

2023-2024 IMPACT REPORT



*Each Child.
Our Community.*



From Our Executive Director

Dear Craven County Citizens,

It is my pleasure to share with you the 2023-2024 Impact Report. Please note that our mission is "Each child, Our community". Our nonprofit stands by our commitment to support all babies, toddlers, young preschool children and families throughout the county. The year has been highlighted with recognition by the business community as one of the 30 most significant organizations in the county. We also highlighted our 25th anniversary with a celebration at the Harrison Center in downtown historic New Bern. Our keynote speaker was Senator Rachel Hunt, the daughter of North Carolina's Smart Start founder, Gov. Jim Hunt.

Many of you may not realize that the Dolly Parton Imagination Library has provided free books to children in Craven County for the past seven years. A heart of love for children, Dolly Parton, began this worldwide program whereby children receive a monthly age-appropriate book in the mail until their 5th birthday. Our report recognizes that 3,759 children were enrolled in the program this past year. Please advocate with us to encourage state and local politicians and members of the General Assembly to continue this program. It is determined to end June 30, 2025, without additional funding.

The Impact Report shares with you our financial overview for the year. We want to be as transparent as possible with the community, informing you about expenditures and where your much appreciated donations are spent. 70% of our budget contributes to childcare-related services. The WAGE\$ program provides childcare workers with supplemental income as they are underpaid workers in the childcare/teaching field.

My third year with Craven Smart Start is emerging and I want to thank those in the community who have supported our programs because we could not continue without donations, grants and volunteer hours. Grants from Bosch Community Fund, T.J. Maxx and the Harold H Bate Foundation supported our literacy programs, such as Raising a Reader and Story Cubs. I invite you to visit our office and go to our website at www.cravensmartstart.org to review the programs and outreach events held each year, some are new and some are annual. We are honored to have a dedicated board, 18 hard working employees and direct service providers that support our mission. We pledge to the community to move forward serving the families and children of Craven County and hope you will support us as well with prayers, volunteer hours and donations because half a bridge will not get us to the other side of the rainbow.

With much love and sincerity,



Cassandra Bennett, Executive Director



Our Mission is “building brighter futures for young children”

A Significant Organization

FY 23-24 was a really good year—no hurricanes and many program highlights. In October, 2023, the MBF Architects, P.A., recognized Craven Smart Start as “one of 30 organizations that significantly contributes to the wellbeing of our community” and awarded our partnership \$1,000 to assist with our mission.

We were honored to receive this recognition & award. We reviewed what makes an organization “significant” and concluded that one of the main traits is our vision and ability to collaborate with others in working together for the future of our children. Collaboration was a founding principle of Smart Start. Today it’s one of our greatest strengths.

Having access to child care means that for each family:

Care is easy to find and reasonably close.



Care is affordable.



Care is supportive of children's healthy development.

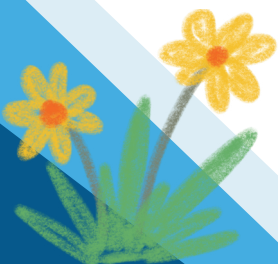


Available care meets parents' needs and desires.



Craven Smart Start works though out Craven County:

- To raise the quality of childcare and to expand early literacy
- To advance child health and development
- To build early childhood networks—by partnering with many community agencies



Program Highlights

Child Care WAGE\$®

Child Care WAGE\$® Program Craven Outcome Overview FY24

\$1,334

average six-month

61

supplement
recipients

15%

turnover rate of WAGE\$ participants

98%

of respondents
reported satisfaction
with WAGE\$ and its

100%

of directors reported
positive attitudes
toward WAGE\$ in their
child care programs

88%

of active participants have permanent levels on the
education scale (AAS ECE or higher) or have
submitted education during the year to document
additional coursework

The Child Care WAGE\$® Program is an education-based salary supplement program for teachers, directors and family child care providers. The education, position and work schedule for each applicant are assessed to determine the annual award. To encourage consistency, installments based on half of the annual award are issued after each six-month period the participant completes in the same early care and education program. Because these supplements reward teacher education and continuity of care, children ages birth to five benefit from more stable relationships with better educated teachers. In FY24, WAGE\$ was a funding partnership between Smart Start and the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) promotes literacy skills through a partnership with the Dollywood Foundation. Children can receive the books regardless of the family income. Craven Smart Start became an affiliate for the DPIL in February of 2017. As of June 30, 2024, 3,759 children were enrolled in DPIL. Each child enrolled receives an age-appropriate book monthly in their mailbox until their fifth birthday.



