



2016 Toolkit for Educating Political Candidates on Early Learning

2016 is an election year! In North Carolina we will be electing local, state and federal leaders to public office. It's an opportunity to educate incumbents and new candidates about why early learning matters to our communities, state and nation. And it's an opportunity to ask candidates to share their platform on early childhood issues.

Elections provide an important opportunity for focused debate on issues of importance. Issues with the greatest public demand are the ones most discussed. Despite having overwhelming support, early learning has received little attention from candidates running for office. Such attention will come, when voters move early learning from an issue they support to one that they demand – in other words voters need to act.

This toolkit is designed to help communities actively engage and educate candidates for public office on early care and learning. Political candidates and elected leaders are public employees working on behalf of their constituents. They want to hear from you. They need your help to be well informed and make decisions that are in the best interest of their communities and the state.

Let's remind those running for office that early childhood is a bipartisan issue that voters care about.

What's Inside

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Election Basics | 3 |
| • Key Dates | 3 |
| • Rules for Nonprofit Organizations | 4 |
| • NC Offices Up for Election in 2016..... | 5 |
| Building Public Demand | 6 |
| • NC Support..... | 7 |
| • Messaging..... | 8 |
| • Questions | 10 |
| Pre-Election Activities..... | 11 |
| • Attend Candidate Events and Rallies | 11 |
| • Use Social Media | 11 |
| • Host a Tour..... | 12 |
| • Build Relationships..... | 16 |
| • Host a Candidate Forum..... | 17 |
| Post-Election Activities | |
| • Meet with Elected Candidates..... | 25 |
| • Write Note to Non-Elected Candidates | 25 |

Election Basics

For an overview of the election process in North Carolina, visit the State Board of Elections at <http://www.ncsbe.gov/>.

Key Dates

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Absentee voting by mail begins. | September 9, 2016 |
| <i>Any registered North Carolina voter is eligible to vote by absentee ballot.</i> | |
| Deadline to register to vote | October 14, 2016 |
| Early Voting Period Begins..... | October 27, 2016 |
| Early Voting Period Ends..... | November 5, 2016 |
| Election Day | November 8, 2016 |

Rules for Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations have an important role to play in elections. You have expertise, knowledge and a strong voice to raise the issues that impact your community.

You Can!

Nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations are allowed to engage in nonpartisan voter and candidate education activities.

Nonprofit organizations may conduct voter registration, organize get-out-the-vote activities, host candidate forums and educate candidates on their issues.

It is important to keep the following rules in mind:

- ⑥ All activities must be nonpartisan.
- ⑥ Shared resources and materials must be provided to all candidates for the office.
- ⑥ All candidates for an office must be invited to participate in candidate events.

You Can't!

Nonprofit organizations may not intervene, directly or indirectly, in the campaign on behalf of a particular candidate or party. You may not show preference for one candidate over another.

According to the Internal Revenue Services:

"501(c)(3) nonprofits are prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office."

Nonprofit organizations may not endorse a candidate, make a campaign contribution, or rate candidates on their issues.

The rules for 501(c) 4 organizations are different. For a complete list of rules and guidance, the best resource for nonprofits is [Nonprofit Vote](#). They have a robust [online guide](#), including a [checklist of permissible activities](#).

NC Offices Up for Election in 2016

The following contests are up for election in North Carolina 2016:

Federal

President
U.S. Senate
13 U.S. House of
Representative Seats

NC Council of State

Governor
Lieutenant Governor
NC Attorney General
NC Commissioner
of Agriculture
NC Commissioner of Labor
NC Commissioner
of Insurance
NC State Auditor
NC Secretary of State
NC Superintendent of
Public Instruction
NC Treasurer

NC General Assembly

50 NC Senate seats
120 NC House of
Representative seats

Judicial

4 NC Court of Appeals Judges
Various Superior Court and
District Court Judges

District Attorneys

District Attorney District 11A
District Attorney District 16A
District Attorney District 19B
District Attorney District 19D
District Attorney District 22 A

County and Local

Registers of Deeds
County Commissioner Seats
Other Local Municipal
and/or School Board Seats

Building Public Demand

“Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail. Without it, nothing can succeed.”

