



Frequently Asked Questions

Our Strategy

1. What is a Center for Excellence?

A Center for Excellence is an initiative designed to study, strengthen, and share best practices within a particular field. Across the country, academic research institutions generate evidence. Community clinics generate practice wisdom. Rarely are the two integrated in real time. As national systems search for culturally responsive models that are both effective and cost-efficient, we are one of the few Latino serving mental health organizations positioned to inform that transformation in real time.

It works like this: At El Futuro our care team identifies patterns emerging in practice, such as barriers to showing up for appointments, stigma within multigenerational households, mistrust of formal systems, and provider burnout in bilingual clinicians. Simultaneously, our community partnerships surface early signals about stressors affecting families. Then, our training programs test strategies for improving engagement and cultural responsiveness.

The Center of Excellence at El Futuro will coalesce these learnings and be an investment in the health of a future where:

- Providers across the country have access to tested engagement strategies grounded in lived community experience so that families do not fall through the cracks,
- Health systems understand how to reduce barriers before families disengage,
- Workforce pipelines intentionally support bilingual and bicultural clinicians,
- Community-based interventions are evaluated with measurable outcomes, attracting sustained public and private investment, and

- Data generated in real-world settings informs policy, funding, and practice, shifting resources to what really works in the field.

Rather than expanding services at only one organization, the Center for Excellence allows El Futuro's knowledge and practices to influence providers and systems across the nation.

2. Why El Futuro? What makes the organization unique?

El Futuro is one of the few organizations in the country dedicated specifically to providing culturally responsive mental health care for Latino families. What makes El Futuro distinctive is its whole person approach to client care. Traditional mental health care relies primarily on clinic-based, one-to-one treatment. While essential, this model alone cannot meet the scale or complexity of today's needs, particularly in communities navigating these new stressors.

Since 2004, El Futuro has been quietly building and refining approaches that respond to persistent gaps in Latino mental health access:

- We co-designed a therapeutic garden with the community to build more trust, civic engagement, and well-being.
- We built a 15-person team of Community Mental Health Workers, local leaders who receive intensive training to support Spanish speaking immigrants through 10 sessions to alleviate the psychological distress of depression and anxiety.
- We grew our 2,000-person La Mesita network to train and support mental health and allied professionals via webinars, conferences, and case studies on the best practices of providing culturally-responsive care.
- We partnered with major funders to convene coalitions such as the Immigrant Solidarity Network and the *Mi Voz, Nuestra Salud* Initiative, to identify solutions to the mental health crisis and create policy recommendations.
- We coordinated regular cultural celebrations like Kermes fiestas, Posadas, Dia de los Muertos and other events to build community, decrease stigma around mental health, and foster cultural pride as a protective factor for mental health.
- We created curricula to advise and train national entities on culturally-responsive mental health care, including various state departments of health and human services, the NC998 suicide-prevention line, health systems and allied professionals as far away as California, Wisconsin, Texas, and Massachusetts, WakeMed hospital systems, and more.

These innovations grew organically, out of necessity, but they have worked.

- Our therapeutic garden now hosts dozens of culturally-affirming events a year, creating a vibrant sense of belonging for 5,000+ community members.
- Our Community Mental Health Worker program has achieved the same results at reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety in people with mild to moderate mental health issues as traditional therapy, but for 25% of the cost. Additionally, its impact has been validated through a \$2.8 million investment by Alliance Health, and we are now being asked how quickly this model can be replicated in other communities.
- Our training programs are in such high demand that we have attracted partnerships from major state and national entities to expand their scope and improve their practices – partners such as the National Latino Behavioral Health Association, Molina Healthcare, The Duke Endowment, Kate B Reynolds Foundation, and others. Today, we are turning away training requests and delaying new collaborations—not because the need has slowed, but because our infrastructure has reached its limit.

