

Cohort Facilitator: Supporting Grassroots Efforts to Promote Equitable Early Childhood Outcomes

Request for Services

The Blue Cross NC Foundation and the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust seek a consultant to facilitate a cohort of 14 community-based grantees that are pursuing local and state-level advocacy goals. The purpose of the cohort is to share learnings from the field, build relationships with each other, and to participate in technical assistance opportunities supported by the Foundations.

RFS Release Date: July 12, 2021

Contract Duration: October 1, 2021 – December 31, 2022

Full Applications Due: ~~August 6, 2021~~ **EXTENDED DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 3, 2021**

Response Format: Electronic submission to rob.thompson@bcbsncfoundation.org

RFS Contact: Rob Thompson
Director, Early Childhood
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation
rob.thompson@bcbsncfoundation.org

Note: Pre-submission inquiries regarding this opportunity may be addressed via email to Rob by midnight July 23.

About the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is an independent, charitable foundation with the mission of improving the health and well-being of everyone in North Carolina. Since our founding in 2000, more than \$150 million has been invested into North Carolina communities through more than 1,100 grants. In our grantmaking, we strive to address the key drivers of health, and we take a flexible approach designed to meet identified needs in partnership with the community. We also work closely with our grantees, and other nonprofits, to support their growth through capacity building, training, and leadership development opportunities. More information is available at bcbsncfoundation.org.

About the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust

The mission of the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust is to improve the health and quality of life of people with low incomes in Forsyth County and around the state, as Mrs. Reynolds stated when she established the Trust in 1947. We support thriving North Carolina communities and thriving residents, equitable access to health care, and equitable health outcomes. Statewide this means investing in community-driven solutions that improve access to care and eliminate health disparities. Locally in Forsyth County, where the Trust is based, we work to improve the quality of life through efforts like our Great Expectations initiative, which works to ensure children in Forsyth County enter kindergarten ready to learn and leave set for success. In Forsyth County and across the state, we collaborate with communities and partners to change systems, apply an equity lens, and ensure residents get the support and opportunities they need to thrive. More information is available at www.kbr.org.

Background:

The Blue Cross NC Foundation and the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust recently awarded 14 grants to local, grassroots organizations led by and serving Black, Latino, and American Indian communities to advance early childhood systems change goals. The primary goals of this funding effort are to:

- Build the policy advocacy capacity of local organizations led by and serving Black, Latino, American Indian, and other people of color;
- Enhance the power of these organizations to influence state policy discussions;
- Support the implementation of local policy and system advocacy goals to dismantle structures that perpetuate racism and racial inequities in systems of early childhood.

The foundations plan to support these grantees as a cohort to participate in learning opportunities, share experiences, and build an informal network. A major component of the cohort facilitator's role is to prepare for and facilitate meetings among grantees. Most grantees are focused on issues related to early care and education (i.e. child care), while others are working with constituents to identify priorities. (Please see the appendix for a full list of grantees with brief descriptions of their projects.) While there will be significant overlap among grantees' programmatic priorities, developing a unified agenda is not a focus of the work. Rather, we hope they will forge helpful peer relationships that contribute to their shared success with the support of intentional facilitation.

Additionally, the foundations will enlist technical assistance providers to deepen advocacy skills and support the operational success of grantees. The focus of this technical assistance will be determined in

collaboration with grantees to ensure it aligns with their needs. The cohort facilitator will play a significant role in coordinating the technical assistance offerings for grantees.

Facilitator Role and Deliverables

Facilitator responsibilities include:

- Co-designing with grantees cohort norms and practices, such as meeting frequency and agenda setting;
- Scheduling, planning, and facilitating regular cohort meetings, both virtual and in-person (Logistical support will be provided by foundation staff and/or contractors);
- Developing a process for identifying technical assistance needs of grantees;
- Supporting foundation staff with the development of RFSs for grantee technical assistance providers;
- Working with the foundations and grantees to manage offerings from technical assistance providers;
- Participation in evaluation activities with the strategic learning partner;
- Scheduling and planning a cohort retreat;
- Communicating cohort successes, needs, and challenges to foundation staff.

