



JOINT MEETING
THE CHILDREN'S TRUST OF ALACHUA COUNTY AND
THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES

April 24, 2023 at 4:00 PM

County Administration Building, Grace Knight Conference Room,
12 SE 1st Street, 2nd Floor, Gainesville, FL 32601

Call to Order

Commissioner Chair Prizzia called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

Roll Call

PRESENT – Children’s Trust of Alachua County

Chair Tina Certain

Vice Chair Lee Pinkoson

Treasurer Ken Cornell

Member Shane Andrew

Member Judge Denise R. Ferrero

Member Nancy Hardt

Member Maggie Labarta

Member Patricia Snyder

Member Cheryl Twombly

PRESENT – Board of County Commissioners

Chair Anna Prizzia

Vice Chair Mary Alford

Commissioner Charles “Chuck” Chestnut

Commissioner Ken Cornell

Commissioner Marihelen Wheeler

Agenda Review, Revision and Approval

BoCC: Motion to approve the agenda by Comm. Cornell, Seconded by Comm. Wheeler.

CTAC: Motion to approve the agenda by Vice Chair Pinkoson, Seconded by Member Ferrero.

Motions pass unanimously by voice vote.

1. Listening Project Update

CTAC Executive Director Marsha Kiner gave a slide presentation about the Children's Trust recent listening project. The planning began in August 2022. A consulting firm, Prismatic Services, was hired and the process started in October. We listened to the community through interviews, surveys, focus groups, and community meetings. We were sure to include key informants such as staff, partners, providers, youth, parents, and caregivers; we exceeded our goal of more than 1,000 participants. Analysis of the results began in January 2023, and earlier this month, we were able to share the results. We identified a number of necessary services and resources, and Prismatic recommended several priority issues for continual strategic planning. They felt we needed to address the transportation divide in rural communities, seek opportunities to incubate new grassroots programs, and support community centers and sports. For our strategic planning process, they suggested we listen continually to our community members, communicate regularly, set measurable goals, and metrics of impact. Our Steering Committee will meet in May to identify funding priorities, strategies, metrics, and allocations to recommend to the CTAC Board.

As CTAC Board Member Cornell holds a seat on both the County Commission and the Children's Trust, he described his fellow commissioners as forward-thinking when it comes to serving children, and the CTAC members as experts that are second to none. He hopes both staffs can use the knowledge and outcomes from the listening project, as well as available financial resources to help Alachua County children and their families. Commissioner Vice Chair Alford started the discussion by asking about the LGBTQ children, as they weren't explicitly listed in the report. Member Labarta answered that making programs inclusive encompasses all children and expects programs to be sensitive and supportive to their unique needs. Vice Chair Alford mentioned that due to the current politics surrounding LGBTQ children and their experience in schools and programs, that the Trust be present and clear on this issue and ensure they are not precluded from the use of Trust funds. The topic of literacy was brought up by Vice Chair Alford asking if there could be an opportunity to provide pregnant and postnatal women with services so they could help with their children's literacy skills? Member Hardt confirmed that it would be easy to include a literacy screening during an OB visit, then refer patients to existing adult literacy programs. This would additionally help with health literacy skills for child safety.

Commissioner Chair Prizzia mentioned that during a recent joint BoCC/SBAC meeting, the boards agreed to create a Comprehensive Literacy Plan for Alachua County. She would like the Children's Trust to join this group to provide input and feedback in its development. She said that great things are happening in the community, such as United Way's Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, and the collaboration of UFLI (University of Florida's Literacy Institute) with the School District. However, due to the overall fragmentation and lack of comprehensive strategy, there is no real understanding of what programs and practices exist, and what people in the community need.

As this plan should include both children and adults in the community, the BoCC/CTAC boards discussed who should lead this planning process. Chair Prizzia asked Trust Member and

Superintendent Andrew if the UFLI program was required at all Alachua County schools. He confirmed that it was available and that some teachers had undergone training, however it was not a required component of the curriculum. Member Hardt suggested collaborating with the Public Library system as they attend to both children's and adults' literacy needs. Commissioner Cornell reminded the group that at their previous meeting with SBAC, the School Board really stressed that they wanted to take the lead on this, therefore, the School Board should lead it. Chair Prizzia expressed that she didn't think that the School Board was the right place for this to be led, as their past efforts to push literacy have not produced sufficient results. A more comprehensive approach and commitment from all involved needs to take place. Member Andrew agreed on the need for a clearinghouse/convenor to bring the groups together, along with UF, Santa Fe College, and all of the county's smaller cities and towns. To succeed, we need everybody at the table, and we need all their resources, whether that's research, programs, curriculum, etc.

