

BUSTING THE MYTHS

Have you ever considered funding the Child Care WAGE\$® Program? Do you have questions or concerns about the program or how it is administered? Please let us know! We've compiled some information below that may help address some common misconceptions.

MISCONCEPTION: PARTNERSHIPS LOSE LOCAL CONTROL WHEN THEY PARTICIPATE IN WAGES. WAGES ISN'T FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS.

The Child Care WAGE\$® Program was created and is administered by Early Years in Chapel Hill, NC, and is available to any partnership across the state that wants to participate. It is a statewide model that ensures fidelity by mandating consistency in its policy application, transcript review and program implementation. This approach helps ensure the quality of the program to both funders and participants, and helps produce the desired results. However, the participating partnerships still have considerable control over how WAGE\$ operates in their counties or regions.

For example, partnerships:

- Determine the amount of funding that goes towards supplements and thus can directly impact the scope of the program and the number impacted.
- Choose the award level (out of three possible award structures) for participants. Percentage increases and decreases to awards may also be implemented if/as needed.
- Choose many eligibility criteria and can tailor the program through these options.

In addition, participating partnerships have input into WAGE\$ policies. The program has an advisory committee that includes local and state partnership representation, and partnerships may request that a policy be considered by this committee.

MISCONCEPTION: WAGES PARTICIPANTS REMAIN ELIGIBLE PERMANENTLY AND ARE NOT REQUIRED TO CONTINUE THEIR EDUCATION.

WAGE\$ does have education levels that may be permanently funded if the participants continue to remain employed in their same child care programs and meet other eligibility requirements. Yet these are the levels that research shows make the most difference in the growth and development of young children. Once participants have the AAS ECE, its equivalent or higher on the WAGE\$ scale, they are not required to continue coursework, but if they do take additional classes, it could result in more money, so the encouragement is always in place. However, for all levels below the AAS ECE, participants must advance up the education scale to remain eligible for their awards. Individuals at temporarily awarded levels are given deadlines by which they must make educational progress in order to stay on the program. Education is required for these participants and, as a result of this and other eligibility requirements, there are almost always changes in the population receiving awards. It is important to remember, though, that if participants continue to be eligible for awards, it means that the program is working! Do you want your best-educated teachers to stay in the field? WAGE\$ is one avenue to provide that encouragement and support.

MISCONCEPTION: WAGES IS TOO EXPENSIVE

It is really up to each funder to determine the "cost" of WAGE\$ because the program is designed to meet local needs. In other words, WAGE\$ can typically work with the budget approved by a partnership and reach the applicants that can be covered by that amount using the funder's chosen tier and eligibility requirements.

We can reach more individuals and/or provide higher awards with greater funding, or we can tailor the program to reflect the funding provided. In those cases, WAGE\$ will work with the partnership to determine the best strategies to employ within the county based on the available options. In addition, when funding WAGE\$, partnerships receive a significant benefit by having administration covered by the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE).

WAGE\$ operates as a collaboration between local Smart Start partnerships that elect to participate, the North Carolina Partnership for Children and DCDEE. Typically the entire amount that a partnership allocates will go directly to supplements in the communities it represents. In other words, it goes directly into the hands of your participants! Because WAGE\$ is a statewide initiative and administered at Early Years, partnerships should also consider the money and time saved at the local level in administration and evaluation. If you are interested in WAGE\$, call us and see what options we can provide with your potential budget. We will do our best to craft a productive and results-oriented solution.

MISCONCEPTION: IF WE CANNOT FUND EVERYONE, IT ISN'T WORTH THE INVESTMENT.

WAGE\$ makes a difference even when partnerships cannot reach 100% of their eligible pool with the funding available. When you have educated teachers who stay, you are impacting the lives of those teachers and their families, the children they serve year after year and their families, their coworkers and the community overall because children have a better chance to succeed. Your dollars may go directly to the teacher, but the impact certainly doesn't stop there. The participants and their employers make it clear that the investment is worth making, from encouraging education, to making it more feasible to work in early childhood despite the low salaries, to helping participants pay their bills and experience less financial stress.

"The WAGE\$ Program is important to keep dedicated child care professionals like me in the field. It has inspired me to seek higher education in early childhood development. Perhaps most importantly, the program makes me feel needed, which in turn shows when I enter the class each morning." (teacher)

"When you're on your last dollar, a WAGE\$ supplement helps out a lot – not only in the workplace but at home too. ... WAGE\$ helps me in my classroom and outside my classroom. Without it, I would truly struggle." (teacher)

"This supplement is important to our staff because child care professionals are undervalued and underpaid. This is a great encouragement for teachers who further their education, which benefits the children in our centers and gives confidence to parents who know that their children are being taught by well-informed teachers." (director)

For additional results and participant feedback, see the most recent program reports [here](#).

More WAGE\$ resources for funders can be found [here](#).