



**Item:**

Help Me Grow Alachua

**Requested Action:**

- 1) The Trust is asked to approved the release of RFP 2021-07.
- 2) The Trust is asked to authorize \$220,000.00 for Help Me Grow during FY22.
- 3) The Trust is asked to approve Resolution 2021-13
- 4) The Trust is asked to authorize Executive Director to appoint a review team of members with subject matter expertise.

**Background**

The Board has adopted 4 community-level results for children: 1) All children are born healthy and remain healthy, 2) All children can learn what they need to be successful, 3) All children have nurturing and supportive caregivers and relationships, and 4) All children live in a safe community. These results include the importance of identifying the elements of the Prenatal and 3 (PN-3) system in Alachua County.

The Help Me Grow system promotes cross-sector collaboration to build an efficient and effective early childhood continuum of care. Help Me Grow strengthens the grid by maintaining a current directory of available services and connecting service providers to each other to create an interconnected system. Help Me Grow is designed so all children have the best possible start in life by providing free developmental and behavioral screenings. The Children's Trust of Alachua County will also be adding a literacy assessment component and service linkage to this RFP. Research shows that proficiency in reading by the end of third grade enables students to shift from learning to read to reading to learn and to master the more complex subject matter they encounter in the fourth grade curriculum (see more at [Florida Grade-Level Reading Campaign](#)). Most students who fail to reach this critical milestone falter in the later grades and often drop out before earning a high school diploma. Families benefit as Help Me Grow listens to them, links them to services, and provides ongoing support. Help Me Grow is available to all children, including those whose families may have concerns or simply want to learn more about their child's development.

It is also important to acknowledge that differences of thought, background and experience can present challenges in developing and implementing early childhood assessments and interventions that are culturally responsive, competent, and well-received by the intended communities. Efforts to improve the health and well-being of children in Alachua and their families should therefore embed principles and strategies for racial equity and inclusion to maximize participant engagement and retention, especially for people of color.

Help Me Grow is not a stand-alone program, but rather a system model that utilizes and builds on existing resources in order to develop and enhance a comprehensive approach to early childhood system-building in any given community. Successful implementation of the Help Me Grow model requires communities to identify existing resources, think creatively about how to make the most of existing opportunities, and build a coalition to work collaboratively toward a shared agenda.

**Attachments**

Resolution 2021-13

**Programmatic Impact:**

Help Me Grow Alachua organizes a system of community resources and strengthens the grid by maintaining a current directory of available services and connecting service providers to each other to create an interconnected system. Help Me Grow is designed so all children have the best possible start in life by providing free developmental and behavioral screenings. Families benefit as Help Me Grow listens to them, links them to services, and provides ongoing support.

**Fiscal Impact:**

\$220,000.00 for FY 22

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends approval