

## CCR&R Advisory Committee Meeting

### AGENDA

*Quorum = 6 (50%) (Total Committee Members = 12)*

Thursday, February 12, 2026

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**HYBRID** (Multipurpose Conference Room and Zoom)

***Be the Driving Force*** to meet our roles and responsibilities as a non-profit Board by:

➤ *Providing Oversight*    ➤ *Ensuring Adequate Resources*    ➤ *Establishing a Strategic Direction*

- I. **Welcome, Determination of Quorum, & Call to Order – Wanda Wesley, Co-Chair**
- II. **Approval of Minutes**
  - A. November 13, 2025\*
- III. **President’s Report – Mary Sonnenberg, President**
- IV. **Financial Updates – Carole Mangum, Grants Manager**
- V. **Strategic Planning Update (summary attached) – Julanda Jett, Vice President of Programs**
- VI. **Neurodivergent Children Resource & Support Workgroup – Julanda Jett, Vice President of Programs**
- VII. **Department Report & Matters for Discussion – Julanda Jett, Vice President of Programs**
  - A. Department Updates:
    1. Workforce Development Program – cohort 2
    2. Planning Round Table – Early Childhood Listening Session for Providers
    3. PFC Library Sensory Room
    4. Providers Appreciation Banquet – May 2<sup>nd</sup> at FTCC
  - B. Cumberland County Literacy Council
  - C. SOAR Community Coalition – **Wanda Wesley**
- VIII. **Division Reports –**
  - A. Family Services
    1. NC Pre-K – **Ar-Nita Davis, Programs Manager**
    2. Consumer Education & Referral – **Sheila Rowe, Program Manager**
  - B. Provider Services – **Sheila Rowe, Program Manager**
    1. Kaleidoscope
    2. Technical Assistance & Trainings
    3. Region 5 (School-Age & FCC)

IX.	<b>Upcoming Meetings / Events / Holidays</b>		
	<b>MEETING</b>	<b>MEETING DATE</b>	<b>MEETING TIME</b>
	Facility & Tenant	February 16, 2026	11:30 am – 1:00 pm
	Human Resource	February 17, 2026	12:30 pm – 2:00 pm
	<b>Board of Directors (&amp; NC Pre-K Planning)</b>	<b>February 26, 2026</b>	<b>12:00 pm – 2:00 pm</b>
	Community Engagement & Development (CED)	March 5, 2026	8:30 am – 10:30 am
	<b>Board Development</b>	<b>March 11, 2026</b>	<b>9:00 am – 10:30 am</b>
	Finance	March 19, 2026	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
	<b>Executive</b>	<b>March 26, 2026</b>	<b>9:00 am – 11:00 am</b>
	Planning & Evaluation	April 7, 20256	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
	Family Connects	May 5, 2026	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
	CCR&R	June 4, 2026	9:00 am – 11:00 am
	<b>EVENTS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
	PFC Little Land	Saturday, March 14, 2026	Crown Expo Center
	Grilled Cheese Festival	Saturday, November 7, 2026	Dirtbag Ales
	<b>HOLIDAY/CLOSURES</b>	<b>DATE CLOSED</b>	
	Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Monday, January 19, 2026	
	Good Friday	Friday, April 3, 2026	
	Optional Mental Health Day	Monday, April 6, 2026	
	Memorial Day	Monday, May 25, 2026	
	Juneteenth	Friday, June 19, 2026	

X. **Adjournment: Next Meeting is Thursday, June 4, 2026 at 9:00 am (in-person & hybrid)**

\* Action Item



**Partnership for Children of Cumberland County, Inc. (PFC)**  
**CCR&R Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**November 13, 2025 (9:08 am – 11:00 am)**  
***Be the Driving Force***



<b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b> Cathy Everett, Wanda Wesley, Katherine (Katie) Lada, Angela Crosby, Dr. Rondell Bennett, & Tre’Vone McNeill <b>MEMBERS ABSENT:</b> Darlisha Warren, Desheka Williams, Dr. Alexia Blue-Wilson, Christopher Williams, & Sherail Monroe <b>NON-VOTING ATTENDEES:</b> Tamiko Colvin, Ar-Nita Davis, Sheila Rowe, Julanda Jett, & Mary Sonnenberg			
AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	FOLLOW-UP
I. Call to Order	Wanda Wesley, Co-Chair, welcomed all attendees, determined that a quorum was met not and called the meeting to order. The scheduled meeting of the CCR&R Advisory Committee was held on Thursday, November 13, 2025 and beginning at 9:08 am pursuant to prior written notice to each committee member. Tamiko Colvin was Secretary for the meeting and recorded the minutes.	Called to Order	None
II. Approval of Meeting Minutes	<p>The minutes of the June 5, 2025 and September 11, 2025 scheduled meetings were previously distributed and reviewed by the committee members. The Co-Chair asked for corrections. Hearing none, the committee consented and the minutes were approved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angela Crosby &amp; Katie Lada motioned and approved for June 5, 2025 minutes.</li> <li>• Angela Crosby &amp; Dr. Rondell Bennett motioned and approved for September 11, 2025 minutes.</li> </ul>	Approved	None
III. President’s Report	Mary Sonnenberg, President, highlighted important dates and information from the report. (report provided).	None	None
IV. Financial Updates	Mary Sonnenberg, President, provided the financial report for Cumberland County (report provided).	None	None
V. Neurodivergent Children Resources & Support Update A. Ways to Grow Workgroup	<p>Julanda Jett, Vice President of Programs, provided updates for the Neurodivergent workgroup.</p> <p>A. Ways to Grow the Workgroup – due to low attendance at recent meetings, suggestions were requested for improve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanda suggested virtual meetings instead of in-person may be more appealing.</li> <li>• Create a flyer/information sheet for the next neurodivergent work group (planned for early January) and share with Cumberland County Community Collaborative (Sharon Glover) and other relevant groups.</li> </ul>	None	None



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Katie and Wanda to share information about the neurodivergent work group in Colors, LACC, and with contacts at Autism Society of North Carolina and ECAC.</li> <li>• Ensure Amy Perry and Crystal Harrell (Autism Society of North Carolina) are on the email blast for the neurodivergent work group; if not, add them.</li> <li>• Katie stated she will distribute flyers for the neurodivergent work group at CDSA and encourage providers/parents to share via email and in the lobby.</li> <li>• The next neurodivergent work group for early January after the holidays and coordinate with team to promote via flyers and email.</li> </ul>		
<p>VI. Family Engagement</p> <p>A. Increase Family Involvement</p> <p>B. Explore Strategies</p>	<p>Julanda Jett, Vice President of Programs, initiated discussion on family engagement, how to increase family involvement, and explore strategies.</p> <p>Team to explore and implement strategies for increasing family awareness of quality child care, including distributing leaflets/flyers at child care centers and via email, and coordinating with schools (especially Title I pre-Ks) to send information home with families.</p> <p>Some family engagement activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn (KPL) is a weekly activity on Thursdays at Faacinate-U Children’s Museum &amp; PFC Lending Library.</li> <li>• Harvest &amp; Heroes – Touch the Truck in October</li> <li>• A Sensory Room is underway in the Lending Library. Tentatively opening in January 2026</li> </ul> <p>Angela Crosby and Wanda Wesley mentioned leveraging partnerships with schools and libraries, as well as utilizing the United Way's literacy calendar to promote events. The group also addressed the need for updated policies and procedures, with plans to review and recommend changes to the board.</p> <p>The discussion concluded with Julanda presenting on the development of a sensory room at the library and exploring ways to increase awareness about quality childcare options.</p>		



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	<p>Dr. Rondell Bennett spoke about the course of the program and other partnering opportunities on educational and community initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the need for residency programs in various areas, including BK, middle school and high school math and science, and special needs.</li> <li>• additional avenues for teacher licensing are necessary, especially for special needs education; teachers are often overwhelmed and leaving the profession.</li> <li>• Piloting a new program – offering BK (Birth-Kindergarten) residency at FTCC and hiring a specialist to support this initiative.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify and hire to teach specials needs certficate classes for those that specialize in special needs/behavioral management.</li> <li>○ Ar-Nita will distribute information fot the NC Pre-K directors at the next meeting.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Additional Advertising Options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumberland County Literacy Bus (tutoring)</li> <li>• WIDU Radio (Rev. Ron Godbolt)</li> <li>• Parent Communication Groups</li> <li>• School Systems</li> <li>• Videos instead of emails</li> <li>• Faith-based community</li> </ul>		
<p>VII. Department Reporting &amp; Matters for Discussion</p> <p>A. Committee Membership</p> <p>B. Department Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Development Program</li> <li>• New Staff</li> <li>• Open Position</li> </ul> <p>C. Cumberland County Literacy Council</p> <p>D. SOAR Community Coalition</p>	<p>Julanda Jett, Vice President of Programs, provided the report for the Programs Department. The report included the following information:</p> <p>A. Committee Membership – Commitment &amp; Expectations:</p> <p>Mary Sonnenberg &amp; Julanda Jett eshared the expectation</p> <p>Tre’Vone McNeill proposed partnering with the faith community and local organizations would be a great start. He agreed to compile and share a list of church contacts to broaden outreach efforts and strategic planning, including contacts from True Vine and the Ministerial Alliance. Tre’Vone will and coordinate with Ar-Nita for additional contacts.</p> <p>Mary Sonnenberg requested an opprortunity to present the Partnership’s information at a Ministerial Alliance Leader meeting. She asked Tre’Vone to coordinate schedule with Belinda.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>

