



South Carolina
**Early Childhood
Advisory Council**

November 30, 2023

South Carolina General Assembly
1100 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Members of the South Carolina General Assembly:

Thanks to the support of the General Assembly and Governor Henry McMaster, this was a historic year for South Carolina First Steps. After 24 years of existing with a sunset provision, South Carolina First Steps was permanently authorized – further solidifying the state’s investment in early childhood. We are grateful for your leadership and your commitment to our shared mission of ensuring all children start school ready to reach their highest potential.

We are pleased to report that in fiscal year 2023, First Steps directly served 54,241 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers – double the number of children served just five years ago. Another 63,000+ children were reached in child care settings and classrooms. First Steps is a critical part of the early childhood system in South Carolina, and your continued support will allow us to reach more children directly and indirectly for years to come.

Pursuant to S.C. Code Section 59-152-50, please find enclosed the 2022-2023 Annual Report for South Carolina First Steps and the South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). The report summarizes our impact from fiscal year 2023, presents the activities of both the First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees and the South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council, as required by S.C. Code Sections 63-11-1720 and 63-11-1725, and shares many important stories from the families we serve. In addition, Proviso 1.88 of the General Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 mandates that First Steps shall provide an annual report on the state’s investment in early learning and development. This information can be found within the enclosed 2022-2023 Annual Report.

A key role of the ECAC is to provide recommendations and advice about early childhood matters to state leaders. As director, it would be my honor to support you in your service to young children and their families in South Carolina. If my team and I can ever be of assistance, please contact me via email, gmjartan@scfirststeps.org, or phone (501-690-3043).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Georgia Mjartan".

Georgia Mjartan
Executive Director
South Carolina First Steps



ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



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For children.
For families.
For community.
Forever.

Our Mission

South Carolina First Steps works collaboratively to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential with engaged support from their parents, caregivers, and communities.

Our Vision

We will be successful when all children reach their highest potential.



On June 19, 2023, Governor Henry McMaster signed H. 4023 into law, permanently authorizing South Carolina First Steps. A ceremonial bill signing was held in August.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This was the year that our state's leaders stepped up for our youngest children.

After 24 years of existing with a “sunset” — in effect, as a pilot program — South Carolina First Steps became permanent.

The vote for H. 4023 was unanimous in both the South Carolina House and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Henry McMaster on June 19, 2023. Policymakers saw the impact of First Steps — locally, in their own communities,

and statewide for over a million children since inception — and they stepped up by codifying the state’s investment in infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

In every county, First Steps partnerships responded to the overwhelming desire of parents and providers to give young children the best start to life. They stepped up to meet the need where families are:

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

in their homes, at their schools, and even in their pediatric clinics. They served over 50,000 children in 2023, twice their reach just five years ago.

With the launch of a common application for more than 25 different early childhood programs and services across a multitude of state agencies, this was the year South Carolina made accessing publicly funded early childhood programs easier and more streamlined than ever before. The innovation, called First Five SC, was so groundbreaking that states all around the country have called on South Carolina to teach them how to replicate its success.

First Steps 4K provided more children than ever before with the opportunity to learn and develop in a full-day, curriculum-driven program. Private and nonprofit child care providers, the faith community, private schools and charter schools stepped up to give parents options by partnering with First Steps 4K.

Early educators leaned in to deepen their knowledge and improve their practice by working hand in hand with our team of knowledgeable classroom coaches. As a result, First Steps 4K students improved in every early learning domain, increasing their readiness for long-term school success.

Hundreds of people volunteered their time to serve on local First Steps partnership boards and on the state board of trustees, to read to children in First Steps 4K classrooms and to serve as AmeriCorps and VISTA members.

Individual and corporate donors gave funds to help expand our programs. Private philanthropy allowed us to innovate and become a model for the nation. Our colleagues across state government joined together with us to ensure the comprehensive needs of children and their families were met.

This was the year parents, providers, and policymakers stepped up for children.



GEORGIA MJARTAN
Executive Director



FISCAL YEAR 2023

Our Impact



54,241

children directly served

**First Steps is here
for South Carolina's
children during the most
critical stage of their
development, from birth
through age five.**

With a presence in every county
of the state, we are stepping up to
ensure that every child is ready to
thrive in school.



BY THE NUMBERS

In the last year:



50,689 children

received direct services from a
First Steps local partnership

35,370 parents

also received services from
their local First Steps



37% of children in need

were directly served by First Steps



3,650 4-year-olds

attended full-day First Steps 4K
programs at no cost to their families



10,000+ educators

participated in First Steps training
and professional development,
benefitting 63,000+ children



\$1 = \$2.66

First Steps local partnerships leveraged \$25 million from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$1.66 for every state dollar invested

PROVEN RESULTS

A 2019 study found that children who received First Steps local partnership services were:



74% more likely

to score at the highest
level on the Kindergarten
Readiness Assessment



34% less likely

to be chronically absent in
kindergarten

WHY WE START EARLY

The Need

Early childhood experiences shape the architecture of the developing brain, establishing a foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health.

Every child deserves a chance to thrive, but too many face disadvantages that can negatively impact their development and school readiness. In South Carolina last year:

44%

of children 0-5 lived in poverty or a low-income household

44%

of children ages 0-5 were read to less than 4 days per week

38%

of children 0-5 lived in a single-parent household

57%

of children ages 3-4 were not enrolled in preschool

24%

of babies were born to mothers who received less than adequate prenatal care

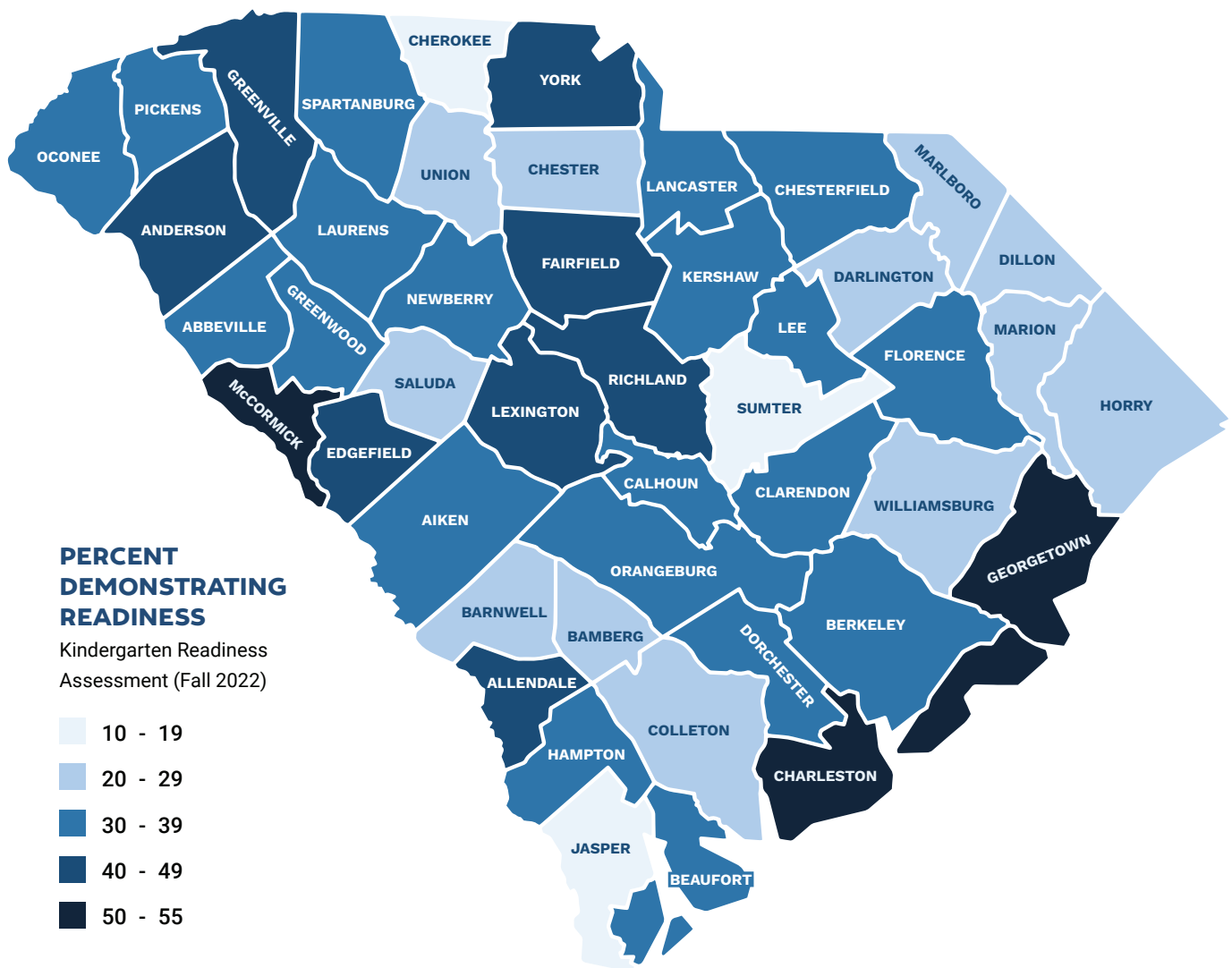
10%

of babies were born with low birthweight

62%

of entering kindergartners tested "not ready" for school

Kindergarten Readiness in South Carolina



The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

Children are considered ready for school when they achieve a score of “demonstrating readiness” on the South Carolina Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). This developmentally appropriate test is administered to all students entering publicly funded kindergarten within the first 45 days of the school year. The KRA determines each child’s readiness level across four domains:

1. **Language and literacy**
2. **Mathematics**
3. **Physical well-being and motor development**
4. **Social foundations**

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Nurturing Families and Communities

Across the state in every county, First Steps works to ensure that every child has the opportunity to benefit from quality early childhood programs.

Through a network of 46 local partnerships, each a community-led nonprofit, we deliver direct services to families, share knowledge of available resources, and mobilize partners to build a more efficient and effective early childhood system.

Our state-local partnership model means that our investments are guided by the communities we serve, aligned with existing community services, leveraged with private philanthropy and grassroots support, and strategically directed to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families.

In the past year, First Steps local partnerships expanded intensive, evidence-based programs that are known to boost children's school readiness. As a result, 7,996 children were enrolled in high-intensity programs, marking a **72% increase** from the previous year.

