



November 27, 2024

South Carolina General Assembly  
1100 Gervais Street  
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Honorable Members of the South Carolina General Assembly:

This is a historic year for South Carolina First Steps as we celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We are grateful to the General Assembly and Governor Henry McMaster for continued leadership and commitment as we work toward our shared mission of ensuring all children start school ready to reach their highest potential.

We are pleased to report that in fiscal year 2024, First Steps directly served 64,678 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Another 80,000+ 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 2023-2024 Annual Report for South Carolina First Steps and the South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). The report summarizes our impact from fiscal year 2024, 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 1.84 of the General Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 mandates that First Steps provide an annual report on the state's investment in early learning and development through READY funds. This information can be found within the enclosed 2023-2024 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 I may ever be of assistance, please contact me at [AVandervliet@scfirststeps.org](mailto:AVandervliet@scfirststeps.org) or 803-758-8877.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Vandervliet".

Ann Vandervliet  
Executive Director  
South Carolina First Steps



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



South Carolina  
**Early Childhood  
Advisory Council**

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## **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.

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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### **In 2024, we had the opportunity to reflect on 25 years of serving young children and families in South Carolina.**

We continue to celebrate our progress while reaffirming our commitment to the future. Since its inception, First Steps has served more than a million children and families, demonstrating what is possible when leaders from communities, the public and private sectors, and both sides of the aisle come together with a shared commitment to ensuring every child is intellectually, emotionally, and physically ready for success in school and life.

Among those leaders is Georgia Mjartan, who led First Steps as state director for seven years. During her tenure, First Steps achieved historic milestones, including securing permanent status as a state agency, doubling its reach to serve 64,678 children annually, expanding First Steps 4K statewide, and launching nationally recognized innovations like First Five SC. On behalf of the board, I thank Georgia for her extraordinary leadership.

While we've made remarkable progress, the data reminds us that there is still work to do. Forty-two percent of South Carolina's children under age six live in poverty or low-income households. This past year, First Steps directly served 45% of them, up from just 17% four years ago. However, the most impactful programs—those offering intensive support to families—remain out of reach for many children who need them most.

Although we have increased high-intensity services to children most in need by 60%, these programs still only reach 8% of eligible children. With continued focus and investment, we can expand access to programs that yield the greatest benefits.

At this pivotal moment, I am delighted to welcome Ann Vandervliet as our new executive director. A mission-driven leader with deep expertise in early childhood systems, Ann understands how to leverage partnerships and data to deliver meaningful results for children and families.

I want to thank our legislators, local partnerships, staff, members of the board and Early Childhood Advisory Council, and partner agencies who tirelessly work for young children and families. Together, we can significantly increase the number of children in South Carolina who enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school.



**DAVID MORLEY**  
Chairman,  
SC First Steps  
Board of Trustees



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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**For the past 25 years, South Carolina First Steps has laid a strong foundation for improving the system of individuals and organizations serving young children.**

Recent investments, including the General Assembly's establishment of READY funding, have enabled local First Steps partnerships to reach more children and families than ever, while helping us better **understand** which strategies have the most meaningful and lasting impact.

Statewide expansion of First Steps 4K, in partnership with nonprofit and private preschools, has increased access to free, high-quality early education and sibling care. This not only prepares children for school but also supports working families and strengthens our economy.

Another recent example of **partnership** and innovation is the First Five SC portal, a collaborative effort across multiple agencies to make accessing early childhood services easier for families. With over 140,000 children under age six living in poverty in South Carolina, many families face daily struggles that limit learning and coping capacity. By increasing utilization of available services, we can make a measurable difference in the lives of these children.

Collaboration and alignment across all sectors of the early childhood system are also key. We must continue creating **connections** between families, service providers, early caregivers and educators, policymakers, and funders. Efforts like mapping public investments in early childhood and leveraging data across agencies will help us better understand what services are most helpful and have the most meaningful effect.

Together, we can continue to **build** a data driven and family-centered pipeline of support that prepares South Carolina's children for school readiness and lifelong success.

I am deeply grateful for the warm welcome and the opportunity to serve alongside such dedicated partners. Let's continue to understand, partner, connect, and build so that every child is ready for a bright future.



**ANN VANDERVLIE**  
Executive Director  
SC First Steps



FISCAL YEAR 2024

# Our Impact



# 64,678

children directly served

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

With a presence in every county, we work to ensure that every child has the opportunity to start school ready for success.



## BY THE NUMBERS

In the last year:



**60,727 children**  
were served directly by a  
local First Steps partnership

**46,817 parents**  
also received services from  
their local First Steps



**45% of children in need**  
were directly served by First Steps



**4,119 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 80,000+ children



**\$1 = \$2.71**

First Steps local partnerships leveraged \$28 million from sources outside of state government, providing a match of \$1.71 for every state dollar invested

### PROVEN RESULTS

A 2019 study found that children who received local First Steps 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.

South Carolina is home to 334,324 children under age six, each deserving the opportunity to thrive. Yet, too many face disadvantages that can negatively impact their development and school readiness. Last year in South Carolina:

**42%**

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

**43%**

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

**36%**

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

**57%**

of children ages 3-4 were not enrolled in preschool

**23%**

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

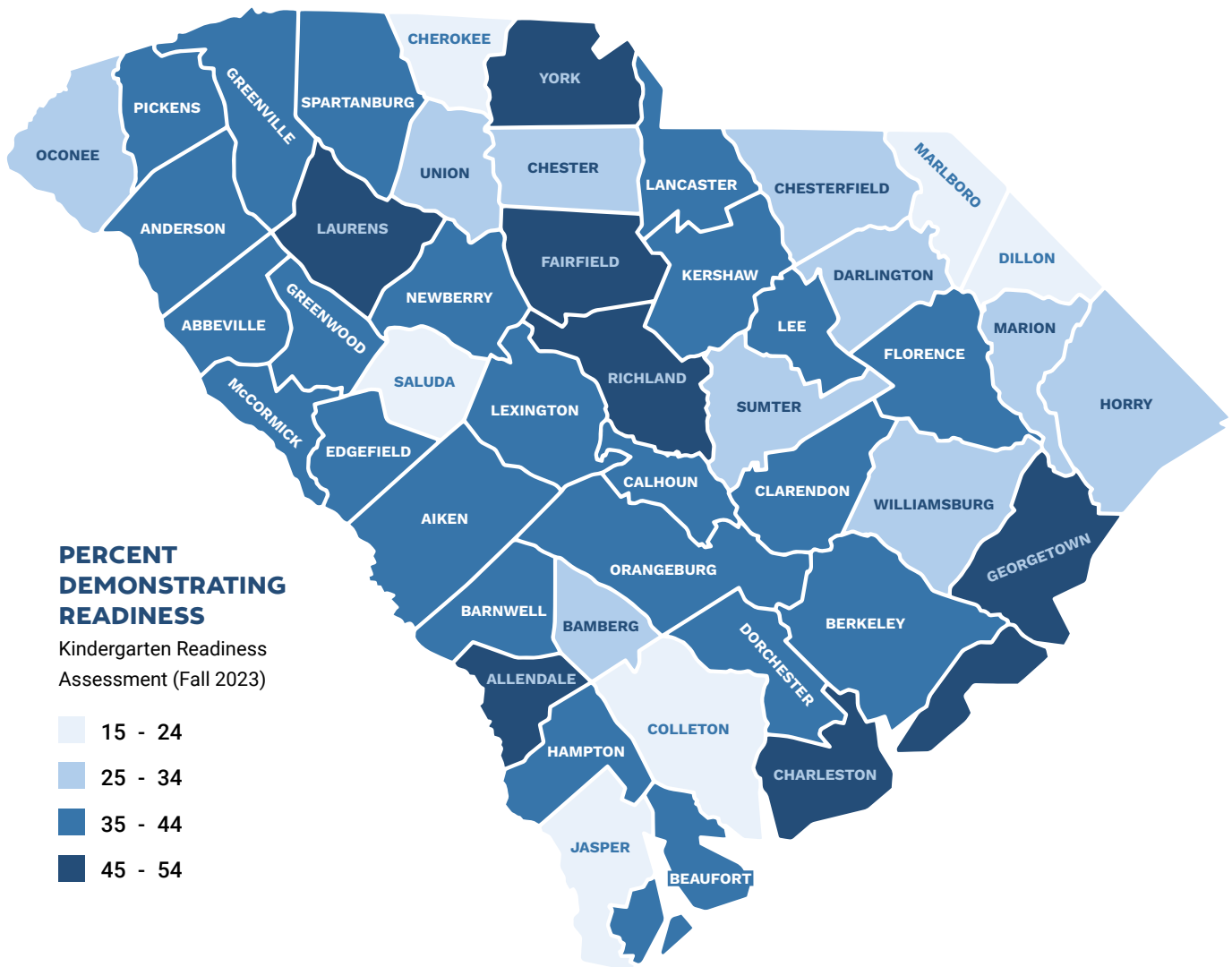
**59%**

of entering kindergartners tested "not ready" for school

**10%**

of babies were born with low birthweight

# 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 every county in South Carolina, First Steps works to ensure that all children have access to programs and services that get them ready for school and life success.**