Trust Member Vice Chair Pinkoson added that a critical portion of this starts from age 0-5, we need to make sure the people at the table can influence both parents and children from birth to their start in the school system, so they are not starting behind. It's critical that we involve the parents and they're on board, or we're not going to see results. Trust Member Chair Certain expressed her discouragement that the use of UFLI was not required, and that the School District should not be let off the hook. Chair Certain said she thought the School Board has to lead this, and every single student in Alachua County should get the same curriculum that is research-based and has evidence behind it to show it works. Trust Member Cornell read the motion from the last BoCC/SBAC meeting – the motion was moved that BoCC staff work with the School Board, the Children's Trust, UF, and other stakeholders to develop and fund a comprehensive plan for literacy in Alachua County and bring back recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. This comprehensive plan would be led by the School Board. This motion and a similar one made by SBAC passed unanimously by both boards. He explained that from the County Commission's perspective, their staff would work with CTAC, SBAC, UF, and other stakeholders to bring recommendations on how the BoCC could help with this community-wide plan. He said that all our goals are the same, increased literacy, which is a family-wide issue. He asked what resources each entity could provide.

Member Labarta agrees on the need for a convenor, but there are going to have to be lots of participants and each will have a responsibility, such as the ELC (Early Learning Coalition) for pre-school, the School District for K-12, the University with expertise on research-based practices for child and adult literacy. She suggests picking someone to lead who has a big enough table, the capacity to lead, keep records, but mostly a willingness on the part of the stakeholders to say this is what we have, this is what we don't have, where do we put the access to services that would help, where do we identify them (ex. OB office, home visit), and to map out what the services are at each level, and who can best provide them in a coordinated way. She suggested including the Community Foundation as they may have funders/donors who are willing to invest in this initiative and have the ability to convene. Chair Prizzia mentioned that Alachua County used to have a program called America Reads, funded by UF. This position would coordinate hundreds of volunteers/students with literacy training

throughout the community at local afterschool and summer programs. When the funding was not renewed, the program was discontinued. She asked if the Children's Trust should convene, as they have the ability to connect beyond the school day and within the community.

Regarding the listening project documentation, Commissioner Wheeler asked if educators/teachers were included in the surveys. Member Cornell explained that the survey was sent through the school district to the schools. ED Kiner confirmed that it also went to the district PTA. Commissioner Wheeler expressed dismay that, as a special educator trained at UF with the proven method of precision teaching, the survey didn't explicitly target experienced teachers who have spent the time finding what works and what doesn't. Trust Member Twombly confirmed that the survey was available and open to all residents in Alachua County. Member Cornell reported that he received feedback from local mayors that the teachers did complete surveys. Member Labarta confirmed that the teacher's surveys weren't analyzed as a specific category, but perhaps the consultant could parse them out.

Vice Chair Pinkoson expressed that he was unsure if the Children's Trust has the infrastructure to act as convenor. He suspects that the time and effort that spearheading this group would require - organizing, communicating, scheduling, minutes - would detract from staff's current duties, and be better suited for a larger organization. He mentioned that the Trust could really use help with transportation.

Chair Prizzia reiterates that the Children's Trust is invited to the table for the Comprehensive Literacy Plan, and notes that there is a need to move forward sooner rather than later with the experts who understand literacy. She mentioned that the board also needs to understand literacy before making funding and policy decisions, therefore a training by UFLI could be useful to ensure best practice. Trust Member Snyder suggests the group look specifically at how best practices change over time, such as from age 0-3, age 3-5, age K-2, etc.

Motion made by Trust Member Cornell that CTAC staff work with the School Board, the Board of County Commissioners, UF, and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for literacy in Alachua County and bring back recommendations to the CTAC board. This comprehensive plan would be led by the School Board, Seconded by Vice Chair Pinkoson.

Member Snyder confirms this motion includes children and adults. Member Twombly reminds the board to consider peripheral issues going on with families that may be impacting literacy and to look at the whole child holistically.

Member Labarta suggested letting key people in the community, who are already doing the literacy work, lead this project and hire someone to coordinate a community-wide literacy plan and put together a scope of work, instead of the possible funders. She supports using CTAC's fund balance to invest in this effort. Member Cornell also supports that approach. Chair Certain suggests the possibility of using ESSER funding from the School Board.

