



Our Future Campaign



El Futuro 



Table of Contents

Letter from Our Executive Director	pg. 3
Our Context	pg. 4
Our Momentum	pg. 7
Our Vision: The Our Future Campaign	pg. 8
Our Plan	pg. 10
Our Credentials	pg. 12
Our Appeal	pg. 15

A Letter from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Since 2004, around 20,000 North Carolina families have turned to El Futuro for bilingual, culturally responsive mental health care that understands their language, culture, and lived reality. As a result, El Futuro has developed effective, culturally responsive models of care. We have piloted new approaches that truly work, such as community care teams, nature-based therapy, and cultural engagement. Now, we find ourselves in a unique window of time where the taboo around mental health has decreased, the demand for services has increased, and public awareness around the role of immigrants in our communities is activated.



What we do not yet have is the infrastructure to measure these efforts, turn them into clear best practices, and share them widely in order to help many more people both in North Carolina and across the nation.

The Our Future Campaign is a three-year, \$10 million investment to launch El Futuro's Center of Excellence to develop mental health innovations that work and spread them nationwide so more people get the support they deserve.

Through focused investments in the three campaign pillars of Learning, Replication, and Sustainability, the Center will ensure that healing reaches more people, sooner.

Direct service will remain at the heart of our work. However, this campaign ensures that the expertise built alongside thousands of families strengthens systems far beyond a single clinic.

I invite you to build that future with us.

With gratitude,

Luke Smith, MD

Executive Director
of El Futuro

OurContext

We are living through a momentous time when immigration policy, economic pressure, and discrimination are shaping our society and impacting community well-being.

This environment, which is both deeply personal and profoundly public, compounds long-standing barriers to mental health access, and the demand for culturally responsive mental health care is rising in North Carolina and across the nation.

Traditional clinic-based, one-to-one treatment remains essential.

But on its own, it cannot:

- Reach the scale of families who need support
- Grow the bilingual workforce fast enough
- Equip schools, health systems, and public agencies with real community-informed innovations that engage Latino families effectively

In a moment when the well-being of Latino families is inseparable from the health of our schools, workforce, and economy, solutions cannot remain local. They must be strengthened, studied, and shared.

The Reality of Mental Health in the United States

- 50%+ of adults with mental illness receive no treatment
- Latino communities face even greater barriers to care due to language, workforce shortages, and stigma.
- Mental health outcomes for immigrants in the US often decline over time – a phenomenon known as the “immigrant paradox”

For a full list of references and bibliography, see our “Data Snapshot” appendix.

“With this campaign, El Futuro seeks to quantify the unquantifiable. How do you put a dollar amount on a mother who, thanks to El Futuro, is now equipped for the next decade to help her children navigate their own challenges? It’s like saying, how do you put a dollar amount on a sapling that is cared for in a nursery? We don’t know where the tree that will be planted, what house it will shade, or what park it will beautify, but we know that it won’t be there unless we grow it. El Futuro is not just growing trees; it’s building a greenhouse.”

Sam Poole, El Futuro Supporter



This little girl came with her family when El Futuro began our community mural. When we invited families to paint something that represented community, she chose to paint what inspired her most.



Francisco, a therapist at El Futuro, played with children and their families during our community fiesta, Kermés. It is always beautiful to see families feel at home—seen, understood, and heard. Culture has a powerful way of bringing us together.



OurMomentum

In our last Strategic Plan (2017–2026), El Futuro asked a bold question: what if mental health care extended beyond the clinic?

So, we began building and refining approaches to address persistent gaps in Latino mental health access, such as:

- A therapeutic garden designed with the community, hosting dozens of culturally affirming events and strengthening belonging for 5,000+ participants annually.
- A 15-person Community Mental Health Worker team delivering structured interventions with outcomes comparable to traditional therapy for mild-to-moderate depression and anxiety, and validated by a \$2.8 million grant.
- A 2,000-member professional learning network providing training, webinars, and conferences statewide and nationally.

El Futuro has not waited for systems to adapt. We grew from three volunteer clinicians to a culturally-representative team of 90+ staff who serve more than 3,000 families annually through direct care and 9,000 more through prevention and community engagement activities that promote mental well-being and reduce the need for crisis care.