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

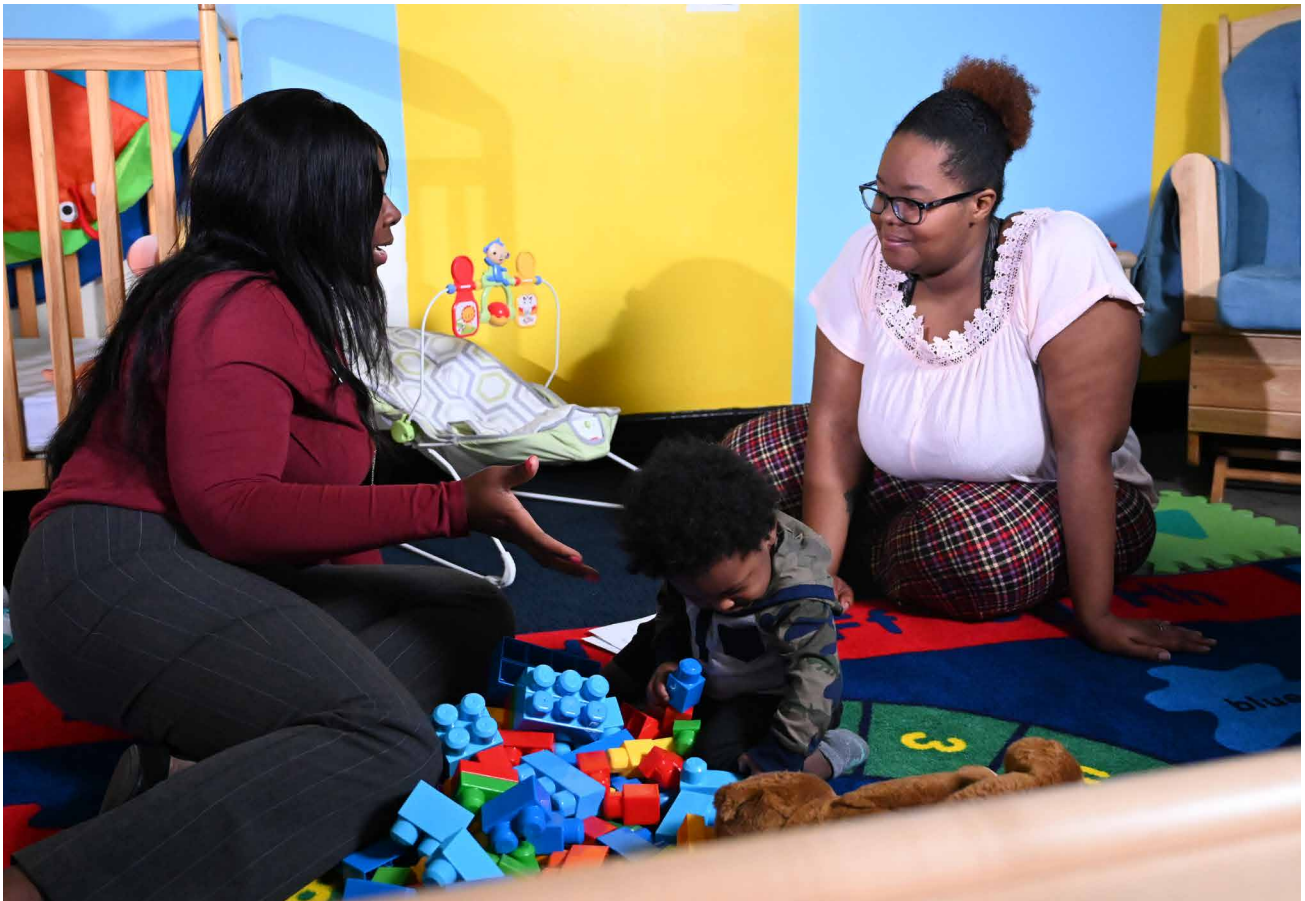
Our state-local partnership model ensures that our investments are guided by the communities we serve, aligned with local resources, amplified by private philanthropy and grassroots support, and strategically targeted to deliver the best outcomes for children and families.

In the past year, local First Steps partnerships reached more children than ever before, increasing the total number served by 19.8%. This milestone was made possible in part by short-term federal funding from the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), which provided additional resources to expand programs and services.

### **Our Local Impact, FY22-FY24**

	CHILDREN	ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS
2021-2022	54,092	30,543
2022-2023	50,689	35,370
2023-2024	60,727	46,817

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



*Armani Manigalt and her 10-month-old son DJ participate in the Parents as Teachers program at Darlington County First Steps. Armani credits the program’s support and her parent educator, Crystal, with helping her feel confident and supported as a parent, saying, “First Steps makes my heart smile.”*

## **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.

*For a list of risk factors, see Appendix B.*

**“Supporting parents with young kids is so important because, no matter how old you are, being a parent is hard.”**

**— Armani Manigalt, participant in Parents as Teachers at Darlington County First Steps**

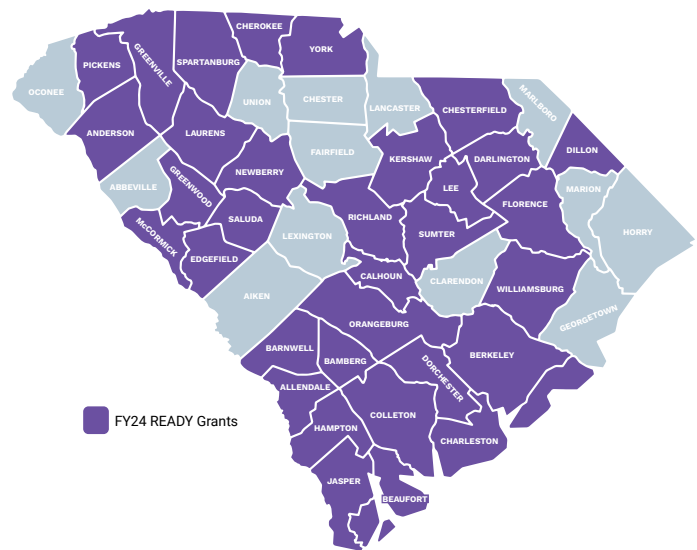
## Local Partnerships

# Every Child Ready

In 2022, the General Assembly made a historic commitment to South Carolina's youngest children by allocating \$3 million in recurring funds to be distributed to local First Steps partnerships through a grantmaking process.

This past year marked the second year of the **Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY)** grant program. These funds prioritize programs that support children ages 0-3, with a focus on rural areas and counties where Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores fall below the state average.

Over the past year, \$2,134,849 in READY grant funds were awarded across 33 counties to sustain and expand evidence-based parenting programs, enhance the quality of child care, support innovative strategies, and address critical workforce and infrastructure needs.



*Chesterfield County First Steps expanded its 4K program at Compass Point Preschool with READY funds, converting a part-time teaching assistant role to full-time. In 2024, with the ability to enroll more students, the program graduated its largest class yet.*

For the complete list of READY grant awards to date, see Appendix F.  
For local partnership financials, see Appendices G-I.



*With READY grant funding, Greenwood County First Steps staff members Jamilla Smith and Karina Catalan become certified car seat inspectors. They now help families select and safely install the right car seat for their infants and toddlers.*

## Pursuing Innovation

In 2023, we launched the **Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation (CC4ECI)**, a funding model designed to develop, test, and refine innovative early childhood programs. Co-designed with the North Carolina Partnership for Children, CC4ECI provides grantees with tools, technical assistance, and a peer learning network to evaluate program effectiveness and implement improvements for greater impact.

A central feature of this model is engaging families who participate in the programs being tested. Their feedback helps ensure that initiatives address community needs, remain relevant in real-world settings, and have the potential to scale for broader impact.

Three local First Steps partnerships formed the inaugural CC4ECI cohort, each receiving two-year grants funded by READY and supplemented with private support from the Enterprise Mobility Foundation. Their projects focus on expanding home visiting services, layering services to improve child and parent outcomes, and increasing access to school transition supports.



## Local Partnerships

# Parenting



### PARENTING PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE | 2023-24

**37,943**

total home visits delivered

**1,955**

parent group support hours provided

**4,148**

families supported through  
intensive parenting programs

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

**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, development, 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 intensive in-home coaching to community-based peer support.

Some programs focus specifically on promoting early language and literacy. One standout example is **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**, which mails free, high-quality books to children from birth to age five. This year, the program served 13,108 children in 18 counties—a 26.5% increase over last year—so that more families across the state have access to books that inspire a love of reading.



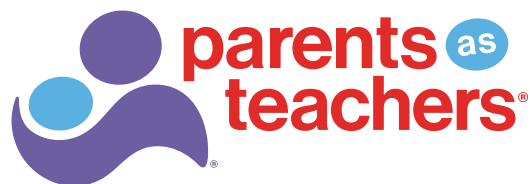
*Jordan Waters with his children, James and Emily. Through Laurens County First Steps' Parents as Teachers program, Jordan found the support he needed to step up for his family.*

## A Father's Journey

Jordan Waters, a single father of two young children, James and Emily, faced the daunting task of raising his kids alone when they were just 3 and 14 months old. Understanding the importance of being the best parent possible, Jordan sought help and turned to his local First Steps in Laurens, South Carolina.

Laurens County First Steps recognized the urgency of Jordan's situation and made room for him in the **Parents as Teachers** program, even though it was at capacity. This program provided Jordan and his children with regular personal visits from a certified parent educator, participation in group sessions, and access to vital resources. The experience gave Jordan the knowledge and confidence he needed to succeed as a parent.

Today, Jordan is both a graduate of the program and an ongoing and active participant in group meetings. He is dedicated to continuous learning and supports other parents on their journeys. He says, "I wouldn't be the parent I am today without 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 include programs like **Quality Counts**, a child care improvement initiative developed by Spartanburg County First Steps. These efforts lead to measurable gains in program quality, ensuring safer, more reliable child care for families and better outcomes for children.



### QUALITY ENHANCEMENT & CHILD CARE TRAINING AT A GLANCE | 2023-24

**5,506**

hours of on-site technical assistance provided

**152**

child care centers participated in QE

**805**

hours of certified training offered

**6,773**

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 J.  
For the results of an external evaluation of First Steps child care scholarships, see Appendix K.*



*Charissa Williamson, a teacher at Royalty Academy in Winnsboro, S.C., engages her preschool students with hands-on activities that promote learning and creativity. Thanks to the support of Fairfield County First Steps, her classroom is equipped with resources that make every moment a teachable one.*

## **Building a Brighter Future**

Charissa Williamson, a preschool teacher at Royalty Academy in Winnsboro, S.C., brings joy and enthusiasm to her 3-year-old classroom every day. “It’s a joy to teach this age,” she shared. “Hearing them say, ‘Miss Charissa, we love you,’ and seeing their smiles makes everything better.”

Royalty Academy benefits from child care quality enhancement and coaching services offered by Fairfield County First Steps. This support has had a significant impact on Charissa’s classroom. “They put together this whole class,” she explained. “Whether it’s books, blocks, anything like that, we are using it. Everything they have provided is a teachable moment for my preschool.”

The program not only brought in supplies but also offered one-on-one coaching to help Charissa refine her teaching strategies. “It’s all about making sure the kids get what they need,” she said. “It’s going to prepare them for the future.”

For Charissa, First Steps is about more than just resources—it’s about creating a supportive community. “First Steps means a lot to me, the families, and the community,” she says. “It’s a great thing to be a part of South Carolina First Steps.”