Vice Chair Pinkoson makes a substitute motion to refer the concept of moving forward with a Literacy Council to CTAC ED Kiner. He asks for her input on structure and to come back to the CTAC board with recommendations, Seconded by Member Labarta.

Member Hardt asks if the library district will also provide financial support for this initiative. Member Cornell confirms that it will be discussed at their next meeting.

Member Cornell withdraws his motion.

Motion passes unanimously by voice vote.

Motion by Commissioner Vice Chair Alford, Second by Commissioner Cornell for the Board of County Commissioners to support, with financial resources, this effort to support a council and a position that would move forward with this comprehensive plan, up to \$40,000.

Motion passes unanimously by voice vote.

2. Countywide Transportation Opportunities

Chair Prizzia noted that during the course of the Listening Project, the topic of transportation came up repeatedly. It's one of those root causes that really limit people's ability to do the things they need to do. She asked if there were specific requests or recommendations that came from the community in terms of what their needs are? Are there specific areas we could target? Member Hardt confirmed that it was the rural communities outside of greater Gainesville where a lot of this feedback was received. ED Kiner states the results of the surveys show that: 29% of Micanopy parents and caregivers stated that a lack of transportation was a challenge in getting good health care services for their children; and 39% of High Springs parents and caregivers stated that the transportation kept them from attending local activities. This was a recurring concern; while the school buses bring kids home, how do they get everywhere else, such as doctor's appointments. ED Kiner gave the example of bringing funded programs to the rural communities, such as mobile dental services, and afterschool programs, but can we additionally provide transportation or fund opportunities for programs in that area to have transportation?

Chair Prizzia shared that the City of Gainesville and the County have a joint planning body, called MTPO (metropolitan transportation planning organization) that meets to make plans and decisions about long-term transportation options in Alachua County. Commissioner Wheeler has previously mentioned that there is a real lack of transportation opportunities for our rural communities and small municipalities. At one point, Gainesville's RTS (Regional Transport Services) piloted new routes in these communities, which ran twice a day, without much success. Chair Prizzia noted that people need transportation on a more regular basis or an on-demand transportation solution. Commissioner Wheeler shared that she had requested, at a previous MTPO meeting, that RTS educate students about how to ride and how to stay safe on the buses. This was due to the fact that the school buses may often be running behind schedule

because of the lack of drivers and the high demand, while the city buses are underutilized. However, this would just be useful for those within the city limits, and not the rest of the county.

Member Hardt shared that some businesses (such as a car dealership, hotels, rental companies, academic institutions) would pay for an on-demand Uber journey instead of providing a courtesy vehicle or member of staff to personally transport the customer. Could this model be used to transport kids on short journeys within a rural municipality?

Member Cornell mentions the possibility of the Children's Trust and the Board of County Commissioners have a meeting with the City of Gainesville regarding options on the RTS System. Currently, those that are under 18 or over 65 ride for free. The listening project suggested that if parents could ride for free with their children, the RTS system could be much better utilized. As drivers track usage, the costs could be reimbursed by the Children's Trust. Alternatively, they could simply make all bus fares free for all riders. Vice Chair Alford states that a very small percentage of the RTS budget comes from rider fares, Commissioner Cornell states it may be less than 4%. Vice Chair Alford also suggests that a fare-free system may qualify RTS for different types of federal funding. Commissioner Cornell offers to bring this up at the next MTPO meeting on behalf of the Trust. Chair Prizzia notes that even cutting fares would not provide help for the outer lying areas, new routes would have to be funded, they would have to be regular and direct, or it might not be a sustainable solution.

RTS Transit Director, Jesus Gomez joined the discussion. Member Cornell asked if the City had discussed parents riding with kids for free. Mr. Gomez confirms that it has been brought up, and the outstanding issue is funding. Chair Certain asks the approximate costs of the different age groups. Mr. Gomez states that it costs \$130,000 for the riders under 18, those who are 18-65 are currently contributing \$560,000, and riders over 65 cost \$100,000. To make the buses free for all riders (the gap of 18-65) would cost at least \$560,000 annually. While the under 18 program is working well and provided 200,000 free rides this past year, all of the RTS programs are expected to be discussed during this year's budget process at the City Commission level.