Because El Futuro operates at the intersection of clinical practice, community engagement, and systems change, it is uniquely positioned to develop and disseminate its unique model of care to benefit others.

3. Why now?

We are living through a momentous time when many Latino families are carrying a level of heightened stress that is both deeply personal and profoundly public. National conversations about immigration and what it means to “belong” have intensified in recent years. Policies and enforcement have shifted quickly, and many families in our community are navigating increased uncertainty, fear, and isolation. The result is missed school, reluctance to seek help, and even hesitation to enter public spaces - ripple effects that are shaping our society and creating barriers to a healthy community. This environment compounds long-standing barriers to mental health access. Demand for mental health services continues to rise across North Carolina, yet culturally and linguistically responsive care for Latino families remains extremely limited. At the same time, Latino children represent one of the fastest-growing youth populations in the state. Without intentional investment in culturally responsive practices and early intervention models, the gap between need and available care will continue to widen.

Conversely, the growing population of Latino families in our communities are increasingly asking for care that reflects their culture. Young people are increasingly

empowered to name their mental health struggles out loud and seek support. Health systems, schools, and public agencies are increasingly recognizing that cultural responsiveness is not an “add-on,” but the difference between access and exclusion. Faith leaders and communities are increasingly seeing that the mind and spirit are intimately connected.

El Futuro has spent more than two decades developing approaches that work. This campaign is designed to ensure those lessons are strengthened and shared while the need and opportunity for impact is greatest.

4. What will be different when the campaign is successful?

The campaign will strengthen El Futuro’s ability to:

- Reduce wait times and expand early intervention services
- Train more providers in culturally responsive care
- Support schools, clinics, and community organizations serving Latino families
- Strengthen the mental health workforce pipeline

Over time, this will allow many more families across a wider geographic scale to access meaningful care earlier.

5. How will success be measured?

Success will be measured in several ways, including:

- Access to care
 - Reduced wait times for services
 - Increased number of families receiving care
 - Expanded early intervention and prevention programs
- Family and clinical outcomes
 - Continued high stabilization rates among clients (88-92% of El Futuro have improved stabilization rates after treatment)
 - Improvements in family functioning, school engagement, and mental health outcomes
- System impact
 - Number of state, regional, and national organizations trained or supported
 - Adoption of culturally responsive practices by partner organizations
 - Growth in the bilingual and culturally responsive mental health workforce

6. How will new technologies such as AI support this work?

Technology will help El Futuro improve efficiency, deepen learning from clinical work, and expand training opportunities. Potential uses include:

- Tools that reduce administrative documentation for clinicians such as AI notetakers
- Data analysis that helps identify the most effective interventions for clients
- Digital training platforms that allow providers across the state to access culturally responsive education

All technologies will be implemented with strong safeguards to protect privacy and ensure ethical use.

7. What will the campaign fund?

A major part of the funding will go towards building the infrastructure and capacity of a team who can turn practice into proof, proof into scale, and scale into sustainability, thereby moving forward the campaign's three pillars of Learning, Replicating, and Sustaining.

- **Learning:** We will hire clinical leaders, program managers, and frontline staff who will allow us to rigorously learn from what happens every day in care. This will include clinical supervisors and project managers to capture data from therapists; compliance and quality roles to ensure ethical, HIPAA-compliant learning; and expanded community-facing teams—community mental health workers, peer support specialists, case managers, and care coordinators—who test innovative models of therapy delivery outside the traditional clinic. We will also invest in therapeutic garden programming and client engagement leadership so we can understand how healing environments and community connection affect outcomes.
- **Replicating:** To move from a strong local model to regional and national impact, we will hire roles dedicated to translation and scale. This will include a Director of Impact to lead the Center for Excellence, a data analyst to turn lived experience into replicable models, training and consulting staff to support partners, and a public mental health communications role to share tools, language, and approaches that others can adopt. These positions will ensure that El Futuro's practices don't stay siloed—they are taught, adapted, and used by schools, clinics, and communities across the nation.
- **Sustaining:** Finally, we will build the infrastructure that allows this work to last. This will include investments in finance, HR, IT, facilities, communications, fundraising, policy advocacy, and data systems—so that El Futuro remains stable, compliant, financially resilient, and well-led through future growth.

