



2019-2020

ANNUAL REPORT



South Carolina
**Early Childhood
Advisory Council**



At Stake: Their Future, and Ours

The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted life in many ways for young children and families in South Carolina. Yet early child development has never paused. Even when child care programs were closed and families were isolated at home, the brains of our state's babies, toddlers, and preschoolers continued to grow and develop in rapid response to the world around them. Their experiences during this crisis – whether nurturing or stressful – will have a lasting impact on their learning, behavior, and health.

Our state's efforts to ensure that every child has the chance to reach their highest potential have never been more critical. In 2019-2020 and throughout this crisis, South Carolina First Steps has done its part by assuring continuity of quality early childhood programs and services, while focusing much-needed attention on the challenges facing young children, families, and caregivers of all kinds.

Our mission is a collaborative endeavor, and our accomplishments are shared with state leaders, funders, partners, and families. Working together, we can realize a future in which every child is healthy, well-cared for, learning, and ready for success – a brighter future for us all.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2020 WAS THE YEAR OF THE CAREGIVER. From hospitals to family homes, caregivers of all kinds have dramatically reorganized their lives to meet the needs of our society's most vulnerable members. Those with young children have had a particularly heavy lift. A two-year-old can't do e-learning. And every second in the life of an infant is an opportunity for more than a million neural connections to be made, if the environment is right and the caregiver responsive.

South Carolina First Steps was ready. With children at home 24/7, the urgency and importance of our work was clearer than ever. Parents needed us. And we were there for them. We have always believed that a parent is a child's first and most important teacher. That's why so many of our programs focus on developing parents' skills as brain builders, literacy developers, social-emotional coaches, and early educators.

We leaned in to meet the need, adding more parent educators, adapting to virtual home visits, and leading outdoor parent groups in the park. We distributed food, formula, and diapers to families who were struggling. We made sure children unexpectedly constrained to home had access to high-quality books and resources.

Across the country, we honored healthcare professionals and grocery store staff as essential workers. But behind the scenes, it was another group who made this all possible. For every parent who went back to work, there was a caregiver. In South Carolina, throughout the pandemic, childcare providers showed up every day at centers that never closed, holding little hands, wiping runny noses, reading, singing, and circling up with children. Taking personal risks for little financial reward, these caregivers kept our economy running, families supported, and children nurtured.

Just as small businesses around the country wondered if they would make it through the crisis, childcare centers struggled to stay open with higher costs, lower ratios, and decreased enrollment. In response, First Steps offered PPE and cleaning supplies, financial support, assistance in applying for aide, and advocacy at the state and federal levels.

The work of a parent is often unseen and the heroics of childcare teachers unsung. But 2020 was different. Through Zoom, we literally saw colleagues juggle parenting, teaching, caregiving, and work. As a society, we appreciated the role of child care more than ever. New allies to our field emerged, the many industries reliant upon a parenting workforce who needed care.

As you read this year's report, I hope you will see on every page a whisper of *thank you*. Thank you to the parents, the grandparents, the child care teachers, the center directors and owners, the home visitors and parent educators. I hope you will share the gratitude we feel as we support, nurture, and care for the caregivers who make our society function and whose love and investment powers our future. They deserve it, this year more than ever.



GEORGIA MJARTAN
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georgia Mjartan". The signature is fluid and cursive.



In South Carolina, throughout the pandemic, child care providers showed up at centers that never closed, holding little hands, wiping runny noses, reading, singing, and circling up with children. Taking personal risks for little financial reward, these caregivers kept our economy running, families supported, and children nurtured.

Leadership

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS THRIVES on the dedication, input, and guidance of our Board of Trustees. The Board represents a statewide group of leaders consisting of legislators, state agency directors, early childhood educators, members of the business community, and parents of young children. These individuals make up a cohesive board that mirrors the diversity of the families we serve throughout the state.

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Governor's Designee

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Children's Trust of SC

WALTER FLEMING JR.
Business Community

TIMOTHY HOLT
Business Community

JULIE HUSSEY
Parent of a Young Child

ANGEL JOHNSON-BREBNER
Parent of a Young Child

JENNIFER MCCONNELL
Child Care Provider

ALEXIA NEWMAN
Medical/Child Care
Development Provider

ROGER PRYOR JR.
Child Care Provider

DR. AMY WILLIAMS
Medical Provider

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

WHEN SOUTH CAROLINA CREATED FIRST STEPS IN 1999, we made a historic investment in our children and our state's economic future. More than two decades later, we know this investment is working. A recent five-year study shows that infants, toddlers, and preschool children who participated in First Steps' programs were 74% more likely to score at the highest level on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment when compared to their like-peers. And decades of research show that these results last a lifetime.

Investments in early childhood development are effective, and one reason why is that they bolster social-emotional competence – a critical factor in school and life success. The research bears this out. One study funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation asked kindergarten teachers to rate their 5-year-olds' social skills and behavior on a 5 point scale. Twenty years later, those who scored one point higher were 200% more likely to have a college degree, 54% more likely to have a high school diploma, and 46% more likely to have a full-time job. For children who scored 1 point lower, they were 67% more likely to have been arrested and 82% more likely to have a need for public housing.

Getting children ready for school is getting children ready for life and career, and South Carolina First Steps has a formula that works. But our reach, and therefore our impact, remains limited by our funding. Last year, we were only able to reach 19 percent of the children eligible for any program. However, only 5% of children receive the more intensive services that deliver the kind of results described above.

When children arrive at school ready to learn, they continue that positive trajectory. But when left behind, the data shows they stay behind. In South Carolina, as in many other states, children are not reaching their full potential. In 2015, only 33% of 4th graders demonstrated proficiency in reading or math. When they reached 8th grade in 2019, fewer than 30% met grade-level expectations. In 2018, when 100% of South Carolina's graduating class took the ACT, only 14% of students met college readiness benchmarks in all four subjects compared to 27% nationally. Importantly, only 5% of African Americans were college ready. In 2018, there were 19 states that required at least 90% of students to take the ACT and South Carolina ranked 18th, only surpassing Nevada.

We know the solution. Increase investment in the early years, when it matters most: prenatally through age five, and in the parents and caregivers who make the most important impact. The status quo is not enough. As a state, we must commit the resources required.

Although the current economic environment has required us to hold back on bold investments like a statewide expansion of 4K, we will continue to move forward. As we do, let's not fall into the trap of believing we can't afford to make a difference in the lives of our youngest citizens. In truth, we can't afford not to.



DAVID MORLEY
Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Morley', written in a cursive style.

Our Call to Action

SOUTH CAROLINA'S LONG-TERM PROSPERITY depends on the health and well-being of our state's 343,000 babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. Every one of them deserves a chance to reach their highest potential, but too few are getting what they need from the start.

SOUTH CAROLINA'S YOUNG CHILDREN FACED CHALLENGES PRIOR TO COVID-19. BEFORE THE PANDEMIC:

