

**Media Contact:**

Nan Sanseverino
Communications Director
919. 515.3556 | ncsansev@ncsu.edu

EMBARGO UNTIL: 6AM EST, APRIL 4, 2018**COMMUNITIES SELECTED FOR NEW “KidsReadyNC” Initiative***New initiative helps NC counties build capacity for improved early childhood outcomes*

RALEIGH, NC (April 4, 2018)—The Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) at NC State University today announced the selection of **Catawba, Chowan, Randolph** and **Rockingham** Counties for participation in [KidsReadyNC](#), a new, 18-month initiative designed to help selected Tier 1 or Tier 2 communities strengthen leadership capacity within their local early childhood development systems.

Funded in part by grants from The Belk Foundation and The Duke Endowment, selected communities will receive tools and technical assistance, and will participate in a peer-learning process all designed to boost capacity and improve outcomes for children and families.

“Thanks to a lot of hard work by early childhood experts, there’s tremendous energy and awareness in North Carolina about the importance of early childhood investments for our state’s economic future, but under-resourced communities need to find new strategies if they are going to do everything they can for our children,” said IEI Director Leslie Boney. “Through this partnership of IEI with investors, state and national experts and communities, we think we will find solutions and approaches that can help Tier 1 and 2 counties across the state.”

In partnership with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG), the initiative builds upon the “kidonomics” theme featured at the 2018 Emerging Issues Forum.

“We are excited to forge new partnerships with multi-sectorial stakeholders and organizations, including projects like KidsReadyNC that extend across Universities and bridge to communities,” said FPG Director Ayse Belger. “The expertise and engagement of specialists like Laura Louison and Oscar Fleming from the FPG National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) will strengthen the capacity of communities to deploy best practices.”

KidsReadyNC pilots an early childhood system capacity-building model delivering state-of-the-art technical assistance with a more modest funding commitment from the community and outside funders. It is a lower-cost model designed to produce positive outcomes for the participating communities while creating strategies and successes that other similar communities can draw upon in the future. Each site will identify one of

John F.A.V. Cecil, *Chair* | Leslie Boney, *Director*

seven “measures of success” identified by NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading stakeholders as priorities for action.

Technical assistance providers will work with each participating community on key focus areas, including a community-specific planning process, support for initial implementation efforts, and cross-community convenings to focus learning and build supportive relationships.

“The Forum for Youth Investment is excited to dig in and support innovative strategies in lower-resourced North Carolina communities that bring leaders together to improve early childhood outcomes,” said The Forum for Youth Investment Senior Fellow Elizabeth Gaines.

KidsReadyNC technical assistance providers include:

- **Janice Gruendel**, Ph.D., M.Ed., Research Professor, College of Health and Human Services, University of North Carolina Charlotte; Senior Fellow, Institute for Child Success; Fellow, Zigler Center in Child Development, Yale University
- **Laura Louison** and **Oscar Fleming**, National Implementation Research Network, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
- **Elizabeth Gaines** and **Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom**, The Forum for Youth Investment

Community submissions were evaluated on their early childhood leadership and programmatic efforts, unique challenges and opportunities, and a financial and staffing resource commitment to the initiative.

“All of the applicant communities presented compelling opportunities,” said IEI Assistant Director Patrick Cronin. “The four KidsReadyNC communities were chosen because each has the right mix of assets and is fully committed to a community-driven leadership approach to improving early childhood development outcomes.”

Selected KidsReadyNC Communities:

- Catawba (Catawba Partnership for Children)
- Chowan (Chowan CARES)
- Randolph (Inspired Randolph Collaborative)
- Rockingham (Rockingham Partnership for Children)

More information about KidsReadyNC is available at emergingissues.org.

About the Institute for Emerging Issues:

Housed at North Carolina State University, the Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) is a nonpartisan public policy, “think-and-do” tank focused on North Carolina’s future prosperity. Please visit emergingissues.org for more information.

About The Belk Foundation

The Belk Foundation is a Charlotte-based family foundation that supports public education by strengthening teachers and school leaders, and ensuring that students are achieving on or above grade level by the third grade. Now in its fourth generation of family leadership, The Belk Foundation serves as the public expression of gratitude and commitment shown by the family that created the Belk department store organization. The Belk Foundation had assets of more than \$52 million as of September 30, 2017. Since 2000, The Belk Foundation has invested more than \$46 million in our community. More information is available at www.belkfoundation.org.

About The Duke Endowment

Based in Charlotte and established in 1924 by industrialist and philanthropist James B. Duke, The Duke Endowment is a private foundation that strengthens communities in North Carolina and South Carolina by nurturing children, promoting health, educating minds and enriching spirits. Since its founding, it has distributed more than \$3.6 billion in grants. The Endowment shares a name with Duke University and Duke Energy, but all are separate organizations.

About Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute:

The mission of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) is to enhance the lives of children and families through interdisciplinary research, technical assistance, professional development, and implementation science. FPG generates knowledge, informs policies, and supports practices to promote positive developmental and educational outcomes for children of all backgrounds and abilities from the earliest years.

###