



Item:

Implementation of the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program Update (Mia Jones)

Requested Action:

- 1) The board is asked to receive this update.

Background:

At the April 8, 2024 Children's Trust of Alachua County Board meeting, the board approved \$300,000.00 for investment into the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program that will be administered by the Early Learning of Coalition of Alachua County (ELCA). The board also approved additional future funding investment to the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program as determined by staff in order to sustain the funding category with ELCA.

This investment fund was intended to create a local funding category for Alachua County families who meet the criteria for ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed). By creating the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program that aligns with the ELCA working families (BG8) funding category requirements (except the income limit) and setting the initial eligibility income limit at 200% FPL, ELCA and the Children's Trust create a pathway for families to receive needed support who would otherwise not have qualified.

Although staff at ELCA and the Children's Trust indicated the \$300,000.00 would not be matched by state dollars at that time, public comment indicated there may be misinterpretation of policy on how families are enrolled into school readiness program for continued support after the use of the investment dollars. He suggested that staff reach out to the Division of Early Learning (DEL) again. The following has been done since the April board meeting:

Trust staff met with Dr. Herman Knoph and Dr. Patricia Snyder of the Anita Zucker Center to discuss creating a MOU and a possible contract on developing a funding formula to maximize the childcare match dollars.

Trust staff provided a commitment agreement for the 2024-2025 School Readiness Program Match. The School Readiness Program Match is a 50/50 partnership between the Children's Trust and ELCA and the form is required to draw down match funds from the state for their new fiscal year.

ELCA staff along with other ELC in the state have reached out to the Division of Early Learning (DEL) for guidance and formal protocol.

Trust staff also reached out to FACCT, Florida Association of Children Council and Trust and requested assistance in requesting clear protocol in writing from leadership at the Division of Early Learning.

Trust and ELCA staff are waiting to receive information from DEL and FACCT. After DEL met with all ELC they are reviewing internally and will provide guidance and clear protocol. Waiting on a response from DEL does not prevent funding and the creation Child Care Tuition Assistance Program. However, we do want to ensure families receive the needed support without an unexpected break in funding.

We will present to the Board our findings at another board meeting along with any needed changes to the implementation of the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program and any recommendations regarding funding supports for families enrolled at the Gainesville Empowerment Zone and other Early Learning Centers.

Programmatic Impact:

Goal 2- Children and youth can learn what they need to be successful.

Fiscal Impact:

\$300,000 - Child Care Tuition Assistance Program

Recommendation:

The board is asked to receive the report.