Deliverables:

- Preparation for and facilitation of cohort meetings;
- Co-designed process for selecting technical assistance providers implemented;
- Plan and implement in-person cohort retreat in winter / spring 2022 (Logistical support will be provided by foundation staff and/or contractors);
- Quarterly written updates to foundation staff.

Desired Skills, Qualities, and Attributes

- Has experience facilitating similar efforts.
- Committed to and experience with operationalizing racial equity principles in cohort facilitation.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the dynamics between nonprofit and philanthropic sectors.
- Experience with advocacy efforts.
- Knowledge of early childhood systems.
- Based in North Carolina.
- Consultant is fluent in Spanish (desired, but not required)

The foundations place a high value for diversity in our vendor selection and we seek a consultant who has demonstrated experience working with Black and Latino leaders in North Carolina communities. We strongly encourage Black, Latino, and other consultants of color to apply for this opportunity.

Anticipated Budget and Timeline

Up to \$95,000 is available for this work.

| Key Activity* | Estimated Date |
|---|---|
| Facilitator RFS Released | July 12, 2021 |
| Applicant Questions Due | July 23, 2021 |
| Responses to Applicant Questions Posted | July 28, 2021 |
| RFS Due | August 6, 2021 SEPTEMBER 3, 2021 |
| Proposal Review <i>(The Foundation may reach out with follow-up questions and/or to clarify aspects of the proposal.)</i> | August 6 – September 17, 2021 SEPTEMBER 3 – MID-OCTOBER, 2021 |
| Contract Start | Mid- to Late-October, 2021 |
| Contract Ends | December 31, 2022 |

Proposal Requirements

Please include the following materials in your proposal:

1. **Cover sheet.** Include organization name, contact information for the key contact for this RFS, and two references. Please note, references should be individuals outside your organization with whom your team has worked and who can comment on your organization’s skills, experience, and work style.
2. **Proposal narrative**
 - a. **Values and approach.** Describe the values that guide your work and how they show up in the way you approach evaluative work.
 - b. **Approach to services.** Please describe your proposed approach to this work, including:
 - i. Method of developing shared norms and practices among grantees.
 - ii. Approach to developing agendas and facilitating meetings among grantees.
 - iii. Strategies for working with grantees to identify technical assistance needs.
 - iv. How you would account for power imbalances between the foundations and grantees.

- v. Anticipated challenges and how you might navigate these over the course of the work.
 - c. **Organizational history and qualifications for this project.** Elevate information on the desired skills, qualities, and attributes outlined above. Please include information regarding the proposed project lead and team members.
- 3. Cost proposal.** Up to \$95,000 is available for this work. Please submit a budget based on your approach that shows how you would allocate this budget.

Contact and Deadline

If you have any questions, please contact Rob Thompson, Director, Early Childhood at rob.thompson@bcbsncfoundation.org.

Please submit your proposal in one file (Adobe PDF format preferred) to rob.thompson@bcbsncfoundation.org no later than midnight on August 6, 2021.

Assumptions

The Blue Cross NC Foundation is not liable for costs incurred by any firm or individual associated with the preparation of a response to this RFS.

Proposal Review & Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed based on the requirements of this RFS. A preliminary review will be completed by Foundation staff in early August, providing cohort members with an opportunity to review a smaller subset of proposals in August and early September. We anticipate a decision by the end of September.

Contract Duration and Compensation

The duration of the contract is from commence on October 1, 2021 – December 31, 2022. The compensation limit for this contract is \$95K. The contract will have the option for renewal in 2023.

Foundation Contact

The primary contact for this RFS is Rob Thompson, director, early childhood.

