



2020 IMPACT REPORT

Our Mission

Ready for School, Ready for Life is a collaborative effort to build a connected, innovative system of care for Guilford County's youngest children and their families.

CEO Message

Ready for School, Ready for Life (Ready Ready) is building a connected, innovative system of care for Guilford County families and their youngest children. We are building this for ALL families, and aiming for population-level change.

Approximately 6,000 children are born in Guilford County each year. By the time they reach kindergarten, just 51 percent of them meet or exceed milestones for language and communication proficiency. That's for **all students**. If you examine the figures for Black and Hispanic students, the numbers drop to 47 percent and 33 percent, respectively.

We need these children to be successful students by third grade. It's the best indicator for high school graduation and success in life. We are educating our future leaders and workers.

We understand that systemic racism creates disparities in the outcomes for children and families of color. These gaps begin at birth and continue throughout life. Ready Ready's Board of Directors has established an Equity Strategies Committee to ensure these structural inequalities are addressed intentionally, proactively and consistently in every aspect of our work. We are building this system of care with families, not for them.

Our Guilford Parent Leader Network provides feedback and leadership to Ready Ready in this important systems-building work. During 2020, we participated in 405 hours of parent-led leadership through trainings, workshops, and monthly meetings.

Our vision is that every child born in Guilford county in 2021 and beyond will enter kindergarten developmentally on track. The system of care we are building will support families and children at every stage, starting with prenatal care and going through third grade when our plan is fully implemented.

We'd like to thank Guilford County residents for embracing our mission from the first 100-day challenge teams established back in 2015 before we became a nonprofit organization. We are so grateful for the support of fully-invested partners, the dedication our board of directors and its committees bring to the table, the 100+ community partners who share our mission, our enthusiastic parent leaders, and our devoted staff members. You are all making a difference for our future.



Charrise Hart

Charrise Hart
Chief Executive Officer

Values and Principles

We believe in being Family-Led.

- As defined by families and reflective of our community's diversity, authentic family voice is engaged consistently and intentionally in our work.
- Families serve as decision-makers, partners, and change agents.
- We equip families to serve as strong advocates for themselves, their neighbors, and Guilford County's children and families.

We believe in being Inclusive.

- Stakeholders from different races/ethnicities, perspectives, backgrounds, orientations, and proximity to community assets (and challenges) shape our work.
- Perspectives of people engaged in day-to-day work with children and families (direct service providers, early childhood teachers, families, and more) are centered in decision-making.

We believe in being Equity-driven.

- Eliminating disparities is the central goal of our work.
- We ensure marginalized populations have equitable access to information and resources.
- We maintain a humble and respectful attitude toward individuals of diverse cultures and identities.

A Message from our Board Co-Chairs

Concerned about the increasing number of children arriving at kindergarten not on track to read at grade level in the third grade, we began this system-building work with a grassroots effort in 2014. Reading on grade level in the third grade is a primary indicator of school and life success. As we embraced the critical factor that the brain grows by 80 percent in a child's first three years, we knew we had to build a system of care for our youngest children and their families. Consequently, our work's first phase is aimed at Guilford County's children – from prenatal through age three.

More than 100 local organizations and nonprofits are working together to create this innovative system of care for families and our youngest children – particularly those with the greatest need.

This work is key to developing a quality workforce going forward, our community commitment to equity, and sustaining the quality of life that keeps us an attractive place to locate and raise a family.

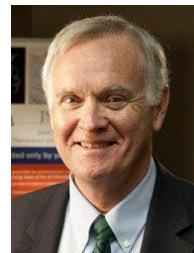
Over the last year, we witnessed how the pandemic affected the early childhood workforce and how vital our child care centers and preschools are to the functioning of our workforce. Early childhood educators are essential workers, but their wages, benefits, training, and support have not kept up with or demonstrated their importance.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed cracks in our society and slowed us down a bit, but we are on track to meet our metrics and benchmarks. We are looking to the future. Sustainability will be a crucial factor for us. We must demonstrate our outcomes to our donors and funders and also focus on policy changes at the legislative level.

