

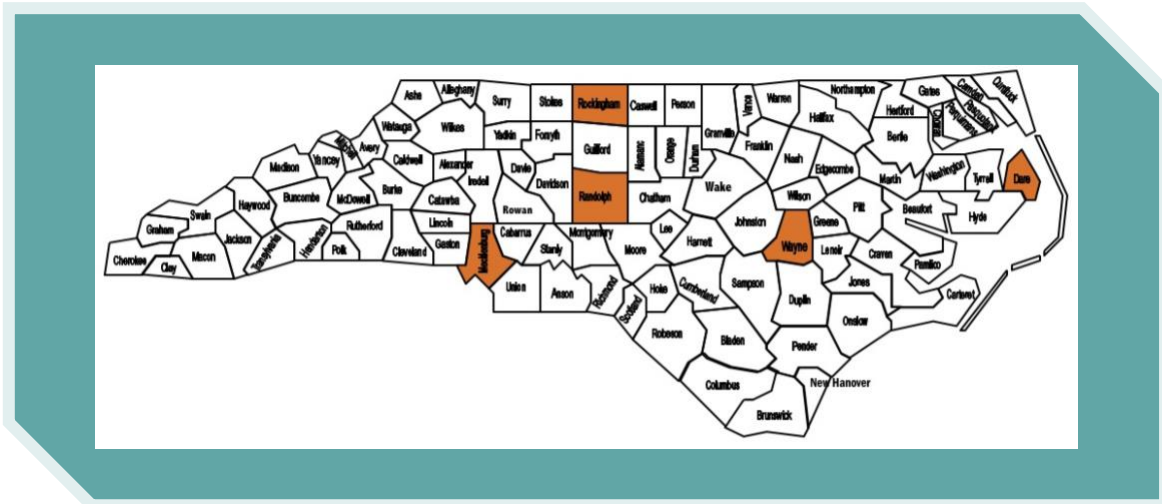
Think Babies™ NC

2021 Community Partner Micro-Grant Summary



In the spring of 2021, the Think Babies™ NC Alliance awarded micro-grants of \$2000 to five organizations to support county-level activities that raised public awareness, engaged infant, toddler, and family advocates, and informed policymakers about the importance of focusing on infants, toddlers, and their families. The organizations that received micro-grants were:

- Children & Youth Partnership for Dare County, Inc.
- National Black Child Development Institute – Charlotte Affiliate
- Partnership for Children of Wayne County
- Randolph Partnership for Children
- Rockingham Partnership for Children



These community partners' efforts included conducting research to learn more about the needs of and supports for families of infants and toddlers, raising public awareness about the importance of infant-toddler care and development, and improving advocacy skills to impact policy. The community partners utilized a variety of virtual and in-person methods to engage families and other community stakeholders through yet another year marked by unprecedented challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The community partners navigated these challenges by creatively employing social and traditional media methods to connect, including: 90 paper family surveys; at least 13 Zoom presentations and discussions; ten live events (drive-through and/or socially distanced); and a digital billboard campaign. Additionally, several publications were created, including two newspaper articles, one report, and one video shared via social media and YouTube.

Community Partner Project Summaries

Children & Youth Partnership for Dare County, Inc. conducted surveys of families, in English and Spanish, to begin assessing the capacities of diverse families. The results of the survey will inform, support gathering additional results, and facilitate further discussion of the next steps for families of infants and toddlers. A total of 30 family surveys were returned including one Spanish-speaking respondent. Seventy percent of the respondents had at least one child age 0-3, 87% were White, and 20% had a household income below \$50,000. The results of this survey increased the understanding of the economic impact of services that affect young

children and their families for the greater community as well as local policymakers. The Partnership acknowledges that due to the challenges in navigating the pandemic, plans for this project were greatly changed. However, they are committed to continuing to gather input from the survey with some minor changes and more incentives to encourage participation.

National Black Child Development Institute – Charlotte Affiliate supported the building of community among both families and early education practitioners, specifically in Family Child Care Networks in Mecklenburg County, to support common goals and language. The use of common messages, such as "every child, regardless of their race, family income, or zip code, deserves an equal opportunity to thrive and succeed in life," allowed both groups to clearly see how much they all had in common when it comes to infants and toddlers. As a result, this community now has a better understanding of what it means to Think Babies in the state of North Carolina. Parents and caregivers who would have never given a second thought to the idea of speaking before a Board of Commissioners or writing a letter to a legislator are now "group leaders." There is a tighter bond between both the families and practitioners as a result of this work. Every time they stepped into the same space together around this idea of using their voices to advocate for babies and toddlers, it did not matter what street they lived on or the level of education they had; they (parents and FCCH providers) were all on the same team.