48%

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

6%

of children 0-5 experienced food insufficiency at some point in the year

40%

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

50%

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

21%

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

54%

of children ages 3-4 were not enrolled in preschool

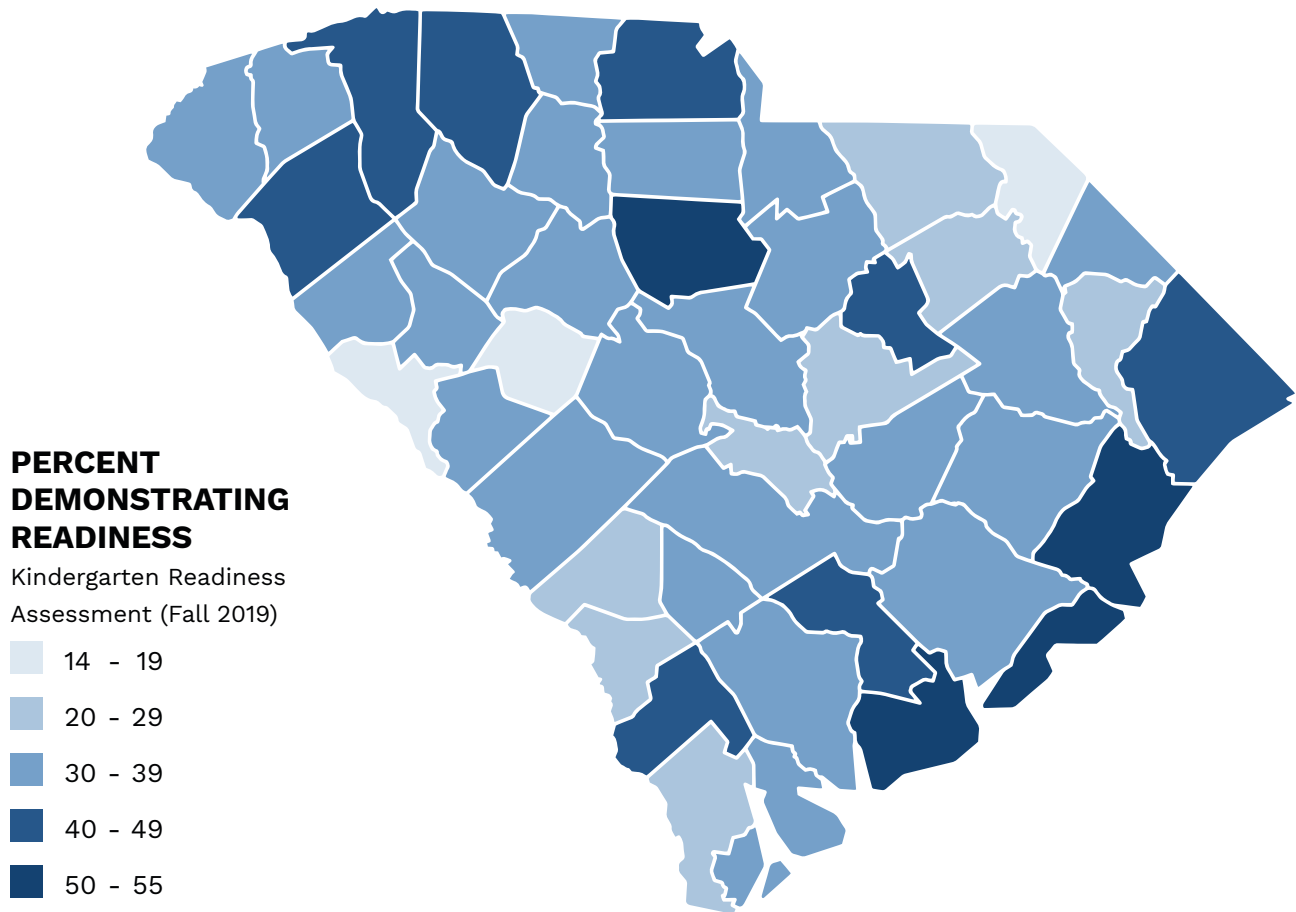
10%

of babies were born with low birthweight

61%

of entering kindergartners tested "not ready" for school

WHY WE NEED TO START EARLY



The Impact of COVID-19

Although young children are less likely to show serious symptoms of COVID-19, they are highly vulnerable to the economic, social, and emotional effects of the pandemic. Here's what we know so far:

Access to quality child care has severely declined. Before the pandemic, 45% of children under age 5 lived in a child care desert, an area with either no child care centers or so few that there are more than 3 times as many children as licensed child care slots. By late May 2020, the percentage rose to 71%.

Families are experiencing more stress and anxiety at home. 83% of SC parents and caregivers say they are more stressed and anxious than usual. This places children at increased risk for maltreatment and adverse outcomes.

Some children are more vulnerable than others. Black, Indigenous, Latino, and low-income communities have experienced the highest rates of COVID-19-related deaths and job losses. These disproportionate impacts threaten to deepen existing gaps in early childhood development, school readiness, and future life success.

Our Results



IN 2019-2020, SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS advanced our mission to ensure that all children start school ready to reach their highest potential with engaged support from their parents, caregivers, and communities.



In 2019-20, South Carolina First Steps directly served:

30,579

babies, toddlers, and preschoolers
and reached more than

40,000

additional children in child care settings and classrooms,
where they benefitted from the services and support
provided to their caregivers and teachers. *



* an estimate based on the number of children enrolled in child care centers participating in First Steps child care quality enhancement, child care training, and First Steps 4K programs.

In 2019-20, because of First Steps:

5,430

families participated in parent education programs designed to improve parenting practices and promote child health and development.

3,048

4-year-olds attended high-quality First Steps 4K programs at no cost to their families.

3,600+

children received screenings to detect developmental delays and prevent learning challenges later on.

1,354

families of rising kindergartners participated in Countdown to Kindergarten, building the relationships, skills, and confidence they need for success in school.

1,872

early childhood educators participated in professional development that will make the children they serve more successful.

366,297+

free, quality books and resources were delivered to children in homes and child care centers across the state.

PROVEN RESULTS

Children who received First Steps 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.

These results are among the key findings from a 2019 evaluation of local First Steps partnerships by the Institute for Families in Society at the University of South Carolina. For more on this report, see Appendix C.

Local Partnerships

EMBEDDED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, local First Steps partnerships are uniquely positioned to address the needs of young children, their families, and communities – especially in times of crisis.

Targeted investments

NO CHILD’S DEMOGRAPHICS or zip code should determine their destiny. South Carolina First Steps guarantees that every child in the state has the opportunity to benefit from quality early childhood programs by allocating funds to all 46 counties based on population and need, as well as seeking additional public and private resources to make discretionary and targeted grants.

At the local level, First Steps partnerships utilize a set of predisposing risk factors to identify children most at risk for early school failure, ensuring that intensive services are prioritized to the children and families most in need of support.

IN 2019-20:

100%

of children served intensively had at least one risk factor

42%

had two or more risk factors

41%

had four or more risk factors

For a list of risk factors associated with early school failure, see Appendix A.

OUR IMPACT: LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS



Blending funds from South Carolina First Steps, Children's Trust of South Carolina, and The Duke Endowment, Greenville County First Steps launched The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) in 2020, with an ambitious two-year goal to reach at least 25% of families in Greenville County.

When lawmakers created South Carolina First Steps, they built **efficiency and effectiveness** for early childhood funds into the law. In 2019, First Steps local partnerships leveraged **\$16.6 million** from sources outside of state government. That's **\$1.18 for every state dollar** invested.

Accountability at all levels

AS A STATEWIDE PUBLIC-PRIVATE INITIATIVE, First Steps is accountable to voters, our funders and, most importantly, to South Carolina's children. Our partnership structure gives local leaders the ability to operate in a way that best meets the needs of local families. To facilitate their success, First Steps holds local partnerships accountable for meeting performance standards, and provides technical assistance, consultation, and comprehensive support through a team of dedicated program officers.

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

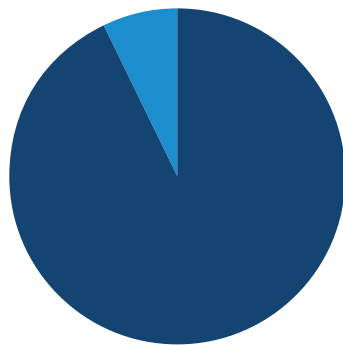
Local impact

STATEWIDE, FIRST STEPS OFFERS A RANGE OF SERVICES that improve children’s health, strengthen families, expand access to quality early care and education, and help transition rising kindergartners into school. Because each community is different, each local partnership tailors its offerings based on local determination of needs and resources. On average, each local partnership administers 5 to 6 programs annually.

	CHILDREN	ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS
2017-2018	27,697	76,435
2018-2019	25,236	40,851
2019-2020	27,531	18,146

Our commitment to quality

EXPENDITURES OF STATE FUNDS BY PROGRAM TYPE, 2019-20



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 – 93%
- EVIDENCE-INFORMED - 7%

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.

“First Steps local partnerships are closing the gap for children in poverty.”

Institute for Families in Society, 2019



Sierra and her son, Kahari

Exceeding expectations

WHEN SIERRA PORTER LEARNED SHE WAS PREGNANT with her son Kahari, she worried that she would not have the knowledge and support she needed to be a good mom. A friend encouraged her to sign up for **Nurse-Family Partnership** through York County First Steps. When she was paired with nurse Elizabeth Forbes, her confidence and outlook quickly changed.

Over a year later, Kahari is a healthy, happy toddler and Sierra is working full time at a residential treatment facility. She is also back in school, pursuing a bachelor's degree in correctional program support services. She says Kahari's first birthday party will be a celebration for both her son and herself. "It means I've succeeded as a mom," Sierra says.

"She's not only succeeded," Elizabeth adds. "She's exceeded."



7X RETURN ON INVESTMENT

In South Carolina, every dollar invested in Nurse-Family Partnership saves \$7.70 in future costs for the highest-risk families served.

Strengthening Families

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 child health and development. 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 the family's needs, from community-based peer support to in-home coaching.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, First Steps parenting programs have been a lifeline to families experiencing new or increased challenges like job loss, domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health concerns. In the 42 counties where First Steps funds evidence-based home visiting programs, parent educators have pivoted to

accommodate new health and safety guidelines, providing their clients with virtual visits and uninterrupted support during a time of heightened need.

PARENTING PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE | 2019-20

38,548

total home visits delivered

160,000+

books distributed

1,821

parent group support hours provided

5,430

families served

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



Doula R. Simon Lee visits with client Velintcia Ford and her daughter, Rayanna

Support from the Start

In 2018, **1 in 10 babies** born in South Carolina had low birthweight – the **fifth highest** rate in the nation.

SCHOOL READINESS BEGINS WITH GOOD HEALTH at birth. Yet too many babies in South Carolina are born too small. Low birthweight – less than 2,500 grams or about 5.5 pounds – is a leading cause of infant mortality and, for those who survive, a risk factor for health challenges and developmental disabilities that impair school readiness. The risk is particularly high for babies born to Black mothers, who had a prevalence of low birthweight three times higher than those born to white women in 2018.

Berkeley County First Steps works to address this disparity and support positive birth outcomes by connecting expectant mothers with a certified doula beginning in pregnancy. Research shows that doula-assisted mothers are four times less likely to have a low birthweight baby, two times less likely to experience a birth complication, and significantly more likely to initiate breastfeeding.

“From conception to early education, we want to be able to provide that mental, emotional, and physical support for moms and their families,” says doula R. Simone Lee. “We’re able to assist them in having a good foundation for the rest of their lives.”

Improving Health

HEALTH AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT ARE DEEPLY CONNECTED, beginning with a mother's wellbeing in pregnancy. As part of our commitment to school readiness, we offer programs that enhance food security, prevent chronic health conditions, and address developmental delays. When families can meet their nutritional needs, access comprehensive medical care, and connect with appropriate intervention services, their children are more likely to start school healthy and ready to succeed.

