

**Request for Proposal
Durham PreK Apply
August 2025**

Project Summary

Durham PreK is a universal public preschool program funded by Durham County and administered by Early Years providing PreK services for four year olds. Early Years works collaboratively with other local public PreK programs, including NC Pre-K through Durham’s Partnership for Children, Head Start through Families and Communities Rising, and Title I through Durham Public Schools, to enhance and expand access to PreK across Durham County. Durham PreK is open universally to all four year olds in Durham County. Administering Durham PreK involves performing outreach within the local community, receiving and processing family applications, determining program eligibility, placing children in PreK seats, supporting providers and teachers through Technical Assistance coaching and professional development, providing workforce development activities for future teachers and making payments to sites for services provided.

We are seeking to develop a comprehensive database that will serve to meet the needs of managing all these aspects of Durham PreK. The core functionality of the database will be an application portal where families can complete an application for PreK, upload required documents, make site selections, and accept their seat offers. This application system would require ways for staff members from all partner agencies to review applications and submitted documents, score applications for eligibility, and make placements, and create classroom rosters. A portal for facilities would also be a core function, allowing Durham PreK providers to login to access their site rosters and submit relevant forms. Finally, a staff interface will allow staff to easily view dashboards with relevant data, export reports for further analysis, and track various details of the program.

About

Founded in 1974, the mission of Early Years is to lead efforts to strengthen accessible and affordable high-quality early care and education by providing support for families, communities and the workforce.

Using a holistic approach, Early Years supports children and families, helps child care professionals improve the quality of early education children receive and ensures all families can afford and access the high-quality early care and education that is so important for a child’s early development. Through its Meal Services Program, Early Years also provides nutritious meals to children at child care centers, where they may eat 50-100 percent of



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their meals. Our TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship Program, Child Care WAGE\$® and Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® Plus programs give child care professionals the means to obtain an education and supplement their salary based on that education. Early Years also licenses TEACH. and WAGE\$ across the U.S. and conducts early childhood systems research and policy development statewide and nationally.

Audience

The audience for the Durham PreK Application database consists of the following:

- Families of 4 year olds in Durham County who are applying for publicly funded preschool - Families span all income levels and come from a variety of educational backgrounds. For some, English is not their first language and technology may be a challenge. We anticipate up to 2,500 child applications per year.
- Durham PreK childcare providers - Providers range from small, single owner operated facilities to large, corporate chains to nonprofit and government organizations. There is a wide variety of computer literacy among this group with some providers extremely comfortable with online portals and others who struggle with submitting electronic forms. Currently there are around 50 providers who receive children through the Durham PreK placement process. Some providers would have multiple users and some providers oversee multiple sites. The number of providers is likely to grow as Durham PreK expands over the next several years.
- Staff of Early Years and our Durham PreK partner agencies - Overall, program staff have medium to high computer skills, however, they still need a system that is user friendly and intuitive. There are currently around 45 staff members across all partner agencies - Early Years, Durham Public Schools, Durham Partnership for Children, and Durham Head Start - using the system. That number is likely to increase over time.

Objective

Our objective is to have one database solution that encompasses all aspects of the work of Durham PreK rather than the various databases and spreadsheets that we currently use to track this information. In particular, our objective is to have a more robust application portal and an added facility portal that can support the placement process within the system itself rather than having to keep multiple external spreadsheets and forms to track placement information. Our current application portal collects all application and document information and allows for automated email notices but does not have a way to track placements and seat assignments making it inefficient and resulting in a higher likelihood of error.

The new system will streamline processes to make reviewing applications, placing children in PreK seats, transferring children from one seat to another, and reporting on all aspects of Durham PreK applications and placements easier and more efficient. Adding a facility portal will allow sites to have a real time look at their enrollment, making it easier to enroll children and fill vacancies.

To be effective, the new database must be:

- Intuitive to use for all users, in particular families and providers
- Mobile-friendly with easy navigation for use on phone or tablet
- HIPAA, FERPA and ADA compliant

Scope of Services

Application Cycle

- Family submits application and documents via portal
 - Application has ability to assess basic eligibility based on child date of birth (DOB) and County. If entry for these fields does not meet acceptable criteria, user is notified of ineligibility and given the opportunity to change child DOB if there was an entry error.
 - Application uses logic rules to show/hide questions and for prompting for upload of documents depending on how families answer questions. For example, if they say they are paid monthly, it will ask for 1 paystub. If they say they are paid weekly, they'll be asked for 4 paystubs. This reduces the need to follow up with families later for missing documents.
 - Application allows for insertion of text, pictures, and embedded videos to provide demonstration and explanation for how to fill out the application as needed.
 - Uploads are prompted for throughout the application (for example, paystubs immediately after asking about payment information, proof of age immediately after asking about birthdate, etc.). This increases the likelihood of parents uploading the correct documents.
 - Once application and support documents are submitted, the application is locked, and families can no longer make edits unless they interface with a staff member
- Initial Review (for complete application and appropriate supporting documents)
 - Agency staff use a checklist to ensure all submitted documents meet requirements
 - If submitted documents do not meet requirements, staff follow up with families to submit necessary documents. Need a way to mark application as "missing documents" to indicate that further follow up is needed.
 - If submitted documents are sufficient, application can move to next stage.
- First Round Partner Review
 - Partner agency staff members review the application and documentation submitted and use this information to officially document the data that is used to verify program eligibility (name, birthdate, address, family size, family structure, and annual income). They also answer a series of questions related to income, special needs, and special family circumstances that determine a child's eligibility for programs. The fields completed in this review stage are