We are fortunate to have had substantial outside investments by The Duke Endowment and Blue Meridian Partners. Nearly 20 local and regional foundations and individuals have committed to supporting Ready Ready the backbone organization. We will continue to work to ensure long-term funding. We need to demonstrate to our outside friends that we remain committed to making this work for our community. We appreciate your passion, support, and resolve to build this system of care for Guilford County families.



Susan Schwartz
Executive Director
Cemala Foundation



Ed Kitchen
Chief Operating Officer
Joseph M. Bryan Foundation

We believe in being Responsive to Evidence.

- We pursue evidence from a variety of sources, including information about community context, analysis of our own effectiveness, what's working/not working in our community (and in others), high-quality research from the broader early childhood field, and people's stories about their own experiences.
- We collect and use data responsibly.
- The best available data and evidence drives our decisions and strategies.

We believe in being Transparent.

- We practice integrity by communicating regularly with partners about decision-making structures, practices, and outcomes.
- Formal and informal updates are provided regularly to partners and the public about the status of activities, design processes, and implementation.
- Protocols and policies about how data will be collected, used, shared, and safeguarded are developed through an inclusive community process.

We believe in being Collaborative.

- We proactively and consistently identify and address structural barriers to working together across agencies/organizations.
- We build on organizational and community strengths, aligning resources to address gaps and improve outcomes.

Our Priorities

“It was a huge adjustment during COVID as a first-time parent. The Family Connects nurse was good at answering my questions, keeping in contact with me, and touching base often.”

– Family Connects client



“Several HealthySteps sites have connected with Backpack Beginnings to further meet the needs of families in the clinics. The partnership allows the HealthySteps specialists to help coordinate and distribute donations such as diapers, formula, and food.”

– Brianna White,
Parent Education
Program Educator,
Children’s Home Society



Expand Proven Programs to Meet Community Need

We are working to expand four proven programs: Family Connects, HealthySteps, Nurse-Family Partnership, and Reach Out and Read. In order to serve as many Guilford County children as possible, these programs have added staff with support from Ready Ready and our funders.

- These programs and Navigation have identified 15 areas to streamline services for families and providers.
- We have partnered with UNC-Chapel Hill's National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) to develop a process, informed by science, to move from recommendation to implementation.

Meeting community need:



15,000

Guilford County children served in 2020

- Well-child visits at pediatricians
- Virtual home visits

80

professional wage jobs will have been created in Guilford County by the end of Phase 1.



Build a Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a team-based process of collecting, analyzing, and using data to improve service quality on an ongoing basis. We began with 13 programs in our first CQI cohort. Our plan: to provide CQI coaching, resources, and strategies to help programs improve quality and develop sustainable approaches for this work.

- All programs in our first cohort improved their capacity to collect and use data for improvement.
- Programs report their progress was impactful during this initiative, and they have begun applying their new capacity across their programs, even with clients.



CQI by the numbers:

100% of programs improved in 4 or more quality areas.

92% of programs improved their capacity through performance measurement.

2X The number of programs using a formal or standardized tool to monitor implementation nearly doubled.

“Performance measurement is essential. You can’t be a data-driven program without it. It’s crucial to program work and improvement. We are not serving families to the fullest capacity if we are not doing that.”

– CQI participant in Cohort 1



Build Technology to Support Data-informed Decisions

Imagine Amazon without an integrated data system tracking orders, inventory, and shipping. Unfortunately, this is the state of early childhood systems, where families navigate a fragmented, disjointed service landscape in their attempts to find services to help their children thrive. Technology is key to solving this problem.