HEALTH PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE | 2019-20

3,600+ children

received screenings to detect developmental delays and prevent learning challenges

4,800+ screenings

to detect developmental delays completed

12,000+ healthy meals

provided to children at risk for food insecurity

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

OUR IMPACT: HEALTH



Solimar Abbott, a PASOs Community Health Worker, with the Marquez family

LATINO CHILDREN CURRENTLY REPRESENT 11% OF OUR STATE’S YOUNG CHILDREN, and in some counties the totals reach over 25%. Unfortunately, these children fare worse than any other group on many measures of health and wellbeing – including kindergarten readiness.

To close this gap, First Steps has partnered with **PASOs**, the state’s leading organization supporting Latino families, to expand the **Connections for Child Development** program in Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, and Lexington counties. Bilingual Community Health Workers (CHWs) screen children’s development in the family’s home and provide referrals to appropriate resources, therapies, and specialty care.



As a CHW with Beaufort County First Steps, Solimar Abbott says that while her priority is the developmental needs of children, “the whole family gets involved.” That’s because CHWs often connect families with services and supports to address food insecurity, medical needs, and other concerns.

Major funding for this initiative is provided by a grant from the BlueCross® BlueShield® of South Carolina Foundation and the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five initiative.

Expanding Access

\$9,490 IS THE AVERAGE ANNUAL COST OF CENTER-BASED INFANT CARE in South Carolina. That's 11% of the state's median income for married couples and 39% of the median income for single parents. For a 4-year-old, the average cost is \$8,541 per year.

Quality child care and early education is only affordable if it costs no more than 7% of a family's income, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services. For most South Carolina families, the cost is out of reach. Our **scholarship programs**—including those administered locally by First Steps partnerships and statewide by First Steps 4K—make payments directly to child care providers to serve families most in need. The funding provides local businesses with valuable support, children with a quality early learning experience, and parents with the opportunity to enter or remain in the workforce.

CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS & FIRST STEPS 4K | 2019-20

\$16 million

in scholarships paid directly to child care providers

340

total providers supported

3,618

total children served

For the complete list of early care and education programs offered by First Steps local partnerships, see Appendix D.



The former Bank of Kershaw building will soon house the only licensed child care center in town.

Eliminating child care deserts

In South Carolina before the pandemic, **45% of children under age 5** lived in a child care desert. By late May 2020, the percentage rose to **71%**.

IN 2019-20, SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TOOK ACTION to address our state's child care gaps by awarding over \$1.05 million in competitive grants to establish and expand early childhood programs offering First Steps 4K in underserved communities.

A **\$600,000 grant** to the Town of Kershaw will transform a historic downtown building into a state-of-the-art child care and early education center serving families across Lancaster, Kershaw, and Chesterfield counties.

A **\$300,000 grant** to Spartanburg's Highland Community Partnership will revitalize a former public housing facility and provide needed transportation for First Steps 4K children in the Highland community and surrounding areas.

Seven additional grants to current First Steps 4K providers in Georgetown, Marion, Richland, and Spartanburg counties have created expanded classroom space and provide transportation to enrolled children.

OUR IMPACT: EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION



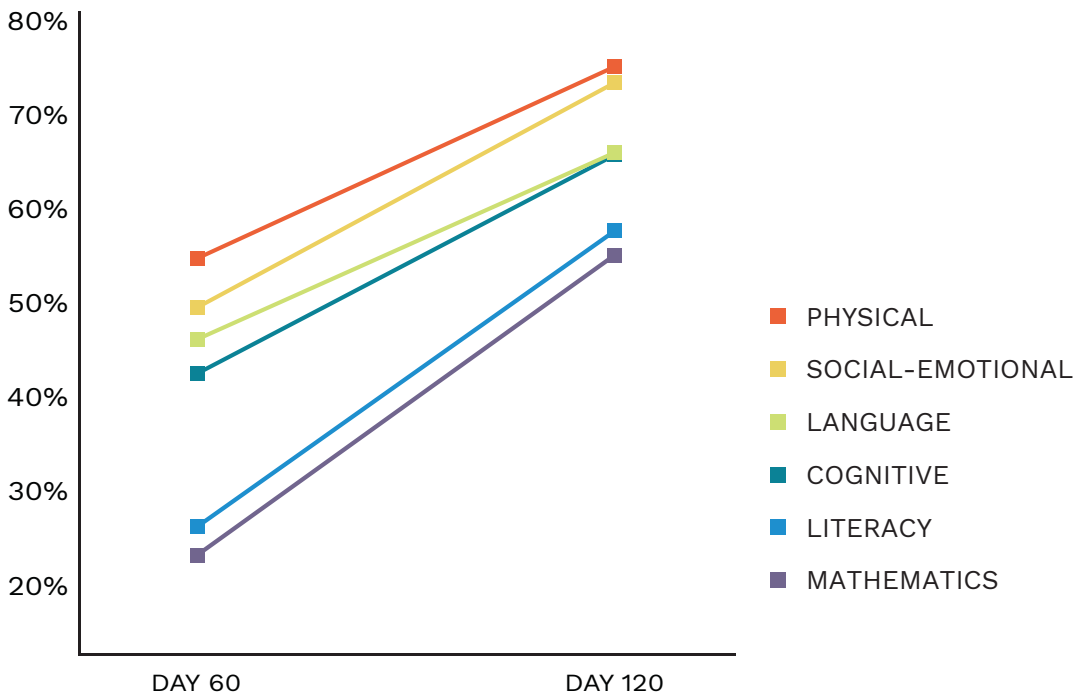
RESEARCH SHOWS that children who attend a high-quality preschool program are more successful in kindergarten and beyond. South Carolina First Steps gives families the opportunity to enroll their eligible child in a free four-year-old kindergarten program of their choice through **First Steps 4K**, a part of the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP). In coordination with more

than 200 private, community, and faith-based providers, First Steps 4K increases participation in high-quality 4K across the state.

To ensure the quality of our programs, First Steps 4K providers are expected to maintain rigorous program standards, implement evidence-based curriculum, and document student learning throughout the year. To support their success, First Steps provides quality assessments, on-site coaching, funding for equipment and materials, parent education opportunities, and high-level professional development.

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.

FIRST STEPS 4K STUDENTS WHO MET KINDERGARTEN READINESS BENCHMARKS BY DEVELOPMENTAL AREA, 2019-2020



* Day 180 not assessed due to COVID-19



First Steps 4K students practice healthy habits at Renaissance Academy in Columbia.

Our COVID-19 response

“First Steps 4K staff provided continuous support which was essential to keeping our doors open.”

**Veronica Reynolds, Director
Renaissance Academy**

FIRST STEPS 4K PROVIDERS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE in educating young children, supporting working families, and fueling our state’s economy. When COVID-19 forced public schools and First Steps 4K classrooms to close, First Steps offered continued payment to First Steps 4K providers for enrolled students through the end of the 2019-2020 school year. The uninterrupted support helped keep essential businesses open, hard-working teachers employed, and students engaged and learning at home.

When 119 First Steps 4K programs re-opened for classroom instruction in June, First Steps helped ensure the health and safety of staff and families by equipping all providers with masks, infrared thermometers, hand sanitizer, and other supplies. Using video conferencing technology, First Steps 4K coaches provided virtual, one-on-one support to teachers in classrooms. As a result, over a thousand children experienced a quality summer school experience and a necessary bridge to kindergarten.

Promoting Quality

MANY PRIVATE CHILD CARE CENTERS STRIVE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES but lack the resources often available to publicly funded early childhood programs. Through rigorous quality assessments and support, our **Child Care Quality Enhancement** (QE) strategies produce measurable improvements in the quality of care provided to young children.

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AT A GLANCE | 2019-20

4,037

hours of on-site technical assistance provided

145

child care centers served

6,900+

children enrolled in provider classrooms

Participants in our intensive Quality Enhancement programs show **an overall gain of 10.4%** on pre- to post-assessments of classroom learning environments.

For the number of individuals, by county, served by QE, see Appendix F.



Arlene Burton, a home-based child care provider in Beaufort County

Supporting providers of all kinds

THOUSANDS OF SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILIES rely on home-based child care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these providers have become even more important – particularly for the essential workforce, who often need safe, reliable service during nontraditional hours.



Parents as Teachers®

Arlene Burton provides child care to six children out of her home in Beaufort County. While she acknowledges that home-based providers are perceived as lacking professionalism and training, she is determined to disprove the stereotype. To enhance the effectiveness of her program, she turns to Beaufort County First Steps. The local partnership is one of 11 statewide that recently expanded its **Parents as Teachers** home-visiting program to serve home-based child care providers. Participating providers receive research-based curricula, on-site coaching and support, and connections to professional networks and resources.

“It has been a rewarding experience,” says Arlene. “Our children are reaping the benefits.”

This initiative is funded by the state’s federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five. For more on this grant, see page 33.

Advancing the Profession



OUR STRATEGIC EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION include professional learning experiences that meet the needs of the state’s early childhood workforce. Offered locally statewide, our **child care trainings** are certified through SC Endeavors and include topics in the areas of nutrition, health and safety, curriculum, child guidance, and program administration. At the state level, First Steps 4K hosts an annual **two-week academy** for teachers and directors, and serves as a partner in presenting the **Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree** – an annual, statewide learning opportunity for all teachers in publicly funded preschool programs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT A GLANCE | 2019-20

746

hours of certified training offered

1,872

teachers and directors served directly

33,100+

children indirectly impacted

For the number of individuals, by county, served by local child care training, see Appendix F.