The Campaign

8. What is the purpose of the campaign?

The *Our Future Campaign* is a \$10 million initiative to establish and grow North Carolina's first Center for Excellence in Latino Family Mental Health at El Futuro. The campaign will fund the people, systems, and partnerships needed to strengthen El Futuro's proven model of culturally responsive care and share it more broadly across the state, the region, and the nation. By doing so, the campaign will help expand access to mental health services for Latino families while improving how those services are delivered.

9. What has been raised so far?

As of early-2026, nearly \$3 million has been secured from foundation and individual donors, with two \$1 million foundation asks pending. The campaign is currently in its quiet phase, during which leadership gifts are being secured from long-time supporters and philanthropic partners.

10. Who is leading the campaign?

The campaign is being led by El Futuro's Board of Directors in partnership with the Campaign Steering Committee who help to introduce the campaign to donors and partners across the community. Additionally, the consulting firm of moss+ross provides campaign counsel to the members of the El Futuro Advancement team:

- Luke Smith, Executive Director, lsmith@elfuturo-nc.org
- Kerry Brock, Associate Director, kbrock@elfuturo-nc.org
- Mary Coffman, Director of Philanthropic Engagement, mcoffman@elfuturo-nc.org
- Angie Mejia, Campaign Manager, amejia@elfuturo-nc.org

11. How will El Futuro fund this campaign and what is the role of philanthropy?

The \$10 million Campaign will be funded through leadership gifts, multi-year pledges, foundation support, and broad community participation. Additionally, contracts from the health and government systems will help us to achieve our goal. Like most campaigns of this scale, a significant portion of the goal will come from a smaller number of leadership gifts, complemented by contributions from many donors who believe in El Futuro's mission and want to help expand its impact. Gifts of many sizes are important to the campaign's success.

12. How will El Futuro sustain its annual operations after the campaign concludes?

The campaign will strengthen long-term sustainability by investing in capacity-building roles, internal systems, and technology upgrades that reduce operational strain. These investments will improve billing efficiency, expand training pipelines, and diversify revenue sources. After the campaign concludes, El Futuro's annual operations will continue to be supported through a blend of government contracts, insurance reimbursements, grants, and a robust annual fund. The campaign is a one-time investment that builds the stable foundation needed to sustain growth well into the future. Additionally, as a result of increased efficiencies, advocacy, and proof of concept over the next few years, we expect to continue to trend towards a higher volume of revenue from contracts as the healthcare and government system reimburse this work more meaningfully.

Making a Gift

13. Can I pay a campaign pledge over time?

Yes. Most campaign gifts are made as multi-year pledges, typically fulfilled over three to five years. This allows donors to make a more significant commitment while spreading payments over time.

14. Does my campaign contribution replace my annual fund gift?

Campaign gifts are generally considered in addition to annual giving, because the campaign funds one-time strategic investments rather than ongoing operations. Many donors choose to maintain their annual support while making a multi-year campaign commitment.

15. What assets can I use to fulfill a pledge?

Donors can fulfill campaign pledges in several ways, including cash or check, credit card or electronic transfer, appreciated securities such as stocks, donor-advised fund distributions, qualified charitable distributions from IRAs, and planned gifts such as bequests. El Futuro staff can work with donors and their financial advisors to determine the best option.

16. Is my gift tax-deductible?

Yes. El Futuro is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

17. Who should I contact if I want to learn more or discuss a gift?

Donors interested in learning more about the campaign or discussing a potential gift are encouraged to contact El Futuro's Advancement team. We would be happy to answer questions, share additional information, or explore ways to support the campaign.