Abraham Lincoln

The role of the public in driving policy is nothing new. Even President Lincoln (if we are to believe the internet) recognized the power of the people – and that was before Facebook, Twitter and a 24-hour news cycle!

Building public demand:¹

- Connects people to an issue through values
- Produces long-term attitudinal shifts
- Is achieved when a sufficient number of community members and thought leaders are galvanized around an issue to form new or different set of fundamental community expectations

Building public demand is so important that it is a key component of just about every theory of change on how to achieve policy change.²

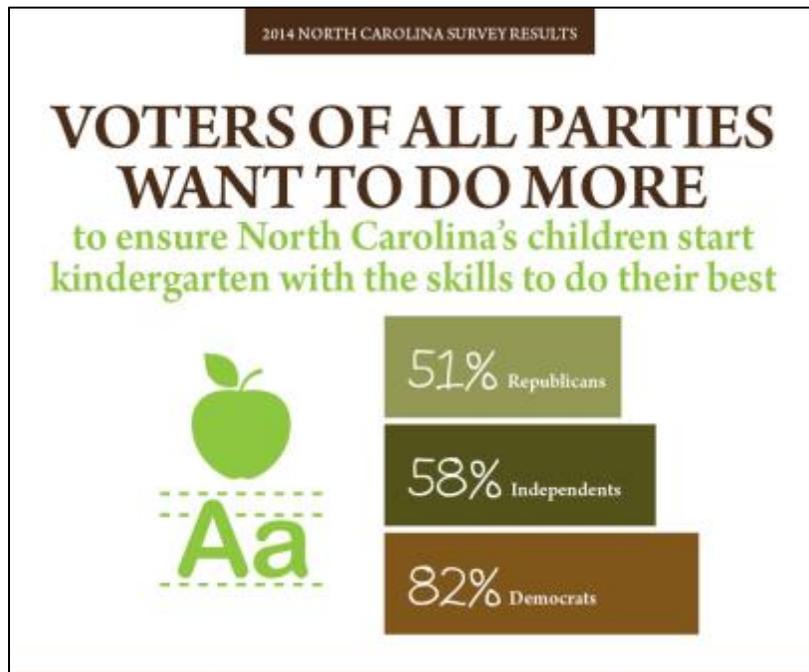
¹ Stachowiak, Sarah. In Pathways to Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts. Center for Evaluation Innovation, 2013. http://orsimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Center_Pathways_FINAL.pdf

² Ibid.

North Carolinians Support Early Learning

A 2014 bipartisan North Carolina poll found that North Carolina voters view early childhood education as a critical issue in the state and across the nation. Majorities of Democrats, Republicans and Independents supported investments in early childhood programs in the state – including expanding access to Smart Start, NC Pre-K, teacher training and home visiting programs.

More than four in five (83%) of North Carolina voters believed that investments in early childhood programs will benefit North Carolina's economy in the short and long term.



UPDATE: The North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation is conducting a similar poll for 2016. Results and a toolkit will be available in late September 2016.

Messaging

There are three basic rules for effective messaging.

1. **Listen.**

Begin by understanding what your candidates care about. Review their websites, read newspaper articles about them and ask them questions first. What are their priorities?

2. **You are not the audience.**

Essentially this is a repeat of rule one! What resonates for you, may not be what resonates with the person with whom you are talking. This may be hard to hear, but it doesn't matter why you think early learning is important. What matters is how early learning advances a candidate's priorities. Be prepared to discuss early learning in the context of economic development, business growth, community revitalization and a host of other issues. Visit www.first2000days.org for more ideas about how early learning advances our economic prosperity, national security and community safety.

3. **The messenger matters.**

Understand who has influence with your candidates. Business leaders, law enforcement, clergy and other community leaders often serve as credible – and unexpected – ambassadors for early learning. Engage your champions!

