

Funding Opportunity: Backbone Support Team
Grown in Durham, Durham County's Early Childhood Action Plan
March 2022

SUMMARY

Attention early childhood and community advocates! **We are looking for a team to support and amplify the work of [Grown in Durham](#)**, our community's Early Childhood Action Plan. We call this the Grown in Durham Backbone Support Team—see more on page 4. This team will be central to **putting the plan into action** toward our primary goal—that all young children and their families in Durham can thrive. **This team will make sure that the work is happening in an equitable way**—centering the voices of parents, facilitating power sharing on the steering committee, and prioritizing funding for groups working in early childhood that reflect and are accountable to their communities.

Do you know how to bring parents and organizations to the table to work together? We are looking for the connectors, the bridge builders, the people and organizations who bring a special energy to their work with the community. Do you have a passion for the early years? Do people always show up to your meetings? Do you love your work plans and to-do lists, to dot the I's and cross the T's to keep the important work moving? **If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you or our team could be a great fit for this opportunity. Please keep reading!**

NEXT STEPS:

- Review this full announcement, especially the eligibility information in Table A on page 5
- Read a [summary of Grown in Durham](#), our community's Early Childhood Action Plan
- Explore our [Grown in Durham website](#), which includes information about the planning process, about the action plans for our 21 recommendations, and about our [steering committee](#)
- Attend a virtual information session (participation is recommended, but not required):
 - [Register here](#) for 12PM on March 16th
 - [Register here](#) for 6PM on March 17th
- **If you want to apply, fill out this application by April 13, 2022**
 - If you need support with the application, please sign-up for support at this [Calendly](#), or contact Cate Elander, Durham County Early Childhood Coordinator, at 347-738-0694 or celander@dconc.gov
 - We will schedule follow-up conversations with finalists in April or May
- A small group of steering committee members is reviewing applications, holding interviews, and making a recommendation to the steering committee; **the Steering Committee plans to select and contract with the Backbone Support Team by July 2022**
 - Our rubric for application review is included in Table B on page 6



FULL ANNOUNCEMENT

About Grown in Durham, Durham County's Early Childhood Action Plan

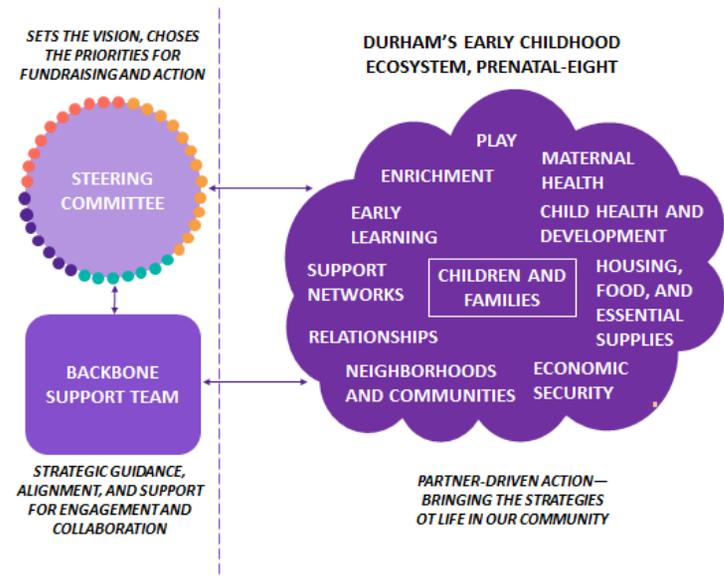
In Durham, not all children and families have the same opportunities to thrive. **We believe all children deserve to grow up healthy, in safe and nurturing communities, where they can play, learn, and be ready to succeed in school and life.** For that reason, in 2020, over 150 parents, early childhood providers, and systems leaders teamed up to identify areas for action in support of Durham's young children, birth through age 8, and their families. Over 1500 additional parents provided ideas and perspectives. In the [Grown in Durham](#) plan, there are recommendations, strategies, and action steps to bring our vision to life. **All parts of our early childhood system are included in the plan, including maternal and child health, family support, and early care and education settings like child care and school.** At its core, the plan reflects the goals of our community around early childhood and is being used to inform the work of partner organizations (groups of all kinds working early childhood) as they support children and their families. These are the goals that we were focused on as we developed the plan:

- Challenging our assumptions—thinking about why things are happening the way they are, and what might need to change
- Valuing the voices and experiences of children and families in our community
- Working together to create opportunities for all children and families to thrive
- Making sure services and programs affirm the culture and lived experience of families
- Preventing family stress by addressing racism and poverty

The way we are putting the plan into action includes three key roles that are shown in the diagram to the right: the steering committee, the Backbone Support Team, and partners.