- Our Integrated Data System (IDS) will enable care coordination, service monitoring, and outcomes tracking for more than 30,000 young children and families in Guilford County.
- HealthySteps Specialists and Navigators are successfully using applications developed by Ready Ready to onboard families, send electronic consent forms, and conduct remote visits. The app also reduces paperwork and allows easy access to historical data.
- Families will own their data and control when to share and with which programs.



Our Priorities

—Cont.

“When The Duke Endowment was looking for a place to invest, we chose Guilford County because of its rich history of early childhood innovation and collaboration.”

— Meka Sales, Director of Special Initiatives at The Duke Endowment

“We are working at the grassroots level with elected officials and statewide organizations and at the grassroots level with leaders, partners, and families in our community to share the systems-building work Ready Ready is undertaking.”

— Adam Tarleton, Ready Ready Board member and Public Policy Committee chair



Conduct Rigorous Evaluation and Build Sustainability for System-building Work

The work we are doing to create a connected system of care can't rely on hunches or anecdotes. Instead, we evaluate every step. Focus on outcomes. Measure success. The data we consider is used to inform decisions and expand programs.

- Duke University has begun an implementation study of the Navigation service. Ready Ready and Children's Home Society will use the results to improve the impact and experience for families.
- Using what we have learned through our work over the past three years, a small team, facilitated by MDRC, updates our initiative's Theory of Change.
- We redefined our organization's values. Through a community-led process, we arrived at six values and determined the underlying principles. They guide planning and decision-making across our priorities.

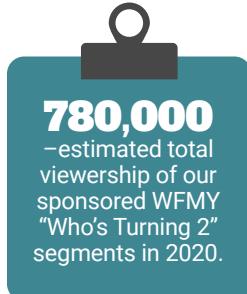


Build Public Will for Early Childhood Priorities

Our work can't happen in a vacuum. We need Guilford County families, leaders, elected officials, and citizens to support our efforts. We share our story, plans, and our successes with North Carolina legislators and similar organizations to reinforce that the systems we are building will help children and families today, and our entire state in the future.

- We have made new strides in our policy efforts to secure private funding and also public funding which demonstrates Guilford County and North Carolina's interest in investing in our future workforce.
- North Carolina legislators have filed bills in the House and Senate to support two projects that can be replicated across the state:
 - Develop an Integrated Data System to navigate families through a fragmented collection of services, while monitoring child outcomes.
 - Improve early childhood work environments by providing support, guidance, leadership, resources, and wage supplements for eight early child care centers in Guilford County.
- We launched our public awareness campaign, The Basics Guilford, in April 2019. The Basics are five fun, science-based parenting and caregiving concepts that anyone can do. They support the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children from birth through age three.

The Basics Guilford:





**FUTURE
LEADER**

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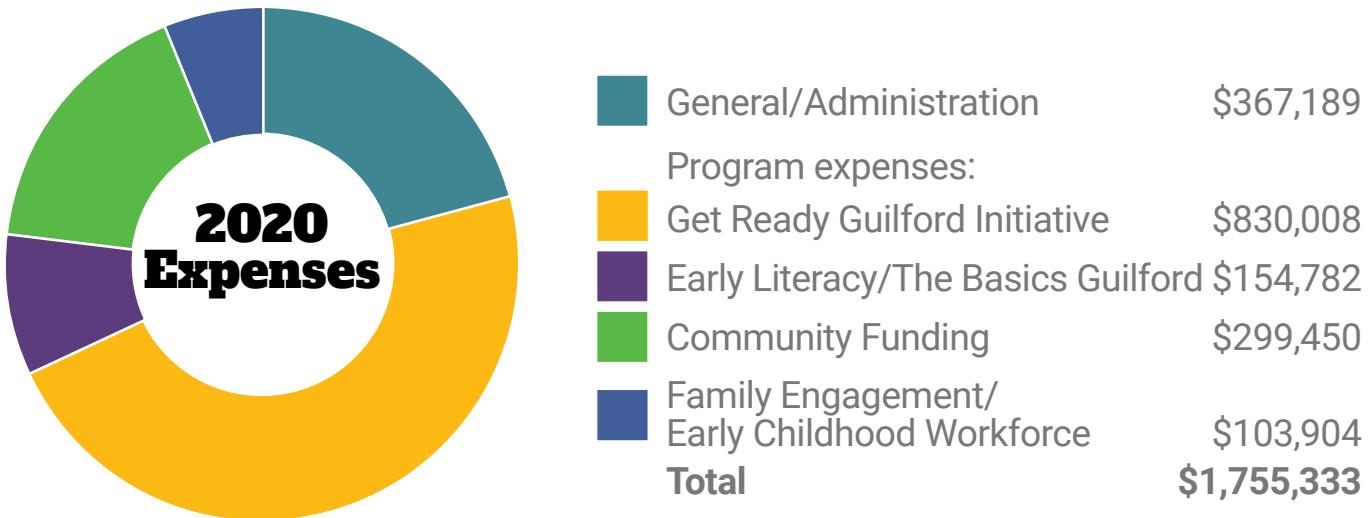
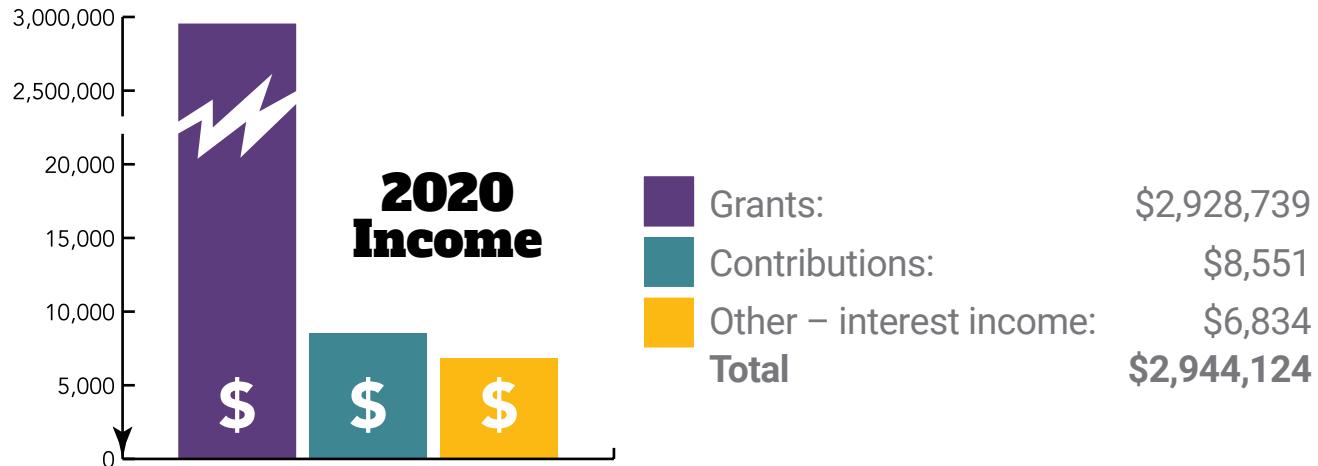
Mr. Adam Tarleton
Brooks Pierce
Partner