	<p>B. Department Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce Development: Due to unforeseen circumstances, the ceremony is postponed until April/May next year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 4 participants currently working in facilities under mentorship at Jump Start, Little Beginningz, Little Angels, and Kindercare-Ramsey.</li> <li>○ Collaborating with NC Works for pay.</li> <li>○ Recruitment for the remaining 11 slots for cohort 2 will begin in January. Information session will start in late January. Julanda will coordinate with the City of Fayetteville for possible video and advertisement for recruitment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• New Staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ever Aranda, NC Pre-K Program Specialist</li> <li>○ Alisha Bradshaw, NC Pre-K Caseworker</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Open Position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Early Literacy &amp; Play Coordinator</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>C. Cumberland County Literacy Council – Wanada Wesley provided updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met on Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup> . Next meeting is scheduled for February 2026</li> <li>• Additional volunteers are needed for the Dolly Parton Imaginary Library Storytime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Approximately 100</li> <li>○ Seeking individuals with literacy and/or early childhood backgrounds</li> <li>○ Can collaborate with FTCC Literacy Students volunteering opportunities will be shared with Dr. Bennett and Katie Lada.</li> <li>○ Volunteers are required to have a background check</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>D. SOAR Community Coalition (flyer provided) – Wanda Wesley provided updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOAR meeting is Thursday, November 13<sup>th</sup> at the Child Advocacy Center at 3:00 pm (222 Rowan Street).</li> <li>• Body Safety</li> <li>• Darkness o Light Training</li> <li>• Spring – joint collaboration with COLORS</li> <li>• Student Artwork is displayed at the Art Library until November 24<sup>th</sup>. There were 38 entries.</li> </ul>		
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 Be the Driving Force**



<p>VIII. Division Updates</p> <p>A. Family Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NC Pre-K</li> <li>• Consumer Education &amp; Referral</li> </ul> <p>B. Provider Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaleidoscope &amp; Library</li> <li>• Technical Assistance &amp; Training</li> <li>• Consumer Education &amp; referral</li> <li>• Region 5 (B3QI, FCC, HSB, &amp; School-Age)</li> </ul>	<p>Family Services:</p> <p>Ar-Nita Davis, Program Manager, gave the updates for NC Pre-K (report provided):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumberland County Allocation decreased to 1414           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ NC Pre-K App System:</li> <li>○ Waitlist: 175</li> <li>○ Placed: 1437 (does not mean served)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• DCDEE Extensions Request for Teachers/Teachers Assistants: 21 Teachers</li> <li>• 2025-2026 NC Pre-K Monitoring: due January 2026</li> <li>• Meetings/Outreach Events:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ COLORS Meeting</li> <li>○ PFC Executive Meeting</li> <li>○ NC Pre-K Planning Committee/PFC Board Meeting</li> <li>○ PFC/DSS/CCHD Meeting</li> <li>○ Cumberland County Pre-K, Collaboration meetings with Head Start and Cumberland Schools,</li> <li>○ NC Pre-NC Pre-K Site Administrators Zoom Meetings (September &amp; October)</li> <li>○ DCDEE Café 'NC Pre-K Monthly Café Monthly Meeting.</li> <li>○ Racial Equity Workgroup</li> <li>○ TA Community of Practice</li> <li>○ Cumberland County's Collaborative Conversation</li> <li>○ Neurodivergent Workgroup</li> <li>○ DCDEE Transitions to Pre-K and Kindergarten Meeting (October)</li> <li>○ NC Pre-K PLC 2025-2026 1st Meeting (October 2025)</li> <li>○ Harvest &amp; Heros – Touch the Fire Truck Event (October 23, 2025)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Wanda Wesley added additional information relating to the Cumberland County Pre-K Collaboration meeting with Head Start &amp; Cumberland County Schools System.</p> <p>Angela Crosby, Jumpstart Director, shared the UKER trauma training to manage challenging behaviors in the classroom will be held at their facility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 22, 2025 at 9:00 am - intro-overview (basic information)</li> <li>• January 10, 2026 – 8hr certification training for caregivers</li> <li>• Angela invited committee members &amp; PFC staff to attend</li> </ul> <p>Angela also mentioned the importance of submitting certificated and education records to the Division of Child Development and highlighted the role of instructors and advisors</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>
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	<p>to guide student in choosing appropriate educational tracks, such as BK track for NC Pre-K and kindergarten</p> <p>Provider Services and Region 5: Sheila Rowe, Program Manager, gave the following updates:</p> <p>Provider Services Coaches – providing technical assistance, coaching, observations, consultations, and full ERS assessments in 23 childcare programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering intensive director-specific technical assistance for four programs</li> <li>• Offering Pathways to the Stars support, especially programs with temporary license.</li> <li>• Assisting with Administrative Actions by providing supplemental technical assistance to strengthen overall program operations, quality outcomes, supervision, and behavior.</li> </ul> <p>HSBs – Healthy Social Behavior Coaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As of October 31<sup>st</sup>, there is one HSB Coach, Michelle Jones</li> <li>• 73 site visits</li> <li>• Facilitating behavior trainings</li> </ul> <p>Birth to Three (B3QI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective November 15, 2025, there will be one B3QI Specialist, Tonya McCall</li> <li>• Infant Toddler Safe Sleep &amp; SIDS Reduction in child care</li> <li>• Creating a YES environment (in support of Administrative Actions)</li> <li>• Providing practice-based coaching to 15 childcare programs to enhance quality of care and compliance with best practices</li> </ul> <p>Regional Coach – Vianey Graham (includes school-age):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last day was November 7, 2025</li> <li>• 14 childcare programs regionally</li> <li>• Facilitated school-age trainings for Primetime</li> <li>• Facilitating Building Incredible Relationships and BSAC trainings</li> </ul> <p>Lead Coach – Mary Anders (includes school-age):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 33 childcare programs regionally</li> <li>• Facilitating Administrative Actions trainings</li> <li>• Hosting the School-Age Connection Workgroup</li> </ul>		
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	<p>Family Child Care Consultant – Kathleen Hoffler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26 FCCH programs</li> <li>• Leading Leadership Academy for FCCHs</li> <li>• Offering Pathways to the Stars to increase higher quality rating</li> <li>• Facilitating trainings for Workforce Development Program</li> </ul> <p>Regional Caseworker – Ebony Peterkin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided 503 families with consumer resource and referral, carseat assistance, and food assistance</li> <li>• 59 children and 37 parents participated in the KPL activities at Fasinat-U Children’s Musuem and PFC.</li> <li>• Kaleidoscope Play &amp; Learn – meets twice a week on Thursdays <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 9:30 am at Fasinat-U Children’s Museum</li> <li>○ 2:00 pm in the Partnership’s Lending Library</li> <li>○ All play groups are free - registration online</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Professional Development Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches and TA staff are continuing professional development for QRIS Pathways</li> </ul> <p>Current and Upcoming Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training Calendar for December posted</li> <li>• Training Calendar for January-June is in progress</li> </ul> <p>Additional Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly Information Session Schedule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ November 20, 2025</li> <li>○ February 19, 2026</li> <li>○ May 21, 2026</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<p>IX. Additional Information</p>	<p>Julanda Jett, Vice President of Programs, informed the committee about an appreciation banquet has scheduled for Cumberland County providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 2, 2026 at Fayetteville Tech (Tony Rand Multipurpose Room</li> <li>• 6:30 pm</li> <li>• Additional information to come</li> </ul> <p>Dr. Rondell Bennett updated the committee on the FTCC collaboration with Primetime to offer 5 courses certification in the fall of 2026.</p>		



**President's Report**  
**Executive Committee (Acting on Behalf of Board)**  
**Hybrid (Multipurpose Conference Room and ZOOM)**  
Thursday, January 29, 2026

**A. NCPC/DCDEE Updates / Legislative Updates**

**1. NCPC**

- This month's special stories focus on the Child Care Health Consultant program that is located at Cumberland County Health Department.
- NCPC will be submitting a proposal for the CORE RFA when it is released in February.
- Carry-forward caps were decreased by 10% for FY 26. **Our cap will be \$190,261.**
- Marta Hester's Public Policy Email is attached. If anyone would like information on the presentation by New Mexico referenced, contact me.

