacher education levels for all teachers, with a special emphasis on infant and toddler teachers.

Increase quality of care provided in ECE.

Increase number of professionals who enter and remain in ECE.

Health

Increase access to developmental enrichment and early intervention for children with special needs, with emphasis for 3 – 5 years

Address the needs of children with behavioral or mental health needs and the adults that support them.

Remove barriers that create disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes.

Priorities Continued

Family Support:

- Increase parenting skills among parents/caregivers.
- Offer navigation supports to link families to services.

Early Literacy:

- Support activities that develop and promote EB emergent literacy.

Highlights!

- ✓ ~~Smart Solutions Catalog Required~~
- ✓ ~~2 Grant Opportunities~~
 - ~~Innovation Grant~~
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- Revised Budget Worksheet



Finance Slides



Highlights!

- ✓ ~~Smart Solutions Catalog Required~~
- ✓ ~~2 Grant Opportunities~~
 - ~~Innovation Grant~~
 - ~~Smart Start RFA~~
- ✓ ~~Revised Budget Worksheet~~



Highlights!

- ✓ ~~Smart Solutions Catalog Required~~
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- ✓ ~~Revised Budget Worksheet~~



How to Apply!

Online Portal - WizeHive



You'll be able to find it on SSMC website.

RFA: [smartstartofmeck](https://www.smartstartofmeck.org)
Innovation: [smart_start_innovation](https://www.smartstartofmeck.org/innovation)



Sign In/Sign Up Instructions

For New Users:

By clicking **Sign Up**, you will be prompted to enter your email address and create a password. Once you have chosen your password, your account will be created and you will gain access to the portal.

For Returning Users:

Sign into the portal using the email address and the password you created when you originally signed up for the portal. If you have forgotten your password, click "**Forgot your password?**" and follow the prompts to reset your password.

Sign In

Email

Password

Log In

[Forgot your password?](#)

Need an Account?

Sign Up



Smart Start

of Mecklenburg County

Homepage

Welcome, nwalt13@gmail.com



Please click "**+Create a Profile to Get Started**" to begin. You can always edit your Profile by clicking "Edit".
You cannot move forward until you have completed your Profile.

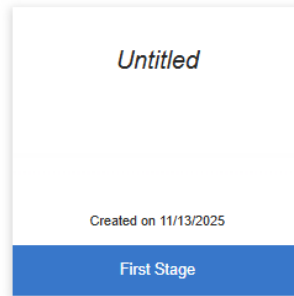
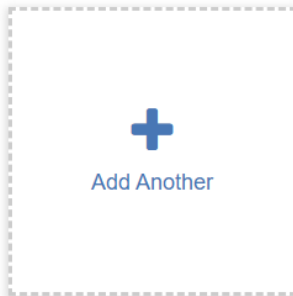
Profile

Complete

Edit

To begin, click "**+Get Started**" below. When you return to this Homepage, you can see the status of your submission by the colored status bar below the submission card.

- If the status bar is **gray**, your submission is under review, and no action needs to be taken.
- If the status bar is **blue**, there is an action required. Click on the Submission Card to complete.
- If the status bar is **red**, there is an error. Please reach out to the Administrator of this program.



POWERED BY





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Profile

Complete

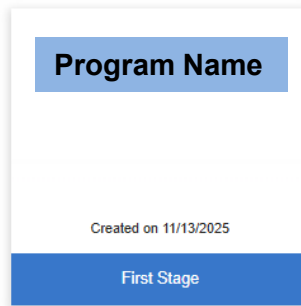
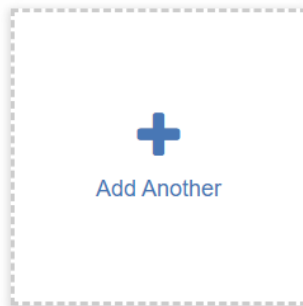
Edit

Update
Contact
Details.



To begin, click **"Get Started"** below. When you return to this Homepage, you can see the status of your submission by the colored status bar below the submission card.