considered the family “scorecard” and need to be exportable in a PDF report format to show that children have been properly assessed for program eligibility.

- If the First Round Partner Review finds that additional documentation is needed, the application would need to be marked as "additional documentation needed" with notes about what is missing so that staff members can follow up to collect these documents.
- Partner Review (DPS) – may happen out of order
 - Staff members at DPS enter a family’s ASQ score (a developmental assessment score) into the application system. Parents complete ASQ screenings through a separate online screening process. ASQ scores can be entered at any point in the application stages.
- Second Round Partner Review
 - Partner agency staff members review the first round review to make sure everything entered there regarding eligibility, income calculation, and family information has been entered correctly.
 - If mistakes are found, it is sent back for a revised 1st Round Review.
 - If everything is correct, the reviewer marks which programs the child is eligible to be placed in (NC Pre-K, Durham PreK, Title I, and/or Head Start) and sends the application to the stage where parents can make their site choices.
- Waiting for Preference Selection
 - Parents receive an email asking them to submit a form to indicate their top 3 site preferences. Each parents’ potential site options are different depending on which programs their child has been determined eligible for. (There are currently 15 combinations of site options applicants could potentially see based on the funding seat eligibility).
 - Parents have 5 days to complete the form. After they complete the form or after 5 days have passed, they move on to the next stage.
- Final Review (offer)
 - Partner agency staff members assign a child to a specific site and seat type based upon information submitted in previous stages (child eligibility and parent site preferences). If the seat type is one that may have a parent fee, the system should calculate the parent fee based on family annual income and family size.
 - Families receive an email with their placement information including assigned site and parent fee, if applicable, and have 7 days to accept the seat, withdraw their application, or go on the waiting list for a different location.
 - If they accept, the application is marked as Accepted and the child is considered officially placed in that seat. The child should then show up on the site roster in the facility portal.
 - If they ask to withdraw, they would complete a form letting us know the reason they are withdrawing from the PreK process. The application is then marked as Withdrawn.

- If they ask to join the waiting list, they would complete a form letting us know why they declined the initial placement offer and what their top 3 site selections are. The application is then marked as Waiting List.
- Note that it is important for us to keep a historical record of all placements that have been made rather than overwriting. Children may end up with multiple placement offers over the course of a year.

Family Portal Features

- Create a new application
- Visual way of tracking application completion (example, check mark when a section or task is considered complete) and sections yet to be completed
- Ability to easily save application and come back to same point at a later time
- View only access to prior year applications for older children and for current year applications that have already been submitted
- Ability to carry over relevant information from a previous application year when applying for a new child in a new school year
- Ability to carry over relevant information that is the same when applying for twins/triplets or other children attending PreK in the same year
- Ability to engage in two-way communication with program staff regarding application questions or need to submit additional information
- A way to make site selection preferences through completing a customized form
- A way to formally accept, decline, or request waiting list on a specific seat offer
- A way to complete a form to indicate interest in applying for a Wrap (before and after school) care scholarship.
- Ability to complete forms in English and Spanish, including signature, as part of application process
- Ability to request a change in their placement after accepting a seat (for example, family accepted a seat at Site A but now wants Site B) through submitting a form with their reason for requesting the change, whether they plan to continue attending Site A while waiting for the change in placement, and their top 3 preferences for a new location).
- Program staff will be able to control the scheduling of publishing the new application for the new school year and closing the current application for the current school year annually. (applications run from February of one year through April of the following year, so there is a period of overlap where both current and next year applications are in use)

Facility Portal Features

- View roster of current children that includes information such as child name, type of seat (program) child placed in, parent name and contact information
- Ability to add child start date and classroom assignment to roster

- A way to indicate that a child has exited the program. Ideally, this would be a form that providers could complete that would then print in a specific PDF format required by the state. This would also include the ability to upload required documentation that is sometimes necessary.
- Enter monthly attendance data for children
- View teacher information (including apprenticeship teachers)
- A way to indicate that they have had a teacher change. Ideally this would be a form that providers would complete that would then print in a specific PDF format required by the state. This would also include the ability to upload required documentation that is sometimes necessary.