Dr. Julia Vann
Guilford County
Public Health Director

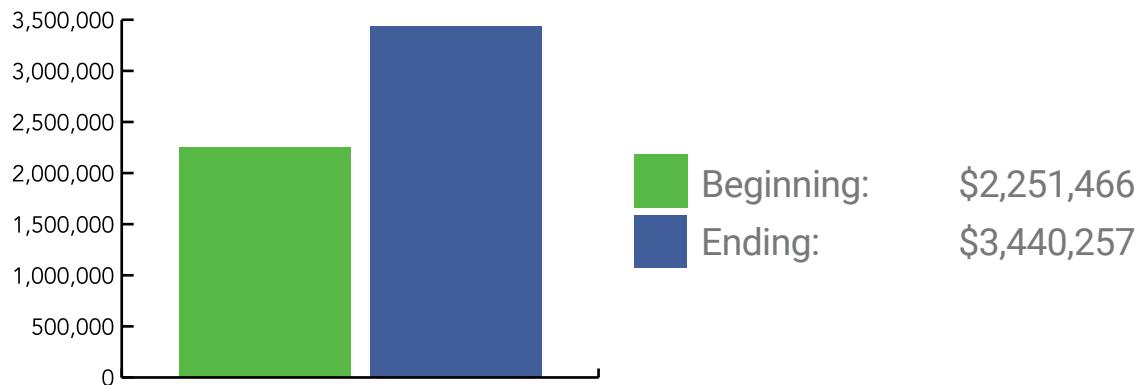
Ms. Cindy Watkins
Guilford County Partnership
for Children
Interim Executive Director

Charrise Hart
Chief Executive Officer
Ready for School, Ready for Life

Financials



2020 Net Assets



Funders



THE
Cemala
FOUNDATION

James B Duke
THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

THE
JOSEPH M. BRYAN
FOUNDATION



PRITZKER
Children's Initiative

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THE STANLEY AND
DOROTHY FRANK
FAMILY FOUNDATION

**Center for the
Study of Social Policy**
Ideas into Action

Reflections on 2020

Just about five years ago, around the same time that the seeds of Ready for School, Ready for Life were planted in Guilford County, The Duke Endowment was looking for a partner community in the Carolinas to significantly and positively impact outcomes for children. Our search led us to Guilford County, and since 2018 we have worked alongside committed and passionate leaders at Ready for School, Ready for Life, and throughout the Guilford community.

This unique partnership has yielded many benefits, and with all things, there have been challenges along the way. The COVID-19 global pandemic took us all by surprise, but due to the tenacity of leaders dedicated to serving children and families in Guilford County, 2020 will be remembered as the year we embraced uncertainty while forging ahead with our collective plans to build an integrated and responsive early childhood system.

I couldn't be prouder of what we have accomplished together in the face of the biggest threat to public health that we have seen in decades. Ready Ready held tightly to the vision of connecting families to the right resources at the right time and did not let up on its role to convene, strategize and mobilize for children and families. Last year, community partners adapted to deliver critical services to families, Ready Ready secured talent to fill high priority staff positions, and advanced the design and testing of key elements of the reimagined system we are creating together.

One can look back at the year 2020 and see all that was disrupted. And yes, many things about our way of life were altered by this debilitating and deadly virus. I choose to remain encouraged by Ready Ready and its powerful and compassionate partners who decided to boldly face the cracks in our systems that were exposed during 2020 and seize opportunities to drive change.



Meka Sales
Director, Special Initiatives
The Duke Endowment



Join the conversation:



@GetReadyGuilford



@4School4Life



Ready for School, Ready for Life



Stay in touch:

Want monthly updates from
Ready Ready?

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<https://readyready.link/NewsSignup>

Meet our staff:

Charrise Hart

Chief Executive Officer

Kelly McKee

Vice-President of Operations

Heather Adams, Director of Engagement & Literacy Initiatives

Mollie Blafer, Community Alignment Specialist

Michelle Chapin, Project Manager

Stormi Covington, Community Alignment Specialist, Team Lead

Karthik Dhakshanamoorthy, Salesforce Administrator

Madhuri Dilliker, Business/Data Analyst

Christina Dobson, Director of Navigation Services

Felicia Evans, Community Alignment Specialist

Kristi Greene, Executive Coordinator

Deepti Panjabi, Director of Continuous Quality Improvement

Angela Powell, Grants Manager

Stephanie Skordas, Director of Marketing & Communications



Learn about The Basics:
www.GuilfordBasics.org



www.GetReadyGuilford.org