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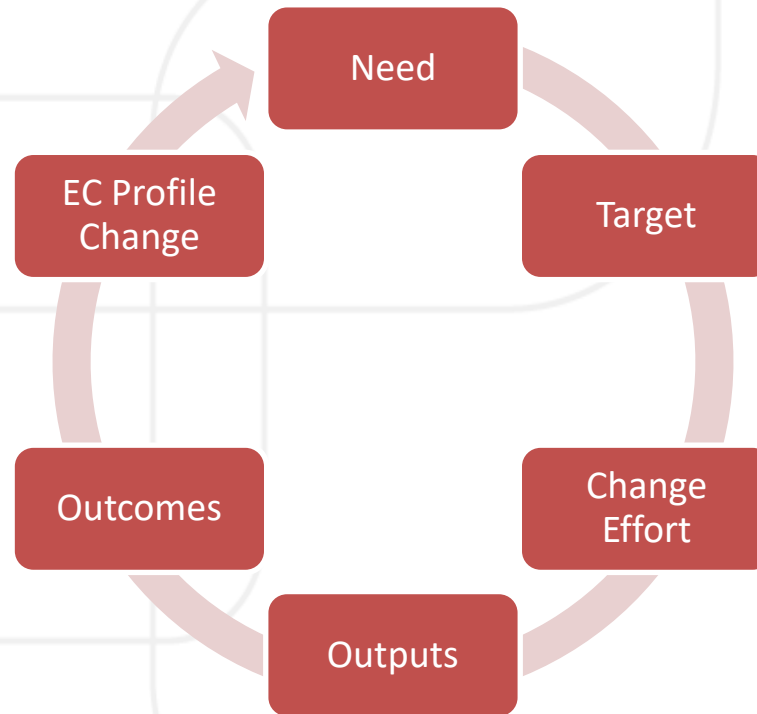
If you submitted an Innovation or RFA in previous years, you will see a box. Please create a new application.

All Applications

- Answer all Questions
- Provide Logic Model
- Outcomes and Outputs
- Completed Budget Sheet
- Corporation Attachments



Logic Models: A Roadmap



Outputs & Outcomes

- What are you counting?
- What is changed?
- How will you know?
- Consult Model and [Smart Solutions](#)