Vice Chair Pinkoson commented and questioned that the discussion was just about parents riding for free with their children, and not the entire 18-65 gap. Chair Prizzia expressed that just reimbursing for parents may be problematic and that the buses should be free for all, or not. Chair Certain reiterated and agreed with Vice Chair Alford's idea that RTS could possibly qualify for federal grants if all fares were free. Chair Prizzia asked about a previous RTS program called Last Mile/First Mile, a pilot launched in 2019 which aimed to collect passengers in the vicinity of an established route – this was meant to keep customers from walking more than ¼ mile to their nearest local bus stop. While this program initially worked very well, some began abusing the system and booking the service for short trips around their community. Mr. Gomez reported that other agencies sponsor Ubers/Lyfts, for example, the City subsidizes Uber trips to/from a local senior center. Chair Prizzia asks if there could be a service of smaller vehicles, similar to the Last Mile/First Mile concept, specifically for neighborhood or community routes (ex. a jitney bus)?

Vice Chair Alford asks if there are private entities that provide this service, which we could have in addition to the RTS bus system? Member Labarta spoke about services from Kids on Wheels that would collect kids from school, take them to their afterschool activity, and then drive them home. The concept would be to take a private entity and provide them with more market share, more volume, and then scale up the services. Member Hardt asks if, for example, one could approach Kids on Wheels or a similar program, as they already have the infrastructure, vehicles, and drivers, and ask if they could add specific services and at what incremental cost.

Vice Chair Pinkoson suggested approaching the leadership in the small municipalities to ask if they know of any existing service or anyone who could create a similar service. Member Cornell suggests mentioning that we have programming happening in their areas (summer school, afterschool, etc.) and to ask if there is any transportation the city staff could assist with, and how much it would cost to help with some of these programs. Vice Chair Pinkoson suggested that the Trust ask these leaders at the next Alachua County League of Cities meeting, and then bring back some potential solutions and costs to the Trust board.

Motion made by Vice Chair Pinkoson that ED Kiner attend the next League of Cities meeting and bring up the transportation issue for our programs to see if there might be a solution or recommendations, Seconded by Member Cornell.

Motion passes unanimously by voice vote.

Vice Chair Alford informed the boards that the BoCC is currently working with the City of Gainesville on a joint master plan for pedestrian and bicycle facilities across the area. This would support child fitness as well as safety. She suggests involving the small cities throughout the county to see what their plans are around bicycle/pedestrian transportation. Chair Prizzia would like to bring this topic up at the next Wild Spaces Public Places meeting with the other communities and municipalities as this could provide an opportunity for the Trust and other funders to assist or subsidize the cost of bicycles or other items families might need.

3. Mental Health Partnership Opportunities with Crisis Center

Chair Prizzia began the discussion by expressing that the current mental health crisis is a major issue in our county's youth. She mentioned that the BoCC previously had a discussion with the SBAC and asked them to collaborate and partner with the Crisis Center to start exploring mental health support counseling for our youth. As it was an important part of the CTAC listening project, she asked if CTAC staff would also like to participate in the dialogue.

Member Labarta agreed that mental health was a concerning area in the listening project, she discussed the many facets and factors that need to be discussed and defined. Mental health can include early intervention, psycho-educational modalities, building resiliency, and building social, emotional, and learning skills. It could also refer to the need for serious counseling, medication, suicide prevention, among many others. There are lots of services in Alachua

County, however they are not coordinated, and are increasingly fragmented. The approach needs clarity as to the preponderance of services needed in ages 0-5 vs. elementary school vs. middle and high school, they are potentially very different needs. She mentions trauma and abuse intervention, substance abuse, and the correlation with behavioral health, and a current and potential increase in the needs of LGBTQ youth.

Chair Prizzia reports that several teachers have contacted her regarding the behavioral and mental health challenges among their students, and that the existing mental health counselors have an increasing number of referrals and long waiting lists. Member Labarta confirms that the majority of the mental health centers in the state are currently having a hiring crisis and behavioral health centers nationally are running with 20%-40% vacancies. She also notes that different levels of care are needed, from psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed mental health professionals, and mentors. Peers can also be very helpful, for example, the Teen Mental Health First Aid programs. We need to understand what the needs are, who can best meet them, what level of staff are needed, and then move to a coordinated approach to funding it.

