
The Place We Build Together

Overcoming Hesitancy and Designing Bridges of Common Grace
for Northwest Florida Families.

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A Region of Strategic Need

Serving young children and families across our 7-county Northwest Florida footprint:

70% Rural Footprint

Vast geography creates deep systemic access deserts, making traditional centralized offices difficult for families to utilize.

The Trust Imperative

Partnering with highly local, embedded networks connects state advocacy with regional wisdom to amplify community voices.

Religious Influence

The total number of known active churches is comfortably estimated to be between 450 and 600.

Kindergarten Readiness

35% Of our children enter school ready, compared to 44% statewide. Source FL DOE FAST testing (Fall 2025)



Addressing Professional Hesitancy



1. Value & Mission Creep

Fears regarding doctrinal conflicts, inclusivity for all families, or proselytization are addressed through clear, neutral agreements.



2. Legal & Funding Limits

Firm administrative frameworks ensure strict separation of church and state, and protect government-funded grant mandates.



3. Public Brand Neutrality

Partnering via structured, non-partisan alliances avoids local polarization and preserves broad community trust.



4. Theories of Change

Unifying direct local charitable aid with legislative policy advocacy to drive both immediate relief and systemic solutions.

The Trust Paradox in Policy



Understanding "Rural Consciousness"

Insights from Nicholas Jacobs and Daniel Shea (2024) in The Rural Voter explain rural community dynamics:

- ➔ **Distrust of External Intervention:** Top-down mandates or highly formalized political languages trigger deep local skepticism.
- ➔ **The "Place-Based" Framing Filter:** Policy support skyrockets when framed around local survival and mutual community obligations.
- ➔ **Respecting Local Fabric:** Lasting success comes from working through existing social systems, not trying to re-engineer them.

The Messenger Matters

Churches as Safe Hubs

Where public bureaus encounter skepticism, local churches serve as completely trustworthy centers of help.

- ✓ **The Trust Premium:** Families accept maternal or early childhood resources much faster from embedded neighbors.
- ✓ **Bridging the Divide:** True systemic outreach requires partnering alongside these existing circles of local trust.

To shift outcomes, we must respect the local context.



OUR COLLECTIVE VOCATION

“ This business of seeing ourselves as implicated is central... That we see ourselves as responsible, for love's sake, is what the responsibility of knowledge is always about... Knowing what I know, having heard what I heard, what am I going to do?” ”

— Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation*

Defining the Path Forward

We sought to apply rigorous strategic discipline to turn local community conviction into a successful policy framework:

What?

Establish a **Children's Services Council (CSC)** in Florida as a dedicated local taxing district for young children.

Why?

Begin in **Bay County** as our high-impact regional proof of concept, based on tax base and scale.




Who?

Partner with local, embedded **Faith Communities** to activate safe grassroots voter engagement.

Strategy: Launching a Children's Services Council (CSC)




Why Start in Bay County?

Our high-impact launching point serves as the regional anchor:

-  **Density:** High volume of regional early learners.
-  **Economic Base:** Generates funding with low individual taxpayer burden.
-  **Media Hub:** Centralized network channels reach surrounding counties.

The Faith Base Leverage

Gaining ground by partnering with existing localized community assets:

-  **Credibility:** Trustworthy neighbors who live in target areas.
-  **Infrastructure:** Active local meeting halls and communication routes.
-  **Engagement:** Higher grassroots volunteerism and local accountability.

Navigating Reality

2026

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Property Tax & Special Districts

This legislative season included (and is still including) intensive discussions regarding local property tax models and special taxing districts throughout Florida. Those results will likely impact current and future CSCs.

Mitigating Risks

To preserve the trust and goodwill that has been established, a change in strategy had to happen.

From Implication to Conviction

Road to Readiness

60% of Children Enter Kindergarten Ready by 2031.

"Society is built when we bring our unique,
diverse gifts to the common good."

— *Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*

Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida

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Image Sources



<https://natureconservancy-h.assetsadobe.com/is/image/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/photos/a/b/ABRP-apolachicola-river-ralph-pace.jpg?crop=0%2C383%2C5417%2C2843&wid=1200&hei=630&scl=4.514166666666667>

Source: www.nature.org



https://www.baby-chick.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Beautiful-little-girl-laughing-while-being-embracing-by-her-young-mother-outdoor-in-field-of-flowers-against-sunset.-1187282065_2125x1416.jpeg

Source: www.baby-chick.com



Source: <https://www.awfumc.org/churchdetail/568852>