First Steps recognized recipients of the 2019 Aim4Excellence National Director Credential in January.

National recognition

“Earning the Director Credential was the best move I could have made if I truly want my child care center to be a part of the solution for our community.”

**Jerlean Holmes, Director
House of Smiles Early Learning
Center, Moncks Corner**

IN DECEMBER 2019, 13 directors of approved First Steps 4K centers earned the **Aim4Excellence National Director Credential** through the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University.

As part of our commitment to improving the quality of early care and education statewide, South Carolina First Steps offers funding and support to First Steps 4K directors who choose to participate in this rigorous, nationally recognized professional learning experience.

To date, a total of 28 First Steps 4K directors have earned their national credential. A cohort of 14 directors is currently enrolled and expected to complete the program in February 2021.

Supporting Transitions

RESEARCH SUGGESTS that almost half of children have some difficulty adjusting to a new school, with 16% experiencing serious problems. When children are supported in their transitions between early childhood settings and from early childhood into kindergarten, they experience less stress and are more likely to thrive in their new learning environment. First Steps supports school transitions with programs that support strong relationships and mutual understanding among parents, early care and education providers, and kindergarten teachers.

Developed by South Carolina First Steps in 2003, **Countdown to Kindergarten** is our most widely implemented school transition initiative. The relationship-



based, home visitation program introduces rising kindergartners to their future teachers during the summer before school entry. Teachers complete six visits with each child's family, establishing strong connections during the summer that facilitate classroom learning throughout the year.

COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN AT A GLANCE | SUMMER 2019

7,964

total home and school visits

232

kindergarten teachers trained as home visitors

1,354

children served

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



York County First Steps intern Hannah Buckner assembles at-home learning kits.

Pivoting during the pandemic

STARTING KINDERGARTEN CAN BE A STRESSFUL EXPERIENCE for children and their families, even in a typical year. This year, a public health crisis made the transition even more daunting. That's why our nationally-recognized **Countdown to Kindergarten** program adapted to keep parents informed and prepared for the uncertainties ahead. Teachers across the state found creative ways to connect with their students from a safe distance, including virtual visits and meetings outside.

Although York County First Steps was unable to offer the traditional Countdown to Kindergarten program, intern Hannah Buckner helped ensure that eligible families would still be able to participate. She modified the curriculum, developed a series of instructional videos, and prepared at-home activity kits for every child. Thanks to Hannah's creativity and hard work, York County First Steps was able to support school transitions for 72 rising kindergartners and their families.

Mobilizing Communities



WELL-CONNECTED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES and trusted by families, First Steps partnerships are uniquely positioned to serve as early childhood:

Portals

connecting young children and their families to available services and resources;

Conveners

engaging key stakeholders in building a more efficient and effective early childhood system; and

Champions

promoting the importance of school readiness for families, communities, and our state.

In 2019-20, local First Steps partnerships mobilized an estimated **20,000** volunteers, partners, and community members in crisis relief and community building activities.



Volunteers and staff from Lee County First Steps supplied families and child care providers with food and supplies during COVID-19.

A lifeline in a time of crisis

WHEN THE PANDEMIC HIT SOUTH CAROLINA, local First Steps partnerships responded by providing immediate relief and much-needed support to families and caregivers impacted by unemployment, child care center closures, and increased stress at home.

Across the state, First Steps collected and delivered packages of food, formula, diapers, books, and resources, dropping them off on porches and leaving them in mailboxes.

Lee County First Steps (pictured above) sourced cleaning and hygiene supplies that are particularly hard to find in rural communities, bringing in a truckload and making the resources available to child care providers and families alike.



Children in McCormick County received new books through our Start with a Book campaign.

Investments in Literacy

TO BE READY FOR SCHOOL AND BEYOND, children need a strong foundation in language and literacy. In 2019-20, we awarded \$186,000 in targeted grants to promote family literacy and deliver new, high-quality books to children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RAISING A READER & READY ROSIE

10 local First Steps partnerships received competitive grant awards to enroll eligible families in two nationally recognized programs proven to promote school readiness: **Raising a Reader**, a lending library and parent education program, and **ReadyRosie**, a program for strengthening connections between parents and teachers.

START WITH A BOOK

During the early days of COVID-19, when many families were at home and less than half of the state's child cares were open, we launched our Start with a Book fundraising campaign to ensure that parents and educators had the resources to keep the young children in their care connected, engaged, and learning during the pandemic. Thanks to contributions from sponsors and donors, we delivered \$13,500 in new, high-quality books to communities across the state.



Working Together

AS THE CONNECTOR AND CONVENER OF ALL EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVING AGENCIES, South Carolina First Steps coordinates the activities of the



South Carolina
**Early Childhood
Advisory Council**

Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), a collaborative body representing the state's early childhood system. Established in state statute, the ECAC includes the directors of state agencies, elected officials, state-level early childhood leaders, members of the business and medical communities, parents, and early childhood educators.

BUILDING ON SC'S EARLY CARE AND LEARNING INVESTMENTS

In 2019-20, the collaborative work of the ECAC was fueled in part by the federal **Preschool Development Grant Birth through 5 (PDG B-5)**, a \$3.5 million competitive grant awarded to the SC Department of Social Services. Renewed in April 2020, the grant will bring an additional \$11 million per year, for up to three years, to the state's early childhood system.

A \$3.3 million federal grant awarded to the Department of Education will empower educators and policymakers to improve the quality and outcomes of early learning programs. As a partner for the **Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS)** grant, the ECAC will take a lead role in improving early learning data access and use within the state.

Interagency collaboration generated up to **\$36.3 million** in **new federal investments** in the future of South Carolina's children.



Launched by state leaders in February, Palmetto Pre-K is gaining national attention for helping South Carolina parents find publicly funded preschool programs.

ECAC ACCOMPLISHMENTS AT A GLANCE | 2019-20

479

educators and administrators from the state's publicly funded preschool programs attended the inaugural **Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree**, an all-inclusive professional development experience held in November

22,773

unique visitors to **PalmettoPreK.org** generated 4,736 leads for families seeking free preschool programs for their 3- and 4-year-olds

400+

attended the **SC Summit on Early Childhood** held in December. Presented by BB&T and SCDHHS, and coordinated by the ECAC and SC First Steps, the conference focused on the economic impact of early childhood programs.

First5

Currently under development, First 5 SC is a comprehensive portal for early childhood services and resources. By answering a few simple questions, families and their advocates will find and connect with providers in their communities.



Stay up to date on our work in 2021 at [earlychildhoodsc.org](https://www.earlychildhoodsc.org).

READY FOR SCHOOL

South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner

THE STATE'S OFFICIAL DOCUMENT OF SCHOOL READINESS has a new look. Developed in collaboration with the SC Department of Education in 2015, the *Profile of the Ready Kindergartner* serves as a companion to the state's *Profile of the Ready Graduate* and a benchmark for early childhood education in the state. The description includes 60 school readiness indicators across five domains.

Revised and redesigned, the updated document was approved by both the SC First Steps Board of Trustees and the SC Department of Education in February. It features new introductory language and an approachable design aimed to help both parents and children feel confident and excited about the transition to school.

Meet the First Steps Fox

The new Profile of the Ready Kindergartner poster features our new mascot, a four-year-old fox who gets ready for school with support from his parents, teachers, and neighbors.



“

What does it mean to be ready for school?

All children are ready for kindergarten when they are five years old by September 1 of that school year. But kindergarten readiness is more than a matter of age. For a strong start in school, children need positive relationships and supportive learning environments beginning at birth. It is our responsibility as families, caregivers, and communities to nurture the health and development necessary for school success.

South Carolina's Profile of the Ready Kindergartner describes the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional signs of school readiness. Because each child develops differently, each child will be ready in different ways. That is why schools and educators must also be ready: prepared to meet the individual needs of students at all levels of readiness and provide whatever support and services are needed for a quality kindergarten experience.

THE READY KINDERGARTNER, with engaged support from parents, caregivers, and community, has developed the skills and abilities necessary for achievement at age-appropriate levels. He/she is physically, socially, and emotionally prepared to benefit from a quality kindergarten experience.



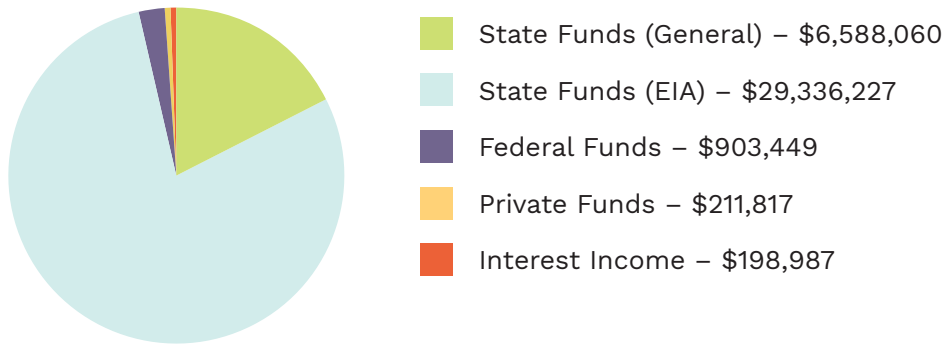
The Profile of the Ready Kindergartner is available as a poster in English and Spanish. For more information, visit scfirststeps.org.