**2. DCDEE**

- **Region 5:** Payment for these activities continues to be up to date. Special Projects have ended and are being closed out. We are awaiting information from CCRI (Child Care Resources Inc. – Charlotte) and Early Years on how these projects will be operating moving forward.
- **SWCDC has provided us with monitoring requests for our Region 5 Contracts.** Carole Mangum will be leading that response.
- **DCDEE will be releasing the RFA for CORE services February 15.**
- **CCRI** has done listening sessions regarding the RFA for CORE services in the South-Central region of NC. We met with them on December 15.
- **NC Pre-K:** Pre-contracting documents for FY27 have been submitted. Waiting for the amendment to increase administrative funds to be executed. The amendment for an increase of \$166,134 will be effective January 30, 2026 through June 30, 2026.

**3. State Level**

- NC continues to be the only state without a final state budget for FY26.
- For details of the session and federal updates, refer to the NC Center for Nonprofits' [January 23 Public Policy update](#).

**4. Federal Level**

- The federal government is under a continuing resolution through January 30, 2026. Budget negotiations are in progress. Information on the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026 is included in Marta Hester's email.

**5. Local Level**

- Partnership staff will attend the **Second Military Community Childcare Roundtable** on January 29 at FTCC.

**B. Grant Opportunities/Updates/RFPs**

- Our County and City of Fayetteville grants are all active. Requests for reimbursements and data requests are being managed by fiscal and programmatic staff.
- Building construction is moving forward. The construction schedule has had some delays and now will go into February. Mike provides updates to staff and tenants as different areas are impacted. Finish work is being done in Conference Room B and the Charles Morris Conference Room. Cannon Foundation funding for the project has been received. We have invoiced the City of Fayetteville for a

part of payment for the first Pay Ap. The construction loan was used for the other part of that payment.

- The grant cycle for FY27 for Cumberland County's Community Funding projects has been released. Grants are due by January 30. Proposals for Family Connects funding and the Early Childhood Workforce Development will be submitted.
- The City of Fayetteville is convening leverage partners who were part of their initial Choice Neighborhoods Grant application to determine continued partnerships in preparation for a new grant cycle.

#### C. Staff Updates

- **Early Literacy and Play Coordinator and Communications – recruiting and interviewing.** If you are interested in or would like to refer a candidate for these full-time positions, please contact Anthony Ramos ([aramos@ccpfc.org](mailto:aramos@ccpfc.org)) for more information.

#### D. Events/Recognitions

- **NC Pre-K Let's Get Enrolled – Applications for the 2026-2027 school year launched on January 21.** Please share the URL: [LetsGetEnrolled.com](https://letsgetenrolled.com). Contact Ar-Nita Davis ([adavis@ccpfc.org](mailto:adavis@ccpfc.org)). Promotional materials for the 2026-2027 school year have been released on social media and are posted on our website. Cumberland County Schools is also sharing the information across multiple platforms. Families can still apply for vacancies this school year.
- **Barnes and Noble Book Drive** – The combined total for Round 1 and 2 delivery of books in November and December was **1,875 books** with an in-kind value of **\$13,651.81**. A final delivery of books in January yielded **285 books** with an in-kind value of **\$1,844.15**. The total number of books donated was **2,160 books** with an in-kind value of **\$15,495.96**. If you happen to find yourself at BN - Fayetteville please make a point to thank Jennifer Wittmann and her team for all of their ongoing support and for selecting us for over a decade to be the recipient of their book drive.
- **Freedom Christian Academy's National Honor Society Book Drive** – The students collected **365 children's books** for an in-kind value of **\$2,480.38** to support local literacy and put stories directly into the hands of children. The IT Department team at PFC were part of thanking the students for their service to our community.
- **Giving Tuesday:** The Cumberland Community Foundation's Giving Tuesday event wrapped up and the required survey is due to CCF by February 6. **Giving Tuesday donations were amplified through generous donors to the Cumberland Community Foundation. Our final direct donations were \$8,931.17 and the amplification was \$1,851.30 for a total of \$10,782.47.**
- **Little Land BIG Play for Families 2026 – Save the date for March 14, 2026 from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm at the Crown Expo Center.** The website is updated and live. Now accepting vendor applications: <https://ccpfc.org/littleland/little-land-vendor-agreement/>. We will need volunteers for this activity. If you are able to assist, contact Daniele Malvesti-Petti ([dmalvesti@ccpfc.org](mailto:dmalvesti@ccpfc.org)).
- **Provider Appreciation Event** – Hold the date for May 2, 2026 at FTCC from 5:00 – 9:00 pm. More details to come. If you have questions, contact Julanda Jett, VP of Programs ([jjett@ccpfc.org](mailto:jjett@ccpfc.org)).
- **Grilled Cheese Festival – Save the date for November 7, 2026.**

## Special Stories January 2026

### Child Care Health Consultants Activity (Cumberland County Health Department)

#### Story 1: Strengthening Health Practices Through On-Site Consultation

Child Care Health Consultant provided targeted technical assistance to a licensed child care center experiencing frequent illness-related exclusions and staff uncertainty around sanitation and illness policies. Through on-site observation, the CCHC identified gaps in handwashing procedures, cleaning and sanitizing practices, and staff understanding of illness exclusion guidelines.

The CCHC provided hands-on coaching, visual reminders for classrooms, and policy guidance aligned with licensing and public health recommendations. As a result, staff demonstrated increased confidence in implementing health practices, illness-related questions decreased, and the center reported improved consistency in sanitation routines. This collaboration strengthened the program's ability to maintain a healthier environment for children and staff.

#### Story 2: Supporting Challenging Behaviors and Staff Well-Being

This quarter, a CCHC supported a child care classroom experiencing frequent biting and aggressive behaviors that were impacting staff morale and classroom stability. Through classroom observation and reflective conversations, the CCHC helped staff identify developmental triggers, environmental stressors, and opportunities for proactive support.

The CCHC introduced trauma-informed strategies, visual schedules, and consistent transition supports while modeling supportive language and “serve and return” interactions. Staff reported feeling more supported and better equipped to respond calmly and consistently to challenging behaviors. Over time, the frequency of incidents decreased, and the classroom environment became more regulated and nurturing.

These stories illustrate how CCHC services positively influence child health, staff confidence, and program stability by providing relationship-based, practical support tailored to each child care setting.

**From:** Marta Hester <[mhester@smartstart.org](mailto:mhester@smartstart.org)>

**Subject:** Smart Start Network Public Policy Update for Week of January 19 - 23, 2026

Good morning,

**Please be advised next Friday's Smart Start Network Public Policy Meeting scheduled for January 30, 2026, will be held at 9:00am to 10:00am.** We will have a *Fireside Chat with our Smart Start Advocates, The Raleigh Group*. We are changing the time to accommodate our advocates' schedules. Discussion will include conversations about our Smart Start priorities, NC General Statutes, mid-term elections, outlook on the 2026 legislative session, and more.

I am attaching presentations from last Friday's Smart Start Network Public Policy Meeting on New Mexico's universal child care and on *Defend the Spend*, which requires states to provide additional justification in the payment management system for Child Care and Development Funding (CCDF). We appreciate Elizabeth Hayes joining our public policy call last week to provide more information.

## STATE UPDATE

### **Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services**

The [Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services](#) met on January 13, 2026, to hear how the state is handling new administrative rules for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) stemming from H.R.1 (One Big Beautiful Bill Act). Counties are currently estimating to need a cumulative \$67 million in additional administrative funding, and the state may need to provide up to \$420 million toward SNAP benefits, though that number could decrease as counties lower their error rates in eligibility determinations. Presentations were provided by NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Brunswick County Department of Social Services, and the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association. For more detailed information, see the presentations in the link as follows: [Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services Non Standing Committee - North Carolina General Assembly](#)

### **Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid**

NC Medicaid and NC Department of Commerce reported on their perspectives on H.R. 1 Changes to Medicaid Work Requirements and Eligibility Determinations, to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid on January 13, 2026. Kevin Leonard, Director of NC County Commissioners Association, also shared the counties' perspectives on increased Medicaid administrative requirements resulting from H.R.1., and the burden it will cause counties. For more detailed information, go to [Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Medicaid Non Standing Committee - North Carolina General Assembly](#)

### **NC Child Care Commission**

The North Carolina Child Care Commission will hold its [Third Quarter Meeting](#) on Monday, February 2, 2026, beginning at 10:00 a.m., at the Division Headquarters, 1915 Health Services Way, Conference Rooms 01110 A & B, Raleigh, N.C. 27607. There will also be an option to join the meeting via WebEx by clicking on the following link:

<https://ncgov.webex.com/ncgov/j.php?MTID=m0514ed56ca232c8ab03304bef54c0dca>

## NC Division of Child Development and Early Education: Market Rate

NC DCDEE currently operates using the 2021 Market Rate; however, House Bill 412 (Session Law 2025-36) requires DCDEE to complete a new market rate study by May 1, 2026, and to make it available to the public. This market rate study should include potential rates that are not segmented by star-rating and new market rates for the QRIS system.