Our Local Impact, 2021-2023

	CHILDREN	ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS
2020-2021	34,575	57,642
2021-2022	54,092	30,543
2022-2023	50,689	35,370

For an overview of our strategic plan, goals, and progress, see Appendix A.



When Rushell Pernell became a mother at age fourteen, she found needed support through Barnwell County First Steps. Today, her son Tristian is a bright, confident second-grader, and Rushell is pursuing her dream of becoming a pharmacy technician. Rushell says that First Steps helped her “become the mother I am today.”

A Targeted Approach

Parents and communities rely on their local First Steps to provide young children with what they need to thrive: a nurturing and safe home, opportunities to learn and grow, quality care and education, and when necessary, early intervention and mental health services.

Because each community is different, each local partnership tailors its services based on a local determination of needs and resources. All local partnerships utilize a common set of predisposing risk factors to identify children most at risk of early school failure, ensuring that intensive services are prioritized to the children and families most in need of support.

“I would like to thank the First Steps program for teaching and giving me the resources that I need.”

— Rushell Pernell, former client of Barnwell County First Steps

For a list of risk factors, see Appendix B.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Accountability at All Levels

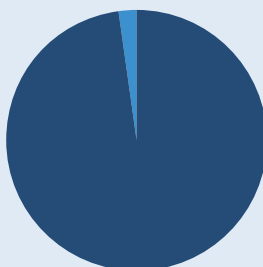
As a statewide public-private initiative, First Steps is accountable to taxpayers, our funders and, most importantly, South Carolina's children. That is why each local partnership is required to meet rigorous programmatic, operational, financial, and administrative standards. To facilitate their success, we provide each partnership with technical assistance, consultation, professional development opportunities, and comprehensive support through a team of dedicated program officers and early childhood experts.

For more on local partnership performance standards and state office support, see Appendix C.



Commitment to Quality

EXPENDITURES OF STATE FUNDS BY PROGRAM TYPE, 2022-23



State law requires at least 75% of state-appropriated funds be used for evidence-based programs. Up to 25% of funding may be used for investments in innovative, evidence-informed practices.

- EVIDENCE-BASED 98%
- EVIDENCE-INFORMED 2%

For a comprehensive list of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs offered by local First Steps partnerships, see Appendix D. For programs offered by county, see Appendix E.

\$20.4 million

In FY23, South Carolina First Steps invested \$20,423,503 in local partnership programs and services that have a demonstrated impact on the school readiness of young children. These funds included state, federal, and private investments.

Driving Innovation

Last year, as part of a two-year grant cycle, we awarded **Early Childhood Innovation Grants** totaling \$130,720 across six counties. Established in 2018, this competitive funding opportunity recognizes and fosters innovative approaches to kindergarten readiness. These grants also maximize the value of public investments in early childhood; more than a third of the funding came from private philanthropy and individual donors.

For local partnership financials, see Appendices F-H.



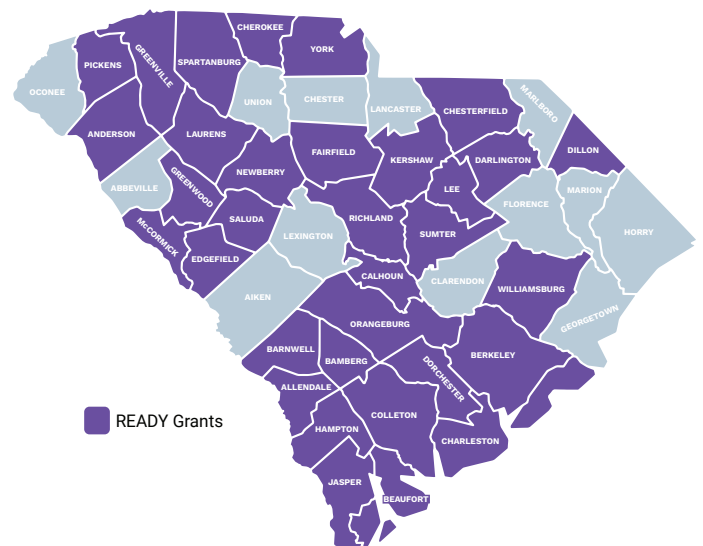
Kershaw County First Steps used a READY grant to establish a presence in a high-need area of public housing, offering improved access to families and needed space for parenting group meetings, child care trainings, and community resources. In May 2023, the local partnership hosted a preschool graduation for a local child care center participating in their quality enhancement program.

Every Child Ready

In 2022, the General Assembly made a historic investment in South Carolina's children, allocating \$3 million in recurring funds to be awarded to local First Steps partnerships through a grant-making process.

We have since awarded **Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY)** grants across 33 counties, prioritizing programs for children ages 0-3, rural communities, and counties where Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores are consistently below the state average.

In its inaugural year, the READY grant program has sustained and expanded evidence-based parenting programs, increased the quality of child care, and addressed pressing workforce and infrastructure challenges.



Access the full report at scfirststeps.org.

Local Partnerships

Parenting



Guided by the belief that a parent is a child's first and most important teacher, First Steps builds respectful partnerships with families to promote early childhood health, well-being, and learning.

Our parenting programs are proven to improve birth outcomes, increase knowledge of early development, foster positive parenting practices, prevent abuse and neglect, promote family literacy, and prepare children for school success. Services are voluntary and provided at levels that meet families' needs, from community-based peer support to in-home coaching.

Last year, 16,725 families participated in First Steps parent education programs — 40% more than the previous year.

PARENTING PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE | 2022-23

37,907

total home visits delivered

2,548

parent group support hours provided

16,725

families served

For the complete list of parenting programs offered by First Steps local partnerships, see Appendix D.



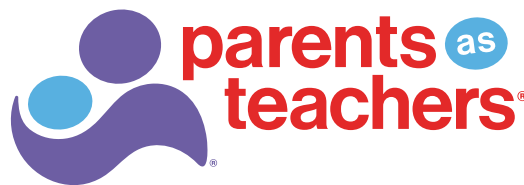
Namrata Dave and her son, Veer, participated in the Parents as Teachers program at Orangeburg County First Steps.

Unlocking a Love for Reading

When Namrata moved to Orangeburg, South Carolina, she lacked the social support she wanted for herself and her young son, Veer. To get connected to resources in her new community, Namrata turned to Orangeburg County First Steps. There she enrolled in **Parents as Teachers**, a comprehensive parent education program.

Namrata was paired with parent educator Sheree Porter, who provided the family with one-on-one support and resources aimed at enhancing Veer's language and literacy skills. Now, as a rising kindergartner, Veer is confident and ready for school. Despite English not being his primary language, he is already reading fluently.

Namrata attributes her son's remarkable progress and academic readiness to the invaluable support they received from Orangeburg County First Steps.



Local Partnerships

Early Care & Education

To improve the quality of care and education provided to young children in South Carolina, we offer on-site coaching, technical assistance, and professional development solutions tailored to the needs of local providers.

Our **Child Care Quality Enhancement** (QE) strategies and **child care trainings** produce measurable improvements in program quality. That means greater access to safe, reliable child care for families and better outcomes for young children.



QUALITY ENHANCEMENT & CHILD CARE TRAINING AT A GLANCE | 2022-23

32,241+

hours of on-site technical
assistance provided

132

child care centers participated
in QE

932

hours of certified training
offered

3,444

children enrolled in QE
provider classrooms

*For the complete list of early care and education programs offered by First Steps local partnerships, see Appendix D.
For the number of individuals, by county, served by QE and child care training, see Appendix H.
For the results of an external evaluation of First Steps child care technical assistance programs, see Appendix I.*



J'Dae Early Learning Academy in Dillon, South Carolina has participated in Quality Enhancement services provided by Dillon County First Steps since 2020.

Unwavering Commitment

Ja'Novice Richardson knew that opening a full-time child care center came with challenges. But when she opened the doors of J'Dae Early Learning Academy in December 2019, she did not expect that a global pandemic would soon threaten to upend her lifelong dream.

Ja'Novice recognized that keeping her doors open would be essential for working families in her community. She was equally committed to creating a high quality learning environment for the children in her care.

She says that Dillon County First Steps helped her every step of the way, providing the coaching and support she needed to sustain and grow her child care center.

As a result, J'Dae Early Learning Academy has flourished, welcoming an increasing number of students and opening a First Steps 4K classroom.

“Children are surrounded by the best and most up to date classrooms, and parents can be reassured that their children are getting the very best.”

— Ja'Novice Richardson, EdD
Owner and Director
J'Dae Early Learning Academy, Dillon

Local Partnerships

School Transition

The transition from early childhood to elementary school is a critical window of opportunity for young children and their families.

Responding to a need articulated by our local partnerships statewide, we collaborated with state and local partners to develop and launch **Countdown to Kindergarten** in 2004.

The centerpiece of the initiative is a curriculum-driven program that connects families of rising kindergarten students with their future teachers during the summer before school.

In the summer of 2022, Countdown to Kindergarten increased its impact by 40% compared to the previous year, thanks to the introduction of a new **Countdown to 4K** program. This adaptation of the traditional model is specifically designed to support students entering preschool.

Alongside the 1,982 children directly served by Countdown to Kindergarten in 2022, thousands more benefitted from community events, virtual learning opportunities, online resources, and a social media drive aimed at boosting awareness of school readiness.



COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN AT A GLANCE | SUMMER 2022

1,982

children served

11,497

home and school visits provided

380

teachers trained

For the complete list of school transition programs offered by First Steps local partnerships, see Appendix D.



Jessica Adamee says that her daughter Cam, a kindergarten student at Forest Acres Elementary in Easley, “has a love of learning that she didn’t have prior to this program.”

A Sturdier Bridge to Kindergarten

Jessica once dreaded the day that her five-year-old daughter, Cam, would start kindergarten. Although Cam had attended child care since she was an infant, a negative experience in preschool made her extremely anxious about going to school.

When she registered Cam for school, Jessica learned that her teacher offered Countdown to Kindergarten through a partnership with Pickens County First Steps. Jessica was skeptical that it would make a difference, but she and her husband felt they had nothing to lose.