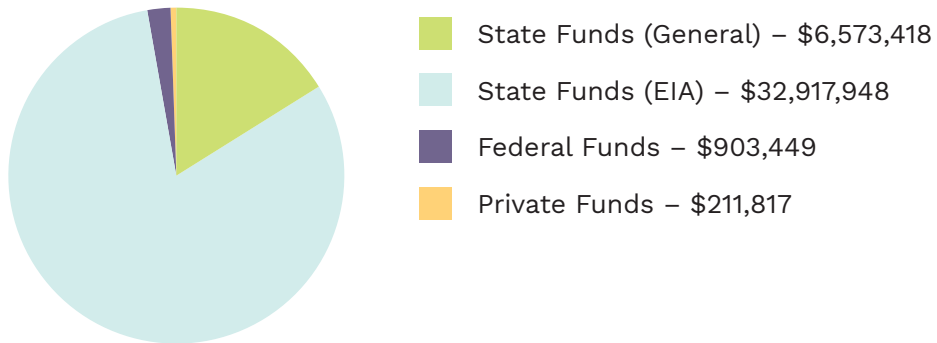
Financials

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 2020 REVENUE – \$37,238,540



FY 2020 EXPENDITURES – \$40,606,632



FY 2020 EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM – \$40,606,632



Next Steps

JULY 2020 MARKED THE CLOSE OF OUR 2015-20 STRATEGIC PLAN, *Vision 2020*, and the culmination of a year-long process to develop and adopt our roadmap for the next five years. The result is *Every Child Ready*, our 2020-2025 strategic plan.

The plan includes a refreshed mission statement, 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.

Our Goals

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%.
2. **INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HIGH INTENSITY PROGRAMS FUNDED BY FIRST STEPS.** By 2025, the percentage of children directly served by First Steps enrolled in high intensity programs will increase from 28% to 40%.
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%.
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%.
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%.
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.



Access the plan at scfirststeps.org.

Supporters

YOUR CONTINUED FINANCIAL SUPPORT enables us to build on our state's investment in early childhood and advance our mission to ensure that every child starts school ready to reach their highest potential.

INDIVIDUALS

Anonymous
Brittany Arnold
Michael Artz
Ronald Artz
Marcia Bacon
Patricia Bailey
Cassie Barber
Mark Barnes
Christine Baxter
Bill Bennett
Marie Birchmore
Jacquelyn Blakley
Neal Boyle
Pamela Bradley
Beatrice Brown
Shelley Canright
Katie Catalana
Katie Conlin
Wendy Crotwell
Lee Depret-Bixio
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Georgia and Dominik Mjartan
Beth Moore
Janice Moore
Kathleen Moore
Lauren Moore
Brian Moore, Sr.
Cheryl and David Morley
Robert Morton
Alexia Newman
Rick Noble

Ginny Owens
Elizabeth Petit
Christine Petro
Matt Posey
Davida Price
Janie Quinn
Chelsea Richard
Terry Richardson
Jim Riddle
Sheldon Riley
Debbie Robertson
Brittan Sanders
Debra Sanders
Drew Schiavone
Shirley Schuette
Cheri Shapiro
Bridgett Shealey
Prentiss Shealey
Jill Shelnut
Diane Smiley
Jillian Stonewall
Allison Strickland
Leah Tennille
Rick Toomey
Shannon Vaughn



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

Tammy Vaughn

Paul Vorderis

Eric Walke

Charity Walker

Paige Wall

Del Webb

Amy Williams

Ken Wingate

Elizabeth Wittebort

ORGANIZATIONS

Alliance for Early Success

BlueCross® BlueShield® of South Carolina
Foundation

Charah Solutions, Inc.

Enterprise Holdings Foundation

Fund for Shared Insight

South Carolina School Improvement Council

United Way Association of South Carolina

United Way of Greenwood and Abbeville
Counties

United Way of the Midlands

SUMMIT SPONSORS

BB&T/Truist Financial Corporation

Children's Trust of South Carolina

Institute for Child Success

Kaplan, Inc.

Lakeshore Learning Materials

Cheryl and David Morley

SCETV

Sisters of Charity Foundation

S.C. Commission on Higher Education

S.C. Department of Education

S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control

S.C. Department of Health and Human Services

S.C. Department of Social Services

S.C. Head Start Collaboration Office

4K ACADEMY SPONSORS

Kaplan, Inc.

Lakeshore Learning Materials

Midlands Technical College

Paul Mitchell The School

School Specialty

PUBLIC FUNDS

State of South Carolina

U.S. Department of Education (Statewide Longitudinal
Data Systems Grant) via S.C. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Child
Care Development Block Grant) via S.C. Department of
Social Services

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
(Preschool Development Birth through Five Grant) via S.C.
Department of Social Services

Risk Factors for Early School Failure

A set of predisposing risk factors are associated with high rates of early school failure. South Carolina First Steps utilizes these risk factors to target children most likely to benefit from its evidence-based school readiness programs and to ensure that service is prioritized to the state's most at-risk children. 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 risk factors.

TANF Eligibility (50% of Federal Poverty Level or below)
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP - formerly Food Stamps) or Free School Lunches eligibility (130% of Federal Poverty Level or below)
BabyNet (IDEA Part C) or local school district (IDEA Part B) special service eligibility
Referral for abuse
Referral for neglect
Foster child
Teenage mother/primary caregiver at the time of the child's birth
Low maternal education (less than high school graduation) at the time of the child's birth
Exposure to parental/caregiver substance abuse
Exposure to parental/caregiver depression
Exposure to parental/caregiver mental illness
Exposure to parental/caregiver intellectual disability
Domestic violence
Low birth weight (5.5 lbs/2500 grams or less) in association with poverty (130% Federal Poverty Level or below) and/or serious medical complications
Preschool aged child with a documented developmental delay
English is not the primary language spoken in the home
Single parent household and has need of other services
Transient/numerous family relocations and/or homeless
Incarcerated parent
Death in the immediate family
Military deployment (current or within 2 years)
Recent immigrant or refugee family
Child removed from a preschool, Head Start, or child care setting for behavior

Local Partnership Performance

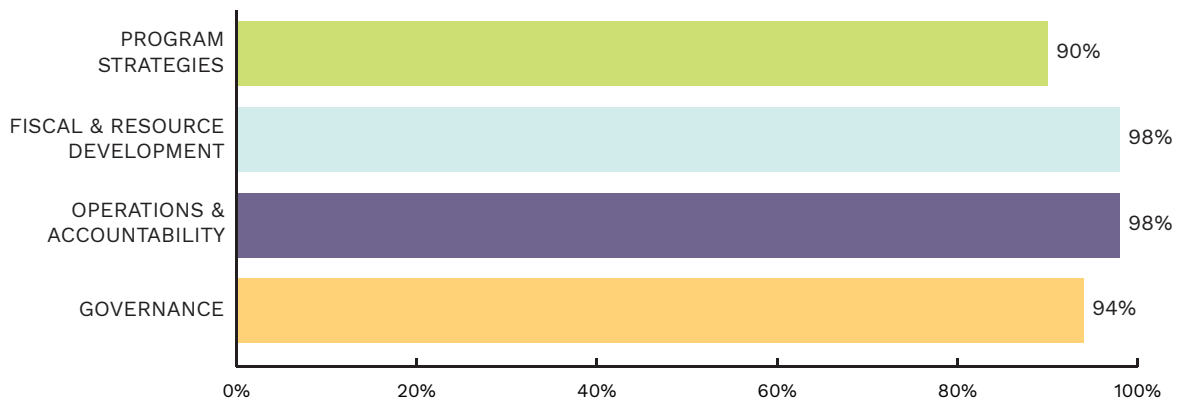
MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR STATE GRANT FUNDING

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 state 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.

In this initial year, local partnerships were assessed for compliance with 43 minimum qualifications across four categories: Governance, Operations & Accountability, Fiscal & Resource Development, and Program Strategies. 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 the vast majority of minimum qualifications. In FY20, local partnerships achieved a success rate of more than 90% within each major area of performance. Overall, 95% of requirements were met. The relatively lower success rate within the Program Strategies category was due to the impact of COVID-19 regulations on service delivery. Thirty-three percent of First Steps local partnerships (15) received a corrective action plan (CAP) to address unmet minimum qualifications (as of November 1, 2020). SC First Steps program officers provide ongoing support to local partnerships with CAPs and report progress to the state board.

PERCENTAGE OF MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS MET BY FIRST STEPS LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, FY2020



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

Local Partnership Performance

EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF FIRST STEPS LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, 2013-14 TO 2017-18

In 2019, South Carolina First Steps commissioned the Institute for Families in Society at the University of South Carolina (UofSC) to conduct research assessing the initiative's progress toward achieving legislative goals and its impact on children and families at the state and local levels. The evaluation report was submitted to the SC First Steps Board of Trustees on November 1, 2019.

KEY FINDINGS

First Steps services have a positive impact on kindergarten readiness and absenteeism in kindergarten. Children in general education who received First Steps services were 74% more likely to score Demonstrating Readiness on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and 34% less likely to be chronically absent in kindergarten compared to their like-peers who did not receive First Steps services.

First Steps services increase parent competence and confidence. Significant gains were seen over time on three recognized measures of parent competence.