Vice Chair Alford asked Chair Certain what training the teachers get in respect to youth mental health. Chair Certain deferred the question to Member Andrew. He confirmed that there was a high level of compliance with the state-mandated Youth Mental Health First Aid course. Vice Chair Alford then asked about courses in anger management. Chair Certain asked Member Labarta if the Trust could fund a position to teach Teen Mental Health First Aid, she confirmed. Member Hardt mentioned that the Trust hasn't funded enough prevention programs, and perhaps this could be integrated into many of our age-appropriate programs, with the Trust funding the training instructor.

Motion made by CTAC Member Cornell, Seconded by Chair Certain, that CTAC staff get with the County staff to determine opportunities to collaborate and leverage funding to help provide more mental health services to kids 0-18, starting with grades 6th-12th which could include, but not be limited to, Youth Mental Health First Aid or a meta-program that provides training for Teen Mental Health First Aid.

Motion made by BoCC Commissioner Cornell, Seconded by Commissioner Wheeler, that County staff get with the CTAC staff to determine opportunities to collaborate and leverage funding to help provide more mental health services to kids 0-18, starting with grades 6th-12th which could include, but not be limited to, Youth Mental Health First Aid or a meta-program that provides training for Teen Mental Health First Aid.

Member Labarta reiterates the need for a better understanding of the different levels of mental health services needed. The BoCC has been in discussion with community support staff regarding different services currently offered, if and what federal funding may be available, and how to prioritize these programs. Commissioner Cornell suggests the County and CTAC staff coordinate the data from the listening project and work with SBAC on how the County can help at the individual school and principal level, discuss where the funding may be available, are there people to fill positions, and how to leverage other payers. Member Labarta mentioned

that Medicaid is a payer of behavioral health care, and most of the kids in greatest need should be covered by Medicaid. Chair Certain asked what the challenges are to connect them to services. Member Labarta answered that first is transportation, and second, that it is hard to provide services within the school system as kids need the educational time. Parents have difficulty getting kids to the offices and clinics where they need to be. Chair Certain expressed that we must figure out how to provide services on a school campus, but outside of school hours. Member Labarta noted that not all behavioral issues are diagnosable mental illnesses, there are other behavioral interventions that may be effective.

Vice Chair Alford asked if there were any screenings for behavioral health issues in preschool. Member Labarta confirmed that there is a state requirement for EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment) screenings to be completed by pediatricians, however the compliance is very low. Trust Member Snyder discussed the required developmental screening required in VPK and school readiness programs. Those who exhibit additional concerns around social and emotional learning are further screened.

Motions pass unanimously by voice vote.

General Public Comments

Adjournment

Commissioner Chair Prizzia adjourned the meeting at 6:28 PM.