According to ACF guidance, states must use current market rates for child care provider payments to be in compliance with federal guidelines to receive CCDF funding. As mentioned previously, Candace Witherspoon, DCDEE Director, advised the agency will request a mini budget early in the 2026 session and address the issue with ACF to ensure NC is in compliance.

## NC Elections

All 100 N.C. House and all 50 N.C. Senate seats are up for election this year. See updated information and resources below:

- [Unofficial Primary Election Candidates for 2027 NC House](#) (updated through January 20, 2026)
- [Unofficial - Primary Election Filing for 2027 Senate](#) (updated through January 20, 2026)
- [North Carolina's 2026 primary elections: What you need to know - EdNC](#)
- [More than 100 NC candidates switched parties. Here's what they say about why - NewsBreak](#)

## FEDERAL UPDATE

### Child Care Development Fund Proposed Rules

As mentioned in the Smart Start Network Public Policy Update on January 9, 2026, the comment period on the Proposed CCDF Rule on *Restoring Flexibility in the Child Care and Development Fund*, will end on **February 4, 2026**. US DHHS, ACF, proposes to amend CCDF regulations to reduce costs and burden for states and territories administering the program. It proposes 1.) rescinding the requirements to limit family co-payments to 7 percent of family income, 2.) to provide some direct services through grants or contracts, 3.) to pay providers based on child's enrollment, and 4.) to pay providers prospectively that were added to the CCDF regulations in the March 2024 final rule, *Improving Child Care Access, Affordability, and Stability in the Child Care and Development Fund*. For more information and to submit comments to the rule, go to [Federal Register :: Restoring Flexibility in the Child Care and Development Fund \(CCDF\)](#)

### Federal Appropriations Progress

Congress has until next Friday, January 30, 2026, to pass the annual appropriations bills to avoid another federal government shutdown. Earlier this week the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, to include the House and Senate Appropriations Committees [proposed legislation to fully fund the government](#) through the rest of Fiscal Year 2026, was released. The consolidated package includes funding for the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, Defense, and Homeland Security. The House will vote on the funding package this week and the Senate will vote next week. A high-level summary of some of the proposed highlights is provided below:

- \$8.8 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, an increase of **\$85 million above the 2025 level**.
- \$12.4 billion for Head Start, an **increase of \$85 million above the 2025 level**.
- Flat funding of \$315 million for the Preschool Development Grants.

- \$4 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, an increase of \$20 million above the 2025 level.
- \$18.4 billion for Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies.
- \$2.2 billion for Title II-A (Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants).
- \$15.5 billion for Special Education, an increase of \$23 million above the 2025 level (funding for IDEA Preschool).
- \$1.6 billion for Impact Aid, an increase of \$5 million above the 2025 level.
- \$75 million for Child Care Access Means Parents in School.

### **Funding Freeze**

A federal judge's two-week temporary restraining order preventing the federal government from freezing over \$10 billion in child care and family assistance funding in five states is set to expire today, January 23, 2026. The freeze and temporary restraining order is applicable to the following states: Minnesota, Colorado, California, Illinois, and New York. Here is an article with more details: [As \\$10B in federal child care funds hangs in the balance, cities and counties brace for budget shock | Smart Cities Dive](#)

Finally, please continue to keep me posted on your upcoming meetings with elected officials and share information about concerns you are hearing from families, providers, and other early childhood stakeholders.

Thank you,

Marta



**Marta T. Hester**  
Public Policy Director

**The North Carolina Partnership for Children**  
1100 Wake Forest Rd, Raleigh, NC 27604



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

## Office of Child Care



**News**

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides funding to states, territories, and Tribes which is critical to supporting working families throughout the country. In light of recent allegations of child care fraud, the Department of Health and Human Services has activated Defend the Spend for all CCDF grantees. It is the goal of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for there to be no disruption to child care payments for legitimate services provided.

You may recall from last spring that Defend the Spend requires grantees to complete a mandatory field in the Payment Management System (PMS) when requesting a drawdown of funds. We ask that grantees provide the following information in this justification field:

- Grantee's attestation that they have reviewed, made any necessary updates, and are implementing strategies and controls to identify fraud and ensure program integrity, including verification of child enrollment and attendance submissions.
- A strong justification for the use of funds that aligns with CCDF program purposes, that at a minimum includes a description or summary of expenses or activities, by CCDF expenditure category (i.e., direct services, quality activities, infant/toddler quality activities, administrative costs).

ACF has surged capacity with additional internal and contract support to ensure expeditious review of DTS submissions. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your OCC Regional Office or to [OCCInfo@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:OCCInfo@acf.hhs.gov) should you have questions or need additional support.

# PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY, INC.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Board Responsibility

*The review of the financial statements is the responsibility of the Committee and Board Members of PFC.*

*The detailed financial reports have been provided to you via email or via the PFC website and will be provided electronically during the meeting.*

December 31, 2025

### ONLY THE HIGHLIGHTED ITEMS NEED TO BE DISCUSSED.

#### 1 Balance Sheet

- a. The cash balances; investments and liabilities are at the anticipated amounts and are sufficient for the current needs.
- b. Since all of our grants are now reimbursement-based, managing the monthly cashflow has become more critical than in past years.
- c. The County of Cumberland Family Connects grant is a reimbursement-based grant on a **quarterly basis** only.
- d. NCPC reminded the local partnerships that they are managing Smart Start cashflow differently for FY25-26.  
"Historically all LPs received one and a half months' worth of the initial NCPC-LP contract amount (12.5%) as an initial advance. In recent years, NCPC would advance about one additional month's worth of the contract total each month going forward, which led to significant SS cash-on-hand for several LPs during the FY. Instead, NCPC intends to calculate monthly payments with greater consideration of LPs' reported expenditures and spending patterns. The initial advance provided in July will remain on hand with the LP for the time being to provide operational cashflow." [from NCPC's September 2025 Dollars & Sense Newsletter .]

#### 2 Smart Start Grant [State Funds]

- a. PFC's Smart Start grant budgets are reflected at 100% of full allocation effective July 1, 2025.
- b. The total allocation for FY25-26 at 100% is \$6,832,478, including DSS and WAGE\$.
- c. In July 2025, PFC reverted \$68,243.04 of unspent FY24-25 Smart Start Services funds to NCPC.  
PFC did not receive \$150,000 of FY24-25 funds from NCPC, and thus with the reverted funds of \$68,243.04, the total unspent is \$218,243.04.  
The maximum reversion cap for Cumberland is \$214,209, which is the anticipated amount to receive back during FY25-26.  
On November 18, 2025, NCPC notified PFC that the \$214,209 of Services funds was available for contracting. PFC has prepared budget changes to be effective Decemb
- d. PFC has reviewed and prepared applicable budget changes for the full \$214,209 to be effective December 31, 2025.  
The current Smart Start budget effective December 31, 2025 is \$7,046,687.

#### 3 NC Pre-Kindergarten Grant [State and Federal Funds]

- a. PFC is in full contract with DCDEE effective July 1, 2025.
- b. The total FY25-26 contract is \$9,614,373 which consists of \$3,583,385 of federal funds and \$6,030,988 of state funds.
- c. The FY25-26 contract for NC Pre-K **administrative funds is \$17,113 less than FY24-25**, and the \$216,016 reduction from FY23-24 was not restored. The **Direct Services State funds were reduced by \$222,620 for FY25-26**.  
PFC is strategizing ways to sustain this funding stream due to the additional reductions in funding.
- d. Historically this distribution of state and federal funds is amended by DCDEE before or at yearend.
- e. In September 2025, PFC received the requested advance of 1/10th of the direct services grant. The amount was \$893,197.  
NC Pre-K providers with completed amendments and other requirements were paid in September 2025 for their August 2025 attendance.
- f. The single audit threshold increased from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 effective October 1, 2024.
- g. Due to the amount of federal funds received, the Partnership **will be** audited extensively for fiscal responsibility and federal compliances, i.e. an A-133 audit since we plan to spend at least \$1,000,000 in federal funds for the fiscal year.
- h. In December 2025, we received notification from DCDEE to submit a budget amendment for an additional \$166,134 of administrative funds.  
DCDEE approved the budget amendment on January 13, 2026. The FY25-26 NC Pre-K budget will be \$9,780,507 after the amendment is executed.

**PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY, INC.**

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

**Board Responsibility**

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**December 31, 2025**

**4 Southwestern Child Development Commission, Inc. [SWCDC] - Region 5 Grants [Federal Funds]**

- a. The **Region 5 Core** grant is in contract effective July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.  
The total grant amount is \$477,685.85 and the contract amendment was executed on August 11, 2025. There was no reduction from FY24-25. An additional \$82,318.85 of unspent FY24-25 funds was added to the original budget amount of \$395,367 for FY25-26. For FY25-26, the de minimus rate has increased from 10% to 15%; however, the increase in indirect funds is a result of a decrease in direct services funds. Certain expenses such as Equipment Rental, is a direct expense that is unallowable for the 15% indirect calculation. This grant will be bid out at the State level and PFC will await guidance if it will be renewed.
- b. The **Region 5 Birth to Three Quality [B3QI] Initiative** grant is in contract, effective August 1, 2025 through January 31, 2026. **[6 months]**  
The grant amount was previously projected to be \$51,291 for six months, down from \$166,977 for twelve months during FY24-25. On September 12, 2025, SWCDC informed us that an additional \$11,600 of unspent FY24-25 funds will be added to the budget. The total budget will then be \$62,891. **The contract amendment for \$62,891 has been received from SWCDC and was executed on October 16, 2025.** Requests for reimbursement of PFC paid expenses for August and September 2025 have been submitted to SWCDC. For FY25-26, the de minimus rate has increased from 10% to 15%; however, the increase in indirect funds is a result of a decrease in direct services funds. Certain expenses such as Equipment Rental, is a direct expense that is unallowable for the 15% indirect calculation. This grant will be bid out at the State level and PFC will await guidance if it will be renewed.
- c. The **Region 5 Healthy Social Behaviors [HSB]** grant is in contract effective July 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025. **[6 months]**  
The grant amount was previously projected to be \$59,521 for six months, down from \$282,743 for twelve months during FY24-25. In September 2025, SWCDC informed us that an additional \$21,852 [\$9,000 + \$12,852] of unspent FY24-25 funds *may* be added to the budget. The total budget will then be \$81,373. **The contract amendment for \$59,521 has been received from SWCDC and was executed on October 9, 2025.** An additional \$17,257 of reversion distribution funds was added to the original budget amount for FY25-26. The total budget is now \$76,778. **The contract amendment was executed on December 2, 2025.** For FY25-26, the de minimus rate has increased from 10% to 15%; however, the increase in indirect funds is a result of a decrease in direct services funds. Certain expenses such as Equipment Rental, is a direct expense that is unallowable for the 15% indirect calculation. This grant was bid out at the State level and PFC will no longer be a subcontractor after December 31, 2025.  
This grant has ended as of December 31, 2025. The final FSR is being submitted in January 2026.

**5 All Funding Sources**

- a. The cash balance at month-end is as projected and is sufficient for the requirements of the upcoming month and through the projected yearend. Because of funding changes and limitations, the cash balance is being monitored closer before expenditures are paid.

**PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY, INC.**

**FINANCIAL SUMMARY - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

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**December 31, 2025**

**6 Unrestricted Revenues (USR) - Fund 208**

- a. The goal is to continue to use these funds only when other funding streams cannot be used or are not available.
- b. The funds and interest earned from the redeemed Lumbee Bank CD#6 were deposited into the PFC Bank of America operating account until a time when the funds can be transferred to the Morgan Stanley E-Trade account, as approved by Board in June 2025.
- c. The cash equivalent balances in Fund 208 consists of the following at the end of the month:

PNC Bank Money Market Account	5,645.37	<i>Does not include interest earned in Fund 899. Funds of \$96,563.69 were transferred from this account to the Operating Account for the construction loan payments.. Both the interest earned [\$32,117.79] and the cash balance [\$64,445.90] were affected.</i>
First Bank Money Market Account	100,000.00	<i>New account opened on November 27, 2023.</i>
Morgan Stanley E*TRADE Account	118,000.00	<i>Gains/Losses are not reflected in the financial statements</i>
	<b>223,645.37</b>	

<b>Interest Earned - Fund 899</b>	
PNC Bank Money Market	1,135.85
First Bank Money Market	6,188.31
	<b>7,324.16</b>

Investments - Fund 208	223,645.37
Interest Earned - Fund 899	7,324.16
<b>TOTAL INVESTMENTS PLUS INTEREST</b>	<b>230,969.53</b>

- d. There is currently NOT a **negative** balance in the operating funds portion of the USR funding stream for the current fiscal year. Funds of \$64,445.90 were transferred on June 23, 2025 from the PNC Money Market [Fund 208] for the construction loan payments. As expenditures are realized that are in excess of the current cash balance, Management will transfer additional funds as deemed necessary.

**7 Cash and In-kind Report**

- a. The 19% match requirement reflected on the monthly report is reflected at 100% of the full allocation, and **does** include the prior year reverted funds maximum amount [\$214,209].
- b. PFC's Leadership Team, staff and Board members will continue to discuss and implement strategies to meet our match requirement.
- c. PFC did not meet the 19% match requirement for FY2425, FY2324, FY2223, FY2122, FY2021, FY1920, FY1819, FY1718 nor for FY1617.
- d. Since the 19% required match was not met for the FY ended June 30, 2025, there will be no contribution to the PFC endowment.
- e. Income from **fundraisers** are to be reflected at the net amount only and after the event is over. Therefore, receipts from sponsors and donors will not be reported for Cash and In-kind purposes until such time.
- f. Income from the City of Fayetteville's federal ARPA grant for Family Connects and Workforce Development are allowable for Smart Start cash and in-kind purposes. The amount is anticipated to be up to \$344,615 for FY25-26.
- g. Income from the County of Cumberland's local government grant for Family Connects is allowable for Smart Start cash and in-kind purposes. The amount is anticipated to be \$300,000 for FY25-26.

SOAR Board Full Report  
AI Supported Review, with Goals, Strategic Objectives, KPI drafts for consideration

Revised main file. Please update full report using updated information.

The updated full SOAR report has been completed and reflects the **revised main file**, incorporating the updated language, priorities, and the 5 strategic pillars aligned to the Board's input.

### **Download the updated full report (PDF):**

SOAR Board Full Report – Updated Strategic Framework

### **What this version includes**

- Integrated **updated SOAR content** from the revised document
- Clear articulation of the **5 Strategic Pillars** as the organizing framework
- Condensed, Board-ready summaries of **Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results**
- Language aligned to **organizational development, community engagement, partnerships, and programs**

### **Next refinements (optional)**

I can further:

- Expand each pillar into **goal statements + 3–5 objectives**
- Add a **results/KPI table** tied to each pillar
- Reformat into a **final Board packet** (cover, table of contents, branding placeholders)
- Prepare a **funder-facing or community-facing version**

Just let me know how this will be used next and I'll tailor it accordingly.

Goal Statements and 3-5 objectives, with KPI table

Below is a **Board- and staff-ready strategic framework** that builds directly from the revised SOAR report and the 5 Strategic Pillars. Each pillar includes:

- **1 clear Goal Statement**
- **3–5 Strategic Objectives**
- **A KPI table** (with outcome-focused, measurable indicators)

This is written so it can drop directly into a **strategic plan, dashboard, or funding proposal**.

---

## **Strategic Pillar 1: Sustainable & Adaptive Organization**

## Goal Statement

Ensure long-term organizational stability and adaptability through strong leadership, diversified funding, and efficient systems that support mission impact.

## Strategic Objectives

1. Strengthen leadership continuity through succession planning and cross-training.
2. Diversify revenue streams to reduce reliance on government funding.
3. Improve staff retention and satisfaction through competitive compensation and development.
4. Modernize systems and processes to increase efficiency and reduce administrative burden.
5. Build internal fundraising and communications capacity.

## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Objective	KPI	Measurement
Leadership continuity	% of leadership roles with documented succession plans	Annual review
Funding diversification	% of unrestricted / non-government revenue	Annual financials
Workforce stability	Staff retention rate	Annual HR data
Operational efficiency	Staff time spent on administrative tasks	Staff survey
Fundraising capacity	Annual philanthropic revenue growth	Year-over-year

---

# Strategic Pillar 2: Equitable Access & Early Intervention

## Goal Statement

Ensure all children and families—especially those most underserved—can access high-quality early learning and early intervention supports.