Cam’s teacher, Ginger McCoy, described Cam’s remarkable progress over the course of the summer. On their first visit together, Cam sat on her mom’s lap and would not look at her teacher. On the second visit, she did the activities with her mother. On the third, Cam comfortably joined Ms. McCoy to assemble a floor puzzle.

“By the fifth visit, it was like we were old friends,” said Ms. McCoy. “Cam opened up and never went back.”

Jessica was thrilled with the progress Cam made through Countdown to Kindergarten but remembers the apprehension she and her husband felt on the first day of school. She even took off work, anticipating the worst – a call from the school to pick Cam up due to a meltdown. The call never came. Instead, Cam returned home bubbling with enthusiasm about her day and eager for the year ahead.

Local Partnerships

Health



The HealthySteps program provides early childhood development support to families at pediatric primary care practices.

Health and brain development are deeply connected, beginning with a mother's well-being in pregnancy.

As part of our commitment to school readiness, we offer programs that promote maternal and infant health, enhance food security, prevent chronic health conditions, and address developmental delays.

When families can meet their basic needs, access comprehensive medical care, and connect with appropriate intervention and mental health services, their children are more likely to start school healthy and ready to succeed.

HEALTH AT A GLANCE | 2022-23

596

children screened for developmental delays

11,821

children served by Reach Out and Read

28,387

meals delivered to children at risk of food insecurity

4,770

HealthySteps consultations in pediatric clinics

1,500

families with newborns served by Family Connects

For details about the health programs offered by First Steps local partnerships, see Appendix D.



Ashley Rushing says that HealthySteps Specialist Christine Galusha of York County First Steps and the providers at Tri-County Pediatrics “feel like family.”

Partnering with Pediatrics

Ashley, a mother of twin boys, was growing increasingly concerned about their developmental progress. As their first birthday approached, she noticed they were not meeting the same milestones as other toddlers their age. She voiced her worries to their pediatrician, but she felt dismissed, being told to simply wait and see.

A friend recommended Tri-County Pediatrics in Rock Hill, South Carolina. At her sons' first appointment, Ashley met Christine, a **HealthySteps** specialist who took time to assess the boys' development and identify areas of concern. She then worked closely with Ashley to connect her with early intervention services and other community resources, ensuring comprehensive support for the entire family.

The boys, now 17 months old, have started therapy to address physical and speech delays. Ashley, who once felt hopeless, is more confident that she and her sons will finally get the support they need to thrive.



Local Partnerships

Mobilizing Communities



Senator Katrina Shealy volunteered to read to a First Steps 4K classroom at 5 Star Academy in West Columbia in February.

At First Steps, we harness the power of volunteerism and national service to amplify our impact and reach. Since launching the First Steps AmeriCorps program in 2020, we've seen our statewide corps of volunteers flourish.



AmeriCorps

At First Steps, AmeriCorps members serve in roles ranging from trained parent educators to community education and outreach members.

Last year, those who served as parent educators in the **Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)** program directly served 106 families.

2023 marked a significant expansion of our volunteer-driven initiatives, including our third annual **MLK Week of Service**.

It was our most successful to date, with 124 volunteers participating in read-alouds at 194 locations and distributing 3,100 books. The event drew a wide range of volunteers, including local and state government officials and partners like Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

Our service learning portfolio also grew with the addition of an **AmeriCorps VISTA** program, providing us with the resources to recruit three full-time Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs) in the spring of 2023, increasing our capacity to support local First Steps partnerships in areas of volunteer engagement, nonprofit management, communications, and fundraising.



Maria Michalet, Outreach Coordinator at Dorchester County First Steps, is a veteran First Steps AmeriCorps member and a former parent participant in First Steps programs. Maria's daughter, Elli, is a graduate of the First Steps 4K program at Riverpointe Christian Academy.

Paying It Forward

Maria was studying at Trident Technical College and raising a two-year-old daughter when she joined Dorchester County First Steps as an intern. Through her new role, she tapped into First Steps services like child care vouchers and parenting support, enabling her to successfully complete her degree.

Post-internship, Maria joined First Steps AmeriCorps as a Family and Community Engagement member. Over two years, she completed 900 hours of service and earned more than \$6,000 in Segal Education Awards, which helped her pay down student loan debt.

Now a mother of three, Maria has a full-time job as Dorchester County First Steps' outreach coordinator. She says that she finds fulfillment in the opportunity to help others access the same kind of support that benefitted her own family and propelled her career.

FIRST STEPS AMERICORPS AT A GLANCE | 2022-23

33

AmeriCorps members

17

service sites

24,024

service hours completed

\$82,667

Segal Education Awards

3

Volunteers in Service to America
(VISTA)

Educating Four-Year-Olds

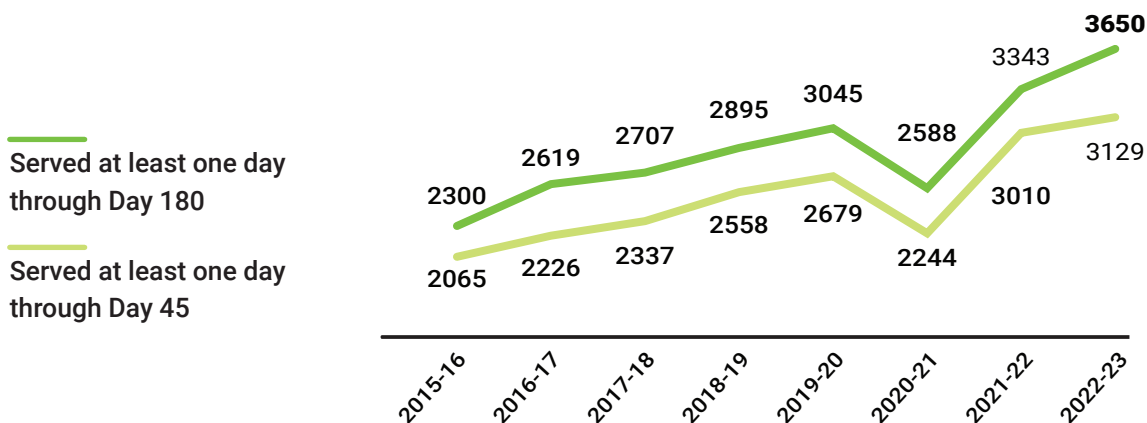
First Steps 4K offers free, full-day preschool education to qualifying children in South Carolina, plus child care for the whole family.

As part of the state's Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP),

First Steps 4K helps families access high-quality early learning.

Last year, through partnerships with 251 licensed child care centers and private schools, First Steps 4K educated 3,650 children.

Building on this foundation, **First Steps 4K+** qualifies families for the DSS Child Care Scholarship program — an innovative interagency collaboration that covers extended care for First Steps 4K students, as well as child care and afterschool programs for siblings up to age 12. Now in its second year, a total of 4,447 children have been approved for scholarships.



Students and parents participate in a BOOST parent engagement workshop at Sunshine House Early Learning Academy in Columbia, September 2022. Photo provided by 4K Lead Teacher Nygia Javis.



A Boost for Language and Literacy

During the 2022-2023 school year, First Steps 4K introduced the **Language and Literacy BOOST** program to promote language- and literacy-rich environments in the classroom and at home. More than 80 participating teachers received monthly professional development and held bi-monthly parent engagement workshops, ensuring skills learned in the classroom were reinforced at home.

This initiative saw remarkable success: 96% of participating classrooms demonstrated measurable improvements in their literacy environments, benefitting over 1,400 students. Additionally, with 428 parent engagement activities offered throughout the year, family involvement in First Steps 4K classrooms has significantly increased.

“We can see great strides in not only their letter recognition but also their use of different and bigger words in conversation.”

— Kelly Phillips, First Steps 4K Lead Teacher
Sunshine House Early Learning Academy,
Mauldin

First Steps 4K

Elevating Excellence

In 2021, the General Assembly expanded access to four-year-old kindergarten statewide.

Prior to this historic investment, 41% of South Carolina children in poverty lived in a zip code that disqualified them from needs-based preschool.

To address this gap, First Steps 4K has continued to expand our reach, increasing student enrollment by 9% compared to the previous year.

We also invested in our state's early childhood workforce, offering stipends to recruit and retain qualified preschool teachers and delivering best-in-class professional development for First Steps 4K providers.

Ahead of the 2022-23 school year, more than 450 teachers and 350 directors participated in the **First Steps 4K Academy**, an intensive, multi-day training.



More than 800 teachers and leaders participated in the 2022 First Steps 4K Academy.

This was followed by 90 hours of targeted training and professional development opportunities offered throughout the year.

In 2023, First Steps 4K further invested in our state's child care leadership by funding and supporting a cohort to participate in **Aim4Excellence**, a national director's credentialing program for early childhood administrators.

"The high quality training teachers receive gives the children they serve top notch educational success."

