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**The Pre-K Priority Awarded \$350,000 from City of Winston-Salem for
Local Initiative to Support Pre-K Classrooms and Educators**

WINSTON-SALEM, NC (Feb. 6, 2023) – The Pre-K Priority, a collaboration of community organizations committed to early childhood education in Forsyth County, received \$350,000 in ARPA grant funds from the City of Winston-Salem to further support funding of a two-year project providing 30 local Pre-K classrooms and educators with specific high-quality resources and supports that are currently limited or nonexistent. In total, the project will impact 540 local Pre-K students and their families in addition to 60 Pre-K educators. The city funds will be combined with \$3.7 million in ARPA funding received by The Pre-K Priority from the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners in the fall of 2022.

“On behalf of The Pre-K Priority, we are grateful to our city leaders for supporting this important initiative to help our youngest learners achieve their fullest potential both inside and outside the classroom,” said Dr. Louis Finney, President & CEO of Smart Start of Forsyth County. Smart Start is a community partner of The Pre-K Priority and administrator of the city and county grant funds.

The Pre-K Priority will use \$126,000 of the city’s grant to fulfill the project’s two-year budget of \$3.8 million. The remaining funds will go toward addressing disparities in resources and supports within the 30-classroom cohort specific to Health & Safety, Curriculum & Assessment, Implementation and Data Collection & Integration.

“This two-year project puts into action the comprehensive recommendations of the Forsyth County Early Childhood Education Task Force as a roadmap for structuring an accessible, equitable, high-quality Pre-K system for Forsyth County,” said Leslie Mullinix, Project Manager for The Pre-K Priority with Family Services of Forsyth County.

The Forsyth County Early Childhood Education Task Force was chaired by Forsyth County Commissioner Don Martin with Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS) Superintendent Tricia McManus serving as vice chair. In late 2022, the Task Force issued a [final report](#) outlining recommendations as developed by its 30 members who represented key community sectors such as Education, Healthcare, Government, Human Services, Community Organizations, and Families.

Implementation of the recommendations through the two-year project is being led by The Pre-K Priority and its community partners, including Smart Start of Forsyth County, Family Services of Forsyth County, WS/FCS, Child Care Resource Center, Latino Community Services, and Forsyth Futures with support from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust.

The application process to select the project’s 30 Pre-K classrooms is underway and will represent the county’s varied Pre-K landscape including classrooms located in licensed, private/independent child care businesses, Head Start, WS/FCS, and community child care centers in the NC Pre-K program.

“If we want to see transformative change in outcomes for our students, families and community, we need to invest in our youngest learners,” said Finney. “This grant from the city, combined with the investment by our county commissioners, will make it possible for us to demonstrate with tangible, evidence-based results, that high-quality Pre-K can be a gamechanger for Forsyth County.”