First Steps has positive effects on child care quality. Statistically significant gains were seen in the quality of the child care environment using two assessment instruments.

First Steps state office and local partnerships serve as a hub for early childhood services. Local partnerships have a strong foundation of collaboration, with skilled leaders and concrete, attainable goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allocate family strengthening resources to highest poverty areas.
- Allocate quality enhancement resources to rural and high poverty areas.
- Further evaluate impact of specific programs, i.e. Countdown to Kindergarten.
- Develop a core set of metrics to monitor routinely across the early childhood system.
- Continue to identify additional funding opportunities.
- Perform quantitative and qualitative evaluation more regularly than is legislatively mandated.

The full report is available at scfirststeps.org/reports.

APPENDIX D

Local Partnership Programs

BY PROGRAM TYPE, 2019-2020

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 FY20	# FAMILIES SERVED IN FY20	# COUNTIES WITH THIS PROGRAM IN FY20
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	1230	1033	32
	NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP	Home visitation for first time mothers, from pregnancy until the child turns 2	Y	Y*	789	1140	9
	EARLY STEPS TO SCHOOL SUCCESS	Home visitation for families pre-birth until 36 months	Y	Y	249	226	3
	HEALTHY FAMILIES	Home visitation for families 0-5 primarily to prevent abuse and neglect	Y	Y	13	13	1
	NURTURING PARENTING	Group support with optional models of home visitation and fatherhood	Y	Y	200	154	5
	INCREDIBLE YEARS	12-week group support for parents for their child's social and emotional development and behavior	Y	Y	23	16	1
	STRENGTHENING FAMILIES	14-session group support program to promote strong and resilient families	Y	Y*	53	93	2
	POSITIVE PARENTING PROGRAM (TRIPLE P)	A system of parent training programs. Triple P levels offered by FS include group support for parents	Y	Y	60	60	3
	OTHER PARENT TRAINING	Other group support for parents not tied to a specific program model	N	N	34	36	1

APPENDIX D

	PROGRAM	SERVICES PROVIDED	EVIDENCE-BASED?	CLIENT LEVEL DATA AVAILABLE?	# CHILDREN 0-5 SERVED IN FY20	# FAMILIES SERVED IN FY20	# COUNTIES WITH THIS PROGRAM IN FY20
Programs with a primary focus of promoting language and literacy development, ranked in order of intensity.	PARENT-CHILD HOME	Home visitation for families with 2- and 3-year olds to promote early literacy skills	Y	Y	43	43	1
	FAMILY LITERACY ADULT EDUCATION	Adult education for parents of children 0-5 to pursue HS diploma, GED or English language skills	N	Y	19	10	1
	LENA HOME	10-session home visitation to help families increase positive interactions and language use with young children	Y	Y	26	21	1
	MOTHER READ/FATHER READ	Group support for parents with low literacy levels in reading to their children	Y	Y*	37	33	1
	LIBRARY BASED PROGRAMS	Library staff visit child care and preschool classrooms providing books, storytelling, and staff training.	N	N	1995	1164	4
	RAISING A READER WITH PARENT SESSIONS – ENHANCED	Weekly take-home bookbags and group support for parents	Y	N	692	613	7
	RAISING A READER	Weekly take-home bookbag exchange	N	N	609	360	5
	DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY	One book per month mailed to the home	Y	N	9664	6655	15
	REACH OUT AND READ	Books and information on reading books to children provided during well-child visits	Y	N	1405	492	2
Programs that promote physical health, prevent chronic health conditions, and identify and address developmental delays.	HEALTH: HEALTH-BASED, HOME-BASED, NON-HOME BASED, HHS COORDINATION	Supporting children's healthy development	N	N	0	14	2
	EARLY IDENTIFICATION & REFERRAL, including PASOs Connections for Child Development	Providing developmental screenings and referrals to other services, independent of another partnership program	Y	Y	454	298	10
	WEEKEND BACKPACK NUTRITION PROGRAMS	Nutritious food backpacks for low income preschool children	N	N	511	n/a	2

APPENDIX D

	PROGRAM	SERVICES PROVIDED	EVIDENCE-BASED?	CLIENT LEVEL DATA AVAILABLE?	# CHILDREN 0-5 SERVED IN FY20	# FAMILIES SERVED IN FY20	# COUNTIES WITH THIS PROGRAM IN FY20
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*	588	500	4
	FULL DAY 4K, HALF-DAY 4K, EXTENDED 4K ½ TO FULL DAY†	Support to school districts to offer 4K services	Y	Y*	51	51	2
	EARLY EDUCATION UNDER 4	Support for infant, toddler, or 3K classrooms, including during adult education/family literacy programs	Y	Y*	56	22	3
	CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS	Subsidize child care costs to providers demonstrating quality	**	Y	570	511	26
	ENHANCED EARLY EDUCATION	Supplemental support to early education programs, such as one-on-one tutoring and parent engagement	Y	Y*	892	892	2
Programs that improve quality and support professional development among early care and education providers.	CHILD CARE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT, QUALITY COUNTS	Intensive support to child care centers, Head Start and preschool classrooms to improve quality	Y	Y Provider and Workforce Data	6988	n/a	20
	TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce	Y	Y* Provider and Workforce Data	30449	n/a	38
Programs that support transitions between early childhood settings and from early childhood into kindergarten.	COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN	Summer program supporting transition into 5K	N	Y	1340	1314	34
	OTHER SCHOOL TRANSITION	Summer program supporting transition into 4K	N	Y	8	8	1

† 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 PROGRAM TYPE, 2019-2020

ABBEVILLE

Nurturing Parenting
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten

AIKEN

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

ALLENDALE

Parents as Teachers
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships

ANDERSON

Triple P Parenting Level 4
Nurse-Family Partnership
Half-Day 4K
Countdown to Kindergarten

BAMBERG

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training

BARNWELL

Early Steps to School Success
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships
Countdown to Kindergarten
Raising a Reader

BEAUFORT

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Identification and Referral

BERKELEY

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships
Early Identification and Referral
Countdown to Kindergarten

CALHOUN

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

CHARLESTON

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Early Head Start
Early Identification and Referral
Trident Literacy

CHEROKEE

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
LENA Home
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Training

CHESTER

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training

CHESTERFIELD

Countdown to Kindergarten
Health Service Coordination
Weekend Backpack Program
Raising a Reader Enhanced
Nurse-Family Partnership
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Full Day 4K

CLARENDON

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

COLLETON

Parents as Teachers
Raising a Reader - Enhanced
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships
Countdown to Kindergarten

DARLINGTON

Parents as Teachers
MotherRead/FatherRead
Parent Training
Fatherhood Initiative
Reach Out and Read
Strengthening Families
Early Education for Children Under 4
Countdown to Kindergarten
Men's Health

DILLON

Parents as Teachers
Raising a Reader
Child Care Training
Child Care Quality Enhancement

APPENDIX E

DORCHESTER

Parents as Teachers
Library Based Programs
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Scholarships
Early Identification and Referral
Child Care Quality Enhancement

EDGEFIELD

Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Nurse-Family Partnership
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Family Literacy
Nurturing Parenting
Child Care Scholarships
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Education for Children Under 4

FAIRFIELD

Parents as Teachers
1000 Books Before Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Scholarships

FLORENCE

Parents as Teachers
Parent-Child Home
Raising a Reader - Enhanced
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships

GEORGETOWN

Parents as Teachers
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Training
Child Care Scholarships

GREENVILLE

Child Care Scholarships
Palmetto Shared Services Alliance
Nurturing Parenting
Triple P
Child Care Training
Nurse-Family Partnership
Enhanced Early Education
Raising a Reader
Countdown to Kindergarten

GREENWOOD

Nurturing Parenting
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten

HAMPTON

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Identification and Referral
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

HORRY

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Raising a Reader
Child Care Scholarships
Resource and Referral

JASPER

Parents as Teachers
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Scholarships
Early Identification and Referral
Raising a Reader

KERSHAW

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Early Identification and Referral
Countdown to Kindergarten
Raising a Reader-Enhanced

LANCASTER

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Countdown to Kindergarten
Early Head Start
Weekend Backpack Program
Early Identification and Referral
Incredible Years

LAURENS

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Nurse-Family Partnership

LEE

Parent Training
Early Steps to School Success
Raising a Reader - Enhanced
Child Care Training
Strengthening Families
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Scholarships

APPENDIX E

LEXINGTON

Parents as Teachers
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Resource and Referral Services
Early Identification and Referral

MARION

Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Raising a Reader-Enhanced

MARLBORO

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training

MCCORMICK

Parents as Teachers
Library Based Programs
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Nurse-Family Partnership
Early Education for Children Under 4
Child Care Scholarships

NEWBERRY

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Reach Out and Read
Library Based Programs
Countdown to Kindergarten

OCONEE

Healthy Families America
Child Care Scholarships
Child Care Training
Triple P Parenting

ORANGEBURG

Early Steps to School Success
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Countdown to Kindergarten
Reading Rocks (Other School Transition)
Child Care Scholarships

PICKENS

Parents as Teachers
Book Flood
Raising a Reader-Enhanced
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Scholarships
Early Identification and Referral

RICHLAND

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Child Care Training
Early Head Start

SALUDA

Library Based Programs
Child Care Quality Enhancement
Nurse Family Partnership
Child Care Training
Nurturing Parenting
Enhanced Early Education
Countdown to Kindergarten
Child Care Scholarships