## Local Partnerships

# School Transition

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

In response to needs identified by our local partnerships statewide, we collaborated with state and community partners to develop and launch **Countdown to Kindergarten** in 2004. The program's centerpiece is a curriculum-driven program that connects families of rising kindergarten students with their future teachers during the summer.

In summer 2023, with the support of ESSER funding, Countdown to Kindergarten continued to expand its reach by serving both rising 5K and 4K students. The program directly served 2,247 children—1,398 rising kindergartners and 849 rising preschoolers—ensuring they had the preparation needed for a smooth transition into school.

In addition to direct services, the Countdown initiative included virtual learning opportunities like the **Countdown to Kindergarten Summit**, partnerships with community-based organizations, and a statewide public awareness campaign.

These efforts collectively helped thousands more families prepare their children for school success.



### COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN AT A GLANCE | SUMMER 2023

**2,247**  
children served

**13,386**  
personal visits provided

**534**  
teachers trained

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



*Justin Johnson (left) and his daughter Malia learn from Barbara Reed, their Countdown to Kindergarten teacher, about how using modeling clay can build the fine motor skills needed for learning to write.*

## Starting School with Confidence

Malia, a rising 4K student at White Knoll Elementary in Lexington County, was initially anxious about starting preschool. Born during the height of the COVID pandemic, her early years were spent largely at home, with few social interactions outside her family. Her father, Justin Johnson, says the family enrolled in the Countdown to Kindergarten program designed specifically for rising 4K students

At first, Malia was shy and hesitant. But after six personal visits with her new teacher, Barbara Reed, she began to open up and feel more comfortable. The weekly visits not only helped Malia adjust to the idea of school but also provided her parents with valuable strategies to support her learning at home.

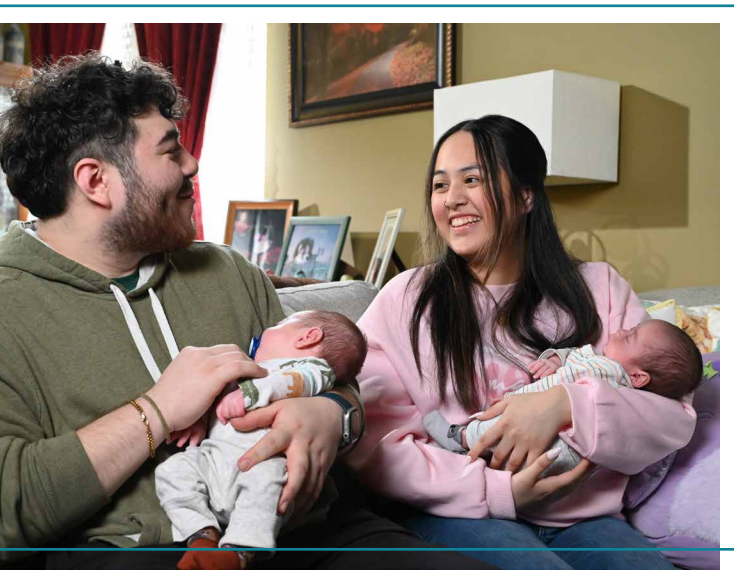
By the end of the summer, Malia was excited to see Ms. Reed and meet some of her new classmates during a special tour of the school. They practiced walking in line, explored their classroom, and even got to visit the cafeteria together.

Thanks to Countdown to Kindergarten, Malia walked confidently into her first day of school, smiling and ready for the year ahead.



## Local Partnerships

# Health



*Sebastian and Sandra with their 7-week-old twins, Mateo and Santiago. As first-time parents, they found support and guidance through the Nurse-Family Partnership program at York County First Steps.*

**Good health is the foundation of school readiness. That's why First Steps invests in a range of programs designed to promote healthy development from pregnancy onward.**

Our services include programs that support maternal and infant health, enhance food security, prevent chronic health conditions, and address developmental delays.

This year, our partnership with **Reach Out and Read** expanded to serve 14,203 children in 11 counties—a 20.2% increase over the previous year. By integrating books into pediatric care, the program fosters healthy development and helps to strengthen child-caregiver bonds.

### HEALTH AT A GLANCE | 2023-24

**654**

children screened for developmental delays

**14,203**

children served by Reach Out and Read

**409**

families served by Nurse-Family Partnership

**4,609**

children served by HealthySteps

**1,507**

families with newborns served by Family Connects

**14,243**

backpacks with weekend meals provided to children at risk of food insecurity

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



*Lauren Luneckas says that participating in Family Connects Greenville meant that she “could exhale, knowing that support was right here for us.”*

## A Lifeline for New Parents

When Lauren and her husband Anthony welcomed their first child, they found themselves far from family support and full of questions about caring for their newborn. That’s when they discovered **Family Connects Greenville**, a partnership between the SC Department of Public Health and Greenville First Steps. Through the program, Nurse Narissa came to their home three weeks after Lauren’s delivery, providing guidance not just on the baby’s health and development, but also on Lauren’s recovery.

Initially, Lauren was hesitant about having a stranger visit her home during such a vulnerable time, but Narissa quickly put her at ease. “She was never there as a houseguest, but as family,” Lauren says. The personalized support helped her navigate those early weeks with confidence. As her daughter continues to grow, Lauren feels more prepared for the milestones ahead.

Her advice to other new moms? “I would tell any mom to do it.”



## Local Partnerships

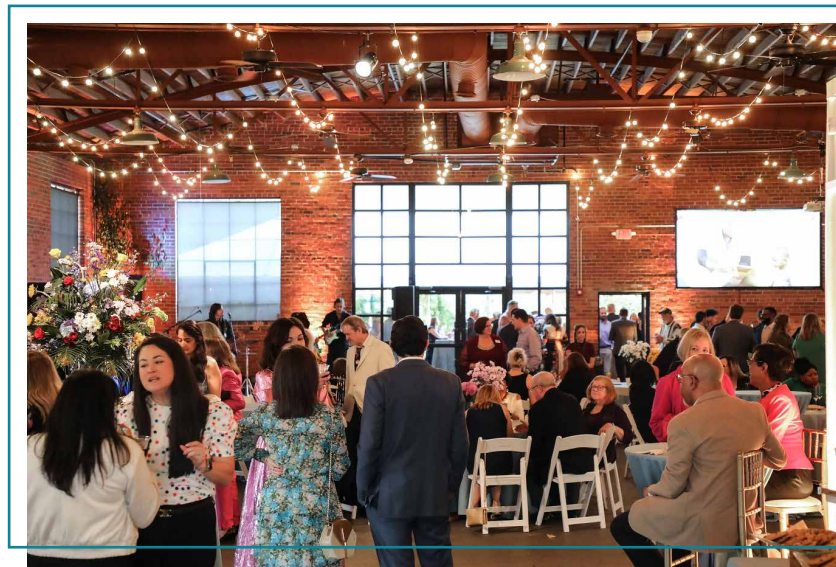
# Mobilizing Communities

**Our success as a public-private partnership relies on engaging local communities, private donors, and volunteers at every level.**

Each of our 46 local First Steps partnerships is tasked with bringing together community members to identify the needs of young children and leverage resources to meet those needs. This starts with local boards of early childhood stakeholders who develop strategies and coordinate services to maximize resources and reduce duplication.

In addition to their boards, local partnerships also engage their communities through events like early childhood conferences, resource fairs, and baby showers. These gatherings provide families and early childhood providers with essential resources, information, and a chance to build social connections.

Local partnerships also engage families in building supportive communities for young children. In six counties, **Family Cafés** bring parents and caregivers together in small groups to learn, share experiences, and shape the programs that serve them.



*Guests gather in support of South Carolina's youngest children at A Night to Celebrate Community.*

To cultivate a community of support at the state level, we hosted the third annual **Night to Celebrate Community** gala on March 21 in Columbia. Presented by Palmetto Citizens Credit Union, the event attracted over 200 attendees and raised an impressive \$111,730 for the children and families served by First Steps partnerships. This generous support allows partnerships to fund activities that state dollars can't cover, such as providing meals for parent meetings and community events. By removing these barriers, we are able to reach and serve more children in need.



*Oconee County First Steps hosted its third annual community baby shower with support from partners including Trinity Baptist Church, Light of the World Church, the City of Walhalla, The Parenting Place, Prisma Health's Nurse-Family Partnership, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, and the Oconee Social Impact Network.*

## Showered with Support

For three years, Oconee County First Steps has hosted a community baby shower, bringing together local partners and volunteers to support expectant families. Diaper bags filled with essentials—like diapers, wipes, towels, and books—have been donated by organizations across the county.

The event is held on weekends to best accommodate parents' schedules, making it easier for families to attend. In addition to providing supplies, the baby shower connects parents with valuable resources, including home visiting programs and parenting support.

Daby Snipes, executive director of Oconee County First Steps, says the baby shower is here to stay. She hopes to expand it each year, reaching new communities and serving even more families.

### MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES AT A GLANCE | 2023-24

**639**

local partnership board members

**154**

Family Café participants

**332**

community volunteers

**\$111,730**

funds raised at  
A Night to Celebrate Community



## Local Partnerships

# National Service



*Representative Stewart Jones volunteered to read to a First Steps 4K classroom at Thornwell Child Development Center in Clinton, S.C. as part of our MLK Week of Service.*

**At First Steps, we leverage the power of national service to expand our reach and deepen our impact.**

Through our **AmeriCorps** and **AmeriCorps VISTA** programs, we engage dedicated individuals to serve South Carolina's youngest children and their families.



**AmeriCorps**

AmeriCorps members take on diverse roles, from trained parent educators to community outreach specialists. In FY24, members serving in our **Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPOY)** directly supported 178 families—a 63.3% increase over the previous year.

This year also marked the most successful **MLK Week of Service** yet, with 194 volunteers reading to children in 194 First Steps 4K classrooms and distributing 4,000 books provided by Toys for Tots. The event, which is organized annually by our AmeriCorps members, drew a wide range of volunteers, including local and state government officials and employees from Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Aflac, and Palmetto Citizens Federal Credit Union.

Our **AmeriCorps VISTA** program also continued to grow. In its second year, we secured resources for five full-time, federally funded VISTA members who strengthened our capacity in volunteer engagement, nonprofit management, communications, and fundraising.