Programs

2023-2024 Craven Smart Start Board of Directors & Staff

Childcare Resource and Referral (CCR&R): CCR&R assists families in finding high quality childcare in Craven County. They offer a Lending library open to the public. For Fiscal Year (FY) 23-24, an average of 3,193 children were served by CCR&R's Technical Assistance, 399 teachers/directors attended trainings, and 63 referrals were made to parents looking for child care.

CCR&R Regional Lead Agency: This program coordinates and integrates CCR&R services delivered across Region 2. By providing effective technical assistance (Infant/Toddler Specialist, School Age Specialist and Behavioral Specialist) to child care providers and consumer-appropriate resource information to parents and the community, higher quality child care options are accomplished.

NC Pre-Kindergarten (NC Pre-K) (Enhancement): For this program, Craven Smart Start provides financial assistance, paid on a direct per child basis for the purpose of enhancing the NC Pre-K rate for children enrolled in and served through NC Pre-K and whose families are eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or the Child Care and Development Fund CCDF. For FY 23-24, 112 children were impacted in 13 classrooms at five sites.

Family Literacy Programs (Part-Day) and Motherread/Fatheread: Family Literacy Programs provide high quality early childhood education to children six weeks to five years of age, while parents attend parenting classes, study to obtain their GED, and/or to learn English as a second language. For Motherread/Fatheread, this program, participants will read from a set of preselected children's books that is part of the Motherread curriculum. Participants will be given literacy activities to engage in at home. For FY 23-24, 29 children were served, 21 families served, and 160 home visits occurred.

Community Outreach: Community Outreach Coordinator expands the knowledge base of Smart Start funded activities in Craven County. For FY 23-24, the coordinator participated in 13 community outreach events; provided 130 interactions with DSPs; created and distributed 4,905 newsletters; and prepared and submitted 32 press releases.

Program Evaluation: The Program Coordinator/Evaluator ensures coordination and collaboration between Craven Smart Start service providers. The Program Evaluator also monitors each funded program and works with partnership fiscal coordinator to link programmatic and fiscal accountability.

Raising A Reader: The Raising A Reader program promotes improved literacy development through daily book sharing between caregivers and young children. Child care centers, child care homes, or other community sites with a high percentage of low-income children are the focus. Families participate in the weekly book bag rotation (books on loan). Each week children bring home a red book bag containing high quality, developmentally appropriate children's books. For FY 23-24, 176 children from 11 facilities participated.

Board and Staff

*Each Child.
Our Community.*

2023-2024 Craven Smart Start Board of Directors & Staff



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James Burns

Vice President

Vacant

Secretary

Lynn Hardison

Asst. Secretary

Lisa Kemp

Treasurer

Don Brinkley

At Large

Jennifer Blackmon

Directors

Maria Eid

Linder Ervin

Chief Patrick Gallagher

LaTicia Garfield

Geoffrey Marett

Beatrice Smith

Our Staff

At Left: Cherie Holt, Demeka Bryant, Pinkie Moore, Savannah Lowe, Tammy Cullom, Mandy Morris, Cassandra Bennett, Bonnie Gould, Nadia Lowe, Bianca Salinas, Venus Miller, Erin Scarborough & Anjali Belknap, Not pictured: Sonia Sumner, Brandi Parnell, & Deborah Cook.