## Strategic Objectives

1. Expand access to NC Pre-K and other early learning opportunities.
2. Improve early identification and referral for developmental, behavioral, and learning needs.
3. Strengthen family navigation of child care, education, and support systems.

4. Increase awareness of available resources among non-traditional and underserved families.

### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Objective	KPI	Measurement
Access to early learning	% of NC Pre-K slots filled	Program data
Early intervention	# of referrals to early intervention services	Partner reports
Family navigation	% of families reporting improved understanding of services	Family assessment
Awareness	# of children/families reached vs. served	Outreach tracking

## Strategic Pillar 3: Strong Workforce, Strong Outcomes

### Goal Statement

Strengthen the early childhood workforce to improve program quality, access, and outcomes for children and families.

### Strategic Objectives

1. Increase workforce retention through compensation and support strategies.
2. Expand professional development and credentialing opportunities.
3. Build workforce pipelines through higher education and partner institutions.
4. Reduce provider closures related to staffing shortages.

### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Objective	KPI	Measurement
Workforce retention	ECE turnover rate	Annual workforce data
Professional development	# of educators completing training/credentials	Program records
Workforce pipeline	# of students entering ECE pathways	Partner data
Provider stability	# of providers operating year over year	Licensing data

# Strategic Pillar 4: Authentic Community Voice & Engagement

## Goal Statement

Create inclusive, accessible opportunities for families and communities to actively shape early childhood systems and decisions.

## Strategic Objectives

1. Reduce barriers to family participation in engagement and governance activities.
2. Elevate parent voice, especially from families using services.
3. Strengthen community-building through digital and in-person engagement.
4. Improve feedback mechanisms without overburdening families or staff.

## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Objective	KPI	Measurement
Family participation	% of engaged families from priority populations	Engagement data
Parent voice	# of parents involved in advisory or feedback roles	Annual count
Community engagement	Engagement rate in online groups/events	Platform analytics
Feedback quality	% of programs using standardized family assessment	Program review

---

# Strategic Pillar 5: Connected Systems & Strategic Partnerships

## Goal Statement

Strengthen cross-sector collaboration to reduce silos, maximize resources, and improve outcomes for children and families.

## Strategic Objectives

1. Expand and deepen strategic partnerships across education, health, faith, and business sectors.
2. Improve coordination and referral pathways among partners.
3. Leverage partnerships to increase funding, workforce capacity, and service reach.

4. Align partners around shared goals and measurable outcomes.

### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Objective	KPI	Measurement
Partnership growth	# of active strategic partnerships	Annual inventory
System coordination	# of shared initiatives or referral agreements	Partner reports
Resource leverage	\$ leveraged through partnerships	Financial tracking
Collaboration quality	Partner satisfaction score	Annual partner survey

---

### Next Steps

- Create a **staff & board-facing implementation matrix** (who owns what, by when)
  - ❖ Work on this through Leadership meetings, Department meetings, All Staff meetings and Board & Executive Committee, Board committees
- Convert this into a **Board-approved Strategic Plan section**
- Build a **1–2 page KPI dashboard** aligned to these tables
- Prepare a **funder-facing logic model** mapped to these goals

# **SOAR Board Summary Report Updated Strategic Framework**

This report reflects updated SOAR analysis outcomes and integrates revised Board input into a unified strategic framework aligned with Partnership for Children goal areas.

# **Strategic Pillars**

## **Sustainable & Adaptive Organization**

Strengthen organizational resilience through diversified funding, leadership succession, modernized systems, and staff retention.

## **Equitable Access & Early Intervention**

Ensure early, equitable access to high-quality early learning, intervention, and navigation support.

## **Strong Workforce, Strong Outcomes**

Invest in workforce compensation, development, and stability to improve child and family outcomes.

## **Authentic Community Voice & Engagement**

Create accessible, meaningful opportunities for families and communities to shape systems and decisions.

## **Connected Systems & Strategic Partnerships**

Reduce silos and maximize impact through intentional, cross-sector partnerships.

## **Strengths**

- Resilience and adaptability amid funding and system changes
- Experienced, mission-driven leadership and staff
- Strong community trust and long-standing presence
- Collaborative culture and cross-sector leadership
- Innovative, high-quality programs

## **Opportunities**

- Diversified and unrestricted funding growth
- Leadership transition and milestone campaigns
- Expanded outreach to underserved families
- Communications, technology, and systems modernization
- Workforce development and early intervention expansion

## **Aspirations**

- Universal access to quality early learning
- Workforce stability and fair compensation
- Improved literacy and prevention outcomes
- Authentic family engagement
- Clear metrics and accountability

## **Results & Milemarkers**

- Completed succession plans and SOPs
- Improved staff retention and satisfaction
- Kindergarten readiness and literacy gains
- Expanded partnerships and funding streams
- High utilization of early learning slots

SOAR Work  
PFC Board Meeting Summary

**Partnership for Children Goal Areas**

<b>Organizational Development</b> Internal Capacity to Realize our Mission and Achieve Greater Impact	<b>Community Engagement</b> Families and Communities Play a Leading Role	<b>Strengthening Partnerships</b> An Innovative and Connected System	<b>Programs</b> High-Quality Opportunities for All Children
--	---	---	--

**Strengths: What can we build on?**

1. What have we done well so far?
2. What are we most proud of so far?
3. What positive aspects of the program have children/families, providers, board, staff, community, and others commented on?
4. What makes the program unique?

*Organizational Development*

- Made the best possible outcome with external context has given us We've faced a lot of external changes. Ability to keep things running despite budget changes
- Survival
- Senior staff
- Qualified, passionate staff with longevity.
- Ability to pivot during crises (COVID, funding cuts).
- Strong community trust and presence since 1993.
- Meetings
- Pre-Meeting info sent out timely for review
- Transparent – local and state info is brought back
- Qualified staff – different levels
- New NC Pre-K enrollment system
- Embracing children and collaboration
- Sound policies and procedures
- Ensuring qualified professional development funding

*Community Engagement*

- Events like Little Land and Grilled Cheese Festival, county fair, etc., makes a positive difference.
- Branded in the community with child care
- Events like Little Land remove barriers and connect families to resources.
- Collaborative spirit through attending other entities' events.
- Fundraising initiatives (e.g., Grilled Cheese Festival) that also build awareness and relationships.
- Collaboration with enrollment tactics (CCS able to mirror PFC's practice with physical signs throughout the County).
- Sean and Ming talk constantly, sharing ideas to have the best collaborative effort.
- All have the same goal in mind – ensuring that the children in Cumberland County get the early childhood education they need (unique)

## SOAR Work PFC Board Meeting Summary

- Know the needs of the community

### *Strengthening Partnerships*

- A lot of successful networking.
- Communication between the agencies. Quarterly meeting between key agencies.
- The Leadership that this Partnership demonstrates at the state level. Being connected to the most current information on policies in the middle of the conversation.
- Intentional relationships with government, military, and statewide networks.
- Focus on filling service gaps and reducing duplication.
- Biggest piece is collaborative
- High-level – get other businesses to participate
- 

### *Programs*

- It seems like we are always ahead of the curve. The trailblazers. We'll pilot; We'll pivot.
- We have foresight.
- PFHE program support for students.
- Helped a lot of children with getting NC Pre-K. And helped the parents. Many assumptions are made that it will always be there.
- High-quality offerings: NC Pre-K, ECE recruitment/training, Family Connects, FTCC childcare support.
- Provide info about ongoing professional development – via emails, easily identified and disseminated
- (Sean) Opportunities for teachers and other staff with alternative dates for trainings. Cooperative.

# SOAR Work

## PFC Board Meeting Summary

### **Opportunities: What are our best future opportunities?**

1. What changes do we expect to see in the next 2-3 years?
2. What external forces or trends may impact our work?
3. What opportunities exist for us?
4. What are children/families, providers, board, staff, community, and others asking for?

### *Organizational Development*

- Cross-training in anticipation of senior leadership positions.
- Address staff retention and rethink structure.
- Building decision – less space- work from home – meeting space/some offices
- Diversify funding streams beyond government.
- Modernize systems for efficiency.
- Funding changes – types of funding, funder changes, new systems evolving with new opportunities.
- Continuing collaboration between CCS, PFC, and outside providers
- Asking CCS to open more NC Pre-K sites in the schools

### STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUS AREAS AND TIME HORIZON

The session focuses on "best future opportunities" across four strategic plan areas: organizational development, community engagement, strengthening partnerships, and program. Discussion targets expected changes over the next 2–3 years and aligning opportunities to those areas. The group will prioritize opportunities across the four areas, deferring detailed "results" work for later.