*Octaisha Pittman works full-time at ParentSMART, a parent education program at Rock Hill Schools, York County School District 3. The program is housed in the same parent resource center as York County First Steps, where Octaisha received Nurse-Family Partnership services and served as an AmeriCorps member.*

## Paying it Forward

When Octaisha discovered she was pregnant, she was overwhelmed and unsure where to turn. That's when she found the Nurse-Family Partnership program at York County First Steps, where her nurse, Trish, became a lifeline, helping her overcome postpartum depression. "She was like a lifesaver for me," Octaisha recalled.

Inspired by the support she received, Octaisha decided to give back. She joined York County First Steps as a **First Steps AmeriCorps** member, serving as an assistant teacher and helping other families. That experience opened new doors, and she was soon hired as a parent educator for the local school district.

Today, her five-year-old daughter is thriving, and Octaisha is proud to be serving the community that once supported her.

### FIRST STEPS AMERICORPS AT A GLANCE | 2023-24

**42**

AmeriCorps members

**17**

service sites

**28,984**

service hours completed

**\$103,392**

Segal Education Awards

**5**

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)

## First Steps 4K

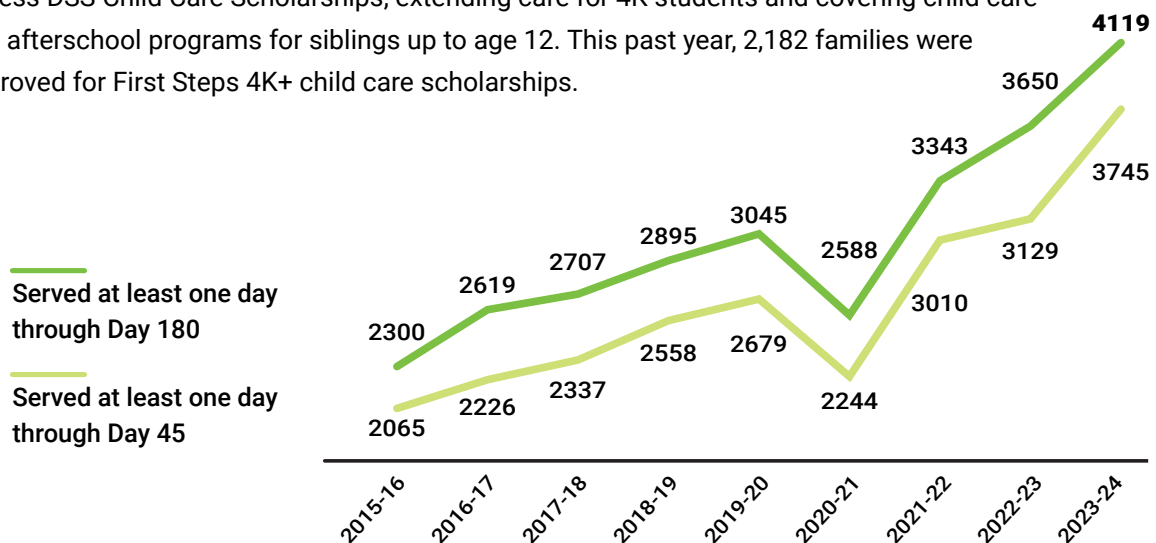
# Educating Four-Year-Olds

**First Steps 4K provided free, full-day four-year-old kindergarten to more children than ever, along with free child care options for families.**

As part of the state's Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP), **First Steps 4K** partners with licensed child care centers, private schools, and charter schools to deliver high-quality early learning. During the 2023-24 school year, we reached a new milestone, increasing enrollment by 12.8% and educating 4,119 children.

To further expand access, we awarded \$167,070 in **expansion grants** to six providers, enabling them to add or grow their 4K programs. This funding is projected to benefit an additional 118 children in six counties.

We also continued to support families through **First Steps 4K+**. This initiative allows families to access DSS Child Care Scholarships, extending care for 4K students and covering child care and afterschool programs for siblings up to age 12. This past year, 2,182 families were approved for First Steps 4K+ child care scholarships.





*Ethan James, a First Steps 4K student, with his mom, Genien James (left), alongside his support team at Precious One Learning Center in Florence, S.C.: Teacher Connie Rodgers, Center Director Erica Jones, and First Steps 4K Coach Amy Engle.*

## A Fresh Start for Ethan

Genien's son, Ethan, struggled with separation anxiety and behavioral challenges, making child care a constant battle and causing Genien to frequently miss work.

But in December 2023, things took a positive turn. Ethan enrolled in **First Steps 4K** at Precious One Learning Center in Florence, SC, where he and his family found the support they had been missing. With the dedicated care of his teacher, therapist, and 4K coach, Ethan's self-regulation skills flourished, and his confidence grew.

By the time he transitioned to kindergarten, Ethan was thriving—a testament to the power of a compassionate, supportive school community.

**“I want people to know that there are resources out here that can help your child, and most parents don't know where to find those resources. First Steps 4K helped me in finding Ethan's team so he could thrive.”**

— Genien James  
Parent of First Steps 4K student

First Steps 4K

# Elevating Excellence

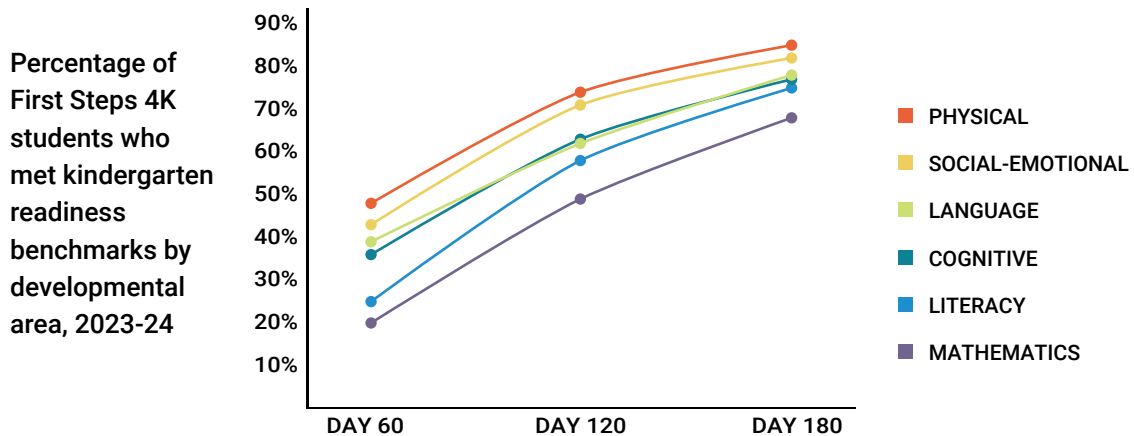
**First Steps 4K is committed to strengthening the state’s early childhood workforce to better serve children and families.**

Ahead of the 2023-24 school year, we hosted the **First Steps 4K Academy**, where 428 teachers and 275 directors participated in intensive, multi-day training. This was followed by an additional 104 hours of professional development throughout the year.

We also invested in leadership by funding a cohort of 18 directors to earn the **Aim4Excellence** credential, a nationally recognized program for early childhood administrators.

These investments are making a difference: During the 2023-24 school year, over 1,553 students benefited from their teachers’ participation in the ESSER-funded **Language and Literacy BOOST** program, which included monthly training and parent engagement activities.

All First Steps 4K providers make a commitment to excellence, following rigorous program standards and implementing evidence-based curricula. Throughout the year, they track and document student progress across six domains. The results speak for themselves: assessments using the **Teaching Strategies GOLD®** system show that First Steps 4K students consistently make gains across all areas of learning and development.





*Michelle Perkinson (left), a First Steps 4K Lead Teacher at Cadence Academy Preschool in Surfside, S.C., with her First Steps 4K coach, Cindy Galloway.*

## The Power of Mentorship

Michelle's journey to becoming a First Steps 4K lead teacher wasn't easy. As a single mother living in a women's shelter, she was determined to create a better life. She worked her way up in early childhood education, eventually earning the credentials to become a First Steps 4K teacher. But it was the mentorship of her coach, Cindy Galloway, that truly made the difference.

Michelle says that Cindy's guidance and encouragement gave her the confidence to grow as an educator. She credits Cindy with helping her enhance her classroom practices and better meet the needs of her students. Cindy's support also fueled Michelle's professional growth. In just five years, she has earned the title of Regional Teacher of the Year and presented at major conferences.

"Her support is the reason I've stayed in this field," Michelle says. "It has opened so many doors I never imagined for myself."

**"The thing that I appreciate the most about her is that she treats me as a worthy human being who is capable of incredible things."**

— Michelle Perkinson,  
First Steps 4K Lead Teacher,  
about her First Steps 4K Coach  
Cindy Galloway

# Leading for Children

**We envision a future where every young child thrives. Achieving this vision requires close collaboration and coordination among early childhood system leaders.**

As the convener and managing agency of the **SC Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)**, we bring together leaders from state agencies, elected officials, early childhood providers, business leaders, and parents to build a more aligned, coordinated and family-centered early childhood system.

A key focus of the ECAC is enhancing our state's capacity to connect and share early childhood data. By integrating data from multiple agencies, we can ensure that families, providers, and policymakers have access to accurate, actionable information for informed decision-making.

This year, our leadership in data integration earned national recognition as the ECAC



became South Carolina's first placement site for **Harvard University's Strategic Data Project Fellowship**. Funded by a two-year grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, this prestigious partnership enhances our ability to use data strategically, drive policy improvements, and ensure that young children receive the best possible support during their most critical years.



South Carolina  
**Early Childhood  
Advisory Council**

## Connecting Families from the Start

This year, we piloted a initiative to connect new parents with needed services through **Newborn Supply Kits**. Each kit included essential items for moms and their infants, along with information about **First Five SC**, an innovative portal created by the ECAC to give families seamless access to South Carolina’s publicly funded early childhood programs. The portal features a simple eligibility screener and a streamlined online application.

In partnership with five birthing hospitals and community organizations, and with funding from South Carolina’s Preschool Development Grant, we distributed 3,600 kits over six months. By reaching families immediately after delivery, the kits increased parents’ awareness of—and thereby timelier enrollment in—programs that support infant health and early childhood development, ensuring that babies get the strongest start possible.