Staff Interface Features

- Ability to view applications still in process and “take over” completing the application on behalf of the family in order to provide support to families with technology difficulties.
- Ability to easily see which stages an application has completed.
- Ability to see application and review information simultaneously, along with review checklists
- A way to communicate directly with families regarding application status/documentation needs. Some of these should be able to be automated (system triggers a specific email once a certain stage is completed or if specific information is missing).
- A notes feature that allows program staff to make notes regarding communication with families, issues with the application, etc. This is a way for anyone to see what has happened previously with the family when they call in for help. These notes are visible only to staff members and not to families or facilities.
- A way to make site preferences and accept seat placements on a family’s behalf if needed.
- Ability to auto calculate annual income based on values entered in 1st round review for rate of pay, frequency of pay, and special circumstances.
- Access to reports
- Ability to limit staff access to certain review stages. For example, only certain people should have permissions to make placements, but all staff should be able to view what placements have been made.
- Ability to limit staff access to certain functions. For example, restrict ability to edit the application itself or to add/remove users.
- Ability to track and easily view which staff members completed reviews, uploaded documents, or changed information (a tracking history or audit log).
- Ability to filter applications within the database by all fields, including review fields
- Ability to track professional development and TA services provided for specific teachers and at specific providers.
- Ability to track apprenticeship data

- Access to change/audit log to be able to track changes to fields, including date/time of change, user who made the change, and change itself
- Program staff need the ability to manage and change facility/classroom/seats data as well as adjust eligibility data (income levels and FPL) as these will change with each school year.
- Program lead staff need to be able to copy the application from a prior application year and make updates for the next application year (for example, adding, revising, or removing a question)
- This component must be able to interface or integrate with an existing application for payments, currently utilizing a Laravel/Vue structure.

Report Features:

- Ability to build fully customized reports, including filtering for which records to include, what fields should be in the report, and the order those fields should be in.
- Ability to track and report on seats, based on a variety of variables and combinations of variables including status (offered, accepted, declined), type and site location.
- Ability to export (i.e. Excel, csv) application data along with review data in the same report.
- Dashboards that easily show relevant data such as number of applications in each stage, number of children in accepted seats by seat type and by site location, number of vacant seats by seat type and site location, number of applications received, demographic info of applications received, demographic info of children placed, etc.
- Allows exporting of applications, supporting documentation, and all review data in PDF format for scholarship documentation purposes
- A way to view, filter, and sort child eligibility information (including categorically eligible information) to aid in child placement process
- Dashboard showing number of applications to have completed each stage and number of applications eligible for that stage but not yet completed. (For example, number of applications that have been through the 1st Round Review but haven't yet had a 2nd Round Review).

Buckets of Data:

Family

- Demographics
- Parent employment and income
- Child info and age
- Review notes (various sections)
- Uploaded documents (date of birth documentation, address documentation, income documentation, special need documentation, etc.)
- Child placement information (seat type, site, parent fee) - historical data needed

Facility

- Basic info from DCDEE (address, star rating, license number, etc.)

- Classrooms and PreK seats
- Teachers
 - Involvement with TA/PD
 - Involvement with Apprenticeship

Proposal Submissions

Submissions should consist of the following:

- Letter of interest
- Overview and background of the firm or individual submitting this proposal.
- Proposal narrative, including your understanding of the Scope of Work and other information you would like to include.
- Detailed timeline of creation, implementation and training.
- Information about the content management system (CMS) that will be used. This should include functional specs, licensing provided in proposal and links to websites that you have developed that use this CMS.
- Samples of or links to previous design work relevant to this project.
- Three reference contacts for similar projects, including names and contact information for individuals who can speak to the team's qualifications.
- Sample contract for proposed services
- Detailed and itemized cost proposal to encompass all factors necessary for development and implementation, including all proposed plug-ins or third party apps, and additional expenses that may arise.

Selection Criteria

Applicants will be judged based on the following criteria:

- Qualifications of the development team
- Ability to show understanding of the scope
- Past experience on similar projects
- References
- Stability of firm
- Total cost

Past experience with non-profit organizations, local government and school systems is a plus.

Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) are encouraged to participate; however, the firm must be certified by the Office for Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB Office) through the Statewide Uniform Certification (SWUC) program.

Selected vendor should expect to demonstrate capacity to begin this work by mid-October and complete this work in a timely manner. The completed project must be live and in use before the end of calendar year 2026.

Timeline

- RFP Sent: Monday, August 11th, 2025
- Proposals Due: No later than 12:00 Noon EST, **Tuesday, September 2, 2025.**
- Questions about the Proposal should be emailed to rfp@earlyyearsnc.org no later than Monday, August 18, 2025. All questions and their answers will be published to <https://www.earlyyearsnc.org/about/rfpupdates/> as they are available. All Submissions will be evaluated immediately thereafter.
- Early Years reserves the right to request meetings with finalists.
- The selection of a proposal will be made no later than October 8, 2025.

Proposal Delivery Address

Proposal submissions should be sent to:

Early Years
rfp@earlyyearsnc.org