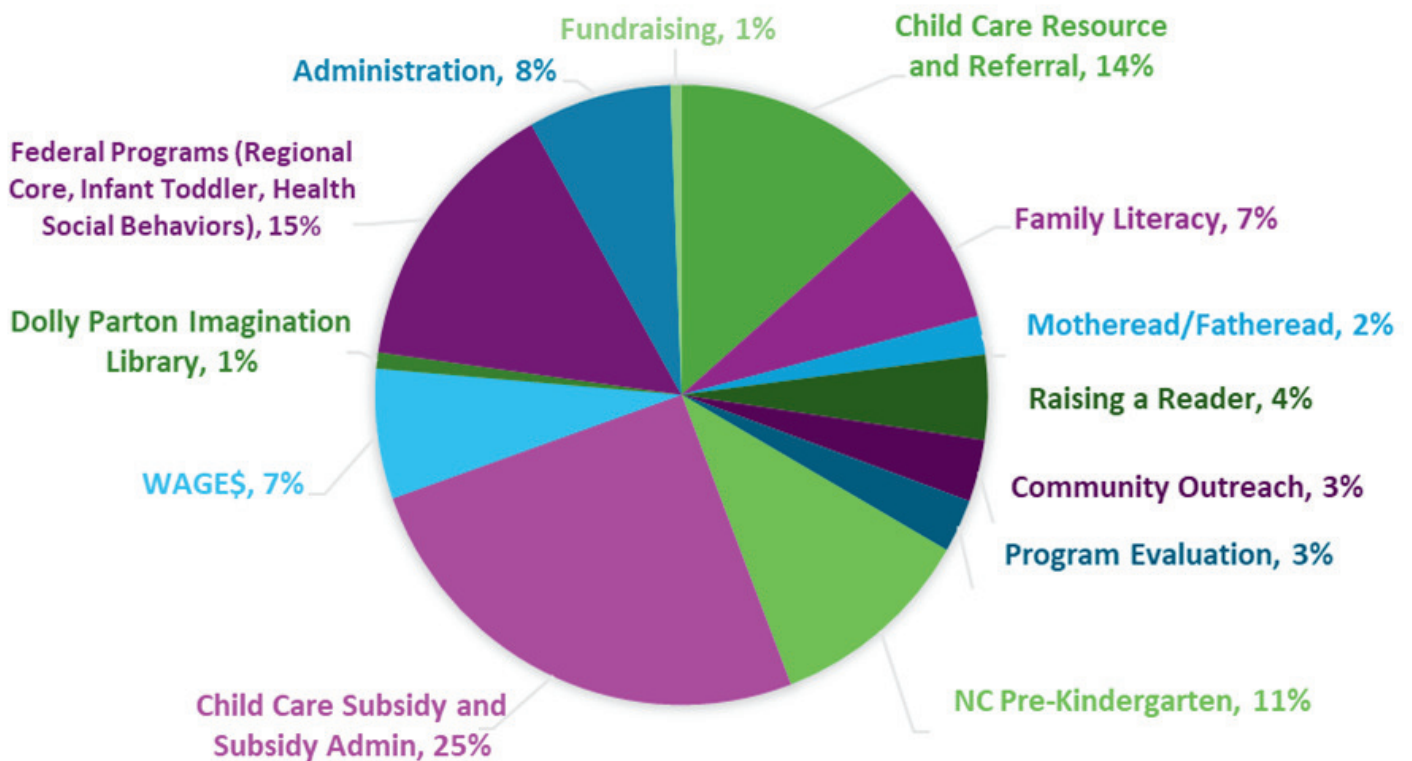


Financial Overview

2023—2024 Financial Overview

Program Expenditures		Source of Funding	
Child Care Resource and Referral	\$ 279,754	State Awards and Contracts	\$1,091,425
Family Literacy	\$ 152,580	Federal Awards	\$302,933
Motheread/Fatheread	\$ 41,472	Private Contributions	\$40,820
Raising a Reader	\$ 91,150	Special Fundraising Events	\$15,379
Community Outreach	\$ 67,063	State Contract Pass Through	\$ 664,712
Program Evaluation	\$ 57,455	Other Receipts	\$6,599
NC Pre-Kindergarten	\$ 224,000	Total Receipts	\$2,121,868
Child Care Subsidy and Subsidy Admin	\$ 524,634		
WAGES	\$ 140,078		
Dolly Parton Imagination Library	\$ 17,500		
Federal Programs (Regional Core, Infant Toddler, Health Social Behaviors)	\$ 302,933	Program Match	
Administration	\$ 156,481	In-Kind Matching Dollars	\$ 21,163
Fundraising	\$ 12,000	Cash Donations	\$ 46,779
Total Expenditures	\$ 2,067,100	Total Program Match	\$ 67,942

PROGRAM EXPENDITURES



Sponsors and In-Kind



2023-2024

Sponsors

B/S/H/
Bosch Community Fund
Harold H Bate Foundation
Craven County Independent Insurance Agents Association
Nationwide Insurance/Cowey Group
Fisher Stores, Inc.
Pat & Carr Ipock
Zaxby's
Kim Matthews
Eastern Carolina Nissan
Greg Bernhardt Insurance Services
Trader Construction
MBF Architects PA
New Bern Chamber of Commerce
John & April King
Jim & Germaine Burns
Robert and Debbie Murray
Betty Wilson
Sigma Chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa
Thomas N. Sparks
Susan Sipos

In-Kind Contributors

Bender Apparel

THANK YOU