From left, Books in Every Bag CEO *Barnie Howell* and Nurse Manager *Beth Enriquez* deliver a Newborn Supply Kit at the Pearl Tourville Women’s Pavilion, located in MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children’s Hospital in Charleston, S.C. Books in Every Bag was one of our community partners in the pilot.

### STREAMLINING ACCESS TO SERVICES | 2023-24



Connecting families to publicly funded early childhood services

**155,881**

unique visitors

**12,838**

checked their eligibility

**77%**

were eligible for at least 1 program



Helping families find free and affordable preschool programs

**61,411**

unique visitors

**6,807**

checked their eligibility

**81%**

were eligible for at least 1 program



Visit [first5sc.org](https://first5sc.org) and [palmettoprek.org](https://palmettoprek.org).

Both portals are supported by in part by the Preschool Development Grant.



## Early Childhood Advisory Council

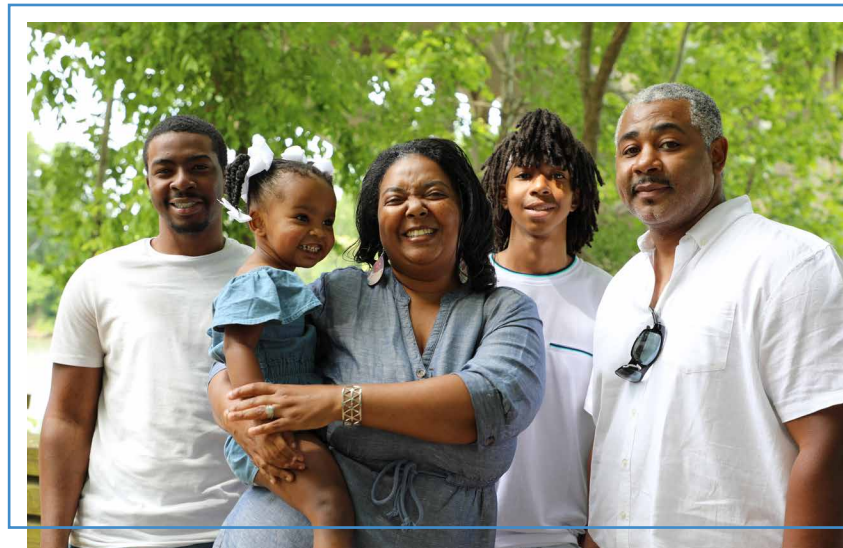
# Engaging Whole Families

**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. This strategy emphasizes the importance of promoting the healthy development and education of young children while simultaneously fostering the well-being and economic stability of their parents and caregivers.

A key component of this family-centered approach is the **Family Voice Council**, a leadership group of 20 parents, grandparents, and primary caregivers who actively contribute to shaping state policies and programs.

Through monthly meetings, council members provide direct feedback to program leaders, ensuring services align with the real needs of families across the state.



*Ferlecia Cuthbertson (center), a member of the Family Voice Council, with her family. Ferlecia sees the early childhood years as an invaluable window of opportunity: "There's not a repeat button."*

Listening to families has also guided the work of the ECAC, from building portals like First Five SC to shaping professional development. By integrating family voice into every aspect of our work, we're building a stronger, more responsive early childhood system—one that benefits children, parents, and entire communities.



## Family Voice Council



*Members of the Family Voice Council shared their stories during the opening plenary of the 2023 SC Summit on Early Childhood. The panelists highlighted the real challenges faced by parents and caregivers in South Carolina, while sharing their vision for a brighter future.*

## **Building Our Future Together: The SC Summit on Early Childhood**

In 2023, the Family Voice Council played a central role in planning the **SC Summit on Early Childhood**, held December 7 and themed “We Are Family: Building Our Future Together.”

Presented annually by SC First Steps and the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council, the summit brought together nearly 450 early childhood professionals, community leaders, policymakers, and state leaders.

With a focus on the two-generation approach, council members curated session topics, selected presenters, and creatively highlighted the diverse voices of parents, caregivers, and early childhood professionals. Their leadership ensured the summit truly reflected the diverse perspectives of families and providers from across the state.



# Connecting the Field



*Ready for Kindergarten offers tips and tools to help families confidently navigate the transition to school, with contributions from multiple state agencies and partners.*

**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 and knowledge-sharing among state-level partners. Through cross-agency initiatives, professional learning, and shared resources, we connect the field to enhance the quality of services for children and families.

Over the past year, the ECAC convened early childhood professionals and stakeholders to share best practices, learn from peers, and foster continuous professional growth.

A highlight of this collaborative approach was the spring 2024 release of **Ready for Kindergarten: A Guide for South Carolina Families**. Developed with contributions from partners like the SC Department of Education and Family Connection of SC, the guide offers practical tips and resources to support school transitions. A total of 22,800 copies were distributed to families statewide.



Early childhood educators proudly wearing their Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree t-shirts: Sierra Steel, Aqukwele James, and Jennifer Foster of Ragin Preparatory Christian Academy, and Cheryl Wynn of Itsy Bitsy Learning Center, both in Sumter, S.C.

## Learning Together: Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree

The **Palmetto Pre-K Jamboree** offers the high-quality, inclusive professional development that early childhood educators need to better serve South Carolina's young learners. Held virtually twice last year, each session attracted nearly 800 participants who attended workshops focused on early literacy, classroom management, and inclusive teaching practices.

Funded by the Preschool Development Grant and supported by SC First Steps, the SC Department of Education, the SC Department of Social Services, and the SC Head Start Collaboration Office, this initiative equips educators with essential skills and teaching strategies. With a 95% satisfaction rate, participants reported increased confidence and improved teaching practices—ultimately benefiting the children in their classrooms.

**ECAC PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
AT A GLANCE  
2023-24**

**450**

attendees participated in the  
SC Summit on Early Childhood

**1,501**

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](https://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



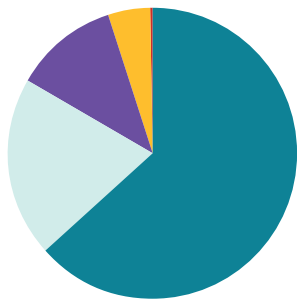
- Shares, takes turns and plays well with others
- Expresses emotions through appropriate actions and words
- Follows simple rules and directions
- Adjusts to changes in routine and environment
- Shows self-control
- Shows caring and understanding of others' feelings
- Interacts with familiar adults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

## Fiscal Year 2024

# Financials

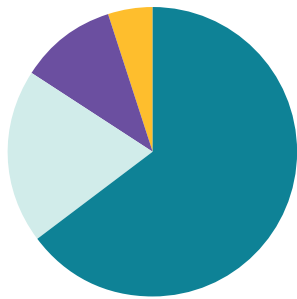
South Carolina First Steps is the only statewide funder dedicated exclusively to early childhood. As a public-private partnership, we leverage state support with federal and private funds to maximize our investment in early childhood systems and services.

### FY 2024 REVENUE – \$66,207,541



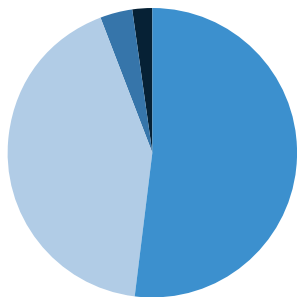
- State Funds (EIA) – \$41,969,774
- State Funds (General) – \$13,328,904
- Federal Funds – \$7,600,056
- Private Funds – \$3,263,661
- Interest Income – \$45,146

### FY 2024 EXPENDITURES – \$69,094,204



- State Funds (EIA) – \$44,724,426
- State Funds (General) – \$13,469,808
- Federal Funds – \$7,600,056
- Private Funds – \$3,299,914

### FY 2024 EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM – \$69,094,204



- First Steps 4K – \$35,959,520
- Local Partnerships – \$29,219,656
- Early Childhood Advisory Council – \$2,383,919
- Policy & Accountability – \$1,531,109

Note: Expenditures exceeded revenue mainly due to the current-year use of revenue recognized in prior years.

# Leadership

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Governor's Designee

**AMY WILLIAMS, DNP**  
**VICE CHAIR**  
Medical Provider

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Business Community

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Kimberly Clark Corporation-  
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Lakeshore Learning Materials  
Lourie Health and Life  
Manley Garvin  
Midas  
The MIL Corporation  
Molina Healthcare  
Nelson Mullins  
Palmetto Citizens Federal  
Credit Union

## 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 **\$16,286.28**, which was distributed directly to support children and families served by First Steps partnerships statewide.



## Your support matters

When you give to First Steps, you build on South Carolina’s proven investment in our state’s youngest children. With your help, more deserving children will have access to the learning opportunities and support they need to thrive.

Scan to give or visit [scfirststeps.org/donate](https://scfirststeps.org/donate).

Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein LLP  
Pollock Company  
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Select Health of SC  
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Teaching Strategies  
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### Foundations

Alliance for Early Success  
Doris Duke Foundation  
The Duke Endowment  
Enterprise Holdings Foundation  
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation  
Lipscomb Family Foundation  
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Pritzker Children’s Initiative  
SC Daughters of the American Revolution Foundation  
Sisters of Charity Foundation of SC  
Spinks Family Foundation

### Event Sponsors

#### A Night to Celebrate Community 2024

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Scott and Company Accounting Firm  
Select Health of SC  
The Sunshine House  
Betty and Lewis Smoak  
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Teaching Strategies  
Trinity Partners

#### First Steps 4K Academy 2024

The Double Tree Hilton Columbia

#### SC Summit on Early Childhood 2024

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Children’s Trust of SC  
Institute for Child Success  
Kaplan Early Learning Company  
Lakeshore Learning Materials  
Sisters of Charity Foundation of SC  
SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs  
SC Department of Education  
SC Department of Health and Human Services  
SC Department of Mental Health  
SC Department of Public Health  
SC Department of Social Services  
SC Educational Television

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  
Corporation for National and Community Service  
VISTA Support Program Grant  
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 FY24, we directly served 45% 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 FY24, 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 FY24, we reached 24% 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 Fall 2023, 41% 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 2023, 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](https://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 two or more.

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The child has been abused.

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The child has been neglected.

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The child is in foster care or kinship care.

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

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

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

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The child is blind or visually impaired.

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The child is deaf or hearing impaired.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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The child has a single parent or caregiver.

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The child is experiencing homelessness.

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The child has experienced numerous family relocations or transiency.