Partnership for Children of Wayne County created and displayed an [electronic billboard](#), published two [newspaper articles](#), surveyed families of young children in Wayne County, and developed [a video](#) to share facts about the policy items of workforce compensation and education, increasing child care assistance, child care availability, paid family and medical leave, expanding home visiting and parent education, and closing the health care coverage gap. The billboard ran over 800 times a day for the entire month of July, and the survey not only reached over 60 parents to learn about their experiences in child care but also had a large social media presence as part of their Think Babies™ Thursdays campaign.

Randolph Partnership for Children created a [two-minute advocacy video](#) showcasing parent and community partners' real-life testimonies receiving 138 online views. *"Having the parent and community participation was extraordinary on this project, making it that much more impactful."* In addition, the video was sent directly to three U.S. Members of Congress, three State Legislators, six County Commissioners, one County Manager, and eight local Mayors. The video was viewed an additional 142 times during agency meetings within the community and during a live-stream agency event.

Rockingham Partnership for Children expanded the development of the Family Stakeholder Advisory Council and engaged parents in four skill-building sessions where participants developed advocacy, leadership, and engagement skills. [Stories of two family stakeholders](#) were published and shared on RCPC's social media sites and website, bringing awareness to the strengths and challenges that families face. The stories reached a total of 2,425 people with 716 engagements on social media. A day-long retreat was also conducted to brainstorm strategies to address one of the top concerns that arose from a family needs assessment – systemic racism. These strategies were then shared with the KidsReady-Rockingham Stakeholders group made up of approximately 25 community stakeholders focused on the social-emotional health of infants and toddlers. Following a presentation to the Reidsville City Council, a roundtable discussion was held with city officials and staff to further the conversation on issues impacting working families.

Summary of Impact

In total, our five community partners directly engaged more than 1,115 individuals across the state through their activities, including:

- 18 state and national legislators
 - State Legislators: Sen. Jim Perry, Rep. Raymond Smith, Sen. Bob Steinberg, Rep. Bobby Hanig
- 34 other policymakers, such as County Commissioners, City Officials and School Board Members
- 44 representatives of non-profit and early childhood agencies
- 518 parents, grandparents, and guardians of infants and toddlers
- 72 early childhood teachers and directors
- 15 health care providers

- 28 systems leaders and funders
- 186 business, community, and faith leaders

Additionally, several of the projects involved community awareness efforts through traditional and social media platforms where precise counts of the reach to the public and policymakers could not be obtained. However, estimates from these campaigns are as follows:

- 800 daily showings for 31 days of the digital billboard campaign in Wayne County
- 280 views on YouTube of the two-minute advocacy video made by Randolph Partnership for Children
- 2,425 people were reached by Rockingham Partnership for Children from stories shared by two families

Continuing the Work

Due to the continued unprecedented challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic extending into 2021, many of the community partners expressed difficulty in recruiting participants, issues relating to shorter project timelines, and the necessity of creating and adapting new methods of connecting with stakeholders as projects progressed. Since early childhood is a field where work has previously occurred almost exclusively face-to-face, the project planners demonstrated resiliency and creativity in their response to conducting these projects within the new reality of the pandemic. The following are a few examples of how some of the community partners plan to use this work as a starting point for further advocacy and public awareness:

- Children & Youth Partnership for Dare County plans to continue obtaining valuable survey input from more diverse families about their priorities, available resources, and growing needs, and they will use this data to advocate for policies, services, and programs that meet ever-changing needs.
- National Black Child Development Institute – Charlotte Affiliate will continue supporting Family Child Care Home networks across Mecklenburg County to reconnect and join under one umbrella having common goals and common language.
- Partnership for Children of Wayne County will continue to share data and facts with policymakers and community members about the importance of issues related to infants and toddlers.
- The Randolph Partnership for Children will continue to share their advocacy video for years to come.

Conclusion

Through these micro-grants, our goal as the Think Babies™ NC Alliance was to increase public awareness and advocacy efforts for issues impacting infants and toddlers across the state. Engaging community partners to host local activities was an effective use of funding and allowed us to reach more diverse stakeholders across a larger geographic region than we could have on our own. Despite the continued unanticipated challenges of navigating the unknowns of COVID-19, our partners engaged families, communities, and policymakers and continued to build, strengthen, and diversify the network of advocates across North Carolina focused on our state's babies and their families.



Think Babies™ NC Alliance

The Think Babies™ NC Alliance seeks to ensure that North Carolina's youngest children, prenatal to age 3, benefit from effective and equitable public policies, programs, and funding so that all children have what they need to thrive: healthy beginnings, supported families, and quality early care and learning experiences.

For more information:

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