Now, after 20 years of serving Latino families, El Futuro is at an inflection point. As mental health stigma decreases and more families seek El Futuro’s culturally-responsive model of care, state and national entities are also requesting more training and consultation.

Demand for both care and training now exceeds our capacity, and without investment in infrastructure, their reach will remain limited. What is missing is the infrastructure to extend El Futuro’s unique model of care beyond a single clinic.

Funders and Partners Driving Innovation with El Futuro

The Duke Endowment

Oak Foundation

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation

Dogwood Health Trust

Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust

The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

The Leon Levine Foundation

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services

Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute



OurVision

The Our Future Campaign

Moving forward, El Futuro will continue to provide direct, bilingual mental health care rooted in trust and cultural humility. Direct service remains the heart of our work.

But now, the Our Future Campaign will build the structure to strengthen and extend that impact.

The Our Future Campaign is a three-year, \$10 million investment to launch El Futuro's Center of Excellence to develop mental health innovations that work and spread them nationwide so more people get the support they deserve.

Centers of excellence serve as engines for focused expertise, evaluation, and dissemination. Institutions such as Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins University use this model to advance fields of medicine through rigorous measurement, specialized training, and broad knowledge-sharing.

El Futuro's Center of Excellence will apply that same disciplined structure to Latino mental health care. Our clinicians

will generate practice wisdom that, in real time, will generate meaningful evidence for practitioners and partners across the country.

It will function as:

- A Learning Engine measuring clinical and community-based innovations with rigor and consistency.
- A Replication Hub translating proven approaches into toolkits, training, and technical assistance for partners.
- A Sustainability Platform strengthening the operational and financial systems required for long-term growth.

The Center will not replace our clinic. It will strengthen it.

By integrating evaluation and dissemination under one coordinated structure, El Futuro will accelerate learning, reduce wait times, strengthen the bilingual workforce, and equip schools, health systems, and community organizations to engage Latino families effectively. This is how local innovation becomes field-level transformation.

“Our vision is that when a person or family seeks care from someone shaped by the Center of Excellence, they will experience not a cold clinical encounter, but warmth, color, and cultural vibrancy. Care will move beyond a narrow focus on neurochemistry or inward reflection to acknowledge the external forces that shape healing, like identity, belonging, migration, and community. As a result, children will feel safer in their own skin and a deeper sense of belonging at school. And parents will return home from work able to rest because they won't be overwhelmed by their own stories of trauma from earlier in their life. The Center of Excellence creates a rich, new space to practice evidence-based care while also incorporating something bigger, more meaningful, and full of warmth.

Dr. Luke Smith, Executive Director

”



In collaboration with artist Cornelio Campos, El Futuro invited the community to help create a garden mural that serves as an open, welcoming space for everyone and a place of healing.

The Our Future Campaign is a three-year, time-bound investment to build El Futuro's Center of Excellence with defined milestones, measurable outcomes, and immediate benefits for families and partners. The Center will be built through three integrated pillars: Learning, Replication, and Sustainability.

Pillar 1: Learning

The Learning Pillar focuses on monitoring and evaluating the complex impact of El Futuro's work to ensure that every hour of care delivered at El Futuro generates knowledge that improves outcomes for the next family. By the end of Year 3, we will ensure that innovation becomes measurable, investable, and scalable by:

- Implementing standardized outcome tracking across all programs
- Establishing formal evaluation partnerships to strengthen practice-based evidence
- Publishing actionable annual impact reports for funders and policymakers
- Building a unified outcomes dashboard to guide leadership decision-making

Pillar 2: Replication

The Replication Pillar multiplies the impact of every innovation so that families across North Carolina and beyond benefit from the best practices of El Futuro's model of care. By the end of Year 3, we will have helped ensure that our learnings travel to meaningful partners by:

- Training providers across the country in culturally responsive practices
- Providing structured technical assistance to partner organizations
- Documenting and evaluating replication pilots in multiple communities
- Launching a digital resource hub accessible regardless of geography

Pillar 3: Sustainability

The Sustainability Pillar ensures that this work does not depend on short-term funding cycles but becomes a permanent and growing part of North Carolina's health infrastructure and a model for the nation. By the end of Year 3, we will have ensured that we are able to sustain our growth by:

- Increasing diversified revenue to protect services from funding volatility
- Securing multi-year institutional commitments
- Reducing clinical vacancy and turnover rates
- Expanding client capacity while reducing average wait times

FOUNDATION

YEAR 1

- Launch leadership structure for the Center of Excellence
- Implement unified data systems
- Strengthen finance, HR, and compliance systems to support growth

EXPANSION

YEAR 2

- Document and publish early findings from community-based models
- Expand training and technical assistance
- Publish first comprehensive impact summary

ACCELERATION

YEAR 3

- Center for Excellence is fully operationalized
- Multi-year institutional funding is secured
- Demonstrate measurable reductions in wait times and improved retention

“

We can't depend on the system alone to care for people. The philanthropic and other pieces of our funding pie must step up and take consideration of our neighbors, because the Latino community in North Carolina is only growing. Many were born in, educated in, have families raised in, and are situated in North Carolina. This is their home. We can't think of this community as "other" anymore. If folks say they want to support North Carolina, this is supporting North Carolina. These are our neighbors.

Molly Hayes, MEd, LCMHCS

Director of Clinical Enhancement Services, El Futuro

”

Our Credentials

Founded in 2004, El Futuro has grown from a volunteer-led clinic into North Carolina's leading provider of bilingual, culturally responsive mental health care for Latino families.

In Fiscal Year 2025 alone, El Futuro delivered more than 20,000 clinical sessions to over 3,100 individuals and families, reached 6,000 more individuals through preventive services, trained 419 professionals, and extended its impact across all 100 North Carolina counties and beyond.

El Futuro is led by Dr. Luke Smith, a

bilingual psychiatrist who has dedicated more than two decades to advancing culturally responsive mental health care for Latino communities. Under his leadership, the organization has grown to a team of 90+ clinical, community, and operational staff who manage multi-million-dollar public and philanthropic investments with disciplined oversight and measurable outcomes.

El Futuro is not only a trusted provider of care. It is a disciplined, growing institution positioned to shape the future of culturally responsive mental health.

“The approach to direct services is magical, offered in a way that is very culturally aligned with the Latino community. It's everything from the way El Futuro is designed architecturally to meeting with a health care provider who shares a similar identity and language, who really gets the context and culture.

The approach is done with values of human warmth, and respect and dignity. If all our health care spaces were designed to be as welcoming and have that human warmth and dignity and respect, then I think we would be in a much better place in our health care system.

Rosa Gonzalez-Guarda, PhD, MPH, RN

Assistant Dean, Ph.D Program, Associate Professor
Duke University School of Nursing
El Futuro Board Member

”



During the pandemic, our greenspace continued to welcome visitors. Even during lockdown, families ventured out to find connection and break through the isolation. Our community's resilience continued to shine.



This little girl was overjoyed to meet the Durham Bulls baseball team during their summer visit to our greenspace to help raise awareness around mental health. It was beautiful to watch families gather in the garden, connect with the team, and share conversations about their hopes and dreams.



Our Appeal

Today, families who find El Futuro experience a unique model of care grounded in dignity, trust, and measurable results. But access to that level of care remains uneven across North Carolina and nationally. Access to culturally responsive mental health care should not depend on geography, language, or luck.

The Our Future Campaign is a three-year, \$10 million investment to launch El Futuro’s Center of Excellence to develop mental health innovations that work and spread them nationwide so more people get the support they deserve.

This investment strengthens local access while building a coordinated engine for learning, replication, and long-term sustainability. It ensures that:

- Proven models are measured and refined
- The bilingual behavioral health workforce grows
- Wait times decrease
- Schools, clinics, and public agencies are better equipped to engage Latino families
- Public and private dollars flow toward approaches that demonstrate results

This is how individual healing becomes system change.

The moment is clear. The models exist. The demand is growing.

We invite you to invest in what works so healing can reach more people, sooner, and last for generations.

Questions?

Please Contact:

Mary Coffman
Director of Philanthropic Engagement
mcoffman@elfuturo-nc.org
(919) 688-7101, ext. 633

We are deeply grateful for your support!

Contributions are tax deductible
as provided by law.

El Futuro is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
Tax ID # 80-0122334

El Futuro 