SPARTANBURG

The Franklin School
Early Head Start
Countdown to Kindergarten
Nurse-Family Partnership
Quality Counts

SUMTER

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

UNION

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

WILLIAMSBURG

Parents as Teachers
Child Care Training
Countdown to Kindergarten
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Raising a Reader - Enhanced

YORK

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

APPENDIX F

Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE) and Child Care Training

INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FIRST STEPS LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, 2019-20

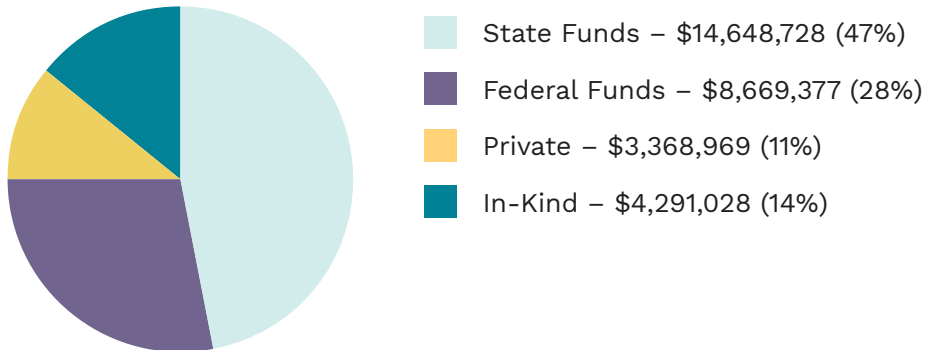
LOCAL PARTNERSHIP	# OF TEACHERS & DIRECTORS SERVED BY QE	# OF TEACHERS & DIRECTORS SERVED BY TRAINING	TOTAL
Abbeville		52	52
Aiken	71	52	123
Allendale		58	58
Bamberg		44	44
Barnwell	24	21	45
Beaufort	73	114	187
Berkeley	7	43	50
Charleston	19	46	65
Cherokee	64		64
Chester		58	58
Clarendon		23	23
Colleton		63	63
Dillon	20	32	52
Dorchester	13	23	36
Edgefield	17	67	84
Florence	115	119	234
Georgetown		30	30
Greenville		1198	1198
Greenwood		280	280
Hampton		47	47
Horry	62	39	101
Jasper		112	112
Kershaw	8		8
Laurens		178	178
Lee		48	48
Lexington		62	62
Marion	53	43	96
Marlboro		62	62
Newberry		74	74
Oconee		345	345
Orangeburg	19	130	149
Richland	425	396	821
Saluda		43	43
Spartanburg	546		546
Sumter		184	184
Union		15	15
Williamsburg		89	89
York	21	97	118

Local Partnership Finances

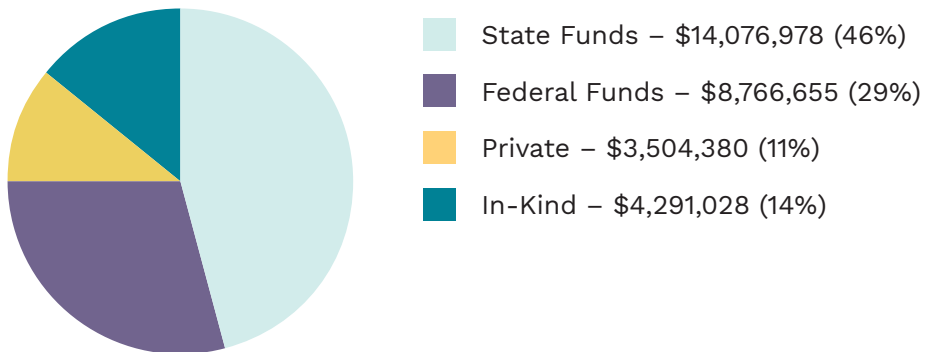
REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES BY FUND TYPE, FY 2020

To maximize our state’s investment in early childhood systems and services, each First Steps partnership is required to leverage state funding by at least 15% and keep administrative expenses low – no more than 13% of their total annual expenses.

FY 2020 REVENUE – \$37,238,540



FY 2020 EXPENDITURES – \$40,606,632



APPENDIX G

LOCAL PARTNERSHIP REVENUE BY COUNTY, FY 2020

COUNTY	PRIVATE	FEDERAL	IN-KIND	STATE	TOTAL
Abbeville	\$17,706	\$0	\$19,918	\$200,000	\$237,624
Aiken	\$4,131	\$0	\$51,519	\$412,272	\$467,922
Allendale	\$2,534	\$0	\$84,660	\$200,000	\$287,194
Anderson	\$18,973	\$0	\$84,919	\$456,825	\$560,717
Bamberg	\$17,274	\$0	\$153,837	\$200,638	\$371,749
Barnwell	\$151,782	\$0	\$15,759	\$217,505	\$385,046
Beaufort	\$29,689	\$50,050	\$1,390	\$359,248	\$440,377
Berkeley	\$29,652	\$2,000	\$78,340	\$504,880	\$614,872
Calhoun	\$26,739	\$0	\$22,742	\$202,450	\$251,931
Charleston	\$21,168	\$1,667,162	\$314,107	\$735,364	\$2,737,801
Cherokee	\$51,355	\$0	\$297,993	\$200,000	\$549,348
Chester	\$289	\$2,000	\$37,518	\$204,000	\$243,807
Chesterfield	\$87,329	\$0	\$37,952	\$205,000	\$330,281
Clarendon	\$4,059	\$0	\$81,158	\$201,753	\$286,970
Colleton	\$40,479	\$0	\$32,856	\$207,515	\$280,849
Darlington	\$160,476	\$39,247	\$0	\$232,097	\$431,820
Dillon	\$55,099	\$0	\$11,425	\$200,000	\$266,524
Dorchester	\$13,503	\$4,000	\$63,663	\$348,844	\$430,010
Edgefield	\$19,355	\$0	\$146,840	\$200,000	\$366,195
Fairfield	\$49,949	\$0	\$40,967	\$203,505	\$294,421
Florence	\$3,061	\$130,626	\$8,145	\$449,096	\$590,928
Georgetown	\$21,907	\$3,340	\$87,668	\$200,000	\$312,915
Greenville	\$318,677	\$0	\$1,531,206	\$1,048,276	\$2,898,159
Greenwood	\$7,125	\$0	\$21,888	\$221,360	\$250,373
Hampton	\$3,606	\$4,000	\$27,819	\$204,603	\$240,028
Horry	\$8,923	\$6,000	\$45,061	\$598,304	\$658,288
Jasper	\$21,360	\$4,000	\$97,182	\$207,500	\$330,042
Kershaw	\$11,768	\$0	\$0	\$210,000	\$221,768
Lancaster	\$25,562	\$1,577,488	\$173,070	\$220,225	\$1,996,345
Laurens	\$2,821	\$0	\$18,000	\$206,776	\$227,597
Lee	\$479,483	\$0	\$103,737	\$213,505	\$796,726
Lexington	\$50,570	\$42,710	\$0	\$613,744	\$707,024
McCormick	\$4,361	\$0	\$31,637	\$246,000	\$281,997
Marion	\$234	\$0	\$38,605	\$200,000	\$238,839
Marlboro	\$6,120	\$0	\$96,833	\$200,000	\$302,953
Newberry	\$6,591	\$0	\$55,304	\$203,505	\$265,400
Oconee	\$456	\$0	\$36,750	\$200,340	\$237,546
Orangeburg	\$83,240	\$0	\$28,476	\$298,560	\$410,275
Pickens	\$35,584	\$0	\$24,514	\$255,572	\$315,670
Richland	\$15,546	\$2,002,790	\$0	\$804,164	\$2,822,500
Saluda	\$4,155	\$0	\$33,253	\$200,000	\$237,407
Spartanburg	\$1,095,038	\$3,125,857	\$0	\$673,324	\$4,894,219
Sumter	\$468	\$0	\$60,000	\$351,456	\$411,924
Union	\$5,401	\$0	\$69,672	\$200,000	\$275,073
Williamsburg	\$10,847	\$6,000	\$56,580	\$223,005	\$296,433
York	\$344,525	\$2,108	\$68,069	\$507,516	\$922,218
	\$3,368,969	\$8,669,377	\$4,291,028	\$14,648,728	\$30,978,102