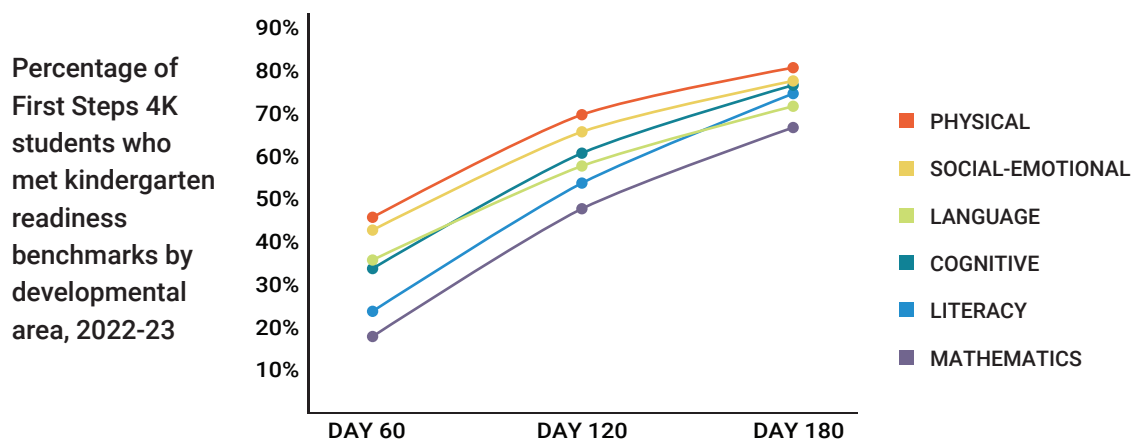
— First Steps 4K Lead Teacher



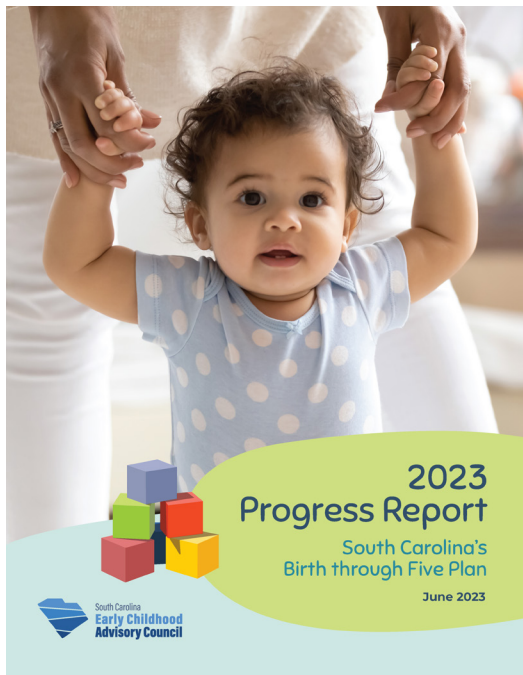
In 2023, 28 First Steps 4K providers, representing nine counties, participated in the Read-In, an annual State House reading event sponsored by the South Carolina State Library that encourages children to get excited about reading.

More Children Ready

To ensure program quality, First Steps 4K providers follow rigorous program standards, implement evidence-based curriculum, and document student learning throughout the year. The results are clear. When First Steps 4K students were assessed using the Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment system, they demonstrated gains in all areas of development and learning.



Leading for Children



Envision a future in which all young children are healthy and safe, nurtured by their families and communities, and ready for school by age five.

To realize this vision, we convene and operate the **SC Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)**, the state's primary collaborative body for the healthy development and education of children prenatal through age five. Council members include elected officials, agency directors, early childhood providers, business leaders, and parents of young children.



South Carolina
**Early Childhood
Advisory Council**

In 2022, the ECAC unveiled its inaugural strategic plan. **For Our Future: South Carolina's Birth through Five Plan** sets forth shared priorities and strategies for system change statewide.

The publication was recognized as a 2023 Notable State Document by the SC State Library and, on a national level, by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

A 2023 Progress Report, published in June, highlights successes and opportunities for further optimizing the system of programs and services available to young children.



View the 2023 progress report at earlychildhoodsc.org.

Harnessing Technology for a Brighter Future

Katie didn't know where to start when her two-year-old daughter Ava was diagnosed with an extremely rare syndrome that impacted her hearing.

Then she discovered **First Five SC**, a first-in-the-nation portal that provides families with streamlined access to the state's public early childhood system.

In minutes, Katie was able to find comprehensive information about 60+ programs and services, check her child's eligibility, and get connected to resources in her community.

"Having all that information in one centralized place was key to getting the right kind of help – fast."



Katie Hagan used First Five SC to find early intervention services and community resources for her two-year-old daughter.

STREAMLINING ACCESS TO SERVICES | 2022-23



122,299

unique visitors

12,051

families checked their eligibility for 40+ programs and services

78%

families were eligible for at least one program



71,299

unique visitors

7,257

families checked their eligibility for publicly funded preschool

77%

families were eligible for at least one program



Visit first5sc.org and palmettoprek.org

Engaging Whole Families

To ensure that children thrive, we focus on creating opportunities for both children and the adults in their lives.

The ECAC serves as South Carolina's lead for system-wide adoption of a two-generation approach, advancing policies and programs that achieve better outcomes for whole families.

A key part of our two-generation practice is facilitating the **Family Voice Council**, a formal leadership group consisting of 20 parents, grandparents and primary caregivers to young children who participate in public programs.

At monthly meetings, council members engage with public program leaders to offer feedback and track the impact of their ideas and suggestions.

In 2023, the Family Voice Council played an instrumental role in conceptualizing and planning the SC Summit on Early Childhood. They curated topics, selected presenters, and worked creatively to highlight diverse voices of the parents, caregivers, and early childhood professionals who make up the state's early childhood landscape.



Ally and her children, Mason and Makenna, represent the transformative impact of the two-generation approach. After experiencing homelessness, Ally found parenting support and housing assistance through Laurens County First Steps.

The Family Voice Council has also embraced opportunities to share their own stories. Through a partnership with South Carolina Educational Television (SCETV), council members recorded testimonials about their experiences with the state's early childhood system. Their voices continue to inform and shape the design and implementation of early childhood programs and policies statewide.



Family Voice Council



SC Family Voice Council member Tré Taylor recorded her story as part of a partnership with SCETV.

A Voice for Children

Tré Taylor's life took an unexpected turn four years ago. Her son was having health issues, and she offered to help him by temporarily caring for his one-year-old daughter and three-year-old son. Four years later, the children are still with her.

"I am so amazingly in love with these children, and they have changed my life for the better," Tré says. "I am so much more aware of unconditional love, patience, tolerance."

In this second chapter of parenting, Tré discovered a profound sense of connection and support through the Family Voice Council. She appreciates being a part of the council because it has given her an opportunity to connect with others with similar struggles and experiences. She has also enjoyed

hearing information, sharing advice, and knowing that she isn't alone.

Tré values the resources she has learned about through Family Voice Council. As a grandparent raising young children, she wasn't aware of many options available to her. Now she feels better equipped to advocate for her own family – while also affecting positive change for other parents and caregivers across the state.

"The Family Voice Council has been so tremendously helpful to me in so many ways."

— Tré Taylor, Family Voice Council member

Connecting the Field



On May 1, 2023, 16 agencies and statewide partners came together for the public launch of the First Five common application at the SC State Library.

“To be at the Summit, surrounded by so many with the same heartfelt passion, intent, and motivation, was awesome.”

— 2022 SC Summit on Early Childhood participant

South Carolina’s early childhood programs form a system that improves health, strengthens families, and prepares children for success in school.

To maximize the impact and reach of these investments, we facilitate collaboration among state-level partners. From cross-agency research and data governance to shared professional development, we work across agency lines and connect the field for the benefit of children and families.

Over the last year, the ECAC convened stakeholders and early childhood professionals to learn from experts and peers, advance their careers, and contribute to a robust statewide system of quality programs and services.

A highlight was the **Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree**, a professional learning opportunity provided at no cost to 1,484 teachers of three- and four-year-olds in South Carolina. The event is coordinated annually by leaders from First Steps, Head Start, the Department of Education, and the Department of Social Services.



The 2022 SC Summit on Early Childhood was held December 5 at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

Learning Together: SC Summit on Early Childhood

Storytelling. From early childhood on, it is one of the most effective ways of teaching, communicating, and connecting.

The **SC Summit on Early Childhood**, held December 1 in Columbia, brought together over 500 early childhood professionals, community leaders, policymakers, and state leaders to delve into the power of storytelling, all under the enchanting theme of *Once Upon a Time*.

Presented annually by South Carolina First Steps and the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council, the conference provided attendees with an open platform to share strategies, research, and dialogue in order to foster a strong foundation for the children of South Carolina.

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
AT A GLANCE
2022-23**

500

attendees participated in the
SC Summit on Early Childhood

1,484

educators attended the
Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree

READY FOR SCHOOL

South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner

All children are ready to benefit from a quality kindergarten experience when they are five years old by September 1 of that school year. But kindergarten readiness is more than a matter of age. South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner describes the physical, cognitive, social and emotional signs that a child is prepared for academic success. Developed by SC First Steps and the SC Department of Education, it serves as the state's official description of school readiness.



APPROACHES TO LEARNING & INQUIRY



- Demonstrates eagerness to learn
- Shows curiosity through questioning
- Shows creativity and imagination through pretend play
- Engages in daily opportunities for play and exploration
- Shows willingness to try new things
- Persists in tasks that are challenging
- Maintains attention
- Applies learning to new situations
- Solves problems with materials at hand
- Use senses and observations to learn about the world around them

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, SELF-HELP & MOTOR SKILLS



- Moves with control and balance while walking, running, jumping and climbing
- Uses fingers to control small objects, such as pencils/crayons, scissors, buttons and zippers
- Uses hand-eye coordination to perform simple tasks, like putting together a puzzle
- Independently performs self-help tasks such as toileting, hand washing, tooth brushing, and dressing



The Profile of the Ready Kindergartner is available as a printable resource in English and Spanish. For more information, visit scfirststeps.org.

LANGUAGE & LITERACY DEVELOPMENT



Listening, Speaking & Understanding

- Converses with others, taking turns speaking and listening
- Speaks clearly, expressing ideas and questions
- Uses words to seek help, answer questions and solve problems
- Speaks in complete sentences of at least six to eight words
- Listens to stories and retells them
- Begins to ask questions about stories that are read aloud
- Follows directions and completes tasks that require multiple steps
- Asks and answers “how” and “why” questions

Early Reading

- Shows interest in books and reading
- Holds books upright, turning pages one at a time from front to back
- Knows that printed words have meaning
- Uses pictures in a text to tell and retell the story
- Recognizes and names/reads familiar signs and logos
- Listens to a story being read aloud
- Makes predictions about what will happen next in a story being read aloud
- Begins to follow text from left to right as it is read aloud
- Recognizes and names rhyming words
- Recognizes that letters represent spoken sounds
- Recognizes some upper and lower case letters and their sounds
- Recognizes that spoken words can be represented in written language
- Recognizes written name as well as other familiar words
- Begins to use pictures and text read aloud to learn the meaning of unfamiliar words

Early Writing

- Draws pictures and tells their story
- Writes using a combination of letters, letter-like shapes and scribbles
- Uses drawing and writing during play
- Writes name independently or using an example

MATHEMATICAL THINKING



Number Sense

- Counts in sequence up to 20
- Counts up to 10 objects, using one number for each object
- Recognizes up to five objects in a group without counting
- Compares sets of objects (*more than* or *less than*)
- Describes and compares objects by size (*big* and *small*), length (*long* and *short*) and weight (*light* and *heavy*)
- Understands and uses the terms *first*, *second* and *third*