Appendix

Blue Cross NC Foundation Grantees:

- **Charlotte Bilingual Preschool (CltBP)** strives to make Mecklenburg County a place where dual-language learners have the support they need to thrive. To achieve this vision, CltBP is working on two complementary system-level approaches, including establishing a pipeline of early educators from the Latino community and developing an advocacy agenda to promote policies that support dual language learners.
- **El Centro Hispano** is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening community, building bridges, and advocating for equity and inclusion of Hispanics/Latinos in the Triangle area. El Centro will engage parents to identify the top issues affecting them related to early childhood, train parents on early education policies and advocacy skills, and collect and share stories.
- **Empowering Parents in Community (EPiC)** works to dismantle systemic racial inequities in education through collective organizing and engagement of historically marginalized parents and communities. EPiC has implemented a successful model for African American parent engagement in schools across Durham and seeks to bring this model to early care and education settings.
- **Equity Before Birth (EBB)** works to support the health and safety of Black birthing people and their children in the Triangle region through supplemental income, increased access to services, and essential baby needs. EBB has developed deep relationships with a growing network of parents, is an active participant in advocacy work for paid family leave, and seeks to expand its capacity to mobilize parents to advocate for the supports they need.
- **Guilford Child Development (GCD)** provides multiple services for young children and their families in Guilford, Rockingham, and Randolph counties. This includes Head Start and Early Head Start, Nurse-Family Partnership, and child care resource and referral among others. Recognizing that early childhood policies have often been created with good intentions but with little input from those receiving services, GCD seeks to create an Early Childhood Advocacy Team composed of parents from across their programs and service areas in order to develop skills and leadership in service of key early childhood issues.
- **Immersion for Spanish Language Acquisition (ISLA)** serves a core community of more than 300 Latino children and families from Alamance, Chatham, Durham, Guilford, Johnston, Orange, and Wake counties. ISLA has a parent advocacy program, Padres Con Voz, that works with parents to employ advocacy strategies to address system barriers in the education system. With support from this funding opportunity, ISLA will cultivate Parents Con Voz cohorts focused exclusively on early care and education.
- **Peletah** is a faith-based organization in New Bern serving several counties in eastern North Carolina. Peletah operates a pre-k program and is working to develop a network to support family and faith-based child care homes to address the need for additional child care in the community.

- **PODER Emma** is a cooperative network of family-based child care in the Emma neighborhood of Buncombe County. PODER Emma provides shared services and professional development for providers and serves as a coordinating hub for the community. PODER Emma will expand this network and engage in local and state advocacy to support its members.
- **Superlative Academy** is a nonprofit providing support to four family child care networks in Mecklenburg County. This group of networks are well-established in Charlotte and provide professional development and business support to members. Superlative will deepen its advocacy on issues related to family child care, specifically reimbursement equity.

Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust Grantees

- **Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN)** is a Latinx-led and serving organization based in Eastern North Carolina that promotes prosperity for Mexican and Latinx communities through network building, leadership development, engagement, and public education. AMEXCAN proposes connecting more families to East Coast Migrant Head Start programs, which provide a variety of early childhood services to ensure children of migrant and seasonal farm workers are prepared for success in school. AMEXCAN also plans to use its community connections to provide feedback to regional and statewide early childhood improvement efforts.
- **Bertie County Hive House** is a community organization aiming to strengthen families and communities by providing access to information, resources, program services, and support for parents, grandparents, children, and youth. This grant will be used to continue youth programming and engage families to inform regional- and state-level policy and early childhood system changes.
- **FD Building Foundations or Foundation Builders Academy** is a child care center in the [Healthy Places NC](#) community of Edgecombe County. Funding for this grant takes a multi-step approach to community-driven planning including gathering community input and creation of key messages for various audiences and creation of a social media campaign to address systemic early childhood education inequities.
- **Robeson County Partnership for Children** proposes collecting and aggregating data on child care worker wages and benefits in Robeson County. The organization will use storytelling, data, and connections with statewide early childhood organizations to promote better pay and benefits for caregivers.
- **Kidz Dreamz Klub** provides child development programs, afterschool activities, and community events for school-aged children and their families. Funding will expand programming and help the organization more deeply engage parents and connect families with stakeholders and decision makers.