

Early Childhood Fund Community Engagement Session  
January 9, 2020 – Dr. Wesley Grant Sr. Southside Center  
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Committee members present: Leslie Anderson, Jasmine Beach-Ferrara, Philip Belcher, Christy Cheek, Kit Cramer, Dr. Susan Mims, Robert Pressley, Glenda Weinert, Al Whitesides, Kidada Wynn

Welcome by Al Whitesides

Purpose, agenda and introductions by Glenda Weinert

Committee members shared why they wanted to join the committee.

Presentation by Rachael Nygaard

- Fund voted on in 2018 by Commissioners and first grant cycle began in 2019
- FY2020 was comprised of a mix of new projects and renewing projects
- ECE dashboards are available on [www.buncombecounty.org/grants](http://www.buncombecounty.org/grants). The community indicators that are being measured to gauge successes include: # of licensed facilities, # of licensed slots, % of children served, quality star rating of slots, # of employees working in facilities, average wage, teacher turnover, kindergarten readiness
- Discussed funding priorities and funding strategies
- There will be a grant-writing workshop on January 18<sup>th</sup> from 10:00-11:30 am at 200 College Street.
- Applications are open now and the deadline is February 14, 2020 by 5:00 pm.

Q&A/Listening Session:

1. Libby Kyle, YWCA: Thank you for the FY19 funding. As of yesterday, all of the classrooms have teachers, and the YW would not have been able to do that without your funding.
2. Zo Mpofu: Thank you for being champions. Preliminary data indicate that there were zero African American infant deaths last year. Our community health assessment has many gaps, and the biggest one is data. The Census is coming up soon. As trusted voices in the community, please use your platform to encourage people to respond to the census. In order to have equity-informed data, it is imperative to have participation.
3. Corrie Price, Evolve: Will there be opportunities for capital expenses for other organizations beside the schools to apply for capital expenses?
  - a. Jasmine - Clear legal basis for counties to fund capital projects for schools. Buncombe County is on the front line for funding ECE. Hopefully the law will evolve.
  - b. Philip – We need to be thinking about a long-term vision for what funds can be used for. The question of how to pay for capital projects is one that needs to be considered in our long-term planning.
4. What is the definition of capital expenditures?
  - a. Rachael - Playground equipment is an allowable expense. If you have questions, it can be addressed on an individual basis.

5. Corrie Price encouraged the committee to consider making child care available at events like this one as a way to increase parent participation.
  - a. Rachael Nygaard - We would love that for these meetings as well as other community meetings held by the County.
6. Marcia Whitney, Verner Center for Early Learning: I have so much empathy and appreciation for the work you do, especially making grant decisions with applicants in the room. Thank you for the transparency. Last year was a whirlwind and you did a great job. I believe there are going to be a lot more applications this year, maybe two or three times as many as last year. Can you provide guidance on how you envision making the difficult decisions about which organizations to fund?
  - a. Robert - We are in this together. This fund is ongoing; the commissioners will make sure of that. There is expertise on the committee, and its members are committed to making the best decisions they can.
  - b. Al – We have got to build the foundation and then go up. With this, we are building it as we go along. As a community, we generally spend too much time talking about the problem instead of taking steps to fix the problem. We are going to have to do some winging it as we go along. We will look at what is best for the community at the time. We know we won't make everyone happy but hopefully we will be successful. We are trying to be very transparent and do the right thing. We are learning every year.
  - c. Kit Cramer – We streamlined and simplified the application for this year and hopefully will be more efficient this year
  - d. Dr. Mims – We have been in a learning processes. We want to make sure we thank you. I have been amazed and educated during the site visits. As we learn more, our process will be better. We recognize that it is really hard to build an infrastructure one year at a time with one-year grants.
  - e. Robert Pressley/Rachael Nygaard: Last year, part of the available funds were used to fund projects that had been previously approved. Also, remember that the available funds should increase by 2% per year.
8. Libby, YWCA – will there be an opportunity for multi-year funding? There were some processes that were partially funded last year that are in the building process.
  - f. Rachael - The one project that we are aware of that will not be able to spend its funds this fiscal year will carry forward its remaining funds and be able to spend it. It will not come out of funds available for the upcoming grant cycle.
  - g. Dr. Mims - It is the intent and the wish of the committee to be able to do multi-year awards. We recognize the importance of that; however, we need to figure out the process, and we are working on that option.
  - h. Rachael - This year's application does ask about multi-year funding.
  - i. Leslie – As we face an election year, we need to elect folks who see the incredible value of early childhood education in Buncombe County. We as advocates must make sure this funding will remain in place, because elections occur every 2 years. It is phenomenal what the commissioners do. Early childhood education is not a service the County is mandated to fund. I encourage you, your staffs and your children's parents to get out in

these community forums and make sure early childhood education is on the radar of the candidates.

- j. Robert – You are as much a part of this as we are. We depend on your feedback and data. We need to publicize this information about what is working so others will want to invest funds in early childhood education, too. Let reinforce each other.
  - k. Philip – When reviewing the applications last year, we paid a lot of attention to how well the applications were put together, including spelling, typos, etc. We realized that this might not be fair to organizations that don't have development or grant-writing staff members. Our scoring criteria have been refined, and there's less emphasis on those types of details. We will focus on which proposals have the potential to provide the greatest benefit to the children of the County.
7. Libby – would like site visits to be part of the decision process.
- a. Kidada - The site visits have been very insightful and the committee listens to each other. We are going to great lengths to make the application process equitable to everyone.
  - b. Christy - Nothing makes me happier than going into a center and seeing children playing and happy. Early childhood education and development are so important; children have to learn early to be successful in life. We kept that in mind when reading the applications. We are so passionate and dedicated to this process. It is a blessing to sit here with these people.

Final words: Glenda – Thank you for your time and participation. We consider it a privilege to serve on this committee and to help effect positive change. Children should come first, and that is what we are working on. Thank you for being here today and for the work you do. Committee members will be available to talk with you for the next few minutes.