

## Situation Overview

FCDJFS is seeking a qualified vendor to assist in the development and implementation of Phase II of the Step Up to Quality effort to help the agency meet the State of Ohio's goal that child care programs receiving public dollars must be participating in Step Up to Quality by July 1, 2020. By July 2017, 25% of all centers and family child care Type A homes receiving public funds must be highly rated, with 100% being highly rated by July 1, 2025. Presently, 20% of center-based and 16% of home-based providers in Franklin County are quality rated. This is compared with 37% of center-based and 23% of home-based providers in City of Cleveland (3-5 stars only), and 36% of center-based and 7% of home-based providers in Hamilton County. As a result, FCDJFS is seeking a campaign that will leverage activity that was started in Phase I of the effort (May-September 2017). This would include but not be limited to the following:

1. Project work plan
2. Project timeline
3. Continuation of countywide communication strategy
4. Development, maintenance, and monitoring of public relations
5. Development, maintenance, and monitoring of communication education and engagement
6. Development, maintenance, and monitoring of strategies to increase the number of star-rated child care facilities

Through Phase II, FCDJFS seeks to engage other key stakeholders in the region to help leverage assets and similar communication and outreach strategies to help meet the State of Ohio 2020 Step Up to Quality mandate and to increase the number of parents and families that understand the value of quality early learning experiences and the impact of those experiences on children for the short- and long-term.

## About The Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC Team

### Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC

As founding partners, Lori McClung and Scarlett Boudier have worked together as staffers, business partners, or coordinated stakeholders since 1999. Their experience, combined with the rest of the Advocacy & Communication Solutions, LLC (ACS) team, reflects more than 70 years of experience as legislative and communication staffers and leaders within the early childhood, K-12 education, youth development, health and human services, philanthropic, workforce, and economic development sectors at the local, state, and national levels. ACS has applied its expertise to engagements with dozens of public, private, nonprofit,

### ACS: WHO WE ARE

ACS is an award-winning national communication, advocacy, and strategy development consulting firm that helps nonprofits, for profits, government agencies, and philanthropic organizations successfully share their messages about target issues with key audiences, advocate for policy change, and position themselves as leaders in their respective fields

and philanthropic organizations, successfully developing and implementing strategy, and conducting research for public awareness, political, policy, marketing, communication, and branding campaigns. In particular, ACS has extensive experience in conducting research, gathering input from the community, and guiding continuous communication efforts that help clients build support and partners to achieve their goals with local, state, and national organizations and collaboratives nationwide.

Incorporated in 2004 and headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, ACS is a minority and women-owned business. ACS is a certified Small Business Enterprise and Women’s Business Enterprise firm. ACS is a member of the Council on Foundations, National Association of Women Business Owners, Ohio Lobbying Association, Council of Small Enterprises, Women’s Business Enterprise National, the National Network of Consultants to Grantmakers, Native Americans in Philanthropy, and the Communications Network in Philanthropy.

In 2011, the northeast Ohio small business chamber of commerce, Council of Smaller Enterprises, named ACS a “Ten Under 10” award winner. This award is given annually to 10 small businesses with 10 employees or fewer to honor their ability to innovate, grow, and reach ambitious goals. In 2015, ACS received a Platinum Award in the Communication Plan category of the [MarCom Awards](#) out of 6,000 entries from 34 countries, and was named a [Weatherhead 100 Upstart Winner](#) as one of the fastest-growing companies in Northeast Ohio.

The ACS team has the experience, patience, and understanding required to work with organizations large and small to build customized approaches and ensure they are implemented efficiently and effectively. The firm provides clients with the right tools to maintain focus and enhance ongoing efforts now and in the future. ACS believes in the power and value of leveraging research, strategic communication, and advocacy to bolster support for any issue.

ACS’ success and that of their clients is directly related to having been in their shoes—as former staff and board members of nonprofits, for-profit, government, and philanthropic organizations, ACS team members have a unique understanding and commitment to the issues which has garnered significant successes for clients since the firm’s inception.

ACS: WHAT DO WE DO?

