



**Item:**

Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County Funding Investment and Child Care Tuition Assistance Partnership (Mia Jones)

**Requested Action:**

- 1) The Trust is asked to approve the recommendation to accept the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County investment funds in the amount of \$340,000.00.
- 2) The Trust is asked to approve the recommendation to contract with the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County for the creation of the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program funding category and provide an initial investment of \$150,000.00 for the program.
- 3) The Trust is asked to approve the recommendation to provide additional future funding investment to the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program as determined by staff in order to sustain the funding category with the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County.

**Background:**

The Children's Trust and the Early Learning Coalition of Alachua County are layering funding investments to expand access to quality care and education and to continue to support the structure of building quality Early Learning businesses in the county.

**Child Care Tuition Assistance Program**

Using investment funds from the Children's Trust of Alachua County, the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program creates a local funding category that will allow ALICE families in Alachua County to enter the School Readiness program.

ALICE stands for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. ALICE families are those that have earnings above the Federal Poverty Level, but below a basic cost-of living threshold.

To enter the School Readiness (SR) program through the working families (BG8) category, family income must be at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Once a family has been determined eligible for SR, families can remain in the program even if their income increases, up to 85% of the State Median Income (SMI). Most recently legislation passed the

School Readiness Plus program which increases eligible income up to 100% of SMI. This will be effective July 1, 2024.

By creating the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program that aligns with the working families (BG8) category requirements (except the income limit) and setting the initial eligibility income limit at 200% FPL, ELC and the Children's Trust create a pathway for families to receive needed support who would otherwise not have qualified.

Similar funding investment into ELC can also be derived from county government, municipalities, employers, charitable foundations, businesses, and other sources so that they can expand local partnerships focused on using the state and local funds for direct services and expanding the number of school readiness slots. This is considered match funding. For ELC to be eligible for matching state funding, ELC must match its portion of the state funds with a dollar-for-dollar match of local funds. ELC has formed funding investment partnerships with the City of Gainesville and City of Newberry.

#### American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Early Learning Discretionary Grant Program

Recognizing that Childcare is essential to supporting children, families, businesses, and the economy as a whole, The Federal Office of Child Care provided funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Discretionary Child Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund. The Early Learning Coalition applied in September 2023 and was awarded \$4.5 million that must be spent by June 30, 2024. A part of this plan included support in the amount of \$340,000.00 for the Children's Trust Business and Leadership Institute V'Locity Masterclass and Accreditation Academy. This shared investment will allow the Children's Trust to reinvest more dollars back into the community and support participating Early Learning businesses in greater capacity.

#### **Programmatic Impact:**

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

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

\$150,000.00 – Match Funding Investment to the Child Care Tuition Assistance Program  
\$340,000.00- Reimbursement from the ARPA Early Learning Discretionary Grant Program

#### **Recommendation:**

The Children's Trust staff recommend approval of the requested actions.