Below we highlight key messages that reinforce existing statewide priorities, including job growth, economic development and third grade reading.

North Carolina is facing a growing skills gap.

- By 2020, 67% of jobs in North Carolina will require some post-secondary education.³ Yet the majority of North Carolina's fourth graders are not proficient in a key predictor of future academic success – reading.
 - 38% of NC 4th graders scored at or above proficient in reading as measured by NAEP in 2015.
 - 25% of NC 4th graders eligible for free and reduced lunch scored at or above proficient in reading as measured by NAEP in 2015.
- Reading in the early grades predicts high school and later success. Those who read well go on to graduate, but those who aren't reading well by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

We can meet this challenge.

- Grade-level reading is achievable with policies and practices in place to reflect that reading is a cumulative process, developing at birth and rooted in early brain development.

³ *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020*. Georgetown Public Policy Institute. 2013

- After decades of researching how to effectively and efficiently develop human capital, Nobel Laureate James Heckman concluded the foundation for school, career and life success is largely determined through the development of cognitive and character skills beginning in children's earliest years.

We must start early.

- Child development is a dynamic, interactive process that is not predetermined. During children's early years, brain architecture is forming through children's experiences and environments, creating the foundation for all future learning.
- To build a strong foundation, children need health and development on track beginning at birth, supportive and supported families and communities and high quality early care and education.
- Brains are built, not born.

It is costing business money and talent now.

- US businesses lose \$3 billion per year due to employee absenteeism as a result of childcare issues.⁴
- 75 percent of mothers and 50 percent of fathers in the US say they have passed up work opportunities, switched jobs or quit to tend to their kids.⁵

What is your early learning plan?

- North Carolina's continued economic vitality depends on how we invest today for tomorrow. By investing in our young children, we create the best outcomes in education, health and economic well-being for everyone in North Carolina. ***What is your early learning plan?***

⁴ *Parents and the High Cost of Child Care*. Child Care Aware of America. 2014.

⁵ Paquette, Danielle, and Peyton M. Craighill. "The Surprising Number of Parents Scaling Back at Work to Care for Kids." Washington Post. The Washington Post, Web. 29 June 2016.

Questions

Take advantage of the many opportunities to ask candidates questions, including:

- ⑥ Local Leagues of Woman Voters. Many leagues create candidate questionnaires or host candidate events. Work with your local League to include a question on early childhood in their outreach.
- ⑥ Editorial Boards. Newspapers often endorse local candidates. One way that they determine their endorsements is by meeting with candidates and reviewing their positions. Ask the editor to include questions on early childhood during these meetings.
- ⑥ Chambers of Commerce. Candidates often meet with local Chambers to build their base of support. Work with your local Chamber so that they engage candidates on early learning issues and publicly share responses.
- ⑥ Community Events and Meetings. Any time you are in a public setting with a candidate is a good time to ask them about early learning.

Sample Questions to Pose

- Our community's continued economic vitality depends on how we invest today for tomorrow. By investing in our young children, we create the best outcomes in education, health and economic well-being for everyone in North Carolina. What is your birth-to-eight early learning plan?
- By 2020, 67% of jobs in North Carolina will require some post-secondary education. Yet the majority of North Carolina's fourth graders are not proficient in a key predictor of future academic success – reading. Grade-level reading is achievable with policies and practices in place to reflect that reading is a cumulative process, developing at birth and rooted in early brain development. If elected, how will you use your position to address the needs of young children?
- During children's early years, brain architecture is forming through children's experiences and environments, creating the foundation for all future learning. To build a strong foundation, children need health and development on track beginning at birth, supportive and supported families and communities and high quality early care and education. What role should public policy play in ensuring that children have the experiences and live in the environments they need to build a strong foundation?
- Today, public investments in North Carolina's young children come predominately from the federal and state governments. However, across the nation, towns, cities and counties are serving as hubs of innovation when it comes to early learning and finding ways to use local revenue to expand early learning in communities. Do you support local investments in early learning?

