



Guidelines for Submitting a Letter of Intent for Innovation Initiatives

Our vision is that every child in Mecklenburg County enters kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed. For the first time ever, Smart Start of Mecklenburg County (SSMC) is seeking letters of intent for one time funding to encourage development of innovative ideas to bring us closer to this vision.

Mission: Smart Start of Mecklenburg County mobilizes resources, forges partnerships, and supports families to improve early childhood health, education and development and ensure children are prepared for kindergarten. Our four areas of focus are early care and education quality and accessibility, family support, health, and early literacy for children birth to five.

Goals: Smart Start of Mecklenburg County has identified the following goals that are essential to fulfilling this mission in our community:

- Smart Start of Mecklenburg County will positively impact policy, practice, and investments for all children, birth to five, and their families.
- Families of young children provide supportive home environments and live in safe and supportive communities.
- Children are healthy and developmentally ready for kindergarten success.
- Children have access to high quality, nurturing early learning environments.
- Organizational capacity will support identified goals and outcomes.

The Mecklenburg Partnership for Children (aka SSMC) conducts its' funding process according to the requirements mandated by the General Assembly. Awards are subject to approval by the Smart Start of Mecklenburg County Board of Directors. Under mandate of the General Assembly, these funds must be used for evidence-based or evidence informed projects designed to serve children ages 0-5 in Mecklenburg County and reflect our mission, vision and organizational goals.

This particular funding opportunity is for projects of \$10,000 – \$30,000 that are rapid cycle and can be completed by June 15, 2021. An innovative initiative could implement a model in a new way, use new technologies or bridge systems. Pilots or one-time, non-capital expenses are allowed. We welcome ideas that:

- Increase the access to affordable, high-quality childcare for families who do not qualify for federal or county subsidy;
- Evaluate current services to identify opportunities for efficiencies or improvements that benefit families;

- Increase access to evidence based programs in one or more of five domains: developmental screening and assessment, home visiting, family strengthening and training, mental health consultation, behavioral health integration in 0-5 health care;
- Increase collaboration or coordination of services to introduce efficiencies, create synergy or address inequities by prioritizing our most vulnerable families.

Community initiatives that do not currently receive Smart Start funding are encouraged to apply.

Letters of Intent for consideration should address the following and be submitted to Elizabeth Kabalka at ekabalka@smartstartofmeck.org by January 8th.

1. Describe the problem. How do you know? Which SSMC priority area is being addressed? Who is the target population? (limit 500 words)
2. How will you address this problem? Give details such as an outline of what you will do, when and where it will occur, how you will engage with families, what criteria will you use to hire experts to help you, if needed. (500 words)
3. What change can we expect? What will you measure to document your success?
4. Why are you the right organization to address this? What is your expertise, what other groups or organizations will you work with?
5. How much money do you need for this project? Will this cover all the expense of the project? If not, where will the rest of the money come from?
6. What are your organization's other funding sources?
7. Has this organization applied for or received Smart Start funds previously?

Projects that meet basic criteria will be submitted to the SSMC Community Investment Committee for consideration. Funding decisions will be announced January 18, 2021.