Matching, Sorting, Classifying

- Recognizes and draws basic shapes, such as circle, square and triangle
- Recognizes and repeats simple repeating patterns, such as triangle, square, triangle, square
- Describes positions of objects by using the terms *above* and *below*
- Sorts and classifies up to 10 objects into categories

EMOTIONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

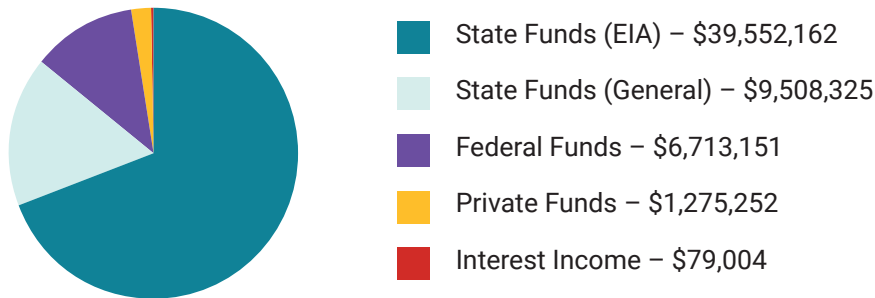


- Shares, takes turns and plays well with others
- Expresses emotions through appropriate actions and words
- Follows simple rules and directions
- Adjusts to changes in routine and environment
- Shows self-control
- Shows caring and understanding of others' feelings
- Interacts with familiar adults
- Respects the property of others
- Resolves conflicts using words and adult support
- Makes friends

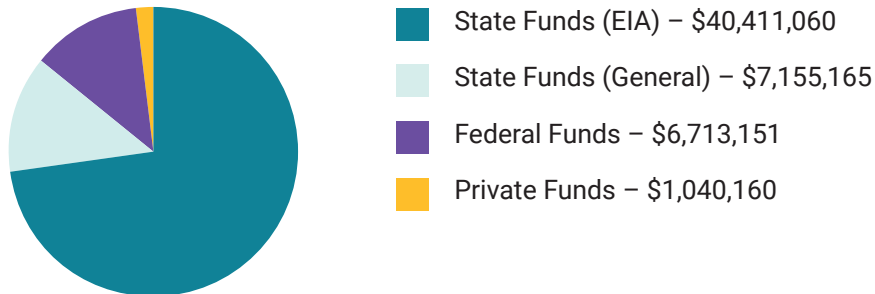
Financials

South Carolina First Steps is the only statewide funding source dedicated exclusively to early childhood. As a public-private partnership, we leverage state support with federal and private funds to maximize our investment in early childhood systems and services.

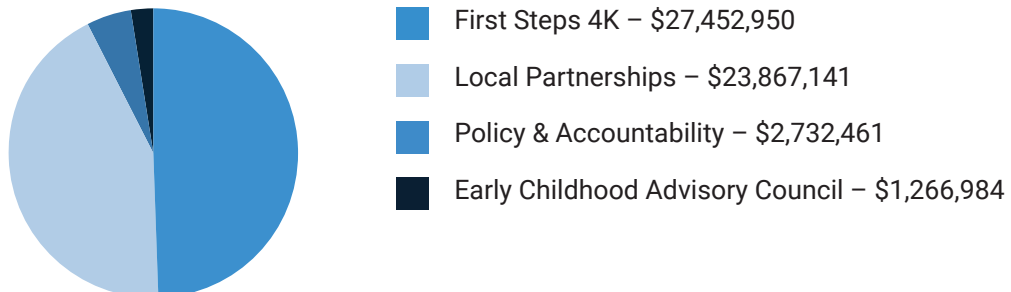
FY 2023 REVENUE – \$57,127,894



FY 2023 EXPENDITURES – \$55,319,536



FY 2023 EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM – \$55,319,536



SC First Steps Board of Trustees & SC Early Childhood Advisory Council

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Child Care Provider

“This was a banner year for First Steps. With unanimous support for permanent authorization and an impactful increase from 5% to 8% of eligible children served with high-touch programs, we are stepping up for South Carolina’s children.”

— David Morley, Chair
SC First Steps Board of Trustees
SC Early Childhood Advisory Council



Fiscal Year 2023 Supporters

Early Childhood Champions

Individuals

Mary Lee Arthur
Marilyn and Ron Artz
Laura and Jacob Baker
Claire and Joe Blake
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and Julie Turner
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Union
Humana Health Horizons
Kaplan Early Learning
Kimberly Clark Corporation-
Beech Island
KRJ Consulting
Lakeshore Learning Materials

Thank you, taxpayers

Every South Carolina taxpayer has the option to contribute to the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness fund when filing their individual income taxes.

In 2023, South Carolina taxpayers contributed \$27,295 that went directly to local First Steps partnerships to support healthy births, strong families, and quality child care.

South Carolina First Steps is both a state agency and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

When you give to First Steps, you build on South Carolina's proven investment in early childhood. Your support improves child health, strengthens families, and increases access to quality child care. Because of you, more children will be ready to thrive in school — and in life. **Thank you.**



Become an early childhood champion.
Give today at scfirststeps.org/donate.

Lourie Health and Life
Manley Garvin
Midas
Molina Healthcare
Nelson Mullins
Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union
Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein LLP
Pollock Company
Prosperity Childcare-Lamar
Riley Pope & Laney
Robinson Gray
Scott and Company Accounting Firm
Select Health of SC
Snider Fleet Solutions
Synovus Bank
Teaching Strategies
TS Holt Company
West Diversified Consultant Services

Foundations

Alliance for Early Success
Blackbaud Giving Foundation
Doris Duke Foundation
The Duke Endowment
Pritzker Children's Initiative
Sisters of Charity Foundation
Spinks Family Foundation

Event Sponsors A Night to Celebrate Community 2023

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Kaplan Early Learning Company
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Beth and Brian Moore
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First Steps 4K Academy 2023

Kaplan Early Learning Company
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SC Summit on Early Childhood 2023

Children's Trust of SC
Healthy Blue
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Lakeshore Learning Materials
Cheryl and Dave Morley
Sisters of Charity Foundation
SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
SC Department of Education

SC Department of Health and Environmental Control
SC Department of Health and Human Services
SC Department of Mental Health
SC Department of Social Services
SC Educational Television (SCETV)
SC Head Start Collaboration Office
SC State Library

Public Funds

State of South Carolina
AmeriCorps State Grant via SC Service Commission at the United Way Association of SC
American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, via SC Department of Education
U.S. Department of Education (Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant) via SC Department of Education
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Child Care Development Block Grant) via SC Department of Social Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Preschool Development Birth through Five Grant) via SC Department of Social Services

Every Child Ready

2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Adopted in July 2020 by the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees, *Every Child Ready* is a five-year road map for achieving our mission and moving toward our vision of success for every child.

This 2020-2025 strategic plan includes our mission, vision, five organizational values, four strategic priorities, 20 objectives, 97 strategies, and 6 overarching measures of success. Collectively, they represent our commitment to South Carolina's children, their families, and our state.

GOALS AND PROGRESS

1. **INCREASE THE REACH OF FIRST STEPS SERVICES.** By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps will increase from 17% to 20%. **In FY23, we directly served 37% of children in need.**
2. **INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HIGH INTENSITY PROGRAMS FUNDED BY FIRST STEPS.** By 2025, the percentage of children in need who are directly served by First Steps high intensity programs will increase from 5% to 8%. **In FY23, 8% of children in need participated in high intensity programs funded by First Steps.**
3. **INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES.** By 2025, the percentage of children under age 6 who benefit from First Steps quality enhancement and training efforts will increase from 12% to 15%. **In FY23, we reached 19% of children under six through Quality Enhancement and child care training.**
4. **MORE CHILDREN ARRIVE AT KINDERGARTEN READY FOR SUCCESS.** By 2025, the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment will increase by 2% each year to 47%. **In 2022, 38% of children scored “demonstrating readiness” on the KRA.**
5. **REDUCE THE RACIAL/ETHNIC GAPS IN KINDERGARTEN READINESS.** By 2025, the gap in the percentage of children who score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment between White kindergartners and Black/Latino kindergartners will reduce by 1% each year to 15%. **In 2021, the racial/ethnic gap in kindergarten readiness was 19%.**
6. **CREATE AN ACCESS PORTAL TO INCREASE SOUTH CAROLINA CHILDREN’S KNOWLEDGE OF AND ACCESS TO SERVICES.** By 2025, First5SC.org will launch and include five categories: child care & early education, health & safety, special needs & early intervention, food & nutrition, and parenting & family support. **First Five SC initially launched in February 2022 with information about 60 programs and services and an eligibility screener for 44 of them. A common application was added in March 2023, providing families with a single access point for more than 25 programs across three state agencies.**



Access the plan at scfirststeps.org.

Risk Factors Affecting School Readiness

The South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees has identified the following risk factors as those most likely to affect school readiness. Intensive services provided by or supported by local First Steps partnerships require all children served to possess at least one of the following risk factors, with most (either 60%, 80% or 100% depending on the program) possessing 2 or more.

The child has been abused.

The child has been neglected.

The child is in foster care or kinship care.

The child or family is enrolled in or eligible for Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF).

The child or family is enrolled in or eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The child has a disability or developmental delay as documented by a physician or standardized assessment (not a screening tool).

The child is blind or visually impaired.

The child is deaf or hearing impaired.

The child is eligible for IDEA Part B or Part C.

The child's mother or primary caregiver was 20 years old or younger at the time of the child's birth.

The child's mother or primary caregiver did not have a high school diploma or GED at the time of the child's birth.

The child's parent or caregiver has had a substance abuse issue during the child's lifetime.

The child's parent or caregiver has had depression or another mental health condition during the child's lifetime.

The child's parent or caregiver has an intellectual disability.

The child has been exposed to domestic violence within their family.

The child had a low birth weight (under 5.5 lbs) with serious medical complications.

English is not the primary language spoken in the child's home.

The child has a single parent or caregiver.

The child is experiencing homelessness.

The child has experienced numerous family relocations or transiency.

The child has a parent who is currently incarcerated or has been incarcerated within the last 12 months.

The child has experienced the death of a parent, caregiver or sibling.