Pre-Election Activities

Attend Candidate Events and Rallies

Candidates often hold events leading up to election day. Take advantage of these moments by:

- ⑥ Signing up to receive announcements from all candidates in your district to be alerted to upcoming events and appearances.
- ⑥ Reviewing the local paper for candidate event announcements.
- ⑥ Asking a question about early learning using the message points and sample questions provided in the toolkit.
- ⑥ Bringing a sign to rallies with a clear slogan such as “I Vote for Early Learning” or “I Vote for Young Children” or “What’s Your Position on Early Learning?”
- ⑥ Following up with them after the event, reminding them that you posed the question and are available to provide more information on the importance of early learning.

Use Social Media

Political candidates are campaigning directly to voters through social media channels like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and many others. Savvy politicians use social media to gauge the issues that matter to voters.

Use your social media tools to raise the issue of early learning. Use the hashtag #election2016NC.

Sample Tweets

- North Carolinians support early learning investments. What are our candidates’ early learning platforms? #election2016NC
- Brains are built during children’s earliest years. What are our candidates’ early learning platforms? #election2016NC
- Majority of NC 3rd graders not proficient in reading. What will our candidates do to support young children? #election2016NC
- Early learning is a bipartisan issue that unites voters. How will our candidates support NC’s young children? #election2016NC

As with all election activities, nonprofit organizations must follow the same rules on social media as they would with any other outreach. For example, Nonprofit Vote advises that you do not use organizational accounts to tag, re-tweet, or share posts with political campaigns or partisan organizations that have endorsed candidates.

For more on social media guidelines, review Nonprofit Vote’s Using Social Media to Promote Voting: Guidance for 501(c)(3) Organizations,

<http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2016/04/using-social-media.pdf>.

Host a Tour

A tour of a local early childhood program provides policymakers with an experience they can take with them when they head to Raleigh that is much more meaningful than a fact sheet. The advantage of hosting a tour prior to the election is that candidates are seeking opportunities to engage with voters and therefore tend to be more responsive.

Identify a location where candidates can see a program in action – a high quality child care center, a NC Pre-K classroom, a Reach Out and Read pediatric office, etc.

Participants will vary by circumstances. However, keep in mind our messaging rule that the messenger matters and invite a local business person or other community leader supportive of the program to participate.

Remember, you must invite all of the candidates running for the office. When candidates arrive, provide a brief overview of what they are going to see and why it is important for the community and the candidates' priorities. As you walk around, introduce them to each staff person and explain what he/she does and how it benefits the community. Allow them to watch the program in action.

Additional Resource

- How to Plan a Site Visit for Your Policy Makers, Zero to Three
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/495-how-to-plan-a-site-visit-for-your-policy-makers>

Checklist of Tasks to Complete in Advance of the Event

- ⑥ **Identify your candidates.** Vote Smart lists North Carolina candidates for the General Assembly and judges at <https://votesmart.org/election/2016/L/NC>.
- ⑥ **Select a date and time.**
Coordinate with the program you are visiting to ensure that you will arrive at a time when children will be awake and engaged in an activity. In addition, confirm that the program has photo release forms for the children so that pictures of the candidates or representatives may be taken.
- ⑥ **Invite the candidates.**
Begin by calling each candidate's campaign headquarters. Note the name of the person you speak with for follow-up purposes. Provide the date, time, and probable participants, and outline the agenda. Emphasize why you believe it is important for the candidate or representative to tour the program.

Follow up your call with an email invitation that goes to all candidates [*see sample*]

candidate email invitation]. This is important so that you can document that you invited all candidates to participate.

⑥ **Send confirmation.**

Once you have an agreement to attend [which may take several calls], confirm the commitment with a letter [*see sample letter*]. It's also wise to place a reminder call a day or two before the event.

⑥ **Invite guests.**

Keep it to a small group of people. Participants will vary by circumstances.

⑥ **Put together an internal agenda.**

Plan out the meeting step-by-step. Think about the visuals and all the logistics needed to make the event successful. Everyone should know what is expected of them.