### FUNDING DIVERSIFICATION AND COMMS CAPACITY

Current reliance on government grants underscores diversifying into unrestricted philanthropic funding. Development and comms teams are understaffed; pursue low-lift, automation, and tools (including AI) to extend reach without overloading staff. Consider a multi-year campaign (e.g., 3-year) culminating in organizational milestones. Explore low-stakes, automated communication strategies tied to fundraising; build capacity with dedicated comms staffing.

### EXTERNAL TRENDS: FUNDING INSTABILITY AND INFORMATION INTEGRITY

Political instability threatens government funding; emphasizes need for unrestricted philanthropic revenue. Rise of AI increases mis- and disinformation risk; organizations must demystify, monitor trends, and proactively correct false narratives. Establish monitoring and response processes for information trends; proactively position thought leadership tailored to local context.

### *Community Engagement*

- Awareness of program offerings and resources generally, and working to reach non-traditional families
- Expand volunteer opportunities
- Increase grant-seeking efforts
- Concern about schools being consolidated and closed

## SOAR Work PFC Board Meeting Summary

- [Same with] child care providers closing due to lack of providers - workforce is not actively seeking early care and education
- Working with Dolly Parton accessing and focusing more on the teachers [Wanda Wesley]
- Outside providers to be more involved

### MILESTONE CAMPAIGN: ANNIVERSARY AND LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

Approaches include digital micro-donations ("5 instead of a coffee") and direct mail to broad contact lists (parents, program participants, partners, teachers). Avoid high-lift events (e.g., gala) due to bandwidth constraints. Campaign to honor Mary's leadership and celebrate an upcoming major anniversary (approaching 50 years). Proceed with concept development for an anniversary/retirement-aligned digital and direct mail campaign; specifics to be defined.

### COMMS RESOURCING AND TREND MONITORING

Need for a full-time comms role focused on research, trend tracking (hashtags, SEO, Google Alerts), and synthesizing data monthly. Shift from reactive to proactive thought leadership; contextualize national data to local community realities. Create a dedicated comms position with a defined cadence for monitoring and content strategy.

### *Strengthening Partnerships*

- Ministerial Alliance (empty Board slot)
- Form new collaborations (county expansion of Pre-K, faith-based partnerships).
- Strengthen ties with universities for education resources.
- More direct communication with teachers, same as Dolly Parton
- Strengthening some of these partnerships to determine better access to family resources:
  - Bus transportation
  - Health Department
  - Crown Coliseum
- Find what is best for the children by:
  - Ensuring resources are shared to get to the families
  - Ex: Incentive tickets to share with families at PFC

### *Programs*

- Expanding parent training programs for non-traditional parents (fathers, grandparents, etc.) without excluding traditional parents.
- Develop initiatives for special needs, food insecurity, homelessness, and mental health.
- Literacy programs to improve early reading outcomes.
- Need funds to secure ongoing funding
  - Critical technology growth
- Public informational forms, informational meetings to learn about NC Pre-K
- More visibility within the Community:
  - Partnering with libraries
  - Send Pediatricians flyers boldly stating who we serve

## SOAR Work PFC Board Meeting Summary

### EARLY INTERVENTION AND SYSTEM NAVIGATION

Emphasize early intervention before school entry; educate families on accessing child care, special education, and local gateways. Navigation complexity varies across states and military communities; adults also need updated guidance as systems evolve. Develop partnerships and materials mapping local pathways to services; target common touchpoints for outreach.

#### Next Steps (Related to Opportunities)

- Draft concept for anniversary/leadership transition digital and direct mail campaign
- Define and post a full-time communications role with research and monitoring responsibilities
- Plan workplace giving campaign targeting corporate partners via LinkedIn
- Pilot Instagram content strategy focused on inspiration and community-building
- Implement Meta chatbot/FAQ automation to direct families to vetted resources (e.g., 2-1-1)
- Map and publish local service navigation guides for families, including military and newcomers

# SOAR Work

## PFC Board Meeting Summary

### **Aspirations: What do we care deeply about?**

#### *Organizational Development*

- Staff perspective
- Succession Planning (including Job Shadowing; Cross-training)
- Every child deserves a strong foundation.
- Increase ECE pay for retention and affordability for families.
- Expand educational partnerships (FTCC and beyond).
- Reduce child abuse and neglect.
- Raise literacy rates to improve long-term academic success.
- Establish a great gateway/foundation with early learning programs for all 4-year-olds
- Adequate early learning
- Cumberland Curriculum Partners
- Incentive – funding & supporting early learning with different “looks”
  - \$1,000/site Curriculum
  - \$500/site snacks
- Collaborative professional development system (CCS, HS, PFC, Private Sites, FCCH) due to inadequate funding if continues to be addressed separately
- Expand Pre-K to 3-year-olds

#### KPIS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

##### Key Focus Areas:

- KPIS
- Community Engagement
- Social Media

#### DEFINING SUCCESS METRICS: KPIS VS. VALUE DRIVERS

The group discussed how to measure success for their opportunities, clarifying the difference between Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and value drivers. KPIs are the measurable outputs or outcomes (e.g., number of families served). Value drivers are the underlying reasons that make an outcome worth pursuing. The group agreed to focus on defining KPIs for the opportunities already identified.

#### MEASURING IMPACT ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

A suggestion was made to start with baseline data, such as the current number of families supported. Data is currently captured for families served through anti-pre-K, consumer education, the lending library, and KPO groups. The group discussed setting goals to increase the number of families impacted within a specific timeframe, similar to SMART goals. A distinction was made between "reached" (a broad audience, including marketing and social media) and "served" (those receiving a direct service). It was agreed to track "number of children served" and "number of children reached" as separate metrics.

#### ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR GATHERING FEEDBACK

Surveys were mentioned as a way to gather information, but their administrative burden was noted as

## SOAR Work PFC Board Meeting Summary

a significant drawback. As an alternative to staff-run surveys, it was suggested to partner with local higher education institutions (like FSU). Students in social work, psychology, or education could conduct and analyze surveys as part of a case study, internship, or for college credit. This approach would provide valuable data without burdening staff and would also build a talent pipeline.

### *Community Engagement*

- Better ways to engage families/community in Board activities – e.g., issues filling Board positions. Parent voice is hard to get. To get them regularly is hard. The people we often get are privileged and can find the time. The people who use the services, who are parents accessing our services, don't have the knowledge or capacity to engage that way. How can we reduce barriers to encourage participation?
- Collaborate with parents involved with school at the end of the school day, not just before 6pm
- Employers – future work for an experienced Community Engagement team.

### BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

The discussion shifted to measuring success in building an online community. Ideas for online community building included private Facebook or LinkedIn groups for parents and strategic partners, and an online forum, similar to Reddit, for parents in Cumberland County to ask questions and share insights. It was noted that a provider group already exists but has low engagement. To increase participation, it was suggested to empower active members to contribute content, as posts from staff can be perceived as just part of their job.

### STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ONLINE GROUP ENGAGEMENT

The group discussed challenges in an existing provider group where activity became focused on posting available slots, which was not its intended purpose. To improve engagement, it was suggested to shift from one-way information dissemination to creating real value for members. Solicit feedback on members' biggest challenges and create curated content to address them. Use prompts and planned content to encourage interaction rather than posting "billboard" style announcements. Other ideas included hosting dynamic content like a monthly 30-minute live "hot seat" session for members to brainstorm solutions together.

### *Strengthening Partnerships*

- Workforce Development programming (salary increases and training for new teachers)
- Ask Pediatricians when diagnosed, direct parents to "Child Find" – Access to Early-In

### *Programs*

- DSS is not able to handle the need for children who need subsidized care. Not sure if FTCC can meet the need. Over 1800 on waitlist. Staffing is a big issue – can't process because of a lack of staff. (DSS)
- Could PFCCC reinstate internal subsidy program?
- More slots; more care (e.g. families with vouchers who cannot find care). Increasing accessibility and affordability of care).
- Consider expanding higher education access to subsidy.
- Workforce Development program (continue)

## SOAR Work PFC Board Meeting Summary

- Early Intervention
- Parent navigation skills and awareness of resources
- “Make it” take it night and other hands on learning routine events including parents

### EARLY INTERVENTION AND SYSTEM NAVIGATION

Emphasize early intervention before school entry; educate families on accessing child care, special education, and local gateways. Navigation complexity varies across states and military communities; adults also need updated guidance as systems evolve. Develop partnerships and materials mapping local pathways to services; target common touchpoints for outreach.