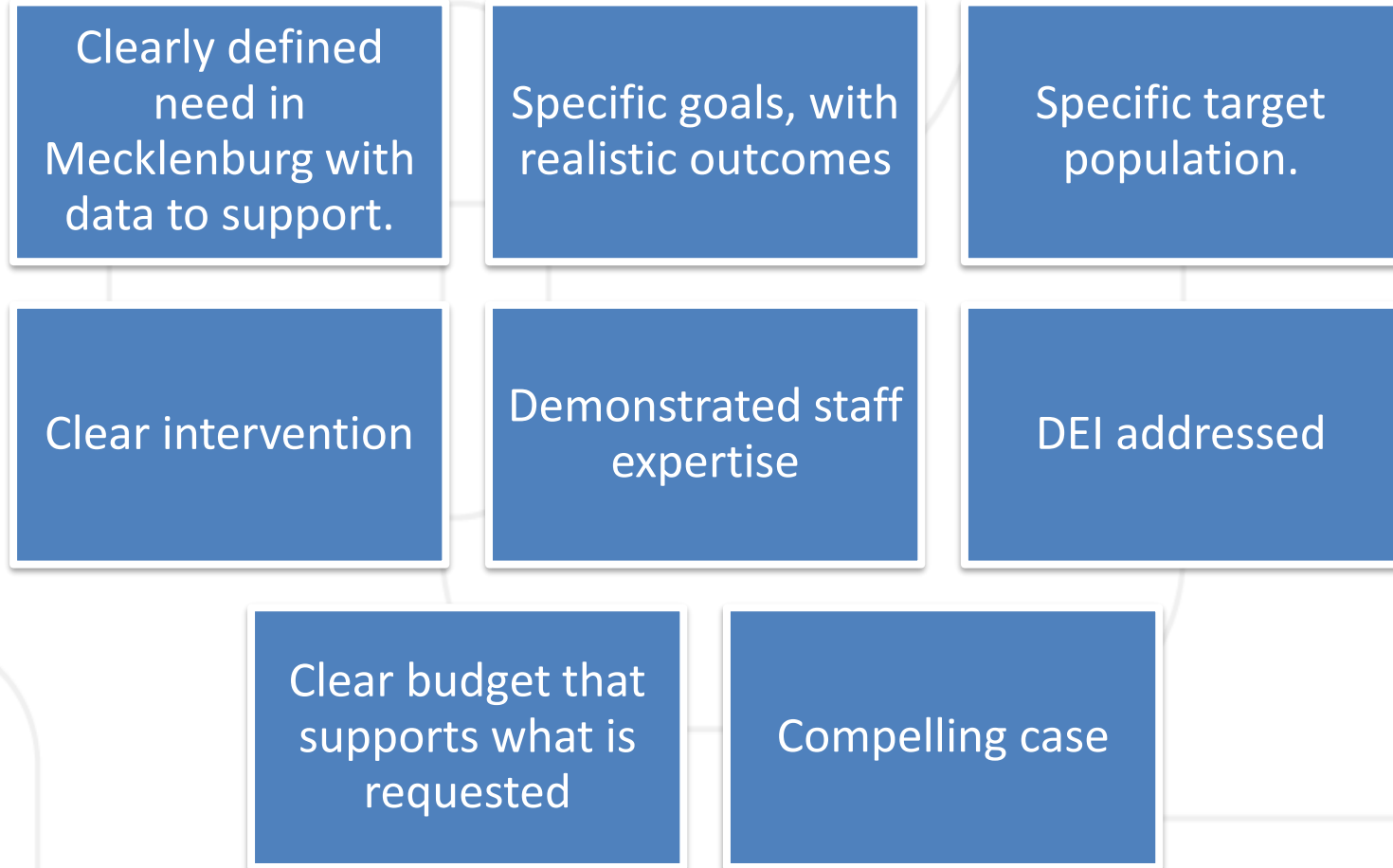


<p>Need Statement What is the problem and how do you know?</p>	<p>Target Population Who will you serve?</p>	<p>Program or Activity Elements What will you do to solve the problem?</p>	<p>Outputs What will you count to show your work?</p>	<p>Outcomes What will change because of your efforts?</p>	<p>How does outcome impact EC Profile or other long-term goal?</p>