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<p style="color: #8e44ad; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 5px;">ADVOCACY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government Relations</li> <li>State Lobbying</li> <li>Federal Lobbying</li> <li>Advocacy and Lobbying Training</li> <li>Situation Analysis</li> <li>Plan Development &amp; Implementation</li> </ul>	<p style="color: #f39c12; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 5px;">STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-term Advocacy Planning</li> <li>Long-term Communication Planning</li> <li>Organizational Strategy</li> </ul>
<p style="color: #27ae60; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 5px;">COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media Relations</li> <li>Strategic Communication</li> <li>Analysis &amp; Planning</li> <li>Crisis Communication</li> <li>Message Development</li> <li>Communication Training</li> <li>Paid Media</li> </ul>	<p style="color: #0056b3; font-weight: bold; margin-bottom: 5px;">CAPACITY BUILDING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitation Training</li> <li>Spokesperson Training</li> <li>Organizational Development</li> <li>Lobbying Training</li> <li>Communication Training</li> <li>One-on-One Coaching</li> <li>Collective Impact</li> <li>Tools and Research</li> </ul>

## Proposed Approach

Based upon work already completed and activity that is ongoing from Phase I, the proposed approach includes four key areas of work. This approach is based on the experience and expertise of ACS and its strategic partners and the urgency related to FCDJFS meeting the State of Ohio's Step Up to Quality 2020 mandate. These steps can be modified based on conversations between ACS and FCDJFS to best suit the needs and goals of Phase II that are not yet known or reflected in the RFP. The four key areas of work and related chart below what each area includes and the timing related to that work. As was the practice during Phase I, ACS will partner with FCDJFS every step of the way to ensure strategic and tactical coordination throughout the life of the project.

### Four Key Areas of Work

1. **Research Strategy & Analysis:** This includes an analysis of existing FCDJFS data to determine specific provider targets and communities in need of quality child care; development, recruitment, and deployment of target audience survey and analysis of FCDJFS clients; up to six target audience focus groups of parents and providers; and a target audience tracking survey to determine increase in awareness levels.
  - a. **Analysis of Existing FCDJFS Data:** Data sets can vary in breadth, depth, and detail. And although FCDJFS relies upon the State of Ohio for certain data sets, this analysis will help to understand what FCDJFS' existing data set includes and how that might impact how we target providers and parents in particular regions of the county. In other words, we must be strategic in our approach (even if it is limited due to a lack of current information), and the data analysis will help to identify which providers are engaged to become/stay star-rated and which neighborhoods have the most critical need to access to quality child care. FCDJFS may determine its internal data set does not need such analysis, but usually at least an initial analysis is needed to ensure the quantitative research is based on clear, consistent, and reliable data set.
  - b. **Quantitative Survey:** Data from the Phase I telephone survey of parents countywide led to many questions about how parents of children receiving publicly funded child care would respond to the same questions. This survey will focus on parents' attitudes toward early childhood learning, experiences with early learning providers, awareness, and attitudes of the SUTQ program, opinions on FCDJFS resources, and barriers to finding high quality options. This would help refine message to not only parents but also child care providers.
  - c. **Parent/Caregiver Focus Groups:** Recruit and deploy up to six focus groups in order to learn about the experiences and attitudes of some of the different communities FCDJFS serves. ACS recommend a series of community-based focus groups and interviews targeting parents in specific neighborhoods as well as specific subpopulations. These studies will differ from traditional focus groups in a few ways, including their location, the number of participants, and the recruiting method. We recommend holding focus groups at FCDJFS offices or neighborhood community centers convenient for each target group. Findings from the focus groups will help refine message to not only parents but also child care providers.

- d. **Tracking Survey:** To assess impact of the paid and earned media outreach campaign around quality early learning and provider recruitment and training, ACS recommends a survey of Franklin County parents to test for movement in perceptions of quality or awareness of the Step Up to Quality program. This tracking survey would build upon the Phase I 2017 baseline telephone/online survey of parents, with a slightly shorter questionnaire. This would help shape outreach, messaging, and community engagement, and strategic and tactical recommendations for 2019, 2020, and beyond.

**2. Plan & Project Management and Support:** This includes plan development; support for earned media and community stakeholder outreach/engagement and provider outreach/engagement; overall project management of research strategy, provider training, media production and buy activity, as well as project analysis and recommendations including measurable outcomes to evaluate progress.

- a. **Plan Development:** This accountability document will help guide all strategic and tactical activity based upon the four key areas of work and the project timeline included in this proposal. This will be expanded upon to include the following:

- i. FCDJFS internal and external activity related to provider outreach, earned media, and social/digital media, stakeholder outreach/engagements.
- ii. Commitments from stakeholders to participate in Phase II work including efforts to advance messaging and communication to their internal and external audiences.