⑥ **Prepare staff.**

Work with program staff on the key messages to convey to the candidates. Have someone prepared to explain the program and share a story that demonstrates its impact.

⑥ **Remind your guests to attend.**

Never assume that someone will attend an event just because they said so. Phone your list of invitees the week before, remind them of the event, and stress that their attendance is important.

⑥ **Arrange to photograph the event.**

Appoint someone on staff to photograph the candidates at the program. This will allow you to post photos online and share them with the candidates. Remember to have photo release forms if you go to a program with children.

⑥ **Make nametags.**

Facilitate conversation and introductions by providing attendees with printed nametags.

⑥ **Provide informational materials.**

These events are the perfect venue to share information about the importance of early learning.

Follow up

After the event, send written thank-you notes to each candidate or representative. Be sure to address any questions raised during the tour.

Sample Candidate Email Invitation

Dear [Name of Candidate]:

On behalf of the [Name of Organization/Program], I invite you to learn more about why early learning is so important to the future of our community. Please join [Name of Participants] on [date] at [time] at [place].

Our community's continued economic vitality depends on how we invest today for tomorrow. By investing in our young children, we are building the foundation for them to fulfill their potential in life and the capacity for our community to thrive.

Why is early learning so important to all of us? Child development is a dynamic, interactive process that is not predetermined. It occurs in the context of relationships, experiences and environments. Harvard University pediatrician Jack Shonkoff puts it this way, "brains are built not born."

To build a strong foundation for learning, children need good health, supportive and supported families and high quality early learning environments. We invite you to see firsthand how [Name of Organization/Program] is helping to create the best outcomes in education, health and economic well-being for everyone in our community.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Organization]

Sample Confirmation Letter

Dear [Name of Candidate]:

I am delighted that you will join us to learn more about [Name of Organization/Program] on [date] at [time] at [place]. Directions to [place] are enclosed.

In the meantime, you may be interested in reviewing The Center for the Development Child website, <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/> - particularly the two-minute video on Brain Architecture.

[If you are a state-funded entity add the following: As a reminder, this meeting is being paid for with private funding.]

Please do not hesitate to call me if you should have questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Organization]

Build Relationships

Launch your own speaking tour using the [First 2000 Days](#) presentation. Make the case for early childhood to as many groups as possible and encourage people to contact their candidates and share why early learning is important to them. Groups to target include:

- ⑥ Civic groups
 - ✓ Rotary
 - ✓ Kiwanis
 - ✓ Junior League
 - ✓ Women's Clubs
 - ✓ Optimist Clubs
- ⑥ Chambers of Commerce
- ⑥ Professional Organizations
- ⑥ League of Women Voters
- ⑥ Faith Groups

Host a Candidate Forum

This section includes the following:

- Guidelines for Hosting Events
- Checklist of Tasks to Complete in Advance of the Event
- Additional Resources
- Sample Candidate Email Invitation
- Sample Confirmation Letter
- Sample Invitation
- Sample Agenda
- Sample Alert

Guidelines for Hosting Events

Candidate forums must be non-partisan. Therefore, be certain to follow these rules:

- ⑥ If you receive state funds, only use private funds! You may **not** use state funds to pay for the event.
- ⑥ Invite **all** candidates and treat them alike. This includes invitation and follow-up, the information you provide in advance, the questions they are asked and the opportunities they have to respond.
- ⑥ Do not intervene, directly or indirectly, in the campaign on behalf of a particular candidate or party. Nothing you do at the event can show preference for one candidate over another.
- ⑥ Provide equal time. All candidates should be given equal time unless the format specifically states that equal time is not guaranteed. The candidates should be aware of the format and document their consent.
- ⑥ Review the IRS rules at [http://www.irs.gov/uac/Election-Year-Activities-and-the-Prohibition-on-Political-Campaign-Intervention-for-Section-501\(c\)\(3\)-Organizations](http://www.irs.gov/uac/Election-Year-Activities-and-the-Prohibition-on-Political-Campaign-Intervention-for-Section-501(c)(3)-Organizations)
- ⑥ Avoid partisan literature. Do not hand out any candidate literature.
- ⑥ Do not make the event a fundraiser.