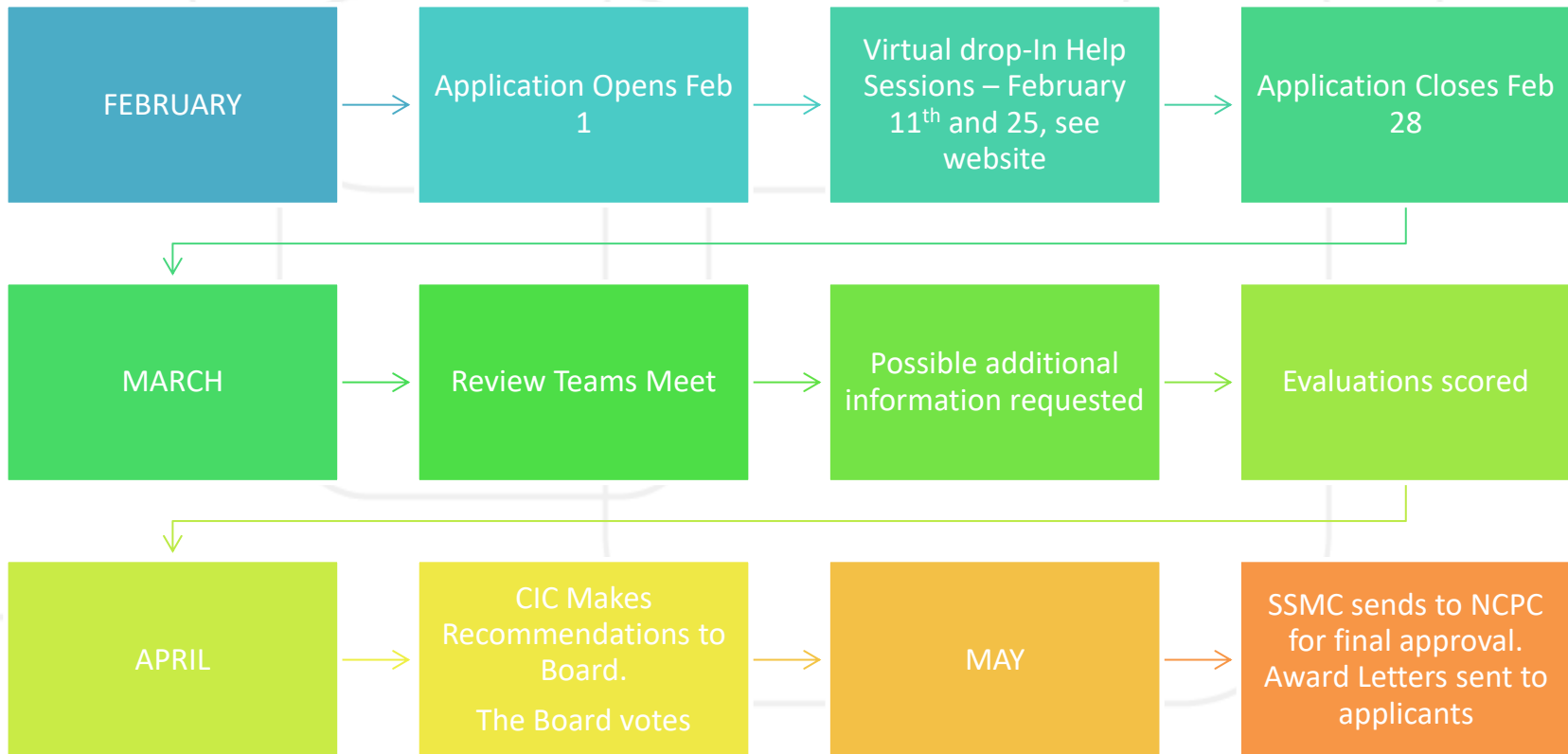
Application Questions

- Who?
 - Are you?
 - Needs your help?
 - Will you collaborate with?
- What?
 - Is the problem?
 - Will you do?
 - Will you measure?

What Reviewers Look For



The Timeline



Questions?





Smart Start

of Mecklenburg County

Jordan Killough

Contracts & Grants Accountant

finance@smartstartofmeck.org

Natacha Duggins

Program Director

nduggins@smartstartofmeck.org

Jennifer Stamp

Strategic Initiatives Director

jstamp@smartstartofmeck.org

Funding Opportunities Fiscal Year 26/27

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Cost Principles NCPC



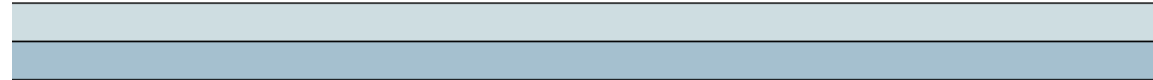
Budget Walk Through

This budget workbook is to provide Smart Start a full understanding of your RFA 26/27 budget request

Enter data into purple sections



Blue Sections have formulas and are locked. These cells will pull data from information entered into purple sections.



There are 4 tabs to be read and completed prior to your application being considered.

- All applicants must complete tabs 2-5

Whats New on the Form this Year:

1. Personnel & Contracted Service is condensed to the Line Item Justification tab. If your RFA is approved additional information on personnel will be required at a later date. Enter in position title, # employees for titles, and total salary amounts.

Tabs to be completed

2. Line Item Justification
3. Personnel Monthly Breakdown
4. Budget Explanation
5. Budget Worksheet

RFA FY26-27 Budget Worksheet

- All applicants must complete tabs 2-5
 2. Line Item Justification
 3. Personnel Monthly Breakdown
 4. Budget Explanation
 5. Budget Worksheet



The budgets must adhere to the Smart Start Cost Principles.

1. Budget Walk Through

2. Line Item Justification

3. Personnel Monthly Breakdown

4. Budget Explanation

5. Budget Worksheet

Budget Worksheet


Tab 2: Line Item Justification

- **Complete information at top:**

- Finance Contact Name
- Finance Contact Phone

Mecklenburg Partnership for Children Line Item Justification FY 2026-27	
Name of Organization:	
Name of Activity:	
Finance Contact Name:	
Finance Contact Phone:	

ENTER INFO INTO LIGHT PURPLE SECTIONS



Budget Worksheet Tab 2: Line Item Justification

- Line 11
 - Full/ Part Time
 - # Employees
 - Position
 - Total Salary for the year including benefits
- Line 12
 - Vendor or type of service
 - Total amount for the year

	Full Time	Part Time	# Employees	Description/Position		
11) Personnel						\$75,000
	Full Time		2	Home Visitation Nurses	\$75,000	
					\$0	
					\$0	
					\$0	
					\$0	
					\$0	
					\$0	
					\$0	
					\$0	
12) Contracted Professional Services						\$10,000
				Bookkeeping Services	\$10,000	
					\$0	
					\$0	
					\$0	

If awarded funds we will ask more detailed information for personnel to be entered into our grant management system

Budget Worksheet

Tab 2: Line Item Justification

- For all line items requesting funds, detail the proposed budget with list of items and/or descriptions, along with cost
- Refer to Line Item explanations on the right side of the worksheet
- Provide sufficient detail so plan is clear

	# Employees	# Conference	Cost per Conference	Description		
17) Travel						\$300
	#1	2	\$150	Meals/Hotel for Childhood Summit	\$300	
	#8				\$0	
18) Communications & Postage						\$1,000
	#1			Phone bill for 2 Nurses	\$1,000	
	#2				\$0	

Details what can be listed on this line.