#### Next Steps (Overall for Aspirations):

- Define baselines for "children served" and "children reached" metrics
- Set specific, time-bound KPI targets for family and child impact
- Identify a lead to revitalize the provider social media group and outline an engagement plan
- Pilot interactive content (e.g., monthly 30-minute live "hot seat" session)
- Explore partnership opportunities with local universities (e.g., FSU) for survey design and execution; determine initial contacts and timeline

# SOAR Work

## PFC Board Meeting Summary

### **Results: How will we know if we are successful? MILEMARKERS**

1. Considering our strengths, opportunities, and aspirations, what meaningful measures will indicate we are on track with achieving our goals?
2. What measurable results do we want to see?
3. What resources are needed to implement our most vital projects and initiatives?

### *Organizational Development*

- Standard Operating Procedures
- Completed succession plans; Keeping them up to date
- Building in time to collaborate or making them goals in personal development plans
- Higher staff retention rates and satisfaction.
- Staff development and competitive compensation for ECE retention and cost reduction impact for families.
- Stronger grant-writing and fundraising capacity.
- Increase the number of students/children across Cumberland County who are prepared for kindergarten
- Kindergarten assessment – M Class vs NC Pre-K data – gains/strengths
- Reversion – seeing children with less behavioral issues
- Succession plans
- Cross-training

### *Community Engagement*

- Growth in community engagement (events, volunteer participation opportunities).
- Families:
  - At beginning of year, contact them
  - At the end of the contact year, assess again
  - Measuring results
- Standardized family assessment

### *Strengthening Partnerships*

- Expanded partnerships and diversified funding streams.
- Are we having more collaborations?
- Not silos and more holistic
- Goals:
  - Development
  - Training
  - Milestones

### *Programs*

- Slots are filled with NC Pre-K (At what percentage – 100% not always realistic)
- Increased NC Pre-K enrollment and literacy scores by 3rd grade.
- All families that need child care know where to come for assistance
- Funding for modernization and program expansion.

## CCR&R Programs Updates

<b>Program:</b>	Provider Service Coaches and Region 5
<b>Site Visits:</b>	<p><b>PS Coaches</b>-are actively supporting 22 childcare programs through technical assistance and coaching, with a primary emphasis on the QRIS Star-Rated License transition, including Pathway 1 (11 classrooms) and Pathway 2 (43 classrooms).</p> <p><b>HSBs-Healthy Social Behavior Coaches-Ended December 31<sup>st</sup></b>  <b>Birth-To-Three-Birth To Three Specialist-Ended December 31<sup>st</sup></b></p> <p><b>Lead Coach</b>- 15-childcare programs 10-childcare programs in Cumberland SA technical assistance and 5-childcare programs in the region.</p> <p><b>FCCH-Family Childcare Consultant</b> 47-Family Childcare programs 5-programs start up 3 were centers in a residence. 12 programs are receiving continual intensive technical assistance and 35 FCCH programs are receiving QRIS Pathways technical assistance surrounding applications.</p> <p>Leadership Academy for Family Childcare are monthly and facilitating trainings.</p> <p><b>Regional Caseworkers</b> have provided <b>881 Consumer Resource and Referral (CR&amp;R) services</b> to families seeking childcare. In addition, Regional Caseworkers facilitate <b>Kaleidoscope Play and Learn (KPL)</b> activities every <b>Thursday at Fascinate-U Children’s Museum and Partnership for Children of Cumberland County (PFC)</b>.</p>
<b>Meetings/Outreach Events Attended:</b>	Pajama Party Storytime in the library December 13, 2025

<b>Professional Development opportunities attended or attended by Team:</b>	January 6 <sup>th</sup> -Stewards of Children
<b>Current and Upcoming Projects:</b>	<p>Training Calendar for FY 25/26 Trainings scheduled through January – June</p> <p>Little Land-March 14<sup>th</sup></p>
<b>Upcoming Events:</b>	Sylvia Murphy-facilitate ITS SIDS in Montgomery Co. for the Childcare Academy
<b>Additional Updates:</b>	<p>Quarterly Virtual Information Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• February 19, 2026</li> <li>• May 21, 2026</li> </ul>

## CCR&R Programs Updates

(These updates will be posted on the website by Tamiko before CCR&R Programs Committee Meeting)

**Submitted by:** Ar-Nita Davis (NC Pre-K Program Manager)

**Reporting Period:** December 2025 – January 2026

<b>Program:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. PFC NC Pre-K Program Cumberland County</li> <li>B. 2025-2026 School Year August 25, 2025-May 22, 2026</li> <li>C. 2025-2026 NC Pre-K Progress October 31, 2025</li> <li>D. 2025-2026 Cumberland County Allocation 1414</li> <li>E. NC Pre-K Sites: 55</li> <li>F. NC Pre-K Classrooms: 86 *</li> </ul>
<b>Programmatic Updates: 2025-2026 sy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. SchoolMint (Enroll) Applications Received: 2418</li> <li>B. NC Pre-K App System: Waitlist-132</li> <li>C. NC Pre-K App System: Placed-1528 (Does Not Mean Served)</li> <li>D. DCDEE 2<sup>nd</sup> Extensions Request for Teachers/Teacher Assistants (February 2026)</li> <li>E. Reduction of NC Pre-K Sites unable to fill the requested allocation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mommy Moment – Reduced by 9 slots</li> <li>2. Cumberland County Schools – Increased by 464 slots</li> <li>3. Next Steps – Increased by 3 slots</li> </ul> </li> <li>F. 2025-2026 NC Pre-K Site Monitoring Tool Completed January 14, 2026</li> <li>G. NC Pre-K Trainings:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ages and Stages Training (June)</li> <li>2. LETREs Fall Training</li> <li>3. SchoolMint</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>NC Pre-K Personnel Updates: 2025-2026 sy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Open Positions: Full Staff</li> </ul>

## CCR&R Programs Updates

(These updates will be posted on the website by Tamiko before CCR&R Programs Committee Meeting)

<p><b>Programmatic Updates: 2026-202 sy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Allocation will be presented in <b>April 2026 at NC Pre-K Planning/PFC Board</b></li> <li>B. <b>Application Data</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 197 families enrolled in <i>First to Know</i></li> <li>2. 236 applications received on the first day</li> <li>3. 504 total applications received to date</li> </ul> </li> <li>C. Placement will begin <b>May 10, 2026</b> for Private Sites and Head Start</li> </ul>
	<p><b>2027–2028 NC Pre-K Site Selection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Projected application launch: <b>July 19, 2026</b></li> <li>B. Site Selection Sub-Committee selected during NC Pre-K Planning Committee Meeting: <b>April 30, 2026</b></li> <li>C. Site Selection recommendations to PFC: <b>October 29, 2026</b></li> </ul> <p><b>2026–2027 NC Pre-K Boot Camp</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Taking the Next Step to Becoming an NC Pre-K Site in Cumberland County</li> <li>B. Projected date: <b>July 2026</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Meetings/Outreach Events Attended:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. COLORS Meeting</li> <li>B. PFC Executive Meeting</li> <li>C. NC Pre-K Planning Committee/PFC Board Meeting</li> <li>D. 2025-2026 NC Pre-K Statewide Meeting Dates (Twice a year - May &amp; December)</li>   <li>E. Cumberland County Pre-K, Collaboration meetings with Head Start and Cumberland Schools,</li> <li>F. NC Pre-NC Pre-K Site Administrators Zoom Meetings (September &amp; October)</li> <li>G. DCDEE Café 'NC Pre-K Monthly Café Monthly Meeting.</li> <li>H. Racial Equity Workgroup</li> <li>I. TA Community of Practice</li> </ul>

## CCR&R Programs Updates

(These updates will be posted on the website by Tamiko before CCR&R Programs Committee Meeting)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>J. Cumberland County Schools Career Pathways Fair January 27, 2026</li> <li>K. NC Pre-K PLC 2025-2026 2nd Meeting (February 2026)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professional Development opportunities attended or attended by the Team</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. State Pre-K Database Training</li> <li>B. Communicating the Relationship Between Place, Racism, and Early Childhood Development</li> <li>C. Supporting Immigrant Parents &amp; Families in 2025</li> <li>D. Stewards of Children (PFC)</li> <li>E. Homelessness and Child Care: Making Connections for Positive Impact #2</li> <li>F. Growing Strong at the CORE: Family and Community Partnership Series</li> </ul>
<p><b>Current and Upcoming Projects:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. NC Pre-K Site Administrators In-Person Meeting, February 2026</li> <li>B. NC Pre-K Planning Committee</li> <li>C. PFC Little Land March 14<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Additional Information:</b></p>	