- The steering committee sets the vision and priorities for action and fundraising
- The Backbone Support Team facilitates collaboration and partnership to keep the work moving and centered on the values of the steering committee
- The partners are the groups in the early childhood ecosystem bringing the plan and the strategies to life through the work they do

Grown in Durham Structure



The Leaders of Grown in Durham: About the Steering Committee and Their Priorities

The Grown in Durham Steering Committee **sets the vision for the work of Grown in Durham** and guides how the plan is put into action. They are a 36-member group that includes parents, front-line workers in early childhood fields, community-rooted leaders, nonprofits, and system leaders. About two-thirds of steering committee members are people of color, parents of young children, and long-term residents of Durham; half have live experience with the problems we are trying to address. The committee makes key decisions about what to do next related to the strategies they have prioritized. **The steering committee provides oversight of and guidance to the Backbone Support Team as well.** You can read the [steering committee charter](#) (working agreements). It lays out the agreements for how the steering committee and support team will work together and make decisions.



You will see that the plan includes a lot of strategies across all different parts of our early childhood system. We know we can't do everything at once, so the steering committee picked the important places to start. These are the committee's current priorities for fundraising and action:

- **Thriving villages:** Strong community of support surrounding families with young children
- **Thriving caregivers:** Economic well-being of adults (including parents!) who care for, teach and develop young children and their families
- **Thriving learners:** Developmentally-appropriate, affirming, and inclusive learning environments

The exact strategies the committee will focus on will be confirmed this spring, but you can expect them to include things like reducing economic stress for families, increasing pay for early childhood educators, building awareness with families and policy makers about our child care system, and connecting families with resources in safe, affirming spaces.

Keeping the Work Moving While Centering Equity and Power-Sharing: Why We Need a Backbone Support Team

This is where you come in! We don't want this plan to stay on the shelf. To make sure we are using the plan, we need people or groups who are making collaboration happen and doing that in equitable and effective ways. **They are the "project managers" for Grown in Durham. They support the steering committee to bring their vision to life.** Some people use the term "backbone" to describe this role because it literally supports the work the way a backbone supports all parts of the body. The term backbone also reflects how **the team must work in alignment with the values of the steering committee—they should have a strong backbone when it comes to things like equity and power sharing.** More than anything else, it is most important to us that the Backbone Support Team is committed to those values. The process we used to develop the Grown in Durham plan and the way we are working now as a steering committee are not perfect—but **leadership from people most affected is central to both.** This quote on the right helps show what we mean.

"If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."
– Lilla Watson

What We Need the Backbone Support Team to Do

With the values of equity and power-sharing in mind, we are building a Backbone Support Team that can keep the work moving while **facilitating engagement and leadership from parents and community groups AND from big organizations and systems leaders** toward our Grown in Durham goals. We will also need the team to **manage grants, contracts and reporting**. In addition to that, there are a number of other roles we need the support team to play, things like facilitating the steering committee, promoting collaborative planning around the steering committee priorities, and making public presentations about our work. **These roles and responsibilities are described in detail on Table A on page 5.**



How Will the Backbone Support Team Be Structured?

We know that there are many different types of people and groups in our community who could bring expertise to the Backbone Support Team—and our experience developing the plan has taught us that we are stronger together. For that reason, we are not looking for one group to fulfill all of the responsibilities. For example, Backbone Support Team could be a partnership between two organizations, a partnership between one organization and a coalition of community members, or a partnership between two or more people and a fiscal agent. **We are open to a number of different combinations of team members, so bring us your ideas.**

Joint applications that cover all three roles are encouraged and preferred. You may also submit an individual or joint application for just one or two roles, and we will work to build the full team. Either way, as you can see in Table A, **the full team will have to work closely together across roles. If you need more support in understanding these roles and responsibilities, please don't hesitate to reach out to us** using the [Calendly](#) or contact information on page 1.