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

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

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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.

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The child is an immigrant or refugee.

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

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

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The child is enrolled in or eligible for Medicaid.

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

## Local Partnership Performance

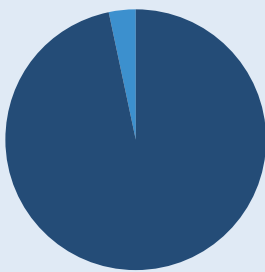
### MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR STATE GRANT FUNDING

As a statewide public-private initiative, First Steps is accountable to taxpayers, our funders and, most importantly, South Carolina’s children. Each local partnership is required by law to meet rigorous programmatic, operational, financial, and administrative standards as a condition of receiving state funds. 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.

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 2024, 15 of 46 local partnerships received a corrective action plan to address unmet minimum qualifications during the previous fiscal year. SC First Steps program officers provide ongoing support to local partnerships with corrective action plans and report progress to the state board of trustees.

#### EXPENDITURES OF STATE FUNDS BY PROGRAM TYPE, FY 2024



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 96.7%
- EVIDENCE-INFORMED 3.3%

*A complete list of minimum qualifications for First Steps formula grant funding is available at [scfirststeps.org/grants](https://scfirststeps.org/grants).*

## Local Partnership Programs

### BY PROGRAM TYPE, FY 2024

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 FY24	# FAMILIES SERVED IN FY24	# COUNTIES WITH THIS PROGRAM IN FY24
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	1,633	1,407	30
	HOME INSTRUCTION FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL YOUNGSTERS (HIPPIY)	Peer parent education and home visitation for families with 4-year-olds	Y	Y	178	170	8
	NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP	Home visitation for first time mothers, from pregnancy until the child turns 2	Y	Y*	409	592	7
	EARLY STEPS TO SCHOOL SUCCESS	Home visitation for families pre-birth until 36 months	Y	Y	134	109	1
	NURTURING PARENTING	Group support with optional models of home visitation and fatherhood	Y	Y	455	377	9
	INCREDIBLE YEARS	12-week group support for parents for their child's social and emotional development and behavior	Y	Y	48	37	1
	STRENGTHENING FAMILIES	14-session group support program to promote strong and resilient families	Y	Y*	25	25	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	1,328	921	4
	FAMILY CAFÉ	Parent discussion groups that promote social connections with other parents	N	Y	201	154	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*	607	607	3
	FULL DAY 4K, HALF-DAY 4K	Operation or support of a four-year-old kindergarten program	Y	Y*	31	31	1
	EARLY EDUCATION UNDER 4	Support for infant, toddler, or 3K classrooms, including during adult education/family literacy programs	Y	Y*	77	74	6
	CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS	Subsidize child care costs to providers demonstrating quality	**	Y	637	19	27
	ENHANCED EARLY EDUCATION	Supplemental support to early education programs, such as one-on-one tutoring and parent engagement	Y	Y*	346	196	5
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	6,773	n/a	18
	SUPPORTING CARE PROVIDERS THROUGH VISITS	Intensive support to family child care providers to improve quality	N	Y Provider and Workforce Data	93	n/a	4
	TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Certified and registered training hours for the early childhood workforce	Y	Y* Provider and Workforce Data	79,486	n/a	34

APPENDIX D

	PROGRAM	SERVICES PROVIDED	EVIDENCE-BASED?	CLIENT LEVEL DATA AVAILABLE?	# CHILDREN 0-5 SERVED IN FY24	# FAMILIES SERVED IN FY24	# COUNTIES WITH THIS PROGRAM IN FY24
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	133	132	3
	LENA HOME	10-session home visitation to help families increase positive interactions and language use with young children	Y	Y	26	24	1
	MOTHEREAD/FATHERREAD	Group support for parents with low literacy levels in reading to their children	Y	Y	69	61	2
	RAISING A READER WITH PARENT SESSIONS – ENHANCED	Weekly take-home bookbags and group support for parents	Y	N	327	213	4
	RAISING A READER	Weekly take-home bookbag exchange	N	N	635	561	5
	LIBRARY BASED PROGRAMS	Library staff visit child care and preschool classrooms providing books, storytelling, and staff training	N	N	1,521	1,187	4
	REACH OUT AND READ	Books and information on reading books to children provided during well-child visits	Y	N	14,203	14,203	11
	DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY	One book per month mailed to the home	Y	N	13,108	12,626	18
	OTHER FAMILY LITERACY	Other services to support language and literacy with parents and children	N	N	672	672	2
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*	4,609	4,609	4
	FAMILY CONNECTS	Nurse home visiting program for all families with newborns	Y	Y*	1,507	1,507	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	654	468	9
	WEEKEND BACKPACKS	Nutritious food backpacks for low income preschool children	N	N	497	n/a	1
	HEALTH SERVICES	Supporting children's healthy development	N	N	104	84	2
Programs that support transitions between early childhood settings and from early childhood into kindergarten	COUNTDOWN TO KINDERGARTEN Summer 2023	Summer program supporting transitions into kindergarten	N	Y	1,398	1,395	26
	COUNTDOWN TO 4K Summer 2023	Summer program supporting transitions into 4K	N	Y	849	849	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 2024

#### ABBEVILLE

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

#### AIKEN

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

#### ALLENDALE

Child Care Scholarships  
 Early Identification and Referral  
 Enhanced Early Education  
 Nurturing Parenting

#### ANDERSON

Countdown to Kindergarten  
 Early Education  
 HealthySteps  
 Raising a Reader  
 Triple P

#### BAMBERG

Child Care Scholarships  
 Child Care Training  
 Parents as Teachers

#### BARNWELL

Child Care Scholarships  
 Child Care Training  
 Countdown to Kindergarten  
 Early Education  
 Early Head Start  
 Family Café  
 HIPPY  
 Library Based Program  
 Parents as Teachers  
 Quality Counts

#### BEAUFORT

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

#### BERKELEY

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

#### CALHOUN

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

#### CHARLESTON

Child Care Scholarships  
 Child Care Training  
 Countdown to Kindergarten  
 Early Identification and Referral (PASOs)  
 Motherhead/Fatheread  
 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  
 Countdown to Kindergarten  
 Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
 LENA Home  
 Triple P

#### CHESTER

Child Care Training  
 Parents as Teachers

#### CHESTERFIELD

Early Education (Compass Point Preschool)  
 Child Care Scholarships  
 Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
 ParentChild+

#### CLARENDON

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



## APPENDIX E

### 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  
Quality Enhancement

### DARLINGTON

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

### DILLON

Child Care Training  
Nurturing Parenting  
Quality Enhancement  
Raising a Reader

### DORCHESTER

Child Care Scholarships  
Child Care Training  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
HIPPI  
Parents as Teachers  
Quality Enhancement  
Reach Out and Read

### EDGEFIELD

Child Care Scholarships  
Child Care Training  
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
Early Education  
Enhanced Early Education  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Nurturing Parenting  
Quality Enhancement

### FAIRFIELD

Child Care Scholarships  
Child Care Training  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
Family Café  
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  
Child Care Scholarships  
Child Care Training  
Early Education  
HIPPI  
ParentChild+

### GREENVILLE

Countdown to Kindergarten  
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
Family Connects  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Nurturing Parenting  
Reach Out and Read  
Triple P

### GREENWOOD

Child Care Training  
Family Café  
Parents as Teachers

### HAMPTON

Child Care Scholarships  
Child Care Training  
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
Early Identification and Referral  
Parents as Teachers  
Reach Out and Read

### HORRY

Child Care Training  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Early Identification and Referral (PASOs)  
Enhanced Early Education  
Raising a Reader

### JASPER

Child Care Scholarships  
Child Care Training  
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
Early Identification and Referral  
Parents as Teachers  
Reach Out and Read

### 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  
Incredible Years  
Parents as Teachers  
Weekend Backpacks

### LAURENS

Child Care Scholarships  
Child Care Training  
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
Parents as Teachers  
Reach Out and Read

### LEE

Child Care Scholarships  
Child Care Training  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Early Steps to School Success  
Family Café  
Health Services Coordination  
Motheread/Fatheread  
Strengthening Families

## APPENDIX E

### LEXINGTON

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

### MARION

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

### MARLBORO

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

### MCCORMICK

Child Care Scholarships  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
Early Education  
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  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
Nurse-Family Partnership

### ORANGEBURG

Countdown to Kindergarten  
HIPPIY  
HealthySteps  
Parents as Teachers  
Raising a Reader

### PICKENS

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

### RICHLAND

Child Care Training  
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

Countdown to Kindergarten  
Early Head Start  
Early Identification and Referral (PASOs)  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Quality Counts

### SUMTER

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

### UNION

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

### WILLIAMSBURG

Child Care Scholarships  
Child Care Training  
Countdown to Kindergarten  
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library  
Family Café  
HIPPIY  
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

## Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY)

### FUNDING REPORT, FY 2023 - FY 2024

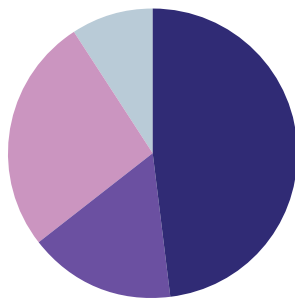
Resources for Early Acceleration and Development in Youth (READY) was created in Proviso 1.105 of the 2022-23 State Budget Bill with \$3 million in General Funds, recurring annually, to be awarded to local First Steps partnerships by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees through a competitive and targeted grants process.

Funding priorities include evidence-based programs for children birth through age three who live in rural communities and in communities where kindergarten readiness scores are consistently below the state average. No more than 10% may be distributed to any one county and no more than 3% retained by the state office for program administration, monitoring, and evaluation.

To develop its READY grantmaking strategy, SC First Steps solicited input from local First Steps partnerships. The needs identified were to sustain and expand services initiated with previous short-term funding (e.g., Preschool Development Grant, ESSER) and to build local partnership capacity through staff compensation, benefits, and infrastructure improvements to better recruit and serve families from underserved populations.

Each READY funding opportunity requires partnerships to specify measurable client and staff outcomes, which are monitored on a quarterly and annual basis. Our grantmaking process is governed by a uniform scoring system that gives additional weight to READY legislative priorities, demonstrated need, proposed outcomes, and previous local partnership performance.