The child's parent or caregiver is currently serving in the military away from home or has returned home from military duty within the last two years.

The child is an immigrant or refugee.

The child has a parent or caregiver who was born in another country and entered the U.S. within the last five years.

The child has been removed from child care or preschool for behavioral reasons.

The child is enrolled in or eligible for Medicaid.

The child's parent or caregiver is eligible for Medicaid and is either pregnant or within one year after giving birth.

Local Partnership Performance

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR STATE GRANT FUNDING

South Carolina First Steps takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that local First Steps partnerships are successfully meeting legislative requirements as a condition of receiving state funds. In 2019, the SC First Steps Board of Trustees adopted a revised formula grant application process in which the governance, operations, accountability, fiscal, resource development, program performance, and core function responsibilities of local partnerships were consolidated into a set of minimum qualifications.

Annually, local partnerships are assessed for compliance with 46 minimum qualifications across four categories: Governance (13), Operations & Accountability (9), Fiscal & Resource Development (11), Program Strategies (10), and Core Functions (3). In addition, partnership boards received feedback on their partnership's performance over the past year relative to the partnership and program standards approved by the state board, assessed as "highly effective," "effective," or an "area for improvement."

Overall, local partnerships have met most minimum qualifications. In fiscal year 2023, 11 of 46 local partnerships received a corrective action plan to address unmet minimum qualifications. SC First Steps program officers provide ongoing support to local partnerships with corrective action plans and report progress to the state board of trustees.

A complete list of minimum qualifications for First Steps formula grant funding is available at scfirststeps.org/grants.

Local Partnership Programs

BY PROGRAM TYPE, FY 2023

First Steps local partnership boards determine annually what services to offer based on community needs and assets, opportunities to collaborate with local partners, and the availability of resources in addition to state funding.

	PROGRAM	SERVICES PROVIDED	EVIDENCE-BASED?	CLIENT LEVEL DATA AVAILABLE?	# CHILDREN 0-5 SERVED IN FY23	# FAMILIES SERVED IN FY23	# COUNTIES WITH THIS PROGRAM IN FY23
Programs that support parents as their child's first and best teacher, ranked in order of intensity.	PARENTS AS TEACHERS	Home visitation and group support for families, pre-birth-school entry	Y	Y	1598	1379	29
	HOME INSTRUCTION FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL YOUNGSTERS (HIPPIY)	Peer parent education and home visitation for families with 4-year-olds	Y	Y	109	106	13
	NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP	Home visitation for first time mothers, from pregnancy until the child turns 2	Y	Y*	529	667	7
	EARLY STEPS TO SCHOOL SUCCESS	Home visitation for families pre-birth until 36 months	Y	Y	131	109	1
	NURTURING PARENTING	Group support with optional models of home visitation and fatherhood	Y	Y	648	530	11
	INCREDIBLE YEARS	12-week group support for parents for their child's social and emotional development and behavior	Y	Y	30	29	1
	STRENGTHENING FAMILIES	14-session group support program to promote strong and resilient families	Y	Y*	13	13	1
	POSITIVE PARENTING PROGRAM (TRIPLE P)	A system of parent training programs. Triple P levels offered by FS include group support for parents	Y	Y	1122	869	5
	FAMILY CAFÉ	Parent discussion groups that promote social connections with other parents	N	Y	207	140	6
Programs that increase access to quality early care and education, in order of intensity.	EARLY HEAD START	Federal grant for intensive center-based support for infants and toddlers	Y	Y*	623	481	5
	FULL DAY 4K, HALF-DAY 4K	Operation or support of a four-year-old kindergarten program	Y	Y*	47	47	2
	EARLY EDUCATION UNDER 4	Support for infant, toddler, or 3K classrooms, including during adult education/family literacy programs	Y	Y*	48	41	3
	CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS	Subsidize child care costs to providers demonstrating quality	**	Y	643	643	23
	ENHANCED EARLY EDUCATION	Supplemental support to early education programs, such as one-on-one tutoring and parent engagement	Y	Y*	1173	838	6
Programs that improve quality and support professional development among early care and education providers.	QUALITY ENHANCEMENT, QUALITY COUNTS	Intensive support to child care centers, Head Start, and preschool classrooms to improve quality	Y	Y Provider and Workforce Data	3444	n/a	19
	SUPPORTING CARE PROVIDERS THROUGH VISITS	Intensive support to family child care providers to improve quality	N	Y Provider and Workforce Data	93	n/a	6
	TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce	Y	Y* Provider and Workforce Data	60,679	n/a	36

APPENDIX D

	PROGRAM	SERVICES PROVIDED	EVIDENCE-BASED?	CLIENT LEVEL DATA AVAILABLE?	# CHILDREN 0-5 SERVED IN FY23	# FAMILIES SERVED IN FY23	# COUNTIES WITH THIS PROGRAM IN FY23
Programs with a primary focus of promoting language and literacy development, ranked in order of intensity.	PARENTCHILD+	Home visitation for families with 2- and 3-year olds to promote early literacy skills	Y	Y	71	71	3
	LENA HOME	10-session home visitation to help families increase positive interactions and language use with young children	Y	Y	17	16	1
	MOTHEREAD/ FATHEREAD	Group support for parents with low literacy levels in reading to their children	Y	Y	32	25	1
	RAISING A READER WITH PARENT SESSIONS – ENHANCED	Weekly take-home bookbags and group support for parents	Y	N	481	439	5
	RAISING A READER	Weekly take-home bookbag exchange	N	N	267	n/a	4
	LIBRARY BASED PROGRAMS	Library staff visit child care and preschool classrooms providing books, storytelling, and staff training	N	N	1400	1114	4
	REACH OUT AND READ	Books and information on reading books to children provided during well-child visits	Y	N	11,821	11,821	8
	DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY	One book per month mailed to the home	Y	N	10,360	9,980	16
	OTHER FAMILY LITERACY	Other services to support language and literacy with parents and children	N	N	651	651	3
Programs that promote physical health, prevent chronic health conditions, and identify and address developmental delays.	HEALTHYSTEPS	Early childhood development support during pediatric well-child visits	Y	Y*	4,088	4,088	3
	FAMILY CONNECTS	Nurse home visiting program for all families with newborns	Y	Y*	1500	1500	1
	EARLY IDENTIFICATION & REFERRAL, including PASOs Connections for Child Development	Providing developmental screenings and referrals to other services, independent of another partnership program	Y	Y	596	527	9
	WEEKEND BACKPACKS	Nutritious food backpacks for low income preschool children	N	N	569	n/a	2
	WIC COLLABORATION	Outreach to increase enrollment and retention in Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	N	N	n/a	588	7
	HEALTH SERVICES	Supporting children's healthy development	N	N	1,267	1,289	1
Programs that support transitions between early childhood settings and from early childhood into kindergarten.	COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN <i>Summer 2022</i>	Summer program supporting transitions into kindergarten	N	Y	1,372	1,192	25
	COUNTDOWN TO 4K <i>Summer 2022</i>	Summer program supporting transitions into 4K	N	Y	610	598	22

† Only includes support of 4K offered by local partnerships; does not include First Steps 4K (CERDEP).

* Client data is captured in a data system outside of those controlled by First Steps.

** Child care scholarships are evidence-based when combined with one or more evidence-based programs.

Local Partnership Programs

BY COUNTY, FY 2023

ABBEVILLE

Child Care Training
Nurturing Parenting

AIKEN

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Enhanced Early Education
Parents as Teachers
Quality Enhancement

ALLENDALE

Early Identification & Referral
Enhanced Early Education
Nurturing Parenting

ANDERSON

Child Care (4K)
Countdown to Kindergarten
HealthySteps
Raising a Reader
Triple P

BAMBERG

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Parents as Teachers

BARNWELL

Child Care
Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Head Start
Family Café
HIPPIY
Library Based Program
Parents as Teachers
Quality Enhancement

BEAUFORT

Parents as Teachers
Reach Out and Read
Supporting Care Providers through Visits
Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Early Identification & Referral (PASOs)
WIC Collaboration

BERKELEY

Family Café
Parents as Teachers
Nurturing Parenting
Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships
HealthySteps
Early Identification & Referral (PASOs)

CALHOUN

Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Parents as Teachers

CHARLESTON

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Early Identification & Referral (PASOs)
Family Literacy
Parents as Teachers
Parents as Teachers - Connected Families
Parents as Teachers - Early Head Start
Quality Enhancement
Raising a Reader
Supporting Care Providers through Visits

CHEROKEE

Child Care Training
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
LENA Home
Triple P

CHESTER

Child Care Training
Nurturing Parenting
Parents as Teachers

CHESTERFIELD

Child Care (3K, 4K)
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
ParentChild+
Weekend Backpacks

CLARENDON

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Parents as Teachers
Quality Enhancement

COLLETON

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Nurturing Parenting
Parents as Teachers
Parents as Teachers - Connected Families
Supporting Care Providers through Visits

DARLINGTON

Countdown to Kindergarten
Family Café
Health Services
Motherread/Fatheread
Parents as Teachers
Reach Out and Read

APPENDIX E

DILLON

Child Care Training
Nurturing Parenting
Quality Enhancement
Raising a Reader

DORCHESTER

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Nurturing Parenting
Parents as Teachers
Quality Enhancement
Supporting Care Providers through Visits

EDGEFIELD

Child Care
Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Nurse-Family Partnership
Nurturing Parenting
Quality Enhancement

FAIRFIELD

Child Care Scholarships
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Family Literacy
Parents as Teachers
Quality Enhancement

FLORENCE

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
HIPPI
ParentChild+
Quality Enhancement
Raising a Reader

GEORGETOWN

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
ParentChild+
Triple P

GREENVILLE

Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Enhanced Early Education
Family Connects
Nurse-Family Partnership
Nurturing Parenting
Reach Out and Read
Triple P

GREENWOOD

Child Care Training
Nurturing Parenting

HAMPTON

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Parents as Teachers
Supporting Care Providers through Visits

HORRY

Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Identification & Referral (PASOs)
Enhanced Early Education
Parents as Teachers
Quality Enhancement
Raising a Reader
Ready4K!
WIC Collaboration

JASPER

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Early Identification & Referral
Parents as Teachers

