



Poor and Needy Division Great Expectations 2017 Funding Announcement

The Kate B. Reynolds Trust is pleased to announce our interests and process for the next round of [Great Expectations](#) 2017 funding priorities. We outline our overall principles and our Open Call for proposals, below.

What We Believe

At the Trust, we believe we need to work together to ensure the young children of Forsyth County, North Carolina—especially those in financially disadvantaged families—meet developmentally-appropriate milestones in their first five years, enter kindergarten ready to learn, and leave set for success in school and life. That’s why we launched Great Expectations in 2015.

Why We Listen

We know that listening to and learning from the families we serve—and the organizations we work with—is essential to foster equity and truly improve educational outcomes.

That’s why, in 2016, Great Expectations worked with 13 agencies throughout the [Forsyth Family Voices](#) project, interviewing hundreds of parents about their needs and interests. And that’s why we are continuing this effort today, with more agencies, who are talking to even more parents.

We also believe in listening to the organizations doing this work to understand where there may be gaps and redundancies. That’s why, in 2016, we conducted the [Early Childhood Service System Analysis](#) with The Forsyth Promise, to guide the development of our priorities.

In our November 2016 Poor and Needy Division funding announcement, we indicated that we would be drawing on the results of both these listening and learning efforts to guide development of our priorities for 2017 funding cycles and work.

We want to express enormous gratitude to those involved in Forsyth Family Voices—the families who participated in the survey interviews and focus groups, and the agencies that prioritized elevating the voices of their clients. We are also thankful to the dozens of front-line staff who work with our community’s children every day for their

participation in the Early Childhood Service System Analysis survey interviews and follow-up meetings. Finally, we have been learning from the community and early childhood experts—locally, across the state, and nationally—about what is working and not working in the early childhood system, and are grateful to all who shared their perspectives with us.

Funding Priorities for 2017

Great Expectations continues to be committed to our central goal of improving early childhood education and ensuring that children enter school ready to learn, and leave set for success in school and life.

Based on that goal, and on what we have learned in our work to date, our 2017 investments will center on three broad areas of the early childhood system:

- Early Intervention and Health
- Access to Quality Childcare
- Birth-to-Eight Educational Alignment

We will support this work in a few interrelated ways:

1. Open Call for proposals in the following areas:
 - Early Intervention and Health
 - Access to Quality Childcare
2. Birth-to-Eight Educational Alignment (still in development and not part of this Open Call)
3. Strategic, targeted investments that the Trust will initiate (and are not part of this Open Call)

Our Approach and Proposal Guidelines

Early Intervention and Health: Open Call

Our learnings reveal that too few children have access to the services they need, and too few parents are aware of the resources available to them. In particular, families shared that they need more information and education about services available for children with developmental disabilities or other special needs. While there are programs in place that develop strong relationships with families and provide ongoing connections to services, the eligibility criteria and length of service vary across programs, and the programs do not fully meet the need.

We have taken some critical first steps toward building a coordinated early childhood screening and referral system, starting at birth, with a major investment in the [Forsyth](#)

[Connects](#) universal home visiting program at Novant Health’s Forsyth Medical Center. Furthermore, we have invested in building a stronger information and referral system by supporting a planning process for [Help Me Grow](#), a system that connects young children and their families with the services they need. We will continue to build on both of these efforts to ensure system-wide advantages and alignment.

Proposals in “Early Intervention and Health” should leverage these investments and address the need for additional parent education about the importance of screening and the pathways to connect to available services. We are particularly interested in proposals that will support the hardest to reach families.

Access to Quality Childcare: Open Call

Expanding access to quality early educational opportunities and care is critical to ensuring school readiness and success for all young children. Childcare quality is defined and measured in a variety of ways, but there is general agreement that quality childcare environments are safe and provide developmentally-appropriate opportunities for play and learning. Quality care is responsive to needs of individual children, and is staffed with professionals who focus on creating warm, responsive relationships with the young people in their care. In addition to expanding early education services for all four-year-olds, there is a need in Forsyth County for expansion of quality and affordable early education opportunities for children ages birth to three. In particular, research points to three important populations of children who often lack access to childcare that meets their needs—homeless children, children with special needs, and dual-language learners. Additionally, there are too few affordable offerings in the existing licensed childcare system for two groups of children: infants and toddlers and children living in rural parts of the county.

Furthermore, we know that most Forsyth County children are not currently in licensed early care and education settings in Forsyth County—which is typical of most communities. And, too little is known about the quality of care children receive when they are being cared for by families, friends, and neighbors—where most children spend their days before they reach kindergarten.