APPENDIX G

LOCAL PARTNERSHIP EXPENDITURES BY COUNTY, FY 2020

COUNTY	PRIVATE	FEDERAL	IN-KIND	STATE	TOTAL
Abbeville	\$11,474	\$7,461	\$19,918	\$195,577	\$234,431
Aiken	\$49	\$912	\$51,519	\$302,604	\$355,085
Allendale	\$5,762	\$1,641	\$84,660	\$200,734	\$292,796
Anderson	\$18,507	\$8,909	\$84,919	\$444,110	\$556,445
Bamberg	\$8,978	\$1,406	\$153,837	\$201,801	\$366,022
Barnwell	\$151,143	\$5,793	\$15,759	\$180,127	\$352,823
Beaufort	\$51,240	\$45,878	\$1,390	\$340,857	\$439,365
Berkeley	\$49,750	\$12,751	\$78,340	\$488,628	\$629,468
Calhoun	\$16,504	\$264	\$22,742	\$200,063	\$239,574
Charleston	\$19,455	\$1,748,936	\$314,107	\$732,229	\$2,814,727
Cherokee	\$44,515	\$3,751	\$297,993	\$191,650	\$537,908
Chester	\$1,027	\$1,049	\$37,518	\$176,523	\$216,117
Chesterfield	\$50,739	\$1,955	\$37,952	\$200,557	\$291,204
Clarendon	\$3,834	\$0	\$81,158	\$213,809	\$298,801
Colleton	\$16,985	\$8,803	\$32,856	\$215,633	\$274,276
Darlington	\$188,765	\$53,229	\$0	\$226,002	\$467,997
Dillon	\$52,177	\$0	\$11,425	\$189,563	\$253,164
Dorchester	\$3,253	\$3,512	\$63,663	\$339,961	\$410,389
Edgefield	\$10,845	\$749	\$146,840	\$187,088	\$345,521
Fairfield	\$42,618	\$6,548	\$40,967	\$170,338	\$260,470
Florence	\$4,594	\$82,559	\$8,145	\$425,692	\$520,989
Georgetown	\$31,153	\$8,590	\$87,668	\$240,767	\$368,179
Greenville	\$483,456	\$4,295	\$1,531,206	\$1,013,795	\$3,032,751
Greenwood	\$5,493	\$14,119	\$21,888	\$223,195	\$264,695
Hampton	\$2,095	\$1,433	\$27,819	\$203,952	\$235,298
Horry	\$8,124	\$1,510	\$45,061	\$537,617	\$592,313
Jasper	\$20,039	\$31	\$97,182	\$199,742	\$316,995
Kershaw	\$6,165	\$3,000	\$0	\$205,179	\$214,343
Lancaster	\$119,389	\$1,573,984	\$173,070	\$256,546	\$2,122,989
Laurens	\$12,847	\$1,516	\$18,000	\$212,517	\$244,880
Lee	\$451,721	\$1,047	\$103,737	\$201,828	\$758,333
Lexington	\$35,944	\$54,022	\$0	\$601,850	\$691,816
McCormick	\$6,124	\$0	\$31,637	\$211,182	\$248,942
Marion	\$0	\$107	\$38,605	\$195,133	\$233,846
Marlboro	\$3,550	\$362	\$96,833	\$192,674	\$293,420
Newberry	\$17,232	\$5,117	\$55,304	\$186,008	\$263,660
Oconee	\$523	\$0	\$36,750	\$183,455	\$220,728
Orangeburg	\$84,857	\$2,287	\$28,476	\$292,600	\$408,220
Pickens	\$35,307	\$3,994	\$24,514	\$249,419	\$313,235
Richland	\$2,746	\$2,087,461	\$0	\$781,010	\$2,871,217
Saluda	\$1,500	\$8,218	\$33,253	\$197,353	\$240,324
Spartanburg	\$1,056,929	\$2,991,091	\$0	\$656,292	\$4,704,312
Sumter	\$3,942	\$0	\$60,000	\$330,154	\$394,095
Union	\$4,467	\$2,217	\$69,672	\$174,156	\$250,512
Williamsburg	\$15,946	\$1,907	\$56,580	\$207,305	\$281,738
York	\$342,618	\$4,237	\$68,069	\$499,705	\$914,628
	\$3,504,380	\$8,766,655	\$4,291,028	\$14,076,978	\$30,639,042

VISION 2020

THE STRATEGIC PLAN OF SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS, 2015-2020

STRATEGIC THEMES AND PRIORITIES

A. Increase access to quality early childhood programs and resources.

- a. Further expand access to high-quality early care, education, and early literacy services, particularly in the Abbeville plaintiff communities.
- b. Enhance comprehensive services to children 0-5 and the families/caregivers who support them, recognizing families as the first and best teachers of their children.
- c. Increase understanding of school readiness domains and assessment, and “what works” to help young children succeed. Make information easily accessible in all communities and for all families.

B. Enhance leadership development and capacity building.

- a. Build state and local capacity by strengthening interagency collaboration, public-private partnerships, strengthening technical assistance and leadership development for early childhood partners statewide.
- b. Enhance systems of support for local partnerships, BabyNet providers, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership and 4K families.

C. Strengthen interagency accountability and public-private collaboration.

- a. Examine and strengthen early childhood transitions for children among SC’s early childhood system partners to ensure continuity of care and healthy development.
- b. Complete revision of BabyNet system and retrain personnel (OSEP, state agency partners, private interventionists).
- c. Identify system gaps, funding opportunities, and recommend solutions in the following program transitions:
 - i. Early Head Start- 4K (Head Start, FS, SDE)
 - ii. Part C- Part B (FS, DDSN, SDE)
 - iii. 4K to 5K (FS, SDE, schools, child care partners)
 - iv. Home visitors - Schools (FS, local partners, PAT, NFP, ESSS, Children’s Trust)
- d. Develop a system of shared, interagency accountability (state and local, public and private) by developing a shared data system, an inventory of services to children 0-5, and an interagency children’s budget.

For a chronological update on progress made toward the goals and objectives outlined in the 2016-2018 workplan associated with Vision 2020, see “Meeting of the Board of Trustees,” South Carolina First Steps (December 2018), pages 22-43. Available from: <http://scfirststeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/SCFS-Board-Packet-December-6-2018.pdf>.

NOTES

PAGES 10-11

48% of children 0-5 live in poverty or a low-income household. Defined as children under age 6 <185% federal poverty level. Data source: 5-Year Estimates: American Community Survey (2014-2018). Table B17024. US Census Bureau.

40% of children 0-5 lived in a single-parent household. Data source: 1-Year Estimates: American Community Survey (2019). Table C23008. US Census Bureau.

21% 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 (2019). Vital Statistics: South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Accessed 17 Nov 2020. [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 (2019). Vital Statistics: South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Accessed 17 Nov 2020. [Available from: https://apps.dhec.sc.gov/Health/SCAN_BDP/tables/birthtable.aspx].

6% of children 0-5 experienced food insufficiency at some point during the past year. Defined as responding, “Sometimes we could not afford enough to eat” or “Often we could not afford enough to eat” to “Which of these statements best describes your household’s ability to afford the food you need during the past 12 months?”. Low sample size, so interpret with caution. Data source: Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. 2017-2018 National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) data query (Indicator 6.26). Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Accessed 17 Nov 2020. [Available from: www.childhealthdata.org].

50% 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. 2017-2018 National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) data query (Indicator 6.7). Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Accessed 17 Nov 2020. [Available from: www.childhealthdata.org].

54% of children ages 3-4 were not enrolled in preschool or nursery school. Data source: 5-Year Estimates: American Community Survey (2014-2018). Table S1401. US Census Bureau.

61% of entering kindergartners tested “not ready” for school and % “demonstrating readiness” map by county. Data source: Analysis of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Results: School Year 2019-2020. Accessed 17 Nov 2020. [Available from: <https://eoc.sc.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/KRA/KRA%202020.reduced.pdf>].

Impact of COVID on child care deserts. Calculated by Chelsea Richard from SC First Steps. Data obtained from SCCHILDCARE.ORG (28 May 2020). Providers include licensed, approved, and registered child care centers and family/group child care homes. Population of children under age 5 from 2013-2018 5 Year American Community Survey Estimates (Table B01001). US Census Bureau. Definition of a child care desert from the Center for American Progress (a census tract with at least 50 children under age 5 with no providers or so few options that there are more than 3 children to every available slot); Deserts without COVID-19 are based on licensed capacity as of May 28, 2020 in each census tract, meaning without any temporary closures due to COVID-19, what was the capacity; deserts during COVID-19 are based on active capacity as of May 28, 2020, meaning the resulting capacity once temporary closures were taken into account

83% of SC parents and caregivers say they are more stressed and anxious than usual. Data source: Build It Back Better: Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on Young Children, their Families, and Child Care Needs in South Carolina (September 2020). South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council, United Way Association of South Carolina, and South Carolina First Steps. [Available from: <https://earlychildhoodsc.org/what-we-do/build-it-back-bettersurvey>].

Race, ethnicity, and poverty and COVID-19. Data sources: Artiga S, Corallo B, Pham O. Racial Disparities in COVID-19: Key Findings from Available Data and Analysis. Kaiser Family Foundation (August 2020). [Available from: <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-covid-19-key-findings->

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Low birthweight by state and by race. Data source: Martin JA, Hamilton BE, Osterman MJK, Driscoll AK. Births: Final Data for 2018. National Vital Statistics Reports: National Center for Health Statistics. 2019. 68(13). [Available from: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68_13-508.pdf].

Impact of doula assistance. Data source: Gruber KJ, Cupito SH, Dobson CF. Impact of Doulas on Healthy Birth Outcomes. *J Perinat Educ*. 2013;22(1):49-58.

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Healthy pregnancies impact health of infant. Data source: Early Brain Development and Health. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed 20 Nov 2020. [Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/early-brain-development.html>].

Hispanic children ages 0-5 in SC. Calculated by Chelsea Richard from SC First Steps (19 Nov 2020). Data source: Vintage 2019 postcensal estimates of the resident population of the United States (April 1, 2010, July 1, 2010-July 1, 2019), by year, county, single-year of age (0, 1, 2, .., 85 years and over), bridged race, Hispanic origin, and sex. National Center for Health Statistics (under a collaborative arrangement with the U.S. Census Bureau). Accessed 28 Jul 2020. [Available from: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/bridged_race.htm].

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