About Funding, Contract Terms, and the Role of the County

Durham County Government is the current funder for the Backbone Support Team. **We are anticipating that there will be up to \$250,000/year available (total) for the team and the work of the steering committee.** The final amount will be confirmed with the approval of the County budget in June 2022. This funding will be used for staffing, compensation for steering committee members, additional community engagement, and contracted services related to evaluation, research, communications, fundraising, and interpretation/translation. We will work to finalize scopes of work and contract amounts before the steering committee votes to select the team this summer. **The initial contract will be for one year;** contract renewal decisions will be made collaboratively by the Steering Committee and by Durham County's Early Childhood Coordinator. The work of the Backbone Support Team is subject both to the [steering committee charter](#) (working agreements) and to Durham County contract terms. **Durham County's Early Childhood Coordinator will continue to be a thought partner and provide assistance to all members of the Backbone Support Team.** For example, she has helped with strategic planning, meeting facilitation, partner convening, development of communications materials, presentations, and grant writing. Based on the needs of the team, the County will continue to provide support—but **the Backbone Support Team will be taking the lead on all roles and responsibilities** included in Table A on page 5.

Table A: Backbone Support Team Roles and Responsibilities

	Role A	Role B	Role C	All Roles
	Community Engagement: Harness Community Power	Institutional Engagement: Leverage Institutional Power	Fiscal Management	Collaboration to Keep the Work Moving Forward
Description	Build strong relationships with parents and people most affected, bring them to the table and support their leadership	Build strong relationships with systems leaders, understand their needs and assets, keep them engaged and help them share power	Oversee grants and reporting so that the funds go where they are needed and we understand our progress	Work as a team across roles to make sure all stakeholders are engaged and the work moves forward in an organized, equitable way
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host conversations with parents and community members to share the vision for Grown in Durham • Identify areas where their perspectives and experiences can inform the work • Identify leadership opportunities for parents and community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold meetings with institutional partners, share the vision for ECAP • Help them see themselves in this work and identify opportunities to leverage financial support or social capital to support the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive large grants • Create and oversee subcontractors responsible for grant-funded work • Report on progress to funders and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create team work flows and shared values • Prepare for, facilitate, and follow-up from bilingual steering and sub-committee meetings • Attend meetings of early childhood groups; identify opportunities to work together • Give presentations about our work to interested groups • Facilitate collaborative planning related to putting the steering committee’s priorities into action • Identify opportunities for funding for the plan, gathering partners together; coordinate grant and funding requests
Notes on Eligibility	<p>A majority of your team (and a majority of their organizations and boards, if applicable) should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify as Black or Brown • Have lived experience with the challenges the plan addresses, like food insecurity, economic insecurity, racism or discrimination in child care, school, or health settings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team must have strong, established relationships with key institutional partners that impact early childhood in Durham • Team must have a history of or willingness to work well and build trust with community groups and parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official nonprofit status (501c3) required • Must have experience managing large grants and subcontracting 	<p>**These roles can be divided as the team sees fit. In the application, teams and individual applicants will have an opportunity to reflect on comfort level and experience with these tasks.**</p>
	Groups playing Roles A and B be Durham-based: a group with strong, existing relationships in Durham, and where some staff and/or board members have spent significant time living in Durham			

Table B: Rubric for Application Review

Criteria Description	Score (1 is low confidence, 2 is medium confidence, 3 is high confidence)	Notes (includes strengths, concerns, and questions for follow-up)
Members of the applicant’s team participated in an engaged way in ECAP planning or on the Grown in Durham steering committee		
The team has significant experience in early childhood and/or with the steering committee’s priorities		
For Role A: The team has deep experience engaging marginalized communities in Durham		
For Role B: The team has deep experience engaging institutional partners		
For Role B: The team demonstrates experience with or a willing to learn how to work collaboratively and build trust with community groups ad parents		
For Role C: The team demonstrates significant experience with grants management, subcontracting, and funder reporting.		
For applications covering 1 or 2 roles: The team demonstrates strong experience and interest with at least half of the cross-team roles		
For applications that cover all 3 roles: The team demonstrates strong experience and interest with all cross-team roles		
The team understands the importance of power sharing		
The team has deep experience with power sharing		

Note: This rubric will be used to help guide our review and discussion of applications. We will use these scores, as well as considerations related to team dynamics, interview responses, and proposed budgets, to make a final recommendation to the steering committee for the selection of the Backbone Support Team.