Overview of Tasks to Complete in Advance of the Event

⑥ **Identify your candidates.**

Vote Smart lists North Carolina candidates for the General Assembly and judges at <https://votesmart.org/election/2016/L/NC>. Be sure to include other local elected offices like sheriff, county commissioners, mayors and others.

⑥ **Select a date and time.**

Candidate forums are typically held between Labor Day and Election Day [November 8, 2016]. The event should last no more than 90 minutes, and the candidates may or may not stay for the entire time.

⑥ **Invite the candidates.**

Begin by calling each candidate's campaign headquarters. Note the name of the person you speak with for follow-up purposes. Provide the date, time, probable audience for the event, and outline the format. Emphasize why you believe it is important for the candidate to attend the event.

Follow up your call with an email invitation that goes to all candidates [*see sample candidate email invitation*]. This is important so you can document that you invited all candidates to participate.

⑥ **Send confirmation.**

Once you have an agreement to attend [which may take several calls], confirm the commitment with a letter that details the format [*see sample letter*]. It's also wise to place a reminder call a day or two before the event.

⑥ **Recruit a facilitator.**

Find a business person or other community leader to serve as the forum facilitator. This could be someone in the community or a business person who serves on your board. The business community has the ear of candidates and elected officials and is viewed as a credible messenger on early childhood issues.

⑥ **Pick a location.**

If possible, host the event at child-focused location. Other options include a community center, school, Chamber of Commerce, library or town hall.

⑥ **Invite guests.**

Candidates will be most interested in meeting potential constituents — especially if those constituents also are opinion leaders. Opinion leaders are people who are active in community affairs and are thus in a position to influence the opinions of others (i.e., the President of the local Chamber of Commerce.)

- ⑥ After you have set the date and finalized your guest list, send invitations as early as possible [*see sample invitation*]. Also, announce the event publicly so that anyone in the community may attend. If you have email addresses for many of your guests, consider using an online invitation service. It will simplify the RSVP process. Also, consider creating a Facebook event page to generate publicity.
- ⑥ **Put together an agenda.**
Keep control of the proceedings by having an agenda that outlines who will speak, when and what they will cover. Give everyone a chance to mingle and then introduce the candidates to your guests. The candidates' campaign office will provide you with the candidate's biography. [*See sample agenda.*]
- ⑥ **Remind your guests to attend.**
Never assume that someone will attend an event just because they said so. To ensure the best turnout possible, phone your list of invitees the week before, remind them of the event, and stress that their attendance is important.
- ⑥ **Invite the media.**
Candidates want as much media coverage as possible. Likewise, we want the media paying attention to early childhood issues. Send a media alert [*see sample alert*] out to local press a few days prior to the event. After the event, send a press release.
- ⑥ **Arrange to photograph and videotape the event.**
Appoint someone on staff to videotape the event. This will allow you to post the video online and share the candidates' positions with more people. Someone else should take photographs.
- ⑥ **Make nametags.**
Facilitate conversation and introductions by providing attendees with printed nametags. Be sure to have blank tags and a marker for others who show up.
- ⑥ **Provide informational materials.**
These events are the perfect venue to share information about The First 2,000 Days. You also may wish to share information about young children in your county.

Follow up

After the event, send written thank-you notes to each candidate.

Additional Resources

- Nonprofit Vote, [A Nonprofit's Guide to Hosting a Candidate Forum](#)
- NAEYC, [Hosting a Successful Candidate Forum](#)

Sample Candidate Email Invitation

Dear [Name of Candidate]:

On behalf of the [Name of Organization], I invite you to attend our Candidate Forum on [date] at [time] at [place].

Our community's continued economic vitality depends on how we invest today for tomorrow. By investing in our young children, we are building the foundation for them to fulfill their potential in life and the capacity for our community to thrive.