**TOTAL READY FUNDING AWARDED OR COMMITTED – \$9,003,426**



- \$4,331,576  
*Sustain and expand effective programs*
- \$1,484,916  
*Create or expand child care technical assistance programs*
- \$2,375,234  
*Build infrastructure and capacity*
- \$811,700  
*Pursue innovation*

**Sustain and expand effective programs**

\$1,901,344 over 2 years to expand programs serving children and families (FY24 - FY25)

Allendale  
Bamberg  
Charleston  
Darlington  
Dillon  
Greenville  
Greenwood  
McCormick  
Orangeburg  
Pickens  
Spartanburg  
York

\$2,430,232 for 1 year to sustain previous ESSER expansion of programs serving children and families (FY25)

Abbeville  
Bamberg  
Beaufort  
Berkeley  
Calhoun  
Charleston  
Cherokee  
Chester  
Chesterfield  
Clarendon  
Colleton  
Darlington  
Dillon  
Dorchester  
Edgefield  
Fairfield  
Florence  
Georgetown  
Greenwood  
Hampton  
Jasper  
Kershaw  
Lancaster  
Lee  
Lexington  
Marion  
Marlboro  
McCormick  
Newberry  
Oconee  
Orangeburg  
Pickens  
Richland  
Sumter  
Union  
Williamsburg  
York

**Create or expand child care technical assistance programs**

\$1,484,916 over 3 years (FY24 - FY26)

Berkeley  
Colleton  
Dillon  
Dorchester  
Richland\*  
Spartanburg  
York

**Build infrastructure and capacity**

\$2,195,234 over 3 years (FY24 - FY26)

Anderson  
Bamberg  
Barnwell  
Beaufort  
Berkeley  
Calhoun  
Cherokee  
Chesterfield  
Colleton  
Darlington  
Dillon  
Edgefield  
Greenville  
Greenwood  
Hampton  
Jasper  
Kershaw  
Laurens  
Lee  
McCormick  
Newberry  
Orangeburg  
Pickens  
Richland  
Saluda  
Spartanburg  
Sumter  
Williamsburg  
York

\$180,000 for 1 year (FY25)

Bamberg  
Barnwell  
Dillon  
Greenwood  
Lee  
Williamsburg

**Pursue innovation**

\$686,200 over 2 years to Carolina Collaborative for Early Childhood Innovation (FY24 - FY26)

Lee  
Pickens  
York

\$53,500 for 1 year pilot to support family child care providers through Parents as Teachers (FY24)

Beaufort  
Charleston  
Colleton  
Williamsburg

\$72,000 for 1 year pilot to support Family Cafés in underserved communities (FY24)

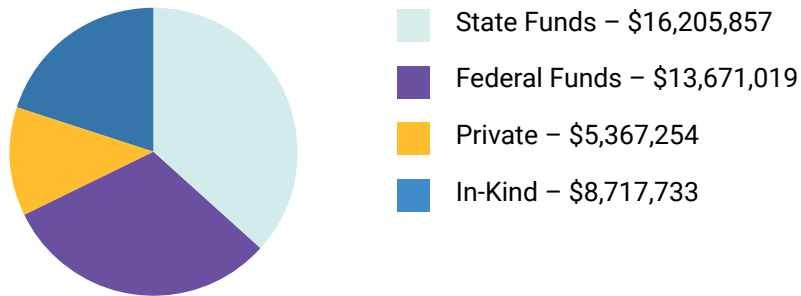
Barnwell  
Darlington  
Fairfield  
Greenwood  
Lee  
Williamsburg

\* Richland County First Steps received a READY child care grant but discontinued it in spring 2024.

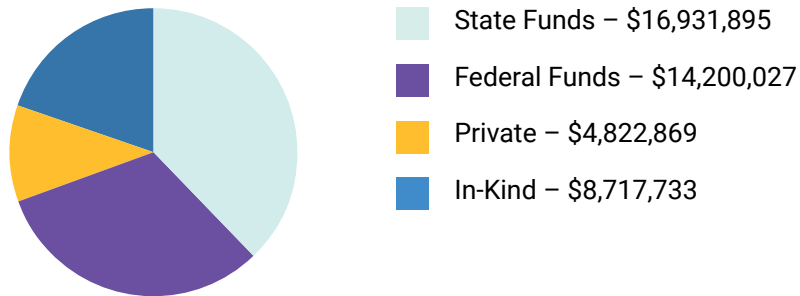
## Local Partnership Finances

### REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES BY FUND TYPE, FY 2024\*

FY 2024 REVENUE – \$43,961,863



FY 2024 EXPENDITURES – \$44,672,524



Note: Expenditures exceeded revenue mainly due to the current-year use of revenue recognized in prior years.

## Local Partnership Finances

### REVENUE BY COUNTY, FY 2024\*

COUNTY	STATE	FEDERAL	PRIVATE	IN-KIND	TOTAL
Abbeville	\$200,000.00	\$1,080.96	\$5,315.93	\$38,765.00	\$245,161.89
Aiken	\$216,761.84	\$2,756.76	\$7,470.33	\$288,787.20	\$515,776.13
Allendale	\$227,510.95	\$0.00	\$9,254.97	\$43,070.00	\$279,835.92
Anderson	\$460,055.36	\$145,301.27	\$2,248.02	\$100,736.91	\$708,341.56
Bamberg	\$267,100.00	\$3,055.00	\$12,095.14	\$282,473.00	\$564,723.14
Barnwell	\$242,000.00	\$221,484.18	\$330,918.36	\$102,122.00	\$896,524.54
Beaufort	\$442,408.00	\$135,323.98	\$43,804.15	\$11,875.04	\$633,411.17
Berkeley	\$632,015.00	\$287,465.06	\$21,187.21	\$67,920.20	\$1,008,587.47
Calhoun	\$230,000.00	\$49,953.45	\$11,987.88	\$33,935.04	\$325,876.37
Charleston	\$718,864.00	\$140,735.30	\$287,046.04	\$205,557.70	\$1,352,203.04
Cherokee	\$230,000.00	\$86,756.06	\$16,777.94	\$374,517.12	\$708,051.12
Chester	\$180,967.79	\$7,485.00	\$4,206.54	\$34,200.00	\$226,859.33
Chesterfield	\$289,603.91	\$234,639.67	\$200,519.98	\$132,211.96	\$856,975.52
Clarendon	\$131,803.89	\$117,178.95	\$4,395.18	\$162,741.00	\$416,119.02
Colleton	\$281,440.00	\$66,504.18	\$94,699.94	\$189,799.60	\$632,443.72
Darlington	\$363,134.26	\$174,468.94	\$100,796.86	\$11,041.44	\$649,441.50
Dillon	\$288,953.12	\$249,585.00	\$40,603.25	\$23,946.92	\$603,088.29
Dorchester	\$369,136.00	\$69,380.39	\$65,497.39	\$0.00	\$504,013.78
Edgefield	\$223,346.00	\$10,944.92	\$13,042.23	\$433,661.99	\$680,995.14
Fairfield	\$205,709.72	\$64,892.28	\$6,638.93	\$262,224.45	\$539,465.38
Florence	\$450,597.92	\$208,498.90	\$4,856.25	\$475,662.59	\$1,139,615.66
Georgetown	\$200,000.00	\$72,345.52	\$6,648.74	\$102,021.52	\$381,015.78
Greenville	\$1,163,328.00	\$215,506.05	\$778,095.53	\$600,000.00	\$2,756,929.58
Greenwood	\$327,656.00	\$0.00	\$13,714.00	\$75,259.42	\$416,629.42
Hampton	\$164,715.42	\$635.00	\$11,361.67	\$99,372.00	\$276,084.09
Horry	\$681,539.79	(\$1,586.04)	\$43,450.42	\$166,426.54	\$889,830.71
Jasper	\$223,170.81	\$2,770.00	\$49,021.10	\$153,002.00	\$427,963.91
Kershaw	\$207,675.53	\$13,514.46	\$12,280.82	\$55,800.00	\$279,270.81
Lancaster	\$260,906.45	\$2,191,371.40	\$169,033.25	\$280,984.78	\$2,902,295.88
Laurens	\$171,684.26	\$15,604.55	\$25,277.76	\$181,530.10	\$394,096.67
Lee	\$299,500.00	\$316,407.47	\$867,642.88	\$589,760.63	\$2,073,310.98
Lexington	\$620,468.00	\$469,988.80	\$174,758.39	\$511,197.28	\$1,776,412.47
Marion	\$191,685.16	\$184,060.90	\$4,619.59	\$594,565.20	\$974,930.85
Marlboro	\$175,028.01	(\$17,591.68)	\$1,924.51	\$266,024.00	\$425,384.84
McCormick	\$229,617.42	\$78,719.05	\$4,997.01	\$136,111.09	\$449,444.57
Newberry	\$229,560.62	\$79,154.65	\$21,566.19	\$69,906.87	\$400,188.33
Oconee	\$181,150.30	\$57,412.31	\$13,917.64	\$453,356.00	\$705,836.25
Orangeburg	\$328,553.48	\$158,210.52	\$79,549.59	\$5,116.03	\$571,429.62
Pickens	\$283,636.00	\$116,114.06	\$118,136.69	\$443,714.71	\$961,601.46
Richland	\$1,069,368.00	\$3,004,879.44	\$345,321.78	\$19,063.00	\$4,438,632.22
Saluda	\$205,122.00	\$8,800.00	\$10,747.10	\$76,750.63	\$301,419.73
Spartanburg	\$838,832.01	\$3,559,282.04	\$566,823.70	\$0.00	\$4,964,937.75
Sumter	\$356,844.94	\$88,043.69	\$4,654.71	\$521,703.00	\$971,246.34
Union	\$200,000.00	\$64,459.32	\$5,845.13	\$0.00	\$270,304.45
Williamsburg	\$257,000.00	\$227,806.40	\$16,143.94	\$0.00	\$500,950.34
York	\$687,406.58	\$487,621.23	\$748,359.33	\$40,819.00	\$1,964,206.14
	<b>\$16,205,856.54</b>	<b>\$13,671,019.39</b>	<b>\$5,367,253.99</b>	<b>\$8,717,732.96</b>	<b>\$43,961,862.88</b>

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

\*\* Revenue amounts may show a difference between allocations and revenue based on penalties imposed by the SC First Steps Board of Trustees for non-compliance with organizational policies.