KERSHAW

Countdown to Kindergarten
Parents as Teachers
Quality Counts
Raising a Reader

LANCASTER

Child Care (4K)
Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Early Head Start
Early Identification & Referral
Incredible Years
Parents as Teachers
Weekend Backpacks

LAURENS

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Parents as Teachers
Reach Out and Read

LEE

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Steps to School Success
Family Café
Raising a Reader
Strengthening Families

LEXINGTON

Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Early Identification & Referral (PASOs)
Parents as Teachers
Parents as Teachers - Connected Families

APPENDIX E

MARION

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Family Literacy
HIPPY
Nurturing Parenting
Quality Enhancement
Raising a Reader

MARLBORO

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Parents as Teachers
Reach Out and Read

MCCORMICK

Child Care
Child Care Scholarships
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Library Based Program
Nurturing Parenting

NEWBERRY

Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Library Based Program
Parents as Teachers
Quality Counts
Reach Out and Read
Triple P

OCONEE

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Nurse-Family Partnership
WIC Collaboration

ORANGEBURG

Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Family Café
HIPPY
Parents as Teachers
Quality Counts
Raising a Reader

PICKENS

Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Early Identification & Referral
Nurse-Family Partnership
Parents as Teachers
Parents as Teachers - Connected Families
Reach Out and Read

RICHLAND

Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Head Start
Parents as Teachers
Parents as Teachers - Connected Families
Quality Enhancement

SALUDA

Child Care Training
Enhanced Early Education
Library Based Program
Nurse-Family Partnership
Nurturing Parenting

SPARTANBURG

Child Care (The Franklin School)
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Head Start
Nurse-Family Partnership
Quality Counts
WIC Collaboration

SUMTER

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Parents as Teachers
WIC Collaboration

UNION

Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Parents as Teachers
Reach Out and Read

WILLIAMSBURG

Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Family Café
HIPPY
Parents as Teachers
Supporting Care Providers through Visits

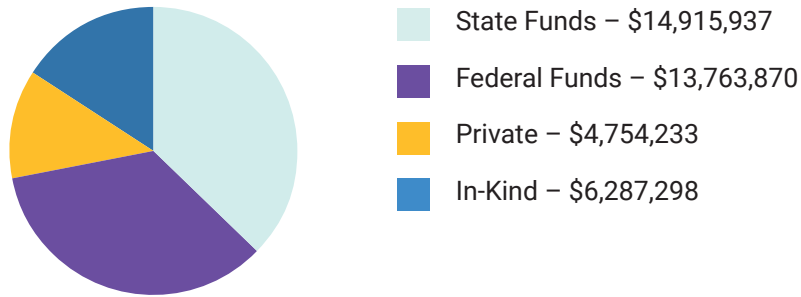
YORK

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
HealthySteps
Nurse-Family Partnership
Parents as Teachers
Parents as Teachers - Connected Families
Quality Enhancement

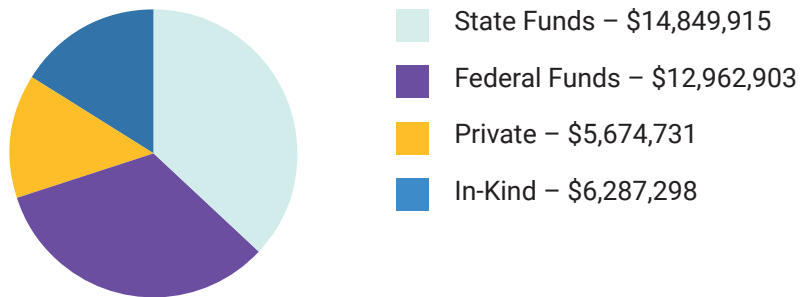
Local Partnership Finances

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES BY FUND TYPE, FY 2023

FY 2023 REVENUE – \$39,721,338



FY 2023 EXPENDITURES – \$39,774,846



Local Partnership Finances

REVENUE BY COUNTY, FY 2023*

COUNTY	STATE	FEDERAL	PRIVATE	IN-KIND	TOTAL
Abbeville	\$183,330.67	\$1,500.00	\$1,415.27	\$35,167.47	\$221,413.41
Aiken	\$302,065.41	\$3,040.00	\$6,021.27	\$194,790.00	\$505,916.68
Allendale	\$200,000.00	\$2,500.00	\$19,113.06	\$35,410.00	\$257,023.06
Anderson	\$421,436.00	\$58,569.58	\$2,052.94	\$82,821.71	\$564,880.23
Bamberg	\$210,000.00	\$50,846.66	\$10,393.48	\$216,349.00	\$487,589.14
Barnwell	\$215,000.00	\$201,823.23	\$178,344.36	\$122,647.18	\$717,814.77
Beaufort	\$425,176.00	\$146,659.99	\$15,513.90	\$24,660.27	\$612,010.16
Berkeley	\$529,702.33	\$344,330.33	\$106,216.35	\$6,040.39	\$986,289.40
Calhoun	\$211,230.00	\$9,362.00	\$40,075.74	\$36,060.13	\$296,727.87
Charleston	\$703,984.00	\$436,144.74	\$359,890.31	\$12,617.53	\$1,512,636.58
Cherokee	\$221,600.00	\$78,154.80	\$46,850.91	\$386,621.84	\$733,227.55
Chester	\$200,000.00	\$8,250.00	\$3,362.06	\$36,050.00	\$247,662.06
Chesterfield	\$216,607.06	\$246,366.56	\$97,373.12	\$40,306.84	\$600,653.58
Clarendon	\$200,000.00	\$134,618.20	\$4,936.67	\$183,930.00	\$523,484.87
Colleton	\$225,724.32	\$58,370.15	\$84,870.77	\$125,334.00	\$494,299.24
Darlington	\$224,420.00	\$152,828.23	\$104,278.87	\$0.00	\$481,527.10
Dillon	\$231,486.64	\$186,475.69	\$36,638.67	\$14,835.00	\$469,436.00
Dorchester	\$322,701.00	\$79,058.12	\$29,749.87	\$77,916.00	\$509,424.99
Edgefield	\$217,064.00	\$17,159.00	\$12,677.95	\$323,462.92	\$570,363.87
Fairfield	\$200,000.00	\$53,391.20	\$10,497.17	\$156,174.08	\$420,062.45
Florence	\$410,112.00	\$150,543.73	\$4,944.09	\$142,453.66	\$708,053.48
Georgetown	\$200,000.00	\$69,052.50	\$12,887.19	\$0.00	\$281,939.69
Greenville	\$1,039,244.00	\$91,659.96	\$909,321.72	\$650,000.00	\$2,690,225.68
Greenwood	\$260,540.00	\$1,500.00	\$2,729.57	\$66,010.75	\$330,780.32
Hampton	\$210,000.00	\$6,336.13	\$16,839.87	\$42,486.00	\$275,662.00
Horry	\$687,924.00	\$10,990.00	\$13,452.26	\$158,741.97	\$871,108.23
Jasper	\$222,500.00	\$5,270.00	\$45,781.40	\$106,836.08	\$380,387.48
Kershaw	\$213,300.00	\$12,974.73	\$1,662.05	\$28,000.00	\$255,936.78
Lancaster	\$200,424.95	\$2,080,353.95	\$150,451.85	\$310,670.62	\$2,741,901.37
Laurens	\$209,177.00	\$23,825.00	\$7,257.85	\$84,638.50	\$324,898.35
Lee	\$234,150.00	\$241,993.33	\$791,042.58	\$409,820.32	\$1,677,006.23
Lexington	\$594,364.00	\$448,581.93	\$110,985.04	\$468,761.37	\$1,622,692.34
Marion	\$200,000.00	\$126,923.50	\$7,203.96	\$345,093.56	\$679,221.02
Marlboro	\$200,000.00	\$15,424.00	\$1,466.48	\$151,937.01	\$368,827.49
McCormick	\$219,000.00	\$22,826.83	\$5,536.82	\$137,264.00	\$384,627.65
Newberry	\$219,534.66	\$65,621.21	\$15,921.50	\$68,880.40	\$369,957.77
Oconee	\$200,000.00	\$41,960.00	\$7,783.43	\$372,611.00	\$622,354.43
Orangeburg	\$302,808.00	\$89,985.17	\$13,487.20	\$19,794.02	\$426,074.39
Pickens	\$224,183.00	\$118,591.46	\$81,038.09	\$136,301.74	\$560,114.29
Richland	\$955,175.00	\$2,419,103.91	\$231,620.79	\$4,510.90	\$3,610,410.60
Saluda	\$203,415.00	\$10,730.00	\$23,898.95	\$71,908.88	\$309,952.83
Spartanburg	\$768,247.00	\$4,501,418.66	\$557,157.23	\$0.00	\$5,826,822.89
Sumter	\$359,863.28	\$87,520.81	\$2,580.14	\$233,748.00	\$683,712.23
Union	\$200,000.00	\$60,691.60	\$4,913.14	\$44,178.00	\$309,782.74
Williamsburg	\$220,000.00	\$161,953.98	\$20,655.31	\$0.00	\$402,609.29
York	\$500,447.53	\$628,588.99	\$543,342.00	\$121,456.63	\$1,793,835.15
\$14,915,936.85	\$13,763,869.86	\$4,754,233.25	\$6,287,297.77	\$39,721,337.73	

* The figures provided are based on unaudited financial statements and, as such, are subject to change.