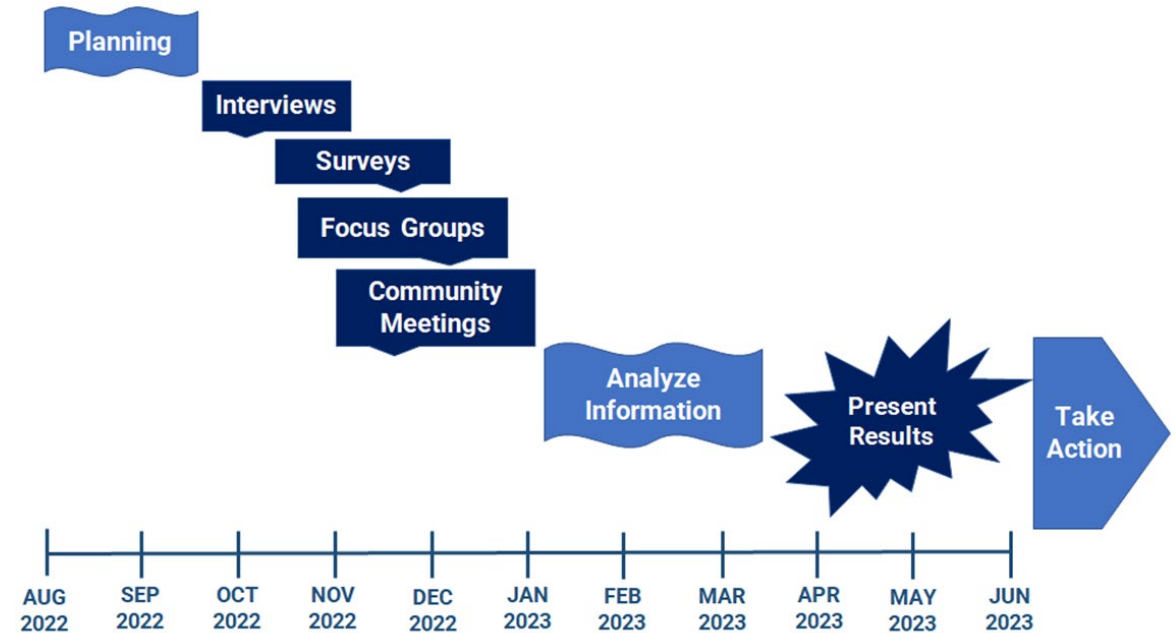
Listening Project & Strategic Plan



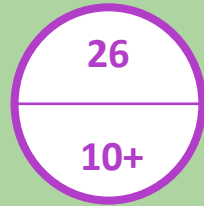
CHILDREN'S TRUST
OF ALACHUA COUNTY



Listening Project Timeline:

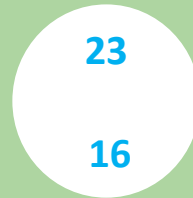


Listening Project Activities



Interviews:

- ▶ Staff
- ▶ Key Informants
- ▶ Partners/Providers



Focus Groups:

- ▶ Youth
- ▶ Parents/Caregivers
- ▶ Providers/Partners



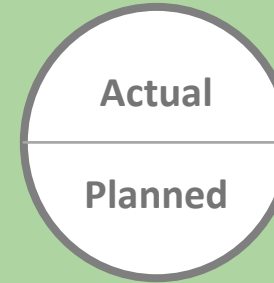
Community Meetings:

- ▶ Youth
- ▶ Parents/Caregivers
- ▶ Providers/Partners



Surveys:

- ▶ Youth
- ▶ Parents/Caregivers
- ▶ Providers
- ▶ Partners



Identified Services and Resources Needed

Afterschool & Summer

- Additional opportunities
- Homework help
- Recreation
- Free or scholarships
- More programs
- Summer camps

Children & Youth Support

- Mentor program
- Program for teen parents
- Employment opportunities
- Support groups
- Counseling & Behavioral support

Education

- County-wide literacy plan
- Vocational training
- Tutoring
- Scholarships
- Apprenticeships
- Career Exploration
- Career Center
- Affordable/accessible PreK

Schools-General

- Community elementary schools
- Revised disciplinary approach
- Safety patrol
- Mental health counselors
- All treated with respect
- More clubs
- Students select classes
- Relevant coursework
- Improve school meals

Schools - Transportation

- Separate elementary and high school students
- Address bullying
- Safer bus stops
- Provide late buses

Schools Facilities

- Clean/Upgraded bathrooms
- Fix air conditioning
- Better desks
- Facility upgrades so all schools have same quality
- More playgrounds

Recreation & Activities

- More public sports facilities
- Greater variety of sports options
- Free/subsidized sports
- Larger recreational facility, open daily
- Field trips
- Playgrounds, Trails, Parks, Pool
- Arts, Crafts, Clubs, Cooking, Dance

Health

- Hospital/healthcare accessible in rural areas
- Dental screenings
- Health insurance
- 24-hour EMS
- Address childhood obesity
- More programs Prenatal-5
- Behavioral support training
- Mental health counseling



Identified Services and Resources Needed

Safety

- Add police substation
- More police patrols in communities
- Violence prevention
- Gun safety/awareness
- More lights
- Safer roads, better road maintenance

Public Transportation

- Increase services
- Keep it free for children
- Expand to rural areas
- Larger buses
- Add sidewalks
- Safer and closer bus stops
- Shelter and bench at bus stops

Resources

- Database of services
- Larger library
- Technology access
- Communications about resources

Parent Support

- Parenting classes
- Family life center
- Family counseling



Recommendations

#	Recommendation
Priority Issues	
1	Adopt explicit dollar spend goals for each age group rather than for each goal.
2	Address the transportation divide.
3	Incubate new programs.
4	Support community centers and sports.
5	Become the marketplace for interns and community supporters/organizers.
6	Become the county fulcrum for information.
Strategic Planning	
7	Listen continually.
8	Communicate regularly.
9	Leverage community.
10	Revise Trust principles, then set measurable annual goals.
11	Adopt better metrics of output and impact.

Strategic Planning Process



April & May - Steering Committee meets to identify funding priorities and allocations, key goals, and strategies and metrics



May – Steering Committee reviews plan draft and recommendations



June – Strategic Plan Approved by Trust Board



CHILDREN'S TRUST

OF ALACHUA COUNTY