

Rutherford County Children's Center – Board Briefing

Current situation: WNCSource leases the Forest City Children's Center in Rutherford County to provide Early Head Start services for up to 24 children and families. In a county where 1 in 4 children (26.6%) under 5 live in poverty, census projections estimate the number of children age 0-2 who are eligible for Early Head Start will increase by 130 by the year 2028. Updates to expand classroom space at the current Forest City Children's Center would be at WNCSource's cost since we do not own the facility.

In 2024, the Gateway Foundation gifted WNCSource a 1.1 acre plot of land (value: \$20,000) located next to their workforce housing development on John Smith Road in Rutherfordton, NC. WNCSource would like to build a new Children's Center on the site to provide Early Head Start programs. With some minor modifications, we will use the architectural plans from the Columbus Children's Center project. Preliminary cost estimates for construction of the new center are \$3.28 million with additional soft costs of \$450,000 (furnishings, educational equipment, security systems, etc.)

In order to fund the project, we plan to submit the following requests to the Office of Head Start:

1. Budget Revision request for \$754,772 from our #04HP000443 grant (Year 3)
2. Low Cost Extension request for \$4,764,020 to use the remaining previously awarded but unspent grant funds to be used for construction
3. Carryover 1303 application required for capital building projects

The Budget Revision and Low Cost Extension requests will be filed by December 31, 2024. The Carryover 1303 Application will be filed in late January. As with all federal grants, a 20% non-federal share match will be required for the project.

The Policy Council of Western Carolina Community Action, Inc. and Children's Services team are aware of this funding strategy and very supportive of the new children's center building project.