- b. **FCDJFS Strategy Support:** Although FCDJFS staff and leadership will continue their existing work for earned media and community stakeholder outreach/engagement and provider outreach/engagement, ACS will leverage research and experience with similar efforts to help support that work. These activities are the core of activity to help FCDJFS meet the 2020 mandate, and will help to complement research and paid media activity:

- i. **Earned, social & digital media:** Recommendations to help engage key media outlets (regional and national) and social media platforms, specifically the following:
  - Identify and help guide opportunities (based on Phase II plan) to leverage FCDJFS leadership and members of the stakeholder community to advance Phase II messaging at internal and external events, meetings, and with print media outlets.
  - Identify and help guide opportunities (based on Phase II plan) to ensure any social media or digital activity complements existing research-based messaging and is targeted to and appropriate for parents and providers. Social and digital media should only be advanced when there is certainty that those social media vehicles can actually reach target audiences.

- ii. **Community stakeholder (nonprofit, government, and business) outreach:** Recommendations on and support for engaging key organizations to help leverage FCDJFS activity related to outreach to parents and providers, and training of providers to become star-rated. This would include initial meetings with a targeted group of organizations and regular follow up engagements to provide updates to those stakeholders on progress related to providers and parents outreach. This activity will likely include:
    - Initial overview meeting with community stakeholder leadership to outline Phase I and Phase II goals and activity, and potential shared engagement strategies (advancing messages, supporting provider training, etc.) between FCDJFS and stakeholder organization.
    - Regular updates regarding engagement strategies, with stakeholders who agree to partner on this initiative.
  - iii. **Provider outreach:** Based on the success of training module recruitment and related provider feedback, make recommendations to FCDJFS regarding additional and/or more refined ways to engage existing and future star-rated providers. This will include a brief written quarterly update on training progress and ways in which internal FCDJFS resources and external partners can be leveraged to help expedite the number of providers engaged, trained, and rated (by the State of Ohio).
  - iv. **Trouble shooting/thought partnership:** Meet regularly with FCDJFS leadership and staff to provide updates on progress of the effort and how to re-calibrate based on the evolution of the project. This will help to tackle anything that is undefined when it comes to navigating each step of the effort.
- c. **Overall Project Management:** This includes managing the research strategy, provider training, media production, and buy activity to ensure the project moves ahead according to the timeline and meets FCDJFS' expectations. This will include monthly meetings with FCDJFS leadership and weekly email and/or telephone conversations.
  - d. **Project Analysis and Recommendations:** To help plan for activity in 2019, 2020, and beyond, ACS will provide an analysis of the 2018 activity including measurable outcomes, to evaluate progress and how that impacts suggested activity for the future.
3. **Customized SUTQ Provider Training Modules:** This includes recruitment of home- and center-based child care providers; development of training module; and development and deployment of up to 24 sessions to train child care providers.
- a. **Recruitment:** Aggressive recruitment of home- and center-based child care providers to engage them in training sessions to help them become or stay star-rated. This will also include confirmation of known barriers to becoming/staying star-rated and assisting in leveraging FCDJFS resources to help providers overcome those barriers (understanding



some might be out of the scope of services/role of FCDJFS).

**b. Development and Deployment of Trainings:** Development of up to 24 sessions to train child care providers. Presently there are 509 unrated providers in Franklin County. Goals related to these numbers and related training are that by the close of 2018:

- i.** 25% (or 128) of unrated providers in Franklin county will be engaged, recruited, and complete the training to become rated by the state of Ohio (with the understanding that the actual rating can only be completed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) ODJFS but all other required components will be fulfilled via the training and support modules).
- ii.** Another 30% (152) will begin the training process with anticipation of their rating to be completed by ODJFS in 2019.
- iii.** In total 55% (280) of the existing 509 unrated providers either will have completed or have started training by the close of 2018 (actual rating must be completed by ODJFS).

**4. Media Production and Related Media Buy:** This includes 8-12 weeks of television and radio split into two 4-6 week “buys” in the late spring/early summer and again in late summer or early fall 2018. This timing takes into account when most parents/caregivers are contemplating child care decision making.

- a. Production:** Based on research and message development, production of television and radio ads to help complement existing/ongoing FCDJFS outreach efforts among parents and providers.
- b. Media Buy #1:** 4–6 weeks between mid-May and June of television and radio ads that help reinforce key messages to target audiences. The timing is meant take advantage of post-school year/pre-summer decision making related to child care and at the same time avoid market pricing that is usually higher leading up to Primary Election Day (May).
- c. Media Buy #2:** 4–6 weeks between Mid-August and September of television and radio ads that help reinforce key messages to target audiences. The timing is meant take advantage of pre-school year/post-summer decision making related to child care and at the same time avoid market pricing that is usually higher leading up to General Election Day (November).