We intend to learn more about the childcare gaps system-wide. Understanding these gaps involves gathering information about parents’ childcare preferences and challenges, as well as learning more about the needs of the families, friends, and neighbors who care for most children outside of the formal childcare system. We will use this information to make investments in increasing access to high-quality care and improving the quality of care provided by family, friends, and neighbors.

Proposals in “Access to Quality Childcare” should focus on building the capacity of existing licensed childcare providers to care for children who currently lack access to quality care. Additionally, proposals that identify creative funding mechanisms for creating more affordable childcare slots are welcome.

Birth-to-Eight Educational Alignment: (still in development and not part of this Open Call)

The children and families we seek to reach through Great Expectations are part of a system that is largely fragmented and made up of multiple paths to kindergarten. Because children receive childcare in a variety of settings and access early childhood programs and services at different levels, there is great variability in the quality and amount of experiences children have preparing them for success in school. Furthermore, the Early Childhood Service System Analysis identified the lack of alignment of efforts across available early childhood programming as a major concern.

There is movement at the national and state levels to align early childhood and elementary education systems, starting earlier in order to close later achievement gaps. This alignment effort focuses specifically on developmentally-appropriate practices from birth into the early grades, developing systems that are high-quality and aligned, and investing in data and evaluation strategies to measure progress across those systems.

We intend to explore ways to foster system-wide alignment and emphasis on developmentally-appropriate practice. Effective alignment requires careful planning to be successful, and any future investments will result from deliberate planning and consultation with critical system partners. **For this reason, we will not be accepting Open Call proposals in this area for 2017.**

Additional Practices and Principles

A strong early childhood system has to be undergirded by certain practices and principles that are required for deep results. We therefore recommend that proposals include ways to address the following areas of interest.

- *System-wide accountability and alignment:* Our Early Childhood Service System Analysis report illuminated a lack of alignment of early childhood data and data systems, especially across the public and nonprofit sectors. We are interested in proposals that will strengthen agency-level data collection, analysis, and data-driven decision making, as well as lead to better data alignment and accountability across the system of early childhood services.
- *Leveraging momentum toward scale:* Achieving better outcomes with young children and their families will not happen through the investments or work of any one funder or organization. The strongest proposals will focus their impact on areas where the community can, over time, achieve and sustain progress at scale, and leverage other system reform efforts at the local or state level, including areas where investment has been pledged by other local funders.

- *Coordinated communications:* While it is clear that many actors in the early childhood system share the same goals and want to expand our networks of supporters—our narrative and messages are not coordinated. Proposal ideas that include an integrated communications strategy are encouraged to address how messaging about early childhood issues thoughtfully aligns with Great Expectations messaging and/or other strong messaging in the community.
- *Strengthening our work with and on behalf of the Latino community:* Forsyth Family Voices data revealed that Latino families have less confidence in their ability to support their children’s education, and less information about the services available to support them. We encourage proposals that build capacity of Latino families and Latino-led early childhood initiatives.
- *Family engagement:* We developed [guiding principles](#) for Great Expectations that emphasize respect for families and equity within the early childhood system. We firmly believe that parents and families have important insights toward shaping stronger programs, stronger organizations, and our work on the system as a whole. Any successful proposal will build on the work of Forsyth Family Voices by elevating family voice, including involving families in program planning and decision-making related to the proposed project or initiative.
- *Engaging unlikely partners:* We encourage proposals that engage partners and voices that historically have not been involved in the work to improve the lives of financially-disadvantaged young children and their families. It will take all of us to help foster equity in our community—the healthcare sector, the faith community, business leaders, as well as those who are working directly with educators, childcare providers, and families.

Application Process and Deadlines

Talk to us if you’re interested in applying, by March 23, 2017. **Application deadline:** Tuesday, April 4, at 5:00 p.m., ET. **Contact** Erin Yates at erin@kbr.org or 336-397-5521.

To engage in an initial conversation about proposal ideas for the April Great Expectations cycle, we request all interested parties contact Erin Yates. Depending on the fit with the Open Call areas described in this proposal, we may then schedule an appointment for a formal advance consultation with you. We request that you call to discuss your ideas by March 23, 2017. To be considered, you must submit your application by Tuesday, April 4, at 5:00 p.m., ET.

Organizations interested in Great Expectations work that is not related to the Open Call categories are still encouraged to call or email as directed above to let us know of your interests and for follow-up at a later time.

To learn more about [Great Expectations](#), visit the [website](#) for the latest news and guiding principles.