Local Partnership Finances

EXPENDITURES BY COUNTY, FY 2023

COUNTY	STATE	FEDERAL	PRIVATE	IN-KIND	TOTAL
Abbeville	\$135,388.32	\$0.00	\$363.65	\$35,167.47	\$170,919.44
Aiken	\$366,389.92	\$3,292.44	\$2,546.08	\$194,790.00	\$567,018.44
Allendale	\$216,559.54	\$1,740.70	\$2,446.43	\$35,410.00	\$256,156.67
Anderson	\$438,877.98	\$33,706.75	\$2,565.30	\$82,821.71	\$557,971.74
Bamberg	\$182,787.53	\$62,821.69	\$1,976.50	\$216,349.00	\$463,934.72
Barnwell	\$217,453.37	\$229,420.45	\$269,056.65	\$122,647.18	\$838,577.65
Beaufort	\$431,340.91	\$149,994.04	\$28,013.79	\$24,660.27	\$634,009.01
Berkeley	\$456,224.47	\$382,651.20	\$189,885.09	\$6,040.39	\$1,034,801.15
Calhoun	\$219,793.80	\$7,474.44	\$38,956.77	\$36,060.13	\$302,285.14
Charleston	\$730,469.50	\$363,772.66	\$355,683.02	\$12,617.53	\$1,462,542.71
Cherokee	\$219,336.80	\$74,462.60	\$32,446.85	\$386,621.84	\$712,868.09
Chester	\$204,278.77	\$3,250.00	\$3,379.85	\$36,050.00	\$246,958.62
Chesterfield	\$214,190.03	\$310,378.61	\$92,018.32	\$40,306.84	\$656,893.80
Clarendon	\$164,803.63	\$119,798.04	\$9,064.73	\$183,930.00	\$477,596.40
Colleton	\$190,711.52	\$55,682.54	\$70,258.52	\$125,334.00	\$441,986.58
Darlington	\$223,555.20	\$138,893.56	\$134,711.38	\$0.00	\$497,160.14
Dillon	\$234,211.21	\$186,480.93	\$27,403.49	\$14,835.00	\$462,930.63
Dorchester	\$322,321.41	\$95,260.72	\$27,006.77	\$77,916.00	\$522,504.90
Edgefield	\$206,674.58	\$16,080.48	\$7,762.15	\$323,462.92	\$553,980.13
Fairfield	\$252,579.95	\$52,001.79	\$2,905.69	\$156,174.08	\$463,661.51
Florence	\$407,134.14	\$132,383.47	\$2,599.56	\$142,453.66	\$684,570.83
Georgetown	\$193,904.86	\$55,513.02	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	\$250,617.88
Greenville	\$1,070,470.33	\$86,875.00	\$745,413.55	\$650,000.00	\$2,552,758.88
Greenwood	\$245,303.23	\$1,500.00	\$5,154.24	\$66,010.75	\$317,968.22
Hampton	\$184,352.80	\$3,397.74	\$10,789.22	\$42,486.00	\$241,025.76
Horry	\$783,178.85	\$11,017.11	\$10,950.81	\$158,741.97	\$963,888.74
Jasper	\$238,679.07	\$4,716.58	\$35,611.98	\$106,836.08	\$385,843.71
Kershaw	\$210,315.03	\$7,796.04	\$4,732.07	\$28,000.00	\$250,843.14
Lancaster	\$193,599.87	\$1,961,217.84	\$257,956.44	\$310,670.62	\$2,723,444.77
Laurens	\$164,159.09	\$18,912.62	\$4,119.68	\$84,638.50	\$271,829.89
Lee	\$221,368.29	\$298,743.92	\$780,102.00	\$409,820.32	\$1,710,034.53
Lexington	\$593,665.86	\$402,748.29	\$159,906.75	\$468,761.37	\$1,625,082.27
Marion	\$204,854.45	\$154,537.97	\$4,616.82	\$345,093.56	\$709,102.80
Marlboro	\$187,061.49	\$5,204.51	\$0.00	\$151,937.01	\$344,203.01
McCormick	\$230,910.10	\$20,476.41	\$13,635.62	\$137,264.00	\$402,286.13
Newberry	\$213,534.90	\$47,683.73	\$14,672.74	\$68,880.40	\$344,771.77
Oconee	\$182,817.56	\$27,581.33	\$4,579.10	\$372,611.00	\$587,588.99
Orangeburg	\$323,208.71	\$81,098.55	\$13,417.02	\$19,794.02	\$437,518.30
Pickens	\$214,011.00	\$106,749.17	\$92,003.56	\$136,301.74	\$549,065.47
Richland	\$876,925.63	\$2,379,273.90	\$243,935.18	\$4,510.90	\$3,504,645.61
Saluda	\$203,716.47	\$10,730.00	\$18,462.25	\$71,908.88	\$304,817.60
Spartanburg	\$788,351.58	\$3,972,338.19	\$1,327,650.51	\$0.00	\$6,088,340.28
Sumter	\$347,855.90	\$84,996.77	\$9,478.65	\$233,748.00	\$676,079.32
Union	\$194,172.88	\$64,807.54	\$4,606.30	\$44,178.00	\$307,764.72
Williamsburg	\$228,223.42	\$144,744.17	\$26,431.94	\$0.00	\$399,399.53
York	\$520,190.74	\$590,695.59	\$584,253.71	\$121,456.63	\$1,816,596.67
\$14,849,914.69	\$12,962,903.10	\$5,674,730.73	\$6,287,297.77	\$39,774,846.29	

Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) and Child Care Training

INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FIRST STEPS LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, FY 2023

LOCAL PARTNERSHIP	# OF TEACHERS & DIRECTORS SERVED BY QE	# OF TEACHERS & DIRECTORS SERVED BY TRAINING	TOTAL
Abbeville	0	331	331
Aiken	52	78	130
Bamberg	0	30	30
Barnwell	3	37	40
Beaufort	76	278	354
Berkeley	35	193	228
Charleston	35	30	65
Cherokee	0	31	31
Chester	0	155	155
Clarendon	0	56	56
Colleton	0	97	97
Dillon	39	51	90
Dorchester	53	127	180
Edgefield	20	50	70
Fairfield	15	0	15
Florence	100	134	234
Georgetown	0	13	13
Greenville	0	248	248
Greenwood	0	52	52
Hampton	0	169	169
Horry	0	82	82
Jasper	0	87	87
Kershaw	27	0	27
Lancaster	0	25	25
Laurens	0	38	38
Lee	0	356	356
Lexington	0	54	54
Marion	48	134	182
Marlboro	0	27	27
Newberry	19	54	73
Oconee	0	153	153
Orangeburg	15	112	127
Richland	299	20	319
Saluda	0	27	27
Spartanburg	571	0	571
Sumter	0	271	271
Union	0	12	12
Williamsburg	0	72	72
York	38	85	123

External Evaluation of First Steps Child Care Technical Assistance Programs

FY 2016 - FY 2019

First Steps is an important part of the state network of agencies and organizations that provide technical assistance (TA) and training for early care and education programs and providers, devoting a significant portion of funding provided to local partnerships to these activities. In 2022, the Institute for Families in Society at the University of South Carolina conducted an external evaluation to examine the reach, efficacy, adoption, and implementation of child care TA and training programs operated by local First Steps partnerships during a three-year timeframe of FY19 through FY21.

KEY FINDINGS

Reach

- TA programs reached approximately 9-13% of the state's child care workforce each year of the evaluation period.
- Training programs reached approximately 30-50% of the estimated early childhood workforce within each year of the evaluation period.

Efficacy

- Child care providers receiving TA, who were enrolled in the ABC Quality Program, increased in their ABC rating level over time.
- Due to the impacts of the pandemic, limited data was available to examine the impact of TA on the quality of early childhood environments using well-established assessment measures. Within the time frame when data was available, FY19 and the first half of FY20, no statistically significant changes were seen between initial and interim ratings.

Adoption

- TA programs were adopted in just over 30% of counties in the state.
- Training programs were supported in most counties (80%) by the end of the evaluation period in FY21
- The number of counties providing both TA and training programs ranged from 13-14.

Implementation

To ground the quantitative analyses of TA and training program implementation, a total of four focus groups were held with technical assistance providers and local First Steps executive directors. Findings from across these key stakeholder groups include:

- First Steps plays a unique role in the early care and education (ECE) landscape because participation is voluntary, non-regulatory, strengths-based, long-term, individualized, and grounded in trusting and empowering relationships.
- The importance of the challenges facing the child care workforce.
- A need to continue improving awareness both of the importance of ECE and of the particular role and strengths of First Steps in supporting ECE.

PAGES 7-8

44% of children 0-5 live in poverty or low-income household. Defined as children under age 6 <185% federal poverty level. Data source: 5-year estimates: American Community Survey (2017-2021). Table B17024. US Census Bureau.

38% children 0-5 lived in a single-parent household. Data source: 1-Year Estimates: American Community Survey (2022). Table C23008. US Census Bureau.

24% of babies were born to mothers who received less than adequate prenatal care. Defined using the Kotelchuck Index (intermediate + inadequate = less than adequate). Data source: Births (2021). Vital Statistics: South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Accessed 13 Oct 2023. [Available from: https://apps.dhec.sc.gov/Health/SCAN_BDP/tables/birthtable.aspx].

10% of babies were born with low birthweight. Defined as birthweight <2500 grams. Data source: Births (2021). Vital Statistics: South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Accessed 27 Sep 2023. [Available from: https://apps.dhec.sc.gov/Health/SCAN_BDP/tables/birthtable.aspx].

44% of children ages 0-5 were read to less than 4 days per week in the past week. Data Source: Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. 2020-2021 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) data query (Indicator 6.7 for South Carolina). Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the US Department of Health and Humans Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Accessed 27 Sep 2023. [Available from: www.childhealthdata.org].

57% of children ages 3-4 were not enrolled in school. Data source: 5-year estimates: American Community Survey (2017-2021). Table S1401. US Census Bureau.

55% of children ages 3-4 were not enrolled in school. Data source: 5-Year Estimates: American Community Survey (2016-2020). Table S1401. US Census Bureau.

64% of entering kindergartners tested "not ready" for school and % "demonstrating readiness" map by county. Data source: South Carolina Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (Fall 2022 Administration). South Carolina Department of Education.

NOTICE OF CORRECTIONS

As of January 2, 2024, errors were found in the original version of this report. This document has been updated to include corrections and clarifications. A complete list of changes can be found at <https://bit.ly/3HKqCAB>.

National Partners

Our national partnerships are valuable assets in advancing our mission. They drive us to expand our reach, enhance our programs, and deepen our impact for the benefit of children and families in South Carolina.

Alliance for Early Success
Ascend at the Aspen Institute
Child Trends
Education Commission of the States
First Children's Finance
National Institute for Early Education Research
National Technical Assistance Center for Preschool Development Grants Birth Through Five
National Women's Law Center
Pritzker Children's Initiative
The Hunt Institute
True North Group
Zero to Three

Cover photo: Two-year-old Grayson and his mother, Taneisha, participated in Parents as Teachers at Charleston County First Steps. Learn more about our parenting programs on page 13.



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