## Local Partnership Finances

## EXPENDITURES BY COUNTY, FY 2024\*

COUNTY	STATE	FEDERAL	PRIVATE	IN-KIND	TOTAL
Abbeville	\$273,122.39	\$1,415.00	\$1,705.16	\$38,765.00	\$315,007.55
Aiken	\$359,145.86	\$3,444.76	\$7,103.55	\$288,787.20	\$658,481.37
Allendale	\$256,005.14	\$1,500.00	\$4,768.09	\$43,070.00	\$305,343.23
Anderson	\$440,912.66	\$155,607.26	\$2,253.66	\$100,736.91	\$699,510.49
Bamberg	\$291,569.05	\$4,090.00	\$1,782.83	\$282,473.00	\$579,914.88
Barnwell	\$236,640.32	\$209,020.93	\$266,389.87	\$102,122.00	\$814,173.12
Beaufort	\$449,268.10	\$135,780.89	\$60,198.76	\$11,875.04	\$657,122.79
Berkeley	\$712,144.99	\$365,340.93	\$31,307.07	\$67,920.20	\$1,176,713.19
Calhoun	\$195,003.16	\$42,071.19	\$6,291.52	\$33,935.04	\$277,300.91
Charleston	\$742,070.21	\$195,178.09	\$250,407.26	\$205,557.70	\$1,393,213.26
Cherokee	\$221,139.42	\$122,294.32	\$25,589.32	\$374,517.12	\$743,540.18
Chester	\$217,790.30	\$6,118.00	\$10,120.12	\$34,200.00	\$268,228.42
Chesterfield	\$286,559.91	\$265,456.44	\$106,087.67	\$132,211.96	\$790,315.98
Clarendon	\$223,518.51	\$132,753.11	\$6,371.30	\$162,741.00	\$525,383.92
Colleton	\$277,608.20	\$60,066.47	\$36,396.09	\$189,799.60	\$563,870.36
Darlington	\$355,828.05	\$196,198.39	\$93,359.91	\$11,041.44	\$656,427.79
Dillon	\$285,602.97	\$249,585.00	\$25,475.04	\$23,946.92	\$584,609.93
Dorchester	\$358,376.51	\$45,206.82	\$53,806.72	\$0.00	\$457,390.05
Edgefield	\$228,626.94	\$12,790.99	\$15,298.22	\$433,661.99	\$690,378.14
Fairfield	\$228,868.39	\$54,382.36	\$18,756.13	\$262,224.45	\$564,231.33
Florence	\$481,365.88	\$208,872.48	\$3,730.08	\$475,662.59	\$1,169,631.03
Georgetown	\$181,543.70	\$125,037.78	\$12,572.97	\$102,021.52	\$421,175.97
Greenville	\$1,174,730.12	\$215,505.00	\$642,519.50	\$600,000.00	\$2,632,754.62
Greenwood	\$341,420.09	\$0.00	\$20,003.53	\$75,259.42	\$436,683.04
Hampton	\$226,270.28	\$7,821.22	\$6,209.60	\$99,372.00	\$339,673.10
Horry	\$735,491.09	\$1,888.00	\$19,262.77	\$166,426.54	\$923,068.40
Jasper	\$255,128.97	\$3,323.42	\$36,142.87	\$153,002.00	\$447,597.26
Kershaw	\$218,027.40	\$14,221.68	\$1,105.43	\$55,800.00	\$289,154.51
Lancaster	\$257,409.96	\$2,061,721.80	\$142,978.92	\$280,984.78	\$2,743,095.46
Laurens	\$222,053.90	\$22,370.43	\$20,823.49	\$181,530.10	\$446,777.92
Lee	\$260,006.67	\$252,153.54	\$809,660.22	\$589,760.63	\$1,911,581.06
Lexington	\$566,222.13	\$526,264.13	\$159,085.45	\$511,197.28	\$1,762,768.99
Marion	\$213,207.69	\$252,907.12	\$5,163.89	\$594,565.20	\$1,065,843.90
Marlboro	\$215,108.21	\$26,377.17	\$40.00	\$266,024.00	\$507,549.38
McCormick	\$222,916.61	\$74,162.26	\$13,622.42	\$136,111.09	\$446,812.38
Newberry	\$230,824.40	\$67,907.67	\$16,194.14	\$69,906.87	\$384,833.08
Oconee	\$206,991.11	\$47,309.48	\$10,570.05	\$453,356.00	\$718,226.64
Orangeburg	\$330,208.26	\$132,203.82	\$46,496.87	\$5,116.03	\$514,024.98
Pickens	\$293,577.58	\$112,124.77	\$118,341.72	\$443,714.71	\$967,758.78
Richland	\$1,104,163.11	\$2,647,366.37	\$279,760.53	\$19,063.00	\$4,050,353.01
Saluda	\$204,652.99	\$8,800.00	\$10,634.84	\$76,750.63	\$300,838.46
Spartanburg	\$830,902.22	\$4,164,078.38	\$652,982.95	\$0.00	\$5,647,963.55
Sumter	\$391,967.62	\$103,611.69	\$11,927.04	\$521,703.00	\$1,029,209.35
Union	\$208,939.49	\$65,794.40	\$6,464.50	\$0.00	\$281,198.39
Williamsburg	\$246,213.36	\$231,742.60	\$18,761.75	\$0.00	\$496,717.71
York	\$672,751.37	\$568,160.59	\$734,345.27	\$40,819.00	\$2,016,076.23
	<b>\$16,931,895.29</b>	<b>\$14,200,026.75</b>	<b>\$4,822,869.09</b>	<b>\$8,717,732.96</b>	<b>\$44,672,524.09</b>

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

## Child Care Quality Enhancement (QE), Quality Counts, and Child Care Training

### INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY FIRST STEPS LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS, FY 2024

LOCAL PARTNERSHIP	# OF TEACHERS & DIRECTORS SERVED BY QE	# OF TEACHERS & DIRECTORS SERVED BY TRAINING	TOTAL
Abbeville	0	318	318
Aiken	38	379	417
Bamberg	0	31	31
Barnwell	18	112	130
Beaufort	89	377	466
Berkeley	48	234	282
Charleston	19	73	92
Cherokee	0	153	153
Chester	0	187	187
Clarendon	14	55	69
Colleton	9	75	84
Dillon	41	216	257
Dorchester	72	48	120
Edgefield	21	42	63
Fairfield	20	24	44
Florence	105	73	178
Georgetown	0	24	24
Greenwood	0	144	144
Hampton	0	28	28
Horry	0	87	87
Jasper	0	95	95
Kershaw	25	0	25
Lancaster	0	44	44
Laurens	0	48	48
Lee	0	369	369
Lexington	0	37	37
Marion	66	73	139
Marlboro	0	33	33
Newberry	28	163	191
Richland	148	79	227
Saluda	0	47	47
Spartanburg	510	0	510
Sumter	0	168	168
Union	0	12	12
Williamsburg	0	32	32
York	99	236	335



## External Evaluation of First Steps Child Care Scholarships

FY 2018 - FY 2022

First Steps local partnerships may offer child care scholarships, providing families with access to free or reduced-cost child care. These scholarships are funded either by the SC Department of Social Services or through local sources. Often, scholarships are contingent on the family's enrollment in an evidence-based program, meaning they must be participating in such a program to qualify for assistance. In 2023, the Institute for Families in Society at the University of South Carolina conducted an external evaluation to examine the reach and impact of child care scholarships provided by local First Steps partnerships during a five-year timeframe of FY18 through FY22.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Reach

From FY18 through FY22, child care scholarships served 1,598 children enrolled at 207 unique child care providers in 28 counties via 30 local partnerships.

- The average age of the children who received a child care scholarship was 27.17 months or a little over two years old.
- 74% of the children who received a child care scholarship were identified as African American.
- 40% of the children who received a child care scholarship lived in households with an annual household income <\$10,000.
- 77% of the children who received a child care scholarship had at least one Ages and Stages Questionnaire screening done.
- 66% of the 207 unique child care providers were rated B or above via the ABC Quality rating system.

#### Impact

- Scholarship children had a statistically significant lower rate of chronic absenteeism than their like peers who did not receive a scholarship (20% vs. 24%).
- There was no statistically significant difference detected between scholarship children and their like peers who did not receive a scholarship in terms of their scores on the SC Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA).
- Due to a small sample size, the evaluators were unable to analyze how children who received a scholarship only (n=18) did, compared to those who received a scholarship and a First Steps evidence-based program (n=598), on the two kindergarten outcomes investigated (KRA results and chronic absenteeism).

Note: When interpreting the impact of scholarships on KRA scores and chronic absenteeism, please note that the 'like peers' comparison group did not exclude children who may have received high-quality child care funded by other sources, such as scholarships provided directly by the Department of Social Services.

### PAGES 7-8

Number of children 0-5 in South Carolina. Data source: 5-year estimates: American Community Survey (2018-2022). Table B17024. US Census Bureau.

42% 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 (2018-2022). Table B17024. US Census Bureau.

36% children 0-5 lived in a single-parent household. Data source: 1-Year Estimates: American Community Survey (2023). Table C23008. US Census Bureau.

23% 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 (2022). Vital Statistics: South Carolina Department of Public Health. Accessed 1 Nov 2024. [Available from: [https://apps.dhec.sc.gov/Health/SCAN\\_BDP/tables/birthtable.aspx](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 (2022). Vital Statistics: South Carolina Department of Public Health. Accessed 1 Nov 2024. [Available from: [https://apps.dhec.sc.gov/Health/SCAN\\_BDP/tables/birthtable.aspx](https://apps.dhec.sc.gov/Health/SCAN_BDP/tables/birthtable.aspx)].

43% 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. 2021-2022 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 1 Nov 2024. [Available from: [www.childhealthdata.org](http://www.childhealthdata.org)].

57% 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.

59% of entering kindergartners tested "not ready" for school and % "demonstrating readiness" map by county. Data source: South Carolina Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (Fall 2023 Administration). South Carolina Department of Education.

## 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

Data Quality Campaign

National Technical Assistance Center for Preschool Development Grants Birth Through Five

Pritzker Children's Initiative

The Hunt Institute

True North Group

Zero to Three

*The newborn featured on our cover is the son of Sebastian and Sandra of York County, S.C. Learn more about their story and our health programs on page 19.*



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