

Information Item

Date: December 13, 2022

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Ben Rowe, Assistant City Manager

Subject:
Proposed City Contribution to Pre-K Initiatives

Strategic Focus Area: Economic Vitality and Diversity

Strategic Objective: NA

Strategic Plan Action Item: Yes

Key Work Item: Yes



As part of the FY 21-22 budget, the Mayor and City Council appropriated \$1.35 million to fund several crime prevention initiatives, including \$350,000 for Pre-K initiatives. In September 2021, the Mayor and City Council approved the use of American Rescue Plan Act funds for the crime prevention plan. Earlier in March 2021, the Mayor and City Council, in coordination with the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners and the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Board of Education, approved a resolution to form the Early Childhood Education Task Force (Task Force) to lead the community in developing a plan to ensure that all of Forsyth County's children have access to high-quality Pre-K programs. The Pre-K Priority, a coalition that was formed in 2014 by a group of early childhood professionals to explore how to improve the quality and number of Pre-K programs in Forsyth County, coordinated the work of the Task Force. The 32-member Task Force began meeting in June 2021 and presented their recommendations in November 2022.

With an initial focus on improving the quality of Pre-K programs in Forsyth County, the Pre-K Priority coalition has developed a proposal to deliver a two-year cohort project with specific high-quality resources and supports that currently are limited or non-existent. The project will include thirty Pre-K classrooms across the following sites: four WS/FCS classrooms, four Head Start classrooms, eight North Carolina Pre-K classrooms in community sites, and 14 private/independent classrooms. The project will impact 540 Pre-K students and their families, as well as 60 Pre-K educators.

In June, Smart Start of Forsyth County applied for Forsyth County ARPA funding totaling \$3,826,406 on behalf of the Pre-K Priority to fund the two-year cohort project. The County Board of Commissioners awarded \$3.7 million to Smart Start of Forsyth County, resulting in a shortfall of \$126,406.

Pre-K Priority staff have worked with City staff over the last several weeks to develop a proposal for utilizing the City's appropriation of \$350,000 for Pre-K initiatives. The following table

outlines the Pre-K Priority’s proposal.

Proposed Uses	Impact	Approximate Cost
Support the two-year model cohort budget shortfall	Full programmatic support	\$126,406
Data collection	26 classrooms (468 children)	11,700
Early Childhood Education curriculum and formative assessment tools	14 private/independent classrooms	63,000
Health and safety screenings	14 private/independent classrooms	110,000
Implementation support	14 private/independent classrooms	39,200
Total Cost		\$350,306

This information item includes an outline brief that provides detailed descriptions of the proposed uses of the City’s funding, as well as the recommendations developed by the Early Childhood Education Task Force. In addition, Pre-K Priority staff will provide a presentation at the Community Development/Housing/General Government Committee’s December meeting.

The City Council also will consider two proposed transformational grants under the City’s ARPA framework that would support other childcare initiatives: (1) Imprints Care’s Family Resource Center for Children with Exceptional Needs (\$500,000) and (2) Smart Start of Forsyth County’s Winston-Salem Childcare COVID-19 Relief Fund (\$660,000). Imprints Care’s proposal would support their expanded learning program, services offered in the first Family Resource Center for Students with Exceptional Needs in Winston-Salem, and Ready for School (prenatal – age 5) programs. Smart Start of Forsyth County’s COVID-19 Relief Fund would focus on the opening and maintenance of closed, licensed family childcare facilities. The fund would provide for Early Childhood Coaches, a Wonderschool online platform to support enrollment and marketing, and a 12-week business support program that would include retention bonuses for teachers. These two initiatives complement, but do not overlap, the two-year cohort project that the City would fund through the crime prevention plan. The Pre-K Priority’s project would focus on enhancing the quality of existing Pre-K programs in Forsyth County.

Based on feedback from Council Members, City staff will prepare an action item for Council’s consideration and approval in December. If approved, City staff will prepare a funding

agreement that establishes metrics and reporting requirements to track the outcomes achieved with the City's funding.