17	Travel	Costs associated with travel by employees
18	Communications and Postage	All communications and postage costs

Details the costs showing travel/phone bill pertains to the salaries listed on Line 11

For Line 11) Personnel Flat Funded Monthly Breakdown

1. Detail a good faith estimate of hc disbursed during the year.

FLAT FUNDED	
MONTHLY BREAKDOWN OF FLAT FUNDED SALARIES	
MONTH	MONTHLY AMT
JUL	\$ 5,000.00
AUG	\$ 5,000.00
SEP	\$ 5,000.00
OCT	\$ 5,000.00
NOV	\$ 5,000.00
DEC	\$ 5,000.00
JAN	\$ 5,000.00
FEB	\$ 5,000.00
MAR	\$ 5,000.00
APR	\$ 5,000.00
MAY	\$ 5,000.00
JUN	\$ 5,000.00
TOTAL:	\$ 60,000.00

Formula totals amount



Budget Worksheet Tab 4: Budget Explanation

- Answer all 5 questions completely
- Understand reporting requirements and expenditure restrictions, refer to [NCPC Cost Principles](#) in the DSP Toolkit

Budget Explanation (FY 2026-27):	
Guidelines for Budget Narrative	
1	Why are Smart Start funds needed for this project?
2	What other resources have you identified or leveraged to match the cost for this project (19% min)?

Budget Worksheet

Tab 5: Budget Worksheet

- Complete details pertaining to Funding Sources
- Cash Donations from Non-State Sources
- Cash Donations from STATE Sources
- In-Kind Contributions
- Program Income
- For current partners, **enter FY25-26** current Smart Start funding in Column G
- New Applicants Column G is zero

Mecklenburg Partnership for Children Budget Worksheet FY 2026-27

Name of Organization: 0
 Name of Activity: 0
 Finance Contact Name: 0
 Finance Contact Phone: 0

Data prefill from other tabs. Enter info in purple sections for other funding sources & SSMC previous funding

Contract Period: 7/01/2026-6/30/2027

Killough, Jordan:
 Info pulls from Personnel & Srvs Tab & Line Item Justification Tab

Line #	Expenditure Category	Total Expected Expenditures	Funding Source				Remaining portion to be paid with Smart Start Funds (year 1)	FY 2025-26 Prior Year Smart Start Funding (N/A for new applicants)	Smart Start Increase (Decrease) Amount
			Cash Donations from Non-State Sources*	Cash Donations from STATE Sources	In-Kind Contributions**	Program Income (fees, etc.)			
11	Personnel	100,000	25,000			75,000	75,000	0	
12	Contracted Services	10,000				10,000	0	10,000	
13	Total Personnel/Contracted Services:	110,000	25,000	0	0	85,000	75,000	10,000	
14	Office Supplies/Computer Supplies & Software	25,000	25,000			0		0	
15	Service Related Supplies	0				0		0	
16	Total Supplies and Materials:	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	
17	Travel	300				300		300	
18	Communications & Postage	1,000				1,000		1,000	

Cost Allocation Plan (Overhead Calculation)

- If applying for expenses on Line 35 you must complete the FY26-27 Cost Allocation Plan Worksheet and provide a written explanation of the methodology

INSTRUCTIONS/NOTES	
<p>Include a written explanation on Tab 2 for any budget amount that is included on Line #35. "Other Expenses." If this amount includes a charge for Overhead or a percentage charged for Administration, the following information must be completed</p> <p>***Enter details in purple sections</p> <p>***You can enter multiple activities per Organization</p> <p>***Exclude Lines 45.46. & 47 from the Total Activity Budget</p> <p>***Max Allowable Overhead Percentage is 8%</p>	

The form will turn red if you exceed the max allowable rate based on your contract amount.

Activity Name	Details	Overhead Amount	Total Activity Budget	Overhead Percentage
In Home Visitation		\$2,500.00	\$35,000.00	7.69%
Guiding Parents to Services		\$2,500.00	\$25,000.00	11.11%
		\$0.00	\$0.00	

Cost Allocation Plan (Overhead Calculation)



Must provide a written explanation.

Can use tab 2 or just attach



Attachments required

Most Recent Cost Allocation Plan
Most recent Board Meeting
Minutes Approving Cost
Allocation Plan

- Resources:
- [NCPC Cost Principles](#) to determine what is allowable
- [FSR Line Item Explanations](#) what is permissible on budget lines
- [19% Cash & In Kind Donation](#) match
- [Travel](#) state rates apply
- [Food costs](#) comply with state guidelines



Contact

Jordan Killough
Contracts & Grants Accountant
finance@smartstartofmeck.org