As I mentioned on the phone, we have invited all of the candidates running to represent our district in the General Assembly to this event. Each candidate will have approximately 5 minutes to speak about his/her perspective on early childhood priorities followed by a brief question and answer session with attendees. There will be plenty of opportunity for candidates to mingle with guests.

[If you are a state-funded entity add the following: As a reminder, this meeting is being paid for with private funding.]

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Organization]

Sample Confirmation Letter

Dear [Name of Campaign Manager]:

I am delighted that [candidate's name] has agreed to attend the Candidate Forum hosted by [Name of Organization]. The event will take place on [date] at [time] at [place]. Directions to [place] are enclosed.

As we discussed, we have invited all of the candidates running to represent our district in the General Assembly to this event. Each candidate will have approximately 5 minutes to speak about his/her perspective on early childhood priorities followed by a brief question and answer session with attendees. There will be plenty of opportunity for candidates to mingle with guests.

To assist [name of candidate] in preparing for the event, I encourage you to visit two websites:

- ✓ *The First 2,000 Days*, www.first2000days.org
- ✓ The Center for the Development Child, <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/>

[If you are a state-funded entity add the following: As a reminder, this meeting is being paid for with private funding.]

Please do not hesitate to call me if you should have questions or suggestions. We look forward to a very enjoyable and successful event.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Organization]

Sample Invitation

Early Childhood Candidate Forum

Come meet the people who will shape our future.
Candidates will share their perspectives on early childhood priorities.

[Day, Date]

[Times]

[Place]

Hosted by the [Name of the Partnership]

Invited attendees include:

House of Representatives Candidates

List Names

Senate Candidates

List Names

This event is being paid for with private funding.

Sample Agenda

- I. Networking
- II. Welcome, Opening Comments and Introduction of Candidates
 - a. This should be done by the facilitator, preferably a business person. [5 minutes]
- III. Candidate Presentations [5 minutes each]
 - a. Each candidate should talk about his/her perspective on early childhood priorities.
 - b. Use a fair method to determine the order of presentations (e.g., flip a coin).
- IV. Q& A with Candidates [10 minutes]
 - a. Use a fair method to determine the order candidates answer the first question (e.g., flip a coin) and then rotate the order for each question.
- V. Wrap-up by Facilitator
 - a. Remember, the wrap-up may not appear in anyway to endorse a candidate.
- VI. Meet and Greets between Candidates and Guests

This event is being paid for with private funding.

Sample Alert

MEDIA ALERT

Candidates to Attend Forum to Discuss Early Childhood Priorities

On [DATE] candidates running to represent [name of county] in the North Carolina General Assembly will attend an early childhood forum hosted by [Name of Organization]. Candidates have been asked to share their perspectives on early childhood priorities.

North Carolina is facing a growing skills gap. By 2020, 67% of jobs in North Carolina will require some post-secondary education. Yet the majority of North Carolina's fourth graders are not proficient in a key predictor of future academic success – reading. Reading in the early grades predicts high school and later success. Those who read well go on to graduate, but those who aren't reading well by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

To be reading on grade-level by third grade, children need health and development on track beginning at birth, supportive and supported families and communities and high quality early care and education.

WHAT: [Name of Organization]'s Hosts Early Childhood Candidate Forum

WHEN: [Date]
[Time]

WHERE: [Location]

WHO: [List Names of Candidates to Attend]

This event is being paid for with private funding.

###

Post-Election Activities

Your work isn't over on Election Day – it's just beginning!

Meet with Elected Candidates

Call and congratulate your elected officials. Schedule meetings with each of your representatives (new and old) before the end of the year. These meetings should be used to get a sense of where members stand and provide an initial opportunity for educating them. Position yourself and your organization as a resource to the policymaker.

Write Note to Non-Elected Candidates

Send a note to candidates who did not win elections and thank them for being willing to serve their community – running for office is hard! While a candidate may not have won this time, he or she may run again in the future. Furthermore, as a community leader, the candidate should continue to be cultivated as an early childhood champion.